

Snared by the Sea Queen

By: The17thStatesman

(CW: Monster Girl/Boy Transformation, Corruption, Brainwashing, Unaware Hypnosis, Unwilling Transformation, Willing Transformation, Hypnotic Singing, Mass Hypnosis, Shortstacks, Harpy-style Sirens, Giantess, Futanari, Shark Girls, Nerdification, Brattification, Femboy TF, Tomboyification, Explicit content including: vaginal and anal sex, Transformation via being smothered under a giant set of girlballs, and a very interesting definition of “praying.”)

The idyllic port city of Whitesands baked under the sun hanging high overhead in the cloudless sky. A gorgeous and affluent community of merchants, craftsfolk, and dockworkers; it took its name from the almost powder fine, pale sands that made up its shoreline. The trio of adventurers who were making their way through the city's square would've loved to have been able to spend a couple days relaxing on the beach, enjoying the ocean, and taking in the rich culture of a bustling harbor that stood at the crossroads between two continents.

But they couldn't shirk their duties, adventure was calling, and they couldn't rest on their laurels whilst the forces of evil threatened the world. They were also flat broke, which didn't help matters either.

“Aden, I avoided asking up until now, because I'm a little scared to hear the answer. But do you know where we're going, right?” A blonde haired and blue eyed priestess asked her traveling companion and ostensive “leader” of their small adventuring party.

“Sure do, Mae!” Aden replied confidently with a smile, before almost immediately backtracking, “Well, okay, not *exactly*, but- I know how to get there! We just have to get to the water, and then keep walking along the shoreline and we're bound to find it eventually! The boat we're looking for is, uh, very distinct.” His confidence and optimism were almost enough to cover up his lack of competence.

A fighter with spiky brown hair, tanned brown skin, and brown eyes; Aden possessed a lithe appearance that would lead one to assume he must've been hiding more physical strength than his physique suggested, considering his chosen class. That assumption would be incorrect.

Mae and Aden were childhood friends who'd grown up with dreams of becoming adventurers together when they grew up. Exploring the world, protecting the innocent, seeking their fortunes and staying by each other's sides no matter what dangers came their way.

Most kids had similar dreams, and most kids also grew out of them. But not her or Aden. She treasured him dearly, but sometimes his short-sighted behavior and naive bravado really tested the limits of her patience... Not to mention her mana, what with all the spells she had to sling to keep the two of them out of harm's way.

They were mid-level adventurers, capable of tackling some decently powerful monsters, but the more quests they took on, the more the deficits in their party had begun to show. Namely, their complete lack of arcane magical expertise and specialized knowledge. There was just a limit to how far an adventuring party could get by with just two members.

Mae was an adept healer and support caster, and definitely the source of *common sense* of the two, but her offensive options in combat were somewhat limited to her mace and a few single-target spells. Almost all of her knowledge skills aside from Religion were sitting firmly at zero points. They'd known they couldn't keep coasting along by the seat of their pants forever, or at least Mae knew that. Eventually, the time was bound to come where they got in over their heads, and that lack of versatility and formal education would prove deadly.

It very nearly did for the pair, [just a couple of weeks prior...](#) They'd accepted what should've been a routine quest to help a village called Sugarglade in the Great Swamp deal with a Drake that'd been terrorizing them and destroying their crops. It turned out to be a trap, the villagers had already been corrupted by a Dracogator who'd dubbed herself "Haelitox." Using her magical and fetid breath, she'd transformed them into her frog girl worshipers, and after having her minions thoroughly addle Aden and Mae, the two childhood friends were the next to be engulfed in her transformative miasma and reborn as her servants...

That seemed as if it would've been where their story ended, but fortunately for them, their Level gave them a bit more resilience to the putrid reptile woman's brainwashing than the villagers... As they were sent deep into the swamp to search for tribute to their "goddess" in the form of valuables or victims, they eventually wandered far enough away from her that the air, and their minds cleared slightly. just enough for them to break away and look for help. That help came in the form of a young wizard named Belle, who was exploring the Swamp in search of reagents, as well as... *trouble*.

Belle had heard about how Aden and Mae had gone missing in the Great Swamp after taking on that quest, it led the guild to suspend it and offer a reward for anyone who could provide proof of their whereabouts, and whether they were alive or dead. Some scouts exploring the forest had seen signs of the corruption spread by Haelitox and her followers, and they reported back that they believed that the villagers, as well as Mae and Aden, had been corrupted by a monster. That drew Belle's interest.

Belle had originally been a member of another proper adventuring party prior to meeting Aden and Mae. As a neophyte wizard fresh out of the mage's academy, she'd joined up with three other rookies at the Adventurer's Guild to form what was colloquially referred to as a "full house." That was a party that contained a wizard, a priest, a fighter, and a rogue. The quartet had gone on their fair share of quests together, advancing from Novices to Apprentices.

They'd been on the verge of earning their Journeyman statuses, until they went on a quest that went horribly wrong. It started with their priest being caught by the vampiress they were hunting

and turned into one of her thralls. They'd underestimated her cunning, she knew exactly whom to target.

Without him and his divine magic, they had no way to weaken and slay her, so they were forced to flee. It had been a full moon that night, and a pack of werewolves happened to be prowling the area searching for victims to join their pack. Their fighter stayed behind to stall them and allow Belle and the rogue to escape. The last Belle saw of her, her neck was covered in bites, and she was already beginning to turn as they dragged her into the darkness.

Her and the rogue ran through the night, and they thought their troubles were over when the morning sun came, but unfortunately that just awakened one of the other many dangers lurking in those woods... An Alraune seduced the rogue with her pheromone pollen, Belle could only watch as she beckoned him into the thick, saccharine, mind-melting nectar of her flower and turned him into her "pistil."

She made it back to the adventurer's guild, the sole survivor of her party... The experience had, of course, terrified her. But it also *awakened* something in her, a fascination with the kind of fates that had befallen her friends. She wasn't sure if it was born from the trauma she'd endured, or if it had always been lying dormant within her, but either way she found herself unable to resist the urge to dive deeper into it.

It made it easier to bear knowing that her friends were not truly "dead," in fact, they weren't even in pain. She made it a personal goal of hers, if she had the opportunity, to hunt them down and liberate them from their corruption, knowing that if they had the choice they wouldn't want to stay that way.

She spent the next several months looking for a new party, always hiding her proclivities, but she had to turn them all down. There was no shortage of parties looking to include a wizard who'd already Level 5; the point when wizards started being able to sling the *really* good spells, but she just couldn't travel with them.

The problem wasn't that they weren't competent companions, it's that they were *too* competent. Belle was looking for party members that she could rely on to get themselves into messes of this sort of their *own accord*. No matter how depraved her private fantasies, she'd never stoop so low as to betray those who trusted her. She had a code, and lines she wouldn't cross.

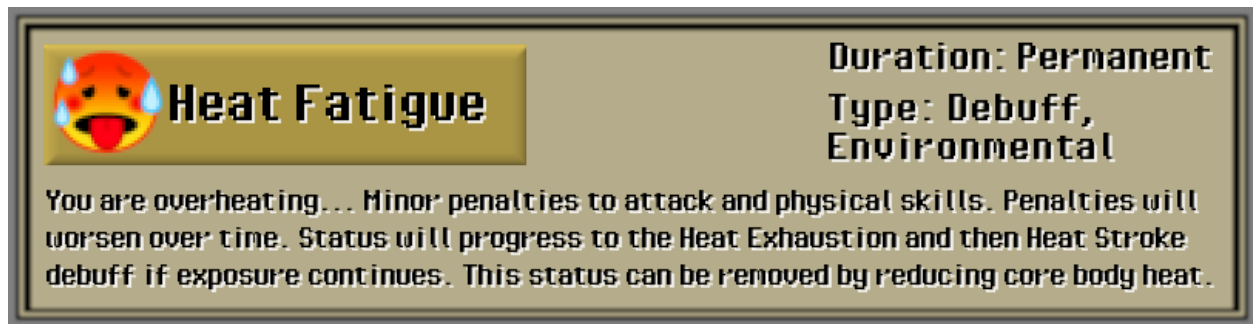
So when she stumbled upon Aden and Mae barely clinging to their minds, she took them to the nearest Adventurer Guild chapter, collected the reward for finding and rescuing them, and saw to it that they were restored to their previous forms. It was fortunate that the transformation had been so recent, it made it much easier to undo... Though, unfortunately, the powerful restorative magic involved still exhausted most of their accumulated savings.

Belle didn't even have to ask to join up with them. As soon as the two of them were back to normal, they naturally wanted their savior to accompany them. It was a bit of serendipity that

they were looking for a wizard. She happily accepted, eager to see what kind of antics and misadventures the two of them would blunder into.

Mae whipped some sweat off of her brow, “Uughh, may the Everlight forgive me for this blasphemy, but just this once I could do with a little *less* of her heavenly glow. The sun is absolutely *killing* me.” Her clothing, consisting of a blue and white cap in the style of a bishop’s mitre atop her head and a white robe with a light gold scapular over top, looked deceptively light. It hid the set of chainmail resting underneath, which was the primary source of the poor girl’s discomfort.

As she closed her eyes, she noticed that she’d been stricken by a status effect...



She opened her eyes again and looked at Aden with a mix of envy and befuddlement. As he was wearing a proper breastplate and yet seemed no worse for wear! She could probably chalk that up to his heartier constitution though. “Aden, this is serious, I’m getting debuffs from the heat now.”

“Alright, alright, I understand, i-it shouldn’t be much farther!” Sure enough, after just a few more minutes of walking, the three of them arrived on the harbor. There were dozens of boats in port, from humble dinghies and sloops to full blown galleons.

“I still don’t know if it’s a good idea for us to even be taking this journey in the first place. It’s one thing to sail along the coast but... out into open waters? Don’t you remember all the stories we heard growing up about the kind of monsters living out in the deep seas? Krakens, sea serpents, whales big enough to swallow frigates whole! I-I don’t know if we’ve got enough experience for this yet. I’m right, aren’t I, Belle?” Mae looked expectantly at a short, pale-skinned girl in purple robes with long black hair.

“Aw, c’mon, Mae! You’re supposed to be the *sensible* one, you’re telling me you buy those tall-tales the veterans in the guild tell? If sailing the ocean is really that dangerous, how come so many people do it? What do you think there’s a curse *specifically* on adventurers or something? Tell her she’s being silly, Belle!” The fighter also turned to their recently acquired wizard.

“Mmrrrr...” The bookish girl let out an exasperated groan as she slumped forward, the conical hat atop her head tipping to obscure her eyes, “Why do you two insist on having me arbitrate

every little petty dispute you have? Are you sure it's a wizard you were looking for? It seems that what you really needed was an encyclopedia."

"But, I'll explain anyway!" Belle cleared her throat, and began to elaborate as she pushed up on the bridge of her glasses, a bulky pair of spectacles that seemed to contain swirls in their thick, round opaque lens. "Technically, you two are *both* right, and also both *wrong*. The truth is a bit more nuanced."

"Mae, the stories you've heard are based in fact. In the chaotic period right after the Sundering, one of the many ways that the Dark Kaiserin tried to destabilize civilization was by cutting off the continents from one another, allowing only monsters to safely traverse the waters. It wasn't that long ago when sailing the deep ocean was so treacherous that it was nearly impossible. Any ship that tried needed to be escorted by a squadron of frigates to even stand a chance of making it across!"

"The open seas were haunted by all manner of horrible beasts, many of whom swear allegiance to Leviathan, the Elemental Calamity of Water! As vicious, merciless, and tempestuous as the sea itself!" Belle dramatically recounted, practically *shouting*, it was only thanks to the hustle and bustle of the market square they were walking through that she didn't draw any concerned stares. "They still *are* too, but it's much safer now."

"Ya ever noticed how much more animated Belle gets whenever she's talking about monsters?" Aden noted to Mae.

"Aden, shh, I wanna hear this." Mae chastised her friend before asking Belle, "Why is it safer now then it used to be?"

"So, a little over ten years ago, the merfolk apparently turned on the Kaiserin and decided they wanted to make a deal with us! They sent out envoys to every nation, offering treaties guaranteeing the safety of any vessel crossing the ocean in exchange for a tithe collected from each ship for each journey. Then, the merfolk started conducting constant patrols along a set of fixed routes across the ocean. Their presence keeps the nastiest monsters from assaulting ships and allows for safe travel."

"Wait, how did that happen? Why did they betray the Dark Kaiserin and side with us?"

"Heh~!" Belle smirked and adjusted her glasses again, a shine passing across their surface, "A very good question, and one that is still hotly debated today. There are conflicting theories, and the merfolk are a very secretive bunch... But most scholars believe that it was ultimately the same motivation that drives most monsters: self-interest! The Merfolk have become fabulously wealthy in the last ten years."

“Hmph! I can imagine why...” Mae scoffed, “It sounds to me like they’ve figured out how to run the biggest protection racket in history, we pay them out the nose and all they have to do is swim laps!”

“Yep, that’s pretty much how it goes! We totally depend on them, if it weren’t for the merfolk, intercontinental shipping and communication would still basically not exist!”

Aden scratched his head, “What do the merfolk even *need* our money or goods for anyway? How do we know they’re *not* still loyal to the Kaiserin. They could be giving all those tithes right to her, and spying on us too!”

Belle shrugged, the slightly oversized sleeves of her robes flopping over her hands. “You’re right, they could be, we have no idea, and even if they are, there’s not much we can do about it! Nobody wants to rock the boat, so to speak, by confronting them about it... Can you even *imagine* what the rest of the world would do to the nation that ruined this deal?”

The Dark Kaiserin was the closest thing that monsterkind had to a single leading figure. Monsters, as a rule, were disorganized and anarchic. They very rarely formed long term settlements, and it was even rarer still for them to develop any kind of centralized authority or structure that could be called a government, certainly nothing on the level of the civilized nations.

Every species of monster was different, many were unique, and all had their own ways of life. Some were almost entirely solitary, others lived in small bands or tribes, some lived according to a hive or colony structure like bees or ants, and others still occupied parasitic niches, lurking on the fringes of civilization.

For all their differences, they had one common value: whomever was the strongest made the rules and held the power. Unlike the so-called “civilized” races, with their sophistry and navel-gazing about ephemeral concepts like “consent of the governed” and “right to rule,” they recognized that the rule of nature was might makes right.

Things like royal bloodlines or plebiscite results only meant something as long as there wasn’t someone bigger, smarter, or more cunning that could take what was yours and bend you to their will. Even the Kaiserin, despite her title, wasn’t really any kind of formal “monarch.” Nor did she want to be.

Monster “society,” if such a thing could be said to exist, was made up of a countless number of individual factions vying for territory and authority in a neverending turf war. Influence ebbed and flowed, as monsters would rise, consolidate their rivals under their banner, then almost always fall, and a new host of factions would splinter out to start the cycle anew.

The Kaiserin was simply the strongest of them all, and so those who served her did so just as often out of respect for her supreme strength as they did out of genuine sympathy for her cause.

There had been some charismatic monsters in the past that had organized warbands large enough to pose a threat to the civilized races on local, or even regional scales, but nothing before on the level of the Kaiserin.

Despite the authority she wielded over monsters, she herself wasn't technically even a monster herself. Or at least, she hadn't been *born* a monster.

Long ago, when the world was young and the gods along with it, she had been a goddess, charged with watching over monsterkind and keeping them in check; ensuring that the paradigm of the civilized races reigning over the world was upheld... Her duty was an essential one, but one that unfortunately destined her to be unappreciated by and unknown to the people she served. She upheld her duty for centuries without complaint, but over time, she gradually began to develop a sense of attachment and empathy towards the monsters.

The more she began to appreciate and admire the ways of the races she was charged with oppressing, the more she began to resent the civilized races that she was made to thanklessly persecute the monsters in order to benefit. That resentment gradually metastasized into disdain.

How was it fair that she had to continue punishing the monsters she'd grown to love, all for the sake of people who would never even know her name, much less show her any gratitude! Instead she was forced to watch them offer the praise that should've been due to *her* to deities like the Everlight. It wasn't that *pompous, moralizing snob* that was keeping the monsters from sacking their towns and burning their crops and sinking their boats, it was her!

How was it fair for monsters to be held back and repressed in the first place? If they would have overrun civilization without her to stop them, then why not simply allow nature to take its course, and for the strongest to naturally rise to the top? If the so-called "civilized" races were so superior, why did they need to be coddled and given special favor and protection? Isolated far from the rest of the gods, there was nobody to address her frustrations or hear out her grievances. All she could do was stew in her steadily growing anger...

Eventually she concluded that it wasn't right for the civilized races to continue being allowed to live their lives thinking that they were so pure and righteous, ignorant to how weak they truly were and how arrogant they'd grown! She became disgusted not only with them, but with the gods who enabled and encouraged them! It was a disgrace, how hard the gods worked to allow them to live the way they did, all so they could bask in their praise and worship... The entire system was perverse from the bottom to the top! That's when she decided that things should *change*.

Instead of being the monsters' warden, she decided that she would be their champion. Monsters didn't try to deny or reject their vices and desires, they embraced them. Monsters understood that power was what truly ruled the world and separated the righteous from the wretched!

Their ways seemed so much wiser and more sensible than the convoluted and self-important philosophies of the civilized races. Perhaps the whole world should live as monsters did... Perhaps the whole world should simply live **as** monsters.

She endeavored to recreate the mortal plane into a paradise of monsters, for monsters: a *pandemonium* of endless vice and chaos. In place of peace would be endless conflict, and in place of death there would be an unending cycle of the subjugation and rebellion, the binding of wills and breaking of chains. Onwards into ever deeper depths of depravity forever more! She would cast down the indolent gods and replace them with the worthiest monsters she could find! Each of the elements and all of the sins would be accounted for.

With her mind made up, she bided her time and gathered power. She was subtle at first, shirking her responsibilities, revealing herself to particularly powerful monsters and recruiting them as her generals.

The key to her plan was a divine artifact that could make her dream a reality. On the boundary between the mortal world and the heavenly realm, there existed a mysterious crystalline orb that had existed for as long as the material world had.

It was the physical manifestation of the rules and laws that determined the natural order of things in the mortal world, essentially the lynchpin and cornerstone of reality itself. It was called the "Zeitgeist." Its resting place had always been neutral ground, but if she could take possession of it, then she'd have the power to reshape reality according to her whims. When she felt the time was right, she orchestrated a two pronged assault with her generals, they would pierce the veil and invade the border world from the mortal side, and she would attack from the divine side.

She very nearly succeeded in her plan, breaching through the defenses around the Zeitgeist and beginning to pour her darkness into it. But before she could finish claiming it, the rest of the pantheon arrived to put a stop to her scheme. Furious and spiteful at the thought of being denied her prize so close to triumphing, she did the near unthinkable and smashed the massive orb into pieces, an event that would come to be known as "The Sundering."

The thousands of shards of the shattered orb, both dark and light, began to rain down upon the mortal world... The laws of reality became unstable, and it was only thanks to the timely intervention of the other gods that the world didn't collapse into itself. As for their rebellious peer, she was banished from the heavens, bereft of her divine spirit, and left to wander the mortal world along with her generals.

Why they didn't simply destroy her, not even the gods themselves were sure. Perhaps it was out of pity for seeing one of their own kind fall so low. Perhaps it was out of guilt, realizing that they held some responsibility for her corruption. Perhaps it was out of the hope that someday she might see the error of her ways and earn redemption, joining them once again. Perhaps they simply didn't want to set the precedent for slaying a god. But the most likely answer was that all

of these reasons and more played a part to different extents for each of the gods who were there that day.

The fallen goddess awoke upon the world she'd aimed to control, weakened but not broken. If anything she only became more driven by her failure. She crowned herself the Dark Kaiserin of Monsterkind, and remained committed to her ambition. She pledged to see the power of the shards she'd corrupted used to rewrite reality into a world of monsters. Before long, many monsters and civilized folk alike began to recover these "Zeit Shards."

For monsters who found the dark shards, they found themselves empowered by them, given access to powerful magic and enhanced intelligence and strength, as well as sinking deeper into the wicked traits that made them monstrous... For any member of one of the civilized races unfortunate enough to come into contact with one of the dark shards, they would find themselves overcome by the Kaiserin's dark power. Consumed and reshaped by their own suppressed flaws, they would turn into monsters themselves.

The Kaiserin's generals sought out and gradually acquired many of the shards for themselves, each shard making them stronger, until they became demigods in their own right, the Elemental Calamities. Even the strongest mortal heroes would struggle to stand against them in combat, and it seemed as if every day the Kaiserin's influence spread further across the world.

The Kaiserin wasn't only fighting for those who swore obedience to her, but for *all* monsterkind. That gave her a unique advantage, she didn't have to worry about who used the shards, as long as they used them at all. She didn't care if they followed her, or knew of her. As long as they were true to their nature as monsters, it still served her ends. It didn't even matter if they had been monsters to begin with.

A perfect example was with a young human woman named Haeley. The lazy and conceited daughter of a brewer, she had a pretty face marred by the chronic case of booze breath she harbored from her drinking habit. She coasted along on her good looks and natural charms, convinced that she was way too good to be slaving away in the swamp muck like the rest of her village.

While in the middle of slacking off on her duties and already getting drunk on her family's famous rum before the sun was hardly up, she stumbled upon a dark shard in the brush. She figured it was just some kind of drunken hallucination at first. But as soon as she touched the shard, it was absorbed into her, and she was transformed into one of the most fearsome monsters that resided in her part of the world, a Dracogator.

Her inner arrogance and sloth were only magnified by her monsterization, and she began to see *herself* as a goddess. Dubbing herself Haelitox, she turned the people of Sugarglade into her frog girl servants, and set about using them to worship her, pamper her, and lure even more victims to become her minions.

Her story was hardly a unique circumstance, there were many others just like her across the world. Even when they had no greater ambition and served no-one but themselves, monsters like Haelitox were still bringing the Kaiserin's vision of a corrupted world closer without even knowing it.

All hope wasn't lost however, the Kaiserin's design wasn't pre-destined to succeed. While they were fewer in number, many of the shards that'd been scattered in the Sundering were still infused with light. These shards could be used to cast powerful restorative magic, magic that could undo the corruption of the dark shards.

Even more incredibly, these shards allowed for those deeply in touch with the gods to channel their power and cast the most elusive and difficult of all divine spells, *resurrection*, with relative ease. By manipulating the reality affirming power of the shard, they could momentarily "bend" the rules of reality just enough to allow them to cheat death and restore life.

This alone wouldn't have been enough to give civilization a fighting chance, but what did was the emergence of the Shadbearers, three heroes chosen by the gods, each imbued with a shard of light and the ability to use them to their fullest potential. They were able to purge the dark shards from their hosts and cleanse the wickedness from them. In time, they could restore the Zeitgeist by gathering its many shards, and bring a true end to the plans of the Dark Kaiserin.

But this story was decidedly *not* about those chosen heroes upon which the fate of the entire world had been entrusted. Yet knowing all of this was crucial to understanding the events that would befall Aden, Mae and Belle as they set out on their next quest.

They were heading to a city called Caltrovia. It was the capital of the Western Caltrovian Empire, and one of the most populous cities in the world. While the Empire's power had been greatly diminished by its separation into functionally independent Eastern and Western halves following the Sundering and the shutdown of oceanic travel that followed, it still remained a beacon of human civilization, as well as possessing the Grand Cathedral of the Everlight, the Goddess of the sun that most of humankind worshiped, included Mae, who she'd sworn her holy vows to serve...

Albeit with a *brief* lapse in service following her indoctrination by Haelitox. But it was fine now! She'd make her confessions, she'd done her penance, she'd bought a shiny new holy symbol to replace the one she threw into the swamp, and she'd taken four baths a day for three weeks to make sure she washed the taint of the Dracogator off. The Everlight, in her infinite love and mercy, had forgiven her for her involuntary transgressions!

The Dark Kaiserin was assembling a grand horde of monsters to try and conquer the city, corrupt its populace, and throw human civilization back into disarray. The world economy had only just recovered and rebuilt the networks of trade that Caltrovia had been tied into, if it was lost... Civilization could be lost with it.

In response to this grave and imminent threat, the Adventurer's Guild had put out a call to arms for every adventurer in their rosters to rally to the city's defense, with the Caltrovian Crown promising a hefty sum of gold to anyone and everyone who arrived to protect the city.

They were hardly the only adventurers trying to book passage across the ocean to rush to Caltrovia's aid, and doubtless many of these ships had been chartered to transport intrepid parties answering the city's summons. It was rumored that the Shardbearers themselves would be heading to the city to lead the defense.

"So you see, Mae? Traveling the ocean is perfectly safe now!" The fighter claimed enthusiastically, a confident smile on his face as he felt like he'd come out on top in the debate, even if it was mostly coincidental.

"Well, I wouldn't go *that* far." Belle tried to reign him in a bit. "Yes, it's true, the route between Whitesands and Caltrovia is mostly safe, but we still need to be ready for possible trouble. Some pirates *are* known to slip through the merfolk's watch."

Aden pointed at his chest as he puffed it out proudly, "And I'm sure that a trio of Level 7 Adventurers like us will be able to handle anything that manages to slithers through their net no problem!"

"Right... Aden, you do know which one of these ships is the one you're looking for, don't you...?" Mae asked as the trio made their way down the pier, bracing herself for more bad news. The heat was even worse out here on the edge of the water, with the sun's rays reflecting off the calm blue ocean like a giant mirror, along with next to no sources of shade to provide any relief.

"Of course I do, Mae, sheesh! You've gotta have a little more faith in me." Aden reassured her, before shaking his head and tutting her, "Tsk, tsk, you've been so cynical lately."

"Ugh, I *know*..." Mae admitted with a sigh, "I'm sorry, it's partially this miserable heat that's to blame, but it's also the fact that the last month wasn't exactly our finest hour."

"It'll be alright, don't worry! That little incident with Hae-"

"*Adeeen!*" Mae drew her mace and growled, "Do **not** speak that rancid reptile's name or so help me goddess, I'll smack you down two inches."

Aden then cleared his throat and hastily apologized,, "R-right, sorry! All I was trying to say was our encounter with... *her*, was just a fluke! A trap that we couldn't have possibly been prepared for! I'm sure that we'll never have to suffer that kind of humiliation ever again and soon it'll just be a distant memory! N-now then, our ship, it should be close by, just keep an eye out for an,

um..." Aden started to mumble, rushing out each word that followed, "*A little fishing trawler named the Damp Squib.*"

"Hooold on! Wait a minute, wait just a minute there!" Mae wasn't going to let him get away with that, "Did I still have some frog slime stuck in my ears, or did you say a *fishing trawler*?"

"*Do* you still have some frog slime stuck in your ears, Mae?" Belle raised an eyebrow, taking a peak at the priestess's head, "because if you did I could certainly use it as a reaga-"

"Aden! Why in the Goddess's holy name are we looking for a fishing trawler!? It *better* just be parked next to the *actual* ship that we're taking!"

"N-no." Aden sheepishly replied, shying away from the increasingly irate priestess, "Okay, now hold on, Mae, will you just let me explain?" Aden raised his voice to try and address his party member's doubts, "Look, you *know* that we're completely broke right now! I mean between repairs for my equipment, the new holy symbol for you, the magic to turn us both back to normal, and that snazzy new spellbook and reagents we had to buy to get Belle properly kitted out-"

"Thanks for that, by the way, it's vellum. I've always wanted a spellbook with pages made of vellum."

"You're very welcome, Belle~! Where was I... Oh, yeah, -we didn't have any money left to book passage on a ship and I didn't want us to miss out on the payday from this big job, sooo, I had to get a little creative."

"Creative,' huh? Let me guess..." Mae rubbed her temples, "You signed us on as laborers in exchange for the fare to get us to Caltrovia, is that right?"

"Um, y-yes, actually, that's exactly what I did, heh... H-how'd you guess, Mae?"

"To be fair, it was pretty obvious that that's what you were going to say next." Belle spoke on her behalf, "Wow, I have to admit... 'Trawling' is definitely not a skill I ever expected to add to my character sheet."

"Hey now, don't go besmirching the proud and noble profession of fishing, Belle! You know, fishermen are the lifeblood of- of thousands of communities! They provide a cheap and delicious source of protein to millions of people around the world every day!" Aden tried to give some sense of dignity to what they were going to be forced to do, but from the sour expressions on the two women's faces, it obviously wasn't moving them at all. "It's one of the oldest and most honored professions!"

"Be that as it may, I am not spending goddess knows how long on a smelly boat full of fish! I've had enough of smelling bad to last me the rest of the year!"

“Well, technically, Mae, it’s not the *boat* that’s smelly, it’s the fish *on* the boat that stink.”

“Aden, that is *entirely* not the-”

Suddenly, there came a shout of “**Hoooy**” from just down the pier that the trio were walking beside, where a large and regal looking galleon was docked. A tall, and swarthy looking crewwoman, her hair hidden beneath a blue bandanna atop her head, slid down a rope hanging from the edge of the deck like a proper swashbuckler and landed on the pier, waving at the party. “Ho there!”

After a brief beat, Mae exclaimed, “...I beg your *pardon!*?” Planting her hands on her hips indignantly. “*What* did you just call me?”

“Woah, woah, there! Ahaha!” The woman chuckled as she held up her hands, “ Easy now, lubber! Firs’ time ye’ve been out t’sea, ah’m wagerin’? It’s jus’ a fren’ly greetin’, lass, ‘ho,’ like, ‘hey,’ or ‘hello...’ It don’t mean nothin’ ‘sides that! Trust me, if I was fixin’ to call you a whore, I’d jus’ call you a whore.”

“Is there something we can help you with, ma’am?” Belle cut to the chase, finding the fact they’d been called out like this more than a bit strange.

“Help *us* with-? Aye, ya kin help us by gettin’ yer keisters on board the ship pronto! We’re ready to shove off jus’ as soon as we-” She pointed over her shoulder, looking back at the massive vessel before glancing back to the party with a skeptical glare, “Oy, hol’ up, now that ah’m gettin’ a closer look at yuhs. You three *are* the ones we’re waitin’ fer, aren’t yee?”

Aden, Mae and Belle all exchanged confused glances at one another, each one hoping that either of their two peers would be the one who could explain what was going on here.

“We... might be.” Aden somewhat hesitantly replied, “But just to be sure that you’re on the level, who *are* you waiting for? Can’t be too careful, y’know?”

“True ‘nuf, though with that bein’ said, I’m not sure if that’s the kinda information I oughta be jus’ handin’ out... Aw, I s’pose there’s no harm! Not like they can’t hold their own even if ya ain’t them! We’re waitin’ on none other din the *Shardbearers!* Is that you three?”

“The Shardbearers!?” Mae’s eyes widened, of all the people her and her companions could’ve been mistaken for, she would’ve never guessed it’d be them!

“Why... Do you have to *ask*? Can’t you tell if we are or not?” Belle asked with a bit of incredulity, the three Shardbearers: Caelum, Ioun and Serena, were the most well-known heroes on the continent, surely most people who weren’t living under a rock would’ve been able to recognize them!

"Nope, I sure can't, lass! Ah've seen dozens of you adventurin' types running around the docks today, and ye all look the same to me!" The sea-faring woman shook her head, "Ah'm a sailor... I spend almost all me days out on the briny deep, back and forth, back and forth! I only get a couple days shore leave between voyages. It don't exactly be leavin' me much time for catchin' up on the latest gossip and scuttlebutt over tea with the landlubbers."

"Well, then why did you call out the three of *us* specifically?" Mae asked, a bit more wary than her companions, she at least wanted to hear her reasoning before she corrected her misconception.

"That's an easy one! I may not know the specifics, but I know we's waitin' fer a mate and two lasses travelin' together, with a fighter, a priestess and a mage... Then you three came traipsin' up to the dock, and yer sure lookin' like a fighter, priestess and mage to me."

"Ah, I see." Mae gave the woman a relieved grin, "Well, I'm sorry-"

"*That we're so late!*" Aden spoke over her, interrupting her confession, "It's our first time in Whitesands, you see, and we were having a bit of trouble finding our way around."

"*Aden*, what the hell do you think you're doing!?" A flustered Mae seethed at the fighter through her teeth.

"Heh, oh c'mon, *Ioun*, we don't have to use those decoy names anymore!" He looked to Belle for support once again, "Right, *Serena*, we can definitely trust, err...?" Aden turned back towards the sailor, realizing he hadn't gotten her name yet.

"Levi! First Mate Levi, of the CSC Rosegold Redoubt, at yer service!" The sailor woman formerly introduced herself, bowing with a flourish to the three adventurers. "So, you three *are* the Shardbearers then?"

"We sure are!" Aden blurted out before the other two could get a word in edgewise. Mae and Belle both looked at him anxiously. Mae knew Aden could be prone to some risky and dubious behavior, but impersonating the great heroes? To jack their ride, no less!? This was just over the line!

As for Belle, she might not have been with the party long, but she knew that if this went wrong, it could land her *deep* in the kind of trouble she was **not** looking for... Still, she was definitely willing to at least try and play along with this charade, more than Mae was at least.

"Ha! Well, why didn't you just say so to begin with!" Levi boisterously replied, before giving the three a harder look and scratching her chin, "Although, if Ah'm bein' honest, ye aren't exactly screamin' 'legendary heroes' t'me. Forgive an old salt for bein' a mite cautious, but ye're lookin' more like a coupla lilylivered milksops, no offense."

“A-ah, none taken! You’re right! And there’s a very good reason for that!” Aden had started speaking without an actual answer in mind, and he hoped that by the end of his sentence one would’ve come to him. Fortunately, in this case, it actually did. “It’s because we’re incognito!”

“Yeah, after all, we’re three of the most famous and recognizable people in the world, and we’re in a hurry! If we’d shown up decked out in all of our high level magical gear, with our passive auras active and everything, we’d have been mobbed by the entire city as soon as we stepped foot inside the gates! We would’ve never made it to the docks at all! We dressed down like mid-levels so that we could move around undetected.”

“Hmmm... Good enough for me!” The sailor accepted Aden’s hastily crafted story with remarkably little pushback or skepticism. “Makes sense ye wouldn’t be wantin’ to attract attention. Well, come aboard then! The Rosegold Redoubt is shipshape and ready to serve ye!”

“The Rosegold Redoubt.” Belle repeated the illustrious sounding name, which practically felt sweet on her tongue, as she looked up at the enormous and luxurious galleon. “If I may ask, First Mate, what are the *amenities* on this vessel?”

“Oh? They didn’t tell ye in the missive? Hehe, well then, ye’re in for a treat! Let’s just say there’s a *reason* most of us don’t mind only gettin’ a couple weeks o’ shore leave a year, we can’t wait to get back on board! Ye’ll see, once we shove off and yeh get settled in, ye’ll not be wantin’ to touch dry land ever again! The Empire sent us out *special*, only the finest for the gods’ chosen heroes to make sure you’re at yer best for that big battle comin’ up!”

“The Rosegold Redoubt is the pride of the Caltrovia’s Shipping Company, she weren’t just made to carry cargo, she was made to carry the company’s higher-ups, along with dignitaries, nobles and all them other uppity types! Her suites are kitted out with nothin’ less than the finest of bedding and softest silk sheets that’d pamper even the most exactin’ blueblood!”

“And you see this?” Levi knocked her fist on the side of the ship’s hull, “She’s built out of solid oak, sturdy and stable, the only leaks you gotta worry about bein’ sprung in her hull are when some poor drunken sit don’t make it to the head! Hehehe... pardon a bit of sailor humor. She’s no slouch either, she’s the fastest ship in the fleet, and she glides through the ocean so smooth that even lubbers like you without a lick of sea legs’ll be nice and cozy on board.”

“What about the food, do you have good food?” Every word she spoke was getting Aden more excited, his eyes were lit up like a puppy’s.

“Hahaharr, now **there’s** a good lad!” Levi reached out and gave him a chummy pat on his shoulder, “Ay, ye won’t be ‘avin to worry about crackin’ yer teeth on no hardtack! We’ve got a fully-stocked kitchen staffed by some o’ the best chefs in Caltrovia! And uh...” She leaned in towards Aden with a toothy smirk, “We got us a fully stocked bar too~!”

“E-excuse us for a moment!” Mae grabbed Aden and yanked him away, pulling him into a group huddle a couple of feet away along with Belle. “Aden, Belle! What are you two *doing*? Are we seriously going to impersonate the Shardbearers!?”

“Look, it’s *their* mistake, not ours...” Aden tried to rationalize their admittedly duplicitous behavior, “*She’s* the one who mistook us for them first!”

“I know, but we’re still *lying* to her!”

“Mae, I- look, I’m doing this for *your* sake.”

“My sake? What do you mean *by* sake?”

“Well, it’s just that- I know how worried you are about us getting across the ocean in one piece, and that you don’t exactly seem jazzed about having to take the Damp Squib...”

“Oh... Aden, I-...” Mae pursed her lips and sighed, “Look, I’ll admit that both of those things are true but they still don’t change the fact that this ship wasn’t meant for us. What if the Shardbearers aren’t able to make it time for the battle because of us?”

“Uhh, pardon me, mates.” Levi leaned in towards the party with an apologetic frown on her face, “Now, I don’t mean to rush ye, I’m sure yer jaw waggin’ about some real important business, but we **do** have a schedule to keep. We’ll be gettin’ underway in about five minutes, with or without ye, so...” She informed the party, tapping her wrist.

“Well, I guess that makes it an easier choice, now doesn’t it?” Aden gave Mae a wry smirk, “or do you still seriously want to give up the gourmet meals and silken sheets and go back to our original plan of hauling nets on the fishing trawler?”

“Ugh, I really do *not* want to get on that fishing boat...”

“Then let’s not! Let’s just take this opportunity that’s been dropped in our laps! If we don’t take advantage of it, then nobody will!”

“Yes, I suppose you’re right... But that *does* beg the question, where are the Shardbearers? If this ship was meant for them, why aren’t they here?”

“Who knows?” Belle shrugged, “Maybe they already took their own boat, they’re rich enough to have one. Heck, are we so sure they even *need* a boat? For all we know they could’ve just *teleported* across the ocean in one fell swoop.” The journeyman mage speculated, with just a hint of envy in her voice.

“Oh, I hadn’t even thought about-” The argument was brought to an abrupt end as the clanging of the ship’s bell sent the clear signal that the ship was about to weigh anchor.

"It's now or never..." Aden looked at his childhood friend expectantly, still leaving it up to her decision.

Mae bit her lip, grappling with her conscience that knew that whether it was harmful or harmless, a lie was still a lie; as well as her intuition that seemed to just *know* something about this wasn't entirely right... But then she thought about everything they stood to gain, and her doubts started to melt away. Getting to be pampered and accommodated like literal royalty on a luxury cruiser? It was so tempting, the ship was practically calling their names.

Once she started trying, it was trivial to justify it to herself. Aden and Belle both had good arguments, this was a totally victimless crime, after all. What was even the point of digging her heels in and doing the "right" thing here? Was she really going to subject herself to getting covered in fish guts in the hot sun for days on end, all for the sake of three superheroes who would never know what she did, or hell, even know she existed for that matter!

What did she owe them anyhow? It's not like they hadn't had everything else in their lives handed to them on a silver platter by the gods. They couldn't even bother to show up to get on board their free ride, so really, was it actually "stealing" their spots at all if they weren't here to claim them? Wasn't it a *good* thing to not let everything the crew had prepared go to waste?

Her, Aden and even Belle, in fact, *especially* Belle, they'd all gone through so much lately. They deserved a break, **Mae** deserved a break. She could afford to be just a bit... *greedy* for once, couldn't she? With her mind made up, she nodded, "Okay, let's do it!"

"Atta, girl!" Aden grabbed Mae's wrist and pulled her along as they ran up the gangplank with Belle bringing up the rear... Only for her to trip over her robe and fall right on her face, after quickly checking to make sure her glasses hadn't broken, she picked herself back up and closed the distance as the ship made its final preparation to disembark.

As the ship raised its sails and set off, its departure was observed by a trio of cloaked figures hiding behind some crates and barrels on the dock, right on the edge of an alleyway between a pair of warehouses. They were obscured from head to toe in their unmarked brown cowls, yet they still seemed to radiate barely contained power and dignity from what little of their bodies could be seen.

"Hmm, it looks like someone *did* take our place after all." A young man donning a shining set of full plate armor and hiding a magical blade beneath his robes mused, before turning to one of his companions, "are you sure this is the right thing to do, Serena...?"

"It was ultimately still their choice... We didn't make anyone lie and pretend to be us, so they're not entirely innocent." The stoic, pragmatic voice of a seasoned sorceress gave her assessment, "I don't think it's the right thing to do either, Caelum, but unfortunately this is the

best possible outcome we can hope for. With them serving as bait, Leviathan will hopefully be thrown off our trail.”

“There was just no way in hell we could get on that ship! I tried to *warn* them not to send something like that! Those poor bastards, they don’t stand a chance, may the Everlight protect them as best she can.” The third member of the trio, a compassionate yet fiery priestess, flickered between pity and anger, “Damn every last one of those **idiots** in Caltrovia! What were they thinking!?”

“Probably that they were doing us a favor... Sending their finest ship to accommodate the ‘heroes’ the same way they’d escort a diplomat or foreign leader.” The fighter shook his head, “But Leviathan is going to be gunning for us for sure, and riding a ship like that would’ve made us the most obvious target on the ocean.”

“I wish we could just **broil** her hide into shark fin soup! I hate having to use these kinds of tactics!” The priestess’s eyes seemed to ignite with righteous flame beneath her hood. “We shouldn’t be sacrificing those three! Liars or not they don’t deserve-!”

“Calm yourself, Ioun...” Serena planted a hand on her shoulder, “We shall settle every account in time, but right now we don’t have the strength to fight Leviathan alone, not with all the buffs she’d receive from fighting in her own domain, not to mention all of her minions at her back. Let us instead, make sure their sacrifice will not be in vain.”

“Fine...” Ioun grumbled her eyes still smoldering, “So what the fuck are we gonna do now? We still need to get across the ocean, and almost every ship in the harbor is either gone or about to be gone.”

“...Hmm, well?” Caelum scanned the perimeter of the docks, before pointing out a familiar vessel that’d been left behind. “How about that trawler over there?” None other than the Damp Squib.

“That’s not a bad idea, I’m willing to bet the last place Leviathan would look for us is on a leaky fishing boat.” Serena concurred, “A creature as ruled by greed as her would never expect someone to be willing to sacrifice their own comfort and pleasure for the sake of protecting others. While she’s busy with our extemporaneous decoys, we can slip right under her nose.”

“Bleh, I can’t stand fish.” Ioun complained as she stuck her tongue out and crossed her arms. “But let’s do it...!”

As the three made their way out of hiding and down towards the docks, a swarthy looking bearded man angrily shouted from the deck of the *Squib*, “Oy! You three! You the sots who were lookin’ to get to Caltrovia? You’re fuckin’ *late*! You good for nothing bilge rats better pray to the Everlight above that the fish start **jumpin’** onto the deck or else I ain’t haulin’ your sorry asses anywhere!”

“Tch!” Ioun scoffed, as her hand began to faintly glow with holy light, “Oh, I just know he thought he was *joking* about praying to the Everlight for fish to jump onto his boat, but I’ll make an honest man out of him. We’re getting that ride to Caltrovia...”

“You know what, Caelum? I think he might be mistaking our identities for those of our impersonators...”

“Ahahaha-!” Caelum couldn’t help but laugh to himself at the irony, “Well, well, well...!” He looked wistfully at the galleon sailing off towards the horizon, a bitter grin on his face, “I suppose that’ll make us even then.”

As Aden, Mae and Belle got situated on the Rosegold Redoubt, it proved to be everything they were promised and even *more*. Their bedrooms, as promised, were truly luxurious. Their beds were so comfortable that they all struggled to get back out of them. In fact, as soon as Aden laid down on one to test it out, he instantly fell asleep and the two girls had to drag him out of it kicking and whining like a child.

“Nooooo-hoho! Don’t make me *leeeaaave!*” He moaned pitifully, clutching to the bedpost as Belle and Mae each grabbed one of his legs, “The world is so hard and cold, lemme stay where it’s soft and warm!”

“Aden, for the love of the goddess, stop being such a big baby! It’s barely two in the afternoon, you can’t go to sleep yet!”

The door to the suite swung open as Levi walked in chipperly, “Ahoy there, me-” Only for her cheerful expression to sink into confusion as she witnessed the queer sight before her, all three adventurers turning to face her as the two ladies let go of Aden’s legs, and Aden scrambled onto his feet. “I uh, I take it that you’re findin’ your accommodations to your satisfaction?”

“Oh, absolutely! It’s just been a while since we’ve gotten to sleep on beds this cozy...” Aden tried to clear the awkward atmosphere as best he could, seeing as he was the one responsible for it. “Usually we’re stuck with either the rock hard slabs in the Guild Halls, or... in a cot on the cold hard ground.”

“Haha, of course, I have quite a bit of respect for ye lot. Adventurers, I mean, don’t get me wrong, bein’ a sailor sure ain’t pickin’ daisies, but it beats putin’ me neck on the line day in and day out. Now then, I’d like to show ye about, so you don’t get lost or wander somewhere you ought not to be, come along!” She waved for the party to follow her as she led them on a guided tour of the ship.

She led them to the Rosegold’s mess hall and kitchen, letting them meet the chefs who’d be taking care of their meals for the journey. She showed them to the ship’s built-in chapel where a

marble statue of the Everlight stood in all her radiant beauty. Belle was amazed to see that they had a small *library* on board, covering a wide variety of topics including a few tomes on magic.

They were then introduced to the bard who worked on board, giving two daily performances to raise the spirits and morale of both the passengers and crew of the vessel on its voyages.

She was a stunningly beautiful girl with light pink eyes and fluffy, wavy white hair. She wore a revealing dress that was mostly white with thin feathery ruffles of black running running down the length of the gown. She bowed to the three adventurers, introducing herself, "A pleasure to meet some illustrious heroes, my name is Alba, and I hope that my songs will lift your spirits as you sail towards your destiny~!" She spoke with a soft trill to her voice.

"I... I'm sure that they will, Miss Alba." Aden seemed instantly smitten with her, much to Mae's annoyance. "I can't wait to hear them."

"Hooohoo~!" The bard let out a distinctive laugh, "Ahh, have I captured your heart so easily, Mr. Hero? Perhaps I could put on *private* performance for such a brave and *handsome* young man as yourself?" The bard gently brushed her fingers beneath Aden's chin as she flirtatiously made her offer.

Before the giggly, charmed fighter could say a word, Mae yanked him away, "That's not gonna be necessary, the 'brave and handsome' hero will wait until the evening show just like everyone else, thank you very much! Wouldn't wanna strain that pretty voice of yours, after all." Her voice was sour with jealousy.

"Oooh, don't be like that, Ms. Priestess! I wouldn't go and steal his heart away from you, after all, it's not mine to take!" She coyly teased Mae with a wink.

"Uugh, *bards*." Mae grumbled as she dragged Aden away to catch up with Belle and Levi.

"U-until lady, Miss Alba..." Aden waved her goodbye, letting out a longing sigh as Mae gave him a hard **slap** across the face, "Bwuh-!? Ow! What was that for?"

"For dragging your feet, c'mon already!" Mae chastised him as they got back in step with Levi. To their amazement, the ship had proper *showers and baths*, fueled by a decanter of endless water that also served to ensure that the ship never had to worry about running out of fresh water to drink.

And speaking of drinks, she then led them down to the lower decks, where she was going to show them the bar. Which she attested to be her favorite spot on the galleon. Even after several minutes had passed, Mae still looked cross about the encounter with Alba.

“Don’t let ‘er get to ya, lass, a bit of a floozy, that one, she’s always teasin’ me too... Hehe, someday I’m fixing to throw her in the brig for running her mouth, but the boys can’t get enough of her singin’! They’d probably stage a mutiny if I put their little songbird in a cage.”

“Hmm, First Mate, correct me if I’m wrong, but aside from me, you and Ma- *loun*, it seems like she’s the only other woman aboard this boat.” Belle observed.

“Aye,” The First Mate nodded, “It be true, sailin’ is widely seen as men’s work, but it won’t always be that way, it’s somethin’ that I’m fixin’ to change, mark my words.”

When the tour reached its conclusion, the First Mate led them back to their suites, before turning to the three and asking them, “Alrighty, that should just about do it, now then, before I get back to work topside, did ye have any last questions for me?”

“Yes, actually.” Belle adjusted her glasses, cleared her throat and then folded her hands in her sleeves, “*Can we stay on this ship forever~? Please?*”

“Haahaha~!” Levi gave them a wily smirk, “I warned ye, did I not? I *told* ya the Rosegold would get its hooks in ya, but I didn’t think it’d be that fast! Well, who knows...? If’n yer yearnin’ for a life on the sea, maybe that could be arranged.” She finished with a wink, Mae couldn’t be sure, but something felt a bit off about the way she said that. She decided to put it out of her mind though, it was probably just her nerves getting the better of her.

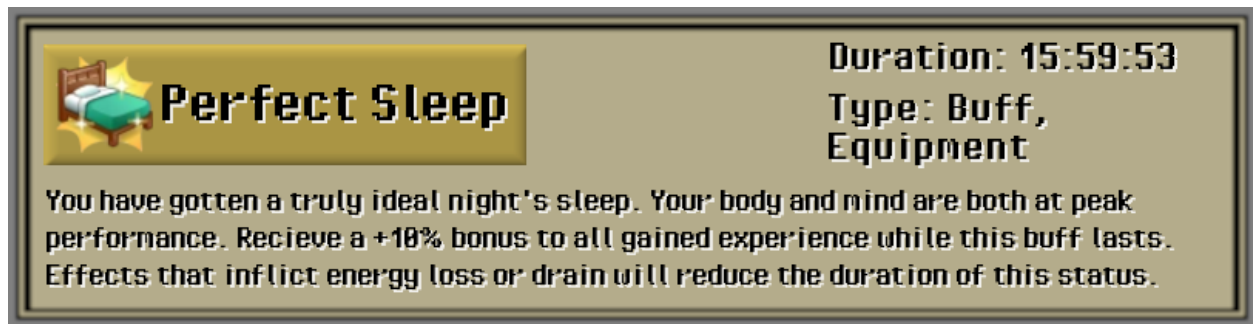
After dinner, Mae and Belle turned in early for the night, truth be told they just wanted an excuse to sleep in those beds as soon as they could get it. Aden, however, stayed up to listen to Alba’s evening performance... It said something that the one who’d been the most reluctant to get out of his bed was also the last one to go to sleep, unable to resist the allure of the songstress...

He was hardly the only one either, it seemed like every member of the crew who wasn’t on duty, (as well as a couple that *were* and had snuck away) had packed themselves like sardines into the lounge room where Alba was performing, leaving the place standing room only, even the *captain* was here, just as enchanted as the rest of the crew. One notable face that wasn’t in attendance was Levi.

Alba’s singing voice was downright heavenly, she more than justified her ego and it was understandable why everyone clamored to hear her... At times, it was actually difficult to make her out over the cheers and shouts of the crew, who at times seemed ready to charge the stage for her, but she never lost control over the crowd, disarming them with a sway of her hips and a wink...

The show passed in a dreamlike blur, by the time it was over, Aden was genuinely exhausted and quickly made his way back to his room to join his companions in their slumber. The three of them all woke up bright and early the following morning, each of them opening their eyes practically ready to leap out of bed, like they could take on the entire world with one hand tied

behind their backs! To their astonishment, they found that they each woke up with a day long buff!



So *this* was the power of a truly comfortable bed!? The most that Aden or Mae had ever seen was a +5% when they stayed the night at an expensive inn during one of their quests. Belle was especially dumbstruck, she could've shaved an entire semester off her time at the Academy *at least* with a bed this nice! It almost didn't seem fair, this was probably the only time in their *lives* they'd see this buff, and they weren't even going to get to take advantage of it!

Belle still tried to make the most of it by heading to the library, while Aden got chummy with some of the crew members he'd met the previous night before attending Alba's morning show. Mae, however, found herself unable to fully relax. She went to the chapel and prayed to the Everlight for guidance, but she felt oddly distant... Perhaps she was showing her displeasure at Mae's decision after all? She tried to remind herself that she had nothing to feel guilty over, but it did little to help.

She headed up onto the deck and looked out onto the water. It was at that moment that the sheer vastness of the ocean truly struck her. She looked out in all directions, and realized for the first time in her life, she couldn't see even a speck of dry land. There was nothing but water, blue waves that met and blended into the blue sky. Even though the ship was massive, she felt acutely claustrophobic, there was nowhere to run, no way to escape if the worst should come to pass.

"Ye doin' alright there, lass? Ye're lookin' as white as the sails..." Levi walked up to her with a concerned expression.

"O-oh, uh, well. Truth be told, I'm still just a bit nervous about sailing, I grew up hearing a lot of stories about how dangerous the ocean was, a-and I know it's not like that anymore, but..." She trailed off, looking back out into the trackless expanse, "L-levi! You sail for a living, heh, y-you would know, I'm worrying over nothing, right?"

Levi crossed her arms, "Aye, I know the seas like the back o' me hand, lass, and I wish I could tell ya there was nothing to fear, but... I've heard of too many ships meetin' a grisly fate for that to be true."

Mae swallowed hard, that really wasn't what she wanted to hear. "S-so it's true then? Leviathan's monsters really do still get past the merfolk sometimes?"

"Hmm? Oh, aye, but those aren't the ones to worry about. Those are just raiders, they rob some cargo, maybe snatch a sailor or two, which is still a tragedy, don't get me wrong, but I've *never* heard of any ship gettin' taken wholesale s'long as they stuck to the merfolk's routes. Now... when they *don't*?" She shook her head, "That's a whole 'nother kettle o' fish. Outside of the routes? The ocean is still just as deadly as it were ten years ago."

"So then, just stay on the safe route. W-why would anyone do anything else? That doesn't make sense."

"The safe routes aren't very convenient or efficient, they make every trip take days, or weeks longer than it ought to. So sometimes, sailors let their impatience get the better of them. It's usually them dinky little sloops and brigs that try it. They start closin' in on shallow waters, and they get to thinkin' they can make a bit o' early scratch by arrivin' early, or beatin' the more cautious captains to market to sell first."

"But that ain't the only reason. The ocean? She's truly a fickle mistress, she can be a right **bitch** somedays. She ain't for everyone, and sometimes, folk just get a bit tired of her company, especially on the slower, bigger boats. They want to get back on dry land, and the closer they get to it, the more they want it! So they break off, and start sailin' at full mast for home! But most don't make it."

"That doesn't sound natural. It sounds like some kind of madness."

"That's very astute of ya, lass. It *ain't* natural, and it *is* madness. Y'see... The Merfolk may've paved us a road over these waters, but Leviathan, oooh, she's a crafty one, every sailor knows her and fears her. She still thinks everything that sails atop or swims below the waves belongs to her, she does, and she does all she can to take what's hers. She thinks that everyone is ruled by their greed and their pride, and she feeds off it, feeds *into* it, tempts every ship she can into her embrace like an angler's lure, and she's **good** at it."

Completely enraptured like a child listening to a ghost story, Mae timidly asked, "Well, h-how does she do that?"

If there was one thing that sailors loved, it was spinning a yarn, so without even meaning to, Levi replied with a suitable level of theatrics, "Bein' out at sea, it does *straaange* things to people's minds, if they're not careful... Leviathan's influence still runs thick in the ocean's waters, every wave carries some o' her greed, pride and even *laziness*, it seeps into the cracks of the minds of the unwary or weak willed. The same way that bilge creeps into the hull of a ship. *Slow*, so slow you don't even hardly notice until you're up to your elbows in it!"

"There's a reason we got a chapel on board, lass, it ain't just 'cus we be lovin' the Everlight that much, she can keep the Scourge of All Seas Shallow and Deep at bay, and it's why we have a bard, and why we be singin' while we work, even if **some of us** can't keep a tune." She turned away and shouted at some of the tone-deaf riggers overhead.

She then looked back to Mae and continued, "The wind... *The wind* carries the song of her servants, and if you don't drown it out, then *you'll* be the one drownin' before long." Her voice lowered to a snide grumble, as if she was taking a bit of pride in her gallows humor.

"Some folks who try to cheat her? They make it to port... But that's almost worse, they get emboldened, they think that since they got away with it once, they can get away with it again. She *loves* that, loves to let you get proud... Y'know what I think? I think the only reason anyone gets by is because she *lets* 'em. She's clever, she knows if she caught every ship every time, then even the greediest sailors would get wise and know better!"

"So instead, she lets a few go on purpose, so they'll start braggin' in every inn and tavern about how they got one over on the Sea Bitch! How they were too quick or too clever for her to catch, *Tch!*" She scoffed, "Imbeciles, all they do is make others think there's a chance. The next time they take a risk, she comes to collect. **Nobody** cheats Leviathan, *nobody*."

"N-no offense, Levi, but that... didn't make me feel better at all." In a sense she was happy to know the threat she was dealing with, but on the other, there was something to say for ignorance being bliss.

"Hmm?" Levi seemed genuinely confused, before smacking her forehead, "Aww, shoot! Don't mind me, lass, I just got a little too caught up in me storytellin'! There's really nothing to worry about."

"You said that... Leviathan likes to play into greed and pride. Isn't *this* a merchant ship, and didn't you call it the fastest ship in the whole CSC fleet when we got aboard?"

"Aye, It is, and aye-aye, I did call it that, and I meant it too!" She boasted, before realizing what Mae was getting at and backtracking, "Oh, but don't you worry yourself none! This ain't our first voyage, we're all too seasoned to fall for any of the Sea Dragon's trickery!"

Mae muttered to herself, "...That sounds just like exactly the kind of pride that she'd prey upon."

"Listen, lass, it's perfectly normal to be nervous your first time sailin' across the seas... It's part of the reason we have the bar, hehe...! heh..." Levi jabbed Mae with her elbow trying to cheer her up with a bit of levity, "But if ye've got vows against drinkin' maybe a warm bath would sooth your worries?"

"I think I'll just... go pray again." Mae decided as she left the First Mate to get back to her work. She found herself more than a bit suspicious afterwards, the sailors were all very friendly,

almost *too* friendly for the kind of work they were doing. Sure, this was a comfortable ship, but sailing was still dangerous and back-breaking labor, the kind of hard work that made hard men, like masons or lumberjacks.

Maybe they'd been told to put on their best behavior around the "heroes" that they still believed them to be? Or maybe, as much as she didn't want to admit it, that spoony bard really *was* just that good at her job of keeping the men entertained. But her mind still lingered on Levi, she seemed to know an awful lot about Leviathan, and the way she spoke about her, it almost felt like... *praise*.

Despite being an excuse to politely, if awkwardly end the conversation, Mae decided to actually head back down to the chapel and give another prayer to the Everlight. She drew closer to the statue, praying even harder, hoping that her goddess would offer her some peace and guidance... At first, she felt that strange distance again, but she continued to beseech her, and eventually that distance seemed to lessen.

It appeared that her prayers were being answered, but something was wrong. The presence that reached out and touched her wasn't anything like the goddesses embrace. Rather than the soft and warm glow that shone against her like soothing morning sunlight, what she felt now was oddly cold and damp, almost *sticky*, and it felt like it was coiling around her.

The strangest thing was that it didn't feel outright bad, in fact, much to her deep shame it almost felt pleasurable, causing her to squirm a bit on her knees as she had to wonder once again if this wasn't some way of the goddess showing her disapproval. But why would she do so this way? That's when she started to feel a sense of *encouragement* being projected by the strange sensation.

It told her that she didn't need to feel ashamed, that she had done the right thing by treating herself and boarding the ship. That she should obey those urges more often, and that doing so would lead her closer to her, closer to her goddess, where she belonged and to whom she belonged...

"*Wha-what...?*" Mae questioned as she struggled to open her eyes. She couldn't move, her body felt stiff and constricted, her muscles twitched but wouldn't obey her. It was identical to the handful of instances she'd experienced the phenomenon known as "sleep paralysis." The coiling sensation grew stronger and more invasive, rubbing against her skin, tightening around her, and creeping towards her sex... Just as it seemed like it was about to plunge itself into her, it ended in an instant.

"A-aahh!" She gasped and her eyes snapped wide... The feeling was gone, everything was back to normal, aside from a feeling of warmth in her loins that was slow to fade. She quickly stood up and left the room, mortified about feeling that way in front of the goddess's image. Yet as she made her way down the hall, she was conflicted. That *was* the goddess she felt just now wasn't it? She needed to talk to Aden about this, he could be an absolute idiot sometimes,

maybe even most of the time, but when she was genuinely upset or bothered by something he always managed to push down those tendencies and give her the support she needed.

Speaking of which, Aden had gone back to his suite to enjoy the view of the sea from the rear balcony. The sun was facing the bow of the ship, which meant that the balcony here on the stern was nice and shady, combined with the gentle breeze blowing against his face as the ship gently swayed on the waves... Aden wasn't the most contemplative sort, and preferred to be constantly stimulated, but even he had to admit, this felt nice.

"Haaaa..." He let out a sigh as he leaned against the railing of the balcony, listening to the sloshing waters, the creaking of the ship's hull and the whistling of the wind. He closed his eyes and smiled, still thinking of Alba's show. He could feel butterflies in his stomach as he recalled her performance, and as it played again in his mind, he thought he could hear something else, something faint, almost inaudible, in fact it could've very well been just in his mind, but something deep in his soul told him it was real.

It was real and it was *beautiful*. It was such a beautiful sound that he was frustrated that he couldn't hear it better. That faint, distant trace of it was almost teasing him. He tried to just focus on it, tune out the other sounds around him, but it wasn't working, he didn't even know exactly what he was listening for! He just knew that it was so sweet, and it made him feel so happy~!

"Hmm, ahaha..." He couldn't help but giggle, he leaned out further, standing on the tips of his toes, every inch closer that he got made the ephemeral song- *song*? Yes, it was a song! It was her song, Alba's song, but so much more! He couldn't make out any lyrics, but he could still feel the meaning behind the song. It was an invitation from the ones singing it, it was calling anyone who could hear to listen to their hearts and come to them, so they could be joyous and free!

He wanted it, he *yearned* for, and *coveted* it! He tried to get ever so slightly closer, leaning forward as far as he could without falling over the edge, and now he could hear the true genius of the far-off melody. It wasn't just riding the wind and it wasn't clashing with the waves! It was playing off of them both; the clear blue water, it was just another instrument in the song. Alba's performance had been only one part in an entire chorus.

The splashing waves striking off the hull beneath him, suddenly they looked like welcoming and kind hands beckoning to him, offering to guide him to the source of that wonderful music. "*Obey your desire... give into your hungers... Listen to your cravings...*" The music seemed to tell him, "*If you want it, then come and get it... come, come to us.*"

"Y-yesss... I..." He shuddered, standing up straight and rigid, as his mind was emptied of anything but the song, the sweet, beguiling song. His body moved with an almost inhuman fluidity, as if he himself was being played like an instrument. Without an ounce of fear or hesitation. He began to climb onto the balcony's railing. "I'm coming..." He smiled, all he had to do was jump, and start swimming, and he *knew* that he'd reach the source of the song before long...

“Aden? Are you here?” Mae asked as she opened the door to his suite, “Hey, I’ve been getting a weird feeling about-” As she started to voice her concerns, she looked out the back door of his room and saw that he was about to do a sea dive into the ocean! “**Aden!?** What are you doing!?”

“H-huh?” The sound of his childhood friend’s terrified voice shouting at him was enough of a jolt to snap his mind free of the trance as his brain properly registered that, oh wow, he was in terrible danger right now. “*Whaaat!?* Holy shit-! *Woo-wo-ah!*” He started to lose his balance, his knees going weak as the swaying of the ship threatened to send him over.

Mae ran towards him in a frenzy and grabbed him by the waist, yanking him back onto the ship and sending them both crashing down onto the hard floor. The fall had left them with Aden in a compromising position on top of Mae, the two practically locking lips as they stared at each other’s faces, panting and trying to figure out what just happened.

“Sheesh, what’s all the racket? Some of us are trying to read ov-” An annoyed Belle marched up to the open door, only to see her two party members on top of each other, panting and sweating. “*Oooh*, wow, hehe, really, you two? It hasn’t even been a *day* yet and you’re already getting that stir crazy, you could at least do it on the bed!” She grinned from ear to ear and tipped her head down as her glasses turned solid white from reflected sunlight.

“We weren’t-”
“-That’s not-”
“We were just-”
“-He was about to!”

“Hey, don’t worry, I’m not judging at all!” Belle held up her hands and shook her head, smugly assuring her fellow adventurers, “Honestly, I’m just surprised it’s taken you this long, anyone with eyes can see how much you’ve got the hots for each other.”

“What do you mean by- *ugh*, Aden, can you get off of me, and explain what you were doing on that balcony?”

“R-right, sorry, Mae.” Aden picked himself up off the ground, offering his hand to Mae and helping her do the same, “Well, I was about to jump into the water.”

“You were about to do *what?*”

“Yes, Aden, I could see that, but **why** were you about to jump into the water?”

“I don’t know what came over me, I was just... I stepped out to get some fresh air, and I was just listening to the sound of the wind and the waves and then I- I heard something, a *song*, and I got this urge to just *dive* into the water.”

"A song? You heard a song that made you want to jump into the ocean?" Belle's face started to get pale, she opened up the book in her hand and started flipping through its pages, "Hmm, that could be very bad..."

"You know what's causing it, and what it means?"

"It could be the work of sirens." Belle postulated, "But... that doesn't make sense to me, sirens should be the servants of *Garuda*, the Elemental Calamity of *Air*. I... I'm going to do some more research on this." In something of a hurry, Belle turned around and started heading towards the hall.

"Belle, where are you going?" Mae called out to her, confused by her sudden change in behavior.

"To the library, I think I saw some books about Leviathan that might shed some light on this!"

"I- Oh, o-okay?" Mae looked back at Aden, "Aden, let's just try not to lose our heads again, okay?"

"Of course, I mean- I'm definitely not planning to almost jump off the boat again! I guess I'll just avoid the balcony..."

The priestess sighed, "I still feel like this was a mistake... We shouldn't be here."

"Aw, don't say that, Mae! Hey, you should come with me to Miss Alba's show tonight, that'll *definitely* make you feel better!" Aden suggested with an eager and innocent smile on his face, too innocent for Mae to be upset at him over it despite the fact that she wanted to.

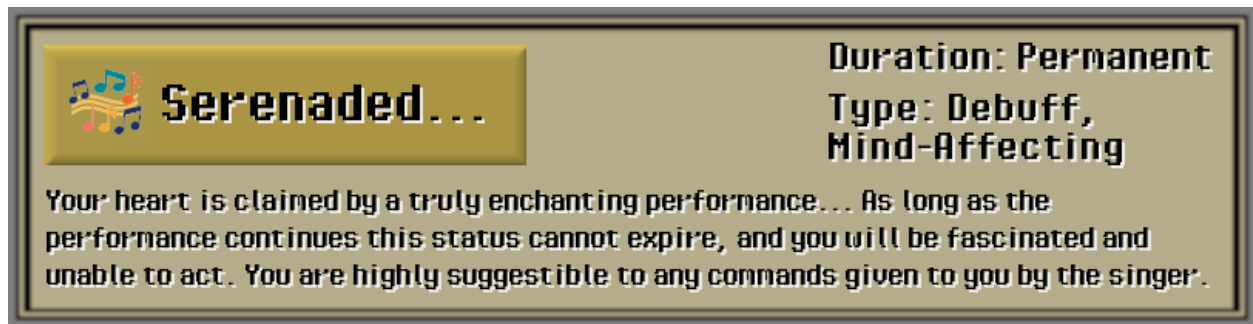
Instead, she just gave him a glare and remarked, "Yeah, I think I'm going to pass on that."

Aden shrugged, "Hey, suit yourself, but I'm telling you, Mae, you're really missing out~!"

The three went their separate ways for the rest of the afternoon... and before long, the sun had vanished over the horizon and cast the ship in darkness once again. Aden, predictably, attended Alba's evening show, and while he thought it'd been his imagination, or maybe just wishful thinking, he *swore* that she was singling him out throughout the show, looking straight into his eyes longingly, and the envious stares he was getting from some of the crewmen confirmed that, though of course none of them were going to risk lifting a finger against the "legendary hero."

As the rest of the attendees filed out, Aden stayed behind, and when he was the last man in the room, Alba sauntered up to him, and asked him again if he'd like that "private performance" she

promised. Without Mae to get in the way this time, he wholeheartedly accepted. He could listen to her sing all night... Without realizing it, he'd get his wish.



Belle meanwhile, had sealed herself in the library and closed out the rest of the world as she poured over the books written on the subject of Leviathan. She surrounded herself with them, certain that she needed to understand her as well as possible in order to minimize their chances of running afoul of her or her servants. At least that's what she told herself at first.

Too late she realized that the tomes she was reading were hardly *unbiased*... They were written by none other than members of one of the monstrous species that was subordinate to her, the *Sahaguin*.

The Sahaguin were a race of highly intelligent and technologically gifted demihumans, mischievous tinkers with generously sized assets on their squat human-like torsos that contrasted with their draconic claws and feet.

Their understanding of aquatic engineering was leagues beyond anything that the civilized races could even conceive of. Their expertise was one of the primary reasons why Leviathan reigned so decisively over the seas, and why practically no conventional ship could manage to fend off her attacks.

They had somehow developed ships that could sail both above and below the water, propelling themselves through entirely mechanical means that allowed them to travel much faster than any sailboat. Of course, the fact that they could breathe underwater made the prospect of underwater navigation a much simpler prospect. How could any other ship hope to fend off an attack from an opponent they couldn't even see, let alone fire upon?

Like all of Leviathan's followers, they were extremely fervent in their obedience and submission to her, and that enthusiasm came through in their writing, which carried a quality that was difficult to tear oneself away from.

The way they described her appearance, her mannerisms, and her speech, building her up like she was the most beautiful creature on land or sea, in such exquisite detail that Belle could perfectly envision her in her mind. How they extolled the sins she lived her life by: greed, pride, and sloth; and the sheer *depths* to which she sank into them and dragged down those around

her. The accolades poured onto her deviousness, cunning and leadership as the greatest pirate captain that the seas had ever seen and would ever see.

She'd surrounded herself with the books before she'd realized just what she'd gotten herself into, and now, no matter how much she wanted to stop reading them, or even just take a break, she couldn't! Every time she reached the end of a page, telling herself that it was the last one and then she'd go to bed, she either ended up needing to read the next one, or turning her head to face one of the others books around her and getting lost in it too.

Belle hadn't thought to check the books for any sign of magic on them, so she wasn't sure if they were somehow cursed or if there was just something about their writing that put your brain in a stranglehold and wouldn't let it go, but either way, she was *hooked*! She didn't know how much to believe, after all, the Sahaguin were far from an unbiased source, but even if she tried to tell herself it was all lies, it didn't change the fact that with every paragraph she read, Leviathan seemed even cooler to her.

Eventually, she stopped trying to resist altogether, realizing that she was trapped in some kind of strange hypnotic effect and deciding that she was perfectly happy with that, "i-it's fine, I'm... I'm *learning*. I'm learning so much about *herrr*..." She rationalized it to herself, but she knew that it was just an excuse.

	Book Bound...	Duration: 7:55:33
		Type: Debuff, Mind-Affecting
Your mind is claimed by the fascinating literature you're reading... Whether you want it to be or not. You are immobilized and unable to take any action other than reading the books around you that generated this effect until it expires.		

As for Mae, she was the only one who'd ended up trying to go to sleep that night, only to find herself tossing and turning in bed, unable to relax, her heart pounding in her chest... But it wasn't only fear that was keeping her awake and agitated, even if she didn't want to admit it. "I-*nng*! I n-need... I *need*- I..." She clutched at her blanket, biting her lips, before opening her eyes and sitting up, "I need to go back to the Everlight, yes, that's it! I just need more of her guidance!"

The fluttering in her heart told her that this was definitely the right choice, she wrapped herself up in her robe, not taking the time to properly dress herself, and walked down the halls to the chapel where she found herself face to face with her goddess's carved image once more. It was very rare for her to pray after dark, as the goddess of the sun, her power waned after sunset. But she was truly desperate, and she knew her goddess would never abandon her... She'd taken her back after that disgrace in the Great Swamp after all.

She closed her eyes tight and clasped her hands even tighter, “Oh, Everlight, sacred and holy goddess of the radiant dawn, I truly need you now, th-this voyage, I’m terrified of where it might be heading! My heart is p-pounding out of my chest, I need your strength now more than ever, please don’t leave me in the darkness!” She shivered with anticipation, a guilty desire that she didn’t understand and wouldn’t acknowledge. And then... it was answered.

Once again, that cold coiling feeling returned, stronger than ever, slipping around her body quickly and eagerly, *delighted* that she’d come to pray again so soon. “O-ooh, yesss, p-please, wrap me up, Everlight...” She sensed the presence she’d felt before, closer than ever, *much* closer. So close that she could practically feel her breath on her neck. Mae let out a gasp as without a word being spoken, she **felt** a single concept expressed by the entity inhabiting the room with enough force to flatten her into the floorboards.

MINE...

“Y-yes, my goddess, I am yours, I- t-take me, please~!” Mae had been fascinated by the sensation she’d felt, she tried to deny it but she hadn’t been able to put it out of her head. The rational part of her mind was screaming at her, trying to remind her that the Everlight had never felt anything like this before, but she wanted to believe it was her so badly that she drowned that side of her out. The creeping slithering sensation, like oily tentacles of a sea beast engulfing her, slid and oozed across her body, rubbing her breasts and thighs and finally slipping into her pussy where they’d previously been denied.

“Mmnggg- *Gaaahdesss...*” Mae moaned, if it was her goddess giving her this kind of pleasure she didn’t need to feel ashamed of it, right? Her own hands slipped beneath her robe, into her panties that were just about all she was wearing underneath it, and started to dig into herself alongside the tendrils. But then something seemed to pull her hand back out. “H-huh!? *Why?*” She whimpered needily, only to feel a tugging sensation that was dragging her closer to the statue of her beloved goddess.

“*No, no, no... My little disciple.*” She heard in her mind, “*you must continue to worship your goddess properly. Let me give you the pleasure you desire.*”

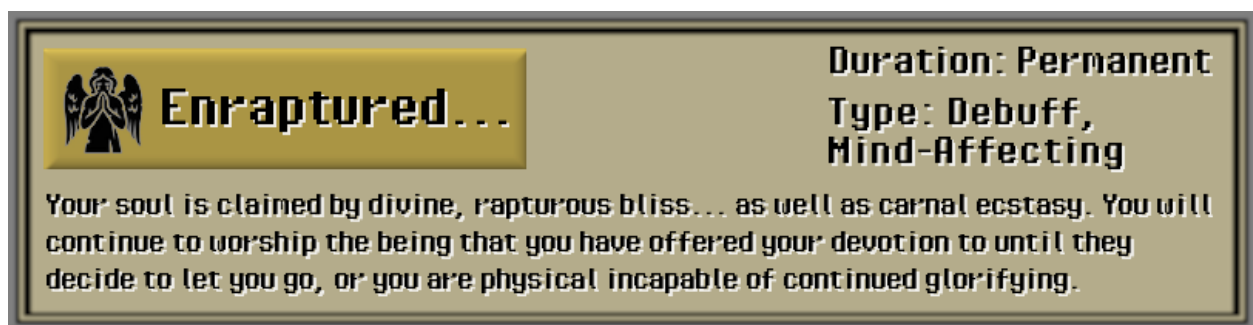
“O-oooh, of course, E-everlight, I understand, ehehe...” Mae giggled bashfully, not daring to open her eyes for even a moment. The bizarre cold feeling, like damp fog rolling across the sea in the morning, grew stronger, and was joined by a muggy warmth as she drew closer and closer to the statue. “Goddess... Yesss, take me closer to you.” Her delirious smile widened as she began to pant.

“*Ooooooh~!*” She cried out as her skin touched the stone, she threw out her arms and wrapped them against the statue, rubbing her face against her chest. She would’ve sworn that the Everlight never had such luscious breasts, or such powerful abs, or thick thighs, but... maybe she was achieving a deeper level of understanding of the goddess than she ever had before!

Yes, that must've been in, she was being rewarded for her devotion! Truly the goddess was good.

"Do you love me, my little servant? Will you prove how much you adore me?" An invisible hand stroked the priestess's head, leaving a damp, slick streak in her hair.

"O-of course, goddess, I'd do *anything* for you..." Mae had fallen into a daze, the humid warmth swirling around her combined with the cold, ethereal sensation that'd penetrated her brain had her in a state of pleasure that completely shut down after part of her that could've doubted or questioned what was happening... And considering the distinctly musky aroma in the air, perhaps there was some lingering repressed "dogma" from her time with Haelitox bubbling to the surface.



"That's what I want to hear, alright then, my pretty little pearl, go ahead and lavish me with the praise I deserve." The "goddess" seemed to be growing more possessive and overtly lewd by the second, but Mae still wasn't questioning it, though she was a bit uncertain what exactly she could've meant by that.

"H-haven't I already been-? O-oh!" As Mae hugged the statue, she suddenly felt something pressed against her abdomen, some long and thick that would've been rock hard even if it *wasn't* made out of stone. "O-ooohh myyy~! G-goddesss...?" Mae muttered, starting to drool as her hands explored every intricate detail of the nearly eight and a half inch long phallus presented to her. Instantly and instinctively she knew what needed to be done, she knew what her goddess wanted from her.

Pulling her panties aside, she folded her hands again, a wobbly smile on her face as she slammed herself down on the cock of the "Everlight..." She should've known, now of all times, that none of this was right. She'd prayed at this statue multiple times and it'd never had a dick before, but any room in her mind for doubt was washed out with the tide as she used the statue's member as a dildo, bouncing herself up and down on it, coating it in her juices as she engaged in the most *devout* "worship" of her life.

"Arrharharharr... Thaaaat's riiiiight, show me how much ya loooove your goddess... Show the whole woorld." A bit of the "goddesses" true colors were able to shine through in her

excitement, it was typical of her to get a bit too *greedy*. Fortunately, Mae was too lost in her devotion to notice it.

The truth was that while there *had* been a statue to the Everlight in this chapel for most of the Rosegold Redoubt's time at sea, that was no longer the case. While it still *appeared* that way to the average onlooker, that was the result of an illusion that'd been cast on the statue to make it appear that way. The actual figure that the statue venerated was that of Leviathan herself...

The Everlight's soft, serene face with a gentle grin was actually a wide sawtoothed smile on a head with a round snout and a pair of fierce, dominant eyes glaring covetously at everything before them. Her gentle and modest figure was, as Mae had discovered, extremely voluptuous, with a bountiful chest and thighs, along with an ass to match and a long draconic tail growing out of it. Her outstretched hands, gracefully inviting all to bask in the light of her love and mercy were really a pair of clutching, demanding claws, demanding all who saw them to supplicate and surrender both themselves and their values to her, and if they wouldn't willingly then she'd use those claws to take them by force!

Then, of course, there was her "mast," standing proudly up and out at full attention, whoever had made this statue had clearly been *intimately* familiar with that part of her anatomy, just as Mae was becoming right now. The statue wasn't *life-sized*, it had been scaled down to match the dimensions of the Everlight's usual depictions... Otherwise, Mae would've been split damn near in two trying to ride it the way it was.

"Ahhh~! Ooouwwhh~! Gooddessshhh, haAAaa~! I looove youuu~! I love you shooo muuuusshhh~!" Mae's face was bright pink as she hastened the pace of her bouncing, clutching to the statue now and planting kisses on her chest as she swore she could feel the statue closing its arms around her as well. "AaaAaaaAaahh~!" She wailed as she came, rivelets of her cum running down the stony length and dripping onto the ship's floor as her body twitched and spasmed in bliss. She let out one last slow moan as she lifted herself up and off the statue's cock, staggering weak kneed back against the wall of the modest room as she struggled to catch her breath.

*"I know you love me, and your goddess loves **you** too, sweetheart. Because you belong to me, always..."*

As Mae felt around for her sacred staff, she had no idea who she'd truly been pledging herself and offering her worship towards. Beams of sunlight pierced through the window behind the statue, gleaming into her eyes as she finally opened them.

"Huh? I-is it morning already...? How long have I been here?" She groggily blinked as she found her staff, using it as a support to push herself up off of the floor. "Th-that was the most wonderful prayer time I've ever had by far, thank you, goddess." She bowed before the statue, still not questioning where the seemingly ordinary statue's cock had come from, or gone for that matter. Her mind simply accepted it as a manifestation of the Everlight's glory.

As she walked out of the room, she caught a whiff of herself. “*O-oh*, I think it might be time to take one of those showers, ehehe...” She bashfully admitted, from spending all night sweating and in pleasure, she wasn’t exactly smelling springtime fresh. She made sure to tie her robe up tight as she opened the door. As she turned away from the statue, its illusory magic faded away, revealing its true form as it whispered-

“I’ll see you and your friends in just a few moments, my little piece of booty.”

“Oooh, my aching head...” Belle groaned as she emerged from the library, “I haven’t pulled an all-nighter like that since finals back at the Academy.” At around the same time, Aden was finally being released from the performance that Alba had put on for him, a lovesick smile still plastered on his face alongside a mess of lipstick stains. The three adventurers caught up with each other in the hall around their suites.

“Well, good morning, Mae, you look like you’re positively glowing today, did you sleep well?” Aden chuckled and scratched the back of his head, “Because I sure didn’t, I was up all night long!”

“Nope, I was awake all night too...” Mae gave a blunt answer, before noticing her childhood friend’s kiss mark covered face, “Hold on a moment, Aden, what is that all over your face?”

“Huh, what? What are you talking about?” Aden asked, genuinely confused, it wasn’t like he’d seen a mirror or anything.

“You know what? I don’t even care.” She just shook her head, dropping the issue and turning to their mage, “What about *you*, Belle? How did your night go? Did you learn anything helpful?”

“Uhhh, funnily enough, I never went to bed either. I just couldn’t stop reading, no matter how hard I tried.” She revealed, conveniently omitting the detail that she hadn’t tried all that hard at all, “But I learned a ton of awesome facts about Leviathan, *kuhuhu~!*” She let out a distinctive laugh that she’d never exhibited before as far as her teammates could tell, “Did you know that her favorite food is fried calamari and that she has an underground palace made almost entirely out of jewel encrusted coral and topped with a giant golden replica of her head on top!?”

“That’s, uh... that’s *great* and all, Belle, but did you learn anything about the sirens?”

“About the wha-?” Belle tilted her head, “Oh, yeah! Er, *no*, no, I did not. I-”

BANG!

Suddenly, the hull shook with the tremendous sound of metal slamming against wood. “What the hell was that?!” Mae exclaimed in shock.

"Sounds like we hit something!" Aden speculated, but no sooner did the words leave his mouth...

BANG! BANG! BAM!!!

Did three more loud impacts reverberate through the hull from both the port and starboard sides, the force of the repeated impacts was enough to shake the massive vessel, knocking the three tired and off-kilter adventurers down to the floor, "Or, like something hit *us*!" Belle clarified as she picked her glasses up off the floor and readjusted them on her face.

WHhHhlllllRrrrRRrrRr!

The trio then began to cringe and cover their ears as a horrid, high pitched grinding noise the likes of which they'd never heard before assault them. "Ahhh, what is that horrible noise!?" Mae cried out.

"I... I think it's one of the machines that Leviathan uses in her attacks on ships! I read about them last night! They're underwater seacraft that are tipped with big mechanical drills that can bore right through hulls!" Belle surmised, before adding, "They're loaded up with her aquatic pirates, they let her seize ships without having to reveal themselves, and it's so totally cool!" Her tone remained dire even as she complimented them.

"What are you *talking* about-?" Mae was befuddled by her non-sequitor, but it was Aden who took charge, for once actually fulfilling his duty as the leader of their party.

"We're under attack then! I- I gotta grab my sword from my room, then we gotta get up on deck and see what's going on!" He wished he had time to put on his armor, but time was off the essence.

"W-wait a minute, if they're drilling into the ship's hull from underwater, doesn't that mean that it's about to sink!?" Mae frantically asked Belle as Aden dug through his belongings for his sword.

"What? Nooo!" Belle shook her head, "The drills like, split open into three segments that let the troops inside out after they get through, they form a seal that prevents any water from getting in until they detach, so don't worry, the ship won't start sinking until after they leave." She explained with a completely inappropriate smile.

"Belle, I'm even *more* worried now!"

"You are? How come...? I mean, sure this ship is probably gonna sink, but I mean, think about how ingeniously engineered those attack craft are!"

"...Did you smack your head when you fell just now?"

“Alright, guys, I got my sword, let’s move it!” Aden charged out of the room, ordering his party members to back him up.

“W-wait! Aden... I’m not wearing anything under these robes!” Mae blurted out, her face reddening as her party members stared at her.

“Really?”

“Why?”

“Yes, really, and don’t worry about why! Just...” Mae pursed her lips and tightened the sash on her robe, “w-watch my back alright.” She requested, offering another urgent prayer for protection to the Everlight, still unaware that she wasn’t speaking to whom she thought she was.

The party quickly stormed the deck, and realized that something was very wrong, specifically the fact that they were the only ones aware that anything was going on at all! The rest of the crew seemed to be going through the motions with those same cheerful grins on their faces, grins that seemed increasingly *uncanny* by the second.

There was no way that they couldn’t have known either, the sound of Leviathan’s attack submarines striking the hull continued to thrum through the ship, and as if that wasn’t enough, a *trio* of frigates began to rise from the sea, three massive metal shark fins emerging from the water as they began to circle the ship. Each of them had the image of a smiling shark-like skull with a garish sawtoothed smile and crossed by an X made of bones painted on their sides, the symbol of Leviathan’s pirate crew, though with how large and powerful it was, it could more properly be called an army.

As the ships rose from the ocean, water poured down the sides of their decks, large fans spun on their sterns, providing their primary source of locomotion, powered by magical engines designed and operated by the Sahaguin. From just over the horizon, flocks of what appeared to be bird women started to approach the ship, and as they got closer it became apparent that despite their uniformly feminine appearance, some of them were also bird *boys*...

“This is bad, we’re in real trouble!” Mae breathlessly looked around as enemies encroached from all sides, the metal frigates closing in bit by bit as their crew started to pour out onto their decks. “We’re completely surrounded, what in the world is everyone *doing*!? Why aren’t they trying to get us out of this, o-or fighting back or something!”

White and blue skinned demihuman women jeered and laughed at their prey from the enemy ships as they started to swing grappling hooks in their hands and flung them through the air towards the Rosegold Redoubt’s deck. They had blue hair that faded to white near the ends of their bangs, and mouths filled with razor sharp teeth. Golden eyes with black sclera gazed with glee at the prize they’d caught in their ambush.

Viciously sharp looking blue fins in the shape of cutlasses protruded out and back from their wrists just before their webbed hands. Shark tails protruded from their rears as their breasts were completely exposed. They wore almost nothing aside from accessories like golden bangles and earrings, the clothing they did wear was mostly made out of scales, hides and bones, leaving almost every inch of their glistening smooth skin exposed that wasn't covered in tattoos and scars. They all stood at least six feet tall, with powerful biceps and abs, not to mention *glutes*...

These were the Merrow, the frontline fighters and muscle of Leviathan's crew, and they took after her more keenly than any of her other servants. It was rumored that Leviathan may have been a Merrow herself, at least partially, before her rise to prominence and power in the service of the Dark Kaiserin caused her draconic features to develop, but nobody knew for sure aside from Leviathan and the Kaiserin themselves.

The Merrow who'd been launched in the drill ships stormed the deck before the ones who were scaling the ship managed to. They swarmed the three adventurers, wielding cutlasses, daggers, specially modified crossbows or even just their own fists and arm-blades in the case of a few particularly swarthy and gutsy looking brawlers.

"*Hahaaaa!* What's the matter, heroes? Scared of a couple fishies? Ya should be!"

"*These* are the legendary shardbearers!? Pffft, they don't look so tough to me!"

"I've eaten minnows that look like they've got more fight in 'em than this lot!"

"C'mere, fighter, c'mon~! Lemme crack a couple of those teeth before the Cap'n gets ya!"

"Get a load of the little priestess! I think she's gone and pissed herself. No wait- *hnnff!* Ooh, that smells like somethin' else entirely!"

"Lookit the mage's *face*, haaah! Betcha five doubloons she'd cum if I spanked her~!"

"I'll take that bet!"

"What are we gonna do? What are we gonna *do!*?" Aden mumbled to himself as a horrible sinking feeling rolled through him.

"Heheehehe..." Belle let out a giddy chuckle, "Oooh, we're *doomed*~! We're sooo do-oomed~! *Kukukuuu~!*" Her knees shook as she sported a manic grin.

"C-c'mon, Be- er, Serena! Don't crack up on me!" Aden quickly caught himself, remembering that there were others around and he was still supposed to be keeping up appearances. Naturally, he assumed that Belle was just breaking under the pressure, still not having discovered her true motivations for joining their party.

"Everlight, h-help us, please, please!" Mae begged and pleaded with her goddess for a miracle, and what happened next made her think that she might've just gotten it.

The door to the captain's quarters burst open and out came First Mate Levi, looking very relieved to see the three adventurers in the thick of the unfolding action. "Oh, *there* you are! Perfect, right where we-"

"You!" Mae broke away from the group and charged towards the woman, wrapping her arm around her neck and holding up her staff. "Alright! Don't *any* of you waterlogged sushi platters move!" She demanded of the surrounding and rapidly growing horde of pirates. "If you do... With the Everlight as my witness, I will call down her full divine might and deep fry your precious queen, even if it kills me too!"

Her outburst certainly wiped the smiles off the faces of the Merrow, though rather than looking worried or intimidated, they mostly just looked confused.

"Watcha be blathering on about, lass? Is this part of some plan of yers that ye neglected to make me privy too?" Levi's eyes darted back and forth, just as confused as the Merrow were, sure she must've been missing something.

"Don't play *coy* with me, 'Levi' Or should I say, *Levi-athan!*?"

"**What** the fuck did you just call me!? Have you been drinking *bilge water!*?" Levi's eyes practically bugged out of her skull as she started to struggle in Mae's grip, only to stop once the priestess let out an admonishing groan as she raised her staff a bit higher into the air.

"Yeah, you heard me, I've got you all figured out!" Mae's voice dripped with equal parts contempt and smugness. "Heh, I must admit, I'm actually a bit disappointed, I wouldn't have expected the oh-so-cunning pirate queen to be so sloppy! I guess that *pride* of yours really dragged you down!"

"Ye're stark-raving *mad!* How did ya go and start thinkin' that I'm the fucking Sea Bitch herself!?" Levi's voice cracked with outrage at Mae's accusation. The Merrows, who by now had completely dropped their guard, were muttering to themselves about how quickly this had turned into a preposterous farce.

"Y-yeah, I'd kinda like to know where you got that idea myself, *loun.*" Aden sheepishly seconded Levi's inquiry.

"Same here..." Belle also echoed the sentiment.

Mae looked up to the sky and shook her head in disappointment before glaring at her party members, "Are you serious? It's so obvious that sh-" But before Mae had a chance to offer any kind of explanation, the entire galleon suddenly *tilted* towards its side as something grabbed hold of the starboard side and started to climb up the hull, nearly knocking the trio of adventurers to the floor and sending most of the ship's currently hapless crew down like dominos.

This was clearly not just another Merrow scaling the ship, everyone could instantly feel the change in the atmosphere. It was like how the air starts to tingle and the seas begin to roil right before a storm.

“Aye... I’m rather curious meself.”

A brusque and flirtatious voice cut through the air like a knife as Aden, Mae and Belle all turned to watch a pair of gigantic clawed hands curl over the railing on the side of the deck. Mae in particular felt her blood turn to ice as a head nearly as large as her body started to rise up into view. Dark blue braids held in shape by golden chains ran down the back of her head as her golden eyes stared with glee and arrogance at everything and everyone before her.

Her sleek pale blue skin glistened in the sun, her long pointed ears pierced with *jewel encrusted crowns* that she wore as earrings, a mouth filled with teeth each large enough to bite all the way through a man’s arm were arranged in a perfect sawtooth pattern, curled wide in a cheshire grin from ear to ear under her shark muzzle, forming the shape of a crescent. Some of those teeth had been either crowned with or entirely replaced with solid gold.

She seemed to be wearing something like a *ship’s sail* that’d been repurposed into a shirt, skintight against her enormous breasts. It was white with the same symbol as the frigates sown over her chest in black, it cut short in an intentionally jagged and coarse pattern above her midriff.

The prongs at the end of an eight foot long trident made out of emerald green coral and tipped with flawlessly cut diamonds was visible over her shoulder. She must’ve been at least twenty feet tall, she was tall enough that she could comfortably lounge against the side of the boat with her feet still paddling in the water. Out of sight of those on the deck, she was wearing a pair of tight shorts made out of a water-tight rubbery material, beneath those she appeared to be wearing fishnet stockings made out of *actual fishnets*! Her large, scaly dragon’s tails swayed back and forth, the end of it splashing and spraying the water.

“L-I-I...” Aden’s sword rattled in his hand as his mouth turned bone dry. “Leviathan...!” There was practically no denying it, **that** was Leviathan, if her mere countenance hadn’t made it clear, the fact that Merrow all turned and bowed down to her removed any room for doubt.

“Arrharhar~!” The massive sea monster chuckled imperiously, “I prefer to go by *Captain* Leviathan, Great Dragon of the Unfathomable Depths, Scourge of All Seas Shallow and Deep, Sea Bitch of the Briny Waters, Queen of the Tides and the Waves, Conqueror of the Unconquerable Watery Expanse, Dread Pirate Supreme of the Umbral Abyss, and Mistress of All who Covet and All that is Coveted... But in a pinch, simply ‘Leviathan’ will do as well, aye~!”

“B-bu-but that doesn’t m-make any sense...” Mae stammered as she tried to grasp the sheer gravity of her mistake.

“Aww, what be the matter, shاربearer? Don’t stop on *my* account... Ye were just about to explain why you thought that little human in your arm was yers truly.” cooed towards Mae as she climbed up a bit further and rested her arms on the ship’s deck, crossing them and laying her chin down on them as her left hand began to tap the floorboards impatiently. “Get on with it, then, I’m simply *ravenous* with the desire to hear it.”

“W-well, um, y-you’re, uh, your name...?” Mae had been completely stripped of any of the bravado and confidence she might’ve had. She felt less like a hero explaining her brilliant deduction and more like she was being forced to give a speech to a crowd wearing nothing but her underwear... Which was made all the worse by the fact that she *practically* was wearing nothing but her underwear. “It s-sounds like Leviathan? Y’know, Levi, it’s like, i-it’s short of Leviathan? I thought that you’d d-disguised yourself as a human and infiltrated this ship to f-fool us.”

Levi twisted in her grasp and stared her dead in the eyes with the most disgusted look anyone had ever given her. “That’s... That’s just my *name*, you daft maroon! What? Just ‘cus me name sounds vaguely similar? It’s not like me parents *knew* I was gonna be a sailor! And do ye know how *long* it took me to become First Mate on this ‘ere ship!? Five years!”

“Aye, and if I was goin’ to disguise meself as a human...?” Leviathan remarked with a casual tone in her voice, poking holes in Mae’s presumptions, “Why would I *ever* go and choose a name as obviously suspicious as ‘Levi?’”

“Exactly! *Thank* you! You’d never do something that stupid!” Levi shouted back graciously to the monster, as if she were simply backing her up in an argument and *not* a greedy sea monster who was in the process of taking her ship and its crew for herself.

“I-it did seem kinda obvious but I thought it was j-just your, um, y-your pride and all, y’know?” Mae rattled her now thoroughly scrambled brain, trying to think of her other reasoning, “W-well, what about all the other suspicious things you said? Like how much you know about Leviathan a-and the way you were praising her!”

“For the love of-” Levi groaned, “*Anyone* who sails the seas for more than a fortnight learns all about Leviathan and to show her proper respect for their own safety, they do! Every sailor knows that badmouthin’ the Sea Bitch or gettin’ to thinkin’ yer smarter or cleverer than her is the fastest way to end up in her greedy maw!”

“Arr, it be true! I can smell disrespect and overconfidence from clear across the sea like it be blood in the water, and I never ever miss a chance to *reward* such delicious hubris.”

“But- but- but!” Mae’s lip quivered as she stomped her foot on the deck, “Nooo! Wh-what about when you said that- that you wanted to do something about sailing being a man’s job!”

Levi sighed and smacked her hand with her palm, "All I meant was that I wanted to serve as a good example for other young lasses and encourage them to consider a life on the seas too."

"Okay, then what did you mean when Belle asked if we could stay on this ship forever, and you said all cryptic that you would 'arrange something?' Huh!?"

"I jus' meant that maybe if ye finished with all this adventurin' business I could've offered ye a *job* 'ere on the Redoubt...!" she replied exasperatedly, before adding with a disdainful grumble, "Which ye can *forget* about, by the way, assumin' any of us even make it out of this mess... And for *fuck's* sake, let go of me already!" She easily overpowered and broke herself free of Mae's clumsy grapple.

"...W-wait, there's one more thing! How come *you* still have your wits while the rest of the crew is totally out of it!"

"That's-! Oh..." Levi took a look at the rest of the crew, as Mae had been in the process of humiliating herself, the Merrows had started tying up and hauling off the crewmen, none of whom were putting up a fight. "Aye, I'll give ye that one, that is proper queer and I'd also like to know how that is..."

Admittedly, there wasn't much that an ordinary human could do to fight back against Merrow, even one who was trained for the possibility of combat on the seas, but the fact they were just accepting being hauled off like sacks of potatoes with those dopey grins on their faces *was* extremely odd, they weren't even putting up a token struggle against their capture.

"I can answer that one!" A familiar flirtatious voice joined the conversation as the white haired singing sensation made her presence known on the deck, completely comfortable and at ease amongst the sea monsters.

"A-alba!? What are ye sayin'!?"

"Alba!" Aden called out to the bard, suddenly finding some of his nerve, foolhardy as it was, "Quickly, get behind me! I'll keep you safe!"

Alba rolled her eyes playfully, sarcastically remarking, "*Ooooh*, my *hero*! That's awfully sweet of you to offer, but I'm afraid that I'm not the one in trouble here." She turned to Leviathan and looked at her with loving reverence. "Queen Leviathan, can I please ditch this disguise now? I haven't had a chance to stretch my poor feathers in weeks!"

"*Arrharhar*, go right ahead, my little Alba. Show these landlubbers your *true* colors."

"Thank you, with pleasure, my Queen~! *Eeeee!*" Alba let out a high pitched squeal as she crossed her arms over her chest, gripping her dress in her fingers before spreading them both out and revealing her true form with a relieved call. The sirens soaring and circling like vultures

overhead responded joyfully to her cry as Alba's dress was torn to shreds, her hands turning into a pair of claws at the end of the two fluffy black and white wings that took the place of her arms.

Her shoes were similarly ripped apart and discarded as two powerful, three toed talons stretched out and scraped against the deck. She was left completely naked and cared not the slightest bit for modesty, outright *flaunting* her beautiful form as her flawless skin ran from her shoulders where her wings began down to her knees where her skin transitioned from soft to scaly and led down to her talons.

Harpies had a very pear shaped build, and Alba was a perfect exhibit of that. Her breasts weren't all that impressive, but she more than made up with it with her bouncy, juicy thighs and ass. "Ahhh, it was *fun* being this ship's idol but I missed the sky sooo much being cooped up in that cramped ship!" It wasn't just her form that had changed, with each second that'd passed since she made her presence known, more of her demure facade was melting away to reveal the brattier side underneath.

"I've got no idea how you 'civilized' types can even *stand* being stuck on the ground all the time! Can't soar through the sky, can't live under the water, and you've got so many *duuumb* rules you have to follow...! Why do you think you're better than us again?" She started to zip about the deck, winking and sticking out her tongue at the heroes and Levi.

"Alba... A *siren*?" Levi was taken aback, "But how could she-? *Ah!*" She grit her teeth and clenched her fists, "Of course, that coloration on her wings. Alba, like Alba-tross!"

"Heheeee, *thaaat's* right! Too bad you figured it out too little too laaate~!"

Mae glared at Levi, eyes half lidded and mouth slightly ajar, then at the revealed siren, then back at Levi. "Are you kidding me? Like, did you really just-...?"

"Anyway, I was using my songs to hypnotize the crew, make them nice and pliable so they wouldn't put up a fight! It was really fun to watch everyone become more enamored by me, day by day... It almost made it worth being stuck in this miserable wooden cage."

"Aye, now it makes sense... Everyone on the ship went to yer shows." Levi nodded along, then realized, "Except for me, I was always too busy pickin' up the slack for everyone else, and I've never 'ad much of an ear for music anyhow. I always preferred to hit the bar."

"Y'know, it really hurt my feelings that you never attended any of my shows, First Mate Levi... *Sniff-! Waah-haa-heeh!*" The siren performatively sniffled and sobbed as she rubbed her eyes with her wings.

"D-don't cry, Alba, I *loved* your shows!" Aden, without hesitating, even now still sought to comfort her.

“Ad-, I mean *Caelum*, she’s a *monster*, don’t play along with her games!” Mae balked at her teammates naivete, still mostly motivated by jealousy, though the fact that he was most likely only so enamored with her because of her literally brainwashing voice (at least, that’s what she was telling herself) did assuage her ego somewhat. Of course, it still left another problem.

“Awww, you really are just the sweetest little thing~! Hey-hey, why don’t you come back and join my flock, Caelum, we can glide through the skies and make beautiful music together for Queen Leviathan *every day*.” She spread her wings wide open in invitation and purred at the vulnerable hero.

Aden, his eyes clouding over, reached out and nearly took a step towards the siren. Belle reached out and grabbed hold of his arm, “Uh, Aden? You *do* realize that she’s a monster who deceived you and is trying to brainwash you, right?” She informed him drolly, adding, “Like, I’ll let you go if you want me to, but I just want to know that *you* know that.”

“Huh? Oh, w-well, I mean, y-you’re right, I shouldn’t. But she’s just so... Sooo...”

“*Teeheehee~!* Wooow, you fell for me *faaast*, didn’t you? So much for the scary, righteous shardbearers chosen by the gods! Can’t even resist some pretty songs from a pretty birdie~!”

“G-grr, you-!” Aden tried to shake his head clear, her relentless teasing putting just a bit of fight back in him to preserve his pride as an adventurer. “Hold on-!” That’s when it hit him, that name she’d used, that’s right, they still thought they were! “W-wait, Leviathan, or, um, Queen Leviathan.”

“Aden, don’t call her that-!” Before realizing what she’d just said, “Oh shi- I mean-!”

“Give it a rest, Mae, you were right! Just like you’re always right, this *was* a mistake!”

“Well, she wasn’t right about Levi being Leviathan, but-” Belle added rather unhelpfully, before clearing her throat and shutting up.

“But now maybe it can get us out of this mess...”

“Oh, *this* oughta be good. Go on then, adventurer, ye have my full attention, what do ye have to say to me?”

Aden took a deep breath, and proceeded to show once again that he was just far too naive for his own good. Genuinely believing that what he was about to do might save them, as if simply coming clean and telling the truth would miraculously result in a happy ending. “We are not the shardbearers!”

"Wh-whaaat!?" Levi let out a confused shout, along with some of the Merrows expressing a mix of confusion, disappointment, and in a few cases that took him at face value, catharsis as things suddenly made a lot more sense to them. "What do ye mean yer not!?"

"Aye, is that so?" Leviathan's smile turned into an amused smirk; she lifted a hand off the ship and rested her cheek against it instead, "But this ship were chartered to carry the shardbearers, wasn't it?"

"Y-yes, and we... we lied to get on board. We pretended to be the Shardbearers, but we're really not."

"Ye did *wut* now!?"

"We aren't Caelum, Ioun, and Serena. Our names are Aden, Mae, and Belle. We're just... well, I mean, we're not *nobodies*, we **are** level 7 adventurers. But we're definitely not chosen by the gods a-and we're not the ones you're looking for!"

"That can't- but!" Levi stumbled back towards the captain's cabin, sliding down to the floor as she processed the information, it did make an awful lot of sense in hindsight. "No *wonder* you're so incompetent... You dirty, lyin' bilge rats! I oughta keel-haul the lot of ya!"

"Hey, that's unnecessary!" Belle objected to the harsh, but justified anger of the First Mate.

Of course, that's when it started to sink in. "But if you're just some run-o-the-mill adventurers then..." Even for all their obvious failings up to now, Levi had still be clinging to the hope that they really were the Shardbearers, and that they'd have some trick up their sleeve to save all of their hides, now she could see that wasn't the case. "Oh gods, we're sunk!"

"Sooo, what then?" Leviathan raised an eyebrow, "Ye mean to tell me that ye three just... took advantage of bein' a fighter, a priestess, and a mage, and swindled this 'ere gormless first mate into lettin' yee aboard, leavin' the real Shardbearers high and dry, just so ye could get a free ride on a fancy boat?"

"Well, the boat was leaving anyway!" Mae spoke up, recalling the encouragement she'd received during her prayer. She shrunk back a bit as Leviathan turned her hungry gaze towards her, but swallowed her fear and elaborated. "The Shardbearers weren't going to be able to make it, so we figured that it was better that we-"

"That *you* get on board... so that it didn't go to waste? When you know that deep down you were still lyin' and still takin' somethin' that wasn't yours to take?" Leviathan began to climb up onto the ship proper, her full profile coming into view as she tilted the ship more before standing upon the deck, rising up halfway to the crow's nest as she looked down at the three adventurers who'd set themselves in her path. "But your goddess told ye there was nothin' wrong with that, didn't she? That it was *fine* to let yourself take what ye wanted."

Mae clutched her staff to her chest, for the first time noting how *cold* and *dark* it felt, the jewel atop carrying none of the warmth of the Everlight that it should have. The visage of Leviathan completely eclipsed the sun behind her as Mae started to get an awful feeling. “H-how did you know that...?”

“Because, *my little pearl*...” Leviathan squated down, reached out towards Mae and stroked her hair with the tip of one of her fingers, leaving a damp, slick streak in her hair. “You told me, when you prayed to me.”

“Wh-when I did *what*?”

“Arrrharharharr~! Ooh, you three crack me up, the whole lot of ya!” Leviathan brought her hand to her forehead and threw her head back in laughter. “Oooh, I **know** ye ain’t the Shardbearers! I’ve known since damn near the moment ye set foot on this ‘ere tub!” She finally dropped the act and revealed all she knew, “Ye really think ye’d be able to hide that from me, from *me*!?”

“That statue ye were prayin’ to, it sure ain’t carved to look like that worthless sun goddess o’ yers, I’ll tell ya that! Rather, it’s carved in the *exquisite* image o’ yers truly~!” Leviathan swished her braids while her other hand ran down her body and accentuated her curvy muscular body. She was showered with a chorus of adoring sighs and moans from the sirens fluttering above, some of whom performatively swooned and fell out of the sky into the water; along with a round of whistles, cheers and bawdy compliments from the Merrows on the deck.

“Y-you’re lying, you h-have to be! I wouldn’t p-pray to an-nother guh-! Goddess?” Mae tried to deny it, but her conviction was severely shaken, suddenly, all of the oddities that she’d downplayed became obvious to her. Her staff fell from her hands to the floor as she put her hands over her mouth in horror. “N-no!”

“Oh, not so sure of yourself now, aintcha?” Leviathan twisted the knife as she reached down and picked her staff up between two of her fingers, “I’ll just be takin’ that, not like we need it fer anythin’ now!” She closed her eyes and in a display of blasphemy that was as audacious as it was banal, she started using it as a toothpick. “Face it, little pearl, you know somethin’ was fishy from the moment ye started mutterin’ yer little prayers, ye just didn’t stop because ye didn’t *care*.”

“And ye didn’t care because prayin’ to *me* felt sooo much better than prayin’ to yer old goddess ever had! That’s why ye convinced yerself that I was her, because you just wanted to keep feelin’ good, didn’t ya?”

“I... B-but that- that’s not-!” Mae wanted to say it wasn’t true, but she just couldn’t, “Y-you-! You tricked me! It’s not my fault!” She then resorted to leaning back on a frankly childish excuse.

“Arrrharhar, please! Ye fooled *yerself!* Just admit it, ye wanted to feel more, you were such a greedy girl for yer goddess’s attention, praise, and pleasure, and ye *loved* it... It’s alright to admit it, lass, we’re all greedy at heart, ruled by our desires, and besides, I’m the only goddess you’ve got left.” She punctuated her statement by chucking the now whittled staff out into the ocean. “Yer old one definitely won’t be taken ya back.”

“Arrhar~! Especially not with the way that ye were riding the *divine rod* of my statue from dusk ‘til dawn~!” Leviathan narrowed her eyes and licked her lips.

“You did **whaaat!?**” Now it was Aden’s turn to be astonished.

“M-mae...! My *goodness*, I didn’t think you had it in you...” Belle meanwhile sounded like she was almost impressed.

“No! It’s not what you think! I didn’t- I mean, that wasn’t-! There’s- It couldn’t have- *yeep!*” Mae’s face was cherry red as she tried frantically to refute Leviathan’s claim, but the sea monster wasn’t going to let her so much as try. She wrapped her hand around Mae’s back as she began to drag her close.

“You can’t deny it, little pearl, there’s no way that you could possibly forget *this...* I *know* it.” Her timbre lowered to a deep penetrating rumble as she pressed Mae’s entire body against the hard bulge in her skintight shorts. “Watcha think~? Those masons did a pretty good job, huh? It felt just like the real thing, *right?*” Mae, in spite of herself, found herself closing her eyes, pressing more firmly against her bulge as a reverent grin formed on her face.

But the laughter and jeering of the Merrows helped snap her out of it, “*Yeugh!* G-get that thing away from meee!” She protested as she shoved herself away.

“*God, I wish that was me...*” Belle thought to herself, sweat pouring down her face.

“Y’know, I’ll *admit...* There was a moment where I thought about just lettin’ ye sail on by, once I knew you weren’t the Shardbearers.” Leviathan mused, “Buuut, then I started lookin’ deeper into your hearts, I saw how ye three were *ruled* by your greed, and your pride, and your *laziness*, and I *knew* I couldn’t let three such perfect recruits slip through me fingers. I had to have ye in my crew~!”

“Wh-what do you mean!? We’re not greedy, o-or proud, or lazy!” Aden tried to challenge her, but Leviathan just snickered at him.

“*Suuure* ye aren’t... And I’m third cousin of Davy Jones ‘imself! Face it, matey, you and your two companions are *rife* with the vices that I can’t get enough of!” She pointed a finger at Aden, “Let’s start with *you*, boy~! It was *your* idea to get on this ship in the first place... Now why did you go and do that?”

“W-well, it was because... Because Levi mistook us for the Shadbearers, and I just- we’re broke, and we were going to have to work on a fishing boat just to get fare to sail to Caltrovia. Mae and Belle seemed so upset about it, a-and Mae was afraid of what might happen in the ocean, so I wanted to give them a nice time. That’s all!”

“Aww, what a sweet story, ye didn’t mean no harm, ye jus’ wanted to do somethin’ nice fer yer *pweecious teammates~!*” Leviathan folded her hands and mockingly pouted her lip at him, before returning to her vicious smile, “But ye left out an important detail, matey. When Levi here mistook ye for the Shadbearers, you **loovved** it~! Didn’t ya? Ye thought, ‘finally, a chance to get some of the respect I deserve!’ Ye could’ve set the record straight, but ye loved bein’ seen as the hero, that’s what ye’ve always wanted, and why work to get that fame and fortune when ye can just **steal** that valor instead~!?”

Leviathan held out one of her fingers for Alba. The siren perched right on it, and nuzzled against the dracoshark’s cheek affectionately as she raised it to her face. “And I know ye loved me little birdie, Alba too~! Ye fell for her charms so fast, ye were swoonin’ at her from the moment ye laid eye on her, because she treated ye like the hero ye think ye are... Arrharhar! You’re so *clueless*, ye can’t even notice yer bein’ pined after by your own-”

“That’s enough, leave him alone!” Mae cried out, ostensibly to protect Aden from further mockery, but more so to try and keep Leviathan from revealing the secret of her true feelings to Aden.

“Hehe, ooh, we’ve *already* gone over yer sins, priestess, ye told me every one of them, but there’s some details I left out. Like how ye were too lazy and proud to ‘lower’ yerself to workin’ on a fishing boat. Too good for fishies, are ya? Weeell, ye won’t be for long!” Leviathan then turned her attention to Belle, who’d until now gone mostly under the radar. “And **youuu...**”

“A-a-and *meeee?*” Belle shrunk back with an anxious smile, almost trying to retreat into her robes like a tortoise as she pointed at herself. “W-what about me?”

“I think ye’re the one who fascinates me most of all, *mage*. Ye can be honest with ol’ Leviathan, y’know. When were you plannin’ to tell yer harties here about your proclivities~?”

Rather than try to explain herself, Belle simply remained silent, Leviathan pressed a finger down atop her head, flattening the cone of her hat as she whispered to her, “I know what you are... and I know what you *want*.” Belle’s heart was pounding in her chest. “You wanna see them get turned, like yer last friends were. I’m gonna make ye an offer, savor it, matey, I don’t give things to others often~!”

“Here’s me terms, I can let *all* of ye go, right now! No strings attached, free as birds, I’ll even give back all of the crew and have me Sahaguin patch up the holes we made in your boat ‘ere! Ye can sail on to fight in the big battle like ye planned, *and* ye can be the hero who saved everyone from the *big, bad* Leviathan!” She was clearly having trouble holding in her

excitement, the twinkle in her eyes suggested she'd come up with a truly devious trick, and she already knew the outcome. "Oooor..."

Snap~!

Leviathan snapped her fingers and within seconds, a group of Sahuguin had assembled from below the decks. "You summoned us, Captain Leviathan~?" One of the monster girls reported in with a salute.

Each of them was wearing a light blue water-proof body suit, fitting snugly on their plump wide bodies, while still allowing enough slack for their soft, pudgy bellies to gently swell out just over their wide hips. They had frizzy and spiky hair in various shades of green and blue, many of them styled into pig or ponytails, and each wore a pair of goggles over their eyes with similar swirls to those seen on Belle's own glasses.

Around their chests and waists they wore "Oooh, now here's a suitably erudite looking specimen, is she eligible to be incorporated into our coterie~?" another asked, unable to resist performing a quick physical examination on Belle under her robes, something that made the mage shiver in barely withheld anticipation. The wizard couldn't help but notice the belts and bandoliers each of the Sahaguin wore that were adorned with all kind of different tools and *toys*, many of an explicitly kinky variety, and some that wouldn't take much imagination to be used that way.

"She *might* be, aye... If she makes the right choice." Leviathan poured all of her charm onto Belle, "As I was saying, I can set you free, or I can turn you and your friends into part of me crew and let you **waaatch**... Your choice."

"S-she's lying! Don't let her humiliate you, Belle!" Mae tried to advise her companion, not wanting to accept what seemed too good to be true. After all, it seemed like such an obvious choice. Why would she *ever* choose the latter option, after all!?

"Watch your tongue, little pearl! A pirate's word be all she got, if I said I'd honor her choice, then I *will* honor her choice. She just has to make it. So what'll it be, cutie? Don't think about what's the *right* choice or the *wrong* choice, nobody'll be able to judge ye for it, just do what you *really* want."

Belle looked around at the scared faces of her teammates, at the shortstacks around her, just itching to make her one of them, at the crew of the ship being hauled away like loot, including Levi who from the looks of things hadn't even bothered getting her hopes up. Then she looked back at Leviathan, into the eyes of one of the most powerful monsters on the planet, who was offering to make her deepest, darkest fantasies come true.

Her eyes narrowed as her face curled into a guilty smile that eerily matched Leviathan's own, she squeezed her knees together, the intoxicating regret and pleasure of what she was about to

do sizzled up her spine. Everything that happened now was going to be *all her fault*, but she loved it. "Yes, t-take me, take them, take *us all~!*"

"Good~! Girl~!" Leviathan gave Belle a pair of headpats, "As you wish."

"Belle! What have you done!?"

"Belle!? Why? Why!?"

"I'm sorry, I'm *sorry~!* I'm so sorry!" Belle cried out, her smile of pure masochistic bliss frozen on her face as she pulled down on the brim of her hat, "I had to, I couldn't resist~! I know it's wrong, but I just want it so bad! I- I *need* it!"

"Y-you bitch! You forced her to say that!" Mae accused her, to which Leviathan simply scoffed.

"First of all, thank ye for the lovely compliment, lass, and second of all, you civilized types all be the same, I swear! Always in denial about ye vices and yearnings, blamin' 'em on me, on each other, on the *weather*, on everything and anything but yerselves! If I was just gonna force her to say somethin', I wouldn't 'ave even given 'er the choice in the first fuckin' place! Face it, little pearl, you didn't know yer mage at all, she just sold you and everyone out for a little bit 'o of pleasure, 'cus everyone has their price, savvy?"

"At the end of the day, greed rules all...!" The shark woman stood up and swept her hands dramatically as the sky darkened, storm clouds swirling in and enshrouding the sun as drops of rain before to fall upon the Redoubt's deck. "And I rule greed!" She boasted as she brought a pair of fingers to her lips and blew them like a whistle. A pack of giggling sirens, including Alba, swooped down from above on Aden like the birds of prey they were and grabbed him.

Two of them lifted him up into the air by his arms as a couple of them laid underneath him to form a kind of living bed to lay him down upon instead of the hard wooden deck. "H-hey! Leggo of me! Put me down! *Put me down!*" He kicked and flailed in their grip as he was disarmed and lowered into the soft, waiting wings of the bird girl and bird boy. "No, I didn't mean put me down on y-yuuuh-? *Ahhh...*" He sighed as the birds cradled him in one of their wings each and rubbed the other over his chest and face.

"*Just relaaax and take a seeaaat~!*" The siren girl purred into his ear with a sing-song voice, she had tanned skin, red eyes, and a head of long black hair with a pair of similarly black wings. "*Don't we feel so soooff and sweeeet~?*" She planted a kiss on his cheek.

"*We'd loooove to have you in our flock~!*" The siren boy joined in, his voice a breathy, effeminate coo, singing just like his fellow crewmate. He had much paler skin, with icy blue eyes, wings, and spiky short hair. He smirked puckishly as his free wing went lower, "*Now take off these paaaants and let's see that-!*"

“Stop! Get off him! Don’t!” Mae shouted as they tried to run towards the lurid birds, but her path was blocked by Leviathan’s hand slamming down in front of her.

“Unh, unh, uuuuh~! Sorry, little pearl, but that one belongs to me sirens now. Don’t feel left out or jealous though, ye’re gonna get it even *better*. I’ve got a special reward in store for you. She snatched Mae in her hand, gently squeezing her as she brought her up to her face and breathed on her, her warm, mind-numbing breath washing over her like a sauna. “Ye’re gonna get inducted into the crew by your’s truly~! It’s the least I can offer for how *passionately* you worshipped me last night.”

“I... I’ll never join you! I won’t be broken by a monster, not again!” Mae tried to stay strong, but in her heart of hearts she knew that all the willpower she could muster wouldn’t mean much in the face of Leviathan’s power. What’s worse... she’d felt how cold her staff had turned, her goddess was displeased with her again, even if she didn’t want to admit it.

“Oooh yes ye will, lass, much *stronger* adventurers than you become mine. If there’s one thing ye need to know about ol’ Leviathan, my precious little pearl, it’s that I always get what I want, and what I want...” Leviathan gently dropped Mae back onto the deck, freeing up her hands to peel off her gigantic rubber shorts, revealing the full extent of her girthy blue cock, along with her pussy hidden beneath it. “is for you to join my crew...”

The Merrows burst into a tide of moans and lewd groans as the trapped musky scent of Leviathan’s crotch filled the air, most of them couldn’t resist the urge to start fingering themselves right then and there. After all, Leviathan was all about self-indulgence, and with how prideful she was, nothing fed her ocean sized ego more than seeing her loyal followers unable to control themselves around her.

The sirens surrounding Aden found themselves tempted, but they had a job to do, and it involved the boy in front of them. Another pair of birds knelt at his side, rubbing against his legs with their pillowy soft feathers. Alba meanwhile, landed right in front of him and leaned in towards his face, “Now, now, no need to worry about what Queen Leviathan is up tooo, just focus on me for now, my *dear, sweet herooo~!*” She wrapped her wings around his back, pulling him into a kiss as the sirens subtly began to tear at his clothes with their talons, stripping him naked as Alba began to grind against him. He was trapped in a cocoon of feathery fluff.

Leviathan slipped out of her shorts fully, revealing her glistening sweaty cock and balls for all to see. As one would expect, she had absolutely no shame, on the contrary she was *flaunting* them, gently swaying her sack as it hung and swung over Mae’s head like the sword of Damocles, threatening to come down and crush her at any moment. She twirled her shorts around her finger while her other hand teased and stroked her own gigantic length. “Perfect, ain’t it? I’m pretty proud of it, in fact, ye could call it the ultimate symbol of my pride, and in just a moment, it’s gonna *squash* that ego of yers and turn ye into one of my loyal crew!”

She tossed the shorts aside, where they conveniently landed right near where Belle was being undressed by the Sahaguin, as it landed on the deck, an intense waft of warm, noxious air poured out of the waistband and washed over the mage and her soon-to-be coworkers like low tide, making all of their eyes flutter as they flopped to the floor. “M-myyy, the Captain is certainly quite concupiscent tonight~!” A drooling sahuagin remarked.

“I concur, not to mention tumaceous~!” Another of the shortstacked engineers added, barely resisting the urge to crawl inside their captain’s underwear. “Let’s not lose track of our assignment however, girls, we must oversee our newest apprentice’s orientation.” She turned her own attention, along with the other sahuagin, back to Belle, as they finished discarding her clothes into the ocean, and pulled out a variety of their “implements.” They also turned her head towards Mae and Leviathan, in order to ensure that she didn’t miss a second of the “boon” that Leviathan had granted her.

Mae wanted to try and get out of the way, but found herself unable to move, the sweltering heat and musk pouring down onto her, and the sheer **presence** of Leviathan’s package, was making her body and mind both go numb. Each passing second caused her to slip into an even deeper daze, and while deep down she still wanted to stubbornly resist, more out of spite at this point than any remaining devotion to the Everlight left in her heart. Leviathan’s influence was already overpowering her, encouraging her to just enjoy what she knew she wanted deep down...

“Hehehe~! Ready or not, little pearl~!” Leviathan’s gleaming white and gold smile beamed down on Mae as she squatted down and smothered the priestess under her balls. The soft, sweaty skin spread across her like a weighted blanket, covering her completely as the pirate queen’s scent and power completely drowned out her thoughts.

Mae couldn’t even last a second before he was driven mad with arousal, tightly gripping and hugging the writhing carpet of skin that engulfed her and planting fervent kisses on it as she deeply huffed the musky aroma that her addled and rapidly twisting mind now saw as the sexiest thing she’d ever smelled. She never should’ve gone back to the Everlight, she saw that now, she belonged under a monster’s thrall, she **desired** to serve under a beautiful, strong, *dominant* being... Haelitox simply hadn’t been enough for her, but Leviathan? Oooh, she was so *much* more than that swamp gator could ever *hope* to be~!

Meanwhile, Belle was drooling onto the floor, utterly mesmerized by the display as Sahaguin got to work making it even better. While a couple hugged and kissed her, rubbing their adorable squishy bodies against the horny mage and caressing her with their nimble claws, others were putting their tools to work, in particular, one had a tool akin to a vibrator that she pressed down onto her dripping pussy, another had a mechanical piston that functioned as a dildo, that she was rubbing down in the kind of lubrication that they used for both the machines, and themselves, and working into her ass, and a third still had a strange device that looked like a hot glue hot with a suction cup on its end that she pressed firmly onto Belle’s chest, massaging and pumping her breast as it slowly started to fill out.

As Mae moaned and grinded against her new goddess's sack, the full *weight* of Leviathan's ego was corrupting her. Just as she promised, she was molding Mae into a new, worthier form. Her skin turned slick where the sweat seeped into it, carrying her essence into her as she took on a rubbery blue and white complexion. Her blonde hair was stained blue and white, her blue eyes taking on the same black sclera and golden pupils as the rest of the Merrow. Her hands and feet both sharpened into claws, but they couldn't hope to pierce the skin of an Elemental Calamity.

They jeered and whistled, teased and taunted, hazing their new sister in arms, but she didn't care, she couldn't even hear them, all she could hear were the soft and subtle rumbles of approval from her goddess as she came onto her hide. A shark tail began to bud from her tailbone, growing inch by inch with every kiss, hump, and sniff she took. Her bashful smile turned wicked and sharp, as did her teeth, and her shapely but weak body turned firm and toned, a set of prominent abs, biceps and glutes pumping into shape as her mind completely embraced its new identity... She was a monster again, and it felt even better than the first time!

"Arrharhar~! That oughta do ya!" Leviathan ran her hands through her braids as she stood up and looked down at her newest recruit, "Now *that's* a better look for ya, little pearl, welcome to the crew!"

"Haaahaaaa..." The newly corrupted Marrow giggled and licked her new lips as she staggered to her feet, her shark tail swaying in delight as admired the fin-blades that'd sprouted from her arms. "Hmm, it be an honor, nay, a *pleasure* t' be servin' such a worthy 'goddess,' Cap'n..." She bowed to her new superior as she ripped and tore the tattered and stained remains of her robes from her body.

"That's more like it... Ye did a good job down there too, might I add, between this and your performance on me statue last night, I think ye've got a bright future ahead of ye as my personal cock swabber... Would you *like* that, little pearl?" Leviathan offered, scratching under her chin with the tip of her nail.

The Merrow's eyes lit up, "*nothin'* would make me 'appier, cap'n!" She wholeheartedly and sincerely accepted. A few of the Merrow gave her envious grumbles, but most of them ran towards her to swarm her like the sharks they were. They started to affectionately elbow her, pat her on the back, and rub their fists against her hair, behaving like a bunch of frat boys in a locker room after a game.

Being saddled with the job of polishing their captain's cock every day would've been seen as a punishment or maligned duty in most crews, analogous with the infamously joked about "barrel" that every sailor had to "take their turn" in. But here, it made her a *celebrity*. In fact, more than a few of the Merrow crowding around and rubbing against her might've been more ulteriorly motivated by the prospect of catching a whiff or taste of the Sea Dragon's sweat and musk than they were welcoming their new crewmate aboard.

Regardless, she fit right in with the rest of the sharks, any trace of her more prudish, restrained personality smashed to pieces like a ship crashing into the rocks as she took their playful, boyish ribbing and roughhousing in stride and started to respond with some of her own. She took to it like, well, a fish to water, even going so far as to immediately start shoving some of the other Merrow's faces into her pits and slamming her ass down on others. Leviathan watched her girls proudly, she was fitting in perfectly.

"An exemplary demonstration of transmogrification and moral degradation on behalf of our captain, wouldn't you agree, apprentice~?" One of the Sahaguin helping to corrupt Belle teased. The mage's skin had already mostly taken on their blue complexion, her black hair splitting at its ends and getting crazier as it shifted to an emerald green.

The spirals on her glasses spun as her breasts were thickening with every suckle of the strange tool on her chest, her right breast had already been "enhanced" to a bouncy d-cup, and now her left was being brought up to match. Her ass was getting thicker and wider with every thrust of the "piston" in and out as her pussy was forming a puddle on the deck from her overwhelmed arousal. "It's... *shooo* *hooot*..."

"I do believe she's beginning to understand, girls! But let's not forget that there's *another* of her former compatriots still in the process of being recalibrated!" The Sahaguin turned her head towards Aden, Alba and the other sirens that were responsible for *his* corruption into one of their ilk.

Poor Aden stood even less of a chance that Mae had, he'd already been hopelessly enchanted by Alba before hand, never once picking up on the subliminal messages that she was slipping into her songs extolling Leviathan's vices and sins. As the sirens giggled and sang their harmonies into his ears, rubbing their fluffy wings against his body, he was adrift in a sea of bliss, unable to muster even the most token resistance to their efforts to change him into one of their own.

"Hehehe~! You may not be a shardbearer, but your dick isn't half bad, *Mr. Hee-roo~!*" Alba trilled and warbled naughtily as she bounced up and down on his shaft, the steady and constant rhythm of her movements like a metronome, with each "plap" of her hips against his serving at the beat that the other sirens sang to. His mind was so far gone that he didn't even realize what had happened to Mae... An empty, placid smile was on his face as his eyes fluttered and happy sighs and mutters were the only sounds that left his mouth; crude attempts to copy the singing of the sirens.

"Awww, you hear that? He's already trying to sound like us, that's sooo cute! C'mon, everyone, let's help him out, Leviathan needs another cheerleader after all!" Alba urged her ilk as they picked up the pace and clutched him tighter, completely swallowing him in feathers as they seemed to stick and merge with him. This caused feathers of his own to begin to sprout from his arms as they gradually thinned and broadened into a pair of pure white wings.

Their beautiful songs were filling up his brain and washing everything else away, all of his experience as an adventurer, his class features and levels, none of those things mattered. All that mattered was how cool and awesome Leviathan was, and how he should be another one of her pretty little pets. He'd be so happy and so well taken care of, being given a cut of the booty she plundered, not to mention a cut of *her* booty if he played his cards right and was an extra good birdie.

Speaking of booty, perhaps the most noteworthy change spreading over Aden's body was the fact that his hips and ass were getting wider and stronger by the second, just like the other sirens around him. His face softened, becoming more feminine and round. Alba reached down and gently rubbed his throat, reshaping his vocal chords bit by bit, using his moans to make further tweaks, almost like she was tuning a radio.

The skin on his legs beneath his knees started to harden and form yellow scales as his feet were being twisted into talons with long, sharp nails. Looking at the process might've lead one to assume that it would be painful, but it was the most heavenly experience that Aden had ever felt. His head was truly in the clouds, rising higher by the second, he'd always been a bit of an airhead, but now he'd be able to take on the altitude to match.

That *pride* that Leviathan had condemned him for also became much more pronounced, but it turned as much towards *her* as it did towards himself. As his body and voice became more alluring, he started to think more entitled and bratty thoughts... Only *Leviathan* of worthy of being the mistress of a bird as pretty as he was, only *she* could properly preen and pamper him the way he deserved, and only *he and his* fellow sirens could give her the praise and adoration that *she* deserved.

"I'll bet you can't wait to be free~! So hurry up and cum in me~!" Alba dropped any pretense and impatiently demanded he spew out the last remaining bits of his old self and his old life into her, and as his hands curled into claws, he took her into his new wings and obeyed. The air resonated with the sound of brainwashing birdsong as the sirens welcomed a brand new boy into their ranks... Aden unloaded pump after pump of white into the albatross themed siren who'd stolen his heart, and now stolen his entire identity, presenting her prize to her beloved Leviathan!

"So how do you feel now, Mr Hero~?" Alba chuckled as she stood up off of him, drops of his cuff blending into the white of her wings and dripping onto Aden's as well.

"Hero? Pffft-!" Aden scoffed as he stuck out his tongue, "Don't call me that, that's so *laaaame*, who wants to be a *hero*? Heroes are just the losers who get their asses whooped by Queen Leviathan!"

"Now you finally get it~!" Alba winked as suddenly all the times she had called him "hero" made sense in hindsight, there had always been a layer of sarcasm and contempt behind them, she'd just been waiting for the chance to make him into another one of Leviathan's sirens, most of

whom had themselves at one point tried to stand against the Scourge of the Seas, only to end up endlessly, and happily, singing her praises.

"I sure do, and boy, she sure fucked our asses good and plenty, hehehe~!" He giggled self-deprecatingly before turning his eyes towards one of the other birds, particularly the pale skinned *boy* that was preening his feathers right next to him. "Just like **this!**" He grabbed the boy in his wings and started rubbing his still hard dick against his plush, almost shining cheeks.

Aden had never had an interest in boys before, but now sticking to girls just seemed so *limiting~!* What better way to show his newfound devotion to his new Queen than by demonstrating how much his tastes had expanded and his hunger grown? He channeled her greed and pride, putting himself in her role and imagining the bird boy in place of him and his party... This was what they called "performance art," right?

The siren boy immediately accepted his role too, for all their bratty pride, all brats loved to submit as much as they loved to dominate. He blushed and looked back at Aden with a half-lidded, needy expression, wriggling his ass against the corrupted fighter's dick, as eager to take him inside of himself as he was to turn the tables later down the line.

Aden could practically feel her ravenous nature surging into him as he rammed his cock into the bird boy's tight ass, he'd never even *tried* anal before, let alone with a boy, but from the second he felt his insides tighten around his length, he was absolutely addicted. "*Haaaahh~!* This feels increeedible! Mhmhmmm, *thank you*, Queen Leviathaaan~! You're the most powerful, sexiest, smartest, wickedest monster in the whole ocean, the whole *wooooo/ddd~!*" He lavished her with praise and adoration as the other sirens joined in and offered both further flattery to Leviathan and encouragement to Aden.

"Let's go! Let's Go! Le-Vi-A-Tha~! Pillage, Plunder, as you please! Ruler of the mighty seas~!" Alba's comment about him being 'another cheerleader' seemed to have struck a particular *chord* in Aden's soul, as with sloppy, bouncy smack of his fellow siren's ass, he was taking that role more naturally, using his own rhythm as he sang out cheers for his triumphant, unstoppable mistress.

"Oooh, I like that, I like that *a lot...* Keep it up!" Leviathan herself voiced her approval, and that validation from the captain herself was enough to cause Aden to change even further to suit her desires. A tight latex tube top, blue gold and black to match Leviathan's colors, formed on his chest, the symbol of her crew emblazoned on the center. A pair of blue and gold pom-poms materialized from the tips of his wings, as he shook and swayed them about, his cheering only becoming more passionate and infectious.

The other sirens and some of the Merrows couldn't help but get caught up in his calls and responses. Every voice that participated just made his cheering stronger, which made it more irresistible in a positive feedback loop of ego boosting fanboy and fangirling. No one felt the effect stronger than the siren that Aden was fucking through, as Aden came inside of him, the

nude boy gained his own pair of pom-poms and a tube top of his own, his eyes lighting up as he started to groggily synchronize his motions and cheers with his own, becoming more perfectly in-sync as he recovered from his own orgasm.

“Rah! Rah! That’s it, join my squad! Hehehe~! Queen Leviathan, I want *moooore*, more cheerleaders to join me, to cheer for you!”

“Then go for it, me cute lil’ simp, take as many of ‘em as ye can, make yer captain proud!” Leviathan gave her full blessing to Aden’s endeavor as he immediately started looking hungrily at the other sirens... Of course, they were looking just the same right back at him. Leviathan loved to encourage competition among her crew as long as they remembered that **she** was the boss. Anyone who could manage to overtake *him* would get to be the head cheerleader in his place. The Dracoshark couldn’t wait to see just how far this went and how *messy* it would get.

“Aaaauhhnn~! That was aaamazzinnng!” Belle rejoiced at the sight of Aden’s downfall, it truly was made all the sweeter knowing that it’d been her own fault to subject them to this fate. By now, there was barely any of her human self left, the other Sahaguin were in the midst of measuring her for her new bodysuit as they played with, poked at, and measured her belly pudge with calipers and protractors to make sure it was all up to “regulation.” Fortunately, she was passing with flying colors.

“You are on the precipice of completing your metamorphosis, there is just one last touch we need to apply.” The Sahaguin excitedly chattered amongst themselves as they produced her very own set of swirly goggles, ones that looked much too small for Belle... they removed her glasses, leaving her actual eye color to remain a mystery for the ages as at this point even her actual eyes were swirling.

They stretched the rubber band of the goggles as tight as it would go, lowering it down around Belle’s head and then releasing it with a **SNAP!** “Gyeeeeeeee!!!” Belle’s entire body shook as her grin spread manically wide on her face and she let out a gurgling squeal. The goggles squeezed around her head so tightly that they pressed out everything left of her existence prior to joining the Sahaguin, all that remained was her encyclopedic knowledge of Captain Leviathan’s history, personality, hobbies and interests, along with the engineering knowledge she’d acquired from her all-nighter spent studying the fish girls’ text.

She grabbed at her head and flopped back onto the deck, onto the laps of some of her comrades, as she was now a Sahaguin through and through... “Ahhh, I feel utterly... *exuberant*.” Basking in her new identity, she asked the others, “my esteemed colleagues, would you be amenable to partaking in a bout of roistering amongst our imperious overseer’s repudiated habiliment?”

The other Sahaguin actually had to deliberate with one another to try to and discern the precise meaning of her suggestion. Eventually, one of them requested, “Could you please restate that in more conventional terms?”

“Do you wanna play in Leviathan’s smelly shorts?”

“We sure would!”

“Aahhh, well...” Leviathan reclined against the back of the ship, effortlessly and painlessly crunching through the wooden planks as she crossed her legs and watched her crewmates going about their duties in her service. “I might not’ve gotten the shardbearers... But I think these three could be even *better* lieutenants in the long-run.” She surmised, “They were so rife with greed, pride and sloth to begin with, nothing like those insufferable ‘chosen heroes...’ Hehe, and I’m sure they’ll only grow more selfish and *depraved* in me service~! *Ahh*, I’m so proud of me loyal crew!”

As Leviathan reveled in her victory and the spoils that came with it, not too far away, on a humble shipping boat back in the safety of the protected lanes, those exactly three chosen heroes that the Sea Bitch was maligning could see the ominous storm clouds swirling in the horizon, and each of them knew exactly what they meant.

Their gambit had worked, Leviathan had taken the bait, and the three who’d taken their place had undoubtedly fallen into her grasp. With their minds still focused on the battle to come, they spared a moment for those adventurers they never met, and who in fact had stolen and impersonated them, but that they were nonetheless sorrowful and grateful for. They made a pledge to do what they could to try and save them someday, but whether they succeeded or not, one thing was for sure...

For as long as they belonged to her, there would be few among Leviathan’s crew who would so thoroughly embody the vices she called virtues. While many more would come to find their fate at the hands of the Pirate Queen, few would manage to come even close to being quite so prized as these three jewels claimed by the self-proclaimed Queen of the Sea...