

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

A/N: Leon's search has been off to a slow start, by his reckoning anyways.

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The girl is terrified of him. That part isn't surprising; Leon is used to his reputation preceding him. It had been the same way with Angelica and Olivia initially.

What *is* surprising is the girl's presence in this place altogether. This was the fifth outpost Leon had hit in so many days at this point. It didn't shock him that word of the attacks hadn't reached any of his targets just yet.

With each outpost going completely silent, the Winged Sharks would first have to notice the quiet and then they would have to send people to check on things. Only after they found the outposts abandoned would they spread word of the attacks.

Still, none of the other outposts had had someone like this girl at them. Leon wasn't oblivious, he recognized a noblewoman when he saw one. Even one so clearly down on her luck and being used as little more than a serving wench.

But of course, she was ultimately irrelevant to his current interests. Leon knew exactly what Deirdre Fou Roseblade was supposed to look like, and this woman with her blue hair was not it. Which meant her only real use to him was to guide him to the office of whoever ran this outpost so he could see if there was any information to be found there.

So far, Leon hadn't managed to strike gold. None of the previous four outposts that he'd knocked off in the dead of night had any information that Cleare herself could get for him by just scanning their surrounding environment. Every outpost they were in contact with, Leon already knew about. And of course, none were big enough to actually have truly sensitive information.

But he had hoped to find at least some mention of his quarry or even the attacks on House Roseblade. It certainly seemed like the Winged Sharks were going all out in an effort to do irreparable damage to Dorothea and Deirdre's House, so there might be some mention, some clue for him to go off of.

Once he's been escorted to the office, Leon doesn't waste time scouring the place. All the while, the young noblewoman stands off to the side, trembling and clearly trying not to wet herself in terror. Honestly, he hasn't even done anything to her... so long as one did not count massacring a room of pirates right in front of her eyes.

Which to be clear, Leon did not count that! He had saved her... sort of. Technically, he would only really be saving her if he chose to bring her with him and that part was still up in the air. On the one hand, leaving her behind would expose him to the Winged Sharks who eventually came to this outpost to investigate its silence. On the other hand, taking her with him would be such a hassle and it wasn't like Leon cared if the Winged Sharks knew he was coming for them or not...

Letting out a sigh as yet another ledger proves to be ultimately worthless to him, Leon finally turns to address the elephant in the room.

"Who are you?"

Stiffening visibly, her back ramrod straight and her eyes wide with fear, the young woman swallows hard. It takes her a second to muster a response, but Leon is patient with her... see, he can be nice!

"I... I am Carla Fou Wayne. M-My father would pay ransom for my s-safe return..."

Leon narrows his eyes at that and considers what he knows for a long moment before slowly shaking his head.

"No he wouldn't."

The now identified Carla freezes up, giving away the lie all the more clearly. Leon just tilts his head to the side and shrugs.

“Your father is Conrad Fou Wayne, a Baronet under the control of House Offrey. The same House bankrolling the Winged Sharks. For you to be here in this position means he’s either dead... or has given you up as a lost cause. Returning you to him would not earn me his gratitude... would it?”

Carla trembles for a long moment more before sniffing. Leon resists the urge to take a step back as tears began to fall down her cheeks. Oops, he hadn’t meant to make her cry. Shit, crying women always made him feel bad.

“N-No... you’re r-right, I... I’m worthless. There’s nobody in the whole w-world who wants me...”

Slowly, she sinks down to her knees right there on the office floor, lowering her head.

“Please... just make it q-quick...”

Leon furrows his brow at that, huffing indignantly. He wasn’t stupid, but he asks all the same, slightly offended.

“Make what quick?”

Quivering, head still bowed, Carla Fou Wayne whimpers.

“I just don’t w-want it to hurt...”

Her inability to say the words, to admit she expects him to kill her, does not keep it from being obvious that she expected it all the same. Rolling his eyes, Leon shakes his head even as he shuts the last drawer of the desk in front of him. Nothing worthwhile, again. Which means its time to move on to the next outpost on the list. But first...

“I’m not going to kill you, woman.”

Carla's head snaps up at that, her teary eyes wide as she stares at him in disbelief.

"You... y-you're not?"

Was that truly so hard to understand? Sure Leon had killed women and men before, but only those who had brandished weapons at him first or broke the code or deeply, deeply offended his sensibilities in some way. His hands were by no means clean, but the point remained that he wasn't going around slaughtering innocents wholesale, least of all innocent unarmed women who had committed no hostile actions against him.

Huffing again, Leon shakes his head.

"Your life is your own."

Then, he starts to walk towards the door of the office, fully intending to leave. For a moment he thinks he might get away before she can overcome his shock... but alas, as he steps out into the hallway, her voice calls out from behind him.

"W-Wait!"

She rises to her feet and stumbles towards him as Leon turns to regard her with a single raised eyebrow.

"You... you're just l-leaving me here? The Winged Sharks w-will be back... they'll make me tell them what happened..."

For someone who didn't want him to kill her, she was doing a really good job of arguing for her own death. That was, after all, the 'clean' way of dealing with this situation. If he didn't want her to spill the beans and he didn't want to take her with him, he *should* just do away with her. Obviously, Leon wasn't going to do that though.

“Tell them what you wish. By the time they check on this outpost and you’re able to give your story, it will be too late anyways.”

After all, Leon wasn’t intending to waste time. He would hit another outpost and another, moving deeper and deeper into Winged Shark territory using the Going Merry’s suite of stealth capabilities, until he found a sign of where Deirdre Fou Roseblade was taken. So ultimately, the Winged Sharks knowing that he was personally hitting their outposts didn’t mean anything to him.

Carla gapes for a moment at his confidence before flushing and biting her lower lip.

“You... I d-don’t know what they’ll do to me though, even if I do tell them the truth. Please... take me with you?”

And there it was, the request he’d been hoping to avoid. Leon sighs.

“And why exactly should I do that? What do you have to offer me?”

Uncertainty reigns for a moment, before resolve spreads across Carla’s face.

“I can offer you... myself. I can c-clean for you... and do other things for you as well. M-My body is still pure in spite of my c-circumstances. You may claim the virginity of a noblewoman if you l-like. I will gladly warm your bed and make you supper and c-clean your clothes... everything a man can desire from a woman, s-so long as you remove me from this place.”

It was a strong offer. Or rather, it would be under different circumstances. The truth was, Carla didn’t hold a candle to either Angelica or Olivia. Both blondes completely blue the blue-haired noblewoman out of the water in terms of looks... specifically in the chest region.

So even though Angelica and Olivia had made it rather clear before he left that they wouldn’t mind if he wound up in a relationship with Deirdre by the end of all of this, Leon wasn’t necessarily interested in picking up yet another stray, nor bedding yet another noblewoman.

“Not interested.”

He turns and begins walking away again after those two simple words leave Carla gobsmacked, her jaw hanging open in disbelief. He makes it down the hall and around a corner before her footsteps rush after him.

“W-Wait! What do you m-mean not interested?! I’m not ugly! S-Surely you wouldn’t mind s-sleeping with me!”

As she turns the corner, Leon whips back around again, prompting her to skid to a halt as he advances on her.

“Just so we’re clear, darling, when you proposition a Sky Pirate, you’re not offering to ‘sleep’ with them. You’re offering yourself up to get fucked. It wouldn’t be anything kind or gentle. It would be rough and hard, and not every pirate would bother ensuring your good health by the end. You should be more cautious of who you offer your body to, girl.”

Carla blinks rapidly, fresh tears welling up as Leon speaks. But he doesn’t let it get to him this time. Not visibly at least.

“Furthermore, I am not out here knocking over Winged Shark bases because I’m looking to get my rocks off. There’s only one reason I’ve come here and seeing how she’s not here, it’s time for me to move on. You, I’m afraid, are just a distraction. So sit tight, think of how you’re going to sell me out to the Winged Sharks, and wait for them to come and get you.”

Harsh? Maybe, but Leon didn’t care. He wasn’t here to make friends, nor to rescue every damsel in distress that he ran across. Carla Fou Wayne would probably be fine as well. Sure, they’d been using her as a serving wench here, but that should keep her beneath the notice and ire of whatever other Winged Sharks would show up. It would be *fine*.

“W-Wait... who is she? Who are you looking for?”

Leon pauses at Carla's query, staring at her for a long moment before letting out a sigh.

"If I told you that, I really would have to kill you."

Of course...

"B-But you've already revealed too much. You've revealed you're looking for a woman. If... if the Winged Sharks come here, I'll have to tell them that part too!"

She's right. He'd said too much. It was one thing for the Winged Sharks to learn that Leon was knocking over their bases. It was another thing entirely for them to learn that he was after Deirdre Fou Roseblade, which they would probably figure out quickly, especially with Dorothea's capture not going according to plan.

Put simply... Carla was now a threat to his mission.

"You might as well tell me who it is... before you kill me."

She's cleverer than he gave her credit for, Leon is forced to admit. As well as growing all the more confident in her fatalism. She stares at him defiantly and Leon has to acknowledge she looks a bit more attractive for it. She's still a lot plainer than either Angelica or Olivia... but she's cute when she's glaring at him rebelliously.

Half-chuckling, half-sighing, Leon shakes his head. She's right in that there's no point in holding anything back now, no matter what he decides to do next.

"Deirdre Fou Roseblade. That is the noblewoman I seek. I've been tasked with retrieving her."

Carla's eyes widen... and then narrow calculatingly. Leon, meanwhile, considers his options for a moment before coming to a decision, reluctant as it might be. Before he can act on his decision, however, Carla seems to sense the change in the atmosphere and raises her hands defensively.

“W-Wait... I can help you. I know where Deirdre is!”

That... brings Leon up short.

“Oh?”

“Y-Yes, but I’ll only tell you if you promise to take me with you and grant me safe passage to proper civilization!”

... Amusingly enough, that was actually what he’d already decided to do. No, he wasn’t going to kill the girl to tie up loose ends anymore than he’d been willing to do so before his own mistake. Of course, she didn’t necessarily need to know that.

“Very well, we have a deal. Where is Deirdre Fou Roseblade?”

Carla licks her lips.

“I... I’ll only tell you once we’re on your ship and away from this place. I won’t let you abandon me here after I spill!”

That was a fair precaution, in the end, Leon just shrugs and nods and turns around. This time however, he’s not walking away from Carla... but rather leading her to his ship. She scurries after him and for a moment he half-expects her to demand that he wait so she can retrieve some things from wherever they’ve let her sleep.

... But either she simply doesn’t think of it or she doesn’t have anything worth retrieving here. Either way, she’s silent as they step onto the Going Merry and the small airship lifts up off of the island he’s just depopulated. To be fair, it was a small island and the population was entirely centered on the Winged Shark Outpost he’d just decimated.

The silence continues for another hour before Leon finally turns to Carla and pins her with a piercing gaze.

“Tell me where I can find Deirdre Fou Roseblade.”

Carla swallows thickly, throwing one last glance back over her shoulder in the direction they’ve just come from. The island has long since vanished into the distance, but it’s as though she’s afraid it’ll reappear again in an instant if she speaks. Finally, she spills the beans all the same.

“T-The Offrey Estate... that’s where Deirdre will be. Stephanie was always talking about how much she disliked Deirdre. She always said she wanted to put her in her place personally. She wouldn’t just let the Winged Sharks sell Deirdre off... no, she’d want to break her personally.”

Carla shivers and looks a little horrified at her own words. And yet, Leon can tell she believes them. It’s both more and less than he was hoping for... nothing concrete, but still the best lead he’s gotten yet.

Of course, what Carla failed to take into account was that he could now just dispose of her anyways, since she’d given up her only leverage. Leon wasn’t going to do that, obviously... but he was tempted to point it out to her here and now.

Alas... he doesn’t do that either. Man, he really is getting a bit soft, isn’t he?

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