

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

**A/N: What's Leon's older brother up to...**

**-x-X-x-**

Nicks grunts as he parries the blade of the sailor in front of him, turning aside a stab meant for his heart. He immediately counterattacks, his own sword taking the other man's life. There's only a slight pang as he does so... both of them were trying to kill the other after all, and life was truly perilous out here in the open skies. Still... there was no denying that Nicks was the aggressor here.

That slight pang in his chest at having to take a life grows a bit more when the enemy crew surrenders mere moments later. If he'd hesitated, if he'd spared the other man, surely the sailor would have thrown down his weapon and surrendered with the rest of his crew.

Ruthlessly suppressing his guilt, Nicks huffs as he carries out his duties as First Mate, barking orders and making sure everything goes smoothly as the surrender is accepted and the surviving sailors are all forced to their knees with their hands behind their heads.

... Admittedly, he'd thought it would be different, signing up to join a crew leaving Tortuga behind to go and pilfer and plunder. Nicks had told himself that he knew what he was getting into, he'd told himself it wouldn't be all adventure and fun... but at the same time, he'd definitely fooled himself into thinking it would be less bloody than it was.

To be fair, a lot of the time their marks surrendered with barely a drop of blood shed. But not always. And not this time. Their prey had fought back this time and as Nicks looks around the deck of the airship at the dead and dying, both strangers and men he knew alike, his jaw clenches.

Being First Mate was... well, he would be lying if he said he hadn't worked for it. And yet at the same time, days like today made him question if he'd really made the right call, leaving his family behind.

Still, why had they fought back so hard? Why-?

"First Mate! Found this one hiding below decks!"

Nicks whirls around, blinking when he sees an absolutely gorgeous woman with blue eyes, silken blonde hair, and pale white skin being escorted out from below decks. To say she was... voluptuous would honestly be an understatement, and the men who are escorting her aren't bothering to hide their lustful appraisals of her figure.

Clenching his jaw yet again, Nicks starts forward and once he gets close enough, he sketches an elegant bow.

"Please accept my apologies for the brusqueness, milady. I assure you on my honor as First Mate that we will not impede your way for long... once we've taken everything valuable, you and your airship will be allowed to go on your way."

When he raises his head from the bow, the (obvious) noblewoman is looking at him with an icy expression that sends a shiver down his spine. She sweeps her gaze across the deck of the ship for a moment before looking back to him.

Whatever she might have said however... Nicks never gets to find out what it is. Because before she can speak, the boisterous voice of his Captain rings out.

"Ohohoho! Now what do we have here?! What a beautiful woman, to grace us with her presence!"

Nicks tries not to wince as he turns to regard the other man. Blackbeard, as he insisted on being called, wasn't necessarily a bad Captain... rather, he was pretty much your stereotypical Sky Pirate by Nicks' estimation.

However, that wasn't necessarily a good thing. The man's honor only went so far as the edicts handed down by the Pirate King of Tortuga. He followed the code like everyone else because to do otherwise would be to invite reprisal from the Pirate Lords, who kept everyone in line out of fear of reprisal from the Pirate King.

Of course, Nicks knew what almost nobody else did... the Pirate King was his brother of all people. Not that that made Leon any less threatening... Nicks had seen Leon's golems in action, he'd seen his brother's airship do amazing things, and he knew full well that Leon's power was genuine.

Regardless, Captain Blackbeard's beady eyes slide up and down the noblewoman's figure and he grins wickedly as he saunters onto the deck.

"Do you have a name to go along with that pretty face, madam?"

Nicks looks between his Captain and the Lady... who remains silent, her icy blue eyes filled with disdain as she regards Blackbeard wordlessly. Nicks squirms, worried that her refusal to answer might upset his prideful Captain... but instead Blackbeard's grin just widens.

"Ah, shy are we? Well, maybe I shall give you a name then, hm?"

The tension in the air is as obvious as it is awkward. Nobody quite knows what's going on... even Nicks. And as First Mate, that's rather frustrating. Just what game is his Captain playing here?

Pointing a fat finger in the blonde noblewoman's direction, Blackbeard hums.

"Let's see... I think we'll call you... Dorothea Fou Roseblade! How about that?"

The reaction from the now-named Dorothea is understated but no less genuine. Her blue eyes widen and her icy gaze is replaced by shock for a moment. She tries her best to rally and go back to being unreadable afterwards, but it's far too late for that... she's given up the game.

“Heh, yes that is your name isn’t it? Excellent... then we have what we came for.”

Nicks blinks, caught off guard and forced to step in.

“Captain?”

Blackbeard looks over at him, as if just remembering he’s there. The Sky Pirate blinks before letting out a laugh.

“Ah right, didn’t tell you did I? Got a job to procure this little lady here for some people who really want to have a word with her. Easy enough gig, in the end.”

There’s some uncertain looks shared among the crew at that. And Nicks knows exactly why. After all...

“But Captain... isn’t that putting us in danger of running afoul of the code?”

Blackbeard’s geniality vanishes without a trace, his beady eyes now piercing as he stares at Nicks.

“How so?”

The other man’s tone is dangerous, all but ordering Nicks to stand down without actually saying it outright. But Nicks... Nicks can’t bite his tongue. Not here.

“The code is pretty clear we’re not supposed to partake in the skin trade, Captain. Wouldn’t *they* be unhappy with us for taking on a job like this?”

He doesn’t outright say ‘Pirate Lord’ or ‘Pirate King’ but its implied. Technically, neither are very secret... more like open secrets than anything. But it is rather taboo to discuss such things in front of people who aren’t pirates.

Plus, Blackbeard understands him perfectly anyways, scoffing and shaking his head.

“Ransomin’ ain’t slave tradin’, boy. We’re perfectly fine to ransom some prissy nobles back to their families for coin if we want to, the code ain’t say nothing against that.”

He’s right of course, but at the same time... this wasn’t that.

“We aren’t ransoming her back to her family though, are we sir?”

Finally, Captain Blackbeard has had enough. Suddenly, there’s a pistol in his hand, albeit pointed at the ground still even as he sneers at Nicks.

“You questioning your Captain’s orders, First Mate?”

Nicks stiffens, his jaw clenching as he straightens up to his full height.

“No sir... what are your orders, precisely?”

Blackbeard pauses for a moment, sweeping his gaze over the deck of the ship.

“... Kill the rest of this lot and secure the girl and her ship. We’ll take it with us as spoils as we ‘escort’ her to her new friends.”

Nicks’ jaw clenches even harder, his teeth all but grinding together as that prompts a wave of violence he has no way of stopping. After all, the moment they hear they’re all about to die, those who have surrendered jerk as if to try and fight back again... which in turn prompts the pirates standing guard over them to finish the job quickly before things can become a proper battle once more.

Dorothea Fou Roseblade tries to keep her composure as this happens, but Nicks can tell she’s rattled all the same. Even still... he’s the First Mate and has a job to do, so he steps up to her side and takes ahold of her arm, trying his best to mitigate things as he looks to Blackbeard.

“Shall I confine her to her quarters then, Captain? Since we’re taking her ship with us anyways. A noblewoman expects a certain level of comfort.”

He tries to make it sound like a jest, but he's not sure he succeeds. There's a strain in his voice underneath his forced joking tone that Nicks at least hears clear as day. Meanwhile, Blackbeard pauses again for a moment as he considers the question... before grinning widely once more.

"You're right about that. Go ahead and escort her to *my* quarters, First Mate. I'll see to her comfort *personally*."

Oh. Funny... Nicks had already come to a certain decision, otherwise he might have protested more strongly. But as it is, even as he feels Dorothea stiffening up at his side, he simply nods.

"Of course sir."

Can't rock the boat too much... not until the time is right.

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Later that night, Nicks approaches Captain Blackbeard's quarters with his cutlass drawn and already dripping with blood. A group of men follow him, the members of the crew who he knew felt the same way he did and who could be trusted. They had effectively just pulled a mutiny, killing the Captain's most fervent supporters and taking control of the rest of the ship. Now, all that was left was to deal with Blackbeard himself.

Nicks had moved as fast as possible and done everything in his power to try and help the poor noblewoman that he'd been forced to escort to Blackbeard's quarters hours before. The Captain himself had only retired to his quarters half an hour ago... but thirty minutes was an eternity and Nicks feared what they might find when they got inside.

Coming to the doors, Nicks doesn't bother knocking. He tries the door first to make sure its locked and when he finds that it is, he rears back and kicks as hard as he can, busting through the wood and making the doors swing open as he and his men charge in.

What he finds... shocks him to his core. Dorothea Fou Roseblade's dress is ripped and there's blood everywhere. However, the blood is not hers. Rather, on the bed... is the corpse of Captain Blackbeard, most of his blood coming from his crotch where he's been thoroughly gelded.

Meanwhile, Dorothea stands off to the side, staring down at a letter on the Captain's desk. Holding it with one hand, she clutches a bloodied dagger in the other, looking up at them as they enter with that same icy gaze as before. She looks a little disheveled, and there is a rip in her dress as previously mentioned... but by and large it doesn't look like Blackbeard was able to take her dignity from her. She remains untouched in that regard.

Still, Nicks likes to think that her icy gaze softens just a bit when it lands on him. Or maybe he's just imagining things. Either way, he offers her a crooked smile and a nod to the dagger she's wielding.

"I'm glad the blade served you well, milady."

He'd slipped it to her on his way to the Captain's quarters. He wasn't sure what else to do, really. Having to tie her up so Blackbeard might have his way with her later, Nicks had already known before that that he was staging a mutiny later that night. The dagger... the dagger had been just in case the mutiny failed. He hadn't even known if she would have the confidence to try and use it.

Clearly he'd underestimated her. She was more bloodthirsty than he could possibly have guessed. It was kind of hot, if Nicks was being honest.

"And what happens now? Your Captain is dead... does that make you Captain?"

Nicks straightens up, glancing back to his co-conspirators before looking to Dorothea and nodding.

"That's right."

“And what will you do with me, Captain? Will you be finishing what your previous Captain started?”

“What?! No! Of course not! I... we did this to try and help you!”

Dorothea furrows her brow.

“You’re Sky Pirates.”

Fair, honestly. But at the same time...

“Yes, we’re Sky Pirates. But we have a code... the Pirate’s Code. And that code is very clear that we are not to partake in the slave trade. Ransoms are one thing... but capturing you to sell you off to some third party is another entirely, is it not? We had to act... and we have no intention of selling you now that we’ve stopped Blackbeard.”

Dorothea still doesn’t look entirely convinced... but she holds up the letter she’d taken from Blackbeard’s desk.

“It is not just me they were after. They went for my sister too. I require your help in making sure she’s okay.”

Nicks blinks at that, caught off guard by the sudden demand.

“Considering that you slaughtered my previous crew, it only seems right that you do so.”

She was certainly an opinionated woman, wasn’t she? Nicks resists the urge to squirm under her imperious gaze, even as he looks right back at her unflinchingly.

“... Who is ‘they’? Who has your sister?”

Brow furrowing, Dorothea looks down at the letter.

“These... Winged Sharks, apparently.”

Again, Nicks exchanges looks with the other men with him. The Winged Sharks were one of the most powerful and organized groups of pirates around. And there had been rumors, recently, of them shunning the code and doing their own thing...

More than that, Nicks knew for a fact that he would have another mutiny on his hands if he agreed to her demands outright. None of the men who had signed on with him for tonight had signed on to commit suicide against the Winged Sharks. Instead...

“The Winged Sharks are far too powerful for our one single ship to handle. If you want help facing them, then there’s only one place you can go.”

Dorothea narrows her eyes.

“Where?”

“The Isle of Tortuga, to petition the Pirate King by way of the Pirate Lords to intercede on your behalf.”

There’s a bit of rustling and murmuring behind him at that, but Nicks doesn’t care if he’s committing a bit of a social faux pas by mentioning both entities in front of a non-pirate. Dorothea, for her part, wrinkles her nose like she doesn’t know whether to believe him or not.

Offering her a crooked smile, Nicks just shrugs.

“It’s your best bet of getting your sister back safe and sound, milady.”

Finally, after a long moment, Dorothea agrees with a jerky nod. Nicks resists the urge to breathe a sigh of relief. At least he was no longer stuck between a rock and a hard place. Now he just needed his brother to come through for him...

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