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Keira Parsons

Writing 12

Raise the Colours

Chapter One: Unwanted Welcome

It almost seems impossible for me to go back to that dire moment when Captain Korbin cut through me like scissors through paper. That bloody nobleman, he tricked me, before I even got a chance to raise the Jolly Roger and fire the canons, that scalawag rose his white flag in surrender!

"Parlay!" he had shouted as he raised his fine-gloved hand in the air, meaning he must come aboard my ship to speak with me. Forced by the pirate code, I had to agree. When he climbed from the bitty rescue boat and onto my vessel, *The Ember Phoenix*, he alone faced my crew and me. The look on his face assured he knew that the rescue boat below wouldn't be enough against us. But he kept a calm exterior; he knew that I could not harm him under 'parlay'.

He came vis-à-vis and held out his hand in a welcoming gesture. I glanced to his blue irises. They seemed so dull, like an old man, yet he was rather young; he looked almost hesitant, or perhaps impatient.

I turned my eyes up to his head, the wig that sat there was a pale white, like untouched snowflakes. Two rolls were on each side. And as I went to seize his hand in return, without warning he hitched a handcuff on my bracelet-covered wrist.

That bastard.

I knew my crew behind me would jump to my aid, cutlasses ready to carve him to bits. The bloodthirsty mates would race in order to get the first break of skin on this piece. I had the same crave. My free hand held the butt of my gun strapped to my belt. I didn't care if I was under pirate code; Korbin was no pirate.

"Captain Raven, you are coming with me," he spoke stiffly.

"And what makes you reckon that, Mr. Korbin?" I asked plainly, trying to hide my gritted teeth behind my lips.

"On the grounds that your father has beseeched you. He has personally put me on the endeavor to bring you home before you embarrass him further as a filthy pirate."

I felt my blood heat up in my build. My heart pumped roughly in my ears.

"I promise that I mean you no harm," he averred.

My crew, on the other hand, would mean him great harm if he did not liberate me. I could sense their emotion intensify near pure outrage towards the noble captain.

I gave him my best smirk.

"I am afraid you have yet to earn my trust, Captain Korbin. In other words, I'm not going anywhere with the likes of you. Now if you will remove these shackles--"

Korbin had pulled me into him, my back now pressed against his medal-covered chest. A blade held close to my neck.

"No one move or your precious captain gets a one way ticket to Dave Jones's locker!" he threatened. My men stayed rooted.

Korbin's mouth moved close to my ear. "I have a reward waiting for me, as well as a promotion. Once I bring you home, your father will grant me the rank of admiral."

"Sorry, old friend, but I don't think you will get me to come with you that easy," I retorted.

The Captain barely had time to frown before my free hand pulled out my gun and I broke out of his grasp. Standing next to him at arm's length, the point of my blunderbuss held just inches from his temple.

My crew stepped forward, but I held out my hand to stop them.

"So, Mr. Korbin, what now?" The corner of my lips pulled to a sharp smirk of satisfaction.

"Now," he said, slowly lifting his left hand. "You die."

My eyes widened as I realized what he had just done; he had made a signal.

That was when the ear-shattering sound of gunpowder exploded, the stingy stench filled my nose. The canon broke through the sea air over the water. I turned my head to see the black ball fly closer to my ship. It rocked as it came into contact.

"We're under fire!" a crewmember shrieked.

"Man the canons!" I shouted. "All hands on deck!"

The crew took my orders, scrambling around the floor, almost falling as more cannonballs came into contact with my beloved vessel.

Arms wrapped around my torso, Korbin had once again captured me. After a struggle I managed to rip away from him, pulling out my sword; my gun still cocked in my right hand.

He reached for his own sword, watching my movements closely. I was the only southpaw pirate in the seven seas. It was what made me better than the rest. He seemed unsure where to come at me, but I didn't give him a chance. Sparring forward, the tip of my blade barely missed him as he stepped out of the way.

His fine-point sword collided with mine.

Twisting my arm, the crossed weapons unlocked. I struck at him again; he backed up as I continued to pursue him. This was the last straw.

He grew close to the ship's blockade, if he flipped over it, he would meet the deep blue below.

I lifted my foot and kicked him hard in the abdomen. His back hit the barrier.

My blade held close to his throat as he leaned up. My brown eyes kept stern to his as I spoke, "Any last words?"

Then another canon hit. No, not a canon. I staggered, then caught my ground. I turned to whatever rocked my deck so roughly.

It was another ship. Korbin's ship: *The Copper Compass*.

"Sail ho!" the crow's nest shouted.

"I got that!" I replied rudely.

The lookout jumped from the nest and climbed down the dark net to even ground.

Then men began flooding onto my ship like the sea itself. My crew spotted the Korbin clones, dropping whatever they were doing and immediately pulled out weapons of all sorts.

I looked back at Korbin, only to be hit in the face with the handle of his sword. The blow was to my cheek. The skin ripped, and hot blood ran down my face. My head whipped to the side, then was thrown back at him; my forehead came into contact with his. He teetered backward, losing his footing once again. The head-butt left him dizzy and disorientated.

Perfect.

Swiping my sword over my head, I attacked, throwing the blade down. Korbin gained his consciousness just enough to roll out of the way from my deathblow. My sword hit and got caught in the wood of the ship. I wiggled it, but it didn't budge. I leaned my boot on the blockade and pulled, but to no avail. I turned just in time for Korbin to strike his weapon at me. The thin point just missed my eye as I stepped back.

As I continued moving back, my hand yanked hard, my sword finally came free. As Korbin brought his aggression down upon me, I kneeled on one knee and lifted my cutlass to block him, then shoulder rolled away. I stood, facing him at a farther distance; behind me, the roars and screams of war rang through my ears. My crew was winning against the sailors of *The Copper Compass*. I wished to turn around to witness their victories, but Korbin barely gave a chance to blink as he charged again.

I kept all my focus on him.

"Cap'n!" A familiar voice called. "The sails are caught!"

My eyes widened and I looked to what he spoke of. It was my first mate, Jackie. Where would I be without him? When I first became Captain, The Phoenix was stolen by a man named Hanley Peer. I couldn't recall his nickname. It was my first test as captain, but I never would have gotten through it without Jackie. It was why I pronounced him as my first mate.

As for his plea, he meant of course that the sails of the collided ships had knotted together. The only way to free them was to cut one mass loose. And it wasn't going to be mine.

But Korbin had the same idea, I turned back at him, but he did not take the offensive; just ran towards the quarterdeck and headed for the nets that led to the sails.

Unfortunately for him, I knew a short cut.

Chasing after him, I allowed him to climb. As he did I made a mad dash for the wheel. My quartermaster, Bosco, held it firmly.

"Gangway!" I shouted, then booted him. I snatched the wheel and held it tight as it turned towards Korbin's ship. No one even noticed the light rock of the deck, not until I released the wheel so it snapped right, then the whole ship almost tipped.

The pretty footwork below turned into almost a dance as the party of pirates and fancy pants rich kids tried to stay upright. They crashed into the other barrier, the ship again rocked, almost falling into the deep.

Looking up at the net, I spotted where good ol' Korbin was well knotted in the links.

Poor Bastard.

After releasing the wheel I ran starboard, where the ship was tipped upwards. The sails were still attached, *The Copper Compass* acted like our anchor, keeping us from falling further.

I jumped onto the barrier and ran across it, then pounced onto the pole that held the sails. It was now lying almost perfectly horizontal, good enough for me to run across. Korbin saw my actions, but was too tangled to do anything about it. The ship began tilting back.

Before defying all laws of gravity, I leaped, just in time for a long rope to swing by. My fingers wrapped tightly around the twine and I used all my might to stay airborne. My weight controlled it, aiding my way toward the sails, my sword held tight in my left-hand.

The large scarlet sails of *The Ember Phoenix* pleaded to be released from the choking ship attached to it. I twirled my weapon quickly, then as I grew near, my arm wound back and rushed swiftly forward. The keen blade cut through the connected sails, chopping *The Copper Compass*; the Phoenix left unharmed.

I turned my body and put my sword in my belt. Both hands held steady around the rope as our 'anchor' shot back, my ship flying with it. The men below hollered as they were tossed back again.

The deck continued to rock, then settled. By that point the fight had already started up.

After pulling myself up the rope, I stood on the parallel post by the crow's nest. I glanced around, but no sign Korbin. I exhaled.

Finally, a breath.

I looked back at the dark wooden ship; this was my pride and joy, even if my father's loot paid for it, as well as my crew, I had grown a bond with both over the past three years.

But enough about me, let's talk about bloody codpiece nobleman, who I could hear coming at me.

I turned my head to where I detected him; I couldn't do the same with my body, for there was barely enough room to stand on these beams. I spotted Korbin's silhouette behind the crimson sails, then a fine point blade cut through it. A tear almost escaped my eye at the sight. Korbin pushed through the slice he left behind, ripping the mass further. My irises set a harsh glare on him.

"Why must you needlessly complicate everything?" he asked as he stepped forward.

"Why must ye *needlessly* be a bilge-sucking bastard?" I shouted, my pirate lingo shaping up.

Korbin gave me a wide look, he knew well enough from our past that I only let out the pirate in me when my anger had reached its peak.

"So what will it be, *Mr. Korbin?*" I walked closer, unsheathing my cutlass. "Will ye leave me in peace, or shall I leave ye in pieces?" I exclaimed as my weapon came down.

Lunging at him, I left him unable to do much else but block and move away from me. We slipped through the slice in the mass and to the other side of the sail. He managed to maneuver away from me and further down the other beam.

Then finally I had him on the edge, literally. He could no longer back away from me; I had him.

"No getting away this time," I growled, my blade grazing his chin.

"What are you going to do, Raven? Kill me?"

"Aye," I smirked.

Korbin seemed to falter at that statement. And for a moment I wavered. Korbin leaned back farther, the fighting on the deck under us was roughly shaking the ship. In his position he could not properly balance. And if he so much as straightened, my sword would stab through his neck; so he dared not move. I knew the sweat forming on his forehead was not from the blistering sun high above us. He observed me, his eyes glistening.

"Please," he begged.

My hand nearly shook as I fought with myself. How dare he challenge me, I was going to kill him! But I couldn't help it; I backed down and lowered my blade.

Korbin stood normally; he looked behind him at the fall he almost experienced.

"Bravo Miss Raven, I am impressed," he said dryly as he turned back to me.

"It be called having self restraint," I responded coldly.

"No, I am impressed you fell for such a jest!"

My eyebrows rose and suddenly I felt his blade thrust into me. It skimmed my body; my thick coat protected me, barely. I grasped my right side where he nipped the skin; my eyes shut tightly.

Korbin looked pleased. He thought he had won. But not just yet.

Exclaiming as I straightened, my cutlass swung at him, threatening to cut off a limb; but he dodged me. And as my arm moved by him, he grabbed the one shackle attached to my wrist.

The momentum behind my miss swayed me, forcing me to lose my stance. I began falling off the beam. Korbin's foolish move of snatching me was his downfall. He went over the edge as well, falling to our possible deaths.

"Raven!" I heard Jackie calling.

Having never called me by my first name before, I glanced over at him as we descended further from the sails. Then we flew past the ship all together, landing in the reef of the Caribbean.

The chilled ocean felt like a numbing pinch as our bodies entered its blue abyss. We were soon enveloped in the calm waves. I raised my head toward the surface, where the suns distorted reflection showed. We were sinking, and I felt the remaining air in my lungs drain. Bubbles began escaping my lips; showing themselves before me. Better yet, the blood from my small wound was trickling into the deep. We won't last much longer in these infested waters. I struggled from Korbin's grasp on my shackle and attempted to remove my jacket. I took the buckle near my abdomen, ripping it off, and then allowed the heavy fabric to slip off my shoulders. My belt was next; my sword and my now worthless black powder blunderbuss fell from me.

Glancing over through the clear water, Korbin was taking my action, but he was struggling more with leaving his precious medals behind rather than the apparel itself.

He quickly snatched an object from the front pocket, and then he too let the coat fall off his person. We both kicked towards the surface.

I broke through, mouth first, sucking up all the air my lungs could hold. But before there was a chance to gather myself, hands caught hold of my arms and I was lifted into a boat. The colours of the jackets told me what side they were on. They were much like the one Korbin left behind. I tried to move out of their grabbing arms, but it was no use.

Being thrown into the dingy left a hard bump on my head; I went to rub it when the other handcuff was snapped on my free wrist.

Korbin was the next to join. My eyes glared over at him, he tried not to meet them as he rung out his white wig.

I looked over my shoulder at my ship. It seemed so far away.

"Sir, there were other sailors aboard *The Ember Phoenix*," a young man said to Korbin.

"Leave them; we have what we wanted." He looked off into the horizon.

"Ye despicable piece of—" a bound was suddenly wrapped around my head and over my mouth.

I threw my elbow back and into the man who so rudely interrupted my statement. He groaned and shuffled away from me. The others began rowing us to *The Copper Compass*.

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Ever since then I have been locked in Captain Korbin's quarters, awaiting the ship to dock in my homeland; the one place I vowed never to venture to again. If it were not for the barred windows, and the guard standing outside the door, I would have already escaped.

The night had come and the rain with it. The pitter-patter of the drops gently knocked on the glass. The sound was soothing to me; it made me wish I could be out there, feeling each droplet chill my skin, rather than be held against my will in this cabin. Though I must say, the well-crafted carpets and the many-framed displays of oil-based paintings flattered the space. They almost made it livable. I could smell the cologne that lingered: the smell of a wealthy man. I shut my eyes for a moment and pictured whom it belonged to.

I strolled around the large empty study. The light was dim and focused on the desk at the far end of the room. It too was obviously expensive, much like the rest of the décor.

I glanced around the well-decorated prison, stepping slowly to allow my boots to leave filthy footprints on the fancy hardwood. I headed to the desk and rested in the olive-green padded chair. It rocked momentarily; the whole ship seemed to teeter from me, but it was really the waves gathering outside.

Settled on the desk before me was a spread-out map, rolled parchments, long wicked candles and a compass; it was similar to the one Korbin always carried around. *Was he obsessed with those things? He even named his ship after them!* I rolled my eyes away from it.

That was when my pupils caught a small wooden chest in the corner closest to me. My eyes shifted to each side, a normal habit of a sneaky pirate, even though I had my privacy. Leaning closer to it, I ran my hand over the carved designs. It was quite the eye catcher. The gold lock was even more so. I examined it and smirked at the rusty key sticking out of it. That pompous asshole had left it behind! I grasped the bronze and turned it; the top clicked and popped up ever so slightly. I hesitated before putting my hands on it again. You can never be sure with fancy chests.

When nothing happened for several breathless moments, I finally put my hands under the lid and lifted it the rest of the way; it now lay open to me. All that sat within it was an unmarked envelope.

Frowning and lifting it to my fingers, I flipped it so it's back now showed to me. The dark brown seal of Peerless kept it shut. *Peerless*.

That name...why was it so familiar? *I should really lay off the rum for a while.* Ready to pull it open, my hand set on the seal, but the door being thrown open interrupted me. I slipped the envelope back into the chest and quickly snapped the lid shut.

Calming myself, I laced my fingers before me on the desk. Captain Korbin stood stiffly in the doorway. He was now dry and dressed in new clothes; his wig had small frizzy pieces from the salt water.

"Ah, Mr. Korbin," I greeted. "I was pondering when ye would show up."

Leaning back in the chair, I lifted my boots and rested them on the table, showing the defilement I knew engraved the bottoms. A firm grimace plastered on the captain's face.

"We shall be there in short order," he announced, still not making eye contact.

I kicked my legs off the desk and got to my feet.

"How kind of you to give me the message personally; was it to possibly see my sass?"

"On the contrary," he straightened, his eyes now meeting with mine. I sauntered up to him.

"It was merely to assure none of these buffoons allow you freedom," he continued.

"And makes ye think I can't escape you, Mr. Korbin?"

We faced each other head on.

"Oh don't fret, Captain," he smiled. "I am aware you could vanish at any given moment... So why don't you?"

"Belay," I scoffed. "Don't play me Korbin. I would never allow a dog like you to be one step ahead of me."

"Oh, so you have a plan, do you?"

My brow went tight together at him. I changed the subject because I had nothing to return with.

"What does the name *Peerless* mean to you, Captain?"

Korbin drew in a soft but noticeable breath.

"Nothing."

"Nothin'," I repeated.

"Indeed," he said sternly. "Don't you think you should be shaping up for your father? Surrender your privateer attitude for instance?"

"No quarter!" I vowed. "Never."

"Hmm," he murmured; he put his hands behind his back, walking further in the room and to his desk; first taking a handkerchief to brush off the muck I left behind. He sat and pulled his compass from his pocket, placing it on the table before gazing back at me.

"I am surprised at you, Raven. Have you forgotten all that you learned while under your father's care so soon?"

"Care?" I chuckled. "You obviously haven't met him."

"And hopefully, for my sake, I never will."

My eyes scaled his form, slowly asserting him. "But was he not the one who '*personally*' sent ye to capture me?" My arms crossed.

Korbin's eyes drifted to the wooden chest, he opened his mouth to retaliate and save his own skin, but a harsh tip of the ship evaded him. He nearly fell out of his chair from it. I myself was having troubles holding my ground.

"What's happening?" he asked quickly, his eyes broad.

"It's a squall you git, calm down!"

The door behind me flew open, one mate cried out, soaked to his knickers.

"Captain! A storm is brewing!"

Before Korbin even replied, I acted, turning for the open door and bludgeoning the small man. Once out of my way, I was free.

Running out onto the slippery deck of *The Copper Compass*, the busy bodies of the crew hid me well. They bounded left to right, trying to steady the ship over the angry waves.

Refusing to waste precious time, I bolted through them; heading to the prow, where the rescue boats hung in wait. A few men were already attempting their escape. Cowardly swabs.

The hard rain soaked me in seconds; the large black raven feather drooped from my Corsair hat. I shooed it out of my face and continued to the boats.

Sneaking up on the first of the three men, I grabbed his hat off his head and smacked him with it. He flinched and turned to me, I slugged him. His body hit the wet deck like a dead cod. It caught the attention of his two mates.

"What do you think you're doing!?" he exclaimed.

"This!" I lifted my foot and it collided with his knee. Next thing I knew he was on the ground and his sword was in my hand. It was sent directly into the abdomen of the last one.

"Raven!"

Knowing well enough who was coming after me, I didn't turn back. Finishing what the cowards had started, I unraveled the ropes to lower the tiny rescue boat. It descended toward the crashing waves, but not fast enough.

With the sword I cut the ropes, suddenly the whole dingy fell into the stormy waters. I heaved the rolled up ladder over the barrier and tossed it down, then abandoned the sword and climbed over the blockade.

The wind blew harshly in all directions; I held my hat tight to my head while continuing my way down.

"Raven!"

I looked up, Korbin came over the edge.

"Where are you going?"

Refusing to point out the obvious, I slid the rest of the way down the rope ladder, falling the short way into the boat.

I settled and grabbed hold of the oars, struggling to get them in-sync.

Suddenly the boat rocked roughly, not from the waves, but from the human who had just hopped into my escape pod.

Korbin snatched at the oars in my hands. I swiped the paddle sideways so it whacked him. He fell back onto his rear. He dared not touch me again; he held on tight to stop from flying out.

The boat was thrown into the bow of the ship, then the waves bellowed and pulled us away. I only focused on holding the oars with all my might; we would be stranded without them. After one heavier wave, we were swept out into the dark stormy sea. *The Copper Compass* became invisible through the night.

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The next morning, no land was in sight. The sun was slowly rising before us, and the waves had calmed.

I looked over at Korbin with a sour expression. He was tapping the face of his compass, trying to figure out a destination. He seemed completely lost without his crew, just being lost altogether was deeply disturbing him.

"Ye just couldn't let me be on my way, could ya?" I crossed the oars over my lap.

He didn't respond.

"For once in your god forsaken life ye have nothing to say?!" I continued to question.

"I am attempting to cipher our whereabouts."

"We be in the ocean, Korbin," I said plainly.

"I figured as much!" he shouted.

I raised an eyebrow at his outburst; he went back to tapping his compass with much frustration.

"That *thing* won't be of help. We be headed West, near Tortuga," I explained, pulling out the spyglass from my pocket. I extended it and looked off into the distance.

"West..." Korbin mumbled, still staring into the glass.

"Yes, East. And I vote we head that way. Tortuga will help me find the Phoenix and me crew." I snapped the spyglass back to compact form, slipping it back into my deep pocket. "It be our main port."

That was when he returned to reality.

"What? No! We are *not* going to Tortuga!"

"Then where do ye suppose we go, *master navigator?*"

He scratched his chin as he looked around at the empty sea.

"South East," he announced. "There is an Island that I know of in that hemisphere."

I frowned. "Yes, I know it. So we be not going there."

"I'm sure you don't know this island..." he chuckled.

"It be crescent shaped, not far off from Tortuga herself, many trees, mostly sand though, and it be there a man named Hanley Peer marooned me crew and I when he stole the Phoenix."

Korbin suddenly turned his eyes away. "Alright, so you do know it."

"So I refuse to head there."

"But we must!"

My arms intertwined over my chest.

"And why be that, Mr. Korbin? What be of importance on that Island?"

He looked to me, flustered. "Well, if you have been acquainted there before, you already know the area..."

I considered it, then shook my head. "It be years ago... And I doubt the small amount of supplies we left behind be even usable anymore."

"But it is preferable than heading to a new Island," he pointed out matter-of-factly. "And besides the fact, it will be less than a day's trip from our current position."

"Why don't we just find the Phoenix so ye can walk the plank?" I smiled sweetly.

Korbin smirked and took the oars from my hands; he began rowing us South East, towards Marreo Cove.

Chapter 2: Marreo Cove

By the next sunrise, our destination became clear. I watched from the bow as we grew closer.

Finally the boat landed on the sandy dominion of the scanty Island.

We looked around at the deadpan terrain before us, the boat trailed at our rears as we hauled it further onto the beach. More like I hauled it onto the beach. Korbin's eyes only set to his damned compass.

"We are facing South now."

"So?" I huffed.

"So, if we pull sail North from here, we shall be on the right trajectory," being on land seemed to finally calm him; his proper vocabulary returning.

He turned and looked out onto the ocean.

I went close to him and whispered in his ear, "I don't know if you noticed, we don't have a sail!" he cringed from my sudden loud voice.

"Minor miscalculations," he wavered. "After we respite for a night we can be on our way tomorrow morning full board."

He took the rope from me and confidently pulled the boat further on the beach, right over a sharp rock that stuck out of the sand. It scratched then punctured the floor, leaving a gaping hole in the wood.

"...What do ye think now, *Captain*?"

"It can be mended," he argued, though the sight devastated him.

"Are you daft? Even if we do, this won't get us across the Caribbean!"

"If you will just give me a moment to map our whereabouts, I can find the direction to your father's residence. I just need more time to follow the compass," he ignored me and stared back at his pocket-sized navigator.

"Screw you and that bloody compass!" I snatched the object and threw it. It plunged into the sea.

"What have you done!?" he shouted, running after the bronze piece. He entered the water, tossing his white wig onto the shoreline before dunking under the waves; he came up empty handed each time.

"Forget it, Korbin! Get used to bein' lost! I'd rather be that than go 'home'!"

He didn't reply, only focusing on heaving in breaths before going under again.

Sitting on the sand, I crossed my arms.

"Ye really have no soul, ye self-centered brute! Ye only care about taking me back to my father! So that *you* can get promoted! You don't even comprehend what yer asking of me! Just stayin' 'ere with ye now is a pain in my side!" I ranted on. "But as an added plus ye expect me to just *follow* you back to my haunt?" I laughed. "Ye really be a blubbering idiot!"

I stopped, having not seen Korbin rise from the waves for some time. Getting my feet to try spot him, he was nowhere to be found.

"Korbin?" I called.

No answer.

My feet took control of the situation, running me towards the ocean; I threw myself in under the ungrateful waves. It took a moment, but finally the scurvy bastard was before me, his hands digging roughly through the sand. I swam to him and pulled him towards the surface, we were chest deep in the water.

"Are you mad? It's just a compass!"

"I have to find it!" he spluttered.

"If you want to risk your being for it then fine! Have at it!"

Korbin looked down like a scolded child.

My eyes rolled.

"Come on ya sea-bask, get out of the water."

He only nodded; we began swimming back to shore.

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By the time we finally got the boat far onto the beach and hitched to a tree, I was already counting steps—one foot after another.

Korbin tightened the knot of the bind then sent a strange look to my odd stepping style.

"What in blazes are you doing?" he asked.

"Quiet, I'm counting."

Korbin followed me. I lightly counted under my breath.

"Look, I understand how being a pirate has left you with not much of a substantial education, but could you please count faster?"

"I'll be counting down yer death clock if ye do not be quiet!" I snapped.

Korbin shut his big mouth; I praised the gods.

Many minutes later, I stopped in a spot under the trees. Korbin, who had paid more attention to the thick woods around us more than anything else, knocked into my back. I fell forward, but resting my hand on the bark of the palm tree stopped me. I stiffened and curled my fist while turning to him—a warning. He stepped back.

"It be right here, we best get diggin'," I explained, getting to my knees and shoving my hands into the sand.

Korbin glanced left to right, and then pulled up his sleeves. He removed his fancy white gloves and grabbed a thin stick. He poked at the mud.

What seemed like hours later, we caught the glimpse of the crates and chests that held the dated supplies of my crew. We left it behind in case any other castaways found themselves on this hellhole. But mostly for our own sake in case Hanley came for us again. But I hadn't heard from that scalawag in half a decade.

I heaved the first crate to the lip of the hole and broke through the thick pieces of wood with a nearby rock-- digging in; first pulling out two shovels.

Korbin's eyes narrowed at me.

"Well those would have been beneficial about an hour ago."

"Quit yer whining and help me," I ordered.

He weakly took my demands, pulling out the other materials; rope, canteens, jars of peaches, etc.

"Better yet, go start a fire," I added.

Korbin seemed uneasy with my request.

"I can't."

I stopped digging and looked over at him. "You what?"

"I cannot... start a fire," he confessed.

"Really."

"Unfortunately so."

"Ye really are worthless!" I stood and picked up one of his fine white gloves then smacked him with it.

He stared at me shocked as the glove dropped back to the ground. He retrieved it with gentle hands and carefully placed it with the other. I walked around him and began picking up sticks.

When finished, I returned and allowed them to fall in front of him.

"What are those?"

"They be our fire starters," I explained. "Ye be lucky I always carry flint with me or ye would be screwed. Go build up the sticks and scratch the flint together."

"That isn't much instruction..."

"Just do it, ya codfish! Figure it on yer own!"

I dropped the flint for him and returned to unpacking supplies. Korbin gathered up his necessities and attempted to start a fire.

After the camp had been put together, we set up our bedding on opposite sides of the camp, as far as we could get away from each other without straying from the warmth of the fire. The one I ended up building.

I had no trouble sleeping on the sand with only a few skimpy blankets to cover me. Korbin on the other hand...

He lied on his back, using his wig as a pillow, shuffling uneasily until he just sighed; surrendering to the fact he probably won't get a blink of sleep. His dark brown locks were untamed; it was almost unorthodox to see him that way.

"Bad hair day?" I teased.

Korbin glared over at me; his lips kept tight together.

"Oh calm down, like you have anyone to impress here."

When he still didn't speak to me, I figured he was still sour about his compass.

But after a long moment, he asked me a strange question.

"Why did Hanley Peer steal the Phoenix from you?"

Having not expected such a query, I frowned. But I took a breath anyway, preparing to tell him my story.

"Peer be a ruthless little man; *little* being a literal term. He targeted me for I had a great ship at my disposal. He stole it out of pure jealousy. But Jackie and I got him back good."

"What did you do?" he set his eyes on me.

I smiled.

"When we were marooned here on Marreo Cove, he left me crew with just a few crates of necessities and the clothes on our backs. He was foolish enough to keep the ship in sight so he could watch us die one by one through his spyglass. I refused to allow such a deal, so Jackie helped me make a plan...we used the wooden crates to make a raft, and in the night he and I made our way to the Phoenix. We played all sorts of pranks, tormenting he and his crew— from random fires, to things falling over board... Anyway, we stole a bunch of his belongings, including his famous spyglass. It's quite a looker," I pulled it from my pocket to show him the brown and gold piece. "He got really rallied up about that one; even more so when we stole most of his stash of doubloons. He came to the beach, full crew along with him to get it back, but while he did, we drifted back to the Phoenix, and he got a taste of his own medicine. Poor bastard. I wonder if he ever got off the Island."

"I'm sure he did..." Korbin trailed off.

Without another look, he turned over and went to sleep. I followed the action, first looking up at the clear night above us.

--

The next night was bright as the moon grew. We sat opposite to each other, the fire burning in between us. I tossed another jar of peaches into the sand.

"I don't know how long ye plan on stayin' here, Korbin," I said, taking a drink of an unmarked canteen. He was unaware of the alcohol that swished within it.

"Just know, when my ship comes to get me, you won't be on it."

"Understood," he said stiffly.

I eyed him. "Do ya now?"

"Yes, Miss Raven, I am aware of your ways. And I am acquainted with the fact that you would rather enjoy seeing me stranded here for the rest of my life, striving on spiced peaches and coconuts."

"You know, I would enjoy that!"

He dared a smile at me. My eyes drifted from him.

Korbin sighed.

"Is there anything besides sea water to drink around here?"

I got to my feet, wiping the sand from my baggy pants. "What'll ya have?" I asked while rummaging through the crates.

"Tea, Earl Grey, if you have it. No sugar."

I chuckled lightly as a random canteen entered my grasp.

"Sorry bub, fresh out of tea," replying sarcastically as I tossed it to him.

He fumbled it in his fingers for a moment before actually getting a hold on it. He unscrewed the top and frowned as he sniffed the liquid, cringing and pinching his nostrils with his thumb and forefinger.

"What is this?"

"Grog," I announced, sitting again.

"What a terrible name--"

"For a terrible drink," I held up a new canteen in a 'cheers' gesture.

Reluctantly, he repeated the action, then plugged his nose again before sipping. The sour look on his face from the taste wasn't worth all the gold in the world. I let out a loud outburst of laughter. He only scowled at me, unable to speak for the alcohol was still in his mouth; he refused to swallow it.

"Just down it, Korby!" I grasped my stomach to stop snickering. I got to my feet, conspiring on helping him, staggering over to his spot on the sand.

He lifted one slender finger as he swallowed. He shook his head quickly, his wig falling off his head.

He turned in order to grab it, but I trampled it with my boot.

"Wigs not be allowed on my Island," I smiled.

Korbin looked flustered at the sight of his frizzy wig. Picking it up and dangling, he went to grab it, but I threw it into the fire. It caught the great amber flames in a display of sparks. Korbin hesitated his decision to go in after it.

"Do you have any idea what you have just done?!" he exclaimed.

"I've just demoted you, Korbin," I smiled. "Welcome to the free life!" I went back to the sand bump I used for a seat and chugged the rest of my drink.

"So you do remember some of the rules of society," he took another sip of the grog; I noticed the thin pinky finger sticking out. "You destroyed my sign of rank."

I rolled my eyes and shrugged. "It had been crammed into my mind so frequently as a child that not even all the rum in the world could wipe it from me memory."

Korbin's eyes scaled me. "What a...colourful metaphor."

"I try," I said smugly.

"So how does a young society woman become a successful captain?"

Finishing the throat burning drink and tossed it aside, I pushed my hair out of my face, giving him my drunken smile.

"Father had the loot, I had a dream. I didn't want to stay living in corsets and wigs... no offense."

"None taken," although his blue eyes still watched the fried wig in the center of the fiery embers.

I looked into the charring wood. "I didn't want me father to choose the man I would marry. In fact, I don't even want to be married. It would only mean to be tied down..."

Getting carried away, I continued, not caring if Korbin was even listening, I spoke more towards the flames; my eyes also watched the remainder of the wig being destroyed as I pictured the one my father used to wear.

"At sixteen, I was betrothed. I never even met the man. I never gave me father a chance to introduce us. I ran away on me seventeenth, when the wedding was planned. By eighteen I met Jackie in a pub. He revealed his stories of his life as a pirate, the one he be still livin' today. All he lacked at the time was a ship and crew in order to continue his journey; and I was there to grant it to him. It wasn't for him though; I wanted a *new* life, one where *I* lived by *my* rules and to hell with the 'proper' life. I lived it long enough to know that be no way to live. This, right now, completely free will to do what we wish...You can feel it. Once you have tasted that freedom," I snapped my fingers. "Ye be hooked."

Korbin looked at me through the fire.

"But what about you? Wait, I reckon..." I examined him. He sat patiently for me to decipher his past. "Ye were born to a wealthy family, where ye got everything ya wanted, and was never scolded, ya always followed the rules and that be why ye be such a big sissy."

Korbin's eyes went downcast. "You are close. But not quite..."

"Really? Enlighten me then," I leaned back on my extended arms.

Korbin was quiet for many moments.

"I did not have a father. At least I never knew him personally. My mother was widowed until she remarried to a disgraceful man. 'Harsh love' she defined it as... She endured it for my sake, all she wanted was for me to know the feeling of having a father; but he never loved me as a son. I knew for I compared his functioning towards me, to my half brother my mother had bared for him. The only thing I got from my real father was his compass. He left it behind as a gift when I was born. I always wondered if he got lost out at sea because he was without it..."

For a moment a heavy feeling gathered in my stomach, I knew it wasn't the grog.

"But my other 'father', I received enough from him. If I so even spoke out of turn...there was no compromise...I was drafted into the navy by sixteen, and have been so ever since. My main duty is to ruin the freedom you and your folk are trying to live by..."

Silence crept between us. Korbin took another drink, smoother this time, as if he was dousing the memory from his mind.

"If it means anything..." I paused. "You can always have my father."

Korbin laughed, the heavy feeling lifted in my gut.

"It be funny what rum will make you spill," I lifted another canteen.

"It never occurred to me that such a demonic drink could bring out someone's disregarded past."

I kept my eyes on him.

"It be what brings people together, Korby."

"Together..." he nodded. "Right."

"Ya don't believe me?" I raised an eyebrow. "Why do ya think I am so close with me crew? They know my deepest secrets through my slurred words. I could never stop being close with them, they know too much," I chuckled.

Korbin smiled. "You are... the only one I ever 'spilled' to about my family."

I stopped putting the canteen to my lips. "How can I? Did ye not have friends before?"

Korbin actually slouched from his perfect posture.

"I had comrades."

I smiled and shook my head. "Those don't count as friends, mate."

Korbin glanced at me. "Mate? Is that a term for friend?"

"It tis," I winked. "Drink to it. Friends. Bonded by trauma."

Without a second thought I took another chug. I hadn't noticed Korbin didn't do the same.

Chapter 3: The Time Has Come

By dawn, I realized that my head was pounding. All my senses were against me, the rising sun was too bright, the gulls squawked too loud, and the sea smelt too salty, I could almost taste it. I sat up, instantly regretting it. My hand pressed against my forehead.

I squinted out to the sea; gasping from the sight of the brown sails that I recognized from an earlier time. Quickly I glanced over at Raven, who was sound asleep next to me. She had drifted much earlier than myself. It could possibly be from the drinks last night. Her brown hair fell rampant over her closed eyes; her hat cuddled into her.

Slowly, I ascended from the sand, standing as strongly as I could, hoping that Raven wouldn't wake from me wobbling towards the edge of the waves. I swallowed my remorse and lifted my hands above my head, waving them slowly. I wasn't sure if the ship caught my action, but a part of me hoped they didn't. I looked back at Raven.

I woke up from the bright sun above me. Usually I would hide away from it, but this time it didn't bother me as much. I yawned, stretching and sitting up, scratching the sand out of my hair as I glanced around. Korbin was starting a new fire.

"Well look at you, ya learned something," I pestered.

Korbin didn't look over, just nodded once.

I frowned while getting to my feet, then went and stood over him.

"What be the issue, mate?"

"I encourage that you do not continue to call me that."

"And why not?" I crossed my arms. "Would you prefer *matey*?"

I chuckled, Korbin stayed like stone.

"You do not understand, Captain," he stood and held his hands behind his back.

"The time has come for me to double-cross you."

My brow pulled tight together. "You be right, I don't understand."

"Just come with me, Raven, don't make a struggle."

He showed me the rope in his grip. They were fashioned in a strange knot. Two holes were in the midst of them, meant for my wrists.

Without hesitation, I took off down the beach, running my fastest over the loose sand.

"Raven!" He was coming after me.

But I didn't let him get close, bolting into the palm forest and quickly out of his viewpoint. I hid behind a tree. He ran past me and further into the bushes. I turned and went the other way.

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Once far enough away down the beach, I kicked along the sand. That stupid bastard. I would never trust him again; I was foolish to trust him in the first place! I looked to the distance over the water, where the silhouette of Tortuga sat across the way. Maybe swimming there could become a possibility. It would be better than this godforsaken place.

I booted the sand frustrated, but something came up with it. It flew through the air, then landed a few feet away from me.

Frowning at the up roared treasure I had stumbled upon, I picked it up and wiped off the sand particles.

It was Korbin's rusty old compass. I eyed it thoughtfully. *Maybe I should just throw it back into the water—forgotten.*

But instead I slipped it into my pocket, looking off to where I planned to go. It would only loop back to him anyway...there was no escaping him; I might as well confront him. I sighed and changed course.

Taking the wooded route, I traveled, just so he couldn't see me coming.

But when I returned to our small camp, he wasn't there.

Looking both ways as I gradually ascended from the palm trees, no Korbin came into my view.

I took a shallow breath; something wasn't right. That was when my eyes spotted the sails on the horizon, and when I was grabbed.

I screamed, but no sound left my lips; a hand rested over my mouth. And as my body was pulled back into the forest, a hard chest hit my spine. I tilted my head up, only to see the hideous face smirking down at me.

I swore in my mind as my mouth tried to open. When it did, my jaw bit down on the man's fingers. Hard. He hollered and released me as the warm liquid rushed from his wound. I ran from him and back out onto the beach. A man stood in front of me, who snatched my wrists. I retaliated by stomping on his foot. He released me but more just kept coming.

Soon bounds had wrapped around my arms, legs and mouth. I fell to the sand motionless.

Turning my head up at my mystery attackers, my eyes caught the sight of the pint-sized man standing over me. Korbin was among them, looking stone faced as I lay helpless.

"What shall we do with her, Peerless?" a man asked.

Peerless. Hanley Peer! My eyes went wide.

"I dunno know men; I think it be time young Raven danced with Johnny Ketch," he smiled big.

"Hang her?" another crewmember trembled.

"Aye. After I get me spyglass returned of course," Peerless smirked.

Then I was heaved into strong arms and carried to the edge of the waves, where a group of rescue boats awaited us. Korbin followed until Peer stopped him in his tracks. The crew turned back to see what was going to be said.

"Thank ye, Captain, ye have done yer job right. Though I expected yer whole ship would make it 'ere!"

"There were...complications..." he breathed.

"Right, and 'ere be another complication, ye can't come on me ship with us."

"What? Why?" Korbin frowned deeply.

"Sorry lad, but I never agreed to bringin' ya back! Ye be figurin' that fer yerself. But no hard feelings, eh? Ere be your pay," he handed him a hefty sack and a taunting smirk. "Godspeed!"

With that, the crew continued back to the boats. I never looked back at Korbin, though I felt his eyes on me as my form was tossed into the dingy.

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Chapter 4: Johnny Ketch, I don't dance

So here I am, standing at the prow of Peerless' ship. The setting sun reflected pink on the surrounding clouds of the horizon. But as beautiful as the sight, I felt no joy from it.

I stayed strong with my hands bound before me as a large member of the crew did the honours of placing the thick rope around my neck. I glanced left, where more men held the end of the line, the one that would lift me off the ground, and to my end.

I shut my eyes, the chilly air sent goose bumps to my flesh. I had been stripped to my undergarments in order to claim all my belongings. But what they didn't know was I had Korbin's compass hidden in my clenched fingers. Even if I was furious, I wouldn't allow the trinket to fall into Hanley Peer's hands.

When I opened my lids, my irises caught Peerless sitting on a stool; his short legs hung over the side, kicking with joy. I showed no fear; it would only bring him more satisfaction. The fair Eastern winds helped calm my interior. My long hair swept over my back. This be sailing weather. The best kind.

"Well Captain?" Peerless held in his childish giggles while he waved my raven feather under his chin, my hat sat atop his head. "Do you have any last requests?"

I held my head high, tilting my chin at him.

"I just want you to remember you shall forever be a poxy blaggard, grog-smelling, bilge-sucking, shark bait scalawag."

The crew chuckled and snickered behind him, Peer however had a beet-red face and his tiny fists curled tight.

"Ye be a dead--!"

"Sail ho!" the crow's nest shouted.

"Who be interruptin' me?!" Peerless slammed his fits on his lap.

"Captain!" the sailor behind me pointed to the back of the ship.

Peerless stood on his stool to see, his mouth dropped.

"It be *The Ember Phoenix*, sir!"

"How could they have found us?!" Peerless panicked as he pulled out his spyglass and looked through it. "Korbin?! That bloody--set the sails! Raise the colours!" he roared.

"That scurvy bastard..." I smiled in admiration.

"They be growing near, Captain!"

Through all the sudden hustle and bustle of the crew, I managed to slip out of the loose rope around my neck and run down the bowsprit, making my way quickly through the crowd. Getting to the aft of the ship, I saw the scarlet sails for myself. It was indeed my beloved vessel coming to my rescue.

Peerless continued to shout orders. I turned and headed to him as he swung his sword around. As he swiped it behind him, I lifted my hands; he sliced off the twine bounds he placed himself.

"Peerless!" I called.

He turned, sword first. I ducked from his uninterpreted attack. And as I straightened my head slammed into his. His eyes rolled back and he fell off his stool, the bump on his forehead added from the deck.

My now free hands pushed my hair out of my view while picking up my hat and placing it back on my head. I glanced over my shoulder, where the Phoenix was creeping up. It slowly approached the side of the ship, where the set up canons fired; I could smell the murky gunpowder in my nostrils. As my vessel grew even nearer, I saw my men standing at the ready on the barrier, ropes in their hands. One of them was indeed Captain Korbin. I barely recognized him. His hair was tangled and his filthy clothes blended him with the rest of the lot. I almost didn't believe it was him. I picked up Peerless' sword and held it before me.

"When ya get the chance, tell Johnny Ketch I don't dance."

The unconsciousness man stirred, I stepped on his back to ensure he stayed put.

Lifting my sword high before me I shouted, "Avast ye, members of the Phoenix! Charge!"

The roars of my crew rang, battle cries as they kicked off the barrier, swinging onto the opposing deck. The men under Peerless took the offensive, returning the war cry and showing off their weaponry. My crew ran at me, I turned with them and attacked in the line. We all connected in an array of swinging swords and gunshots.

It seemed endless, but finally my crew began to overcome the rest. More and more of them fell to the floor.

I swung my sword confidently, it rammed into another's. I met face-to-face with my opponent.

"Korbin! You--"

"Despicable excuse for a man," he replied, not moving our collided weapons.

"I cannot even begin to fathom that you actually grew a pair and came to retrieve me! Even though ye be the one who sent me to the gallows, you git!"

"My deepest apologies Raven--"

A man came up behind him; I grabbed Korbin and turned him with me, stabbing my blade into the attacker's chest. I spun back to face the nobleman.

"Ye be forgiven—for now, mate," I winked.

He gave me a quick smile. We went our separate ways, taking on more of the Peerless crew.

The flooded sea of bodies was overwhelming; the fact that you could never turn your back was thrilling, but deadly. I held a sword in each hand to ensure no such hazard was met to me.

"Cap'n!"

I turned to see Jackie holding armfuls of explosives. Good man. He always came prepared.

Understanding what he implied, I finished off my last opponent and then held my bloodied blade to the sky.

"Rise from the ashes, me hearties!"

The signal was clear to my crew. They fought off the rest of the men, leaving only the look out and Peerless. He just started to wake as we made our port back to the Phoenix. Korbin stopped by Hanley Peer; he dropped his sack of cash beside him, then retrieved an object, by that time I was back on my ship.

Jackie ran up the stairs from below deck. Peerless looked to him dazed.

"Fairwinds, ya scaly bastard!" he waved and shot his gun, the fiery blast was meant to set off the gunpowder line he had placed, but he didn't realize it didn't light.

Another had.

Running to the barrier of Hanley Peer's ship I glanced over at Jackie, who was proudly starting the flame of the planned explosion. The gunshot sounded, but I smelt no lighting of powder. Jackie seemed too tied up in the moment to notice either. He went to the barrier and swung to the other side.

Taking a look over at Peerless behind me, he was now on his feet. He swung at me with a blunt object.

"Ye bloody traitor! What side ye be on?" he spat.

With much haste, I ducked away from him, then bounded to the stairs. But Peerless was hot on my trail. I picked into my pocket, where Raven's flint sat. Taking them into my hands, I started scratching them together even as I got close, but no such luck on a spark. Suddenly my knees gave out on me as the wooden object in Peerless' hands batted me. I fell to the ground, the flint rocks rolled away from me.

I gazed to *The Ember Phoenix*; it was turning from the ship.

Peerless exclaimed as he once again brought down his weapon. Escaping his blow, I rolled across the deck.

Getting to my feet, I watched his transversals closely as he once again swung in my direction. Snatching a sword out of a fallen pirate, Peerless' weapon crashed with mine; the momentum sent me back into the nets. I held the links tightly to stop from falling.

I cast my eyes over at the flint, then back at Peerless, who attacked. I scrambled up the nets as he swung, barely missing me. I turned and swiped my sword at him; he lifted his weapon and my blade stuck into it. Peerless ripp