

Eva hesitated to trust a parlay on a good day. She trusted a parlay with Captain Moore not at all. Yet here they were sitting around a table in the Aurora's navigation room like they weren't going to try to kill each other.

Eva told Henry not to fall for their peace flag after the storm calmed, so of course he invited the sharks on board just to be contrary. The table was only barely large enough for the Naval Captain with his tricorne hat and flashy uniform. Eva couldn't even call Henry's jewelry gaudy in comparison. Across the table from Eva, Captain Moore's first mate sat perfectly straight, a model sailor, with his big eyes locked on Captain Moore. Thomas's uniform was crisp and clean, not over-embellished. Tasteful.

"You must understand that we're only trying to do our job." Captain Moore examined his spotless white leather gloves, then raised his eyes to Henry. "The crown would like pirates eliminated entirely." He said 'pirates' like it was some great insult.

Henry leaned his elbows on the table. "It seems to me you only benefit from our existence. We do the same things, but you do it in the name of the law and leave the blame on us." He brought a hand to his mouth to tap his lower lip. "What would you do without a scapegoat, I wonder?"

Captain Moore smiled. A slow, creeping thing that made the hair rise at the back of Eva's neck. "You think you're clever, don't you, little one?"

Eva had that same thought on a regular basis, but it was different coming from someone who would actually hurt him. She opened her mouth to protest, but Thomas looked at her and she snapped her mouth shut. He wasn't threatening. Not in the way that Captain Moore exuded power and privilege and dared you to test him. Thomas had delicate features, prematurely grey hair that fluffed in silver whips over his forehead, and a tragic air around him that would make Eva want to baby him if he weren't a Naval officer. Even so, the look in his eyes told her he wouldn't allow anyone to question his Captain.

Captain Moore ignored the way Henry leaned his chin on his fist with an indignant huff and continued, "But you're not wrong," he admitted. "We want the same thing."

"The treasure." Henry sounded bored. "A prize for Queen and country, I assume." The sarcasm in that had teeth sharper than Henry's looked.

Thomas lifted his chin. "Too big a prize for one man."

"Eight," Henry corrected under his breath.

Captain Moore tapped a gloved finger on the table in front of Henry. "We could find it together. Split it."

Everything inside Eva wanted to spit in his face. "You won't split it fairly." Even with the death behind her tone it came out civil, all things considered.

Captain Moore laughed and sucked air through his teeth. "No. No, an even split wouldn't do. But a partial treasure is better than public hanging, no?" And he sounded so cocky Eva had to clench her jaw to keep from saying something she would regret.

Henry hummed like he was actually considering it and tapped his lips again. "Public hanging," he tilted his head to one side, "Or working for the face of evil." He tilted his head to the other side. Thomas tensed, but said nothing, eyes on Captain Moore again. Henry bit the tip of his finger. "I'm going to have to decline your *generous* offer. For obvious reasons." Eva liked his sass when it wasn't directed at her.

Captain Moore acted surprised. "Obvious reasons? Please enlighten me."

Henry smirked, resting his chin on his hand. "I swear no allegiance to any crown, my motives are my own. You hold no power over me except what I allow you." Eva grinned at Thomas in triumph. His mouth pressed into a fine line. Henry continued. "I disagree with every action you take and I despise what you stand for." He sat back and let his hand fall to the table with the clink of heavy rings. "Forgive me if I didn't make that obvious."

Captain Moore spoke in a soft threat. "Careful, little one. I would hate to be provoked to violence." Thomas watched Eva's reaction and his single blink told her it was no idle threat.

Henry didn't seem to care. "I remind you that you are on my ship, at the mercy of my hospitality."

Thomas spoke before Captain Moore could throw another threat. "It would seem we're at an impasse. Further discussion would be a waste of time." He looked at Captain Moore for approval and Eva understood Thomas in that moment. He wasn't here for a fight, he didn't enjoy violence, but he would follow Captain Moore to the ends of the earth and beyond. She could appreciate that kind of loyalty. Thomas looked at her and she inclined her head just barely. He did the same and something passed between them. Mutual respect. Sympathy.

Captain Moore pushed himself to his feet. "Yes. A waste of the time you should be spending to get right with God before we blow you out of the water."

Henry stood, not at all bothered by the height difference. "One hour," he said with absolute authority. "One hour and then you can *try* to blow us out of the water." He winked with a wide gesture of his hands. "Unless you'd like to blow me now?"

Thomas hissed and Eva clacked her teeth together in shock. Captain Moore gave Henry a slow up and down. "Oh little one," he smirked. "It's a good thing you're so cute." He looked down at Thomas and Thomas nodded. "One hour."