

Her awakening was rude and rough. Her fingertips gripped carefully at the metal rim to pull herself across, before she let out a quiet yawn. The blur of vision slowly cleared up as she realized she was far at sea. Even here, she could feel waves trying to claim the metal hull.

"I should... find some snacks." She muttered, noticing how very usable her position was. Up on this ledge, an inch from a pool of tar-like oil, she could easily overlook the place. And no easy way up there either. Perfect for a stowaway.

With some climbing, jumping and pulling, she got her Wading Boots and the sheet and pillow that hung above the oil, suspended from a cold metal pipe. She still didn't know what was in there, but it didn't matter more.

Once a way down was fabricated, she did her best to hide the way up, to an acceptable degree. With that out of the way, she looked to map out the area. Through a door, she could see the weak moonlight or fading dusk, implying it was already quite dark.

It fit her well, with how her feathers were still heavy, thick and sticky. The stuff luckily didn't rub off on everything, or she'd leave miles of footprints. And hey, she thought, now I'm less visible in the dark.

While this was true, she still took her time going around. Exploring the deck from cracks and via peeks, absorbing in as much as she could. The crew seemed absent, only a skeleton crew was there to make sure the darn boat went the right way. And such a crew looked outward, to the sea and stars, not towards its cargo.

It was on deck, only night fell far enough, that she got a good glimpse at one of them. A stubby fellow, not even close to what you'd expect on such a risky vessel. Heading on her trip to find food and supplies, she made a tidy circle around him.

Not that this helped at all. His eyes, ears and nose were trained to find sneaky-beakies. Such as her! Now, he'd certainly cry for help and get it, if he didn't rush to his boss with the worst descriptor he could muscle out.

"Sir, sir!" He uttered to the night captain, who stood at the tip of the bridge's balcony, armed with binoculars. "There's a shadow slimy thing on board! I saw it... it... it was!"

"Quiet!" The other hissed, dropping the binoculars, which landed against the chest. "Shadow slimes? Like a stowaway?"

The answer was a talky shaken head and a shaken voice. "N-no, sir. It was slimy, gooey, dripping, moving around with emerald eyes encased in pearls." The other restrained a clear swear, for the sake of keeping peace.

"Listen, swamp monsters aren't a thing out in sea. Unless you can find seaweed, it's nothing. We're nowhere near an industrial refinery, so it's not a crude oil thing either. And you-know-who is fast asleep. You're imagining things. Stop pulling double shifts or stop wasting my time."

The command was clear and crisp and laced with body language, to such a point that it could have easily been a rant over the kid's eager to cry wolf. "You heard me." The captain barked, losing some degree of temper at the shaken sailor.

By then, of course, the breegull had found the kitchen. Cold, empty, after all, no chef cooks in the dead of night without folk to feed. It meant she could easily sneak out a can or two of choice, settling with something tasty and easy, as well as one of the many spare can openers. If she observed carefully, she could almost get a story out of the stock the fridge had, or the locks on the ovens, or even the knives that hung quite high up.

The avian had procured a nice bag to stuff the items in. A piece of trash from the garbage, but the harbor she came from had plummeted her standards. Soon after, she took a remaining few scraps of food and a couple of bottles, hoping dearly that nobody would notice or care.

But back on deck (which took a few pulls with the amount of weight she lugged around), she took back to where she thought she came from. Her navigation was a bit of a mess, though she did leave a small clue on the doors she used to reach the deck, so that should help.

There, however, she faced a problem. The shaken guard had taken full precautions to arm himself in case of danger. Wielding an improvised weapon, as the captain refused to arm him, he peeked around, having no choice but to meander in to the other. A chance meeting, testing both participants' resolve.

"You again!" He said in a hushed tone, not wanting to get yelled at from across the bridge. "I... knew it."

"Knew what, shortstop?" The bird said, arming her sass and legs for some sleek and smooth moves.

"You, you're a pirate! An invader!"

"You know, for a guy who knows it, you're sure out of it." She said, trying to glance his physical state. Being good at insulting looks, she had a knack for finding the little things. "You're too tired to even know who you're talking to!"

"I do. You are an invader. That's who I talk to! Now surrender."

"Listen, sleeping shortbread, what kind of two-bit invader shows up like this? I don't have any weapons either."

"Well, that's... not important!" The other huffed, pulling up his belt to make his stature large, important, imposing. "Just come with me! This ship doesn't take passengers lightly."

"Kid, stuff it. You're half asleep and arguing with a figment of your imagination. I bet you that five minutes from now you'll have forgotten I even exist. Just ask yourself; what kind of invader shows up without weapons, friends, a ship and just kinda walks around? I'm just your subconscious reminding you that your boss is sick of you chasing ghosts. Now make that boss person proud and ignore me!"

"That's... not what I meant!"

"Listen to yourself. Loudly shouting at me. Just talk to your boss. I bet you she's full of your nonsense and didn't see me either, because I'm not real. You're just a hack job trying to make it big by crying wolf. I'd do a better job at you than you do." The other gulped and noticed his voice elevated at every word she flung. He could already hear her shout at him, annoyed at his arguments at nothing.

"I mean, if I was really, for totally really, an intruder, would your first inclination be to confront me about your own uncertainties? See, this is why your subconscious made me appear. Because, boy oh boy, you could use someone to slap you around those spiked ears a few times."

Perhaps it was confusion, resignation, or fear. It mattered little, for he submitted and surrendered, letting the other walk off. Luck have it she hid right around the corner behind the stack of boxes between the smoke stacks, leaving him very bothered, sweaty, and bursting at the seams.

"Sleep, sleep, I need sleep. I never ever want my subconscious doing that again." He said as he looked all around the boxes and vents, not finding a trace no more. For this little birdie had taken shelter.

The thief spent a good slice of time setting up her little bed and space. All the things she scrapped together made for a decent impromptu bed, and the room itself wasn't all that cold. With her being conscious, she noticed the room wasn't exactly sparse of any traffic, meaning she had to closely observe the doors to avoid being noisy at the wrong time. Now that she had little reason to leave the nest, she'd stay up there anyway.

It'd do that kid some good. Going out nightly would just get everyone riled up, or at least make the overseer too antsy to let patrols go alone. Perhaps water would be an issue, if there wasn't a functional piping system she could tap into.

Her mind went to the blistering smell she must have had under the blackness that clung to her. Yet, it didn't feel like the chemicals and oils were still there, as if swimming in a vat of tar scrubbed it off. She could nary care about the details; no smell is the best she's been in weeks.

One of the many problems with her stowing away was the seclusion. A benefit of dockwork is that one sees enough morons to fling insults at, but here she couldn't even toss an empty can. Pacing back and forth was the mainstay of her excessive, with all verbal training performed under

the muffle of a pillow.

As hours came and went, she did become a little more savvy about who and when. Things such as how often the engineers pattered about, how long a round took, all things she wrote down. Not with a pen, but using the tarpit and the books she 'loaned'. And with her notes came snide, sarcastic murmurs to herself, both praising her thin, precise lines and her inability to actually use those lines well.

Naturally, her adventurous spirit and unmoving body started to hunger for something physical to do. Snooping around wasn't enough, she needed a goal. And what better goal, she figured, than to figure out where the darn boat was even going. Yes, she knew well and sure it went to where she needed to be (eventually) but knowing about any intermediate stops worth exploring wasn't a terrible idea.

In fact, the more she didn't have a straight man to remind her what an awful idea that could be, the more it seemed like a great way to spend her seas of time.