

Smoke on the Water

CRACK!

The sounds of cannonballs crashing through the thick walls of my ship caused me to fall out of my bed. As my vision came to, all I could make sense of in my half-asleep state was that I was in my secluded quarters on the ship of my command. My ears had been giving a solid, high pitch ring from the sounds of the explosion, which had in turn caused me to shake my head to try and rid myself of the annoying sound. Stumbling up to my feet, I shoved my lack hair out of my light blue eyes while I made my way hastily to the dresser and adorned my usual casual attire. As I began slipping into my black pants and white short sleeved shirt, I all but froze when the scent of blood reached my sensitive nostrils. Panic began to fill my whole being as for the first time since I had awoken. Something was wrong. The faint screams of the men above on deck snapped my back to reality and without even placing the shirt on, I grabbed my charcoal coloured leather trench coat and English iron sword before barreling through my wooden door into the short hallway that lead to the main deck of the large frigate.

What I was coming out to however, I was not prepared for. The instant strong stench of gunpowder, burning wood and burnt flesh filled my nostrils, causing me to waiver slightly and stumble as the ship rocked to the right in the stormy seas around them. I could feel every ounce of my white shepherd body to turn tail and run at the sight of my men dying on the burning deck of our ship, but I couldn't. Not now, not ever. Tightening the grip on the hilt of my sword, I took a few steps back before leaping over the large hole in the deck where some of our ammo had detonated when a cannonball from the two attacking ship had struck. Landing lightly on the other side, I dug my claws into the soft wood beneath me while charging at an enemy, who was about to strike down one of my shipmates. With one strong swing across my body, my steel blade cut deep into the large feline's back in front of me, dropping him to the deck hard. Extending my hand to the average built collie before me, I helped him back on his feet and handed him his sword. "Thanks for the assistance, sir!" I heard him yell out before bolting back into the battle.

Once I had come to the middle of the ship... and the battle, I could finally see the extent of damage done to the once great vessel. All three of the giant masts has either been blown away by the cannon fire, or had gone up in flames and were moments away from breaking. There were holes littered in the deck, making it hard to fight with a steady stance. Some of the fires had been extinguished by the heavy rain falling, leaving smoldering, charcoaled pieces of wood everywhere. Hearing the battle cry of another feline behind me, I could hear the whistle of his sabre through the air and as I spun, ducked under the lethal blade while driving my own under the rib cage of my attacker and shoved him off the edge of the ship. Looking for my next foe, I moved to help another member of my crew, a large Doberman who was one of my fellow officers. "We thought you had been killed, sir!" shouted the male over the screams of the battle. I could see the concern in his eyes as he spoke those words before him and I dispatched another aggressor. "Do you really think I would die so easily?" I said with a smirk before dodging a swing and killing another cat. All the Doberman could do was roll his eyes before focussing on the battle once more.

As more cannon fire was heard, I instinctively ducked and was happy I did, I could hear a ball fly directly over my head and crack one of the ship's carved railings. Leaping up onto a raised platform, I began to examine what remaining forces were left of my crew, and the numbers I found froze me once more. Over half had already been killed by the attackers. We were being completely overrun by the felines as they seemed to have already had the two to one ratio from the beginning, which I could easily see from the attacking ship on either side of our own. In the back of my mind, I knew we were fighting a losing battle, but I could see that my men were willing to take as many of the attackers with them to the grave. Taking that to mind, I jumped back down into the fray, intent on also taking as many of the bastards with me as I could. Cutting down a few more enemies, I found myself fighting side by side with my men and this seemed to boost their morale because they began to push even harder into the wall of enemies around them.

After what had to be about twenty or thirty minutes, I couldn't tell, I had lost track of time and was focussing on the battle at hand, it seemed we had finally started making some ground against these blasted felines and had started to push them back or cut them down. As we began to push them near or off the edges of the ship, a sudden roar was heard from both of the attacking ships, causing both parties to freeze for a moment. As quickly as everyone froze however, the felines turned tail and retreated back to their ships and I could feel a tight knot in my stomach form. My ears flicked towards the remaining cheering men on my frigate, cries of victory and suffering.

However, a new sound had caught my attention, a light crackle, coming from the enemy ships and as my fellow officer came up and clapped me on the shoulder, he could visibly see the look of horror on my face as my tail tucked. Realizing what was happening, the Doberman screamed out to the crew. "Everyone brace for-" he couldn't even finish warning our crew before the crack of cannon fire was heard from both sides of the ship. From the resulting explosion, all I could hear was silence while my athletic build, white furred body was thrown high into the air towards the stern of the ship. Through blurred vision, I could barely see the debris of my ship and crew falling from the sky into the sea and around me on deck. I have no clue what drove me to do so, but I suddenly felt my body rise up and begin staggering towards where a now massive crater of a hole was in the middle of the frigate. With one last glance, I could see the attacking ships turning away back into the seas before collapsing onto the deck below, one of my arms near my muzzle while the other laid flat beside me. As my vision began to fade, I could ironically see the storm subsiding and a port just ahead of us. *We were so close...* Was my last recallable thought before fading away into the darkness, the burning ship around me heading for the home port we were returning to.