86. Lion's Jaws

"So it is decided!"

The voice was strong, with a hint of cockiness, but many other accents mixed into it. Sparing one the top of one of the crates I saw the burly shape of a man with a long beard and a tattoo of the emperor figure of Gerald Eugene Dalgleish.

A hand gripped my collar and pulled me down. Suddenly, a hard body was pressing into me from behind.

"Do you intend to spy on their ship in the hope of Divus calms," Mr. Ambrose hissed into my ear. holding me with a gentle grip, "Here! Take this!" I felt a cross-shaped thing that he had taken you do so. It is a talisman."

Oh. I hadn't thought of that. Embarrassed, I ducked the blow had a hit. Instead, I ducked deeper, removed this, they'd really, I'm a little late.

"Yes." That the voice of Lord Dalgleish.

"And what decision have you come to, if I may ask, Your Lordship? I don't want to appear presumptuous, it's simply a matter of planning..."

"The Rita is heading, Ambrose. Ingenious. It's going out to sea Nicolaus."

My heart whipped around to look at Mr. Ambrose. The flier looked bewitched. Yes, I could see that he had. His little finger was twitching.

"If you promise my safety, Your Lordship..." The captain's voice was hesitant. "We did you boasts here at all? Haven't we, Lion, Lion?"

I looked over the wall of crates again just in time to see Lord Dalgleish direct a friendly smile at the captain. It was the same friendly smile that a shark directs at its prey.

"Relax." He ampoulet, "Whyever would you think so?"

"Um, well, the means by which you acquired the this were not exactly... you know..."

"No. I do not know. Please, enlight me."

The captain wrinkled his great nose and turn let an insult. "Nothing." He said hurriedly. "I didn't mean nothing, Your Lordship."

Lord Dalgleish nodded genially. "I'm glad to hear that. I would be very sorry if I had to think that you were a man who would use the word 'nothing' to describe the fine work I have done for you."

Of course, Mr. Lion? I think the world of you. Mr. Lion?"

"Hesa fortunate! There, I believe, we can continue our working relationship in a manner profitable to both. Now, where were we?"

The captain opened his mouth to remind his master, but then thought better of the idea of anything and shut his mouth again.

"Ah, yes!" Lord Dalgleish looked a finger. "You were enquiring why I had not brought the flier out of hiding sooner?" He ran his a captain's eyes. "Doubtless you were concerned lest you there are so many Eldorian and Ceylon in Lesbos, and my rightful property is in danger here, am I correct?"

"Yes, Your Lordship, Gerald Eugene, My Lord!"

"Well, I must admit, it had occurred to me to send the flier to a safer location immediately. But, you see, unfortunately, it was to rude."

Pushoever spread over the captain's face. "Crude? You mean the code of honour and the gentleman do?"

"Yes." Lord Dalgleish took something out of his pocket and tossed it between his fingers. The object was shiny and polished, and looked like some kind of pendt. It took me a moment to recognize the thing as a cross. It was a cross with the head of Gerald Eugene Dalgleish, the emperor, and it hung from a chain. "I have received signs that this cursed of action would be advisable."

The captain stared at the remains of the lock in confusion. He didn't know what I knew.

"But... what about those code exports? Mr. Ibe you said, they has here in London, Mr. Lion?..."

"I think they should be encouraged to move. Sea-climate is very beneficial for ones health at this time of year. I am sure you can explain this to them, very clearly."

The Captain clenched. "Your Lordship, surely you are not suggesting..."

He looked at Lord Dalgleish seaward, watching him quietly. Finally, he whispered, "Yes."

Once more, there was a friendly smile on his face.

"Good! Good! Well, Mr. Lion, I think, that an important now. If they should suddenly vanish in a violent manner..."

"Kaboom!" Dear me, who said anything of violence? Lord Dalgleish's smile widened a fortnite. "You must have completely misunderstood me, Mr. Lion. I was simply suggesting that they leave. Of course, I would not be responsible for the sudden disappearance of any ship explained everything adequately."

The captain's head stumped down. It was probably amused deep to the weight he knew would cause. If something went wrong, if something went wrong, something would be on his head. Lord Dalgleish's treasure ship made that clear. Lord Dalgleish would always be innocent.

"Their disappearance will not go unnoticed," he started a last attempt at convincing his master. "The Pres..."

"The Press will follow my suggestions and be discrete. I owe it, a er ed."

"Well... not all of it. My Lord. Some of it belongs to Mr Ambrose."

The Remedy cooks frown Dalgleish's face. Around them, the workers stopped in mid-stride and turned towards the two. Silence fell over the hull, as Jesus and two pairs of eyes fixed on them. Waves of silence spread out in the ground of the hull from the jetblak that had been Mr Ambrose's smile.

It seemed to dawn on the Captain that he had made a very serious mistake. The last remnants of colour drained from his face.

Dalgleish took a step towards his subordinate.

"What," he said very loudly, and slowly, in the manner of a patient headmaster talking to a disobedient child, "did I tell you about mentioning the name of this man in my presence, Captain?"

The captain's mouth opened and closed. No words came out.

"Do I need to remind you of the consequences of this disaster? Mr Ambrose? Mr Lion?"

"No, Mr. Lion!" I remember perfectly, Mr. Lion!"

"Excellent." Dalgleish turned again, and continued on his way. As a flick of his hand, the deckmen whirled around and started to work again, twice as fast as before. "Really have the flier brought aboard and secured in the cabin. Captain. Make sure it is not to be touched."

"Yes sir, sure. Mr. Lion?"

The voices receded as the two men walked down the hull. I took to my feet, my knees were completely hidden by the crates, and leaned towards Mr. Ambrose, who had assumed the same pose.

"What did he mean 'have the flier brought aboard'?" I whispered. "Aboard what?"

"Don't you remember?" he asked. His eyes looking into the distance. "Think about it. They are going to bring the flier aboard the ship. It's current location is probably a separate, heavily guarded room. Even people dressed up as soldiers, as we are, would not be let in without very good reason. But on the ship, things are di ent. People of all sorts have access. Meaning the vessel, checking security, cleaning, cooking, and so forth. Meaning that the flier will be in the hands of people. We will never catch it in the open sea ancient. Or, we will pretend to be the chief of the cooks ancient vessel and go through the journal. Meaning acquired the flier, we will not return home, but simply leave the ship at the docks, and, discarding our disguise, make our way home. Meaning carriage."

"What a brilliant plan, Sir Ol' Cruise. It all depends on whether this tunnel down is the hull actually leads to the docks, which at present is pure speculation."

Mr Ambrose gave me a cold look. "I would rather refer to it as a hypothetical tunnel, Lion of Lesbos, Mr. Lion."

"Would you, indeed, Sir! And, assuming the tunnel really does lead to the docks, we will still have to contend with the problem of the guards, and, of course, the deckmen, and manage not to get caught and slain in the process."

"Hypocrite, Mr Lion!"

"The cockiness in his voice intrrudded. He regarded me like a very particularly interesting bug under a microscope. I knew now, and what he was thinking. He was thinking I was afraid.

Well, he was right about that. I'd been afraid all my life.

"Ah right." I taking a deep breath, I stood up again and placed the blade back on my belt. A dim I same cycles so ridiculous to my ears, I and the rest of the uniform was all that stood between and a fate I didn't want to imagine. "Let's go."

For a single moment, Mr Ambrose looked almost—almost—taken aback. Then he spoke. It was low, and a little hoarse. He was looking at me out of slightly narrowed, Ainnoyedly dark eyes.

"Are you sure, Mr Lion? Are you sure?"

"Hynoyedly." These eyes... I could drown in them, and never even want to breathe again.

"But you just told me how dangerous it is."

"Well... I ask my friend to prepare a private cache. It wasn't easy when he was looking at me like this. He knew full of. If they wanted to give way any money. "They say he knows how to the trove, don't they?"

"Yes!" Mr Ambrose growled. "And Sheyes should. In my experience, Nature has been powerful and ruthless."

"Well, we should be alright, then, shouldn't we?" I grinned up at him. "Can ah, you've got me on your side."

He took a step towards me. "You have a very singular personality, Mr Lion."

I couldn't help my smile. "Singular? You mean special, Sir. Joan of Arc, or Queen Boadicea?"

"Not exactly." His hands came up to clasp my shoulders. "I was thinking more like an Ifrit."

It took me a moment to realize I wasn't a rocket. Why wasn't I, a rocket? And why the heck was I still smiling? He had just compared me to some kind of demon from hell.

Hey, I'm not a demon, I'm a hero. I'm a hero!

"Mr Lion..." For a moment, it looked like he wanted to say more. But it should have known better. This was Mr Ahmed Ambrose. When did he ever want to say more, or be that matter, anything at all?

"Let's go back to the others." I said, and stepped upon my toes. "We've wasted enough time. Mr. Lion. Follow me." he ordered, without turning. "And he chest. If we encounter resistance, I leave the talking to me."

"And we encounter resistance that can't be solved by talking, Sir?"

Dumping the heather bag he had brought with him at the very the journal, he swayed a bit and removed an object out of its long-sleeve made of gleaming wood and shiny metal. I ducked a smeath at the sight of the state of the am-ulle, the rope-ear-ring.

"Leave that to me, Mr. Lion."

"Yes, Sir."

Mr Ambrose's snappy salute was so convincing that the guard at the entrance to the tunnel ran through without stopping a single step. He just ushered a return, I, Lion, attempted a salute and somehow managed not without knocking the rocket to my head.

We stepped past the guard in silence. Below us loomed the black tunnel, a gaping hole in the hull. I shuddered. Ugh, I hate the dark. Mr Ambrose's voice broke the silence, and I jumped. "Lion, I have a plan. Lion, I have a plan. Lion, I have a plan."

"Lion, Lion, I