

“Alright, I have to give it to you,” Quasi readily admits, “this is fucking amazing.”

Davy nods proudly. His ghostly eyes glow with the reminiscent of a distant memory. **“Dutchman was an elder water dragon with an innate ability to manipulate the sea. This ship, built with its bones, is capable of producing a fraction of the dragon’s power,”** the [Archlich] rattles on as he sails his ship across the sky. Holding them aloft and pushing them forward is a cyclone tilted so far down it may as well be sideways.

Quasi only partially listens to the undead. The [Hero] is too caught up in the sheer awesomeness of sailing with a dead dragon’s maelstrom.

“If an elder dragon can create hurricanes, how the hell does a dragon die? Aren’t they supposed to be immortal? How’d you kill it?” he asks.

“Hmph,” Davy snorts. **“I thought you’d be able to tell, me being a lich and all, but I’m not suicidal. No, an elder fire dragon formed a volcano directly under Dutchman and killed it. But why let good bones go to waste?”**

Quasi pauses for a moment. “Volcano... Holy fuck, dragons *are* dangerous. Makes you wonder how they went extinct.”

Davy doesn’t move or react as he continues maneuvering his ship and the rivers of mana streaming forth from it.

“Elder dragons are overwhelmingly powerful, but they’re also beyond rare. Most dragons didn’t live long enough to grow old. I’d wager there were only seven elders alive at any point, and they were always the leading cause of death for other dragons. They only went extinct because they ignored humanity long enough for humans to develop [Dragon Slayers] with enough levels to kill them.”

Quasi folds his arms. “Yeah, I can relate. I thought I was [Assassin] proof with my skills and stats, but maaan was I wrong.”

Davy shakes his head disapprovingly. **“If you wish to live as long as me, you must never be careless. I hope you learned something from nearly dying.”**

“Nearly? Nah, I actually did die—Oh, hey, is that the fleet?” Quasi points.

Davy raises a spectral eyebrow but lets it pass and answers the question.

“Indeed, and it seems as though the fighting has just started.”

“Yup, and it looks like Testudo is still alive in his castle... Why is his castle so shiny?”

“How in the...” Davy voices with an elated degree of surprise, **“where the hell did he buy that much adamantium!? And how did he keep it all concealed!? This... This changes my ranking considerably!”**

Quasi snorts. “Only if he survives. It looks like his castle is caught and the [Pirate ArchQueen] is coming in to give the turtle a really bad day.”

“Are you still sure you want me to drop you off on his ship?” Davy asks, but Quasi quickly waves him off.

“Yeah, I’m good.” Quasi reaches into his shadow and retrieves a mask, cane, and hat. “I can’t let you outdo me with your hurricane sailing.” Quasi taps his cane on the floor. “Barglesmash, to me!”

A phoenix caws from the Dutchman’s mast. The bird flaps off its perch and descends in a fiery ball of light, extinguishing his flame the second before it perches on Quasi’s shoulder. The bird, formerly small enough to live inside his hat, has grown considerably over the course of a few days. Its old, red feathers have molted off, replaced by bright blue ones.

“How long did it take you to teach your bird that?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Quasi lies without hesitation. “Just drop me off by the castle and prepare to unload the rest of my crew when I have everyone’s attention.”

Davy looks at the young man and the confidence oozing from his posture. He’s not sure what the man will do, but he can’t help admit that he’s curious. **“Then be ready to jump. I stop for nothing.”**

With his final words, Davy pushes his ship's core to the limit. The unruly swirling winds pull tighter, until the vortex looks more like a tube of wind.

“Depths take us, what is he doing here?” Aegir growls as the waterspout grows more concentrated as it approaches. Within the maelstrom, sailing on the whirling vortex of water is the *Flying Dutchman*. He’s heard of Davy Jones. Everyone has, and the stories told about the immortal lich make most [Captains] quiver in fear, too scared to even name him. Any idiot should know those stories are just tall tales, but the man himself must not have gotten the memo.

Aegir checks the battle, finding the fighting has almost entirely stopped. All eyes are now on the encroaching cyclone that would obliterate any ship lacking strong defensive enchantments. It would be so easy for the storm to land on the fighting fleets and destroy over a hundred ships and damage dozens more.

“Aegir... is that him?” the [Abbot] asks.

Without turning to Nickolas, Aegir nods with an audible gulp. “Yes. That is Davy Jones, the Terror of the Sea.”

“Why is he here?”

“I don’t know,” Aegir answers. “but I doubt it’s to aid us.”

The [Grand Admiral] waits and watches like all other ships as the hurricane rises further up, tearing into the storm clouds that have begun to form.

Nobody moves or says a word as the funnel of wind rises over the ships and, to everyone's surprise, tilts downward towards Testudo. Gales arc from the cyclone to toss the sea and drag at sails, pushing the ships near the castle away with its approach. Molucca releases the nets holding the *Navis* and flees, lest he be dragged wherever Testudo might be going. He isn't a moment too soon, as immediately afterwards the castle is engulfed in the vortex's maw. Sizable waves emulate from the violent crash of water.

For a minute, the maelstrom churns the sea where the *Navis* had sailed, spraying everyone in proximity.

Then, all at once, the whirlwind dissipates. Wind and water slows, until the sea is steady once again. What remains is the *Navis*, unscathed.

No, Aegir notices, there is something else. Someone.

There, atop the highest parapet, stands an interloper.

Blinking the saltwater from his eyes, Aegir takes a better look. What he sees is a suited man wearing a skeleton caricature mask, a tricorn tophat embellished with bone, and a cane that looks like a humanoid's spine. But most notable about him is the Phoenix wearing a bowtie perched on his shoulder.

“Be careful,” the [Abbot] warns, “I sense the will of several gods surrounding him.”

Aegir frowns. “If so, then he’s not Davy Jones. That immortal does not tie himself to the divine.”

The masked man's head moves slightly, seemingly looking at everything around him. Then, his head stops facing Aegir. The [Grand Admiral] feels a chill go down his spine.

Several silent seconds pass before Aegir and Nickolas feel an aura descend upon them and over the sea.

“Good day to you all, my lovely audience.” The words echo through the aura and into everyone’s mind with a powerful compulsion attached. All eyes are drawn to the dandy, who has his arms stretched out to sides.

“You may call me, Bone!” he shouts his name with such energy that countless sailors flinch from the volume.

“—and I thank you all for coming to my concert.”

The man slides one foot forward, left hand swings back with the staff, while the right hand lifts his hat to his side as the man bows. The bow is magnificent for those with the stats, skills, or tools to see such a perfect movement.

The man stands up and once again glances across everyone present.

“Please stay seated until the performance begins.”

From the man's back, ivory bat-like wings erupt in a spray of blood that makes the Phoenix take flight. The new necromantic appendages shake off the excess liquid before flapping once and pulling Bone up into the air.

Everyone silently watches the man, either held still by his aura, or like Aegir, transfixed by fear. He can feel it, a new storm is brewing, and Bone is at the epicenter. Something chaotic, uncertain, and worst of all, *hazardous*, has arrived in this masked man. This man is the fleshy antithesis of Odin’s teachings, and it does not bode well for what is to come.

Bone gently lands on the water, half a league from the *Navis*, in the center of all the ships. The patch he stands on glows faintly with violet, unperturbed by the passing swells. The man's wings fold into his back, and in their place grow nine transparent, purple tails.

The tails swish elegantly in time with the movement of the waves.

One of the tails unravels into strands of energy which join the violet water beneath Bone’s feet, expanding it. Another tail follows, and so grows the patch. So it continues, until every one of the nine tails are part of that brilliant pool of mana that has the [Mages] seriously worried.

From the violet water rises the most extravagant and grand piano Aegir’s ever seen. The instrument is larger than a skiff, it's even larger than a trawler.

The man pauses once again, taking another moment to look at his silent and entraptured audience.

Then, with lazy motion, he seats himself. His gloved white hand slides across the polished, phantasmal wood and delicately raises the cover from the keys. With the slow, soft caress of someone who genuinely appreciates a finely crafted and tuned instrument, the masked man touches the solid ivory keys.

“Thank you for your patience,” the man's voice reaches everyone, **“I will be performing a piece written for just this occasion.”**

The man taps a single key. The sound doesn't come from the piano, but from the stormy sky above. The clouds look ready to pour down, but they wait like everyone else.

“This song is called... *Rise of the 34th. [Sonorous Skies]*”

With a final breath, Bone's hands fall upon the keys with a soft touch. A relaxing melody begins, a slow start to what everyone feels is only just the beginning. Some continue to stare at the man as he plays, but most choose to look up at the sky and watch the clouds shift with every stroke of the keys. This lasts for ten seconds before the music becomes louder, faster, and is accompanied by more instruments; more layers

Eyes turn from the melodious heavens to Bone in the throes of a symphony. Near the man, several dozen other instruments rise, each one played by, to everyone's horror, skeletal undead.

The strongest [Captains] break free from their trance at the sight, but everyone else remains transfixed, enthralled by the macabre show.

The music crescendos, louder, faster, more magnificent than before, as more and more players join the ghastly chorus. A stage rises up, still upon the ocean, and lifts the skeletal orchestra above the waves.

The stage continues to rise, a small piece of a much larger superstructure. Slowly, the whole emerges, barely contained by the immense oval of violet water. Up and up it goes, the stage atop a hull twice or thrice the size of Aegir's flagship.

Finally, the onlooking [Sailors], [Captains], and [Admirals] perceive the structure as a ship, broader of beam than the *Navis* and displacing more than the *Dwarven Anvil* would, had it been built to float.

The ship ascends in time with the symphony descending on high. The music grows louder yet, each reverberation shaking the ocean, heralding the resurrection of something fell and ancient.

Eventually, the ship reaches its full freeboard... and then, to everyone's mounting terror, the ship continues rising. Floating on air, the ship ascends further, defying gravity and revealing its full form for all to see.

Above the waterline, the vessel is a super-dreadnought and at the keel, some crazed shipwright retrofitted it with the black skeleton of an oversized narwhal, complete with its skull and crystalline horn. Seemingly pulling in the surrounding light, veins of purple crisscross the ship's monstrous hull. Gravity attuned mana floods the surrounding sea, supporting the battleship and wrecking havoc nearby.

But, what chills the blood of everyone outside the ship's gravitational wake is the vessel's name written across monster skull and silver prow.

Like the ship, a compound of an ancient Legend and an unknown Terror...

ShadeHaven