

## Hippocratic Oath - Oceanic Pains

The receptionist beamed as the doors to the Oceanic Museum opened and several people, dressed in the same blue-and-white striped uniform, marched in. Her smile disappeared as they bypassed the reception area without stopping.

“Hey, wait!” she yelled. “You’re supposed to pay.” They ignored her, a score of the pirates filling into the museum. “Stop!” she yelled at them.

“Is there a problem?” the final pirate asked as the doors swung shut behind him. Where the others had their hair hidden beneath a bandana, this guy had his blue hair unconstrained. He carried a black case across his back.

She looked across the entrance to her fellow receptionist, who was sat back doing her nails. “Yes. Nobody has paid, and we’ve no record of a group booked for today. Who’s in charge of these people?”

“That’d be me,” the blue-haired pirate. “I do apologise, I’ve got the payment somewhere.” He laid down the case.

“That’ll be-”

He pulled out a wooden bat. “Here’s your payment!” he yelled as he slammed it against the ticket window, shattering the glass. She screamed as shards of glass flew towards her.

“Tell Captain Stern to get his ass out of his office,” Riviera yelled. “If he wants to keep his precious museum intact.” He swung the bat through another panel of glass. “Now!”

“Y-you have to pay the entrance fee...” the woman muttered from beneath the desk.

“Oh, for fuck’s sake,” he cursed. He reached into his pockets, rifling through them in turn, then patted his body. “Give me a sec,” he said. “James, you got your wallet?”

One of the Team Aqua grunts stopped his study of the different types of soil. “Sure, boss,” he said, pulling out a miltank-leather wallet and handing it over.

Riviera pulled a note from it and slapped it on the counter then returned the wallet. “Thanks, I’ll repay you later.” When the woman remained under the desk, he turned to the other reception booth, only to find the other receptionist had bolted.

“Damnit.” He tapped on the desk of the first booth. “Hey lady, you gonna call Stern now?”

“Helix Dome it,” he cursed when she didn’t move. He wandered through the museum, casually swinging the bat. He cast his eyes over the various exhibits; balls of water from regions such as Kanto, Hoenn, his home of Unova, even Tunod, a place he’d never even heard of; cylindrical tubes showcased soil from the bottom of the ocean; a tank displayed long-dead fossils; a sign read *Slateport City Oceanic Museum thanks you for not touching the exhibits*.

A sign on the eastern wall labelled *Gift Shop*, above a curtain of string decorated with sea shells. He parted the beaded curtain with his bat and entered.

Shelves and display cases showed various tat, keychains and mood rings and tiny models. One corner had books about the ocean, while another displayed model ship sets. A display model rested atop the boxes.

“What’s going on?” a voice asked. Riviera looked to his left, seeing the paunchy shopkeeper.

“Environmental research,” Riviera answered. “I’m looking for Stern.”

The shopkeeper strained himself trying to peek out the door. “You’ll need to ask at reception. Did something break?”

“They’re busy, summat about broken windows. Can you contact Stern?”

He nodded. “I’m not supposed to unless it’s an emergency though...”

“Call him, please.”

He shook his head. “Not unless it’s an emergency. Why, was somebody hurt?”

“Oh don’t worry, everybody’s fine, for now.” The sound of tinkling glass drifted in. “Well, nobody’s hurt at least.”

The shopkeeper hesitated, drumming his fingers against the counter.

“Are...are people vandalising the museum?”

More glass tinkling. Riviera parted the curtain. A pair of Aqua grunts by the regional water were looking around sheepishly, glass and water by their feet. Two spheres of water were missing.

He let the curtain. “Just a few mishaps. Now call Stern.”

“Oh no, I have to call the police!” the shopkeeper said, picking up the phone and dialling. He jumped and shrieked as the till screen cracked and darkened, the rounded end of the bat inches from his face.

“Not the police, Stern!” Riviera yelled, pulling the bat free of the till. He swung the bat again and the screen of the till broke free, hitting the nearby wall. The shopkeeper let out a wail and dropped the phone.

The doctor rubbed his forehead. “Why does this place employ idiots?” He cast his eyes across the store, settling on the model ship, the *S.S. Anne*. He picked it up then placed it on the counter. “This is what is going to happen. You are going to pick up that phone and call Stern, or I am going to destroy your shitty little shop one display at a time. You’ve got until the count of three. One.”

“Please!” the man begged, placing his hands on the model. “Don’t destroy this.”

“Two.”

“We can talk about this!”

Riviera brought the bat down, striking flesh. The man screamed in pain as shards of plastic were embedded into his hand and the model broke apart. He flinched backwards, cowering in the corner, as Riviera brought the bat down on the rest of the model, reducing it to broken plastic.

“Let’s try that again,” the doctor said. He aimed the bat at a card display. “Call Stern. And stop crying! It’s nothing lethal.”

Evidently the prospect of having his pitiful empire destroyed motivated the man. He grabbed the phone and dialled. “Captain Stern, sir. I...Look I know this is irreg- I know I shouldn’t be call- *We’re in danger down here!* The museum, goons-” He yelped as the doctor tapped the counter with the bat. “Some fine gentlemen are here to see you They’re most insistent. They...they’re destroying the ship models, sir.” He nodded occasionally as the person on the other end of the line spoke, occasionally giving grunts of confirmation. He returned the phone to its cradle. “Captain Stern said he’ll see you upstairs. Just please leave me be!”

“Thank y’kindly,” Riviera said. He dropped the bat and tore several strips from his outfit, placing them on the counter. “Wrap up those wounds until y’can get proper

medical aid,” he instructed, retrieved his bat, and passed through the seashell curtain again.

He passed through the grunts, bat on shoulder, leaving them to learn about the ocean. He climbed the stairs to the north, ascending to the upper floor. A 3D map of Hoenn lay at the top of the stairs. Along the west wall were several cylindrical tubes of water, with several display cases showing various ships along the east wall. The centre was dominated by a seating area and TV droning on about a submarine.

Course, he was here to learn about the submarine, he reminded himself. He whistled as he paced the floor, examining the ships. The first case held a model of the *Royal Unova*, a ship he’d only ever seen leaving port.

“Oh Captain, My Captain! Our fearful trip is done,” Riviera quoted. “The ship has weathered every rack, the prize we sought is won.”

“I’m right here, you bastard.”

Riviera turned slowly. He’d missed the office door in his attempt to recall the poem. “Captain Stern I presume?”

Captain Stern was slightly taller than the doctor was, either wearing many layers or a bit overweight. His brown fringe kept threatening to get in the way of his glasses.

“That’s right,” the captain said. “You think you can just stride in here, intimidate my staff, and get away with it? Perdita, let’s go!”

A flash of light and the small poochyena puppy appeared. “Swift attack!” Stern ordered.

Riviera gasped and dropped his bat. “Oh you seek a battle?” His foot lashed out, combat boots catching the puppy under the chin and sending her flying. She struck the window and fell to a heap on the floor, dazed.

The captain’s gaze flew to his Pokémon. “Perdita!” In that second, Riviera picked up the bat and slammed it across the captain’s back. Stern stumbled as the doctor did a twirl, bringing the bat against Stern’s face. A tooth flew free and Stern collapsed against the glass of the *S. S. Aqua*’s display.

“Enjoy drinking through a straw,” Riviera said as he raised the bat to the captain’s cheek.

“Stop right there!”

Riviera paused then removed the bat from Captain Stern’s cheek. “Your lucky day.” He threw aside the bat as he turned to the stairs.

A young woman stood by the stairs. She wore a blue shirt and shorts, as well as a bandana. She could easily have been a member of Team Aqua had it not been for the shades and trainers.

“Who are you?” he asked.

“Agent Quinn, International Police,” she said. “Dr Riviera Hurt, you’re under arrest. Come quietly and you won’t get hurt.”

Riviera laughed. “Oh, that’s a good one.” He rolled his shoulders. “Let me show you how it works.” He screamed as he charged at her, fist raised.

He slammed it down, striking the map of Hoenn. He gritted his teeth, ignoring the scraped skin on his knuckles. A hand grabbed the back of his hair and forced his face against the wall. Blood trickled from one of his nostrils.

He swayed as he turned to face her. Damnit, but she was fast. “Nice moves,” he admitted grudgingly.

“What’s the matter, Doctor? Are you only capable of fighting when your victims can’t fight back?”

Riviera spat a glob of spit free. “Oh, don’t get ahead of yourself,” he said. He cracked his knuckles then rolled his head, cracking his collarbone, then took up a fighting stance. “Bring it.”

She struck him across the face, but he threw up an arm to block her second blow. He struck with his other fist, catching her in the stomach. She bent over, winded, and he followed up by kicking her under the chin. She curled up into a ball. Nearby, a door clicked as Captain Stern locked himself in his office.

“What’s the matter, Agent? Are you only capable of fighting when your opponents aren’t surprised?”

She glared at him then got back to her feet. “Oh, it’ll be a pleasure bringing you in.”

They circled one another, each waiting for the other, neither willing to make the same mistake they made last time. After several minutes, Quinn closed in and Riviera took the opportunity to swing at her. He only hit air, but a jab to his side took

him down to one knee. He grabbed her ankle and pulled, knocking her off-balance. She grunted as she fell to the floor.

He rose back to his feet and wiped his sleeve across his brow. "You're good," he said, breathing heavily. "Where'd you learn your stuff?"

She raised her legs and leapt to her feet from the supine position, her body twisting in the air. She raised her fists as she landed, bouncing on the balls of her feet.

*How very flexible*, Riviera thought. They began their circling dance again. He looked into her eyes, saw the fire, saw the determination. Thoughts about seeing just how flexible she was came unbidden to his mind.

Attempts to keep those thoughts private failed, as Quinn sensed his distraction and launched her attack. She struck him one, two, then kicked him with a spinning kick. He took several steps as he fought to retain his balance, his face reddening and smarting. A flying kick to his back forced him against the *Royal Unova's* display case. His chin struck the corner of the glass and an irony taste filled his mouth, his tongue painful.

He got to his feet then leant against the display case, wishing that the room would stop spinning and that his stomach would settle.

"Ready to give yourself up?"

He spat some bile onto the display then held his hands in the air. He listened to her footsteps as they came closer. His elbow shot out, striking her nose. He spun, grabbed the back of her shirt, and threw her against the display case. It cracked and gave way and she fell onto the model of the *Royal Unova*. He spat out some more bile. "See ya."

He turned to his left side as he shoulder barged his way through the window. It shattered and he flew through the air a few feet before gravity asserted itself.

The grass broke his fall. Pain coursed through him, but none more so than his right shoulder.

*Ignore the pain! Move!*

He turned himself onto his belly, but even that small movement caused intense shoulder pain to flare up. He pushed himself up to his knees then tried

swinging his arms. The left one moved easily, but the right shifted an inch and protested with more pain.

“Are you okay?”

His head snapped round. A man wearing the apron of the local Pokémart was gawking at him.

Riviera pushed himself to his feet, taking care to favour his left side. He swayed and took deep breaths, the pain becoming a dull ache. He shuffled forwards, his only goal to get away, anywhere that wasn't here. Still those unwanted thoughts invaded his mind.

“Hey, do you need help?” the gawker asked.

Riviera paused at the man's question. He was tempted to make a remark about bleeding battered people incapable of moving faster than a slowpoke being perfectly fine, but bit it back. “Screw off,” he said instead and continued on his way.

Mission failed.

[END]