

INT. STEDE'S CABIN

STEDE sleeps peacefully with his mouth open, one leg hanging off the bed, and taking up most of the space. ED sits at his side, softly smiling down at him, his hair back in its usual half-up, half-down, as he watches STEDE sleep, fondness in his eyes. He fixes a curl on STEDE's forehead and rises from the bed, his tattoo-covered back to the camera. He walks over to the couch, picks up a blue velvet robe, and puts it on, covering his 'TRUST NO ONE' with a skull and snake crawling out of its eye tattoo. He looks back at STEDE one last time before walking to the door and closing it slowly and quietly behind him.

INT. HALLS OF THE REVENGE

[light piano music playing] [items thudding]

The camera is panned up at ED as he looks down, not looking at the camera but to the right of it below him. He's wearing a dark teal blue velvet robe that slips off his right shoulder as he ties something up. The camera turns to the object of his attention—a bundle of rope that holds his leathers and a cannonball. He sighs and admires his work for a few seconds before bending down and picking it up.

EXT. DECK OF THE REVENGE

♪ ♪ [wind whistling] ♪ ♪

ED sighs as he places the rope ball down on the railing, relieved that his hands are no longer full. He exhales like he's hyping himself up to throw the leathers overboard. He looks at the bundle again, reminiscing about the "good old days" before throwing it overboard.

[loud splash]

The camera follows the bundle of rope underwater until it's nearly out of sight. ED stares at his reflection in the water and watches the reminders of his past sink.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[sing-songy]

Bye-bye.

He bends down and picks up a beautiful silver tray with intricate designs. The tray holds a flower in a glass of water, a white bowl of oatmeal with some syrup sprinkled on it, a sponge cake with brown sugar sprinkled on top, and two perfectly toasted pieces of toast, one with jam and one with chocolate. a blue plate of eggs with parsley flakes and a fork next to it, a bowl of marmalade, a white mug of coffee with a silver sugar container, and tiny tongs on top. ED adds a tiny piece of twine and adjusts it once or twice before deciding it's presentable and smiling at his work. He dips his finger in the marmalade and licks it as he walks back to the cabin.

♪ ♪

[cheery, elegant theme playing]

TITLE CARD: *The show's title, 'OUR FLAG MEANS DEATH,' is spelled out by the blue ocean and the bubbles resulting from the splash of ED dropping his leathers. His leather jacket can be seen underwater through the center of the 'O'.*

INT. STEDE'S CABIN

STEDE stares at the breakfast tray on his lap and smiles softly at the affectionate gesture. ED sits beside him, leaning against the window, waiting for STEDE's reaction.

STEDE:

[awestruck]

I can't believe you made me breakfast in bed.

ED relaxes at his response and shrugs like it's no big deal.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

What can I say? You inspire me.

STEDE smiles and looks down at the tray.

STEDE:

What have we got? Two toasts with jam and chocolate syrup, oatmeal with some syrup, and a sponge cake with brown sugar sprinkles.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[proud]

Yeah.

STEDE (CONT'D):

Eggs with parsley flakes, a bowl of marmalade, coffee, and a cup of sugar cubes. [eyebrows raised] Wow, lots of sugar.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Yup.

STEDE leans in and smiles slyly.

STEDE:

Trying to sweeten my taste?

ED nearly chokes on the spoonful of marmalade in his mouth, and STEDE pats his back.

STEDE (CONT'D):

Marmalade, of course. And strangely, some twine. What's that about?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[shrugs] Yeah, it's a piece of twine. I panicked. I didn't know what else to put on there, so I thought that I should add a flourish, so I put the twine on.

STEDE pats his lap reassuringly and smiles softly.

STEDE:

It worked. It does. It actually made it. [sighs] You really went all out for this?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Just my way of saying thank you.

STEDE:

[confused]

For what?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[deep breath] Okay, you know that night that I died?

STEDE frowns at the memory of seeing ED's unconscious body and crying over him, begging for him to come back to him.

STEDE:

Mm, yeah.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

You appeared to me.

STEDE:

[curious]

Appeared?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Yeah.

STEDE:

Like a ghost?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

No, like a mermaid. Or a merman. You were a merperson.

STEDE lights up at the thought of him as a merperson and tries to imagine what his color palette would be as a merperson.

STEDE:

[interest peaked]

Wow. How'd I look?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Fantastic. [STEDE grins] You know, orange and sparkly, and you sort of just appeared out of the darkness under the water. You saved my life.

STEDE:

You know, I've always thought I looked good in orange. [ED chuckles] And I'm glad I could help. I'm sure you'll return the favor next time we're in a near-death situation.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[nods] How 'bout we just avoid all near-death situations?

STEDE:

[laughs] Yeah. Nice idea. Not bloody likely with our line of work.

STEDE takes a bite of the oatmeal, and his eyes widen in surprise. He slices the eggs, making sure there's some parsley on them, and he takes a bite, groans, and turns to ED.

STEDE:

[overjoyed]

Ed! This is amazing! Where'd you learn to cook?

ED shrugs like it's no big deal, but the compliment gives him butterflies.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Watching my mom.

ED looks down at his lap and rubs the robe to fight the tears. STEDE sees this soothing tactic and recalls ED telling him velvet is his favorite texture. STEDE boops his nose to comfort him.

STEDE:

[high-pitched]

Boop.

ED looks up at him, half frowning and half smiling like he's processing what just happened.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[smirks] Did you just *boop* my nose?

STEDE:

[very posh-sounding]

Yes.

ED laughs at the combination of his nose booping and his high-pitched voice. STEDE smiles.

STEDE:

[softly]

There he is.

STEDE caresses ED's cheek with his hand. ED is surprised at the bold display of affection, but it only lasts a few seconds before he's leaning into the touch, closing his eyes to soak in the feeling thoroughly. ED's eyes are closed as he soaks in the sense

of STEDE's hand on his cheek and finds that just his presence is so soothing. He finally understands why cats purr when you rub their bellies, and he imagines a world where they could stay like this forever. ED opens his eye's obsidian brown eyes and strokes STEDE's wrist with his thumb before slowly placing small kisses across his arm from his wrist to his palm while maintaining eye contact. STEDE lets out a shaky breath at the sight.

STEDE:

[barely audible]

Fuck.

ED tries to stifle a smile at his reaction. STEDE feels his heart drop as he watches ED kiss his wrist, knuckles, fingertips, and thumb. He can't stop thinking about those lips. They're so. So...

STEDE:

[whispering]

So soft.

ED pauses his affectionate kissing and stares at him, his cheeks heating up at the compliment. STEDE realizes he's said it out loud.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[teasingly]

[slight smirk] This is the first time I've heard that one.

ED gazes at STEDE with anticipation in his eyes. It takes STEDE a couple of seconds to realize that ED wants him to make the first move. STEDE's cheeks feel hot, but he refuses to waste the opportunity and leans in. STEDE tries his best to maintain eye contact but can't help but drop his gaze to ED's lips as he gets closer and closer, his thumb still caressing ED's bottom lip but slower and softer, like he was feeling a petal in all its glory.

ED's still looking at him, and he can see the gears in his head turning, realizing what STEDE's about to do, but he still lays there, his head on his lap, staring up at him like he's waiting for him to give him permission. STEDE feels time slow down as he hovers right above ED's lips, breathing slowly, but his heart is racing, and he is convinced that in the quiet room, he can hear ED's heartbeat matching up with his.

STEDE:

[shakily]

Jesus.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[chuckles] Nope, still just me.

STEDE closes his eyes as he leans in to join their lips, but just as they brush against each other and STEDE thinks he could die happily right here from that alone, he feels his thumb slip from its place on ED's lip and go.

STEDE:

[whispering]

Thank God Roach holds monthly physicals.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[smirking] Oh yeah, why's that?

STEDE:

[nervous chuckle] I'd think I'm having a heart attack.

ED laughs so hard that his eyes crease, and he leans over, holding his stomach. STEDE loves it when he laughs like that, like he's carefree like STEDE's the funniest man in the world. STEDE admires the way ED glows in the sun and wishes to stay in this moment forever. ED stops laughing, looks up at STEDE, and smiles at being

the target of his loving gaze. He grabs STEDE's face and kisses him, catching STEDE off guard. STEDE doesn't take long before deepening the kiss and wrapping his arms around ED's waist. ED pushes STEDE down onto his back, and STEDE pulls him down on top of him, sending both of them into a fit of giggles.

STEDE:

[teasing]

Comfortable?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[matching his tone]

Very.

STEDE does a fake laugh, gives ED a peck, and smiles against his mouth. ED lays his head against STEDE's chest and looks up at him through his lashes. ED does a little lick, one, two, and he looks like he's about to speak. STEDE is very much not ready; he thinks his brain is still processing everything going on, but instead of speaking or completing the kiss, ED does something entirely unexpected: he bites down on STEDE's thumb. Hard. STEDE doesn't fully process it until he feels the tingly sensation in his thumb and realizes the pain.

STEDE:

[confused]

[pouting] Ow!?

ED can't help but chuckle and smile at what he calls STEDE's "adorable pout." STEDE loves that smile where he can see the mischief in his eyes. ED sits up and stretches his knee a bit, which causes a shiver of guilt to run down STEDE's back. He can't help but feel a little guilty that he jumps up, ridding him of a place to lay his head, and he looks so content laying on his lap, and no! STEDE thinks to himself, *'Damn man, get a hold of*

yourself.' ED stretches in a way where his nose scrunches, and STEDE can see his stomach. ED looks at him with that lazy smile of his.

STEDE:

[shakes head] You handsome maniac.

ED pulls STEDE into his lap.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[smirking] Oh, you think I'm handsome, huh?

STEDE pretends to evaluate the question before answering, finger on chin.

STEDE:

Only a little.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[chuckles] Oh, only a little bit?

STEDE nods, and ED tackles him down, sending STEDE into a fit of laughter and sending them rolling on the tiny daybed until STEDE's in his lap. They don't even notice LUCIUS walk in.

LUCIUS:

Captains we've- Oh my god!

LUCIUS covers his eyes at the sight of STEDE and ED making out. STEDE screams and loses his balance, trying to cover himself up with ED's robe, and falls to the floor. ED looks at STEDE rubbing his back on the floor, LUCIUS covering his eyes, pacing back and forth, and shaking his head at the duo's theatrics.

STEDE:

[startled]

Jesus! Lucius!?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[annoyed]

Fuck off.

LUCIUS:

[frantically screaming]

Why didn't you put a sock on the door!?

STEDE:

[frantically screaming]

I don't know what that means!

ED ties his robe and crosses his arms across his chest, staring at LUCIUS like he's waiting for him to uncover his eyes.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

You can put your hands down, mate.

LUCIUS:

And risk being traumatized again? [dry chuckle] Yeah, right!

STEDE grabs his fuchsia robe from his outside wardrobe and rolls his eyes at LUCIUS's reaction.

STEDE:

Lucius, stop being dramatic [LUCIUS scoffs]. He's decent.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[cheekily]

I've been told I'm more than decent, thank you.

LUCIUS:

[teasing]

So that's why you look so well-rested.

ED flicks him off, and LUCIUS sticks his tongue out at him.

STEDE:

[aghast]

Edward! Lucius! Can you two please just not?

LUCIUS:

[half-heartedly]

Sorry.

STEDE:

[smiles] Thank you. Now, what is it you need to tell us?

LUCIUS brightens up as he remembers what he came there for.

LUCIUS:

[grinning]

We're 10 minutes away from the Republic.

LUCIUS waits for applause or compliments from his co-captains, but they just stare at him like he's overstaying his welcome. LUCIUS thinks about how lucky they are that he can take a hint.

LUCIUS (CONT'D):

[rolls eyes] I lost the short straw game, so here I am again.

[mumbling] Last time, I let Frenchie choose my straw.

LUCIUS moves to sit on their bed before remembering what he walked in on and decides to lean against the couch instead. ED and STEDE share a look, which LUCIUS catches, claps, and purses his lips before leaning off the couch.

LUCIUS:

I can read a room [STEDE squints]. I'll leave you, lovebirds,
alone.

He nearly runs to the door and pokes his head in to leave them
with one last message.

LUCIUS:

[speaking fast]

Congratulations to you two, but please put a sock on the door next
time, okay?

He slams the door shut behind him, leaving STEDE confused and ED
semi-amused.

STEDE:

[whispering]

[scrunches nose] Such a drama queen!

[pipe organ music playing]

ED chuckles and shakes his head at STEDE's snarky comment.

[birds cawing]

INT. HALLS OF THE RED FLAG

[clock ticking]

ZHANG and AUNTIE stand in the hallway aboard the Red Flag, heads
tilted, as they stare at the giant clock in front of them in
curiosity and confusion.

ZHANG MEI:

[annoyed but interested]

What is this doing in my office?

AUNTIE:

[shrugs] Well, that's from the prince. He delivered one to every ship in the fleet. Something about celebrating a time of peace between pirates and civilized society.

MEI frowns at the explanation.

ZHANG MEI:

Was he here when it was delivered?

AUNTIE:

'Course not, Rich Prick sent some soldiers with the message to every ship this morning, which you would know if you didn't insist on sleeping in.

ZHANG MEI:

[pouting]

How am I supposed to lead 400 ships without getting the proper amount of sleep?

AUNTIE gives her an unimpressed look.

AUNTIE:

Twelve hours?

MEI's eyes widen, and she shrugs, turning away while she twirls a strand of hair.

ZHANG MEI:

[scoffs] Maybe.

AUNTIE shakes her head and stares at the clock like she's waiting for it to do something.

AUNTIE:

What?

ZHANG MEI:

[puzzled]

What?

AUNTIE:

You think this means something.

MEI turns back to the clock, staring at it like she's waiting for it to reveal its true nature.

ZHANG MEI:

[twirling pigtail]

You said he sent his soldiers to each of our ships at the exact same time?

MEI traces the clock as she walks around, inspecting it for any oddities. She stops in front of the clock, back at AUNTIE's side.

AUNTIE:

You think he's planning something.

MEI turns to AUNTIE; she's wearing a skeptical look. She doesn't think RICKY could crush a bug.

ZHANG MEI:

[frowns] I know you don't think much of him.

AUNTIE:

He wouldn't dare. He knows he can't win against us.

MEI steps in front of her.

ZHANG MEI:

[shakes head] And that's exactly what he wants us to think. He knows we'll underestimate him, and he'll use that as his chance to strike.

AUNTIE:

Cockiness can be a hindrance, Mei.

ZHANG MEI:

[frowns] He's a complete idiot, Auntie. But he's got unlimited resources at his disposal. The good news is we know his type: a rich, weaselly, cunning white prick who had everything handed to him his whole life. Guys like him never do their dirty work, and he's the type to screw anyone just to prove themselves and have some fraction of power. [frowns] We've defeated stronger men than him before; we'll get through this.

ZHANG bites her thumbnail as she thinks about his plan before she's pulled out of her thoughts by a stabbing sensation on her finger.

ZHANG MEI:

Ow! What the fuck was that!?

AUNTIE proudly holds up a needle so small that MEI has to lean in to see it. MEI stares at her with shock and disgust in her eyes, like she's betrayed her.

AUNTIE:

[sly smile] With this. Nail biting is a nasty habit to shake; you've had it since you were

ZHANG MEI:

[rolls eyes] Five years old, I know. God, I can't believe you still have that thing. Is it even clean?

AUNTIE:

[crosses arms] I could say the same about your nail-biting.

ZHANG MEI:

[gasps] Mean!

AUNTIE rubs her shoulder affectionately before clearing her throat and patting her shoulder.

AUNTIE:

You'll live; now go get ready. The sooner we leave, the more people we can recruit, and the sooner we can find out what the fuck this is [getting the clock].

ZHANG MEI:

Right.

AUNTIE gives the clock one last once-over, then walks to the door to gather crew members for when they dock. MEI turns around to address her.

ZHANG MEI (CONT'D):

Hey, can you get some of the girls in here to toss this overboard? I trust that fucker about as far as I can throw him.

AUNTIE nods and shuts the door behind her. MEI listens for her footsteps to get farther away before grinning, giggling, and doing a little dance. She clears her throat and looks at the clock one last time.

ZHANG MEI:

[sputters] Man, you're ugly.

She kicks the clock, which causes it to chime loudly and repeatedly. She looks around nervously to ensure no one's around before taking off.

INT. STEDE'S AUXILIARY WARDROBE

STEDE and ED stand on opposite sides of STEDE's auxiliary wardrobe. They're looking for an outfit for STEDE. STEDE squats down, looks through his gift box, and picks up a pink bible JIM gave him the day after the cursed suit incident. He recalls them telling him, "You need God in your life after welcoming the Devil so easily," but he was just happy that they knew him well enough to find it in pink.

STEDE (OFFSCREEN):

Does this scream, 'Gentleman Pirate 2.0, don't fuck with me, but you're welcome to ask for an autograph'? That's the vibe I'm going for.

ED looks at the ring in his hand one last time before shoving it back into his pocket. He turns around, finger-patting his lip as he judges the outfit. STEDE stands with his hands on his hips, white fingerless lace gloves on both hands, ED's silver sword earring in his right ear, and a black rosary necklace around his neck. His shirt is long-sleeved with lace frills and floral patterns, with a modern black mesh-laced brassiere on top and a thick black belt with gold buckles just below his chest. A navy blue sheer shawl is held up by the belt and wrapped around his waist with a strand that reaches his upper thigh tied to the side. A thinner and longer black belt is tied into a knot, and the side of the belt with the notches hangs loosely against his thigh. ED recognizes the belt as his when he sees STEDE's knife split through the other side of the belt like a makeshift sheath. His flared white satin pants stop at his ankles above his black boots.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[smiling] You look as beautiful as the day I met you.

ED nervously fiddles with a loose thread from his new pants. The pants aren't new, though neither is the rest of the outfit. They're more like hand-me-downs from BUTTONS; ED's just holding onto them until he returns. Or until he can find a new look after tossing his leathers. STEDE bites the inside of his mouth to stop

himself from smiling at the compliment, but his amusement shines through in his tone.

STEDE:

I was half dead.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[smiling]

And still, just as eye-catching.

STEDE lightly rolls his eyes, but his smile tells ED that his happiness did make an impact.

STEDE:

Okay, but how are we feeling about this color scheme?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Blue, white, and black are definitely your colors.

STEDE tilts his head and smiles fondly at ED's words.

STEDE:

[starry-eyed]

You know me so well.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

I love the new look, but what about your sets?

STEDE:

I'll still wear them, just not all the time, trying something new, you know, updating my look.

ED wants to broach the subject but doesn't want to spook STEDE by coming on too strong. He crosses his arms and leans against the wall, a sly smile gracing his lips.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Well, you know me, Mr. Observant.

STEDE laughs and shakes his head at his lover's silliness.

STEDE:

I can be observant too, you know.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[sly smile]

Oh yeah? Make an observation.

STEDE scoffs and crosses his arms, but ED just copies his movement. STEDE shakes his head and chuckles, popping one hand on his hip, ready to prove ED wrong.

STEDE:

[points at ED's pearls] That pearl necklace—it's new.

ED looks down at his neck and upper chest, where his necklace sits.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Huh? Oh, the story's not that exciting. I just raided a wedding.

STEDE:

[interested]

You and I have different definitions of exciting. Raiding a wedding, huh? Was it a nice one? Did you have a good time?

ED chuckles; only STEDE would hear about him raiding a wedding and ask if it was nice and if he had had a good time.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Eh, I wasn't there as a guest or for fun, so...

STEDE realizes what he's implying and feels his smile turn to a frown.

STEDE:

Oh. [beat] Well, I've had my cravat for as long as I can remember. Since I was a baby, I think.

ED feels the invisible dark cloud hovering over him disappear at STEDE's blatant attempt at making him feel better. It's working.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Really?

STEDE hums, a dreamy look in his eye as he caresses the soft fabric in his hand. He clears his throat and steps up to ED, looking into his eyes for permission to tie it. ED nods, and STEDE smiles to himself as he throws the cravat around his neck and pulls him in close. ED's breath hitches at the proximity.

STEDE:

[softly]

I got it from my mother.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

What was she like?

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. UNKNOWN ROOM

The camera does a slow zoom away from a brown wooden door. The room has yellow wallpaper with red roses, a canopy bed with cedar wood railings, and a black veil. The sheets and comforter are stark white, with two pillows pushed against the head of the bed.

The camera turns until it lands on a four-year-old STEDE speaking animatedly about something with a woman who looks to be in her early 20s. They both sit on a couch at the foot of the bed. She

has wavy brown hair that stops at her shoulders, and her deep, dark brown eyes shimmer with unshed tears as she listens to STEDE talk. She's wearing an all-white nightgown that looks identical to STEDE's nightgown in The 'Art of Fuckery', and STEDE's wearing a bright blue set similar to his outfit in 'Pilot,' although now the sleeves are adorably oversized on him. When she laughs at something, he says, her eyes close, and she leans over, clutching her stomach. Four-year-old STEDE smiles, happy to have made his mother laugh. Something catches their attention, and they turn around, their smiles immediately dropping.

END FLASHBACK

INT. STEDE'S AUXILIARY WARDROBE

STEDE smiles at the memory.

STEDE:

[barely audible]

She was wonderful.

ED notices that his smile doesn't quite reach his eyes.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[clears throat] You know, my mom gave me my red silk scrap.

STEDE looks up, snapping out of his reminiscing, now intrigued at the new piece of information about his lover's past.

STEDE:

Really?

ED reaches into his pocket and takes out the silk.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[nods] She wanted me to have something nice. I took it from this estate she was working at [dry chuckle]. She risked getting fired just so I could have it.

He caresses the silk softly.

STEDE:

Do you ever miss her?

ED's caressing of the silk halts at the question. The ring in his pocket suddenly feels heavy as he recalls the fond but painful memory.

Stede (CONT'D):

[shakes head] Sorry, stupid question.

STEDE looks down at his hands and picks at his fingers. ED grabs his hand.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

It wasn't a stupid question; I do. Miss her, I mean. The last time I saw her was... my 21st birthday.

STEDE:

Really!?

ED nods as he continues to stare at the silk in his hand, lost in the memory of his mother.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

I send her money every now and then, but...

STEDE:

It's not the same.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[softly]

Yeah.

STEDE:

Well, maybe we could visit her one day.

ED looks up, eyes wide, and is filled with surprise and hope.
STEDE confuses his surprise at the uncomfortableness of inserting
himself into ED's personal life.

STEDE (CONT'D):

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have assumed. [nervous chuckle] You know
what they say—assuming makes an ass out of you and me.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[shakes head] No, I would like that. Only if you would be okay
with that. No pressure.

STEDE:

No, I would. I would love that.

They smile bashfully at the thought of a future together. STEDE
pats his lap and turns to leave the closet. He turns around to
find that he's not behind him but still in the same spot.

STEDE (CONT'D):

You coming?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Yeah. [smiles]

STEDE holds his hand out to ED, ED takes it, and they leave the
closet.

EXT. STREETS OF THE REPUBLIC OF PIRATES

[light music playing]

JIM OLUWANDE and ARCHIE take in the bustling streets of the
Republic of Pirates.

[street chatter] [goat bleats]

OLUWANDE notices the red bows on nearly everyone's clothes as the trio walks to Spanish Jackie'z.

OLUWANDE:

Hey, you seein' all these knobs with the red, knotty doodads on their shoulders? Pretty stylish, aye?

ARCHIE:

Mei's recruitin'. She must have some big plans.

JIM playfully bumps ARCHIE's shoulder.

JIM:

[teasing smirk] Alright, we get it. Your queen's a genius.

ARCHIE

[chuckles] I'm just saying' She's ambitious, that's all. Alright. Borderline brilliant, actually.

ZHANG and AUNTIE talk to the Nassau townspeople and pass out bows.

ZHANG bends down to speak to a little girl. She smiles at the little girl's words and nods her head, like what she's saying is of the utmost importance. MEI reaches into the tiny pouch attached to her side, pulls out a ribbon, and clips the ribbon to her shirt. The little girl claps her hands excitedly and runs over to tell her mother, and ZHANG turns to AUNTIE, obviously gushing about the interaction.

OLUWANDE:

Oh, you've got it bad.

ARCHIE whips her head to the side, now facing him. She's blushing.

ARCHIE:

What!? I-you-shut up.

OLUWANDE and JIM share a look before bursting out laughing.

ARCHIE:

I hate you guys.

Jim:

Ah, come on, you love us.

OLUWANDE:

[nodding] Just like you love

ARCHIE covers his mouth with her hand.

ARCHIE:

[whisper yelling]

Do you mind saying that any louder?

OLUWANDE removes her hand from his mouth and squints confusingly.

JIM:

Weren't you two engaged?

ARCHIE:

Not the point!?

JIM pats her shoulder to reassure her.

JIM:

You'll thank me later.

ARCHIE:

[worried]

Thank you for what

JIM:

Zhang! Hey! What's up, girl?

ZHANG turns around at the sound of her name being called and frowns when she sees the trio. She walks away, her pigtail flipping as she moves on to the next Nassauian to recruit. AUNTIE turns to them and flicks them off.

JIM:

[taken aback]

Oh wow.

ARCHIE drops her face in her hands, disappointed at the interaction. OLUWANDE comfortingly pats her shoulder.

OLUWANDE:

There there.

JIM:

Come on, you need a drink.

The trio continues their walk to Spanish Jackie'z.

EXT. RESTAURANT OUTSIDE THE REPUBLIC OF PIRATES

At a small outdoor restaurant outside the Republic of Pirates, STEDE and ED sit at a table, eating pineapple slices and drinking from wooden cups. They look happy.

STEDE:

[astonished]

We've been living around here for weeks. I can't believe I didn't know about this place.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Oh, no. This place is great. I know everyone. Hey, Maxie!

He high-fives a girl passing by their table. STEDE chuckles.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Yeah. My favorite thing about this place is that I've never been stabbed.

STEDE:

[surprised]

Wow, that's a first.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[nods] Yeah.

STEDE smiles shyly and looks down at his plate before gaining the courage to tell ED about the letters.

STEDE:

Well, um, I spent a lot of time at the beach writing you letters.

ED smiles and leans in, trying to close the distance created by the table, intrigued by the newfound information. He thinks it's cute.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

What kind of letters?

STEDE shrugs like it's no big deal. Like he didn't pour his heart out into those letters, get up bright and early to write them, and kiss every bottle before throwing it out to sea, hoping for ED to find them.

STEDE:

[feigning nonchalance]

Just letters. Putting them in bottles. Throwing 'em in the sea.
Letters in bottles.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[nodding] It's not the most reliable postal service, but I love that. I love that ya did that.

A couple of roughnecks walk up to their table. They're dressed in mesh tops and leather pants and vests.

ROUGHNECK #1:

Hey. Don't mean to interrupt, but...

ED / BLACKBEARD:

You want an autograph. Here we go. I had a lovely little meal here with my friend. [STEDE smiles] Um, but I tell you what, I'm feeling in a nice and generous mood. Once we finish our meal, I will sign whatever you want.

The roughneck turns his attention to STEDE.

ROUGHNECK #1:

Are you Stede Bonnet? You wasted Ned Low?

ED looks pleasantly surprised at the revelation that the roughneck and his friends are there for STEDE and not him. STEDE turns to ED, shocked that he has fans, but ED signals for him to go along with it.

STEDE:

Wh... Uh, yes, and yes, I suppose. Do we have a problem here?

The roughneck turns to his friends, smiling and laughing; they whisper amongst themselves before turning back to him, barely hiding an excited smile.

ROUGHNECK #1:

[giddily]

We're just huge fans.

STEDE's eyebrows raise in disbelief; he's never had fans before.
ED smiles proudly as the roughnecks laugh, excited to have finally
met their idol.

ROUGHNECK #2:

Um, we're going to be at Jackie's later; we'll buy you a round.

STEDE almost chokes on his drink.

STEDE:

[surprised]

Wow.

Roughneck #1:

[nodding] Oh, bring your friend, too.

STEDE:

[nods] Spanish Jackie'z.

The roughnecks give STEDE one last smile before walking away,
sneaking glances back at STEDE every so often and talking
excitedly amongst themselves.

ROUGHNECK #3 (OFFSCREEN):

So awesome we got a chance to meet him.

ED chuckles and shakes his head.

STEDE:

What?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Congrats, mate. You're infamous.

STEDE:

[scoffs] Come on. I mean, a few roughnecks outside a fish shack
does not infamy make.

ED looks down at his plate to hide his smitten smile. He thinks,
'God, I love this man' before clearing his throat and looking back
up at STEDE, affection all over his face.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Tell ya what. Why don't we go and get that drink, ay? You can try
out your new fame.

STEDE tilts his head and chews his lower lip, considering his
options. ED stares at him with hope in his eyes, and STEDE can't
find it in himself to say 'No'.

STEDE:

Maybe just one.

ED smiles, his lips tucked away, showing his barely contained
excitement.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Mm-hmm.

STEDE looks around their surroundings before leaning in like his
words are only for ED. ED tries not to blush at the seemingly
intimate gesture.

STEDE:

[whisper]

Should we get the bill?

ED leans in; a mischievous smile blooms as he speaks in a soft
voice reserved for STEDE.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Pirates don't pay, especially the famous ones.

ED winks, and STEDE squeals, practically buzzing out of his seat in anticipation. ED does a quick scoping of the scenery before turning back to STEDE.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Run for it. Go, go, go, go.

The duo get up quickly and run away from the scene, giggling as they gain distance from the shack.

STEDE:

[laughing] We didn't pay.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[giggling]

We didn't pay!

[chatter, laughter]

ED glances around, grabs STEDE's hand, and makes a sharp left into some bushes, pulling him with him.

EXT. BUSHES NEAR A RESTAURANT OUTSIDE THE REPUBLIC OF PIRATES

ED takes a peek around the bushes while STEDE stares at him in confusion.

STEDE:

What's wrong?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[shrugs] I thought someone was following us.

STEDE can see through his lie but decides to humor him.

STEDE:

Uh-huh, and it had nothing to do with you wanting some alone time?

ED scoffs and tilts his chin up all poshly, acting shocked.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[crosses arms] I have no idea what you mean, mate.

STEDE lightly shoves him and laughs at his antics.

STEDE:

[affectionately]

You nut.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

You love me.

ED realizes what he just said too late, but STEDE blushes and tucks a strand of his hair behind his ear.

STEDE:

[smiles softly]

I do.

ED smiles and kicks at the grass, looking up at STEDE through hooded eyelids. STEDE pulls him in close, catching him by surprise as he wraps his arms around his neck, pulling him deeper into the kiss, and ED wraps his arms around his waist.

EXT. POND OUTSIDE OF THE REPUBLIC OF PIRATES

The camera slowly moves away from STEDE and ED and zooms in on familiar spots near a pond. It's ROACH and FANG. They laugh as they kick their feet in the pond, surrounded by blades of grass and more relaxed.

FANG:

[sighs] I'm so relaxed, man. How did you think of this?

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. THE REVENGE'S DINING ROOM

The camera hovers over FANG as he grows increasingly irritated with the result of his work. He eventually drops the rope and frowns.

FANG:

This rope is so rough on my tender fingies. I shouldn't have agreed to do all this.

ROACH leans over the kitchen counter, a cigarette in hand and a lazy smirk blooming.

ROACH:

What if we just... [exhales] don't?

END FLASHBACK

EXT. POND OUTSIDE OF THE REPUBLIC OF PIRATES

ROACH:

My curl pattern was messed up by the salt air, I was permanently sunburned, and my toenails were coming through my shoes. [FANG groans]

ROACH:

And I said to myself, "Roach, buddy, you need to take care of yourself."

FANG:

[nodding]

Yeah, that's so, so, so important.

ROACH:

[sly smile] Hey, check this out.

[light music playing]

ROACH uses both his pointer and fingers to gather some mud and rub it on his cheeks. FANG gasps.

FANG:

[intrigued but lost]

What? What are you doing?

ROACH rubs the mud across his forehead and along the bridge of his nose and turns to FANG, showing off the complete mud mask look.

ROACH:

Huh?

FANG's face stretches into a smile.

INT. SPANISH JACKIE'S BAR

STEDE stands against a wall in Spanish Jackie's, surrounded by a group of pirates who are very interested in whatever story he's telling. He looks confident.

STEDE:

And so I said to the poor bastard, "Not with those shoes on, you won't."

The pirates and STEDE laugh. Someone hands STEDE a drink, which he accepts gratefully.

Stede (CONT'D):

Hey! Thanks, mate.

ED walks over to where STEDE is standing with a drink in his hand, and the group of pirates disperse to give them some space.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[laughs] God, this is going great for you.

STEDE smiles, happy to have ED's approval.

STEDE:

[shrugs] I'm enjoying it.

ED leans in so that his words can only be heard by STEDE. STEDE tries not to shiver at the feeling of his hot breath against his ear.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

You are getting famous. Here are a couple of things about that:
Accept drinks, but, uh, never finish them.

ED scopes the scene as he speaks. STEDE feels special like he's taking a private lesson for free that many would kill for.

STEDE:

Oh.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Um, never insult someone's tattoo, especially if it's of you.

STEDE:

[surprised]

What? Do people have your face tattooed on their bodies?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Not just my face. [pouts]

STEDE's eyes widen in shock. He was not expecting that.

STEDE:

Oh, wow.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Yeah, um, what else? Number one thing, for me, is, I'd say, watch out for the papas'.

STEDE:

[frowning]

What are they?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

The paper-Razzi. Those assholes that float around—they're hiding in the corners, doing drawings of you without your permission.

There's one over there.

A man across from them, barely hidden in the shadows of the bar, furiously sketches STEDE and ED from his notebook, only looking up every so often to make sure he's got the right angle and facial features.

STEDE:

What?!

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Yeah. [to the paper-razzi] Fuck you!

STEDE:

[appalled]

Oh, wow!

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Hey, someone's definitely going to try and kill you.

STEDE's eyebrows furrow at the cheerfully sweet delivery of the news, contrasted by the news of someone trying to kill him.

STEDE:

Oh, really?!

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Yeah. Enjoy the night!

ED walks away, leaving STEDE to stew in the news of the imminent attempt on his life at some point during the night.

STEDE:

[shocked]

What? What!? Kill me?

AT THE ENTRANCE SPANISH

JACKIE'Z

INT. HALLWAY TO SPANISH JACKIE'Z

The Crew of the Revenge cautiously descends the steps to Spanish Jackie'z like they're walking to their dooms. LUCIUS leads the group with BLACK PETE close behind him, whispering and yelling in his ear.

LUCIUS:

Maybe there isn't any bad blood. Jackie might not even be here today.

BLACK PETE:

Dude!

LUCIUS:

What? I need to get that sight out of my head! [whisper yelling]
It was like walking in on my parents, so forgive me for not giving a fuck about any ongoing beef we might have with Jackie.

FRENCHIE:

[nervously looking around]

[whispers] Mate, we set foot in here; Spanish Jackie will have our heads.

SPANISH JACKIE (OFFSCREEN):

More like your balls.

They are startled by SPANISH JACKIE's presence and voice once they hit the last step and enter the bar. The crew nearly jumped out of their skins from surprise and fear.

FRENCHIE:

[under his breath]

Oh, Christ.

Her hair's in box braids: four strands in the front, a tiny bun on top, and the rest of it down her back. She's wearing a long-sleeved red velvet blouse with black lace frills at the cuffs of the sleeves, around the collar and waist, along the blouse's linings, and bows on the hands' cuffs. There are three buttons undone, and a lace bustier accents her chest. Her black sequin flared pants and black red bottom boots pull the look together.

[crew muttering]

WEE JOHN:

Oh, shit.

She crosses her arms and looks them up and down, shaking her head.

SPANISH JACKIE:

"The Revenge" boys. I never thought I'd see you in here again.

[panicked crosstalk]

LUCIUS:

Sorry!

BLACK PETE:

[frantic]

I told them this was a bad idea.

FRENCHIE:

[turning around]

We could still leave.

SPANISH JACKIE turns around, now facing the entire bar.

SPANISH JACKIE:

Everyone, listen up! Here's the crew that 86ed Ned Low!

The bar patrons cheer, and SPANISH JACKIE turns back to the crew,
smiling as she beckons them closer.

SPANISH JACKIE (CONT'D):

Hey! Come on in! Hey. Don't be scared. Come on! The Swede will be
happy to see you.

The crew loosens up and smiles at the sight of their old friend.

INT. SPANISH JACKIE'Z BAR

THE SWEDE's back faces the camera before turning around and
showing off his new look. His hair is pulled back into a low
ponytail, and he's rocking a navy blue jacket, a crop top that
says 'SPANISH JACKIE'Z', and low-waisted leather pants.

THE SWEDE:

This is my signature cocktail. I call it the Sot och Saftig, or
the Sweet and Spicy, just like my wife.

He mixes the drinks with such confidence that it's hard to believe
that this is the same SWEDE from a month ago. He places the drinks
on a tray and LUCIUS bashfully accepts it.

LUCIUS:

Okay. Thank you.

THE SWEDE:

Cheers.

LUCIUS walks over to the crew's table and lays the tray down in the center. He takes a seat next to BLACK PETE and leans in to whisper to the crew as he takes a drink.

LUCIUS:

Is it just me or did The Swede get, like, so hot?

THE SWEDE:

It's an adjustment for me as well.

LUCIUS jumps at the realization that THE SWEDE heard him

RANDOM PIRATE:

Another round... for the legendary crew of "The Revenge"!

[cheering] [bell ringing]

Two pirates walk over to their table and place another tray of drinks down.

BLACK PETE:

[grinning]

Thank you!

BLACK PETE cheerfully grabs a drink, and FRENCHIE leans close to his side.

FRENCHIE:

Hey, [looks around] this free drink shit is for the birds. You know what I mean?

BLACK PETE:

[frowning] Birds love drinking for free?

FRENCHIE:

No, that's not what I mean. I mean, there's money to be made.
Let's get our grift on.

BLACK PETE:

[nodding] Okay.

FRENCHIE:

[sly smile] Yeah?

BLACK PETE:

[nodding] Yeah, let's do it.

The two of them stand up and make their way out of the bar in
search of the proper tools for their plan.

ACROSS SOME TABLES

SPANISH JACKIE takes out a cigar and looks around for a match. ED
pulls one out of his pocket and scratches it against the table,
lighting it for her.

SPANISH JACKIE:

[flirtatious smile] Still a charmer huh?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[shrugs] Old habits die hard, I guess.

SPANISH JACKIE chuckles as she takes a puff from her cigar and
blows the smoke away from him.

SPANISH JACKIE:

[smirking] It looks like your man is famous.

ED gives her a questioning look, and she tilts her head, gesturing
towards STEDE and his entourage. He turns to see what she's
talking about.

in front of them

STEDE stands on a chair, chugs a bottle of rum, and holds it over his head triumphantly. The crowd cheers, and he twirls, surprisingly never losing his balance despite obviously being tipsy.

STEDE:

Woo, look at me!

His fans cheer.

BACK TO SPANISH JACKIE AND ED'S TABLE

SPANISH JACKIE laughs as she and ED watch STEDE down drinks and laugh with his new fans, obviously enjoying his newfound fame. ED smiles, but it doesn't reach his eyes.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Hm.

SPANISH JACKIE turns her attention back to ED and squints suspiciously.

SPANISH JACKIE:

Okay what's wrong?

ED purses his lips and avoids her piercing gaze.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Don't know what you're talking about.

SPANISH JACKIE:

You got that sad look you get when your man of the month does you wrong. Like an abandoned kitten.

ED frowns at the harsh but true statement.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[scoffs] Okay first of all I didn't have a "man of the month".

SPANISH JACKIE tilts her head as she tries to figure out what he means.

SPANISH JACKIE:

[points] Oh fuck, that girl with the nice boobs. [snaps fingers]
What was her name? Annie?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Yes, No! Fuck. [shakes head] Yes, her, but no, that's not what I meant. I mean, I don't look like a sad abandoned kitten.

SPANISH JACKIE:

[laughs] Yes, you do.

ED wants to argue in his defense, but decides to be the mature one and simply flick her off. She laughs and takes another puff from her cigar as she looks him up and down.

SPANISH JACKIE (CONT'D):

Why you dressed like a dirty-ass orphan?

She picks at the lint on his jacket, and he can't fight the smile that blooms from the lighthearted teasing from an old friend. ED chuckles, knowing that she's been holding that question in for a minute.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Maybe I'm trying out minimalism.

ED looks back at STEDE, who grabs the hand of a very muscular man as he's helped down from his chair. STEDE pats the man's cheek, thanking him for his help, and the man blushes. ED frowns.

ED / BLACKBEARD (CONT'D):

Just takin' a little break from the leathers, ya know?

SPANISH JACKIE:

[nods] Mm. Natural fibers, bird shit on your collar. You goin' through another "If I was a regular dude" phase, huh?

ED leans in like he's letting her in on a secret.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[soft tone]

Actually, it might not be a phase this time. I'm thinking of settling down, packing it all in.

SPANISH JACKIE:

[amused]

Ah. Does he know that?

ACROSS THE BAR

ED looks back at STEDE, leaning back in a chair as someone pours a blue margarita in his mouth as he tries to catch it all.

CROWD:

[chanting]

Stede! Stede!

[cheering]

INT. SPANISH JACKIE'Z BAR

SPANISH JACKIE:

[smirking] Because your guy just became the motherfuckin' man.

ED feels the ring in his pocket grow heavier. STEDE is living out his dream of being a famous pirate, and ED is on his way out. He did not think of that until now.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[under breath]

Fuck.

THE SWEDE cheerfully walks over to their table with a tray and two drinks in hand.

THE SWEDE:

Okay, here we go.

He places them down on the table, his smile fading as he finally notices ED.

THE SWEDE (CONT'D):

Oh, Blackbeard, are you a poor now?

ED scoffs and adjusts his jacket like he's shielding himself from THE SWEDE's innocent but hurtful remark.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[defensive]

Uh, what? No. I'm just, [sighs] just trying something different, man.

THE SWEDE:

Oh, okay. Back to basics.

THE SWEDE smiles but sends JACKIE a look that ED recognizes before walking away. It's the kind of look STEDE gives him when BLACK PETE says something remarkably untrue or absurd, something they'll discuss in private later. ED checks him out as he leaves and nods appreciatively.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Love the new look.

SPANISH JACKIE:

[smirks] Yeah, now he's mucho caliente. [whispering] Fucks like a jackhammer.

She chuckles and ED looks surprised but intrigued at the information that he didn't ask for.

ACROSS THE BAR

INT. SPANISH JACKIE'Z BAR (ACROSS SOME TABLES)

STEDE chugs more drinks and lifts his fists above his head to the beat of the cheers.

CROWD:

Stede! Stede!

He downs the last drop and wipes his mouth as a pirate dressed like a blacksmith lifts his hand like he's just accomplished some glorious feat.

Stede:

I'm a Sea God!

BACK AT ED AND JACKIE'S TABLE

INT. SPANISH JACKIE'Z BAR

SPANISH JACKIE laughs at STEDE's antics and pats ED's shoulder.

SPANISH JACKIE:

But hey good luck with retirement. [chuckles]

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Fuck.

ED puts his head in his hands and groans. JACKIE puts out her cigar in a heart shaped glass ashtray and pokes at his head. ED groans.

SPANISH JACKIE:

Okay what's wrong with you.

ED looks up from his arms. He's frowning.

SPANISH JACKIE (CONT'D):

I haven't seen you like this since you and that cowboy tried to steal my good liquor.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[agitated]

He completely bailed on me!

SPANISH JACKIE:

[at the same time]

"Completely bailed on you" and that's what you get for fucking with white folks.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[laugh of disbelief] You're married to white people!

SPANISH JACKIE:

Don't try to flip this on me [ED scoffs]. Now answer the question.

ED sighs defeatedly and reaches into his pocket.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

You promise not to judge?

SPANISH JACKIE:

[stone faced]

When you finally pay your tab.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[teasing smile] I'll pay it when I retire.

SPANISH JACKIE chuckles, and ED smiles as he rolls the ring along his knuckles in his pocket.

SPANISH JACKIE:

So never.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[chuckles] That's actually what I wanted to talk to you about.

He lets out a soft exhale and slowly pulls out the ring from his pocket, his hand in a tight fist as he places it on the table, covering it with his hand.

SPANISH JACKIE (CONT'D):

[shakes head] You and your theatrics.

ED slowly removes his hand from the top of the ring. JACKIE looks down, and her eyes widen at the sight of the ring. She opens her mouth to speak, but ED gestures towards STEDE. She covers her mouth with her hand and looks down at the ring, shaking her head. ED nervously fiddles with the ring on the table, waiting for her reaction.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[timidly]

Please say something.

She opens her mouth to speak but closes it, knowing that what she's about to say is harsh, and decides to soften the blow to the

best of her ability while getting her point across. She sighs,
which ED knows is a bad sign.

SPANISH JACKIE:

Hell no.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[pleading]

You haven't even heard what I have to say.

SPANISH JACKIE:

Don't need to, I have something you don't.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[crosstalk]

Don't say "experience".

SPANISH JACKIE:

[crosstalk]

Experience.

ED groans and throws his head back, he looks up at the ceiling fan
like.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

You're doing pretty well all things considered, so it can't be
that hard.

SPANISH JACKIE is unamused, and ED looks down at the ring on the
table.

SPANISH JACKIE:

And you know my situation.

ED nods. JACKIE's first marriage wasn't for love or particularly wanted. She married an older, established man with years in the game at 18, she knew no one would take her seriously as a business owner on her own and knew she couldn't make them without some incentive so she married; *him*, ALFEO DE LA VACA. She bumped into him at a bar, he was on the run and his luck had run out so she made him an offer. He would gain a loophole from the Navy and hunters who came to her bar looking for him. It took some shoulder rubbing with people who would never give her the time of day or basic human respect in any other setting but the law was passed. Spousal privilege; a bride cannot testify against her husband. ALFEO told her it was genius, hiding from the law inside the law, freeing him and cementing her as a force to be reckoned with. She built her business on her own though, ALFEO's use was primarily used at the beginning for her street cred but her bar and her town was her brainchild.

SPANISH JACKIE:

Wasn't that bad, got to marry some hunks. But that's not the point and you're not me.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

I know but [sighs] I love him. Shouldn't that be enough?

JACKIE stares into his baby brown eyes before she leans across the table laughing. ED frowns and crosses his arms.

SPANISH JACKIE:

[wipes tears] I'm sorry I'm sorry but come on do you hear yourself? Should've could've would've, be for real. [chuckles] And wasn't he married already? That's usually a turnoff for most guys, trust me [smokes].

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Yeah but we're diff- wait, how did you know he was married before?

SPANISH JACKIE:

I make it my business to know about every pirate that comes into
my town.

ED looks skeptical, he knows she's bullshitting.

SPANISH JACKIE (CONT'D):

And Swede told me.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[lightly rolls eyes] Thought so.

JACKIE softly grabs his hand. ED meets her eyes, his syrup-brown
eyes shining with worry.

SPANISH JACKIE:

What is this really about? And don't bullshit me.

ED throws his hands up defeatedly.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Maybe I'm just tired of doing the same old bullshit! Maybe I've
finally found someone who cares about me and actually likes me for
me. Maybe I don't want to look over my shoulder for the rest of my
life!

ED looks around and finds a few pirates looking at him, but they
avert their gaze when he gives them a raised eyebrow look, daring
them to say anything about his very loud outburst. SPANISH JACKIE
claps slowly. She interlocks her fingers and elbows on the table
and sits her head on her fingers. She looks proud of him.

SPANISH JACKIE:

No need to thank me. I know I'm good. [ED chuckles] You should
talk to him, tell him what you told me.

ED nods and turns to where STEDE and his fans were mere minutes
ago. They're gone.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[sighs] Fuck.

He drops two coin pouches on the table.

SPANISH JACKIE:

Finally closing your tab?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Don't act so surprised.

She chuckles. He grabs the bottle of rum from the table and gives her a two-finger salute before heading to the table the crew's seated at.

[muffled cheering]

SPANISH JACKIE grabs the hand of one of her husbands passing her table. She taps the table drawing attention to the coin pouch. They collect the pouches, nod, and walk away.

INT. SPANISH JACKIE'Z BAR (THE REVENGE'S TABLE)

ED squeezes past the crowd around the crew's table and finally reaches the front, but is stopped by WEE JOHN. He's standing in front of a metal gate, a serious expression that screams '*Don't fuck with me.*' ED pushes to the back of his mind. He shakes the question out of his head and tries to remember to ask them about it later.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Wee John.

WEE JOHN looks down at him; his no-nonsense expression melts into a soft smile at the sight of ED.

WEE JOHN:

Hey Ed.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Hey, whatcha doin'?

ED looks behind him and sees the Crew of the Revenge gathered around two tables pushed together with cardboard poster boards, paper, quills, wooden planks,

WEE JOHN:

[grinning]

We're selling merch.

ED is intrigued but shakes the thought of asking him to elaborate out of his head. He needs to know where STEDE is. FRENCHIE pokes his head behind WEE JOHN and smiles when he sees ED.

FRENCHIE:

Hey man, you want in on this?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Tempting but no I came over to ask if any of you saw Stede leave?

FRENCHIE nods and goes around the table, asking the crew. He's back in 30 seconds, which ED doesn't take as a great sign.

FRENCHIE:

No, sorry, but I'll let you know if he comes back.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Thanks but I'm gonna go look for him anyway.

FRENCHIE:

Good luck babe.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

You too.

ED shoves his way back through the crowd of fans waiting for merch and leaves Spanish Jackie'z. LUCIUS walks into view from FRENCHIE's right and nudges his shoulder. He shows him his sketchbook, and FRENCHIE grins, nodding approvingly.

INT. SPANISH JACKIE'Z BAR

THE SWEDE happily mixes drinks as ARCHIE sits at the bar, frowning at the drink in front of her that she's been nursing for at least ten minutes.

ARCHIE:

Ya know, she just looked at me like I was a worm.

THE SWEDE:

[smiling] Was it as devastating as it was arousing?

ARCHIE frowns at the strange comment, but her face changes to a look of consideration the longer she thinks about it. She decides that it's a question for another time, preferably one where she's less tipsy.

ARCHIE:

[pouting]

[shaking head] How'd ya do it, Swede? How'd you, how'd you make Jackie so happy?

THE SWEDE:

[scoffs] Hard work. I put my heart, soul, and my back into it. My whole body. [chuckles] Ya know, if it doesn't work out with you and your lady friend, I could put in a word with Jackie. Hm? There's decent turnover here, husband-wise. Bring Oluwande and Jim too Jackie likes them.

ARCHIE tilts her head, surprised at the information. She shrugs and downs another shot.

EXT. BACK ALLEY OF THE REPUBLIC OF PIRATES STREETS

MEI leans on a barrel, trying to appear neutral, as she listens to JIM and OLUWANDE's defense of ARCHIE. AUNTIE stands with her arms crossed, side-eyeing the duo's attempt at changing MEI's mind about ARCHIE.

JIM:

I know things didn't end well, but she thinks about you all the time.

ZHANG MEI:

[scoffs] Yeah? Then why isn't she here telling me this herself?

OLUWANDE:

Well she's kind of scared that you hate her.

MEI's annoyed smirk turns into a frown.

ZHANG MEI:

She thinks I hate her?

OLUWANDE:

[simultaneously]

No.

JIM:

[simultaneously]

Kind of.

OLUWANDE pinches the bridge of his nose, and JIM scrunches their noses and squints at the blunder.

JIM (CONT'D):

No...

OLUWANDE:

Smooth.

JIM sticks their tongue out at him and turns back to MEI smiling, like she didn't just see them stick their tongue out like a child.

She did.

ZHANG MEI:

Great she doesn't hate me [crosses arms] but that doesn't explain why she chose you over me.

JIM:

She didn't choose me over you, she just chose the safer option.

OLUWANDE:

In the sense that there was too much baggage between you two and she was scared of hurting you again. [JIM nods]

MEI pushes up from the barrel and stands straight.

ZHANG MEI:

Did *she* say that?

OLUWANDE:

All she does is talk about you and how she wishes she could make it up to you. [JIM nods]

JIM:

I don't know what it was about that week but she was a mess.

MEI looks down at her feet and kicks at the dirt.

ZHANG MEI:

[barely audible]

It's the day that was supposed to be our anniversary.

AUNTIE frowns at her somber expression; she isn't fond of the idea of MEI reminiscing about her time spent with ARCHIE. JIM and OLUWANDE share a knowing look.

OLUWANDE:

That explains it. [JIM nods]

EXT. DECK OF THE REVENGE

The sky is a beautiful blend of orange and purple, and the clouds are a yellowish red, nearly covering the sun. The camera zooms in on the Revenge until a small figure leaning on the ship's railing comes into focus. Buttons, now a seagull, flies around before perching on the railing next to the person. The camera turns to reveal the mystery crew member. It's ARCHIE. She's got a bottle of rum in her left hand and her right arm on the railing, which she uses as support for her chin. Strands of hair stick up and out of her usual low ponytail, and she's got bags under her eyes. She takes a large swig of the rum and stares at the wide ocean with a somber expression.

JIM (V.O.):

She'd been drinking and talking to BUTTONS all day.

EXT. BACK ALLEY OF THE REPUBLIC OF PIRATES STREETS

AUNTIE:

Is he still a man?

MEI eyes her curiously but JIM and OLUWANDE are unphased by the question.

OLUWANDE:

No he's a seagull.

AUNTIE:

Ah. [small smile]

ZHANG MEI:

I'm sorry what?

AUNTIE:

I gave him the scroll, he's a bird now.

She waves the answer like it's no big deal. MEI looks to JIM and OLUWANDE for confirmation that she's not alone in her confusion, but they just nod and shrug at AUNTIE's words.

EXT. DECK OF THE REVENGE

JIM (V.O.):

So like I was saying Archie was not her usual cheerful self that week, she was... heartbroken.

ARCHIE wipes at her eyes, mascara smudges, and tear stains down her cheek. JIM pretends to mop from across the deck as they watch ARCHIE rant to BUTTONS. ED and STEDE stand at the helm of the ship; STEDE steers the wheel, and ED stands behind him, his hands over his, helping him steer.

JIM (V.O.):

The captains were especially lovey dovey that day.

OLUWANDE (V.O.):

Probably 'cause it was the week of captain's birthday.

JIM (V.O.):

Oh yeah. Anyway they were being gross and Archie was running out of booze. She's reached the first step of heading downstairs when she hears-

STEDE (OFFSCREEN):

[shocked but elated]

Oh my god!

ARCHIE whips her head around and rushes back on deck to see what all the commotion's about. STEDE and ED stare wide-eyed at a red silk sat in the palms of their hands.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[in disbelief]

Is that!?

STEDE:

[short laugh] I think so.

ED and STEDE lock eyes and grin.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Must be fate.

STEDE:

[smiles shyly] Must be. May I?

ED somehow understands what STEDE's asking and nods, his cheeks heating up as STEDE moves behind him, gently lifts up his springy curls and ties the red silk into a bow. STEDE walks back in front of him and smiles lovingly at his lover's new look.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Well, how do I look?

STEDE:

Absolutely breathtaking.

ED smiles and opens his mouth to reply but is interrupted by ARCHIE's gut wrenching sob.

STEDE:

Oh dear...

ARCHIE (JIM V.O.):

[slurring/bad accent imitation]

Ooh look at us we're in love and happy and shit. Get fucked.

She lifts the bottle over her mouth and tilts her head back but there's barely a drop on her tongue. She stares at the bottle in her hand and seconds later her lip is wobbling. She sobs.

ARCHIE (JIM V.O.):

[slurring/bad accent imitation]

Mei used to [hiccups] wear red and let me tie her hair up.

She sniffles and starts crying again, this time STEDE rushes over to comfort her. She cries into his shoulder, using his sleeve as a handkerchief to blow her nose. ED tries not to laugh when STEDE's eye twitches as he pats her shoulder.

EXT. BACK ALLEY OF THE REPUBLIC OF PIRATES STREETS

JIM shakes their head solemnly at the retelling. OLUWANDE squints in confusion.

OLUWANDE:

Those were not her exact words.

JIM:

[scoffs] Um yes they were.

OLUWANDE:

Um no it wasn't and that accent was not your greatest work.

JIM clutches their chest, offended at OLUWANDE's slight towards what they view as excellent accent work. MEI smiles at the couple's banter.

ZHANG MEI:

It was actually dead on, sounds just like her.

JIM:

[points] Thank you!

ZHANG MEI:

[shakes head] Thank you for telling me.

She walks towards them, arms crossed as she looks the pair up and down. JIM blushes under the intensity of MEI's stare.

JIM:

So...you wanna talk to her?

ZHANG MEI:

[shrugs] I would not say no to that.

JIM:

[flirtatiously]

See you soon, Pirate Queen. Don't make yourself too available.

JIM winks at her and turns to leave with OLUWANDE who nudges their shoulder and teases them about that moment with MEI. ZHANG looks down and bites her lip to stop herself from smiling at the gesture but stops when AUNTIE side eyes her.

ZHANG MEI:

What? They were nice.

AUNTIE:

[disapprovingly]

Don't let yourself get distracted again.

ZHANG MEI:

Thank you, Auntie, I know.

AUNTIE:

[unconvinced]

Do you?

ZHANG MEI:

Yes!

AUNTIE purses her lips and sighs. MEI knows she has something she wants to say. MEI kisses her teeth and rolls her neck, annoyed at her obvious disapproval.

ZHANG MEI (CONT'D):

Passive aggression doesn't suit you; just say what's on your mind.

AUNTIE tilts her head and returns MEI's unwavering gaze, daring her to say something else. She knows it's a test, but AUNTIE feels it needs to be said, and MEI needs to hear it.

AUNTIE:

You already let her screw us over once, and you're about to let it happen again because what? Two people you barely know, one who betrayed you—

ZHANG MEI:

[sighs] Auntie—

AUNTIE (CONT'D):

Told you that she misses you!?

MEI closes her eyes, and her nostrils flare ever so slightly as she tries to gather her thoughts before she says something harsh.

She's pissed but not surprised; they've had this conversation before.

ZHANG MEI:

What is it with you and her? I'm willing to talk to her and she's changed!

AUNTIE:

You don't know that!

ZHANG MEI:

And you do!?

AUNTIE opens her mouth to rebuttal but nothing comes out.

ZHANG MEI (CONT'D):

[scoffs] Right.

AUNTIE:

No, no "right", Mei! The only reason we were stuck selling soup in this fucking town was because you lost focus-

ZHANG MEI:

Oh come on-

AUNTIE (CONT'D):

[louder] And the consequences were higher than the rewards.

MEI kisses her teeth and turns away from AUNTIE, not wanting to listen to her anymore, but AUNTIE isn't done.

AUNTIE (CONT'D):

She stole the indigo-

ZHANG MEI:

We don't know that!

AUNTIE:

Yes we do.

AUNTIE's gaze softens as she reaches out to rub MEI's left shoulder. She backs away, and AUNTIE feels a pang in her chest at the rejection.

ZHANG MEI:

[barely audible] I think you should go.

AUNTIE:

[frowning]

What?

ZHANG MEI:

[louder] I think you should go. [beat] You obviously don't respect me, you don't care about me.

AUNTIE steps back like she's been slapped, and it takes everything in MEI not to pull her into a hug and apologize.

AUNTIE:

Mei I do.

ZHANG MEI:

No, you don't. All you do is remind me of past mistakes, doubt me, and doubt me. [deep breath] I think you should go.

AUNTIE is stunned and tries to decipher if she means it or not but MEI refuses to meet her eyes, looking down at the dirt below her.

AUNTIE:

Mei, you know I only want what's best for you.

ZHANG MEI:

Well you've got a funny way of showing it.

AUNTIE:

Back to the ship or back home?

ZHANG MEI:

I don't care. I just... don't want you here.

AUNTIE tilts her chin up and lets out a deep exhale. She doesn't want to leave MEI; she wants to apologize, but she can't or won't; she's too prideful and doesn't.

AUNTIE:

If that's what you want.

MEI doesn't answer; this isn't what she wants, she wants her to stay, she wants her to apologize, she wants to apologize, she wants them to hug it out, she wants her to say she's proud of her. That she cares, that she loves her. But instead, she says-

ZHANG MEI:

It is.

AUNTIE searches MEI's eyes for any sign of reluctance or regret. Nothing.

AUNTIE:

[stiff nod] Fine.

ZHANG MEI:

[shrugs] Fine.

AUNTIE walks away, leaving MEI standing there. She stops behind the rock wall, waiting for MEI to change her mind or follow after her. She waits thirty seconds and frowns. MEI steps forward to

follow after her but stops, clenches her fists, and shakes her head. AUNTIE closes her eyes and softly knocks her head against the wall. She's not coming. She leaves. MEI feels a tear fall down her cheek, roughly wipes her cheek, sniffles, and walks back to the bustling streets of the Republic of Pirates.

EXT. STREETS NEAR THE PORTSIDE OF THE REPUBLIC OF PIRATES

ED jumps up and lands repeatedly with a serious expression on his face. A flash of what looks like a thin old rope passes by him every time he jumps up.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

You know I think this might be good for us. In the long run, I mean. Sure he'll be upset now but just think of what would happen if I stayed. [shakes head] You guys get it right?

The camera pans out, revealing that ED is jumping rope, and there are two children at each end swinging the rope; one of them is confused and the other is annoyed. There is a group of kids behind him waiting impatiently in a line, tapping their feet or rolling their necks in barely contained agitation.

GIRL #1:

I don't know dude can you switch out already, you've been at it for like an hour.

ED frowns and looks betrayed when the line of kids behind him voices their agreement.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Rude. And by the way, it hasn't been "like an hour" you just can't tell time. [mocking pout]

The girls drops her jaw in shock before she glares and pulls her side of the rope tripping ED and causing him to scrape his hands on the concrete.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[in pain]

Fuck!

The girl scoffs before turning to her friends.

GIRL #1:

Come on guys, let's go somewhere we can play fair.

The kids walk away, leaving ED hissing in pain on the ground.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[holding back tears]

Little shits!

He scoots back until he hits the wall behind him, where his rum sits, rests his head against the wall, closes his eyes, and shakes his head.

IZZY (OFFSCREEN):

What the fuck happened to you?

ED looks up and finds IZZY looking down at him. ED thanks God that he's blocking the Sun.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[sighs] You must be loving this huh?

IZZY:

A little. [beat] Okay I can't stand to see you like this.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[tired]

Not living up to the Blackbeard legend?

IZZY:

Sad to see an old man get beat up by kids.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[frowns] I wasn't beat up.

IZZY looks down at his scraped hands and back up at him.

ED / BLACKBEARD (CONT'D):

Fuck off.

IZZY:

No can do boss.

ED chuckles and IZZY drops down to one knee, grabs the bottle of rum, and holds out the gloved hand to ED. ED looks a bit skeptical, IZZY rolls his eyes at his cautious behavior.

IZZY:

Don't make it weird.

ED looks down at his gloved hand and backs up at him. IZZY raises an eyebrow. ED sighs and holds out his right hand. IZZY takes it.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

You and that damn pouch.

IZZY removes the rum bottle cap with his teeth and spits it out to his right.

IZZY:

And aren't you glad I keep it on me? Saved your ass many times if I recall.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[under breath]

I don't know about that.

IZZY side eyes him but looks back down at his wounded hand.

IZZY:

This might hurt.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[scoffs] Please, I'm not an amateur-

IZZY pours the rum on his right hand and ED feels his toes curl up from the stinging pain.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Son of a bitch!

IZZY:

Oh you're fine. [looks up] Jackie know you're out here with her good liquor?

IZZY reaches into his pouch and pulls out cotton balls. He dabs over the wound, and ED squeezes his eyes shut, letting out a shaky breath.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[trying to ignore the pain]

[chuckles] Smooth, and yes.

IZZY:

Of course she does. [shakes head] She's too soft on you.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Yeah well, so are you. [smirks]

IZZY side eyes him and shakes his head before reaching into his pouch, pulling out a gauze this time.

IZZY:

Fuck off. [ED smiles]

He wraps it around ED's hand until it's at least three layers thick and separates it from the wrap with his knife. ED winces as he ties it tight.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Jesus, ever heard of "a gentle touch goes a long way"?

IZZY:

[focused on his work]

Nope.

ED sighs and holds out his other hand for IZZY to take and continue the process. ED hisses at the rum hitting his open wound, does a deep inhale, counts to five, and lets out a deep exhale.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[curious]

[tilts chin up] What are you doing out here anyway?

IZZY:

I could ask you the same.

ED looks up and finds that IZZY's already staring at him, a knowing look in his eyes. He knows he's up to something, and ED decides there's no point in hiding his intentions.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[sighs] I needed to clear my mind.

IZZY:

Thought you did that this mornin'.

ED's head whips up at the realization that he saw him in what he thought was a private moment. IZZY dabs his hand with cotton balls.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[small smile] You saw me; 'course ya did.

IZZY wraps his hand up and separates the gauze wrap from the rest of the roll and tucks it back into his pouch. He rests his arms on his knees and tries to meet ED's eyes.

IZZY:

Well? How'd it feel?

ED smiles at the memory, the feeling of dropping that heavy burden into the ocean and watching it sink.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[soft smile]

Fucking great.

IZZY:

Hmm.

IZZY packs up his medical supplies and turns back to ED, staring at him like he's trying to figure out what's going on in that head of his. He holds out his hand for ED to take. ED takes it and he winces as he's pulled up.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Thanks.

IZZY:

So... retirement?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Yup.

IZZY:

And you're sure this time?

ED crosses his arms and sighs. He's known IZZY for two decades, so he's not surprised but disappointed.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[looks up at sky]

[groans] Not this again.

IZZY:

Yes this again! Edward, isn't the first time you've considered retirement.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Yeah but this time's different.

IZZY:

[at the same time]

This time's different. You know how many times I've heard that?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Here we go.

IZZY:

'07, you were so convinced you were going through with it you even packed, in '99 you , '91 you , and three months ago-

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Oh fuck off.

IZZY (CONT'D):

Three months ago you were sold on retirement and we all know how that went.

ED throws his hands up in defeat. This is not the first time IZZY has thrown his past failures in his face, but it still stings.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[frowning]

Every time. Would it kill you to be supportive?

IZZY:

Nearly did.

ED scoffs at the obvious passive aggression.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

If that's what you call supportive, I'd hate to be your enemy!

IZZY:

Look this isn't about me!

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[chuckles] You're kind of making it about you!

IZZY:

I care about you.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

You got a funny way of showing it

IZZY:

Well fuck me for not wanting a repeat of the past 2 months!

ED shakes his head; IZZY's not getting him and that's where the problem lies. He never has, he's always had to spell it out for him.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Iz, I'm done man. I've been withering away for the past 15 years, a shell of my former self.

IZZY flinches at his words.

IZZY:

I didn't mean it.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

You did and it's fine.

IZZY doesn't want to believe that but the man standing in front of him now is undeniably a different man than the one he met twenty-one years ago or ten years ago or even three months ago.

IZZY:

[gulps] So this is it then?

ED nods and IZZY sighs in defeat; he doesn't want to believe this is really the last time they'll ever see each other. He wants to hold onto the possibility that this is just another phase and that he still has a chance to get them back to where they were before sailing with the Revenge. Before him.

IZZY:

We just can't seem to stop hurting each other.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[frowns]

Yeah.

IZZY nods and awkwardly looks down at his leather boot, kicking at the rock pebbles. He sniffs, trying to gather himself before he meets his eyes. He doesn't want to cry in front of him.

IZZY:

Does he know?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[shakes head] Not yet.

IZZY:

[chuckles] Good luck.

ED flicks him off, picks up his bottle and starts walking back to the bar. He stops five feet away and walks back to IZZY, holding out the rum like an offering.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Here, I know you hate Jackie's stash.

IZZY:

Yeah cause she saves all the good shit for her favorites.

ED's mouth quirks up into a smile as he gives IZZY one last onceover. He nods stiffly.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Take care mate.

IZZY watches him leave; the wooden shark growing heavier in his pocket.

♪[pensive music playing]♪

EXT. STREETS OF THE REPUBLIC OF PIRATES

[indistinct chatter]

STEDE sits on some stairs, surrounded by a bunch of roughneck pirates covered in leather and mesh tops and holding weapons ranging from axes, guns, and swords to daggers, knives, and chains.

STEDE:

I just threw a violin.

[group laughing]

RANDOM PIRATE:

Blackbeard didn't wanna kill Ned Low himself?

STEDE:

[frowns] No, you see... Well, maybe. But we're a partnership. We take turns on making our decisions. That's what we do. It works for us, always has. Right, Blackbeard? [looks around] Where is he? Ed?

STEDE wonders how he's just now noticing that ED's not with him. He's ashamed at the thought that ED hasn't been with him since they entered Spanish Jackie's and that he didn't notice.

STEDE:

[under his breath]

I have to go back.

STEAK KNIFE:

What's that boss?

He stands up with his hands on his hips like a man on a mission, drawing the attention of his fans.

STEDE:

[confidently]

I have to go back to Jackie'z.

STEAK KNIFE:

Oh, okay. You need a bodyguard?

STEDE waves him off, believing there's no reason for the worry since it's barely a 10-minute walk back to the bar.

STEDE:

I think I'll be fine.

RANDOM Man (OFFSCREEN):

[yelling]

Stede fucking Bonnet!

STEDE turns to find out who's calling his name; it's a drunk man in an old-timey cowboy hat and a long-sleeved sweater with leather overalls. The man breaks a glass bottle over his head and stomps on the shards that fall to the ground. The crowd murmurs at his intensity.

RANDOM Man:

I'm gonna fucking kill you!

STEDE turns around to see who he's talking to, then points at himself questioningly. The man nods, STEDE chuckles, pouts, and sends the angry man an apologetic smile.

STEDE:

Sorry but I'm actually quite busy at the moment. Can we reschedule?

He presses his hands together in a pleading motion, leaving the man speechless at STEDE's lack of fear or respect. STEDE nods to himself after not getting a reply and decides to take the man's silence as an "okay." He takes a step forward, and the man pulls out a knife.

RANDOM MAN:

Face me you coward!

STEDE is thrown off his balance at being called a coward and doesn't register the man reaching to his side. Nearly. The man drunkenly pulls out his dagger from its sheath.

RANDOM MAN:

Prepare to die Gentleman Pirate!

[crowd gasps, oohs]

STEDE:

[cheerfully]

Oh it's catching on! Fuck!

The man swings, and STEDE just barely dodges the attack, moving to the right at the last minute, causing the man to lose his footing and fall face down in the mud. The crowd laughs as the man wipes the mud off his face, his cheeks red from rage and embarrassment.

RANDOM MAN:

Fuck off!

CROWD:

Stede! Stede! Stede!

STEDE:

[pretending to be embarrassed]

Oh stop! Okay keep going.

The man struggles to get up from the mud from the hard fall, now further fucking with his drunken state. STEDE makes a bashful 'Stop' motion to the crowd's cheers, but his grin says otherwise.

The drunk man finally stands up straight, and the crowd's excited cheers turn to anxiety.

CROWD:

Stede! Stede!

STEDE:

Thank you truly you know-

PIRATE FAN:

No behind you!

STEDE turns around and is met with a strong right hook from the drunk man. He hits the ground. He doesn't know if his ears are ringing or if there's a church nearby, but he hears shouting.

STEDE:

[under his breath]

Fuck.

He feels something wet hit his lip. He touches his lip and looks down at his fingers. It's blood. The man's cackles grow louder as the crowd boos him. The man circles STEDE, who is still processing whatever the fuck just happened. He walks up to the crowd and raises his arms in defiance.

RANDOM MAN:

Are you not entertained!?

STEDE tunes out the man's spiel about his beef with him as he runs through the possible strategies in his head before landing on one.

Through his peripheral vision, he can see the man walk up to him to give him one last kick or stab and tightly clutch his dagger in his right hand where the man can't see it. The man looks down at him and laughs, which triggers something in STEDE that causes him to dig his nails into the dirt. STEDE looks up at him with a feral

glint in his eye. The blood and disheveled hair make him look like a pirate straight out of one of his books.

RANDOM MAN:

[laughs] Bon voyage Stede Bonnet!

The man raises his dagger above his head and brings it down from an angle. STEDE stops it with his own blade, shocking the man and the crowd, and pushes up with a yell causing sparks from the blade to clash and hit the man's hat setting it ablaze.

PIRATE FAN:

Oh shi-

The man stumbles back from the force and the growing flames atop his hat spreading down.

RANDOM Man:

[ear-piercing scream]

AHHHHHHHHHHH!!!

He makes a tiny note in his head to give JIM a raise for self-defense lessons, or what is referred to as "a waste of outfit preparation time." Only in his head, though; he would rather eat dirt than be on the receiving end of JIM's rage. The man screams as he burns and runs around in a circle before jumping into a water barrel.

STEDE:

Jesus...

The crowd is silent before erupting into cheers and laughter running towards STEDE. STEDE dazedly watches the man be removed from the barrel by some townspeople before he's suddenly lifted from the ground. The pirates hold him above their head like a triumphant hero that's just defeated a dragon.

RANDOM PIRATE:

Gentlemen Pirate's the fuckin' dude!

STEDE smiles bashfully at the praise and attention.

STEDE:

Thank you. [serious] Now, to Spanish Jackie'z.

The crowd cheers and marches him to his requested destination.

INT. SPANISH JACKIE'Z BAR

FRENCHIE stands behind a crunched over table Lucius, one hand on one hip, as he watches him work on his writing. Lucius stands up and crosses his arms, admiring his work.

LUCIUS:

So, what do you think?

Fernando purses his lips and turns his head to the side.

FRENCHIE:

You know I'm not the type to judge another man's art.

LUCIUS:

[squinting]

You called my portraits of Ed "certainly a choice.".

FRENCHIE (CONT'D):

[like he didn't speak]

But this is not the Gentleman Pirate's signature mate.

LUCIUS:

I think I would know what Stede's signature looks like.

FRENCHIE snaps his fingers and points at him.

FRENCHIE:

See that! That right there is exactly the problem; don't think of this as Stede's signature; this is the Gentleman Pirate's signature.

LUCIUS:

You're losing me.

FRENCHIE:

[sighs] Look, mate, the gentleman pirate is flashy. He's eccentric. He's cursive-y. He's-he's- [grins] Stede!

LUCIUS:

[confused/annoyed]

Yeah, I know he's Stede.

FRENCHIE:

No, Stede!

He turns LUCIUS around so he's facing the door. LUCIUS feels his STEDE is being carried by his leather pants, mesh top, and pirate fans.

LUCIUS:

Wow.

FRENCHIE:

Right!

FRENCHIE runs over to STEDE, who's now being set down by his human chariot.

STEDE:

Thanks guys.

FRENCHIE:

[smirks] Look at you, big man, on campus. Got into a fight already, huh?

Stede blanches at the memory of accidentally setting that man on fire.

STEDE:

[dazedly]

You could say that.

Fernando nods slowly, like he knows something's up with his captain from his zoned-out state. He nudges his shoulder, snapping him out of his head.

FRENCHIE:

Hey [smiles], you want a tour of the merchandise?

STEDE:

Merch? [FRENCHIE nods] Of me? [FRENCHIE nods] I would love to, and if the offer still stands when you're up and running, I will, but right now, I need to find Ed.

FRENCHIE:

Of course, he went looking for you about an hour and a half ago.

STEDE:

Shit. Well, do you know where he went?

FRENCHIE opens his mouth to speak but is cut off by a loud scream from across the bar. FRENCHIE and STEDE whip their heads in the direction of the scream to find LUCIUS wrapping his neck scarf around BLACK PETE's index finger.

BLACK PETE:

[biting his lip]

Fuck!

LUCIUS:

[concerned but chiding]

I told you not to cut anything without a glove.

BLACK PETE:

Babe, it was dull as fuck! Everyone knows that dull blades don't cut.

LUCIUS:

Yes, they do! They cut worse than sharp blades, love!

BLACK PETE pouts as LUCIUS drags him over to ROACH, who is making tiny Gentleman Pirate cookies and sits him down in front of him. STEDE looks around and sees posters with his face, and WEE JOHN is setting up a tattoo workspace.

STEDE:

[impressed]

Wow, you guys are really milking this, huh?

FRENCHIE:

[proudly]

You're welcome.

STEDE:

That's not. Never mind. Thank you for your help, or lack thereof.

FRENCHIE:

[nods] Merci.

Stede squints at him in irritation, not knowing if he's being
sarcastic or not.

STEDE:

Well, break a leg.

FRENCHIE:

[smiling]

Thanks.

He turns to leave, and FRENCHIE: walks back over to ROACH'S
station, hands on his hips, as he reprimands BLACK PETE for not
being safer. STEDE bumps into someone as he walks to the stairs.

IZZY:

God, watch where you're—oh god.

STEDE:

As much as I would love to stay and talk, I have somewhere to be.

IZZY blinks, disoriented by the rum, before he zones in on the dry
blood on STEDE. STEDE feels like he's being dissected.

IZZY:

You look like shit.

STEDE:

Thank you. Have you seen Ed?

IZZY:

He's somewhere by a pier or something. I don't know. I just want
to get shitfaced off your free drinks.

STEDE:

The pier, of course. I can't believe I'm saying this, but thank you, Izzy.

IZZY:

[groans] What did I just say?

STEDE runs out of the bar, and IZZY makes his way over to the bar, grabs a tray of beers marked 'For the Revenge Crew', and heads to a table in the corner.

EXT. PATIO ON THE REPUBLIC OF PIRATES

ED stares at the ring in his hand and inspects it like he's waiting for it to tell him something. STEDE makes his way up some stairs, excited to tell ED about his eventful day. When he's two stairs away, he finally clocks ED's somber expression. He finally reaches the top and slowly walks over, standing at his side, pulling ED out of his thoughts.

♪ ♪

STEDE:

[softly]

Hi.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[smiling softly]

Hi.

ED turns to face him as he comes up the stairs and feels his chest squeeze at the sight of a dry blood streak that starts at STEDE's nostril and ends at his upper lip. He runs over and runs his hands over his face, checking for any other injuries.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[shocked]

Oh my god, your face. What happened? Who did this? Do I need to
fuck them up?

STEDE shakes his head, delicately removes his hands from his
cheeks, and holds them.

STEDE:

Ed. I'm fine [beat], and he's dead, so [shrugs].

Stede frowns at the sight of his bandaged hands. He grabs them
softly; concern's written all over his face.

STEDE:

Oh, god, your hands. What happened?

He places a hand on ED's shoulder to comfort him, but ED moves
away, turning his back to him. Stede tries to ignore the pang in
his heart at the move.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

It's nothing; I'm fine.

ED pulls his hands away and walks back to the railing.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

I got jumped by some kids.

STEDE's eyes widen in shock and disbelief.

STEDE:

Oh my god, really!?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

No, they just pulled the jump rope, and I tripped.

STEDE tilts his head like he does when something isn't making
sense to him, but he doesn't want to ask any questions in fear
that it'll create more questions than answers. ED finds it cute,

especially when it's directed at him. STEDE nudges his shoulder flirtatiously, and ED wonders how long he was zoned out that they're now standing at the railing.

STEDE:

I missed you.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[voice breaking]

I missed you too. [clears throat] Sorry, I've just been walking around, you know? [fake chuckle] I have a lot on my mind.

STEDE:

Oh?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Yeah, I just didn't want to burden you with my problems on your big day.

ED wants to push, but STEDE looks like he's just seen a ghost, so he decides against it. He nods and steps back, turns around, and inhales, counts to five, then exhales. He's hyping himself up.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[whispering]

You got this; you can do this. Like ripping off a bandage.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[speaking fast]

I know this is probably a bad time, but I have to say this, and it might hurt now, but in the long run, you'll look back on it and laugh and think, "Wow, that was crazy, right?" and it'll be great, and you'll be happy, and I will too, but

STEDE:

Ed! Breathe.

ED wills himself not to cry and swallows harshly before answering.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

I'm leaving.

Stede shakes his head, thinking he must've heard him wrong.

STEDE:

What?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Look at you; you're blowing up, you know? You're the toast of the town. Everyone wants a piece, and I'm done, man. I've actually been done for a while. I can't do this anymore, and I won't ask you to join me because I know you love this sh*t.

Stede shakes his head in confusion. ED's words are hitting his ears, but he's not processing any of them. He's trying to figure out what changed from earlier that morning to the Republic of Pirates to their amazing date now.

STEDE:

Ed, what are you talking about?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

I'm retiring, and I don't want to drag you down.

STEDE:

[shaken up]

Now hold on, don't I get a say in this?

ED grabs his hands like he's a prince from one of STEDE's books and kisses the back of each hand.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

I don't want this to end. Trust me, I love being with you, but I can't do this anymore. But you do, and I won't ask you to throw your dream away for me.

STEDE roughly rips his hands out of ED's. He paces around the patio, breathing heavily, trying to find the words to express his anger. He can't breathe; there's too much air; he feels claustrophobic; there's too much space. He stomps back to the ED and stops two steps away.

STEDE:

[scoffs] Are you kidding me? What happened to not making decisions for each other and talking things through?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[regretful]

I'm sorry.

STEDE's lower lip wobbles, his nose scrunches, and tears fill his eyes. ED feels like shit.

STEDE:

[voice breaking]

[shakes head] Fuck you, Edward Teach.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[whispering]

I'm sorry.

STEDE:

[laughs] Oh, you're sorry! For what? For breaking my heart? For not dumping me sooner?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

No! I just sigh. I didn't want it to go this way.

STEDE scoffs before taking a step back, like ED's just told him
he's never loved him.

STEDE:

[raspy voice]

How long have you been planning this?

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[closes eyes] Stede.

STEDE:

[sobbing]

How long!?

ED bites his bottom lip and softly hits the railing with his fist.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Since I left the bar,.

STEDE gasps like he's and stumbles back, trying not to meet his
eyes as he cries into his hand.

STEDE:

[shakily]

God, he was right.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Who?

STEDE:

Fucking Ned Low! He said that you wouldn't want me after I killed him! [tearing up] When I burned that man. When I wasn't struggling anymore!

He spits out "pure" like it's a disgusting word. It's an incantation, and if he says it three times, it'll come true.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Stede, that's not true at all.

STEDE:

Oh, please, you don't have to soften the blow; you're already dumping me; it's fine.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Now that's just petty.

STEDE's eyes widen in anger at ED's audacity.

STEDE:

No shit!

STEDE sobs into his hand, turning away from ED, trying to save whatever shred of dignity he has left. ED reaches out to touch his hand, the naturalistic urge to comfort him not even registering. He pauses and puts his hand back on the railing.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

[softly]

I really am sorry.

STEDE:

[defeated]

Don't apologize when you don't mean it.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Stede-

STEDE:

[sobbing/voice breaking]

Please just go! You've already done what you came here to do, so
just go!

ED doesn't want to leave him there, but he knows he'll only do
more harm than good if he stays.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Take care, mate.

STEDE sobs hard into his hand as ED walks down the steps. ED gets
to the last step and turns to the right, leaning against the wall
and softly hitting his head.

ED / BLACKBEARD:

Fuck.

He drops to the ground and cries into his knees.

The sky is dark navy blue, and the red flag is illuminated by its
lanterns.

INT. HALLS OF THE RED FLAG

TIFF struggles to move the clock across the hall. She pauses and
leans on the clock to catch her breath. She wipes the sweat from
her forehead and closes her eyes.

TIFF:

[whispering]

Come on, Tiff, you can do this.

AUNTIE (OFFSCREEN)

Hey!

TIFF screams at hearing the recognizable voice. She turns around and finds a scowling AUNTIE. She stands with her arms crossed, judging her frantic state. TIFF bows her head quickly and tries to avoid eye contact as she looks back and forth at her and the clock.

TIFF:

Hi Auntie! Gosh, I wasn't suspecting you back so early. Are you okay? Is Zhang-

AUNTIE:

[rolls eyes] What is that doing here? Mei said she wanted it off the ship hours ago.

TIFF:

Ah yes, ma'am, she did. I just had to complete some other tasks, but I swear I was just about to toss it before you came.

AUNTIE looks unimpressed and unmoved. TIFF rocks back and forth on the heels of her feet.

TIFF:

Well, I should get going.

AUNTIE:

I'll help.

TIFF:

[blooming smile]

Really? Oh, thank you, Auntie.

TIFF goes in for a hug but stops and wraps her arms around herself. AUNTIE shakes her head, walks to the other side, and rolls up her sleeves.

AUNTIE:

Okay, you push, I pull.

TIFF grins, ecstatic that AUNTIE's helping her with this task instead of reprimanding her.

TIFF:

Yes ma'am.

She clears her throat and rolls up her own sleeves, pushing against the clock as AUNTIE pulls.

INT. SPANISH JACKIE'Z BAR

The crew of the Revenge is getting their grift on. WEE JOHN tattoos STEDE's face on a man, and FRENCHIE, BLACK PETE, and LUCIUS work on selling planks, autographs, and wanted posters.

FRENCHIE:

Planks, ahoy! Planks! Authentic! 100% Gentleman Pirate-certified replica planks! Anyone for a plank? Yes, sir! Yes, sir!

PATRON:

Over here! Over here!

BLACK PETE:

This is a genuine signature. Very few of these are available. This deal won't last. The Gentleman Pirate is a genuine article!

[whispering] We need more of these, babe.

LUCIUS:

[whisper yelling]

I'm going as fast as I can with a missing finger, hon.

FRENCHIE:

A fancy man from Barbados!

wee john:

You know, for another piece of eight, I can do the back of his head on the front of your torso.

RANDOM MAN #2:

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. I've got all day, buddy.

WEE John starts outlining STEDE's head on the front of the pirate's torso. OLUWANDE walks in, and FRENCHIE looks up at the sound of recognizable footsteps. FRENCHIE grins at him and runs over to him, wrapping him in a hug like it's their reunion all over again.

OLUWANDE:

[laughs] Someone's in a good mood.

FRENCHIE pulls away from the hug and holds him at arm's length, shaking him slightly.

FRENCHIE:

Mate, where have you been!?

OLUWANDE:

Fixing a broken marriage.

FRENCHIE:

Okay cupid! Well, we've been making a killing selling this merchandise, so if you want to take some side action...

OLUWANDE:

I'm good, but thanks.

ACROSS SOME TABLES

STEDE sits at a table surrounded by his fans, running his index finger around a cup.

STEDE:

Some people are afraid of success, but... I feel like you guys get me. You like me for me.

STEAK KNIFE:

I've only known you a few hours, Bonnet, but I'd fuckin' die for you.

STEDE:

A bit intense, but [sighs] I like the feeling.

[indistinct chatter]

IZZY walks up to STEDE's table, now being blocked by STEAK KNIFE, his arms crossed and a look that screams, 'Don't fuck with me.'

STEAK KNIFE:

VIPs only. [looks down] Oh, Mr. Hands.

IZZY:

Steak Knife. Fuck off a minute.

STEAK KNIFE:

Fucking off, sir.

STEDE:

[postering]

Whatever you want to say, you can say it in front of my friends.

IZZY:

[very drunk]

Fuck off, Bill.

bill:

Yes, sir, Mr. Hands.

Bill stands up and walks away, the rest of STEDE's fans following him.

STEDE:

[shocked/disappointed]

Oh, Bill?

IZZY:

I know what happened.

STEDE:

[sighs] Of course, you do.

IZZY:

[slurring]

Edward left you.

STEDE:

So, this is a victory lap, then? It might take you a while with your horsey leg.

IZZY:

[scoffs] You're one to talk. Tell me how many mojitos you have had.

STEDE flicks him off, and IZZY laughs as he takes another swig from the large beer bottle. He takes a seat next to STEDE, and it's less than graceful, but he's too drunk to care. He rests his prosthetic leg on the chair in front of him and leans back with his eyes closed. STEDE eyes him curiously.

STEDE:

Isn't there a soul that needs reaping somewhere?

IZZY:

A man can't just enjoy a drink in peace now!?

STEDE:

You came up to me!

IZZY chuckles at his reaction and takes another large drink. STEDE looks worried, but there's an undertone of judgment in his gaze.

STEDE:

Christ, you're really putting that away, aren't you?

IZZY:

So?

STEDE:

So something's up.

IZZY:

[under breath] Fuckin' hell. [nearly screaming] I'm not talking about my feelings with you, Bonnet.

STEDE:

[poshly]

Well, forgive me for trying to be nice.

IZZY:

[snarling]

I don't need your [shakes head] faux politeness.

STEDE looks stunned, and IZZY smiles at the quiet.

IZZY (CONT'D):

[cocky]

Finally shut you up, huh?

STEDE:

[smirking]

I'm just surprised you know the word faux and how to pronounce it.

Oh, brava, Izzy.

IZZY:

Oh, fuck you!

STEDE chuckles, abruptly stops, and leans in so that there's no way IZZY doesn't hear him or misconstrue his words.

STEDE:

Listen, you want to drown your sorrows in this poorly made beer.

[IZZY frowns] Be my guest, but I know you.

IZZY:

The fuck you do

STEDE (CONT'D):

I know you, and I know the only person who can get you binge drinking like this is Ed. [beat] He told you, didn't he?

IZZY stares him down, but STEDE's stare is unflinchingly intense.

IZZY:

Of course he did the same thing that happened with you; he doesn't need me anymore.

STEDE purses his lips and squints at the comparison, but realizes what he means just before he opens his mouth.

STEDE:

You've been fired.

STEDE knows he looks like a mad man, a slow smile spreading across his face and biting his lip to contain a laugh.

IZZY:

Fuck you! [beat] I wasn't fired; I quit.

STEDE:

[mocking pout] Izzy, you can't quit at a demolished company.

IZZY:

Look, Bonnet, this isn't the first time he's "retired" and fired me, and it certainly won't be the last, so if anyone here should be worried about their standing with him, it's you.

STEDE frowns and takes a swig from his own cup.

EXT. REPUBLIC OF PIRATES COURTYARD

JIM, OLUWANDE, and ARCHIE walk into the courtyard. It's dark, and the only thing illuminating their way are some lanterns.

JIM:

No pressure, but, um, this might be your last shot.

ARCHIE:

What do you mean?

JIM:

Que valga la pena.

JIM points up to a balcony where MEI is sitting, legs crossed, all prim and proper. ARCHIE gulps.

[light piano music playing]

EXT. BALCONY IN THE REPUBLIC OF PIRATES COURTYARD

ARCHIE nervously fiddles with her fingers as she listens to MEI.

ZHANG MEI:

I have a hard time with trust. You know that saying, "Fool me once, shame on me; fool me twice, I need to end your life"?

ARCHIE:

Still not sure how that goes.

ZHANG MEI:

That's how I was taught.

ARCHIE:

Look, I'm sorry I left. [beat] Again. Okay? I panicked. It was a little bit intense. I know it was a bad look, me leaving and the indigo going missing, but it wasn't me. I swear I would never

MEI reaches across the table and shushes her with her index finger. She smiles softly.

♪['Break in My Day' by Mark Mothersbaugh starts playing]♪

ZHANG MEI:

You don't have to explain. Uh, I... [deep breath] I missed you.

MEI reaches out and gently rubs ARCHIE's hand. ARCHIE grins at the gesture.

ARCHIE:

You missed the break in your day. [ZHANG laughs/nods] 'Cause that's what you used to say. I missed the break in my day. [both laughing] I love when you say that.

ZHANG MEI:

[softly]

Okay.

The two women smile bashfully at each other and their interlocked hands as they caress each other's knuckles.

INT. SPANISH JACKIE'Z BAR

[mellow music playing]

STEDE and IZZY sit at their table. Their table is covered in bottles, and it wouldn't be wrong to assume it's mostly IZZY's since he is the only one still drinking and very drunk.

IZZY:

I put in 20 years for this godforsaken job, and this is how he repays me!

STEDE:

[dryly]

Uh huh.

IZZY:

You know this—this is exactly what I get from listening to my mom.

STEDE:

[slightly more interested]

Uh huh.

IZZY:

[high-pitched]

Oh, don't give up on your dreams, Israel. You can be anything you want to be. [back in regular voice] And I saw him! There was a black bear in my town, and I took that as a sign, you know!?

STEDE:

[squinting in confusion]

Uh huh?

IZZY:

And I joined, and he was [raising hands] even greater in person.

STEDE:

[now invested in the story]

Uh huh.

IZZY:

And he wasn't looking for a crew like other captains, no, he was
[pause].

STEDE:

Was...

IZZY (CONT'D):

He was glowing.

STEDE knows ED wasn't actually glowing, but he knows what IZZY means; ED's got a warmness about him that's indescribable. LUCIUS walks over to their table and does a double take.

LUCIUS:

Well, fuck me gently with an axe. I never thought I'd see the day.
Izzy Hands and Stede Bonnet are friends.

STEDE:

We're not friends.

IZZY:

Fuck off.

LUCIUS rolls his eyes at the two and frowns at IZZY's barely conscious state. Lucius reaches for the bottle.

LUCIUS:

You should call it a night, don't you think?

IZZY tries to swipe at LUCIUS's hand but misses completely and hits his head on the table.

IZZY:

[muffled]

Ow.

STEDE sighs and shakes his head as he stands up and motions for LUCIUS to help him lift IZZY up from the other side.

STEDE:

Lucius, do you mind?

LUCIUS:

Yes.

STEDE:

[whining]

Lucius!

LUCIUS:

[groans] Ugh, fine. But it counts as overtime!

STEDE:

Okay. [to STEDE] Let's get you back on the ship. You need it. Besides, if you stay here much longer, you're going to end up on the wrong end of a sword.

OVER BY THE BAR

JIM, OLUWANDE, ARCHIE, and MEI lean against the bar, the newly reunited couples standing across from each other. ARCHIE and MEI leave no space between them. JIM and OLUWANDE do their handshake and grin at a job well done.

JIM:

Look at you; you have all four limbs.

OLUWANDE:

[to MEI]

She was concerned you were going to stab her, but...

ARCHIE:

So, yeah. I'm, I'm going, I'm going to go with Mei now.

JIM and OLUWANDE look surprised but happy for her.

OLUWANDE:

Oh.

ZHANG MEI:

So, thank you for being kinda nosy and crossing boundaries, and...

[chuckles] you know what you did.

JIM:

All good, Pirate Queen.

BACK AT STEDE'S TABLE

STEDE:

What's she doing here?

LUCIUS struggles to lift IZZY after STEDE stops pulling his weight. He looks over to see what's pulled STEDE's attention. He groans and rolls his eyes when he sees her, but he is not surprised.

LUCIUS:

[squeezed out]

She's recruited half the island; can you please help me?

To anyone else, STEDE's gaze would read as contempt for an enemy, but LUCIUS knows better. After their escape from the Red Flag, STEDE would often rant to LUCIUS about how he worried ZHANG would hate him and feared he had ruined their friendship. LUCIUS drew some of his best STEDE portraits during that time.

STEDE:

Well, she better back off my guys.

BACK AT THE BAR STAND

ZHANG MEI:

You know, there might be a bit of room on the ship.

OLUWANDE and JIM share a proud look.

OLUWANDE:

That's a great offer, but you know we've sort of got a good thing going right now.

JIM:

Yeah, thanks for the offer, though.

ZHANG MEI:

With him? [points at STEDE] Look, I'm going to be real with you two; your talents are being wasted on that guy. No offense.

JIM:

[simultaneously]

I mean-

OLUWANDE:

[simultaneously]

Kind of an offense, but okay.

ZHANG MEI:

Take your time; you don't have to decide now, but even if it's a
'no' now, I'm always recruiting.

ARCHIE:

[nodding]

Yup, and you'd get your own room. [OLUWANDE/JIM laugh]

ZHANG MEI:

[venomously sweet]

Don't push it.

JIM:

I mean, we can also share.

ARCHIE:

I mean, we've been doing that...

ZHANG MEI:

[chuckles] Alright.

STEDE:

Oh, I see... We're all friendly now. Zhang, last time we saw each
other, you were trying to kill everyone.

The quartet turns to STEDE, who stands with a barely conscious and
very drunk IZZY's arm around his left shoulder, with LUCIUS doing
the same on his right side. He roughly drops IZZY's arm from
around his shoulder, dropping IZZY's whole weight onto LUCIUS.
LUCIUS nearly falls over with IZZY but catches him at the last
minute; he sends STEDE a nasty glare.

ZHANG MEI:

[genuine]

Hi, Stede. Congrats on the Ned Low thing; that's big for you. You know, I think we can all agree to call a truce. What do you say?

She holds her hand out for STEDE to shake. He looks at it, then at her, then back at it, and puts his hand out.

STEDE:

Oh [chuckles], alright.

She smiles at the thought of reconciliation and their friendship picking up where it left off. When his hand is about to meet hers, he pulls it back, confounding everyone. He stares her down sternly and shakes his finger at her.

STEDE:

I see what you're trying to do, Zhang, and it's not going to work.

ZHANG crosses her arms and stares at him like he's lost his mind.

The gathered crew shook their heads at their captain's bold claims.

OLUWANDE:

What? No Captain.

LUCIUS:

Stede please.

ZHANG MEI:

And what exactly would that be?

STEDE:

You're still pissed that I screwed you over, so you're trying to steal my crew.

ZHANG MEI:

[chuckles] Please, I barely had to try.

STEDE turns to OLUWANDE and JIM in shock and betrayal. They try to explain, but STEDE is already escalating the situation before they can speak.

STEDE:

Et tu, Olu? You're going to stab me in the back right in front of me? For her? I took her entire crew down with chamomile tea!

ZHANG MEI:

[feigning politeness]

Let's not do this here.

STEDE shrugs like he has no idea what she's talking about.

STEDE:

Do what? We're just talking, aren't we? Unless...

STEDE touches the side of his hip where his sword is sheathed. The growing crowd of bar patrons watching the altercation 'Ooh's at the motion.

STEDE (CONT'D):

You had something else in mind.

ZHANG MEI:

[smirks/scrunches nose]

I'm going to pretend you didn't just touch your sword.

STEDE:

[matching her tone]

Should I pretend you're not poaching my crew?

ZHANG MEI:

It's not poaching if they want to leave. Maybe go spend some time with your serial killer boyfriend. Or did he already leave you again?

STEDE feels nauseous at the reminder of the past two hours. He can't tell if the world is spinning or if he's just tipsy.

bill:

Oh, damn.

[crowd murmurs] [tense music playing]

STEDE:

Who told you that?

ZHANG MEI:

[laughing]

Oh, sh*t, really? That was a lucky shot, but, yeah, figures.

STEDE feels tears welling up in his eyes, but STEAK KNIFE steps in front of him, allowing him the time to wipe his eyes and regain his composure.

STEAK KNIFE:

I got this, boss. That was really mean.

MEI looks up at the taller man and smiles like a woman who has taken down men twice her size before, and this will be a walk in the park.

ZHANG MEI:

[unphased]

I'd back up.

STEAK KNIFE:

Now, I'll be mean.

ZHANG MEI:

Okie-doke.

MEI taps certain pressure points on STEAK KNIFE's chest so fast that STEDE would be in awe if he wasn't an emotional wreck at the moment. IZZY starts to gain some consciousness and groggily looks up to see MEI hit the last pressure point. STEAK KNIFE falls backwards like a statue; everyone behind him except STEDE moves out of the way. STEDE softens his fall by catching him. They slowly sink to the ground, holding his head in his lap.

[crowd murmurs] [STEAK KNIFE choking]

STEDE frantically shakes STEAK KNIFE like he's trying to wake him up from a nightmare as the man chokes on seemingly nothing.

STEDE:

[near tears]

Steak Knife! No! [to MEI] What have you done?

[STEAK KNIFE choking]

IZZY:

[slurring]

Oh shit.

LUCIUS turns to his left and cheers internally. IZZY is awake as he shrugs the man's arm off him and removes his arm from his waist. IZZY nearly falls over but has enough balance to stand up on his own.

STEDE:

[cries]

Steak! Fight it! Steak-y!

STEAK KNIFE stops choking, and his head falls limply to the side.

STEDE's lip wobbles as he blinks back tears before he gathers himself and closes STEAK KNIFE'S eyes. He stands up, his eyes puffy from his day of crying, but there's no sadness in them, only rage. STEDE pulls out his sword.

♪ ♪

STEDE:

Draw.

OLUWANDE:

[shaking his head]

Oh, Stede, no.

ZHANG MEI:

You've killed one man in less than a day. Don't let it go to your head.

STEDE:

I've killed two men in less than a day so I think I'm getting the hang of it.

MEI and the Crew look surprised at the revelation of a second killing but MEI's the only one that laughs. MEI smirks and pulls out her own sword, twirling it like an expert swordswoman before pointing it at STEDE.

ZHANG MEI:

[confident]

I'll make this quick then.

JIM and OLUWANDE look on in horror, and FRENCHIE: walks around with a basket in hand, taking bets from the bar patrons. ARCHIE takes a drink from her flask, and an amused smile dances across her face as she watches MEI.

STEDE:

You're going to die quickly, are you?

STEDE strikes at ZHANG, who deflects it, sending it to the ground.

She steps on it when he tries to lift it up, and she slaps his face with the side of her sword.

STEDE:

[grunts] Ah!

ZHANG MEI:

[amused]

You fight like a towel boy.

STEDE goes on the offense again, and she dodges and deflects easily.

STEDE:

[grunts] Aha!

♪ ♪

She spins and strikes, and he blocks but stumbles onto a table. He looks to his left, sees a cup, and comes up with an idea. Mei points her blade at his chest.

ZHANG MEI:

[unimpressed]

I've killed mediocre men. I've killed exceptional men. But you're the worst kind: a mediocre man who thinks he's exceptional.

STEDE:

The thing about being mediocre is that no one sees you coming.

He grunts as he throws a cup in her direction, but she once again dodges easily and turns back to him, raising an eyebrow at the sad

tactic. The cup hits a man across the bar, right on the dome.
Arthur laughs as the man groans in pain from the bar.

ARCHIE:

[laughing]

Shit. You got fucked up, bro. You got fucked up.

The man throws a glass bottle at ARCHIE, capturing the bottle's trajectory. ARCHIE screams and ducks, and the camera turns to a pissed-off JIM.

JIM:

Hell no!

JIM throws a knife, hitting the man square in the chest. A brawl breaks out in the bar.

[grunting]

A man lunges at OLUWANDE with a knife. OLUWANDE dodges and breaks a bottle over a man's head.

[upbeat music playing]

Fernando picks up the bowl of money he was taking for bets on the fight and sneaks away.

[grunting] [indistinct yelling]

♪ ♪

[bottle shatters]

SPANISH JACKIE walks in and ducks as a wooden cup goes flying towards her. She looks back at who threw the cup, takes out her gun, and shoots them.

SPANISH JACKIE:

Oh, hell no! Y'all, take this shit outside!

She grabs a patron mid-run and tosses him across a table.

[patron screaming]

SPANISH JACKIE:

I said, Take this shit outside!

MEI kicks STEDE through the backdoor of the Republic of Pirates,
sending him flying out and on his butt in the mud.

EXT. OUTSIDE SPANISH JACKIE'Z

STEDE looks down at the mud and dirt on his hands, checks his
pants, and pouts.

STEDE:

[whimpering]

Oh shit! This will take forever to get out of crème blanc.

Lucius rolls his eyes at his captain's skewed priorities. FANG and
ROACH have joined the crew, and their face masks are now dry.

BLACK PETE:

Stay down, Stede! Stay down!

STEDE:

[grunting] Oh, no!

JIM:

Stede, please don't get up.

ZHANG MEI:

Say "mercy," and this all ends.

OLUWANDE:

Just do it.

BLACK PETE:

Say it. Quit.

BLACK PETE:

Say it, Stede.

STEDE:

[cries] Merci...

[sighs of relief]

STEDE:

.. beaucoup.

[disappointed murmurs]

ZHANG chuckles as she walks over to a piece of plywood she noticed lying around and picks it up. STEDE whimpers, knowing exactly what she plans to do with that wooden plank. ZHANG yells as she lifts it above her head.

ZHANG MEI:

Is this how you plank someone, Stede?!

She brings it down on STEDE, who groans in pain and tries to crawl away.

ZHANG MEI:

[mockingly]

Am I doing it right?

She brings it down on his back again, and the crew's reactions rise from screams, grimaces, and closing their eyes.

STEDE:

[straining]

Well, actually.

[grunts] [crowd exclaims]

FANG:

Oh, no, no, no.

OLUWANDE:

Fuck.

IZZY:

[chuckling]

Fuckin' hell.

[clock ticking]

MEI raises it one final time, preparing to knock him out.

ZHANG MEI:

Now the plank walks you!

STEDE yells as he braces for the impact of the wooden plank.

[clock chimes]

Before MEI can strike him, a building behind them explodes,
sending everyone into a frenzy.

[explosions]

MEI looks up and sees her ships exploding in the distant harbor.
She feels her heart drop to her stomach. She feels like the air is
being ripped from her lungs. AUNTIE, her crew, they're all gone.

[cannon fire]

STEDE scrambles to get up and turns to find MEI frozen in her spot
with an expression he never thought he'd see on her. Fear. He

knows it's serious when the great ZHANG MEI is silently crying,
mouth agape at the

[solemn music playing]

Pedestrians run in every direction, bumping into each other as
more canons are shot at the Republic and exploding houses get
closer and more frequent.

[pedestrians screaming]

STEDE looks to his left and finds that most of his crew is
freaking out, wondering what to do, helping residents, or standing
frozen in shock.

ZHANG MEI:

[at the same time]

Oh, my God!

STEDE:

[at the same time]

Oh, God!

[explosions] ♪ ♪ [cannonball whizzes]

A cannon ball comes flying at the camera.

Cut to black. CREDITS ROLL.

[explosion] ♪ ♪ [screaming] ♪ ♪