

The worst part of sailing ‘round the world is the uneventful days. No navy ships to fight, no hostages to torture. The days when all you can do is stare at the ocean, scheme, and drink.

This was one of those days. And I was trying to make the most of it. I’d already cleaned my quarters, emptied the loo, fed the bird, fed me, and I had been ready to polish the *cannon balls* before I found an extra barrel of rum below deck. Of course, then I had something fun to do.

I was on the deck, lounging and letting reality blur into sweet oblivion. The sea was calm, the briny waters lapping gently against the helm of my ship. Nothing was happening, no ships approaching from the horizon. Just *The Terror* and me.

And my bird. It’s a strange animal, speaks in tongues sometimes, but it’s useful. Carries messages, adds a bit more fear to victims’ eyes. I haven’t bothered to name it. Too confusing, trying to figure out if I should name it all one name, or give each head a title. Eventually, I got in the habit of calling it ‘Thing’ and it responds fairly well to that.

Thing was off in the crow’s nest, being a bird. I usually let it have free range of the ship. It’s well behaved. Except the left head. That one bites.

I’m not sure what the consequences of being bitten by a three-headed bird are, but I haven’t died yet. And everyone else its bitten hasn’t lived long enough to show any side effects. Of course, I could be an outlier, poison immunity could be stopping me from sprouting another limb.

I sighed, staring at the horizon. I half-wished that a navy ship would pass by and give me a reason to duel something. I’d had a battle only a few days ago, but the treasure they’d had wasn’t anything interesting. Books, some cheap jewelry, a nesting doll, coal, clothes, and provisions. All the battle had been good for in the end was quelling boredom, and even then the rush hadn’t lasted very long. Nothing was *happening*, and I wanted to see some blood spill.

I took another swig of rum to distract myself, squinting against the sun. I groaned, setting my bottle down and plopping my hat over my face, content to take a nap and let *The Terror* take me where she would. Maybe we’d land somewhere interesting, full of money and drink.

Unfortunately, Thing had other plans.

“Cylus!”

I didn’t move my hat, swatting at the general direction of its voice. “G’way.”

“Cylus!” It hopped on top of my hat and bit me. I sat up, jostling it off of me and shaking out my hand.

“*What?*” I growled, incredibly annoyed by its means of getting my attention.

“Letter!” the middle head squawked. The right head shook it in my face. I frowned in confusion, taking the letter.

“Who knows where to send me mail?” I muttered, opening the envelope.

*To Mr. Alistair,*

*Due to a recent increase in your annual income, and possible damage to your vehicle, person, or other insured belongings, I would like to schedule a consultation to go over the changes and have you update your account information. Please come during **office hours** as soon as it is convenient. (Note: this does not mean never).*

*If possible, respond before your arrival to estimate when you will be able to consult with me. (Note: again, this does not allow the response of never). If you are unable to respond before your arrival, I ask that you do not repeat the incident from one of our previous meetings. Come during **office hours**. Thank you.*

*Thank you for your acceptance, and I hope to see you in my office soon.*

*Sincerely,*

*Jake*

I glared at the paper. How the hell did he even know where I was, let alone the goings-on of my life?

“Bastard,” I grumbled. I grabbed my hat and bottle, took the final swig, then threw both the letter and the bottle over the side. Thing swooped to land on my shoulder, nibbling at the edge of my hat as I stormed up to the helm to set a course for a new destination. A land that was very much *not* full of money or drink.