

Modified Version, for the Contest Entry see the Forum Post
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From Wray Fort to Ironport, I'd thought I saw it all. Sharks the size of boats, massive mountains encasing the living forges of the dead gods, nature hardly fazes me anymore. You'd have to understand, seeing a giant flying feathered snake made me think I had too much booze. Chaos really is somethin' special, ain't it?

By the time I had touched down on the Castlian's Shore, *the storm* was all anyone could ever talk about. Talk of massive tornadoes last week, gusts consuming the entire nearby forest, even some conspiracy with the Dark Arts Society. The light breeze that day did nothing but unease everyone even further, you would have thought they would be scared of the clouds next. Anyways, I had known the council wasn't after me so it was safe to head into the nearby town. You'd be surprised by how easily townspeople mistake pirates for any random traveller, as long as my face wasn't plastered on the board I was a free man. Restocked on supplies and I was just having a few nice hours with my crew before we would have launched. My right hand Carter saw it first.

"Phil, there's a dragon in the sky."

"Yeah, and Prometheus himself is on Seawatch."

"Phil, look over to the sea."

Carter wasn't one to joke often, I already knew he saw something. Just about East there was, in fact, what seemed to be a giant white snake-like creature with huge pink wings flying in the far distance. Believe me or not, it was one of the few times I hadn't drank on landings like these. Soon my whole crew was pointing and staring at that white thing, slowly drifting into various shapes as it moved farther away from us. "Serpent of storms," I muttered under my breath the words of my old captain. I had always thought it was another sailors' tale for rainy days, like the story of how the world ended or how an 'AG' used to rule the seas. Stupid lies. The similarities between what I could make out and what he had said were uncanny, this was no lie.

“Destroyer of entire fleets, summoner of storms and harsh waters, that thing cannot live. Men, we must depart after that beast. Ready the ketch immediately.”

My crew at that point had barely an idea of what we were getting into. I could tell they were scared, yet I couldn't let this thing escape me. How many more ships would fall if we didn't kill it now? Even if my noble side had a voice in that decision, greed was what pushed me over. How much would they pay for its head? If the death of this elemental brought peaceful seas, how much more could I profit from this? We could have been rich, legends among all pirates for hundreds of years. Alas, it was not meant to be. That damn serpent cost me everything.

Our boat set off to the East, chasing after the slow flying beast. As we had approached, I observed abnormal changes in wind patterns. The air wasn't particularly cold nor warm, almost neutral and blowing roughly towards the East. The waters were quite calm that day, yet as we came closer it became fairly active. Finally we had come in close enough distance to see it clearly. Although it had appeared to be a snake initially, it was covered in white and pink feathers. It also had gigantic sets of pink wings with the largest about half the height of our mainmast, the span of them probably multiple lengths of our whole boat. Its forked black tail looked alien. Everything else about it resembled a snake perfectly with a long and thin body, lighter underside, and a snake's head with two huge (though proportionate with the head) glowing pink eyes. It seemed to be gliding on the aforementioned breeze, though how the wind carried a thing so massive I could not fathom. I could not tell if it knew of our presence at the time.

The wind became strong enough near the beast to make us stop a small distance away from it. I ordered my men to turn the boat so that our starboard side faced the snake, our cannons were in position to fire upon it. It had not summoned any storm, blown our ship into the open sea, or created a whirlpool to drown us all. It simply continued to slowly glide across the sea, I had no idea what destination it had in mind. A fool I was, with not a thought but the riches I would make I ordered my men to load the starboard cannons. We fired every cannon we had on that side right at the serpent.

For all I had said about it being slow, there was no hesitation in its dodging of the cannonballs. Just a few flaps of the wings and the tiny things fell right into the ocean. Now, it turned right to us and flew in our direction. The wind began to howl, its shriek echoing across the sea and bombarding our ship. Even with our sails down, the ship began to drift. My men started to scream.

“Reload the cannons! It can’t dodge them all a second time.”

In a panicked rush, my loyal crew loaded them all again and sequentially fired. It avoided them all again, no luck was to be had with our ship’s equipment. The waters became violent and I had spotted what seemed to be the formation of a whirlpool around our ship. Magically the clouds greyed and rain began to fall. Not even a tornado was as terrifying as how fast the beast had made the weather change. It was closing the distance fast, with our cannons failing I ordered my crew to do their best to sail for shore. I could no longer fight for its death, only our survival.

While they desperately attempted to raise the sails in the storm, I raised both hands at the serpent. A blue circle came forth from my palms, glowing dimly on the ship’s deck. With a shout, I launched a beam of dark water at the beast. Miraculously, it hit the side of its underbelly. It almost appeared to have flinched in pain, though for certain I had aggravated it. It continued to approach us at an alarming rate. I did my best to bombard it with blasts, though it seemed to have no effect other than worsening the weather. By now it was almost upon us and I was helpless.

A radical idea came to my head, pure desperation which I had thought might save me and my crew. The sound of wood cracking came from our rear mast, I could only say, “Watch out!” before it came crashing into the sea. My crew had avoided it, though for certain they were never more scared in their whole lives. There was no time to question it any longer, if I was going to die it would be in combat. I unsheathed the dagger at my side, arcanium-tipped, and stared directly at the beast.

With a powerful leap I burst into the air propelled by my own magic energy. A spring of water followed my feet, carrying me all the way to the sky. My boots struck the top of its body, though with how fast it moved I had lost balance. I was left to flail in the air for moments in pure terror before my hand caught the top of its wing. With its constant flap my body

was jerked violently back and forth, my head almost ripped right off my body. My last fragments of energy drained into the dagger as I stabbed it right under the fold of its side. The serpent made a deafening screech, its movement thrust me into the air along with one of its enormous scales. I only had a glimpse at its underside before crashing into the ocean along with the scale. With such a strong impact I couldn't hold my own breath, any last bit of air was forced out of my body. Even in water, the waves shoved my body around the blue void. It felt as if I were looking through a lens, my sinking ship and the bright flashes of lightning far from me. My whole body felt numb, it felt as if it wasn't even mine anymore. My last moments were almost peaceful as my vision dimmed, my heart slowing to a complete stop...

"What was that end, you some kind of philosopher?" The headless guy broke the spell in my mind. Almost forgot I was dead.

"Yeah, so what's it matter to you? This isn't some play, its my life, I should be charging you good money for a story like this!" This guys being a real prick, even for pirate standards.

"Well, I guess it was something. Better than staring at the flowers." The ghost mentioned. It still freaked me out how I could see right through his wound into his split heart, but guess I should get used to that.

My crew's long gone, probably all dead from that storm. Ship's at the bottom of the sea, probably along with that scale too. Now I'm here in Hades itself, a lot quieter than I had imagined. Guess that's expected from an endless flower field. Oh yeah, I bet that damned Serpent's alive still. Gliding over the sea without a care for the burden of over a hundred souls, still counting. Maybe even thousands. Well, it would be better not to dwell on it too much. Don't wanna use up all my thoughts, gotta save some for the rest of the eternity in Asphodel.