

# Legacy

The Pirate Queen

A small beam of light bled through an opening in the heavily embroidered curtains of the captain's cabin. On the floor clothes and weapons alike were scattered in unorganized piles. Katherine woke up to the smell of salt water and the gentle swaying of her ship. It would've been a pleasant thing to wake up to if not for the hangover she got from the night before. Gunny had made a drink from cactus juice that he bragged would knock even the strongest of men off their feet. When Katherine asked for a cup, Gunny laughed as he told her that it would be too much for a girl like her. So of course she just had to down two to prove him wrong. Her mistake.

"Curse that man." Katherine muttered under her breath as she slowly moved across the cabin. After gathering her clothes, she sat back down on her bed. With her eyes closed she listened to the sounds of her crew going back and forth above on deck as she got dressed. She had just thrown on a shirt and was reaching for her vest when a knock came from the door.

"Capt'n you up yet? Pretty sure it's almost mid-day." The door creaked open and the silhouette of a large bald man stood in the doorway. Katherine covered her ears and winced at the sound of his voice.

"Gods Bull, why do you always have to be so loud? I mean I know you're a Half-Giant and all, but seriously use your head man. I drank more than half the crew last night."

"Sorry Capt'n. Keep forgetting you humans can't handle a few drinks. Anyways, can I come in? Zatarra sent me down with some of that elven tea stuff. Says it'll help with the hunged over."

"Did he now?" She quickly glanced across the room and smiled as she saw a pair of pants that weren't hers. So it wasn't a dream after all. "How kind of him. Yeah, place it on my desk. Oh, and they're called hangovers you big dolt." Bull walked across the room and placed the tea

down. Katherine hoped Bull wouldn't notice as she finished putting on the last of her clothes. Unlike most of her crew, Bull was the one of the few people allowed in her cabin. She trusted the man, more than any other. He practically raised her after her father's death.

Out of all the men who served under her father, Bull was the only one that still directly serves her family. Bull met Katherine's father on the dock of a slaver's port over twenty years ago. Bull was being whipped for protecting another slave. A child who had been blinded by her previous owner. No one knows what motivated Katherine's father into buying the two and freeing them, but after they left port Bull was pulled aside and given two options. Get off at the next port with the little girl and enough coin to live off of for a week or work on the ship and both him and the girl would be taken care of.

Bull chose the latter and swore to serve as long as he drew breath. However not long after those events, Katherine's father was ambushed and killed. To pay back the kindness he was given Bull decided to become Katherine's bodyguard to protect her from sharing her father's fate. When she finally came of age to captain her own ship, Bull became the ship's Quartermaster.

Katherine walked over to her desk and fell back into her arm chair with tea in hand. After a long sip of the warm bitter drink, she sighed. "Call the others. I want to know where we're at with our preparations for this summit." With a silent nod, Bull took his leave and closed the cabin door behind him. Katherine took another long sip and looked back to her bed. A guilty smile spread across her face. She was surprised Bull hadn't noticed. It had taken her months, but in the chaos of last night she finally got Zatarra to herself. She found it funny how the elf who

was probably ten times her age could be so shy and nervous anytime she got near him.

According to Gunny and Nova, Zatarra was quite the serious loner when she wasn't around.

It wasn't long before the next knock came to the door. "Hey Princess, we're coming in." The cabin door opened and a beautiful girl wearing a large dress and a mask was escorted in by a monkeyish looking boy with a rifle strapped over his shoulder and a pair of colored reading glasses hanging from the front of his shirt.

Katherine looked up and smiled at her guests. "You know Nova, it never ceases to amazes me how a blind girl like yourself can dress up and look as beautiful as you do every day. Is that a new mask as well?"

Nova blushed and started playing with her long hair. "It is. Gunny bought it for me as a present last time we were at port. Do you like it? He said it's shaped like a butterfly."

"I can see that. It looks perfect on you Nova. You're lucky to have a man with such sharp eyes." Katherine giggled as Gunny's whole face turned a bright red, despite his tanned olive skin. After Nova and Gunny sat down, Katharine asked "Gun, where's Bull and Zatarra? I don't want to start this without them."

"I don't know, but Bull looked pretty angry when he told Nova and I that you wanted to see us. I don't know what you did Princess, but I won't be surprised if Bull was taking it out on that poor elf boy you've had your eyes on recently."

Katherine laughed at his remark. "That 'boy' as you call him has probably lived nine or ten of your life times already Gun."

Gunny rolled his eyes. "So you like older men. Good for you. By the way, how's your head?"

Katherine put down her cup of tea and took a deep breath. “It’s fine, no thanks to you.”

Gunny laughed as he put his hand up in defense. “Hey, I warned you didn’t I? In all honesty I’m surprised that you can even move. Many of the boys are in pretty bad shape up on deck.”

“Oh no. You didn’t actually drink that stuff, did you Katie?” Nova asked as she shook her head.

“Of course I did! When that little boyfriend of yours started bragging how good and strong his drink was, I got curious. Then he told me to my face, in front of the whole crew, that I shouldn’t drink it. Saying that there was no way a girl like me could handle it. So I had to. I can’t exactly look weak in front of my crew, now can I?”

“I suppose not, but Gunny that wasn’t very nice. You know how stubborn Katie can be. She’s too prideful to back down from a challenge. You shouldn’t do things like that.”

Gunny started laughing and patted Nova’s hand in apology. “Sorry Love, but I couldn’t help myself. She’s such an easy target. You know this ship wouldn’t be half as fun if she wasn’t like this.”

“I’m sitting right here you know!” Katherine yelled in frustration.

“We know.” Gunny and Nova said in unison.

“Not you too Nova...” Katherine hung her head and let out a heavy sigh. Then another knock came from the cabin door.

“Come in.” Katherine said. The door swung open and Zatarra came in with Bull towering over him. Bull looked to be in a good mood now. The same couldn’t be said for Zatarra.

“Sorry we’re late Capt’n.” Bull said as he entered.

“Its fine Bull. Could you bring the maps over here?” Bull nodded and walked around the corner. Zatarra pulled up a chair and gave Katherine a wiry smile as he met her eyes.

“You forgot something.” she whispered and pointed towards the floor.

His gaze followed the direction her finger was pointed towards and nearly jumped out of his skin when he saw the familiar pair of pants laying on the ground. He was about to get up to retrieve them, when Bull returned with charts in hand. Noticing his hesitation, Katherine giggled.

“What’s funny Katie?” Nova asked. Bull was curious as well, raising what would have been his eyebrow if he had any.

“Oh, it’s nothing Nova. So Bull, how many days until we arrive at this year’s summit?”

Bull laid out a map across Katherine’s desk and pointed. “Currently we are here, on the edge of the Serpent’s Teeth. If we continue on this route without incident, we should arrive at the capital of the old Sintellean Empire in two days. That’ll give us one day to rest before we have to deal with the other Pirate Lords. However, this morning Rat told me that it looks like a storm is heading towards our direction from the east. If we get caught in it, it could delay us quite a bit.”

“Understood. Nova, this is the first summit the Pirate Lords have recognized me as a possible successor to my father. The last thing I need is to look like a weak and clueless little girl to those sharks. How many of the Pirate Lords will be attending and what should I expect?”

“According to my sources, all six of the Pirate Lords...along with a representative from the Matholus Royal Family will be attending the summit.”

Katherine choked on the last of her tea and asked in between coughs “Excuse me? Did I just hear you correctly? The Matholus Royal Family? Why are those butchers attending this summit?”

“As you can imagine, a great many things are going to be discussed at the summit this year. The fact that the Matholus Royal Family has been invited and that the summit this year is being held at the center of our fallen Empire is not a coincidence. The other Lords have done this to test you. Depending on who the Matholus’ send, this could either strengthen or weaken your position.”

“I see...” Katherine sat in silence for a bit, then turn to Zatarra. “Zatarra, how about you? Have your men turned anything up?”

Zatarra shook his head in apology. “I’m sorry to say not as much as we’d hope for, my Lady. Unfortunately we didn’t learn about the Matholus’ intervention until recently. As for the Pirate Lords, each of them has planned a way to either strengthen their position with you or to make you look incapable of ruling. It should also be said that someone has already hired a sloppy assassination on your life. We’ve already taken care of it.”

Zatarra paused, but when no one spoke up he went on. “It’s was probably nothing more than a simple test of your reach, but that doesn’t mean you should ignore it. I can have it so that this would be assassin is brought before you and the other Pirate Lords at the beginning of the summit. Normally I’d recommend killing him in front of the others as a show of your power and that you are not one to be questioned, however the Matholus will be present as well. How you proceed with this is up to you, my Lady.”

Katherine nodded. “Very well. Question him until you find out something useful. If we can find out which of the Pirate Lords hired him, we can use it as a bit of leverage later. As for the summit, I don’t need to acknowledge this. Like you said, it’s just a simple test and we don’t want to show an outsider how divided we really are.”

Zatarra nodded and Katherine turn back towards Nova. “Nova, what’s my stance with each of the Pirate Lords?”

“As of now, I’d say that only two of them can be trusted. Lady Janthia and Sir Antonello. Antonello was a good friend of your father so you can count on his support, but he is a man of action. If you want to keep his loyalty, you’re going to have to prove yourself in the near future. Janthia was you mother’s half-sister. Though she is normally a fickle women, she strongly believes in supporting her own blood. That being said, she will expect the same kind of unwavering support from you as well. That could become a problem, but for now we’ll need her support.”

“Jackson just inherited his late father’s fleet and title of Pirate Lord. Like yourself, this will be Jackson’s first summit as well. He is younger than you by almost six years, but don’t let that fool you. He is probably more dangerous than any of the other Lords. He’s quite ambitious and has the second largest fleet out of all the Pirate Lords. Depending on your actions at this summit, he could turn out to be either one of your strongest allies or one of your worst enemies. Keep that in mind as you speak to him. Also, keep an eye out for the other three Lords as well. Especially for Armand and Eduardo. They’ve been seen meeting with each other many times as of late. Though we have no proof as of yet, I believe they’re up to something.”

“Ok, is there anything else I should know before we disperse?”

“Yes.” Bull spoke up. “Each Pirate Lord is allowed to bring one member of their crew with them to the summit. Only one. Obviously you will be choosing someone in this room to accompany you to the summit, but remember this. No matter who you choose, each of us will convey a different message about yourself to the Pirate Lords. Think long and hard as to who you think you should bring along.”

There was a long silence in the cabin before Katherine finally replied. “I obviously have much to think about before this summit. I will take what you all have said to heart and inform you all what I’ve decided before we arrive at the old capital. You are all dismissed. Thank you.”

They all rose together and bowed before leaving the cabin. Katherine took a deep breath then got out of her chair. Two days huh? That wasn’t much time to think all this through. Probably shouldn’t bring Gunny. He wouldn’t be that much help confined in the meeting hall. Zatarra is good at reading people and telling whether or not they’re telling the truth. He could also probably react the fastest if something went wrong, but is that enough reason to bring him though? If she did choose him, she’d have to come up with a better reason to convince Bull. She could bring Nova instead. She would probably be the most help to her, but what kind of message would she convey to the Pirate Lords? Sure she is beyond intelligent, but she’s also blind and quite frail. She could easily become a target. Katherine didn’t want that. Then there was Bull. Bull is well respected by most of the other Pirate Lords. He’ll also be the largest and strongest man there, but he wouldn’t be much help if Katherine had a question or wanted some advice.

“Aahhh! Why does this have to be so frustrating?” Katherine whined as she fell back onto her bed. She laid there in silence until she slipped into sleep. When she finally woke up again, it was to the sounds of her men yelling up on deck. Katherine got out of bed and started

walking towards her cabin door. Then she noticed something was missing. Zatarra's pants were gone. "That pointy eared dastard. He stole them back while I was sleeping." She laughed to herself.

Katherine opened the cabin door and walked out onto the deck. Her men were rushing back and forth in a frenzy. Katherine scanned the horizon and saw two things she wished she hadn't. To the west was a ship flying the Matholus royal colors and to the east that storm Rat saw, about to be upon them both.

Katherine ran towards the helm and yelled at Rat. "Rat, how long do we have before it hits?"

"Ten maybe, twenty minutes at most. Bull told us to ignore that Royal Navy ship, but I'd personally would feel a whole lot better if those dastard were at the bottom of the sea when that storm hits Blondie."

"Listen to him. We will not be attacking any royal ships for the next couple of days. A member or representative from the Matholus Royal Family might be on one of those ships. The last thing we need is to kill one of them and start another war with the Matholus Kingdom. Now give me the helm. I need you to make sure everyone has a lifeline on and doesn't shoot at that ship. Understood?"

"Aye Blondie. I hear yea." Rat handed over the helm and ran across the deck checking every post and yelling orders to every sailor he passed. Light began to disappear as the sun receded behind the monstrous black clouds. The wind picked up and the rain started coming in hard at an angle. If she didn't know any better, Katherine would've thought this to be a

hurricane. She saw Bull and Rat talking and pointing towards the storm. Bull nodded and made his way to the helm.

“What’s wrong Bull? I’ve seen that face before and I never like what happens after I do.”

“Capt’n, its Rat. He’s worried that we might be in store for a couple of waterspouts. You know how that old man’s feelings are usually right when it comes to the sea.”

“Great...what do you think we should do? It’s too late to avoid the storm now. Should we drop anchor or ride through it?”

Bull was silent at first, then turned to look at the storm. “We should ride through. If a waterspout forms I’d rather take my chances and try to avoid it when we can move, than pray it misses us as we’re anchored to one spot.”

Katherine grinned. “I was hoping you’d say that.”

“Hey Blondie! All lifelines secured mam!” Rat yelled over the sound of the howling wind.

Katherine looked towards Bull. “Is Nova safe?”

“She is. She and Gunny are together in her room. Zatarra is in the crow’s nest. I told him to be a look out for anything in the storm. Last thing we need is to sail straight into a whirlpool.”

“Good. Let’s just hope our friends in the Royal Navy make it through as well. We don’t want to be blamed for sinking any of their ships right now.”

They sailed through the pouring rain and the crashing waves for hours, all the while with the Royal Navy following their ship from a distance. Then all of a sudden, the rain and wind

stopped and a warm fog formed in the air. Thunder and lightning began to fill the sky and the sea started to boil.

“No. No! NO! Blondie we need to turn this ship around NOW!” Rat screamed as he ran for the helm. He pushed Katherine into Bull and grabbed the helm. “While we still have some momentum, we need to get out of here!”

“Rat, you old dastard. What in the world is going on? Tell me what’s going on!” Katherine asked sensing the dread in his voice.

“It’s a Sea Dragon, Blondie! Probably an Orange or Red Tail if it’s giving off this much pressure. In the chaos of that storm, we sailed right into her territory by mistake and she isn’t too happy about it. If we don’t get out of here now, we’re done for!”

“Sea Dragon? Orange or Red Tail? What are you talking about old man? They’re just myth.” Bull protested.

“Oh no, they’re real alright and if you want to live you should tell the men to load all the explosive cannon shots we have.”

“Capt’n you can’t seriously belie...”

“Do as he says.” Katherine commanded.

Bull stood there dumbfounded for a few seconds, then said. “Right away Capt’n.”

After he left, Katherine stood next to Rat and asked “Will the explosive shots hurt it?”

Rat laughed “No, but it might stun the creature long enough for us to get away. The only real way to hurt a Sea Dragon is to get it to fight another Sea Dragon and if that happens, pray to the gods you don’t get caught in the middle of that.”

Just as he finished his insane rant, Rat and Katherine heard an unearthly screech. They turned around and saw a crimson red serpent twice the size of their ship rise from the boiling foamy waters. It scanned the sea, saw Katherine’s ship, and began darting for it.

Katherine rushed across the deck and yelled “Bull, we need those cannons!”

“Almost ready!”

“It’s gaining on us!”

“Just a minute.”

“We don’t have a minute!”

“Alright. All cannons, aim at the Sea Dragon!”

“BULL!”

“Open *FIRE!*”

Katherine wasn’t prepared for that and the world lost all sound as her ship’s forty-six broadside cannons went off. Half the cannons couldn’t aim correctly in time, but just enough explosive shots made contact with the Sea Dragon to halt its assault. When Katherine finally regained her hearing, she didn’t hear what she was expecting. There wasn’t any cheering coming from her crew. Instead, she heard Rat screaming. “BRACE FOR IMPACT!”

Then she was airborne. The sheer force from the creature's body making contact with the hull of the ship sent more than half the crew into the air. After realizing what had happened, Katherine grabbed onto some of the ship's riggings before her body had the chance to fall back down.

She watched in horror as the red Sea Dragon turned around and started rushing back for her ship again. Then out of nowhere a bolt of lightning arced across the sky and hit the Sea Dragon. It didn't do much, but it was enough to get the monster's attention. It had come from the bow of the Royal Navy's ship. A boy in white and red robes stood there smiling. The Sea Dragon let out another of those unearthly screeches and began charging at the other ship.

The boy began charging up another spell, but this one was different. It was a lightning spell like before, but this time the lightning was blacker than a starless night. The men on his ship began to scream and yell at him to cast his spell, but he just ignored them all. Katherine realized what all those men feared. To this boy, none of their lives mattered. He would wait until the absolute last second to cast his spell. If his spell failed to kill its target the first time, then the boy probably believed he deserved whatever fate came next. Or maybe the boy was just arrogant and thought that there was no way his spell could fail.

Whatever the reason, the boy waited till the creature was right in front of the ship to release his spell and in a blink of an eye the Sea Dragon's head was gone. After being suspended in the air for a few seconds, the Sea Dragon's body fell back into the sea. The crew of the Royal Navy began to cheer and boy in the robes waved at Katherine, as if asking her if she enjoyed the show.

Katherine was frozen at first, then looked down at the state of her ship. It was a mess, but somehow it was still sea worthy. After taking a sigh of relief, Katherine called out “BULL! RAT! ZATARRA! Are any of you idiots still alive?”

At first there was no answer, then Bull push a broken part of a mass off of himself and yelled back through painful grunts. “It seems I’m still breathing, somehow.”

Rat had a bloody gash across his forehead, but was still holding onto the helm. “You can’t get rid of me that easily Blondie.”

Zatarra was hanging upside down from his lifeline above Katherine. “I’m fine my Lady, but I might need some assistants getting down from here.”

Katherine laughed at their strange luck and slowly made her way down the rigging. “Someone check on Nova and Gun. Make sure they’re both still alive and alright. Oh and get one of the apothecaries on deck. Someone needs to look at Bull and Rat’s injuries.”

“Yes mam.” Some of her pirates said.

After Bull and Rat were treated, Katherine walked over to the stern of the ship and watched as the last of the boiling sea water faded away in the distance. Then for a split second, Katherine could have sworn she saw white scales emerge from the foaming sea water. She thought about telling Rat about it, but decided against it. The old man was crazy enough. He didn’t need any more help there.

After the Red Tail went down, the Royal Navy ship changed direction and sailed off. Just who was that boy though? Whoever he is, Katherine was sure that this wasn’t the last time she’d see him. Perhaps he’d even be at the summit. Until then though, she needed to prepare. What lied

ahead of her would most definitely be more treacherous than a Sea Dragon could ever be, but whatever it was she would overcome it. For she was the Pirate Queen.