

## Dark Waters

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# Dark Waters

by [Catbunblue302](#)

## Summary

There is nothing Izzy wouldn't do for his captain. Even if it means debasing himself and submitting to torture in Ed's place.

## Notes

Again, technically posting this early but whatever

# Chapter 1

## Chapter Summary

The crew is captured.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The ship had been following them for half a day, Izzy's heart pounding in his chest so fast he thought it might burst. Everytime he looked back she was closer, so Izzy stopped looking. He left Buttons at the helm, he was a little weird but one of the few competent people on the ship, and Izzy focused on barking orders at the rest of the crew. The ship chasing them was a brigantine, much smaller than *The Revenge* but still a very real threat. Her deck teemed with sailors and Izzy knew, outnumbered as they were, they didn't stand a chance. Not in a fair fight.

Ed had snapped out of his delusion long enough to notice that they were in real, actual trouble and he'd sequestered himself, along with Bonnet, in the captain's cabin to think. It was Izzy's job to grant Ed the time to do it. The brigantine was faster by virtue of its design, but *The Revenge* could still give her a fair chase. She was flying full sail and Izzy kept an eye on the clouds, praying for a storm or some sort of heavy fog that they could get lost in. Stede's crew were, for once in their useless lives, doing their *damn jobs*. It would appear that the gravity of the situation had finally gotten into their thick skulls.

The worst part was the waiting. There were only so many things that could be done and eventually he found himself standing helplessly at *The Revenge's* railing, watching the brigantine gain on them. She'd catch them, it was inevitable. Her presence was like the hot breath of a beast on his neck and Izzy had to take a shot of rum to calm his nerves. He'd rarely felt like this in the last several years. He hadn't needed to; Blackbeard's reputation preceded them and many lay down their arms rather than fight. The ones that did fight were easily cut down by Blackbeard's crew, who were always the best of the best pirates that could be found.

None of that mattered here. Himself, Ed, Fang, and Ivan were the only ones he trusted to be good in a fight. On Stede's crew, only Jim would be of any use. They'd been helping each other brush up on their skills, them on their swordsmanship, him on his knifework, and Izzy was gaining a grudging respect for them. Still, no matter how good the five of them were,

they had no chance against the size of the crew chasing them. Maybe if they got a good enough angle, they could bring her down with *The Revenge's* cannons. The brigantine had speed on her side but the galleon had sheer firepower. Izzy considered the idea for a moment before putting it aside. To try the idea, they'd have to swivel to face her broadside. It would practically guarantee their capture and it was too much of a risk.

The brigantine had gotten close enough that Izzy no longer needed his spyglass to pick out the individual faces of the men on board. He spotted their captain and his heart skipped a beat. Torres had been a merchant once upon a time, before Blackbeard had single-handedly ruined him. Shipments stolen, his fleet sunk to the bottom of the ocean. Torres had vowed revenge on Blackbeard, a laughable statement when he'd been on his own ship, surrounded by a crew more fearsome and bloodthirsty than the sharks that prowled the water after a raid. It wasn't so funny anymore now that Ed had let himself be weakened so much by this useless ponce.

"Spriggs." Izzy barked.

Lucius came up to the railing. He was visibly nervous and he couldn't keep his eyes off the ship that chased them. He was scared. Good. He should be. "What?"

"Go tell Ed that it's Torres that's chasing us."

"Who? What? Who's Torres?"

Fucking twat. Terrified out of his mind and he *still* couldn't take an order without backtalk.

Izzy grabbed him by the stupid little scarf around his neck and dragged him down to his level. "Go." He snarled.

He let Lucius go and the scribe hurried off, hopefully to do as he'd been told. Izzy turned around to address the rest of the crew. They'd run out of time.

“Prepare to fight.” He told them, and ascended to the helm without bothering to see if they’d listen. They were losing this fight no matter what they did, the only question was how long they could draw their deaths out.

“They’re gainin’ on us.” Buttons said. “I’m tryin’ but there’s only so far I can push her afore she breaks.”

Izzy didn’t reply. He watched the brigantine bob on the waves behind them, so close and only getting closer. He gripped the railing, taking solace in the way the wood stung his rope-burned palms. The pain was grounding, helping him to stay in the moment. He closed his eyes. There was a very real chance that today was the day he died. Him and Ed and every last fucker on this ship.

“Brace!” Buttons shouted and Izzy barely had the chance to understand what he’d said before something heavy crashed into the ship.

*The Revenge’s* deck rolled underfoot as the brigantine's bowsprit crashed into her hull. Shouts came up to his ears as Stede’s crew was knocked off balance by the impact. Izzy had been saved by his tight hold on the railing. Now he let go, drawing his sword and returning to the main deck where he’d likely die defending Ed. The brigantine glided up beside them, her hull so close to theirs that Izzy could hear boards scraping against each other.

Ed had come up on deck and Izzy glanced back at him to check and see if he had some secret plan. His jaw was set in a way that told Izzy he didn’t, so he turned back to the enemy ship beside them. He had enough time to wonder why they hadn’t turned the cannons on them yet, before all hell broke loose.

They were pirates, that much was clear. They clambered up onto *The Revenge’s* deck like rats and the crew did their utmost to hold them off but there were simply too many. Izzy found himself being pushed back from the railing as after every man he slew, two men jumped up to take his place. In the chaos he heard Ed shout and Izzy instinctively jerked his head up to look for him in the melee. There were too many people on the deck, too much movement, and Izzy couldn’t find him. Not that he could have helped if he had. There were four of them swarming him, attacking him with wild cuts and slashes. He parried as many as he could but he was vastly outnumbered and they were pushing him back, back, back until there was no more room for him to retreat. His shoulders hit the mainmast and Izzy knew he was pinned, but he wouldn’t go down without a fight.

A knife went flying through the air to sink into one of his attacker's throats and the surprise they got from one of their allies dying beside them was enough for Izzy to dispatch another of them. He looked up to see that Jim was fighting alongside him, sword in hand. He gave them a quick nod in thanks for coming to his rescue before turning back to the sea of enemies. His fourth opponent had slipped back into the fray and Izzy followed suit, slipping through knots of fighting men as he searched for his captain.

They were losing. Badly. People were being cornered all around him, forced to drop their weapons or die. He could see someone being shoved to the ground, their arms jerked behind their back. Izzy caught sight of the scarf around his neck and he realized it was Lucius. Buttons was still on his feet, biting at his attacker's throat like a rabid animal. Izzy spotted Roach and Ivan as well, but they were both badly surrounded and it was only a matter of time. He couldn't see Ed anywhere.

Izzy was grabbed by the collar of his shirt and yanked harshly backwards. He managed to pull away before he was fully knocked to the ground but someone else kicked him and, still off balance, Izzy fell to his hands and knees. His sword slipped from his hand and went skittering across the deck. He reached back for his knife but a hand caught his wrist before he could make it anywhere close. Izzy's arms were yanked back, pinned firmly at the small of his back and tied together even as he struggled to escape. The rope was rough against his flesh, tied too tight and biting into his wrists.

They hauled him to his feet and pushed him towards the brigantine, where he was forced onto her deck and shoved to his knees alongside the other captives. *Captives ? Why were they still alive?* Izzy took stock of his fellow prisoners and discovered that not a single one of the crew was absent. They wanted them alive, but for what? He didn't think Torres would be the type to take hostages.

At last, Ed and Stede were brought onto the brigantine's deck, the fucking ponce trying to make a good showing of being brave but Izzy could tell he was fucking terrified. Stede was brought to kneel with them and Ed was left standing in the middle of the deck.

"Hello, Blackbeard." Torres said flatly.

Ed didn't respond, his face carefully blank and his jaw lifted in defiance.

“Do you remember me, I wonder? Or have you stolen from so many people that they’ve all blurred together in your mind?”

“Don’t know who you are, mate.” Ed replied.

He did know who Torres was, Izzy knew that he did, he was just refusing to give Torres so much as the time of day. *There* was a spark of the old Ed, his Ed, and Izzy’s heart swelled with pride.

“Well then,” Torres said. “Let me remind you.”

He punched Ed in the stomach, hard, a blow the pirate captain couldn’t dodge with his hands bound the way they were. He doubled over, hissing in pain, and Torres used the opportunity to push him to the ground. He crouched beside him, a hand buried deep in Ed’s mane as he whispered something in his ear, inaudible to the audience gathered around him. Eventually, Torres let go and stood up.

“Take his shirt off and tie him to the mast.” He said to his crew.

Lucius stiffened beside him, so close to Izzy that their thighs were practically touching. Izzy ground his jaw as he was forced to watch his captain be stripped and manhandled into the position that pleased them best, his hands untied only to be retied around the mast instead. Someone handed Torres a whip and the ex-merchant held it deftly, the cat’s knotted tails swishing menacingly against the boards. Izzy’s self control broke at the sight of it.

“Don’t you dare lay a fucking finger on him!” He snarled, surging to his feet and making it a few steps forward, before he was recaptured by a tight hold on his upper arms.

“Ah, Iggy, I didn’t know Blackbeard was still keeping you around. I figured you’d be old news by now.” Torres said.

“It’s *Izzy*. ” He growled.

“Whatever. I intend on ruining Blackbeard just as he ruined me, so if someone would kindly keep *him* under control, that’d be lovely.”

He turned back to Ed and Izzy’s captors were dragging him backwards, trying to force him back to his knees in the line-up.

“Leave him alone! Don’t hurt him!” His cries were falling on deaf ears and Izzy was growing desperate. “Please! Have mercy!”

Torres raised the lash and Izzy tried his final card.

“I’ll- I’ll take his place!”

Torres stilled. “Will you, now?”

“Stand down, Izzy.” Ed growled.

Izzy didn’t listen. He was loyal to his captain above all else and sometimes that loyalty meant he had to disobey. “I will.”

Torres strode across the deck towards him, a new kind of hunger in his eyes. “And what would you let me do if I promise not to hurt him, hmm?”

Izzy swallowed thickly before answering. “Anything.”

And he would. He’d do anything for Ed. He’d jump into certain death, follow him to the ends of the earth, he was certain he’d even mutilate himself if Ed ordered him to.



“Then beg.” Torres replied.

Izzy bit the inside of his cheek. He could debase himself for Ed’s sake, he’d done it before.

“Please.” He said. “Please, let me take his place.”

Torres laughed. “That’s not begging-”

“Torres! Enough! Your fight’s with me, leave him alone!” Ed snarled, yanking at the ropes that still held him to the mast.

“But it would be cruel to deny your first mate here. After all, he asked so nicely.”

“And I’m saying no!” Ed growled. “As captain, I overrule him.”

“I think I’ve heard enough out of you for a while.” Torres turned to his crew. “Gag him.”

A cloth was shoved into Ed’s mouth and Izzy didn’t protest. He could do this, he *would* do this for Ed but it would be a lot easier if he didn’t have to hear him yelling at him not to. He’d leave after this, he’d have to, Ed wouldn’t want him around anymore after he’d debased himself like this. Izzy didn’t want his last memory of their time together to be him disobeying Ed’s orders.

“Where were we? Ah, yes, showing you how to beg properly.”

Torres grabbed Izzy, turning him around and slicing the rope between his wrists. For just a heartbeat, Izzy caught the eyes of Stede’s crew, fear and disgust and pity showing on their faces, before he forced himself to look away.

“Get on your knees.” Torres told him, after he’d cut him free.

Izzy balled his hands into fists but did as he was told, slowly sinking to his knees on the deck. His cheeks burned with humiliation, but it was a small price to pay to ensure Ed’s safety. He could hear Ed still, shouting at him behind the gag, but Izzy could easily tune him out, pretend it was anyone rather than his captain.

“That’s better.” Torres said. “Now try again. And call me sir.”

Izzy’s fingernails dug into his thighs. His face twitched as his dignity warred with his loyalty to Ed. But Ed would always win out in the end, no matter what was stacked against him. Izzy swallowed his pride and spoke.

“Please let me take his place, sir.” His voice was soft, hoping his voice would carry to Torres’ ears only. But the ship was silent enough to hear a pin drop, and Izzy knew he was entirely out of luck. Everyone had heard.

Torres looped his fingers in the tie at Izzy’s throat, using it to force the shorter man to look up at him. “Good boy. Take your shirt off and let’s start then.”

Of course this twat was going to make him strip himself. Izzy ground his teeth, trying to claw together enough self-control to go for the buttons on his shirt. Evidently, he took too long because Torres spoke again.

“Of course, if at any point you change your mind, you can say ‘stop’ and I’ll move on to Blackbeard.”

“No.”

“What was that, Izzy? I believe you’ve forgotten to address me properly.”

“No, sir.” Izzy spat out the words like they were acid on his tongue. He wasn’t bothering to keep the hatred and disgust off his face. Izzy had offered Torres his compliance, not his submission.

He worked to undo his tie, subtly slipping the ring from the knot with a practiced sleight of hand and tucking it into his pants pocket. The piece of jewelry was small, perhaps insignificant at a glance, but it was special to him and he wanted to keep it with him as long as possible. His waistcoat came next, and then his shirt, and finally Izzy was kneeling before Torres, stripped to the waist. He heard someone’s breath catch in their throat as the mangled ruins of his back was bared to the world. He’d been flogged several times before and his back was made up of tangled knots of scar tissue.

While he’d been stripping, Ed had been untied from the mast and brought over to kneel with the rest of the prisoners. Torres grabbed Izzy by the upper arm and hauled him over to the mast. The first mate had expected to be tied to it, but no one came forth bearing rope. Perhaps this was just another part of Torres’ game, where he pretended Izzy had a choice.

“Ready?” He asked.

“Do your worst.” Izzy snarled.

The first blow came down without further warning. Izzy cried out as the cat’s tails bit into his skin, the knots tied in them cutting all the deeper. Again and again they came down. Izzy buried his face in the mast and bit his lip, trying his best to remain silent and salvage what little dignity he had left. But it wasn’t long before he was hurting so bad that he couldn’t stop himself from whimpering and moaning. He was crying from the sheer pain of it, a fact Izzy was only aware of when he noticed the wood of the mast had grown damp under his cheek. It hurt so bad and his legs trembled as he struggled to keep standing. Another blow came down, biting so painfully that Izzy could swear it had hit bone. His legs buckled and Izzy fell to his knees, still clutching the mast.

“You want me to stop?” Torres asked, kindly.

Izzy shook his head desperately, not trusting himself to speak without his voice quavering. *No. Don't stop. If he stopped, he'd move onto Ed and Izzy couldn't let his captain come to harm.*

“Then get back on your feet.”

His legs wouldn't cooperate with him the first two times and he only ended falling to his knees again. The third time he managed to stay up and it was only by virtue of his fingernails digging hard into the splintering mast that Izzy was able to stay standing.

The flogging continued and it was only when someone interrupted did Torres stop again.

“Enough! You're going to kill him!” Jim shouted.

Torres didn't immediately reply and Izzy chanced a look backwards. Jim was on their feet looking fierce, even as a man struggled to force them back down to their knees. Torres considered them for a moment.

“Yes.” He finally said. “Yes, I suppose I am. And wouldn't that be a shame? Shall we find something else for him to do, then? Or something for you to do, perhaps?”

Torres had stepped very closely into Jim's space and the pirate responded by spitting at him. Disgusted, Torres wiped their saliva off his cheek. “Oh, relax, doll, you're not my type.”

He turned and again crossed the deck, stroking a hand through Izzy's hair. “Neither are you, but I don't imagine my boys are very picky.”

Torres grabbed him by the upper arm, tight enough to bruise, pulled him off the mast and flung him to his hands and knees on the deck. Izzy cried out as he hit the ground, the muscles in his back pulling and widening the lashes he'd received. He was facing the crew again and Izzy didn't look up, not daring to meet their eyes to see the disgust he was sure he'd find

there. He deserved it. He was weak. A good pirate would have taken the flogging with nary a whimper. Ed would already be on his feet again.

“He’s all yours. Do as you like with him.” Torres said.

Slowly, one of the crew came towards him, his footsteps tentative on the deck as if he wasn’t sure he’d really been granted permission. He picked up Izzy’s right hand, the one on which he still wore his glove.

“You didn’t remove this.” He said.

“Don’t touch it.” Izzy tried to snarl but his voice would only come out as a whisper and it sounded more like a plea than an order.

Of course, the pirate ignored it regardless and took off Izzy’s glove, seizing his wrist when the first mate tried to pull his hand away. The majority of the skin on his hand was an angry red, burn marks marring his flesh. The nails on that hand were brittle and blackened. It had been set on fire once and Izzy had almost lost it. And wouldn’t that be ironic, he’d thought. Izzy Hands, the man with only one hand.

The pirate gawked at it, grinning. “That’s fucking gross, man. No wonder you cover that up.”

It wasn’t shame that had made him cover it, it was sheer practicality. Forever after he’d been burned, the skin had been incredibly sensitive and wearing the glove was the only thing that let him maintain the utility of it.

A second pirate had come over to study it, staring at him like he was some sort of zoo animal. It really didn’t warrant that kind of attention. Hadn’t they ever seen burn scars before?

“Hey,” Said the second pirate. “Hold his hand still. I’ve got an idea.”

Izzy's stomach turned. He didn't like the sound of that.

The pirate stood up and brought the heel of his boot down hard onto Izzy's already damaged hand. The sounds of breaking bone were lost under Izzy's scream as pain exploded up his arm. They let him go and Izzy swiftly pulled his broken hand to his chest, cradling it as he whimpered.

"That's nothing." Scoffed a third pirate. "Let me show you something *actually* fun."

Izzy had curled up onto his side after his hand had been stomped on, but a boot to his ribs rolled him back over onto his stomach. They kicked his legs apart and someone tugged his pants down to his ankles and Izzy's blood ran cold as he realized what they were about to do. Jim yelled at them to stop and he was pretty sure he could hear Lucius' and Stede's voices joining the mix. Izzy could recognize Ed's voice, even muffled behind his gag and it was hearing him that halted the 'stop' on his lips. He couldn't say that, couldn't say no. Not unless he wanted to watch this be done to his captain. Izzy's job was to keep Ed safe. He wouldn't let that happen to him.

There were sharp yelps as the protesters were kicked into silence and Izzy lay mute as the first one thrust into him. It hurt, like being sliced in two from the inside out and Izzy clawed desperately at the boards beneath him, trying to get away. The thrusts were harsh, animal-like and uncaring for his comfort. Izzy bit down on the flesh of his own arm, not trusting himself with the ability to speak, for he knew if he did he'd start begging them to stop.

The first one finished and then another one took his place and another and another until Izzy was sure that it would never end. Eventually they did stop and Izzy was left to lie face down on the deck, ruined, covered in dried blood, a viscous goo leaking from his ass. He could feel it sticky on his thighs and he didn't know how much of it was cum and how much was blood. Even if he'd had the strength to lift his head, he wouldn't have.

"I suppose that's enough for the evening. You can return those people to their ship and cut them loose. They're of no further use to me. Take Blackbeard and Izzy to the brig. There's quite a reward on their heads, after all."

Izzy didn't have the energy left to yell at Torres for breaking his promise. But then he really should've seen that coming, shouldn't he? Ed had driven Torres to piracy, and Izzy should

know better than anyone that pirates were never honest.

## Chapter End Notes

I do not apologize for the cruel cliffhanger <3

Also I know you canonically see Izzy's hand without his glove and it's fine but consider  
☆☆angst☆☆

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Summary

More torture for Izzy

### Chapter Notes

This one's a lot shorter than the first chapter oops

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"Izzy." Ed whispered.

Izzy didn't move. He was curled on his side with his back to Ed. They hadn't returned his shirt and Ed could see the cruel lash marks that marred his body. They'd scabbed over but they were still an angry red, his back still stained with dried blood.

"Iz. Izzy."

The bastards had put them in separate cells and Ed couldn't even offer Izzy the comfort of a gentle touch. Hell, he couldn't even check if Izzy was still *alive*. The man had been so still since they'd brought to the brig.

"Izzy, look at me!"

*Don't be dead, don't you dare.*

Izzy twitched and Ed's heart leapt to his throat. He was alive. Ed flattened himself further against the rusty bars of his cage, desperate to get as close as he could to his first mate.



"C'mon Iz, get up."

Was he being selfish? Probably. He didn't care. He just needed Izzy to look at him, speak to him, assure Ed that he was alive.

Sluggishly, Izzy started to sit up. His movements were slow and hesitant and Ed could tell he was in pain. He was going to fucking kill all of them. Every last person on this ship, they were *dead*. Somehow Izzy managed to push himself up far enough that he could slump against the bars of his cage.

"Ed." He whispered.

"Izzy, what the hell were you thinking? I ordered you to stand down!"

Izzy choked out a faint laugh and shook his head. His eyes had closed with the effort of remaining upright. "'s my job to keep you safe."

"Well, you can't do that if you're bloody *dead*, can you?" Ed snapped.

God, he was fucking furious with Izzy. As soon as Ed got finished killing Torre's crew, he was stabbing his first mate along with them. He'd made Ed stand by as someone he cared for deeply was beaten, raped, and tortured in front of him. He'd felt so helpless, bound and gagged, forced to his knees and made to watch.

Ed gripped the bars tighter and bowed his head as he realized what he was doing. He wasn't mad at Izzy, he was mad at Torres and Izzy was the only one around to take that anger. He'd let himself be hurt on Ed's behalf and here he was yelling at him.

"Fuck, Iz." Ed ran his hand over his face, trying to gain some semblance of control. "Just don't do that again, okay?"

" 'kay." Izzy mumbled and they both knew it was a lie.

"Try to get some rest, Iz. I'll wake you up if something happens."

Izzy made a little noise in his throat and slid back down to the floor to curl up in a ball. He'd fallen asleep remarkably quickly and Ed felt worry claw at the inside of his tummy. Izzy had always had trouble sleeping even on their own ship, and especially in places where he didn't feel safe. For him to fall asleep so fast... Ed didn't want to think about it. He didn't want to think at all about the things that had been done to Izzy, but they kept playing in his mind on repeat. His scream when they'd broken his hand was seared into his mind.

Ed shivered. Judging by his internal clock, dusk was falling. The brig was growing chilly. After they'd stripped him to the waist to flog him, they hadn't returned his shirt. He didn't hold out hope of ever seeing that jacket again.

He hoped the others came for them, in the same breath that he begged they wouldn't. Torres had let them go, clearly having discounted them as a threat after so easily besting them the first time. Maybe they'd be clever and come up with some plan to outmaneuver Torres. Or maybe they wouldn't and Torres would actually kill them this time.

Ed prayed for a rescue. Izzy needed urgent medical care, hell, even just basic medical care would go a long way. But Ed couldn't help him, not locked in a separate cell like this.

And Ed prayed that they'd declare them a lost cause. Torre's crew had routed them without breaking a sweat and they'd do it again with the same amount of difficulty. If Stede and his crew tried to rescue them, they'd likely all end up cast to the bottom of the sea. Or worse. Ed closed his eyes. He'd seen how the leery, ogling looks hadn't stopped at just Izzy.

Oh god, Izzy. They hadn't cleaned him up after they'd finished with him. Ed could only imagine how he felt, his ass torn and throbbing, blood and cold cum drying on his legs. At least he didn't have to contend with the taste of it too. None of them had taken his mouth.

*Yet.* A sadistic voice inside him purred. *No one's taken his mouth yet.*

Ed felt sick. He buried his face in his hands, trying to quell the tears that were rising. Blackbeard didn't fucking cry. Blackbeard stood strong while they ground him and his loved ones into the dust. No. No tears. He'd save his hatred, stoke it like a coal on a fire until it had grown into a massive inferno that would consume them all. And Izzy would be by his side, cutting them down like so many stalks of wheat and Ed would never have to hear him scream again.

He remembered the 'x' he'd drawn on Izzy's face so many years ago. My first mate. *Mine*. A message not only to Izzy, but to everybody else. This thing belongs to me and if you hurt it, I will make you pay. And God, he would, he swore he would. All of them were dead men walking.

Ed stayed awake through the night. Sometimes Izzy woke, panicking, and Ed would soothe him back to sleep. He didn't dare rest himself. He couldn't protect Izzy but he could at least give him a little warning before they came back.

Dawn came and went, a faint hazy light trickling into the brig and revealing first the silhouettes and then the details of the objects around him. In the growing light Ed could see that Izzy had wedged himself into a corner of his cell, unconsciously trying to seek out shelter. He was shaking and Ed didn't know if he was shivering or trembling.

Footsteps echoed nearby, slowly getting closer and Ed ground his teeth.

"Iz." He hissed. "Iz, someone's coming, wake up."

He felt bad rousing Izzy but he'd feel worse if their captors were the ones to wake him, like as not with a swift kick to the ribs. His first mate stirred, his dark eyes catching the light and glowing like some sort of nocturnal animal.

A man strolled down the corridor towards their cells and Ed recognized him as the bastard that had broken Izzy's hand. He was carrying a tray and he whistled when he got closer.

"Not looking too good, are you Izzy?"

"Fuck off." Izzy mumbled. Ed's heart swelled with pride. Good boy, Iz. Don't give in.

"I'd work on my attitude if I were you. The next two weeks'll go a lot smoother if you behave yourself."

Ed wondered if he'd meant to let that information slip. Two weeks. His mind worked, a map of the oceans drawn out in his head as he calculated the ports they could be heading to. He felt they were sailing east, not anything he could've provided proof for, just a sense he'd acquired over long years on the sea.

The man slid the trays into their cells none too gently and Ed just managed to stop his cup from tipping. Hardtack and water. Not exactly appetizing but at least it was *food*. They'd both eaten way worse.

Izzy drank and immediately started coughing. He wiped at his mouth with disgust. "Don't drink it. It's fucking salt water."

Ed tossed his own cup away in disgust. "Fucking bastards."

He gnawed on the hardtack, which was very much like eating a rock, without water to soften it. The pieces, when they finally broke off, were sharp as sin and Ed swore he was going to cut his own mouth to ribbons.

"How are you feeling?" Ed asked Izzy. It was, in all honesty, a stupid question, but he needed to say something.

"Could be worse."

*Could be better*, Ed thought.

"I'll get us out of here, Iz. I promise."

Izzy didn't reply. He thought the situation was hopeless but he wouldn't say as much to his captain. Ed didn't care what Izzy thought. He *was* going to get them out of this, just like he'd gotten them out of everything before.

-

Izzy felt like shit. Everything hurt and his mouth felt like it was stuffed with cotton. He licked at his dry lips, trying in vain to make up for the water he hadn't drunk. The only position he could find that didn't hurt in some way was curled on his side, his broken hand tucked against his chest. The parts of it that weren't ruined with burn marks had turned reddish purple. There was a visible bulge in the back of it where the broken bone threatened to poke through. Izzy knew he needed to do something about the way it was healing, but he honestly couldn't bring himself to give a fuck. He didn't think he was getting out of this alive anyways, regardless of what Ed said.

His back throbbed in time with his heartbeat and every time he moved, he pulled at the forming scabs. His ass stung, and any friction at all re-opened the tears and sent a fresh wash of hot blood down his legs. These pants were ruined.

And even still, when he'd told Ed he'd had worse, he hadn't been lying. He hated them, every one of them, but they hadn't ground Izzy lower than he'd ever been, not by far. It hurt, but he could take more. He didn't have a choice. He wouldn't let Ed be hurt. Loyalty to your captain above all else.

Izzy absently wondered if Stede's crew would attempt to come save them. It wouldn't work, but he wondered if they'd try anyway. Probably not, if they knew what was good for them. But they didn't, did they? They had no survival instincts at all. It was like watching a band of wet kittens toddle off into the jungle with intents to fight a lion.

Ed was thinking. Izzy could see the gears turning behind his eyes. Trying to come up with a plan to escape. Izzy didn't think he would, but who was he to question his captain? If Ed said he'd find a way out, then he would. Blackbeard got whatever he wanted, regardless of whether it was given freely or had to be taken. He considered the tattoo on his face. Izzy had given himself over freely.

Would Ivan and Fang stick around with Stede's crew? Probably. They seemed to be getting along with them swimmingly, even though for the life of him Izzy couldn't figure out why. What was it that endeared everyone he knew to that twat and his merry band of idiots?

The next few days melted into one another. At some point they actually brought them fresh water, which Izzy had deeply needed. He'd recovered to the point where he could sit up without having to lean on something for support. He couldn't see any of his wounds, but none of them felt infected, which was a miracle and a half.

But he remembered what Torres had said and he knew they weren't through with him. They'd be back to hurt him sooner or later. It turned out to be sooner.

Four men came down to retrieve them on the third day.

"Time to play again." One of them said. "You boys ready?"

Izzy bared his teeth and Ed snarled. "Go to hell."

The men dragged them out of their cells one at a time, clapping heavy iron chains around their wrists and ankles. Izzy bit his lip to muffle a cry when one of them jostled his broken hand. He wouldn't give them the satisfaction.

They dragged them up on deck where it seemed the whole crew was standing around, waiting for them. They jeered at them and taunted them, but Ed kept his head held high in defiance and Izzy did the same. Torres was leaning against the main mast, a cocky smirk on his face. The cat was coiled on his belt and Izzy couldn't help but shudder.

"Good afternoon Blackbeard, Izzy. Are you enjoying your stay?"

Ed only ground his teeth in response. Izzy took his cues from his captain and remained silent, even though he dearly wanted to tell Torres exactly where he could shove it.

"No, you're absolutely right." Torres said. "We haven't been very hospitable, have we? How about we treat the both of you to a bath, hmm?"

Izzy was shoved to his knees and he barely had time to close his eyes before a bucket of water was being thrown over him. He gasped at the temperature of it, then coughed and gagged as it got in his mouth. Sea water. At least he hadn't gotten it in his eyes.

He heard the sounds of struggle beside him and he looked over to see that Ed was being given the same treatment. His hair and beard were soaked, strands of them plastered to his face and making him look so much smaller. He shook his head, unable to brush his hair from his eyes with his hands secured behind his back.

"There. That's much better, isn't it?" Torres clapped. "Now, Blackbeard, I've got a game for you today. Is your first mate still interested in taking your place?"

"No." Ed snarled.

"Yes." Izzy spoke over him.

"Shut the fuck up, Izzy!" He snapped.

"Isn't that sweet? And here I was thinking Blackbeard didn't care about anyone besides himself." Torres said.

"He doesn't." Izzy growled.

Fuck, was Ed trying to make this worse on them? Blackbeard wasn't supposed to care about Izzy. He wasn't supposed to care about anyone. Besides, Izzy knew his place. They'd been close once, but Ed had replaced him with fucking Bonnet. If it came down to it, he knew who Ed would pick.

Ed had a weird look on his face and Izzy couldn't figure out what it was supposed to convey. It vanished as soon as Torres started speaking again.

"This is the game, Blackbeard. You get to pick what gets done to your first mate. You can let me flog him again, or I turn him over to my crew for another round. Your choice."

"If you lay a fucking finger on him, Torres, I swear to god-"

"Pick one or it'll be both."

"Leave him alone." Ed snarled. "Hurt me."

"Not an option."

"Ed." Izzy said softly. "The lash. Please."

Something in him was still torn from the last time they'd raped him, and he didn't think he could endure it again. The humiliation, the pain, he just couldn't do it. It would break him down more than he was comfortable with. It would make him cry and Izzy desperately didn't want them to see him cry.

"Well?"



Ed bowed his head and ground his teeth. His shoulders twitched as he worked to break free of the chains that held him.

"The lash." He spat.

*Thank you, Ed.*

They forced Izzy onto his feet and pinned him face first to the mast, a position that was becoming all too familiar. They tied him to it this time, which was nice, because Izzy didn't think he'd stay standing for long otherwise.

The pain was so much worse, layered onto half-healed wounds. Each strike made his vision flash white, blinding him. The world around him began to sound like he was underwater. Izzy was slipping away into unconsciousness and he didn't even try to fight it.

## Chapter End Notes

I promise this will have a happy ending eventually

# Chapter 3

## Chapter Summary

Ed attempts to comfort Izzy and really only succeeds in making it worse

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Ed let his fingers run through Izzy's hair. His head was supported in Ed's lap, curled up in such a way that he wouldn't put pressure on the wounds he'd suffered. Ed had his own marks to match now too. After Izzy had passed out, they'd strung Ed up in his place rather than beating an unconscious man. Ed had taken each blow without complaint. Izzy had sacrificed himself for him, and now it was Ed's turn to return the favor. His hair was glued to his back with dried blood and it pulled at the scabs when he moved his head.

They'd let them share a cell after they were finished. Blackbeard didn't beg or plead his captors for anything. Blackbeard didn't break. Ed did. He couldn't stand to do it again, to sit helpless as Izzy lay unconscious, unable to even touch him, as for all he knew Izzy died in front of him. Ed had seen death. It was written in the ink that marked his body, in the blood that stained his hands. Allies, friends, lovers, taken from him by the cruel mercy of God. He wasn't ready for her to take Iz.

"Ed..." Izzy whispered. He'd stirred and was gazing up at Ed from behind half-closed lashes, too tired and beaten to open his eyes all the way. "Are we..."

He trailed off, but Ed knew him well enough to know what he'd been going to say. "No, we're still here. I'm sorry, Iz."

Izzy offered a weak snort. "I was going to ask if we were dead, boss."

"Nah." Ed stroked Izzy's cheek. The first mate leaned into his touch, too weak to pretend he didn't want comfort. "If we were in hell, there'd be melon spoons."

Izzy barked out a laugh. It was more a wheeze than a proper laugh but Ed would take it. “Thought you were enjoying your fancy spoons.”

“I mean, at first, yeah. But there’s just so much cutlery, Iz. It’s ridiculous. You know they have a fork just for fruit?”

“Do they?” Izzy mumbled.

“They do! One for steaks and another for salads and a different one for every fucking fish in the ocean. It’s ridiculous. And God forbid if you just want to grab a snack!”

Izzy actually gave him a chuckle this time and Ed kept going. He let himself ramble on, knowing Izzy wasn’t particularly interested in *what* he was saying at the moment, just that he *was* saying it in the first place. His first mate didn’t reply much, responding only with the occasional grunt or hum. That was fine. Ed had always been the big talker between the two of them.

Izzy’s hair was greasy against his fingers, the texture rough from years of exposure to the salty air. Ed kept petting him. Stede had done this for him once, running his fingers through Ed’s mane and gently massaging his scalp. He could remember the way it had felt, the way it had made his head spin in the pleasantest of ways. Ed didn’t have the same kind of easy, tactile relationship with Izzy that he had with Stede. Their relationship was claws and teeth, a dark clashing, a kraken dragging its willing prey down to the depths. Izzy liked Ed to be rough with him and Ed was more than happy to oblige. But this wasn’t the place for roughness. Izzy had always had Ed’s back, and now he needed Izzy to know that Ed would always have his.

Izzy’s eyes had more or less fluttered open. He was looking at something on Ed’s shoulder and frowning. “You’re bleeding.”

Fuck, was he? Ed glanced over and oh yeah, he guessed he was. He’d been moving a bit too much and a cut on his shoulder had reopened. Shit, he’d been hoping to keep that from Iz as long as possible.

“Let me see.” Izzy was still slurring with the effects of his ordeal, but he pushed himself up, reaching for Ed.

Ed jerked away, trying to hide his back from his first mate. “It’s nothing. The guys were a little rough with me, shoved me into a wall. No big deal.”

“Ed.” Izzy’s usual growl was beginning to creep back into his voice. “Let me see.”

“I told you, it’s nothing.”

“If it’s nothing, then let me see.”

Izzy wouldn’t give in and Ed tried to bat him away, but he couldn’t fend Izzy off for long, not without actually hurting him. He heard Izzy’s breath catch in his throat and Ed winced.

“When did they...?”

“Earlier.” Ed replied. “When you were unconscious.”

Izzy was quiet for a long moment.

“I’m sorry. I was weak.” He spat the last word like a curse, closing his eyes as if it had pained him to say it.

“Hey, Iz, hey, Izzy, no, look at me. You’re not weak. If you were weak, I wouldn’t keep you around, would I?”

“No.” Izzy replied without hesitation. “You wouldn’t.”

“See? There you go. Now, come lie back down. You look like you’re about to pass out again.”

Ed had spoken with the tone of an order and Izzy did as he was told. At first he settled on the floor, but with a grumble, Ed corrected him and tugged him back up onto his lap. The both of them were getting too old to be sleeping on the ground. Izzy was a lot stiffer this time and it took a while for him to calm back down. He’d been very out of it earlier and now that he was fully conscious, a lot more reluctant to accept any kind of comfort.

Eventually, the first mate drifted off to sleep. Ed let him rest. He sorely needed it. While Izzy had been out the first time, Ed had taken a look at his wounds, but he checked them once more just to be safe. Many of the deeper lash marks would need stitches when they got out of here. One of the cuts at the bottom of his spine was displaying a slightly off discoloration that made Ed nervous. They really needed to clean Izzy’s wounds. Ed could go a day or two without water, but Izzy wouldn’t survive long with an infection. The only problem was going to be getting Izzy to see it that way.

Ed wondered how long they’d been here. Three days? Four? It hadn’t been very long, he knew that. Two weeks could very well be two years from now for all it mattered to them. If the crew kept going on torturing them at this rate, neither one of them would survive to see port. It didn’t matter to Torres if they were still breathing when he delivered them. The rewards on their heads had never specified that they had to be alive for their captor to collect it.

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He pressed his head deeper against Ed's thigh with a shiver. Izzy was cold. He reached up to brush hair from his face and his fingers came away damp. Fuck, he was sweating.

"Ed." He mumbled. His voice was sticky when he tried to use it and he had to cough to clear his throat. "Ed. Am I hot?"

Ed stared at him, blinking with confusion and Izzy internally growled. He could *not* be the only one between them with a working brain. Not right now, not when they desperately needed Ed to make a plan.

"My head. Touch it. Am I hot?"

Ed pressed his hand to Izzy's forehead, his fingers blissfully cool against his skin. It felt so good that Izzy had to bite his tongue to stifle a whine when Ed took it away. "Shit, Iz, you're burning up."

Fuck. He was feverish and his thoughts were getting harder and harder to grab, delirium slowly sneaking up on him. He knew his luck had to run out sooner or later. This many open wounds left untreated, something was bound to get infected. Izzy was only surprised that it had taken this long.

Fuck!

He was going to die here, wasn't he? He'd had the thought so many times in his life, but he was sure this was finally the one. They wouldn't bother to give him medicine, and they certainly weren't going to stop torturing him just because one of his cuts had gotten infected. Shit. This *was* the end, wasn't it?

"You feeling okay? Nauseous, dizzy?"

*Dizzy Izzy.*

Ed didn't know that. Didn't know the way they laughed at him. A sailor that got seasick, how ironic.

" 'm fine." He said.

He was. For now. His stomach hadn't begun the familiar churning that preceded him having to empty it. Thank god. They weren't feeding them enough that Izzy could afford to lose any of it.

Ed was scowling at him and Izzy wasn't quite sure why. That was the look he gave him when he returned from a raid empty-handed. Disappointed and upset. Ed would slap Izzy around a bit when he got like this. Izzy let him. He liked to wear the marks that Ed gave him. Izzy rolled over a little, giving Ed a better angle to hit him. Ed didn't touch him, at least not while Izzy was awake.

He spent the next few hours drifting in and out of consciousness. Occasionally he'd wake up deeply confused and struggle to push himself upright, unsettled by the unfamiliar surroundings. And then he'd feel the tug of the wounds on his back, the sting of the torn parts inside of him, and remember where he was. Everytime he felt himself slipping into delirium, Izzy would bite down on the inside of his cheek. It wasn't long before the copper tang of blood filled his mouth, but it served to keep him grounded. He needed his wits about him as long as he could keep them.

In the moments he was awake, Izzy couldn't help but reflect on his weakness. He'd fainted and Ed had been hurt in his place. Izzy wouldn't let that happen. He had to do better. Once had been a mistake, he wouldn't do it again. He'd prove to Ed that he could be strong. No weakness. Not here. He couldn't allow it. If he gave in to weakness, Ed would get rid of him. Bonnet had already taken his place as Ed's closest companion, Izzy couldn't lose his spot as first mate as well.

They'd given him three days of rest last time. This time he didn't even get a full one. He thought. It was hard for him to keep track of time with the way he kept fading in and out.

"Piss off." Ed snarled at them, when their captors returned with the familiar shackles.

"What's the matter, Blackbeard? Not as fearsome as you thought you were, hmm?"

Someone reached out to grab Izzy's shoulder and Ed hit them. He surged upwards, slamming the pirate against the bars of his cell. Even starved, dehydrated, and beaten, Izzy marveled at Ed's strength.

"I said, *piiss off*." Ed spat.

This fight couldn't last long. There was a sharp clicking as guns and swords were drawn, threatening to kill Ed if he so much as drew breath wrong. Izzy was hauled to his knees and a knife tucked against his throat. Perhaps an attempt to keep Ed docile, or perhaps to prevent Izzy from standing up and joining in.

With a disgusted grumble, Ed dropped the pirate and took a few steps away from him. He stood still as the rest of his captors moved forward to fasten chains between his hands and feet. Now, Ed's claws effectively filed down, they were a lot less careful with him. Someone shoved him forward and Ed barely managed to catch himself before he could stumble to his knees.

"Blackbeard, huh? We sure? This guy isn't really all that impressive."

"Some pirate captain. Didn't take much to capture him, did it?"

"Thinking of retiring soon? You should."

"Enough!" Izzy snarled. "He's a far better pirate than any of you could ever dream to be, *dogs!* "

He was rewarded with a punch to the face for his efforts, so hard that Izzy was knocked sideways to fall to the ground. His teeth clicked together sharply and Izzy stared at the floor, trying to stop his head from spinning.

"Get your hands off him!" Ed roared.

"Aw, look at that, Blackbeard's worried about his boyfriend."



Izzy wondered if it was the fever induced mania that was making him think that was the funniest shit in the world, or if it really was hilarious. Ed's boyfriend? Ha! Never! Ed would never sink that low.

Izzy offered a token struggle as they clapped him in irons, but he wasn't really trying to escape. It was a message more than anything: you haven't broken me, I will still fight you. He cried out as someone seized his broken hand to snap the shackle around his wrist. He could feel his bones grinding against each other under their tight grip.

They brought them back up the deck again, a deck Izzy was really beginning to hate the sight of. He squinted in the harsh light, the setting sun bright and painful against his eyes. He'd grown too used to the darkness of the brig. The crew were gathered around them again, just like they had before, wearing those same cocky grins, that same sadistic glint in their eyes.

"What do you want, Torres?" Ed hissed.

"Another game, Blackbeard. Oh, don't look at me like that, you'll like this one a lot more. If you win, both of you get to go back to your cells unharmed."

A shiver ran up Izzy's spine. He didn't want to be, but he was afraid. Not of the pain, he could take that, he was afraid that he'd faint, fail his captain once more.

"I'm listening." Ed replied, grinding his teeth.

"Here are the rules. You have hmm, let's say half an hour, to remain hidden. If nobody finds you before that time is up, you win. But if they do find you, well, then they get to claim their prize." Torres flicked his eyes up and down Ed's body, the lecherousness of his gaze unmistakable. He didn't elaborate on what he meant by 'prize', but he didn't need to.

"That's not fair." Izzy snapped. "Your crew knows the ship far better than he does."

“Excellent point. Which is why I’m giving him a five minute head start.” Torres pulled a pocket watch from his coat, because of course the fucking fop had a pocket watch. “Get those chains off him, please. Your time starts... now. Oh, and Blackbeard? I expect you back on deck before the sun sets or I’m throwing Izzy overboard.”

Ed’s face twitched, visibly fighting the urge to throw himself at the ex-merchant and strangle him. His eyes flicked to Izzy’s, and his first mate could see the doubt written in his face. *Go*, he thought. *You’re running out of time, Ed*. After a long moment, Ed reluctantly tore his eyes away and broke off to find a place to hide below decks. Leaving Izzy alone and surrounded by enemies, still tightly wrapped in chains.

Izzy shifted his weight from side to side, attempting to fight the urge to run for a corner. He didn’t like having people at his back at the best of times, and this was very obviously not the best of times. He forced himself to hold eye contact with Torres, ignoring the pounding of his heartbeat in his ears as he tried not to wonder if people were sneaking up behind him.

“You’re looking awfully pale, Izzy, are you alright?” Torres purred.

“Fuck off.”

“Don’t be rude, Iz. I’m just offering you the chance to sit.”

Izzy bristled at the nickname. “It’s *Izzy*. ”

He could count on one hand the number of people who had ever called him ‘Iz’, and there was only one person who’d lived to ever do it again. The fingers of his good hand twitched, aching for his sword. He wasn’t something small and cute, to be given an affectionate little pet name.

“You’re very touchy about your name, aren’t you?”

Yes. Yes, he was. Israel wasn't the name he'd been given, it was a name he'd chosen for himself. It was *his* in the way that his sword was his. Worn smooth by his grip to fit comfortably into his hand, the weight of it unique and familiar. Ed had shortened it to Izzy, and Izzy had let him. His identity belonged to him alone, but he would gladly let Ed lay claim to a piece of it.

"Come on, Izzy. Sit. Rest. You look like you need it." Torres' previously mute first mate had finally spoken. Despite the kindness of his tone, his dark eyes glittered with cruelty, the dark curls of his tattoos reminding Izzy of thick, choking vines.

"You should listen to Chikanma." Torres said. "He knows what he's talking about."

Izzy wasn't stupid. This wasn't a strong recommendation, this was an order, and if he didn't do what they told him to, they'd likely just force him to anyway. At least he could retain the dignity of moving under his own power. Biting down hard on the inside of his cheek, Izzy grudgingly crossed the deck. Before he could sit, Chikanma scooped him up and settled the squirming, angry little man onto his lap.

"What are you doing?" He rasped.

"Behave." His captor murmured into his ear, his Nigerian accent thick as honey. "You do not want me to drop you over the side, do you?"

Izzy shuddered. He could swim, of course he could, but bound as he was he'd have no hope of surviving it. The chains would drag him down, down, down, the last light he'd ever see swiftly vanishing above him as the pressure in his chest only grew and grew. Izzy had always feared drowning. Dark. Alone. Lost. He forced himself to be still in Chikanma's grasp.

The man stroked his hair like a dog and it riled Izzy, but not enough for him to risk his life. He kept his head down, grinding his teeth so hard that he could swear he heard something crack. It wasn't long after that that Torres left, returning to his cabin and leaving his prisoner in the capable hands of his first mate. Chikanma continued to hold Izzy, comfortably seated on a crate from which he barked out orders to his crew. Izzy watched them jump to obey, annoyed and jealous. He'd had that once. People had hurried to obey his every command, scrambling at even the mere implication of a threat. They'd respected him and more, they'd

feared him. And then Bonnet's useless crew had come along and every bit of power that Izzy had commanded was now long gone.

## Chapter End Notes

this chapter was supposed to be the last one before they got rescued, but it ended up being long enough that I had to split it into two

# Chapter 4

## Chapter Summary

Ed wins the game. Torres doesn't give a shit.

## Chapter Notes

More non-con in this chapter. Skip like the entire second half if you dont want to read it

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Ed hated them. He killed them in his mind over and over on repeat. He'd shoot them so many times that their bodies became nothing but red slush. He'd drop them into the sea, only to haul them up again just at the verge of death and give them a moment to breathe before doing it all over again. He'd light them all on fire and their skin would blacken and peel as they pleaded for their miserable lives.

He clenched his hands into tight fists. Calm down, Ed. You can't get out of this if you lose your head. He forced himself to count the breaths he took.

*One.*

Stede had taught him this trick. He'd let his temper flare, back when he was Blackbeard, let it roar and burn and eat up everyone in his way but he'd had to keep his emotions in check after he met Stede. He couldn't let him see the darkness that lived within him. The kraken was a creature that Stede could never meet.

*Two.*

Torres had gotten under his skin with this game. It reminded him too much of when he was a child, running from his father when he came home in a foul mood. Hiding and watching as

his mother was beaten before him. He'd hated that feeling then, and he'd hated it even more now when it was Izzy because he should never have had to feel helpless again. He'd built up a legend around himself, a reputation, an armor to protect himself with. But Torres had found a way to break through. He'd made Blackbeard feel defenceless.

*Three.*

He wasn't completely calm, but he was a little less on the verge of snapping. He still wanted them all dead, but Ed could hold on to his self-control for a little while longer.

He'd chosen a spot in the hold that suited his purposes nicely. It was a small room, dim and crowded with objects he could hide behind. There was a small porthole at one end of the room, grimy enough that it barely illuminated it, but which still let enough light through that Ed could keep a careful watch on the sun. He fixed the placement of it in his head and mentally calculated the spot where it would be on the horizon after half an hour. If Torres' men tried to trick him by claiming his time was up early, Ed would know better.

Taking advantage of his comparative freedom, Ed searched the room for anything he could use. He moved slowly, distracted by every little noise that the ship made. Everytime he so much as thought he heard footsteps, he retreated to a corner and watched the door warily. Inevitably it would end up being nothing and he'd slink out of cover again.

The room was obviously intended as storage. Sail and canvas were folded up neatly on the shelves, rope coiled and stored wherever it would fit. There were spare bits of wood and extra shot and powder, but no guns with which to fire them. All useless to him.

And then Ed stumbled upon a set of woodworking tools, the kind every ship carried for use in routine repair. He immediately discounted the saws, they were too big and awkward for him to conceal on his person. Many of the other tools were out for the same reason. Near the bottom of the bin he found an awl, like the sort used for punching holes in leather. It fit comfortably in his palm and the tip of it was sharp enough that he could truly do some damage with it if he tried.

Ed tucked it into his boot. He would have much preferred to keep it closer at hand, somewhere like up his sleeve, but as his captors had continued to neglect to return his shirt to him, he was unfortunately out of luck.

Someone was coming. Ed could hear footsteps in the hall, the sound of laughter, and he bolted back to his hiding spot. Crouched in the corner, wedged between a barrel and the wall, he was practically invisible in the shadows. He hoped.

Ed scarcely dared to breathe as they searched the room for him. They were talking and laughing and his heart pounded in his throat. He hadn't missed Torres' implication of what they'd do to him if they caught him. It was only the fact that he now had a weapon, even a little one, that settled his stomach. Two. He could deal with two opponents easily. He swallowed heavily as he realized if they found him, he'd probably have to kill them. The thought made him feel queasy. He remembered the way his father had squirmed and choked under his hands, suffocating like a fish dragged up to shore. The gurgle as the life left his body.

They didn't find him.

Ed finally let out the shaky breath he hadn't realized he'd been holding. He slumped against the wall, suddenly so very tired. His ruined back brushed the wall behind him and it hurt but he didn't have the energy left to pull away. How much time did he have left? A little while longer, he thought. Maybe half an hour had already passed. He'd stay here a bit more. Just to be safe.

He wondered what they were doing with Izzy. Had they put him back in his cell or left him on deck, where he'd be easy to toss overboard if Ed didn't come back? He hoped it was the former. He didn't want Izzy to be left alone with them. Even if they didn't hurt him, they'd tease and taunt him, and Izzy didn't need to cope with that on top of everything else. Ed needed to return soon, before Izzy lost his temper and gave someone an excuse to hurt him.

It was the thought of Izzy being hurt again that gave Ed the strength he needed to come out from his hiding spot. He'd been reluctant to leave his first mate, and he walked quickly to return to him. The layout of the ship's underdecks was unfamiliar to him and Ed got turned around several times. It wasn't helped by the fact that every time he heard someone he had to duck into a nearby corner. He'd won the game, but he wasn't taking any chances with Torres' crew and their affinity for rule following.

Finally, he emerged up onto the deck. Ed took pleasure in the way they watched him warily, afraid of him now that he was free of his chains, nevermind the fact that he was vastly outnumbered and he never would have tried anything anyway. Not while Izzy stood to suffer for it.

Torres was waiting for him by the main mast but Ed barely glanced at him. A man he assumed to be Torres' first mate was sitting on a crate beside him, Izzy held in his lap. Izzy looked up when Ed came on deck, meeting his eyes briefly before he ducked his head again, his cheeks flushed dark with shame. Ed bristled with rage.

"I won your stupid game." He growled. "Now let him go."

"Yes, you did. I'm actually quite impressed. I wouldn't have thought Blackbeard would be so good at running and hiding."

Ed bit down on the inside of his cheek, fighting to keep his emotions in check. "You said you'd let us go back to our cells. Unharmred."

"Yeah, about that." Said Torres. "I lied. Oops."

Ed only had so much self-control. He surged forward, intent on strangling Torres, hitting him, tearing him limb from limb, but he didn't make it very far. Torres' crew swarmed around him, seizing him and forcing him still. Torres, the pompous ass, hadn't even flinched.

"But, I'll be nice. Since you *did* win, *you* may return to your cell."

"I'll kill you Torres, I will! I'll fucking make you wish you were never fucking born! I hope you burn in hell, you useless bastard!" Ed screamed and fought and bit and kicked as he was hauled back down to the brig. It was no use. He was weak with dehydration and starvation and the lashing he'd suffered.



They forced him back in his cell, slamming the door firmly behind him. Ed didn't stop fighting. He paced about and clawed at the bars like some sort of caged wild animal. He roared insults and threats at them, even knowing that it didn't matter.

Eventually he slumped to the floor, his sides heaving. His knuckles stung and bled where the skin had split from punching the bars. He was pretty sure he'd re-opened some of the wounds on his back.

He'd been an idiot. Not only to believe that Torres would play fair, but to have ended up in this situation in the first place. He'd survived so long shrouded in his reputation that it had blinded him. He'd bought into his own legend. He was Blackbeard, tough and powerful and never defeated. He'd forgotten about the dangers that lived on the sea. He'd sent away all but his most loyal of crew, certain that he wouldn't really need them. Stupid. Foolish.

Because of his idiocy he was trapped in this cell, condemned to suffer until he was turned over to be hanged. And worse, the consequences of his thoughtlessness hadn't affected him alone. No, Izzy was caught up in this too. It was his fault that Izzy was alone up there, suffering god knows what all because Ed had wanted what? A change? He couldn't be content with what he had? No, that was the problem, he never was. He always wanted more and more and more. It was never enough.

Ed pressed his forehead against the bars and didn't bother to stop the tears that ran down his face.

-

Izzy kicked and squirmed as he was hauled into the captain's cabin. Someone was fool enough to let their hand get too close to his mouth and he bit down onto it. Blood filled his mouth and he felt the scrape of bone between his teeth. Someone struck him and the hand slipped free of his jaws, Izzy's head spinning with the force of the blow.

What were they going to do to him? They'd never dragged him inside before and it was making Izzy's stomach twist itself into knots. Apprehension rose in his throat and he choked on it, like it was a physical thing that had lodged in his airway.

Everyone but Torres and Chikanma left the cabin after Izzy was dropped unceremoniously onto the floor. He struggled against the chains to rise to his feet, wanting at least the dignity of not kneeling before them. He held his head high, trying to ignore the pain in his back, the raw ache between his legs. He trembled with the effort of standing but Izzy would remain on his feet as long as he could.

They were ignoring him and it was getting on his nerves. Torres had settled into a plush armchair, a glass of wine at his elbow. Chikanma was rooting around in some sort of fancy cupboard. The whole room contained the same sort of rich comforts that Izzy associated with Bonnet and it only made his lip curl. As if one fancy posh pirate wasn't more than enough.

They didn't speak, so neither did Izzy. He absolutely was not going to ask them to hurt him. Instead he clenched his jaw and shifted his weight from foot to foot. Slowly, he started to slink backward, his movements calm and deliberate so that the chains at his ankles wouldn't clink too loudly. He wasn't trying to escape, he wasn't that stupid. He was just trying to get to the wall so he could lean up against it before his legs buckled beneath him and he crumpled humiliatingly to the floor.

Chikanma leaned down over Torres and claimed his lips in a tender kiss. Torres kissed him back, letting his hands slip under his first mate's shirt and pulling him down to straddle his lap. Izzy turned away in disgust. He wasn't interested in seeing his captors get it on in front of him. He disapproved of this kind of relationship between first mate and captain anyways. Izzy loved his captain, yes, but Ed was never supposed to reciprocate those feelings. It was the first mate's job to be loyal to his captain above all else, revere the very ground he walked on, and sacrifice his life for him if he must. It was the captain's job to replace the first mate when he failed to perform his duties properly. Izzy loved Ed and Ed didn't love him back and Izzy was fine with that, because that was the way it was supposed to be.

Chikanma drew back from Torres' lips and glanced back with a mischievous smirk. "Izzy's pouting."

"Oh, is he now? Are you feeling left out, Izzy?"

"No." Izzy replied flatly.

“I think he’s lying.” Torres’ eyes glittered with cruelty. “Why don’t you go help him out, Chikanma?”

“Aye, captain.”

Izzy flattened himself against the wall as Chikanma approached, ignoring the way his back stung as he pressed it against the boards. “Don’t fucking touch me!”

Chikanma pinned him to the wall and kissed him. There wasn’t anywhere Izzy could go but he tried to squirm away all the same. Weak with fever, he couldn’t even get the larger man to budge. He couldn’t kick out with his feet chained together, and he couldn’t push him away with his arms behind his back. Instead he tried to bite at his assailant. Chikanma caught on to what he was doing and drew away before Izzy could close his teeth on flesh.

“Fine.” He said. “You do not want tender.”

Izzy didn’t want tender, he didn’t want rough, he didn’t want passionate, he wanted Chikanma to get the fuck away from him.

Chikanma picked him up and carried him over to Torres’ desk, apparently uncaring of the way Izzy was still trying to bite him. The sharp edge of the desk bit into Izzy’s stomach when Chikanma bent him over it. Oh god. Not again.

“No! Get away! Fucking get off me! Stop!” Izzy screamed, thrashing against the chains that held him. It was hurting his broken hand but he couldn’t stop. No, god, please no. He couldn’t endure this. Not again. It would hurt and it would hurt more than it had last time because the wounds were still healing.

Chikanma pinned him down with a hand on the back of his neck and let him struggle until Izzy had tired himself out. Izzy buried his face in the desk, trying not to choke on the sobs in his throat. He wasn’t going to cry. Not in front of them. Not before they’d actually done anything to him.

He was aware of someone tugging on his hair, forcing his head up and off the desk. He looked into Torres' dark eyes. At some point while Izzy was fighting he must have gotten up and come over.

"Actually Izzy," Torres said. "I think I like you better when you're quiet. Be a dear and open up."

Izzy kept his mouth firmly closed, meeting Torres' eyes with a fierce glare. Torres only shook his head a little, like he was dealing with a particularly obstinate animal, and pinched Izzy's nose shut. Izzy shook his head, trying to free himself, but Chikanma's hand was still in his hair and there was nowhere he could go. His lungs burned and he needed air, he was suffocating, dying, drowning but he wouldn't open his mouth. Torres, fed up with his defiance, pried his jaws apart and Izzy was too weak with lack of oxygen to fight back.

He shoved a strip of leather in Izzy's mouth and secured it tight around his head. Izzy instinctively struggled against it, trying to dislodge it but it was a useless endeavor. It held his jaws slightly apart and he flushed with humiliation as drool ran from his lips to soak into his beard.

Torres put his fingers under Izzy's chin, forcing him to look up at him. "Yes. I much prefer you like this. No more of that filthy language."

He gave Izzy's cheek a mocking pat and Izzy growled at him. Torres walked back around the desk, vanishing from Izzy's view. There was a brief moment of respite, before Chikanma yanked his pants down to his knees.

This second time was much gentler, Chikanma being kind enough to stretch him first and use some kind of lubricant. It didn't matter. It hurt all the same. The things that had torn within him were fragile, still healing, and they were ripped open again. Fresh blood ran down his legs to join the dried stains that were already crusted on the inside of his thighs. Izzy had hated the gag before, but now he was grateful for it as it kept the noises he made muffled into little whines and whimpers.

Chikanma slipped a hand around Izzy's hips and down to his groin, and even though he was in so much pain and he didn't want this at all, his body didn't care. He flinched away from

the pain, but he was only bucking forward into Chikanma's fingers. A sob wracked his body as he came onto the edge of the desk. Chikanma wasn't far behind him.

He left Izzy broken and used, bent over the desk. Something cold prodded at Izzy's ass and Izzy had a brief moment to lethargically wonder what it was, before it was shoved into him. It wasn't very long, but it was wide enough that it stung when he stretched to take it. It didn't feel like metal, maybe wood, but whatever it was, it was serving to keep Izzy's ass plugged and stop the fluids from oozing out of him. Izzy didn't care enough to be humiliated by it. He was too tired.

"This is a good look on you, Iz." Torres purred. "Nice and quiet and well-fucked."

Izzy couldn't find enough energy to growl at him.

They left him alone after that. Someone pulled up his pants over the plug but they left him where he lay. Izzy could hear them fucking somewhere behind him, moans and grunts swirling around his head. He closed his eyes and tried to block it out.

And then Izzy was flung off the desk as something very big crashed into the side of the ship.

## Chapter End Notes

Ooh is that rescue? Or perhaps simply a very aggressive whale?

# Chapter 5

## Chapter Summary

Rescue arrives at last!

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Ed groaned, clutching his head where he'd been thrown against the bars of his cell. Without warning, the ship had lurched to the side, flinging him around like a ragdoll. Something must've hit it. Ed could hear cannonfire and shouting somewhere above decks but he couldn't make out what anyone was saying.

They were under attack.

His first thought was Stede, but, no, that couldn't be right. Stede was smart enough not to try the same tactic twice, having failed the first time. Ed hoped.

Fucking Stede. He was going to get himself captured or killed and then Ed was going to have to kick his ass. He'd crawl his way down to hell to do it if he had to.

He gave the lock on his cell a cursory look, but had to quickly give it up as a lost cause. Blackbeard had never been a precision instrument; he didn't know how to pick the lock. Izzy could've done it, but Izzy wasn't here. Ed hoped he hadn't still been on deck when the fighting started.

There was nothing for Ed to do but pace his cell with the restless energy of a caged tiger. His ears pricked up when he heard the sound of someone running down the hall and he prepared for... something. Ed didn't have even the faintest clue what he was expecting. But he certainly knew what he hadn't been expecting.

"Ed!" Stede raced forwards to grab the bars between them.

“Stede.” Ed breathed.

“Are you okay, Ed? Did they hurt you?”

“No.” At Stede’s doubtful look Ed continued. “Alright, maybe a little. But it’s not important. What the hell’s going on?”

Stede grinned. “A fuckery, that’s what!”

“What?”

“I’ll explain everything later, right now we need to get you free.” Stede paused as something seemed to occur to him. “Where’s Izzy?”

“I don’t know. They took him away. I’m not leaving without him.”

Ed didn’t even entertain the thought that Izzy was dead. He couldn’t be. Not like this.

“We’ll find him.” Stede promised. “Do you know where the keys are?”

“Um.” Ed started. Oh, fuck, he hadn’t actually been paying attention to who had been locking them in. He’d been too focused on Izzy.

It very quickly didn’t matter. There was the harsh sound of splintering wood and crunching metal and all of a sudden there was a gaping hole in Ed’s cell. He blinked at the cannonball’s path of destruction, counting every one of his lucky stars that it somehow left both of them unharmed.

“Or that’ll do.” Said Stede.

Ed couldn’t help but glance through the broken wood to the firefight outside. “That’s not *The Revenge* .”

“Ah, no.” Stede replied. “Very astute. That’d be the Queen’s Navy, actually.”

“What?”

-

Jim clambered up onto *Fairfax*’s deck, their hair plastered to their face with seawater. They didn’t bother to try and hide the fact that they didn’t belong as they ran for the ladder belowdecks. Everyone was too busy trying not to get shot or stabbed or blown to bits to really give a shit that their prisoner was escaping, if they even noticed at all.

Trying to recall the map Lucius had drawn for them, Jim darted down the halls, pleased to find that they were alone down here. They supposed the Navy didn’t care much for cowards or slackers. Still, they’d been expecting to find at least one or two people down here, and they were honestly disappointed at the lack of violence in Stede’s plan so far. Ah well, time enough for that later, Jim guessed.

The crew had been split between the three ships, the two naval warships, and *The Revenge* herself, probably to prevent this sort of thing from happening. Unfortunately they hadn’t factored in Lucius and his ability to charm his way across ships. (Actually it was probably more likely the writing thing, but Jim had definitely seen him flirting with an officer.) Lucius was allowed to travel amongst the three ships and, in a hasty, piecemeal kind of way, to deliver messages between them.

Lucius’ map held true and Jim was honestly a little surprised. They hadn’t really expected this part of the plan to be quite so easy. Nothing personally against Lucius or whatever, they just didn’t trust his ability to do anything. They’d never actually seen him *do* any work. Usually he just foisted it off on someone else.



Fang, Ivan, and Roach had already been briefed and they were waiting for Jim when they got to the brig, Roach bouncing eagerly on his toes at the idea of bloodshed. Jim grinned as they worked to undo the locks. They'd always loved a bit of mischief, especially at the expense of complete and total assholes.

-

"The fucking Queen's Navy?" Ed repeated as they ran through the halls together.

"Yes."

"How did you- why did you- huh?"

"Later, Ed!" Stede barked and Ed.

"Fine, fine, fine. You're insane, but fine. Where are we going?"

"We need to rendezvous with Fang and Ivan. I thought I'd have them meet us here in case, well, in case you and Izzy were very badly hurt."

"Izzy is pretty badly hurt." Ed replied and shook his head. No, he didn't want to think about it. It was over now, they just had to get out.

One of Torres' crew stumbled out into the hallway ahead of them and all parties froze. The man reached for his sword and Ed didn't think, he just did. He watched the life fade from the man's eyes, his blood trickle from his throat and down Ed's hand, his body shaking as his mind caught up with him.

"Ed..."

Ed realized that he'd been still too long, imagining a different man, a different life. He left the awl where it was in the man's neck, and instead opted to loot his cutlass and pistol. He tossed the gun to Stede.

"Let's go."

There was no time for Ed to dwell on what he'd just done.

-

Buttons squinted as he set to work disabling the rudder chains, his eyes stinging in the harsh light after the darkness of the brig. Karl stood watch on his shoulder, eager to help out but exhausted from days spent flying between the ships. He'd been spending his days keeping tabs on the rest of Button's crew and, as they approached Torres' ship, checking in on Ed and Izzy. He'd relayed the story of Torres' most recent cruelty, and Buttons flinched as Karl told him how Izzy had been violated again.

Nae, t'weren't right what had been done to him. He'd seen the looks they'd given him, and at first Buttons had mistaken it for hunger. Aye, he supposed, he hadn't been entirely wrong. It was just a hunger for the flesh and not the meat that lay within.

The looks hadn't stopped at just Izzy, Buttons had seen the way they'd eyed up some of the younger, prettier pups: Lucius, Jim, Frenchie. They'd bound his hands but they hadn't gagged him, and Buttons was more than prepared to latch onto some fucker's throat if they dared to lay a hand on any of 'em. He'd tried to protest on Izzy's behalf when they'd begun to defile him, but all he'd gotten for his troubles was a blow to the face. His left eye was still swollen shut.

Buttons had never held any particular resentment for Izzy taking his job from him. He'd been Stede's first mate, but Buttons had never much cared for it. He preferred his job at the helm, rather than amongst the crew. 'Sides they didn't need much bossing about anyways. Left to their own devices, they'd keep The Revenge in good shape. Buttons had tried to tell Izzy as much, but the man had seemed rather keen on using his own methods.

Izzy had questioned Buttons' sailing skills. Once. Buttons had been on the sea since he was just a lad, riding in his father's fishing boat before he'd even learned how to walk. He'd loved her for as long as he could remember, even though her feelings changed in the blink of an eye. She could be playful as a kitten one moment, and then a fierce torrent the next. He'd grown a sense for measuring his mistress' moods and Buttons could tell you quick as anything the way her whims flowed.

There had been a comradery between them after that. Izzy sometimes slunk up to the deck beside the wheel and griped about the crew and their mistakes. Buttons could've pointed out that they were more than capable of doing it properly, they were simply dragging their feet because they didn't respect Izzy, but he'd kept his mouth shut. The man'd figure it out for himself soon enough. Or he wouldn't. Either way, it wasn't Buttons' job anymore and Izzy was welcome to it.

Izzy came up onto the deck some nights when Buttons moonbathed. Buttons had made it clear that Izzy was more than welcome to join him, but Izzy had pointedly ignored him. He'd passed on Karl's regards about Izzy's swordwork and Buttons had gotten the delightful joy of seeing his countryman smile. For just a moment, before he was snapping at Buttons about talking to a bird. Karl had chased him around the deck for the next three hours and Izzy had politely shut up.

Buttons tugged the last bit of chain free and tossed it into the ocean with a dull splash. There. Those Navy bastards would nae be chasing after them now.

-

There was chaos above decks. Cannonfire roared in Ed's ears, the sounds of people hurting and dying choking the air around him. He could smell death, tanged with the salt smell of the ocean and the warm scent of sun-baked wood. Izzy was nowhere to be found.

“Ed, look! There they are!”

He followed Stede's gestures to see Fang and Ivan standing in the relatively sheltered lee of the captain's cabin's doorstep, waiting for them. Ivan inclined his head in acknowledgement

and resumed stabbing anyone who dared get too close. Ed watched with pleasure as one of his torturers was gutted, his intestines spilling out and slapping wetly against the deck.

Ed didn't bother to try and weave his way through the tangle of fighting. Instead he slashed out, regardless of Navy man or pirate, desperate to return to his crew. Stede flooded after him in his wake and, if Ed hadn't been quite so single-minded, he might have thought to be proud at the way the man made use of his sword.

"Where's Izzy?" Fang asked.

"I don't know. But Torres will. I'm gonna find him and then I'm gonna fucking kill him." Ed brushed past him, flinging the door open wide.

Torres wasn't there. Izzy was.

-

Roach was humming. The temperature was lovely, now that he'd crawled out of the sea, and he was killing Navy men. What more could he possibly want? They'd been pissing him off with their annoying military bearings and their insistence on shoving him into a cell and the racist comments that were honestly so uncreative that Roach was more insulted at the blandness of them. Insults, like murder, like cooking, required spice. Roach was more than happy to help them learn that.

He cheerily pushed someone overboard to be ground between the hulls like meat, and spun back around to survey *The Revenge's* deck. Mostly cleared. A few more left, but that was alright. Roach could deal with them easy as pie. With Jim's help, and the rest of the crew that they'd sprung from the brig, they were neatly mopping up the annoying little rats that ran over their deck. Even well-trained military men fell apart when they found themselves attacked from all sides at once. Roach glanced enviously at the enemy pirate ship, wishing he could be there instead, picking off the bastards that had hurt Izzy.

Roach wasn't particularly fond of the man, (Mr. Hands thought he was far too good for Roach's cooking.) but really that had gone much too far. Roach didn't consider himself in any

way squeamish, but he'd felt ill watching that.

He was trying not to think about the state Izzy would be in when they dragged him aboard, knowing he'd probably need the kind of medical treatment that only Roach was able to provide. He felt queasy, imagining the kinds of wounds he'd have to tend to.

But Roach was more than capable of distracting himself. Especially when he had such lovely distractions.

-

Izzy felt... blurry. His body hurt and the world spun. He'd hit his head. Hadn't he? Izzy frowned, trying to remember. *Did* his head hurt or was he only confusing it for the myriad of other pains that flowed through him?

He was tied up and he couldn't remember why. There was pain and he couldn't remember where it had come from.

There were cannons, the sounds of gunfire. A raid. Izzy should be out there protecting his captain. He struggled to get up, only to remember he'd been bound. The chains were cold against his skin, cold and delightful against how hot he was-

He was sweating even as he shivered and Izzy pressed himself against the floor, the cool boards feeling pleasant against his cheek. This could almost feel good if it wasn't for the gag in his mouth. Had Ed put it there? He always said Izzy talked too much, thought too much, didn't just *do* enough. If Ed had put it there, then Izzy supposed he was alright with it. He didn't understand how he was supposed to *do* though, chained up like he was.

"Izzy!"

Ed. Ed was here, scooping him up and holding him close. Izzy snuggled into the touch, soft and hurting and wanting to be held. He shouldn't do this, it was weak. Izzy didn't care. He

was dead anyways, what did it matter? This was heaven, had to be if Ed was touching him like this.

“Oh my god. Is that-?”

Stede. Not heaven then. Izzy must be in hell. Yeah, that made more sense anyways. He didn't deserve to go to doggy heaven. He was a bad dog, he'd disobeyed his captain.

Izzy frowned. That didn't sound right. No. He'd never disobey Ed.

But it was true, wasn't it? No matter how he tried to deny it he knew it was true.

*Mind your place, dog.*

Izzy would. He did. His place wasn't on Ed's lap and he squirmed away, trying to get away and show Ed that he could be good, he was a good first mate, he wasn't weak, don't leave him here, please. Izzy tumbled onto the floor and his head spun. *Don't throw up, Dizzy Izzy.*

He felt someone pick him again and Izzy shook his head. No, not right, put him down. He felt darkness encroaching into his mind and Izzy panicked. No, no, no, no, he couldn't pass out, not again, Ed would be-

The world slipped through his fingers like fog on the sea.

-

Frenchie leaned on the railing of *The Revenge* as they sailed away from the chaos. People were still catching their breath from the escape, many of them still dripping salt water from their hair and clothes. Frenchie was one of the lucky ones. He hadn't had to take a frantic dip in the water, like rats fleeing a burning boat. He didn't exactly feel lucky, his fingers itching for his mandolin, the only way he knew how to cope with the situation. It had been broken by

a Naval officer when Frenchie had dared pause a moment to play it. He supposed it could have been worse. The Navy hadn't taken kindly to Pete, full of vim and bluster, and Frenchie flinched to remember the noises he'd made under the lash. The wounds weren't as bad as Izzy's, but they were plenty bad enough.

He didn't know how to feel about Izzy. He really ought to hate the man for slapping him around when he didn't jump fast enough, but Frenchie found he couldn't. When Blackbeard had carried him on board, he'd just looked so small. Izzy had never seemed small before. He had a way of carrying himself that made him feel like he was so much bigger than he was, like he was talking down to them even as he had to look up to meet their eyes. And before, when they'd-

No. Frenchie didn't want to think about it.

He looked out to the sea, trying to ignore the bits of bone and blood that clung to the hull. At least someone had gotten a good time out of this. Roach had seemed over the moon to be set loose on the Navy. Frenchie didn't exactly blame him. They were proper bastards, all of them.

He heard shouts carry over the water as the Royal Navy finally noticed that their prisoners had escaped. And then further roars of outrage as they realized their rudder chains had been snapped. Frenchie could've sworn he heard Buttons laugh, but when he looked back the man was as unemotional as ever. Oh well. He could see the officer who'd broken his mandolin glaring at them and Frenchie felt a grin rise to his lips. He gave them a cheeky little wave as they faded into the distance.

## Chapter End Notes

sorry if this one's confusing! next chapter you'll get to see what stede and the gang were up to while Ed and Iz were busy being kidnapped

anyways. the hurt part of this hurt/comfort is now finished. mostly. probably.

# Chapter 6

## Chapter Summary

Stede and his crew plan a fuckery

## Chapter Notes

This fic keeps trying to be funny oops It's almost as if OFMD is a comedy or something...

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Stede watched the ship fade away on the horizon, his heart shattered. Ed... Izzy... Stede should have said something, should've stepped in and offered himself but he'd been scared, paralyzed with fear. He dug his fingernails into his palms, the voices of Chauncy and Nigel and all the rest swirling in his head. *Little Baby Bonnet, still a coward. Always running away, aren't you?*

This was his fault, all of it. Stede couldn't bear to look at his crew, to see the bruises, the scrapes, the lingering fear in their eyes. A captain was supposed to protect his crew but he hadn't even been able to do that. And Ed? Stede had coaxed him to stay, had stripped him of his defenses. It was Stede's fault that they had been weakened enough to be captured, his fault that Ed had almost... Izzy *had* been... Stede swallowed thickly. He didn't want to think about it. He didn't want to remember the way Izzy had begged to take Ed's place, how he'd remained silent even when they forced themselves upon him, the noises he'd made when they'd taken the lash to his back. It reminded him of meat, of animals that he had never been able to kill, and Stede had had to look away. His father had been right. They'd all been right. He was always going to amount to nothing. Look at what he'd done.

Stede felt a gentle touch at his elbow and he jumped, turning to see that Lucius had approached him. "What are we going to do now?"

"I- I don't know." Stede's breath caught in his throat as his fingers tightened on the gunwale. He swallowed thickly and forced himself to turn around to look his crew in the eye. "I'm



sorry. I shouldn't have let this happen. I failed to protect you all and I've failed as your captain. If you all want to mutiny now, I fully understand."

"For fuck's sake!" Jim snapped. "This isn't about you, *cabron!* "

"Jim!" Oluwande set a hand on their arm, attempting to rein them in. They shook him off with enraged disgust.

"Izzy just got raped and tortured and you're standing here feeling sorry for yourself? I'm not sitting around and kicking my heels while they get hurt, and don't kid yourself because that *will not* be the worst of it, so you better fucking figure it out, Stede, before I jump ship and deal with it myself!" Jim snarled and then whipped around to storm below decks.

Everyone watched them go, stunned into silence. That had hurt but... Stede had needed that. Jim was right. He had no right to be sitting here moping over his own failings when Ed and Izzy were in very real danger. His own issues weren't important right now. He needed to pull himself together and be strong. For Ed.

"Captain, I think what Jim was trying to say was that this wasn't your fault. We were badly outnumbered and no one could have won that fight. You haven't failed us." Oluwande said.

"Aye." Said Buttons. "Was no one's fault save that bastard's."

"You did the best you could, captain." Frenchie assured him.

"Even I wouldn't have known how to get us out of that." Black Pete said.

The crew continued to soothe him, but Stede wasn't having any of it. He didn't deserve their sympathies. "That's enough! Jim was right. We're wasting time just standing here. Now. Does anyone have any actual ideas on how to get them back?"

Silence. Everyone looked at each other awkwardly and then down to the deck at their feet.

Stede shook his head. “No? Alright then. Lucius, come with me. The rest of you... get to work!”

The captain spun on his heel and whirled back to his cabin, not looking back to see if Lucius would follow in his wake. When he turned around again, he was pleased to see that he *had*, which was very relieving because Stede had no idea what he was going to do if Lucius hadn’t.

“Are you alright, captain?” Lucius asked hesitantly. “Do you need to talk it through? As a crew?”

“I’m perfectly fine!” Stede snapped. “I don’t need to talk it through! I *need* to figure out how to get Ed back.”

Lucius nervously fiddled with the scarf around his neck. “Are you sure? Cause I think I need to talk it through...”

“Well, you’re just going to have to buck up, Lucius! We don’t have time for anyone to be emotional!”

Lucius looked shocked and a little hurt, and Stede felt a pang of regret for being so harsh with him. But he was just going to have to learn to live with it. Ed never would’ve gotten caught if he’d still been Blackbeard, so Stede was going to have to be Blackbeard for him. He was going to have to be ruthless and cunning, and in-between that, he wouldn’t have time to worry about anybody’s feelings.

Stede paced about the room irritably. What would Blackbeard do? He’d go in guns blazing, ram the ship right up against theirs and take what was his. But they’d already tried the direct approach and it hadn’t worked. Many of the crew bore wounds from their fight and Stede himself had been sliced across the cheek. He rubbed at his wrists absently, the skin there still sore with rope burn.

He loved Ed. Stede was trying not to think about it, but he did. When Ed had been pinned against the mast, about to be flogged, Stede had realized it. It had flooded through him like a torrent, making his head spin with the force of it. He loved Ed. He *loved* Ed in a way that he'd never loved anyone else before. He'd been paralyzed with it, the emotion weighing down his arms and legs, and striking him mute with its ferocity.

When Izzy had volunteered to take his place, Stede had felt so sickly relieved. He'd hated what he'd thought, *that thank god it wasn't Ed*, and Stede had felt disgusted with himself. Izzy didn't deserve that either. Did Stede care about Izzy? Maybe, it was hard to say. Izzy rebuffed any attempts he'd tried to make to soothe the rifts between them. Izzy hated him and now Stede could see why. It was because he loved Ed and Ed wouldn't show him that same devotion back, instead choosing to give his heart to Stede. Oh, Izzy. Stede felt sorry for him, guilty that he'd ruined yet another thing. Stede wasn't going to give Ed up, but he needed to fix what he'd done. As soon as they were rescued, Stede was going to treat him with the care he deserved, show him how grateful he was that he'd done that.

He couldn't come up with any ideas. No matter how he paced about his cabin, ignoring Lucius who was sitting on the couch, his knees drawn up to his chest and sniffing a little, he couldn't come up with anything.

He braced his hands on the table to steady himself, suddenly feeling tired and defeated. "I've really fucked this up, haven't I, Lucius?"

"Yes." Lucius replied without hesitation, his voice quivering with anger and hurt.

Stede sighed, his heart full of regret. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have snapped at you like that. It's just... everyone was right. I'm no pirate. I'm just a fool. And I thought I could fix this if I behaved more like Blackbeard, but I was wrong. All I did was hurt you, Lucius, and I'm sorry."

Lucius made a noise to indicate he'd heard Stede, but he still looked upset. Stede buried his face in his hands and let out a deep, shuddering breath. Here was another thing he'd ruined. He'd hurt poor Lucius' feelings and the scribe had only been trying to help.

“Did you come up with any ideas?” Lucius asked softly after the silence had stretched on for some time.

“No.” Stede admitted.

Lucius got up and walked over to the table. He let his hand rest on Stede’s arm and Stede looked up at him. His eyes were red from where he’d been crying, but he was smiling weakly, as if trying to pretend he hadn’t. “Hey. We’ll come up with something. As a crew.”

Stede took Lucius’ hand, grateful for the touch and relieved that Lucius had forgiven him. “You’re right.” He said. “What am I thinking? There’s no ‘I’ in team after all. Let’s get the gang all together and see if we can’t work this out.”

Lucius nodded and patted his arm. “All ri-”

The door banged open and Stede jumped as Buttons stormed in. “Avast, cap’n! There’s somethin’ I thought ye’d want to see.”

Stede looked at Lucius, but the scribe only shrugged. They followed Buttons onto the deck where he was staring out at the horizon.

“Couple of Naval warships, looks like.” Buttons said. “We’ll have ta move fast if ye want ta outrun them.”

Stede lowered his spyglass. “No. I’ve got another idea...”

The first ideas of a fuckery were starting to come together.

“You want us to do what?” Said Black Pete.

Stede was standing near the fore of the main deck, the crew gathered around him.

“Surrender to the Queen’s Navy.”

“Uh, captain, you do realize that the point of piracy is not to get caught, right?” Roach asked.

“Excellent point, Roach, very astute! But you see, we won’t be surrendering, not really anyways.”

“I am confused.” Said the Swede. “Because you just said we were.”

“It’ll be a trick.” Stede’s eyes glittered. “A fuckery. We’re going to trick the Navy into helping us rescue Ed and Izzy. Yes, Wee John?”

Wee John, who’d raised his hand, now crossed his arms. “And how are we going to do that?”

Stede chewed on his lip. “Uh... I hadn’t really gotten that far! We’ll figure it out as we go. It’ll be just like improv!”

“For fuck’s sake.” Jim grumbled.

“It’s an idea, yeah.” Said Frenchie. “But they’re not just gonna let us go, even if we manage to pull it off.”

“Hmm, perhaps we could escape while the fighting is going on? Just run off while they’re distracted?”

“Aye. That might work.” Buttons said. “If we disable their rudder chains they won’t be able to turn to chase after us.”

“Excellent!” Said Stede, excitedly. “Does anyone else have any ideas? Come on now, don’t be shy!”

“We could hide some weapons in the ship to use later.” Roach offered. “They’ll probably take ours.”

“Okay, okay, very good!”

“I can pick locks. If they lock us up I can get us out.” Jim said.

Stede smiled, touched that Jim liked his plan enough to take part. Before he could say anything, everyone started talking over each other, bouncing ideas around and building off of each other. Stede’s heart swelled. This was what it was like to be part of a team, to have everyone working together so smoothly. They *would* get Ed and Izzy back, together as a crew, as a family.

“Wait!” Ivan barked and everyone froze. “The Navy isn’t going to believe a band of pirates if we just tell them to go after Torres.”

“No...” Stede mulled it over, trying to find a solution. He wished Ed were here, that he could show Stede how to do this. He’d left too soon, Stede didn’t know how to be a pirate without him- ha, that was it! Stede *wasn’t* a pirate.

“I’ve got it! I shall play the role of a gentleman, captured by bloodthirsty pirates. I’ll tell them how we- uh, *you* fought with Torres and how the fight was long and bloody, but Torres *just* managed to escape. That his crew is weak and ripe for the taking. No one should be able to resist that bait. Two pirate crews in one go? Irresistible.”

Ivan shrugged. “That might work.”

There were nods and agreement from the rest of the crew, but before they could get too loud, Jim spoke up over the din.

“We should have Lucius be captured too. They’ll probably let him keep his job as a scribe.”

The crew looked to Stede for confirmation and the captain waved his arms hurriedly. “Well? What are you waiting for? Go get rope!”

-

“Stede?”

“Yes, Lucius?”

“Was this really necessary?”

They were tied to the mizzen mast, their hands pinned firmly at their sides.

“Ey!” Said Roach. “Prisoners aren’t supposed to talk!”

“Well, we’re not *actually* prisoners!” Lucius hissed.

“Captain, do I have permission to gag the hostage?” Roach called down to Oluwande.

“Nope, nope! Not necessary!” Said Lucius. “I’m shutting up, see? Quiet as the grave- mmf!”

“Oh, come now, Roach.” Said Stede. “That was a little over the top, don’t you thi- uff!”

“Nah.” Roach replied, as he pulled the gag tight around Stede’s head. Happily, he skipped back down to the deck where everyone else was, to some degree, pretending to be working.

They were really only putting up a token effort to outmaneuver the warships, and it didn’t take long for them to catch up to them. A warning shot, and a pretend bit of resistance later, they were hoisting the white flag. The Navy boarded their ship and an officer strode up amidst Stede’s crew, his uniform finely pressed and his buttons shining in the sun. Stede immediately started to wriggle and cry out behind his gag and ultimately just make a big fuss. The officer came over and took the cloth from his mouth.

“Oh! Oh, thank you so much! It’s been simply terrible! These dreadful pirates have captured me and it’s been simply awful!”

“It’s alright, sir. The Navy has them now. We’ll see that this scum is taken care of. Reginald, James! Untie these two and see that they’re made comfortable!”

Stede rubbed at his arms after they untied him, trying to make himself look as sad and miserable as he possibly could. It wasn’t hard. He had a lot of examples of overdramatic nobles to draw on. He watched as his crew were clapped in irons and split up into three groups. He tried to hide the way he winced when the Navy was rougher with them than absolutely required, shoving them face first into the deck and kicking them if they struggled. Frenchie yelped as someone pushed him towards a boat, the heavy chains almost making him topple overboard.

Stede forced himself to look away, knowing that if he showed too much concern that the game would be up. Lucius was clinging dramatically to someone’s chest, babbling about how scared he’d been and how thankful he was that someone had come to rescue him. It was all very well-done and Stede made a mental note to compliment him on his acting later.

“Come on.” The officer from earlier said politely, taking Stede’s elbow and guiding him towards the boats. “I dare say we can treat you a sight better than those pirates did.”



“Thank you, really.” Stede gushed. “You’re too kind.”

As he was rowed back across to the warship, Stede twisted the ring he wore between his fingers. It was Ed’s ring, a smooth silver band that shone as bright as his eyes. Hang on, love, Stede thought. I’m coming.

## Chapter End Notes

And now, back to your regularly scheduled angst

# Chapter 7

## Chapter Summary

Roach tends to Izzy's wounds

## Chapter Notes

Enjoy, you angst hungry gremlins ;)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Izzy moaned in pain as they laid him down on the table and Roach winced. Fang and Ivan awkwardly stepped back, their expressions vulnerable and helpless as they waited for him to give them direction. Ed wasn't with them; Roach had quite firmly refused him entry. He wasn't going to be at all helpful in the state he was in, and it was hard enough to maneuver in here without the addition of a fifth person.

"Someone go get Jim, I need these chains off before I can do anything." Roach ordered, and Fang hurried off to find them. "Ivan, I need clean water."

His aides dispatched, Roach took a step back to look over what he was working with. Izzy was on his belly, allowing Roach to see the mess that had been made of his back. It had scabbed over, but it still looked very much like raw meat. His hands, still shackled behind him, were covering some of the damage and Roach didn't want to imagine what it felt like to have that weight pressed against his wounds. Izzy's right hand was badly swallowed, purple and red beneath the long-healed burn scars that enfolded it. Broken and healing wrong. Roach grimaced. He was going to have to re-break it to set it.

He hurried about the nearby cupboards, gathering up all the medical supplies he'd need. Bandages, splints, needle and thread, opium for the pain.

Fang returned quickly with Jim in tow. A brief flash of horror crossed their face, presumably getting their first real look at what had actually been done to Izzy. They recovered quickly,

and set to work with their lockpicks, undoing the shackles from the first mate's hands. Fang moved back around to Izzy's head and began to undo the leather bit from his mouth.

"Leave it." Roach ordered as he prepared the needle. "Give him something to bite down on."

Fang looked reluctant, but he did as he was told, apologetically stroking Izzy's cheek. Izzy whined and pressed his face into Fang's hand.

"Sorry, boss." Fang whispered. He glanced over at Roach, his eyes landing on the needle. "What's that?"

"Opium. Should put him out while I deal with this."

"Shit!" Jim yelled as Izzy immediately began to thrash and cry out.

"Hold him down!" Roach barked.

Fang and Jim moved to pin him to the table, Izzy wriggling about like he was fighting for his life. Even beaten and bruised, Izzy was strong and they struggled to keep him still. He was re-opening the wounds on his back and fresh blood ran down his sides to gush onto the table. Jim had gotten his hands free and he clawed desperately at them, his broken hand pawing uselessly. Roach placed a hand at the nape of his neck, keeping him still enough that he could slide the needle in. The opium worked quickly and Izzy settled, his desperately rolling eyes fluttering shut.

"What the hell was that?" Jim asked, panting.

"I don't know." Fang replied. "He usually doesn't respond that way to drugs."

Roach didn't care why Izzy had struggled so much, he just cared that he'd stopped now. Ivan returned with the water, and Roach barked at everyone to get out. The room was too small for

this many people in it, but he grabbed Ivan by the wrist and told him to stay. The opium would dull Izzy's senses, but not entirely. Roach wanted someone on hand to hold him down again, if it was necessary.

He decided to start with the worst of the injuries, Izzy's back. The lash marks had closed over, but they'd open up again when Roach cleaned them. He dipped a rag in the water Ivan had brought and scrubbed at the first of the cuts. Usually he didn't care for his patient's discomfort, but Roach tried to be as gentle as he could and mentally apologized over and over to Izzy when he whined with pain. Fresh blood gushed from the reopened wounds, and Roach set the cloth aside for a moment to stitch the first of them. The skin was so damaged that he struggled to find clean patches of skin to put the needle through; it was like sewing up raw meat. As the blood on Izzy's back was cleaned away, Roach began to see blackened veins oozing away from some of the cuts, like ink was running through Izzy's veins. Infection.

It took more of the catgut than Roach had ever had to use before in one go, but eventually he'd gotten everything cleaned and sewn up. He'd disinfected them with alcohol as he'd gone and Izzy's back glistened with dampness. Roach set the needle and thread aside, but didn't put them away. He had the sickening sense that he'd need them again once he'd worked his way further down.

Ivan had a hand rested on Izzy's arm to help keep him still, but the other was buried in his hair. He was saying something to Izzy, and Roach could probably hear what it was if he bothered to listen, but he was busy. He left him there to return to his cupboards and dig out jars filled with herbs. He'd have to keep an eye on it, but for now a poultice should serve to help draw the infection out. He applied it to the damaged areas, wrapping the bandages snugly around Izzy's body. Finished there, he moved on.

"He's not going to like this part." Roach warned Ivan as he took Izzy's broken hand between his own.

Ivan nodded and moved to a better grip on Izzy's shoulders.

Roach had been right. Izzy didn't like this bit at all. Even heavily sedated, he tried to yank his hand away, screaming behind the leather in his mouth. It wasn't as bad as it had seemed; only one of the bones was actually damaged. Roach pushed his thumb firmly into the bump on his hand, rebreaking the healing bone to force it back into the position it was meant to be in. He

ghosted his fingers over Izzy's skin, checking to see if everything else was in its proper place. He ignored the old burn scars, long-healed and too faded for him to do anything about. Satisfied, he fastened a splint firmly to it with bandages, and finally let it go. If he had done that well enough, Izzy should regain all the use of that hand.

No one could call Roach squeamish, but his stomach was turning at the idea of the next part. He'd tried to put it off, but the time had finally come. He swallowed thickly as he gently eased Izzy's pants off his hips.

It was a complete mess. A pinky-red fluid stained his ass and thighs and had congealed onto the inside of his pants. Roach tossed the ruined garment onto the floor. They were going to have to burn that. Something clinked and Roach frowned. Something was in the pocket of it. He fished out a ring, the emerald band that Izzy always wore at his throat, and handed it over to Ivan. If Izzy had tried to hide it, he'd clearly wanted to keep it.

Unable to stall any longer, Roach picked up the rag again and started to clean up the area between Izzy's legs. He felt gross, touching Izzy like this, especially after what had happened to him, but this needed to be done. Izzy was still as Roach dabbed at the mess, flinching only when Roach brushed up against his torn hole. He'd exhausted himself screaming and Roach found he almost wished Izzy would start struggling again. He knew how to deal with screaming. He didn't know how to deal with this tired resignation.

As he cleaned, Roach realized there was something stuck in Izzy's ass. It was wedged so deeply that Roach had to force himself inside him to get it out. He pried it free with his fingernails and a fresh wash of cum and blood began to ooze from his hole. It was a wooden plug, as thick around as three of Roach's fingers, and he immediately threw it away with disgust. None of this was right, but that was a special bit of cruelty that filled Roach with anger. Izzy wasn't his friend in any sense of the word, but he *was* his crew, and Roach was going to kill anyone who'd dared to do this to him.

His initial fears had been right. When he'd been forced to watch, Roach had seen how rough they'd been. Things would've torn, and they had. It was an awkward place to add stitches, but Roach was going to have to.

“I should go check on Izzy.”

Ed started to get up, but Stede pushed him back down. “Roach said he’ll come get us when he’s done.”

“But-”

“Sit down before you pull out all your stitches and poor Frenchie has to redo them.” Stede ordered.

Ed buried his face in his hands. “I just- You saw the kind of stuff they did to him, Stede. It didn’t get better. He kept sacrificing himself for me, even after I’d ordered him not to and fuck! Stede, if he wakes up alone, he’s gonna think I abandoned him or something!”

Stede took his hand, entwining their fingers. His hand was warm, soft against Ed’s own calloused palms. “As soon as Roach finishes, we’ll go see him, I promise. But you heard him, Ed, we’re just going to be in the way.”

Ed remembered. He’d carried Izzy, still chained and delirious, across to *The Revenge*, barking at Izzy not to die on him, don’t you fucking dare, the whole way. Roach had taken one look at them both, told him to hand Izzy over to someone who could actually stand up straight, and then forced a bundle of medical supplies into the hapless Frenchie’s arms. Ed had protested, not wanting Izzy to be taken away from him, but Roach had threatened him at knifepoint to get the hell out from under his feet. The adrenaline rush had faded and exhaustion had suddenly overtaken Ed’s body. He allowed Stede to guide him away and help Frenchie to tend to his wounds. But that didn’t mean he had to be happy about it. And shouldn’t Roach be done by now? Ed’s skin was starting to itch with his desire to check on Izzy.

“Izzy’s my friend.” Ed said. “I need to make sure he’s okay.”

“Ed, look at me. It’s over now. Izzy’s going to be fine. You’re going to be fine. It’s over.”

And with a sudden shock, Ed realized it *was* . He'd been tense for so long, coiled up and ready for the torture to continue, that he hadn't known how to stop. Stede ran his thumb over Ed's knuckles and tears welled in his eyes. It was over.

"I think I need..." Ed trailed off, unable to bring himself to say it. Stede had shown him it wasn't weak to want touch, but he still struggled to ask for it.

Luckily, Stede knew him well enough to guess. "A hug?"

"Yes, please." Ed sobbed.

Stede gathered him up in his arms and held him close. Unable to touch Ed's back, he stroked his hair instead, and Ed wrapped his arms tightly around him. He cried into the side of Stede's neck as every emotion he hadn't let himself feel finally came flooding out. The anger, the pain, the *fear*, all of it came out. His body trembled with the violence of his sobbing, but Stede gently rocked them back and forth.

"Shh, let it out, it's okay. It's okay now, Ed, just let it out."

Ed collapsed against Stede's body, suddenly so tired. So much had happened and he hadn't had a chance to rest during any of it. Stede's hand in his hair was so soothing, and the smell of lavender clung to his skin. Ed fisted his hands in his robe, the soft silk helping to ground him.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Stede asked.

"Not yet." Ed whispered into his shoulder. The wounds were still too raw, the hurt too fresh.

"That's alright. You don't have to say anything until you're ready."

Ed had almost stopped crying, but Stede's tenderness sent a fresh wash of tears down his cheeks. "Thank you."

They stayed like that for a long time. After a while, when Ed's sobs had been reduced to shaking hiccups, he realized Stede had started to hum. He knew the song. A half-remembered lullaby came to the forefront of his mind, shaking dust and cobwebs from itself. His mother's voice echoed in his head, the words sung soft and tenderly.

*"He, wounded, stood beside my bed*

*His blood ran down upon thy head*

*He spoke no word, but looked on me*

*Bent low, and gave a kiss to thee.*" Ed whispered softly.

"Oh, you know it?" Stede asked.

"Yeah."

"It's- well, I mean it was, I'm not sure if it still is, one of my daughter's favourite songs."

"It's very sad." Ed pointed out.

Stede laughed. "Alma's a very morbid girl. I love her, but sometimes she frightens me."

A smile crossed Ed's lips. "You know, Izzy can sing."

"Can he now?"



“Yeah, you’ve got to get him really drunk first. And that’s hard by itself because Iz doesn’t really drink a lot. But,” Ed shook his head. “Once he starts, his voice is beautiful. It’s really something.”

Ed remembered the first time he’d ever heard Izzy sing. He’d drunk a little too much himself, and he’d come staggering up on deck, hoping the night air would aid his hangover. The soft notes of a lament floated through the air, so sweet that Ed had almost thought the myth of sirens had come true. He’d come across Izzy curled next to the mast, a bottle in his hand as he sang to the sea. His voice had trembled with emotion, and on the final line he’d broken into a sob. Ed realized in hindsight, that that had been about the same time Izzy had started wearing the ring he kept at his throat.

A sharp knock shook Ed from his reflections. He looked up to see Frenchie awkwardly hovering in the doorway.

“Um, Roach sent me to come get you. He says you can come see him now.”

“Thank you, Frenchie.” Stede replied.

Frenchie nodded and ran off. Ed remained silent, too emotional to speak.

“You want to go see him?” Stede asked softly.

Ed nodded hurriedly. He couldn’t string together the words to convey the feelings that flooded through his veins so he just looked at Stede, hoping he’d be able to read the emotions in his eyes. Relief, fear, sorrow, guilt. He swallowed around the lump in his throat and made his way down to the galley. Stede slipped his hand into Ed’s and Ed took it, their fingers twined tight as Ed searched for comfort.

Izzy looked so small, lying there. He was on his stomach, unable to be laid on his back and Ed couldn’t see his face to know if he was awake. Roach had wrapped a blanket around his waist for modesty’s sake, but he was naked from the waist up. Snow white bandages entwined around his torso, covering him from the nape of his neck all the way down to his hips. Somehow, bandaged and cleaned, he looked so much more vulnerable than he had when

he'd been chained and bloodied. Ed dropped to his knees and took Izzy's hand, barely noticing he was pulling at his own stitches with the hasty movement.

"Izzy...?" Ed whispered. "Iz? Iz, we're safe now. We're back on *The Revenge*."

"He'll be out for a while, Captain. I gave him opium for the pain." Roach explained.

Ed nodded. He didn't like this; this silent defenselessness was too much like Izzy was dead. But it was probably for the best if he was unconscious for a little while. Ed knew Iz, and he knew that so long as he could physically stand he'd force himself to be useful. He used to think it was funny. He'd remembered laughing at Izzy when the man had fainted, working himself to the bone after he'd been stabbed. Ed grimaced at the thought. No. He wasn't that person anymore and he could- he *would* do better.

Ed scooped Izzy up, mindful not to touch his damaged back.

"What are you doing?" Roach asked.

"I'm taking Iz back to the captain's cabin." Ed glanced at Roach and then at Stede, daring either of them to contradict him.

Stede only smiled. "I was just thinking the same thing."

"If you pull any of those stitches out, you're fixing them." Roach grumbled after them as they left.

Ed's body trembled under Izzy's weight, weak with the effects of no food and little water. His bad leg, already touchy at the best of times, threatened to buckle after every step. He didn't get very far before his courage gave out and he had to stop, scared that he was going to collapse and hurt Izzy.

“Ed?” Stede asked. “What’s wrong?”

“I don’t want to drop him.” Ed replied, his eyes wide with fear.

“Do you want me to carry him?”

Ed glanced down at Izzy and then back up to Stede. He didn’t want to let him go, not ever again, but looking deep into Stede’s eyes, Ed knew he could trust him. He helped Stede get Izzy into his arms, the man slack as a ragdoll in their hands. It felt wrong, Izzy this pliable and helpless, and Ed had to turn away to keep from starting to cry again.

## Chapter End Notes

The song Ed and Stede sing is Baloo, My Boy (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52lflfsb0fE>) The song I imagined Izzy singing is She Moved Through The Fair (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIQ2kH31ElE>) And if any of you actually listen to the lyrics of that second song you're going to fucking hate me for breaking your heart lmao

Also if you guys have any thing you want to see in this story, feel free to throw some ideas at me, because I have like a good few chapters to kill before I can get to the parts I actually have planned

# Chapter 8

## Chapter Summary

Izzy wakes up (but has some nightmares first)

## Chapter Notes

in which i give izzy my sensory processing disorder and my relationship with food.  
Sorry bb <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The timbre of different voices flowed around him like all the currents of the ocean running together. He couldn't hear what they were saying. There was too many of them.

Ed had been with him just a moment ago. He'd picked up Izzy and taken him somewhere. There'd been gunfire and screaming, but he hadn't looked to see what was going on. His eyelids felt so heavy and he didn't have the energy left to lift them. He didn't try. He knew Ed would keep him safe.

Ed wasn't here anymore. Izzy didn't know where he'd gone, but he knew he wasn't here. Had Izzy done something wrong? What had he done that Ed would decide to abandon him? He whined. Wasn't he loyal enough? Strong enough? Ed clearly hadn't thought so. He'd left him alone with all these people who were touching him, holding him, he didn't want it, please stop. But Izzy was just so tired...

He heard someone say something about putting him out and fear flashed through his mind. Bad, no, he couldn't, bad, he didn't know why but he remembered that he couldn't slip into unconsciousness. Bad things would happen. Bad, bad things. But they were holding him down- hands on his hips and shoulders, going to use him, going to hurt- and Izzy fought but they were too strong. He felt a pain at his neck and the world fell away, shattering like broken glass.

-

Pain. He couldn't pick out specifics, all he knew was that he hurt. He cried out and felt another pinch at his neck.

-

Nightmares plagued him. Demons crawling up onto the ship from the ocean, a never ending stream of them that wouldn't stop no matter how many he killed. Black tentacles that wrapped around his wrists and ankles, pinning him to the deck, sticky where they touched his skin. They were covered in some sort of goo, like snail slime, and it clung to his body, making him feel filthy and ruined. They curled inside him and ripped him apart from the inside out. His blood painted the deck. His organs were pulled from him. He could see them, pulsing heavy and red where they'd been torn from him, but he couldn't move. He'd been gutted. Hollowed. A toy with the stuffing pulled out.

And those were the good dreams.

Sometimes he was lost in a void, trapped at the bottom of the ocean with the heavy pressure of the sea weighing down on him, pinning him. He could hear Ed screaming somewhere and Izzy knew that something was hurting him and that he could stop it if he could only get up. He cried, his tears mixing with the salt water of the ocean and becoming indistinguishable. His fault, his fault, all of this. And he was too broken, too weak to do anything about it.

*If you were weak, I wouldn't keep you around, would I?*

-

“Come, thou gentle day!

For if but once thou show me thy grey light,

I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite.”

He knew those words. He couldn't remember where he'd heard them, or why the voice that spoke them stirred such jealousy in his heart.

"Coward, why comest thou not?" He mumbled.

"Oh, you're awake!"

He frowned. Those weren't the next lines.

-

Someone was holding him. They smelled of lavender and gunpowder, salt and ash. Ed.

He was wrapped up in softness. He was comfortable and warm and Ed's arms were wrapped around him. This wasn't fair. How was Izzy supposed to not want this when it felt so good? He squirmed, trying to get away, but Ed only held him tighter and Izzy couldn't break free. He felt like crying. He needed to prove to Ed that he didn't want this, that he wasn't weak, but he just wasn't strong enough.

A hand ran through his hair, stroking him tenderly, and Izzy whined. He leaned into the touch, craving the feeling of someone comforting him. Why did something so wrong have to feel so good?

-

When Izzy finally woke up, lucidly this time, it was to a soft darkness and the gentle tones of Bonnet's voice. He was reading to him. Izzy curled his lip in disgust. He wasn't a fucking child; he didn't need a goddamn bedtime story. He elected to ignore Bonnet as he quickly took stock of all his limbs. The tight pressure of bandages around his torso. The familiar pain of pulling when he breathed, his stitches drawing taut. The last three fingers of his right hand

had been taped together to keep a splint in place, more bandages wrapped firmly around it. His body was stiff with the sensation of having been still for too long, but he was laying on something soft and- wait a second.

He was in Bonnet's bed.

*He was in Bonnet's bed.*

Fuck, hadn't this whole experience been humiliating enough?

Sluggishly, being careful not to pull out his stitches, Izzy rolled onto his side. Bonnet was still reading aloud from the book, but Ed was nowhere to be found. He scrutinized the cabin for any trace of him, but there was nothing. Izzy bit his lip. Ed *had* been testing him with his touch and Izzy had failed, and now he was gone.

He cleared his throat and tried to speak, but his tongue was too heavy in his mouth and it wouldn't move the way he wanted it to.

"Oh, good morning, Izzy! Hey, don't speak. Here. Drink first."

Bonnet plucked a glass from a nearby table and held it to Izzy's lips. He wanted to lean away, rebuff Bonnet, but he didn't think he could hold the cup without spilling it all over himself. Any reluctance vanished as soon as the water crossed his lips. It was cool and fresh and he wanted it, he needed it. He drank deep, gulping down the sweet ambrosia, and whined when Bonnet didn't tip the glass fast enough.

"Careful, Izzy. Don't choke."

With shaking hands, Izzy pawed numbly at Bonnet's fingers on the glass, trying to force him to give him more. He was shaking too much for him to take it from him, but Bonnet thankfully obliged. Izzy emptied the glass and found he could speak again.

“Ed.” He rasped.

“Shh, shh, Ed’s alright. Do you want me to go get him?”

“Don’ want to disturb ‘im.” Izzy mumbled, his tongue still clumsy and making his words bleed into each other.

Bonnet looked at him in a rather concerned manner. “I’m gonna go get Ed.”

“... ’kay.”

Izzy must have drifted off again, because the next thing he knew, someone was seizing his unbroken hand and squeezing it tightly. He fluttered his eyes open.

“Ed.” He whispered.

“Iz.” Ed lifted a hand and traced his fingers down Izzy’s cheek. Izzy closed his eyes, trying to make it seem as though he didn’t want it. “Don’t do that again, Izzy. Fuck, man, I was scared that you were gonna die.”

“Won’t-” Izzy swallowed to clear his throat. “Won’t get rid of me that easily.”

“I’d hope not. I need you, Iz.”

Izzy couldn’t help the smile that twitched at the edges of his lips. He knew he was useful to Ed, but he still liked to hear it sometimes.

Ed tapped his shoulder. “Shove over, I want up.”



Izzy obediently wriggled to the side and Ed stood to climb into bed beside him. Unlike Izzy, he was wearing a shirt, but he could see snow white bandages poking up beneath his collar. He looked away guiltily, remembering whose fault that had been.

“Oof- Ed, what are you-?”

“Trying to get comfy, Iz. Quit squirming. Actually. I’ve got a better idea, come here.”

Izzy was about to protest that they were laying in bed together, how much closer could they get, when Ed pulled him up onto him, so that Izzy was cradled against his chest. This wasn’t a new experience for them by any means, they’d often shared a blanket or a hammock in their youth. Even after it wasn’t necessary anymore, they’d cuddled sometimes, just for the feeling of a warm body next to them.

“Fucking hell, you’re bony as shit. God, someone needs to feed you, mate, you’re like a twig.” Ed said.

It was true. Even before their captivity, Izzy had been on the cusp of verging into an unhealthy weight. He didn’t eat very often. At even the inklings of choppy seas, he’d be leaning over the railing throwing it up anyways, so what was the point? Besides, there weren’t many foods that Izzy found palatable enough to swallow. He’d gag if he tried to eat something he didn’t like, and even the smell of the galley sometimes would have him retching. Food was a chore to him, an ordeal that he had to suffer through every time, so he mainly just ate only enough to stay alive.

Still.

“I resent that.” He muttered.

“Resent it or not, it’s true.” Ed teased, ruffling his hair. “Are you feeling okay, by the way? Roach said he gave you something, but if it’s worn off, I can get you more.”

Izzy realized that the fog that had wreathed his mind was beginning to dissipate. It had been like a wall of ice separating him from his body and, as it melted, thin tendrils of pain had begun to creep in.

“I’ve had worse.”

Izzy wasn’t going to embarrass himself in front of Ed by admitting that he hurt.

Ed sighed, the movement knocking Izzy off-balance for a moment. He glanced up at Ed curiously, and was met with a look of disappointment. “You know I don’t like seeing you like this.”

“I know.” It hadn’t been a question, but Izzy responded anyway. Yes, he knew. Why would Ed like him like this? Weak, and hurt, too damaged to be useful. He’d begged for them to hurt him, for fuck’s sake.

“Well then, quit fucking doing it, dickfuck. You’re driving me nuts here.” Ed patted Izzy’s head again and wriggled out from underneath him. “I’m gonna go get us food.”

“Okay.”

“If I come back and you’re out of that bed, I’m gonna chain you to it.” Ed warned as he left. He seemed to be walking just fine, with no evidence of a limp or a favoring of one part of his body, and Izzy wondered how long he’d been out for.

Izzy levered himself up into a sitting position, tucking the pillows around him in such a way that he didn’t actually have to have any weight on his back. As he moved, he felt something pull between his legs, and with a sickening jolt he realized that there were stitches there as well. He winced. There was a difference between assuming someone had tended to him down there, and actually having evidence of it. At least the plug was out. He flushed at the memory of it, of being bent helplessly over Torres’ desk, bound and gagged and used. He wondered who knew about the plug. Roach, definitely, but had he told anyone? Spread it around the

ship so everyone would know of his humiliation and laugh? Or was this to be blackmail held over his head?

Now, alone, the danger passed, Izzy couldn't help but wonder what the crew thought of him. His reputation had undoubtedly been ruined beyond repair, especially after they'd watched him kneel and beg for it. Shameful. And the way he'd cried out during that first lashing? Pathetic. A proper sailor would've kept his mouth shut and taken it mutely. At least he had kept the dignity of remaining quiet during what they'd done to him after.

He remembered that Jim had stood up for him, but he couldn't figure out why. Sure they'd sparred together, and Izzy reluctantly respected them, but why would they draw attention to themselves? It didn't make sense. They'd saved him, because Torres *had* been going to kill him, and he was grateful for it, but he was deeply baffled as to why.

There came a knock at the door and Izzy looked up to see Bonnet leaning inside.

"Can I come in?"

"It's your ship." Izzy replied. "Do whatever the hell you want."

Bonnet frowned, but he came in anyway. Izzy shifted a little, wondering if Bonnet would shove him to the side so he could sit in his own bed, but he only settled primly on the chair by the bedside.

"Are you feeling alright?"

"Yes."

*Stop fucking asking me that, I'm fine.*

Bonnet fiddled nervously with his fingers. “I just- I wanted to talk to you. Without Ed. To thank you. For doing that.”

“Didn’t do it for you, ponce.” Izzy spat.

“Yes, I know. You did it for Ed.” Stede looked up at him, holding his gaze steadily. “But, Izzy, you have to understand, I love him too. I didn’t want... that to happen either.”

“Didn’t see you fucking stepping up.”

“No. And I, I wanted to apologize too. I should’ve tried to do something.” He sighed. “I’m sorry. I wish I’d been as brave as you.”

Izzy narrowed his eyes. “It wasn’t brave. It was fucking weak.”

“What?”

“I fucking asked them to hurt me. Hell, I got down on my knees and *begged* . Which part of that isn’t weak?”

“The fact that you did it so that someone you cared for wouldn’t be hurt!”

“Doesn’t matter. I fucked up and Ed got hurt anyways.”

“Izzy.” Bonnet barked. “Look at me.”

And Izzy did, because he was used to obeying orders given to him in that tone. It was the tone Ed used when disobeying meant punishment.

Bonnet's expression was firm, his eyes serious. "It doesn't matter what ended up happening, you tried to protect Ed. That was *brave*. And don't claim that it wasn't because I don't keep liars on my crew, Izzy."

"I'm not on your fucking crew, Bonnet." Izzy snarled.

"Maybe not." Bonnet replied. "But I care for your well-being regardless."

"Why?" He blinked, completely baffled.

"Because you deserve it." Bonnet said firmly.

#### Chapter End Notes

oh yeah i don't think ive mentioned, but the end-game is likely going to be stedyhands because izzy deserves two people to love him and hold him <3

the play that stede's reading is a midsummer's night dream btw

also everytime ed tries to comfort poor izzy, iz hears it as 'fuck you' :(

# Chapter 9

## Chapter Summary

Ed talks about what happened

## Chapter Notes

guess who has like three essays due and decided to add another chapter to this instead  
oops

anyways, im pretty sure you're all gonna hate me for this chapter. enjoy <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It wasn't long before Ed returned with steaming bowls of soup. He climbed over Izzy, keeping one in his own hands and giving the other to Bonnet. Izzy felt a little disappointed, but ultimately not all that surprised. Of course as soon as Ed saw Bonnet he'd choose to feed him instead of Izzy. Why wouldn't he? He'd already replaced Izzy in terms of everything else. At least he still had the consolation of knowing, that when it came down to it, he could still protect Ed in a way that Bonnet never could.

Izzy jumped as he realized that a spoon was being held in front of his face. "What are you doing?"

"Feeding you." Bonnet replied as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

"I'm not a fucking child, I can feed myself."

"Can you?" Bonnet raised an eyebrow. "Because you're still shaking very badly, Izzy. I don't want you to spill hot soup all over yourself."

All over his fucking bed, was more likely what Bonnet cared about. Izzy held his gaze firmly, not willing to submit to the humiliation of being spoonfed, but also unable to actually take the bowl from him because Bonnet was fucking right and Izzy *was* still shaking violently.

“Do you want me to do it, Iz?” Ed offered.

Izzy wasn't going to make his captain have to take care of him. He opened his mouth and let Bonnet feed him soup. The chicken broth was pleasantly warm, heating him up from the inside out. There was some sort of herb floating in it, probably to flavor it, and Izzy grimaced when the little bits of plant clung to his teeth. He was hungry, starving in fact, but he was only able to consume half the bowl before his desire to gag became too strong and he had to push Bonnet away.

“Something wrong?” Bonnet asked.

Probably not. The soup would probably be fine, pleasant in fact, if you weren't the type of person that retched when you experienced a texture.

“I'm full.” Izzy lied. He certainly wasn't about to admit his stupid, pathetic problems, not to Bonnet and certainly not to Ed. They'd already witnessed more of his weakness than he cared for, and he wasn't about to add to it. Bonnet had claimed it had been brave, but he had to have been mocking him or something. Or maybe he was just a fucking idiot.

Bonnet set the bowl down with a disappointed look. “I suppose you can have more later.”

Oh joy. He was going to be subjected to more soup.

It wasn't fair. Hadn't he already been tortured enough? When Ed's temper had flared, he'd used to strike out at Izzy, but now he wouldn't do that, probably because Bonnet didn't like violence. So Ed had decided to punish Izzy for his weakness by wrapping him up in warm blankets and getting him soup, teasing him with softness that he didn't deserve and could never have.

“I want to go back to my cabin.” Izzy rasped, fisting his hands in the covers. At least there Ed couldn’t force comfort on him. He’d take his punishment if he deserved it, but he didn’t deserve this one. He’d been weak, yes, but he’d protected Ed.

“No.” Ed answered simply and took another spoonful of soup.

“Ed.” Bonnet said in a strange tone. “Can we talk in the hall, please?”

Izzy tucked his knees up to his chest, giving Ed an easier route as he followed Bonnet out of the room. Probably to tell Ed to get his broken toy out of his damn bed. Izzy wondered why he’d even allowed it in the first place.

-

“I’m not kicking Izzy out.” Ed said firmly.

“No, no, of course not! I want Izzy to stay, too. But,” Stede sighed. “I don’t know if we should really force him to if he doesn’t want to. He’s had a lot forced on him already, Ed.”

“I don’t want to be away from him.” Ed protested miserably.

It was a stupid defense and he knew it, but he didn’t want Izzy to be apart from him anymore. He’d spent so long unable to touch him, unable to comfort him, that he just wanted to hold him and never let him go. But, maybe that was why Izzy wanted to leave. Ed knew he’d never tell him if he was uncomfortable, and maybe Ed was forcing something that Izzy didn’t want onto him. He could understand Izzy not wanting to be touched, not after what they’d done to him, and it broke Ed’s heart to think that Izzy had been forcing himself to endure it for him.

Ed slumped against the nearby wall, his fingers twisted in the soft fabric of his robe. “I just want to make sure he’s okay. After what those fucking bastards did to him...”



Stede took his hand, the warmth of his skin comforting against Ed's own. "I understand. I don't feel good about letting him go either... but Izzy knows what's best for him. If he needs to be alone for now, we should respect that."

Ed's breath hitched in throat. He knew Stede was right, but it was painful to let this happen. Izzy had always been like this when he'd gotten hurt or ill. He'd barricade himself in his cabin, lashing out and snapping at anyone who dared come near him until he was feeling himself again. Ed had learned to just leave him alone when he got like that.

"Okay." He said softly.

Stede planted a tender kiss on his forehead. "I'm so proud of you. I know this is hard."

At the words, tears flowed down Ed's face. So rarely did people tell him that they were proud of him, and between it and the emotional turmoil over having to be apart from Izzy, his control shattered. He leaned into Stede and Stede stroked his hair, quietly letting Ed work out whatever feelings he needed to contend with.

-

Izzy had been expecting more fuss from Ed, but he let him go without another complaint. He wouldn't look at him anymore and Izzy had to assume that he'd finally dropped the act and was going to admit he was disgusted with him. Bonnet brought him a cane and they escorted him to his cabin. Neither one of them were touching him anymore, but Bonnet smiled at him as he closed the door behind him. Fucking ponce. There, are you happy? You finally get Ed all to yourself.

He lay down on his side and wrapped the thin sheets around himself, grounded by the rough scratchiness of them. His cot wasn't as soft as Bonnet's bed had been, but that was fine. And he was cold without the warmth of Ed beside him, but that was also fine. His stomach gnawed at itself with hunger and he wished they'd at least left him water.

Izzy groped around in the crate that served as a bedside table and fished out a knife. He tucked it under his pillow, keeping the fingers of his good hand curled loosely around the hilt. It was his non-dominant hand that he could still move but it didn't particularly matter. After the right hand had been burned, he had been unable use it for a while and so had to rely on his left. The dexterity he'd worn into it hadn't faded with time.

He felt a little better armed, but he knew it didn't really matter. He was just as helpless as he'd been on Torres' ship. The only difference here was that he'd know the people who'd come to hurt him. And why wouldn't they? That was what people always did. If you were weak, they took advantage of you. Izzy had learned that lesson on Hornigold's ship, and on many ships before that. He'd felt safer on Ed's ship, where the fear he'd instilled in the crew had kept him safe, but he'd still hidden himself away whenever he ailed, unwilling to take any chances. Here, he had no such respect to protect him, and he was too weak to get up and find somewhere to hide himself. At least with the knife he might be able to get a stab or two in before they overpowered him.

He slept fitfully, the pain in his back and between his legs waking him frequently. Every time he woke up, panic rushed through him. Fuck, he'd fallen asleep, no, no, no, he'd failed, Ed was going to be hurt because of him- and then Izzy would feel the knife in his hand and remember that he wasn't there anymore.

He wished he'd let Ed give him more painkillers.

-

"I think I want to talk about it now." Ed was perched in the window seat, his knees drawn up to his chest.

"Okay." Stede said softly.

"I was scared. Blackbeard's not supposed to be scared. He's supposed to be powerful and brave and unbreakable. But," Ed swallowed around the lump in his throat. "When they caught us, I was so scared. I thought they were going to kill us, that they were going to kill you, and I was so scared."

“You seemed so brave.”

“Only because I didn’t know what else to do.” He whispered. Stede didn’t say anything else, only took Ed’s hand and held it comfortingly and Ed continued. “When they tied me to the mast I was... almost relieved because I’ve been whipped before and I know how to take it. But then, Izzy started yelling at them not to hurt me and I got scared all over again. I didn’t want him to get hurt because of me.”

Stede remembered what Izzy had said, about how what he’d done hadn’t been brave. He wondered if Ed knew. But, he didn’t want to interrupt, not yet. He’d let Ed get all of this out first before he put more on top of him.

“When Torres started whipping him, I just got so angry. Do you remember when he fell and Torres made him stand up again? God, Stede, he just looked so small and helpless and I hated that I couldn’t do anything to help him. I failed to protect my crew and now Iz was going to be hurt because of me.”

“Ed, it wasn’t your fault.”

“It *was* . If I’d just stayed on my ship, continued being Blackbeard, then none of this would’ve happened. Fuck, Stede, I should’ve listened to Izzy-”

“Ed, stop! Look at me! This wasn’t your fault.”

“But-”

“No.” Stede said firmly. “When you were captured, I thought that it was my fault, but the crew set me straight. They reminded me that this was Torres’ fault.”

Ed blinked up at him, his eyes filled with confusion. “Why would it be your fault?”

Stede shook his head. “It doesn’t matter, Ed. We were talking about how you felt. Go on.”

“No, tell me why you thought it was your fault.”

“I really... it’s stupid. Nothing bad happened to me, just to you and Izzy. So please. Continue.”

“That is the worst fucking load of bullshit I’ve ever heard in my fucking life, mate. You had to *see* that shit. You had to sit back and *watch*.”

Stede wanted to continue protesting, but he knew Ed had a point. Seeing anyone, especially someone you knew, raped and tortured in front of you was traumatic. He sighed. “I thought that... I felt bad that I’d ruined you. I made you stay, and because of that, you were defenseless.”

“Oh, Stede.” Ed reached out to hold both of his hands. “You haven’t ruined me. I- I’m the happiest I’ve ever been in a very long time.”

Stede smiled, his eyes damp. “Me too.”

Actually, the happiest he’d *ever* been. He’d never felt this way before, not with Mary, and never with anyone else. This soft bliss, this feeling of home, when he was with Ed. Stede leaned back against the glass, gently pulling Ed down so that he was pressed against his chest. “I’m sorry, Ed, I didn’t mean to derail you. Please continue.”

“Well, you saw what they did to him... after. When they were through, they tossed us in the brig, putting us in separate cells and he was so still. So still I thought that...” He trailed off, unable to force his tongue to form the words.

“He was dead?” Stede offered softly.

Ed nodded. "I couldn't help him, I couldn't touch him, I couldn't even check if he was alive. I think that that was when I just got... angry. I didn't want Torres to know he'd gotten to me, so I just turned all my fear into anger. And when Izzy woke up, I- I yelled at him, Stede. He sacrificed himself for me and I yelled at him."

"Horrible things had just happened to you. It's not your fault that you lost control a little."

"But Izzy didn't deserve that! He never deserved it! God, Stede, over the years I've just been so fucking *awful* to him. I used to lose my temper and hit him, hurt him so bad that I sent him to the medbay. I was just so angry and bored and lost and Izzy was there and he just kept coming *back*. We used to be so close, but fuck, Stede, I've fucked it up. I've fucked it up so bad." Ed's words dissolved into sobs and Stede pulled him close.

"Shh, shh, shh. It's okay. You realize now that you've done something wrong, and that's the first step to fixing it. I'm sure Izzy will forgive you."

"That's the fucking problem! He always forgives me, no matter what I do! I don't deserve that kind of loyalty!"

"Hush, Ed, yes, you do. You're kind and clever and brave and you deserve the world."

Ed started to say something, but Stede spoke over him.

"Darling, it doesn't matter what you did in the past, it just matters that you recognize that you've done something wrong and that you try to fix it." Stede stroked Ed's mane, running his fingers through his long, soft hair. "I believe you can do better."

"But," Ed's voice trembled. "What if I don't believe I can?"

Stede kissed his forehead. "No one ever believes they can change. Start by trying."

Ed nodded into his chest, his shoulders shaking as he wept. He cried for the things that Torres had done to Izzy, the things that *he'd* done to Izzy. He cried for the way Torres had hurt him, had ground him down and made him beg to let him touch Izzy. He cried because he'd told Stede how awful he'd been, and Stede had forgiven him. He believed that Ed could change.

Stede held him close and rocked him, his own tears stinging in his eyes. In the force of his emotions, he forgot all about what Izzy had said to him earlier, and he only held Ed tighter, whispering sweet nothings into his ear.

## Chapter End Notes

sorry for the hurt <3 i promise that there's only one (two?) chapters left until Ed finally realizes that Izzy is a fucking dumbass that thinks Ed hates him

also oh shit i accidentally spilled a love confession in my angst :/

# Chapter 10

## Chapter Summary

Roach feeds Izzy

## Chapter Notes

TW no self-harm in this chapter, but it is talked about

also finally some fucking comfort in this chapter! (i say as if I am not in direct control of the plot lmao)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Roach padded down the hallway, a tray balanced in his hands. He was half-humming, half-singing, the foggy memory of a song on his lips as he rapped politely on Izzy's door. None of the cabins, minus the captains', actually had locks, so he could've simply walked in if he so chose. However, he figured Izzy deserved whatever privacy and dignity Roach could give him, so he knocked.

"What?" Came the low growl from the other side of the door.

"Dinner!" Roach trilled. "Can I come in?"

"...I suppose."

"Great." Roach pushed open the door with his shoulder and set the tray down on the crate by Izzy's bed. This was the first time he'd seen him since he'd woken, and Roach's eyes flicked over his body, taking in his work. The bandages were going to need to be changed again. He was laying on his side, his good hand tucked beneath the pillow under his head, and the broken one laying dormant on the cot beside him. Roach glanced at it. Still bruised beneath the bandages, but it looked like it was healing okay.

Roach didn't know why Ed had let him leave the captains' cabin after he'd been so insistent on bringing him there. He'd just been told that he should take Izzy's meals to his own cabin instead.

Izzy was glaring at him suspiciously and Roach had a feeling that tending to his wounds was going to be much harder now than when he was unconscious. Izzy's eyes glittered with distrust and Roach was suddenly reminded of a feral tomcat he'd found in his teens. He'd come across it curled up in an alley bleeding to death, but it had still swatted at him when he'd tried to help it. Scars, long faded, laced his arms from the marks it had given him as he'd carried it home, determined to help it, even though it seemed to want anything but. At least Izzy didn't bite. Probably.

"I need to change your bandages. Do you want me to do that first, or do you want to eat first?"

Izzy glanced between Roach and the tray, seeming equally unhappy with both options. "The bandages." He said eventually.

"Alright, roll over then." Roach told him.

With a grumble, Izzy shifted onto his tummy, his neck twisted at an awkward angle to keep Roach in sight. Izzy didn't seem to trust him, and Roach didn't blame him. After what had been done to him, he'd be jumpy too. Still, it had to get done, and Roach knew how unpleasant it was to have people around you treat you like you were a fragile, broken thing, and he resolved to give Izzy a bit of normalcy by pretending that nothing was wrong.

He unwound the bandages around Izzy's chest, the same tune he'd been humming before rejoining him as a companion. Roach always hummed when he was doing something with his hands.

"How are you feeling, Izzy? Any pain?"



“No.”

Roach knew that was a lie, and he made a mental note of it to bring up to someone later.

“Bleeding? Gushing? General ickiness?”

“No.”

Roach hummed. That part at least seemed to be true. “Good.”

The cuts looked to be healing nicely, the black veins of infection almost completely receded. Still, he knew better than to think the danger was completely gone, and he’d brought Izzy some herbal tea to ensure that it didn’t come back.

“You’re healing well!” Roach chirped. “The infection’s almost gone.”

Izzy made a little noise of acknowledgement and Roach cleared his throat. He was dreading the next bit. The wounds on his back weren’t the only ones that needed to be checked.

“I need to look at your other wounds. Lift your hips a little so I can get your pants down.”

Izzy had been staring at him, but now he looked away, his eyes firmly fixed on the floor. “...Do you have to?” His voice was soft, almost scared.

“Yeah.” Roach said reluctantly. “I’ll be quick.”

Izzy turned his head, burying his face in the pillow and Roach took it as permission to continue. He gently eased Izzy’s pants down, just low enough that he could work. His touch was clinical as he spread Izzy’s asscheeks, trying to ignore the way Izzy trembled beneath

him. No infection. A little redness that came from unavoidable chafing, but the stitches hadn't popped out and the wounds remained closed. Roach gently tugged his pants back up, covering up the yellow bruises where they'd used his hips to get a handhold.

"Also healing well." Roach assured him. He wriggled off of Izzy's cot, intending to leave, but as he stood he realized that Izzy's hand was still tucked beneath his pillow. On the surface there was nothing wrong with that, but his stomach churned with suspicion all the same. "Izzy, let me see your hand."

He didn't move.

"Let me see your hand." Roach repeated firmly. He didn't know what was wrong, but the mere fact that Izzy seemed determined to hide it was sketching him out. He'd seen too many sailors die from injuries that they'd refused to tell him about to leave this alone.

Izzy responded to the barked order, hesitantly drawing his hand out and revealing the knife that was curled in it. Roach immediately plucked it from his fingers. A flash of fear shot through Izzy's eyes and he groped out for the knife, the muscles in his back rolling as they pulled at his wounds.

"That's mine!" He snarled. "Give it back!"

Izzy, still weak with the effects of his imprisonment, fought to take the knife from Roach, but Roach held it just out of his reach. He realized that he wasn't getting it and he slumped back against the bed, looking defeated like a kicked dog.

"Please..." He whispered. "Don't."

Roach wasn't giving it back. The fact that Izzy felt he had to hide the knife told him exactly what he was doing with it. It was understandable that he'd behave like that after the trauma he'd suffered, but there were better ways to cope.

“Where?” Roach asked. “Show me where.”

“What?” Izzy repeated in confusion.

“Your wrists? Thighs? Stomach? Show me where.”

“No, it’s not... that’s not.” Izzy paused to take a breath. “I haven’t been cutting myself.”

Roach didn’t believe him.

“Then what’s the knife for?” He asked suspiciously.

“None of your business.”

“Do you want it back?”

“Yes.”

“Then tell me what it’s for.”

It was a bit of a dirty trick Roach was playing, bribing Izzy with something he seemed to so dearly want with no intention of giving it back to him anytime soon. He wondered if he ought to tell Ed. He considered the issue of doctor-patient confidentiality, but Roach remembered that he wasn’t actually a doctor, so it really didn’t matter.

Izzy was grinding his teeth, his eyes flicking between the knife and Roach. Back and forth, back and forth. Eventually he spat. “It was to protect myself, you twat.”

Roach blinked. “From what?”

“The rest of the crew.” He snarled.

That was... unexpected to say the least. Roach felt something in his heart break as the implications of the statement settled into him.

“Has your crew... hurt you before?”

“Obviously.” Izzy snapped, like Roach was an idiot. “If you can’t defend yourself, people take advantage of you. That’s the way the world fucking works. The strong prey on the weak.”

That was a new feeling. Roach didn’t feel like throwing up very often.

He leaned down until he was at eye level with Izzy, still slumped on the cot. “That’s not the way it works here. No one’s going to hurt you. No one *wants* to hurt you. Do you understand me? You’re safe.”

“Why?” Izzy whispered shakily. His voice was full of genuine confusion and it made Roach feel a little violent.

“Because we’re a crew and we take care of each other.” Roach told him. “And if anyone tries anything, you let me know, and I’ll stab them and put them in the stew.”

Izzy blinked at him.

“What? We’re running low on meat.”

The light tone was intended to put Izzy at ease, (even if Roach meant every word he said) and the brief flickering of a smile rose to his lips. Roach pressed the knife into his hand, curling his fingers around the hilt and giving them a little pat.

“Now, eat your dinner.” He said playfully. “It’s getting cold.”

Roach had brought him chicken soup and bread. Nothing too heavy, but something that would fill him up. If Izzy managed to keep it down okay, Roach would bring him more substantial food in the morning. On the tray beside it was a tin cup, the contents still steaming.

Izzy eyed the cup suspiciously, tilting it this way and that as if questioning the mere existence of the warm yellowish liquid. “What is it?”

“Tea.”

“No shit.” Said Izzy.

Had that been a... joke? Not quite, but almost. If Roach couldn’t have genuine playfulness, he’d settle for sarcasm. He was beginning to realize that the comparison he’d drawn to the tomcat had been more accurate than he’d originally thought. It was going to take time to break through Izzy’s walls, but Roach was patient and he believed he could make this mangy old cat purr again.

“It’s green tea. Helps prevent infection.”

Izzy wrinkled his nose and took a hesitant sip. Something flickered across his face as he realized that it apparently wasn’t as bad as he thought it was going to be, and he took another sip, properly this time.

“Not so bad?” Roach teased.

“It’s fine.” Izzy set the cup back on the tray and picked up a slice of buttered bread instead. Roach knew that it would be fresh and sweet, he’d made it himself just this morning. Izzy wolfed the bread down, like he’d been starving, licking his fingertips for traces of butter. His face flushed as he looked up and remembered that Roach was still watching him. “Can I help you?”

“Nah.”

“Can you fuck off, then?”

“Nah.” Roach repeated, amused at the annoyed twitches that flashed across Izzy’s face. He didn’t intend to move from his spot until Izzy was done eating, however Izzy happened to feel about it. He seemed convinced that everyone was out to hurt him and Roach was determined to show him that that wasn’t the case.

Izzy elected to ignore him, picking up the soup bowl and balancing it in his lap. He struggled for a moment, trying to figure out how to both eat it and keep it from spilling with the use of only one hand. Eventually, he seemed to settle into a position, but still didn’t eat it. He stirred the broth with the spoon, glaring at it like it had personally offended him and everything he held dear.

“Problem?” Roach asked.

“No.” Izzy replied firmly. To illustrate his point, he immediately took a spoonful. He got about three bites in before he started to gag.

Roach scrambled to take the bowl from him and started looking around for a bucket, but Izzy shook his head.

“I’m not actually... I just... can’t eat that.” He spoke as if he was ashamed, and he refused to meet Roach’s eyes.

“What do you mean?” Roach asked.

“There’s too much... texture.”

“Oh. Well, why didn’t you say something?”

Roach didn’t mind that Izzy had things he didn’t like. He was used to having to deal with the crew’s varied diets, from The Swede’s complete hatred of any sort of tomato product, to the fact that Lucius rarely ate meat, to making sure Pete’s seafood allergy (which was ironic, but Roach digressed) was never triggered.

“Because it’s fucking pathetic.” Izzy snapped. “What kind of person gags on soup?”

Roach put the bowl down. “What can you eat?”

“The soup’s fine. Give it back, I’ll just... suffer through it. I’m used to it.”

“No!” Said Roach. “I’m not going to make you eat something you clearly don’t like!”

“You’re not *making* me.” Izzy said. “Just give it here.”

“No! Tell me what you like and I’ll go make it for you.”

Izzy ground his teeth. “I don’t *like* anything. Every food is equally intolerable.”

“You ate the bread.” Roach pointed out.

“Fine.” Izzy barked. “ *Most* foods are equally intolerable. Happy?”

Roach frowned, realizing that he wasn't going to get anything out of Izzy just by asking him. He snatched the tray up, making sure to keep the soup out of Izzy's reach. Fine, there was more than one way to skin a cat. And Roach quite liked a challenge.

## Chapter End Notes

ok, apparently I'm going to have to reevaluate my plans for the upcoming chapters because I didn't think this one was going to be quite so long oops. that ed & izzy talk is gonna have to be pushed back sorry! in the meantime, enjoy roach <3



# Chapter 11

## Chapter Summary

In which Izzy continues to be fucked in the head (who'd have thought)

## Chapter Notes

hmmm.....very self conscious about this chapter and idk why?

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Lucius took a deep breath as he stood outside Izzy's door, shuffling his feet awkwardly. Why him? Why did it have to be him? He *knew* why; it was because out of everyone on the ship he was the most well-versed in emotional issues. But this wasn't supposed to be his job! Roach was supposed to have relayed how Izzy was! But he hadn't. He'd stormed above decks, seized Ivan and Fang, and barricaded all three of them in the galley without another word. And the rest of the crew had turned to each other, worried about Izzy. The most any of them had seen of him recently was when Ed was carrying him onboard, a small broken thing, wrapped in chains. Roach was supposed to have told them how he was but he'd just fucked off, leaving Lucius to be nominated in his place.

Lucius didn't know how he felt about Izzy. He'd used to hate him, but... maybe not anymore? He didn't know. He couldn't hate him, not after he'd watched him sacrifice himself to save someone else, but Lucius didn't know how to like him either. There were two versions of Izzy in his head; the bossy, loud, annoying one, and the one that lay helpless and still, bleeding out on the deck. He struggled to reconcile the dual realities, because it just felt wrong, so wrong, to have seen Izzy like that.

He rapped lightly on the door, jumping a little when it just swung open. He'd never seen the inside of Izzy's room before. It was disturbingly empty. There was a cot in one corner, and a crate that served as a makeshift table for a lantern, but that was it. There were no little knick knacks, no indications of any hobbies that Izzy might have, no personalization to the room at all. It was almost spartan in its emptiness.

Izzy was laying on his tummy on the cot, shirtless and wrapped in bandages from shoulder to hip. He eyed Lucius warily like a wounded animal that had been cornered, and Lucius felt the hairs on the back of his neck began to rise. He'd have to step carefully.

-

Izzy glared at the interloper as he tried to figure out what the boy was doing here. Lucius didn't like him, none of Bonnet's crew did. Izzy's fingers curled around the knife tucked under his pillow, but it was a false comfort. The boy didn't look very strong, but it wouldn't take much to overpower him. Not in the state he was in.

"You here to gloat?" He rasped.

That was probably what Lucius had come here to see. To laugh at him and mock him, to kick a man he hated when he was already down. Coward. He'd never dare to do it if Izzy was healthy.

"What? No!" Lucius said. "I just came down here to check on you."

To see if he could still put up a fight.

"So... how are you feeling, Izzy?"

"Fine." He snarled. "Go away."

"Are you sure?" Lucius asked. "Cause you don't really look okay. Can I get you something? Water? Cool cloth?"

The water sounded nice.

But Izzy knew it was a trick. Lucius was baiting him; if he said yes, Lucius would laugh at him for being stupid enough to think he was serious, if he said no, Lucius would get upset with him for rebuffing his 'kindness.'

"Fuck off." Said Izzy.

Lucius swallowed and took a hesitant step back. He paused in the doorway. "Right, yes! It's just... we're all worried about you Izzy. We just wanted to know if you were okay."

"We?"

"The crew." Lucius paused. "Me too."

Izzy stilled. He didn't know what to do with that. It might have been a lie, but it was a lie so brash that he was almost inclined to admit Lucius was telling the truth.

"Why?" He asked, genuinely confused. Why would they give a shit about him?

"Why wouldn't we?" Lucius replied, seemingly just as baffled.

Izzy shook his head. If the boy didn't know how the world worked, well, then he would soon enough. But if Lucius didn't know now, then perhaps he wasn't toying with him. Izzy had to know. Preparing himself for disappointment, he set to work putting together a little test.

"On second thought," He said. "The water would be nice."

Lucius looked pleased to be given something to do, which was a reaction that Izzy wished he'd display more often. If he'd do even half the work that Izzy told him to, maybe Izzy wouldn't need to be up his ass all the time.

He actually came back with water, which surprised Izzy. He took the cup warily, wondering if Lucius had spat in it or something. But, now that the water was actually in his hand, Izzy was too thirsty to care. Besides, he was pretty sure people spit in his food all the time, and if hadn't killed him by now, it probably wasn't going to.

"Thanks." He mumbled, putting the cup aside. He wasn't quite as anal about it as the upper crust, but he did make a point of remembering his manners. It was part of the professionalism he liked to display.

"No problem." Lucius smiled. "Anything else you need?"

Alright, here was the second part of Izzy's test.

"You can stay for a bit. If you want." He lay back down, but he was watching Lucius closely out of corner of his eye, curious to see how the boy would respond. It wasn't that he particularly liked Lucius, or even trusted him, but he knew the rest of Bonnet's crew respected him and they probably wouldn't come down and try anything, at least not while he was there.

"Oh, alright..." Lucius said cautiously and settled, cross-legged, on the floor beside Izzy's cot. "So. Um. What do you want to talk about?"

Izzy frowned. He'd forgotten that people liked to talk. Fine, he supposed if he must, he may as well get information out of Lucius.

"What happened?"

The boy blinked. "With what?"

"The rescue. I don't remember most of it."

“Nobody told you?”

“Obviously not.” Izzy rasped. He’d been with Lucius for all of five minutes, and already he was starting to get on his nerves.

Lucius looked... confused, perhaps? But he told Izzy what had happened. Izzy didn’t know what to make of it. Tricking the Navy into helping them was a stroke of genius, and he was deeply surprised that it had been Bonnet’s idea.

“Well, the bit with the rudder chain was Buttons’ idea, but pretty much everything else was the Captain.”

Izzy guessed he shouldn’t be surprised. Ed adored Bonnet, and Bonnet adored him back, and if he was anything like Izzy’s boss, he’d move the ocean itself for the ones he loved. He wasn’t complaining about the rescue, but he did have a few concerns.

“What’s our heading?”

“Um... I don’t think anywhere in particular. Why?”

“Because the Navy’s not going to be happy that you tricked them. We need to find somewhere to lie low for a while.” Izzy didn’t know if it would be ironic or just plain depressing that they’d been snatched from Torres’ grasp, only to end up being killed anyway. “Go fetch Mr. Buttons and bring me the maps from the captains’ quarters.”

Izzy started to struggle into a sitting position, but Lucius reached forward and pushed him back down.

“Hey, hey, hey! I don’t think you should be moving around like that!”

“I’m fine.” He snarled. “Do as you’re told, Spriggs, that was an order!”

“I’ll go talk to the captains about it, okay? You shouldn’t be worrying about this kind of stuff right now.”

“It’s my *job*! Not that you’d know anything about doing one.” He snapped snidely.

“Hey,” Lucius crooned, rubbing Izzy’s shoulder. “Just relax, okay? I’ll handle it.”

Is that what Lucius wanted? Izzy’s job? Had he come down here, not to gloat, but to ensure that Izzy was too weak to try and defend his position while Lucius attempted to take it?

“See? It’s alright.”

He was still touching Izzy, stroking him, and it was reminding him too much of different pairs of hands that held him down and took what they wanted. He couldn’t see why else Lucius would be touching him, not to comfort him certainly. No, the boy was just trying to make him drop his guard so that he could use him. He was used to this game. He’d been on Hornigold’s ship right there with Ed, and the example that Hornigold set was carried on by his crew. He’d started to keep a knife in his bed after the first few nighttime visits, and he dreaded raids, lest he get too hurt to defend himself. Of course, he couldn’t avoid injuries altogether and once or twice he’d ended up in the infirmary, bribing older crew members with his mouth for protection. This was what Lucius was here for.

Izzy didn’t slap the hand on his shoulder, nor did he reach for his knife. He knew who he could afford to stab on the crew, and it wasn’t Lucius. The boy had loyal allies that would make his life hell if Izzy hurt him.

“Quit pretending to give a shit, and just do what you’re gonna do.”

Lucius stilled. “What?”

Izzy ground his teeth. He hated it when they played coy, when they pretended like they weren't going to hurt him and then did it anyway. He breathed heavily through his teeth, wishing that Lucius would just hurry up and get it over with. "My hand or my mouth, Spriggs?"

Lucius stared at him. "Izzy, what exactly do you think I'm going to do to you?"

"Same thing everyone fucking does." He growled. "Take advantage of the weak."

-

Roach scowled as he heard the galley door fling open. He spun around, brandishing his cleaver at the intruder. "I thought I told you..."

He trailed off as he registered the person who'd come in. It was Lucius, and he looked deeply traumatized. He slid down onto a bench, his face buried in his hands.

"Shit, what happened?" Fang asked, scrambling to the scribe's side and resting a comforting hand on his shoulder. "Are you okay?"

"No." Mumbled Lucius. "No, I am not. And apparently neither is fucking Izzy!"

"You've seen him?" Roach asked.

"Yes! Because you were supposed to come tell everyone how he was! But, you didn't! So, they sent me instead! And," Lucius ran a hand over his face, looking equal parts tired and horrified. "He thought I was going to rape him."

"What'd you do?" Ivan asked.

“What do you think I did?” He replied sarcastically. He winced, realizing that Ivan hadn’t deserved that. “Sorry, I just... I’m a little rattled. I told him that I wasn’t going to do that, and then I came here.” He sighed. “What do you think we should do?”

“What can we do?” Said Ivan. “He doesn’t trust anyone enough to believe that no one’s going to hurt him.”

“Not even you two?” Roach asked, privately wondering why Izzy hadn’t had the same reaction with him, especially after he’d asked Izzy to lower his pants.

Fang shook his head. “He doesn’t let anyone near him when he gets hurt.”

“Do you think we should tell the Captains about it?” Lucius suggested.

“Maybe.” Said Ivan. “But I don’t think Izzy would like it.”

“I don’t care if he likes it, someone needs to deal with this!”

Roach frowned as something finally occurred to him. “When I went to see Izzy earlier, he had a knife on him. He said that it was to protect himself from the rest of the crew, and he implied that his crew mates had hurt him before.” He looked at first Fang, then Ivan. “Do you two know anything about that?”

They shook their heads.

“No.” Ivan said. “It couldn’t have been *Queen Anne* he was talking about. Blackbeard always flipped his shit when Izzy got hurt.”

“Maybe he didn’t know about it.” Said Fang.



“Maybe not.”

“Well, I guess that settles it. We’re going to have to tell him.” Lucius sighed, absently reaching for one of the trays that Roach was in the process of filling.

Roach smacked his hand with the flat of his cleaver. “Stop it, that’s for Izzy.”

“What, all of it? You’ve got enough food here to feed a small army!”

“We’re trying to find something that Izzy can eat.”

Roach, unable to get anything useful out of Izzy, had retrieved Fang and Ivan, hoping that they’d have some insight into the first mate’s eating habits. It turned out they didn’t, but they were more than happy to help him try and find something. Roach had quite missed having little helpers.

Lucius frowned. “He’s been here for a good while, shouldn’t you know by now?”

“No, I didn’t even know he had issues with food until he gagged on the soup.” Roach shook his head. “I’ll bring it up with Ed later. I’ve got to talk to him anyway, to update him on Izzy’s condition.”

“Maybe you could bring up... the other thing, too?” Suggested Lucius.

Roach nodded. “But first,” He said, scooping up a tray, a determined glint in his eye. “No one goes hungry on my watch.”

also before anybody gets concerned about the navy catching up with them, i promise buttons is dealing with it with his magical sea witch powers

# Chapter 12

## Chapter Summary

Izzy finally gets some food he can eat

## Chapter Notes

bit of a shorter chapter this time around. mainly because this chapter is about izzy trying new foods and the author is autistic and has like three foods they like. the author is apparently also talking about themselves in the third person again...

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Izzy picked absently at a loose thread on his blanket, feeling bored and useless. He wanted to get up and find some work to do, but he didn't think he could walk on his own. He didn't know what strength reserve had given him the ability to get here under his own power, but it was now depleted. He wasn't really tired anymore; he was pretty sure he'd been asleep for a greater part of the last few days.

He craved something to distract himself with. Both Roach and Lucius had promised not to hurt him, and he didn't know what to do with that. He had to believe that they were lying, because if they were telling the truth Izzy wouldn't know how to behave. He knew what to do with danger or threats but he didn't have a reaction prepared for kindness. No, it was just safer to think that they were lying.

A knock at the door startled him from his thoughts.

"Come in." He allowed. Any distraction would be a welcome one.

Izzy didn't know what he'd been expecting, but he definitely knew he *hadn't* been expecting Roach, Ivan, and Fang to sweep into his room, bearing trays and plates. Roach threw together a makeshift table out of a plank and two crates, and they spread out the food across it.

Izzy stared at it. “What the..?”

“We brought you food!” Roach said proudly. “You wouldn’t tell me what you like, so let’s do trial and error.”

This was all manner of cruel. Why did everyone have to behave in ways that Izzy couldn’t figure out what to do with?

“You feeling alright, boss?” Said Fang. “We missed you.”

“I’m fine.” He answered automatically.

“Oh, by the way. Here.” Ivan fished around in his pocket and handed something over to Izzy.

His ring. He’d thought he’d lost it. But there it was, glittering in Ivan’s hand like the flash of a silver fish tail. Izzy took it reverently, holding it like it was the most precious thing in the world. And it was to him. It was the only thing he had left from someone he loved. The only thing that anyone had. Everything else had been swept from the world, burned up in fire and ash.

“Thank you.” He said softly, holding it to his chest. It was finally back to him. Back where it belonged.

Roach clapped his hands, breaking the silence which Izzy was grateful for because if he kept thinking he was going to start crying. “Alright! Where do you want to start?”

Izzy looked at the selection of foods that had been prepared for him. And wasn’t that a weird thought. That someone had gone out of their way to do something for him. He couldn’t figure out why they’d done this. There were platters upon platters, food heaped up on them in appetizing piles. Breads that were still warm from the oven, their crusts flaky and tender.

Vegetables and fruits arrayed in perfect patterns. There were those little sandwiches that Bonnet liked, slices of meat, small portions of pastas. And so many other things that Izzy didn't even have names for. He hadn't been aware that there could possibly be so much variation in food.

"I promise it's not poisoned." Said Roach.

"It's not." Ivan added. "We watched him make all of it."

That wasn't Izzy's issue.

"Why?"

They all looked confused, glancing at each other as if someone else might know what he meant.

Izzy clarified. "Why would you do all this?"

Roach crossed his arms. "No empty bellies on my watch."

"And you helped him?" Izzy turned to Fang and Ivan, genuinely confused.

"Of course." Said Fang.

"We would've just told Roach what you like, but we didn't know." Ivan added.

Izzy didn't know what to do with that, so he just turned back to the plates. Generally bread was a safe option, so he started there. He picked up a bun, studying it carefully. There was some sort of seed on top that he brushed off and discarded. More than a single texture was

often too much. He tore off a hunk and turned it around in his fingers, eying the different textures of the shell and the interior. It tasted... heavy. Flavored. Izzy managed to keep his gag reflex in check long enough to swallow, and then he dropped the bread back onto the plate.

“That’s a no then?” Said Roach.

“What was it?” Izzy rasped, licking the tops of his teeth to get every last remnant of it out of his mouth.

“Multi-grain bread.” Roach shrugged. “I didn’t expect you to like it, but I figured you could give it a go anyway.”

Izzy wondered how much of the food Roach had picked because he didn’t think Izzy would like it.

Ivan picked up what was left of the loaf and took a bite. Roach and Fang gave him a weird look.

“What?” He said. “If Izzy’s not gonna eat it, I am.”

“Fair enough.” Said Roach.

Izzy *was* comforted that whatever he didn’t eat wouldn’t go to waste. This was a lot of food, a lot of time and resources spent on him, and Izzy was uncomfortable with it.

“What if I don’t like any of this?” He asked. He wanted to know the answer, even if it didn’t matter. Izzy was going to pretend to like at least a few foods. He didn’t really want to offend the person who stitched up his wounds, especially right before he intended on asking him for a favor.

“Then we’ll keep trying.” Roach said brightly.

“Here,” Fang pushed the fruit platter towards him. “Try a strawberry. You’ll like those, they’re nice and sweet.”

Izzy knew what strawberries tasted like. He could remember climbing over walls into fenced gardens, one ear attuned for the bark of a guard dog as he shoved the red fruit into his mouth, his hands growing sticky with the juice. He’d been just a kid then, too young to get a job on one of the passing ships. He hadn’t eaten strawberries in a very long time. Fresh fruit didn’t carry well on long sea voyages.

He bit into one and it was just as good as he remembered. Sweet and firm and juicy. Izzy closed his eyes, and for just a moment, he was back in those fields, the sun beating down on his shoulders, the dirt soft beneath his feet. He had another.

-

Roach hadn’t really expected Izzy to say no to any of the foods. He’d expected to have to keep a close eye on him, judging Izzy’s preferences based solely on nonverbal cues, but he was a lot better at communicating than Roach had thought. Roach discovered that Izzy liked white bread, but not brown. He liked most fruits and some vegetables, although there was an incident with the celery that had Roach vowing never to let any of it so much as come near Izzy again. He shunned most of the sandwiches, although he did eat the ones that only had a few ingredients in them. He didn’t like sauces and he didn’t eat condiments, and Roach realized that Izzy hadn’t been lying when he’d told him he didn’t like a lot of foods. He noted that Izzy had a big sweet tooth, devouring the fruit and the more desserty breads, and he made a mental note to reward Izzy for stepping out of his comfort zone with something sugary later.

Eventually, Izzy had tried more or less everything and Roach had a list, albeit a short one, of things he could eat. He shoved the last bit of fettuccine in his mouth, which Izzy had pushed aside, likely because of the gooey cheese sauce, and helped Fang and Ivan gather up the plates.

“You did well.” Roach grinned. “I’m glad we found something you can eat.”

“We’re proud of you.” Said Ivan.

“Yeah,” Agreed Fang. “It’s super hard to try new things.”

Izzy looked immensely uncomfortable. He looked down at his lap, fidgeting with his blanket, and said nothing. Too bad, thought Roach. You’re getting kindness whether you like it or not.

Izzy cleared his throat as they were leaving, almost too quiet to be heard. Roach paused in the doorway.

“Can I... may I have more painkillers? My back hurts.” Izzy said softly.

Alright, that was it. That was the last straw for Roach. He’d known Izzy was in pain, but he’d been waiting to give him more until Izzy asked, in case he had some sort of past drug addiction or he just didn’t want it or whatever, but he hadn’t expected Izzy to ask so meekly, looking nervously downwards like he was preparing himself for refusal.

“When did the opium wear off?” Roach asked, kicking himself for letting Izzy suffer for so long.

“...Yesterday.” Izzy mumbled.

“Why didn’t you tell me earlier?”

He shrugged. “I thought I could be strong enough to deal with it.”

Roach opened his mouth to question Izzy further about the implications of *that* , but he quickly snapped his jaws shut and turned on his heel. Opium first, questions second. He returned with the bottle quickly, filling the syringe and injecting it into Izzy’s arm.



“Thank you.” Izzy said and Roach found that he had to leave the room right that very minute.

He went straight to the captains’ cabin, pounding on the door aggressively. “Captain! We need to talk!”

Stede came to answer the door. “What’s the matter, Roach? You seem upset.”

“Not you.” Said Roach. “Get Ed. It’s about Izzy.”

Stede gasped. “He’s not-”

“He’s fine. Physically. Go get Ed.”

But Ed was already wedging himself into the doorway next to Stede. “I heard Izzy’s name. Did something happen? What’s wrong with him?”

“What’s wrong with *him*? ” Asked Roach. “What’s wrong with you? How the hell could you just kick Izzy out? That man is more problem than person!”

“He asked to go.” Ed stammered.

“Well, go pick him up and put him back! Doctor’s orders.”

“What did he do?” Ed asked.

Roach ran a hand over his face. He didn’t even know where to start. “Can I come in?”

“Yeah, of course!” Said Stede quickly, ushering Roach to an armchair. “Have a seat.”

Ed barely let Roach sit down before he was all over him. “Now, what’s wrong with Izzy? Fuck, he didn’t do something stupid, did he?”

“No. Yes. Kinda? Look, let me just start at the beginning. When I brought him food earlier, he was hiding a knife under his pillow. When I asked him about it he said he was keeping it as protection and that his crew had hurt him before. And then he tried to convince me that the soup I’d made him was fine, even after he started gagging on it. I went to go find something he actually could eat, and Lucius came by to check on him, and he told me that Izzy thought he was there to rape him.” Roach sighed. “And he’s been in pain since yesterday and only told me about it five minutes ago.”

Ed looked horrified and Roach found himself sickly happy. Ed hadn’t known. The captain buried his face in his hands. “What have I done?”

“Hey…” Started Stede in a soothing tone. He went to rest his hand on Ed’s shoulder, but Ed only smacked it away.

“Don’t. I don’t deserve that. God, I should’ve fucking noticed. Why the hell didn’t I notice?”

“It’s not your fault-”

“I didn’t even know that Izzy had issues with food! He never said anything! Fuck, Roach, did you find something that he liked?”

“Yeah.” Roach assured him. “He’s been fed.”

“Alright.” Said Stede. “Do you want to go see him, dear?”

“I can’t.” Ed shook his head, sounding close to tears. “I failed him. He’s spent all these years by my side and I... I apparently don’t know anything about him. I thought... I didn’t know...”

“Hey, hey, hey. We can always, *always* do better. And the first step of that is talking to him, okay?”

“Okay.” Ed agreed, tears shining on his cheeks.

## Chapter End Notes

will izzy finally take ed's reassurances the right way? will there be more misunderstandings or will i finally decide to give you comfort? Place your bets now folks!

# Chapter 13

## Chapter Summary

more misunderstandings!! ahaha!!!!

some cameos in this chapter include roach, a vase that never did anything wrong, and izzys god awful self-esteem

## Chapter Notes

whoops meant to update this sooner accidentally fell down a gentlehands rabbit hole  
lmao

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Even this deep in the bowels of the ship, the air smelled of salt. If Izzy focused he could pick out more smells among them; the sweet odor of the cedar boards that made up the walls, the forever lingering scent of fish, the smell of himself. He wrinkled his nose as it occurred to him that he hadn't bathed in several days. His hair felt greasy, his mouth tasted gross, and he just generally felt filthy. He wondered just how much of it was actual uncleanliness and how much more came from disgust at himself.

Abruptly, his door slammed open and Izzy flinched, automatically reaching for his knife. Upon recognizing Ed, he dropped it and levered himself up into a sitting position, the closest he could get to standing at attention while Ed was practically on top of him.

"Izzy." Ed started, the muscles in his jaw working as he fought to keep control of himself. "We need to talk."

Well, there it finally was. Ed's patience with him had run out and he was to be kicked out before he'd even had a chance to fully recover. Was that last scrap of his dignity really worth it or would he beg Ed to let him stay?

“About what, captain?” Izzy swallowed, staring at the floor to hide the wetness of his eyes. It was understandable that Ed would exile him, after Izzy had begged and humiliated himself. Especially after he’d failed Ed and let him get hurt. Weakness had no place among Blackbeard’s crew.

“I was talking to Roach and he said that... that you thought Lucius was going to hurt you. Why would you think that?”

Izzy blinked. That was not at all the way he expected this conversation to go. He barked out a dry laugh. “Come on, Ed, do I really have to explain that one to you? Been hanging out with Bonnet so much you’ve forgotten how the world works?”

Ed slid to a crouch, his tone suddenly firm. “Iz, I’m being serious. Answer me.”

Izzy didn’t want to answer. He’d spent so long keeping that bit of his life hidden from Ed, from anyone, that the secret had congealed into the inside of his heart like a second skin. It was just another mark against him, that he wasn’t strong enough to fend off his assailants in any other way. But Ed already knew he was weak, so what was the point of pretending he wasn’t anymore?

He laughed dryly. “People used to do that. Before I had enough power to deter them. Pin me down and threaten to hurt me, kill me, if I didn’t let them use me.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Ed whispered.

Izzy offered him a half-hearted shrug. “It was on Hornigold’s ship. What could you have done?”

“Fuck, Iz, fuck! I don’t know! But I would have done something!”

“Would’ve gotten yourself killed.” Izzy replied.

Ed pushed himself up off the floor, collapsing to sit beside Izzy on the cot, and burying his face in his hands. At the sudden movement, Izzy flinched, half-expecting to be struck. He hated himself for recoiling; he wasn't afraid of Ed.

"Do I know anything about you?" Ed asked softly.

Izzy swallowed and didn't reply. He didn't know what to say. He deserved that, for keeping secrets and he had no defense for it. He liked to believe that Ed knew him, in the same way that Izzy knew every facet of him, but perhaps he was simply deluding himself.

"I didn't even know you had problems with food."

"It's not your job to know." Izzy pointed out.

"Fuck! Yes, it is! How long have we known each other? Twenty, thirty years? And I can't even be bothered to notice that?"

Izzy had very deliberately made sure Ed didn't know that. He made sure that no one knew it. He forced himself to eat whatever the ship's cook made without question, slinking up to the deck under cover of night and throwing it up later if he couldn't keep it down. Disliking a food wasn't a luxury he allowed himself and he'd have considered it a mark against him if anyone had picked up on his fussiness.

"Why didn't you ever mention that?"

Izzy gave him the same answer he'd given Roach. "Because it's fucking pathetic."

Ed just looked at him with an expression that Izzy couldn't comprehend. The first mate cleared his throat, kneading his hands into his thighs. He didn't have enough self-control to let this conversation go on any longer. If he left before Ed told him to, perhaps he'd manage

to stop himself from dropping to his knees and begging Ed to keep him. “I’m leaving tomorrow.”

Ed’s face twitched. He opened his mouth to say something and Izzy tensed, bracing himself for whatever speech was coming. Some comment on how disgusted Ed was with him or something. Instead, Ed snapped his jaws shut and recoiled backwards. He turned his head away, too quickly for Izzy to catch his expression and quickly rose to his feet.

“I’m sorry, Iz.” He whispered, pausing briefly in the doorway.

Izzy declined his head, silently acknowledging the apology. He didn’t know what Ed was apologizing for, maybe he was simply regretful that he had to let Izzy go. He watched Ed retreat down the hallway until his door drifted shut. He stared at his splinted fingers, wondering if it would even be possible to row a dinghy with a broken hand.

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Ed swept back into the captain’s cabin. He didn’t want to look at anyone, but Stede and Roach were of course still waiting for him.

Stede leapt to his feet, reaching for Ed’s hand. “Darling, how’d it go?”

“He’s leaving.” Ed snapped, jerking away from his touch.

“What? That’s exactly the opposite of what I told you to do!” Roach interjected.

“Get out.”

“What?”

“Get the fuck out!” Ed turned on him, snarling.

When Roach didn't move, Ed picked up a nearby vase and flung it at him. The porcelain shattered into a million shards against the ground and Roach scrambled to escape. Ed watched him go, his teeth bared. Good. Fucking run off, you stupid little cockroach. He spun on his heel and met Stede's gaze.

Ed froze.

Stede was looking at him with perfect horror. His eyes flicked to the remnants of his vase, and back to Ed. Betrayal and shock and fear read in his face. No. Ed had tried so hard to keep the kraken hidden from Stede. He'd let himself slip, just for a moment, but it had been a moment too long. He felt tears sting his eyes. No, please. He couldn't lose Izzy and Stede so close together.

“Stede... I'm so sorry.” Ed took a hesitant step towards him. “I shouldn't have done that.”

Stede swallowed. A shaky smile lifted on his lips, but there was terror still present in his eyes. “That's alright, Ed. At least it was only a vase and not Roach that got hurt.”

“I meant to hit him.” Ed whispered softly. “I missed.”

The admission broke what was left of his self-control and he slumped to the ground, pressing himself against the couch weakly. Stede enfolded him gently in his arms, rocking them slowly.

“Shh, darling, it's alright. It's alright. What happened?”

“Izzy's leaving.” Ed sobbed.

“Why?”



Ed shook his head, burying his face in Stede's shoulder. "He doesn't want to be around me anymore. I don't blame him. It's my fault, Stede. All of... that happened to him because of me. He did it all for me."

Izzy wouldn't even look at him anymore. And why should he? What could Izzy see when he looked at him besides a man who'd failed him in so many ways. He hadn't kept Izzy safe. He hadn't known about the trauma Izzy had gone through. Fuck, he hadn't even known about Izzy's food sensitivities. When Izzy looked at him all that he could see was the reason why he'd been raped and tortured.

"Ed." Stede's voice was suddenly very serious. "What exactly did Izzy say? Did he use those words precisely?"

Ed shrugged weakly. "No. But I knew what he meant."

"What exactly did he say?" Stede repeated forcefully.

"Just that he was leaving. But, Stede, he won't even fucking look at me anymore."

"Oh, Ed... I meant to tell you this before, but it completely slipped my mind and I'm so sorry." Stede said. "Yesterday, while you were gone, I had a conversation with Izzy. He seemed convinced that what he'd done was weak."

Abruptly, the pieces clicked with a sickening suddenness.

"He said that before too." Ed looked up at him. "When we were locked up in the cells together. He apologized for being weak. I told him he wasn't but... fuck, I've made a mistake. I need to go talk to him again. You need to come too."

“Oh, are you sure? I’m not sure that that’s the kind of conversation that benefits from company.”

“I- I can’t do this alone. I need you there. To make sure we... communicate better.” Ed spoke the word carefully, the shape of it foreign. Before Stede, he didn’t talk about anything. But he needed to now. And he needed to be one-hundred percent certain that Izzy *understood* when he spoke.

-

Izzy was working out how to walk in the least painful way when Ed returned. Whatever Roach had drugged him with had turned his limbs pleasantly numb and turned his pain down to a quiet buzz. It didn’t really hurt anymore, but he’d have to be careful not to tear out the stitches between his legs.

“Izzy!” Ed barked. “Sit the fuck back down right now!”

Before the order had even registered, Izzy found himself doing as he was told. He noticed that Bonnet was lurking just behind Ed and he absently wondered why Ed had brought him here. Before he could think too much about it, Ed pushed forward, wedging himself into Izzy’s space and forcing him to look at him.

“I need you to talk to me, Iz. Tell me why you want to leave.”

Izzy frowned, confused. “I don’t want to leave.” His eyes flicked to Bonnet, as he suddenly got what was going on. “Please don’t ask me to beg. Not in front of him.”

“Beg?” Ed repeated.

“To stay. I know I don’t deserve it. I’m too weak and broken to be useful to you anymore. But give me another chance, Ed, please.” He didn’t even care that Bonnet was still there. He looked up into Ed’s face, his eyes wide and imploring, his expression desperate.

“Stop.” He whispered.

Izzy shut up. What was the point of trying anymore? Once Ed had made a decision his mind was made up.

“You can’t go. I need you here. With me.”

Izzy looked up through his lashes, searching for sincerity. Had Ed chosen to overlook his lapse in strength in favor of Izzy’s usefulness? He dared to let himself have the faintest dust of hope.

Ed opened his mouth to say more, but Bonnet cut him off. Izzy jumped. He’d almost forgotten that the ponce was even fucking there.

“Izzy, what did Ed just say?”

“Are you deaf? There’s no way you couldn’t fucking hear him in this small fucking room.”

“I heard him.” Bonnet replied. “Just, humor me. Please. What did Ed just say?”

Ed offered him a nod, so, grinding his teeth, Izzy repeated it.

Bonnet shook his head. “No, I’m sorry. I should’ve been more specific. What did Ed *mean* when he said it?”

“He meant what he said.” Izzy spat. “I’m useful despite my weakness.”

“No.” Ed said softly. “That’s not what I meant.”

Izzy’s shoulders dropped. What other possible interpretations of that were there? Had Ed not forgiven him after all? Was that whole statement the lead-up to a ‘but?’

“I care about you. I don’t know what I’d do without you.” Ed explained.

And Izzy stared at him, wondering at the blatant lie. “No, you don’t.”

“You were telling the truth, weren’t you? When you told Torres you thought I didn’t care about anyone.” He whispered, his tone painfully certain, like he was solving a puzzle that he didn’t want the answer to.

“Well,” Izzy laughed dryly, choking down the lump in his throat. “You don’t care about me, anyway. We both know that you’ve replaced me.”

“Izzy, look at me! I care about you. I care about you so much. Whenever you volunteered to take my place I was so angry with you because I hated that you were letting yourself get hurt. I’m not worth it, Iz. Stop sacrificing yourself for me.”

Izzy blinked, struck dumb, as Ed gripped his arms, holding him tight. “I haven’t replaced you. No one could ever replace you. I’m sorry. So sorry.”

“You’re not supposed to like me.” Izzy whispered. “You can’t afford to be distracted.”

“Shut up. Just shut up, okay? Quit being a fucking moron.” Ed buried his face in Izzy’s neck. “I care about you, you stupid fuck.”

Ed pulled him closer, wrapping Izzy in his warm, soft embrace. Izzy didn’t know what to do. He didn’t know how to cope with this. Emotions roiled inside him, a storm muddying the waters of his heart. They spilled over and he couldn’t stop himself anymore. Tears ran down

his cheeks. He lifted his unbroken hand, trying to swipe them away before Ed could see them, but Ed caught his wrist. “No. Just cry. It’s okay. Just cry.”

Izzy did. Ed rubbed his back softly. When he spoke again, Izzy could hear the sobs choking his throat. “I’m taking you back to the captains’ cabin. And no more talking about yourself like that, okay, Iz? That’s an order.”

“Okay.” Izzy whispered. He leaned into Ed’s touch, savoring something he’d thought he could never have. He’d say whatever Ed wanted to hear, if it just meant he’d never let him go.

## Chapter End Notes

FINALLY now we can start getting the stедыhands fluff we all deserve <3

# Chapter 14

## Chapter Notes

ooh we getting into the fluff now

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“...I can walk, you know. You don’t have to carry me.”

“You can, but you shouldn’t.” Ed retorted.

“This is ridiculous, Ed. Put me down.”

“Nah.”

“Edward Teach. Put me down right now.”

“Okay.” Ed said with a mischievous little grin, and, fuck, Izzy should’ve known what that look meant.

“Oh! Hello!” Bonnet chirped as he accepted the bundle of first mate.

“Not. What. I. Meant.” Izzy hissed through gritted teeth. Bonnet was holding him like a baby, his chest tucked against his body and Izzy’s legs wrapped around his waist. He’d squirm if it didn’t hurt his back so much to move.

“Hush, Iz. Let us take care of you.” Ed replied.

Izzy wondered if that was an order. He pretended like it was. It was easier to melt against Bonnet's shoulder and let the tension flow out of his body if he'd been ordered to. Privately, he was surprised that Bonnet could even carry him. The man didn't seem the type to have a great deal of upper body strength.

It wasn't like Izzy disliked Bonnet, not precisely. He just... envied him. Badly. He wanted Ed to look at him in the same way he looked at Bonnet. He wanted to make Ed laugh and smile and yearn for Izzy in the same way Izzy yearned for him. He wanted Ed to love him.

Izzy could let go of some of that envy, now that Ed had told him that he cared for him. He wouldn't have said it if it wasn't true. Maybe Ed would never love him, and that was fine, Izzy didn't deserve to be loved anyway, especially not by someone like Ed, but he hadn't been replaced and that was more than enough.

Bonnet carried him easily back to his cabin, which Izzy pretended to be annoyed about. He put up a show of grumbling and swatting when Bonnet finally placed him on the bed.

"I'm not made of fucking porcelain." He snapped.

"Don't be prickly, Iz." Ed said. He kicked off his boots and wriggled into bed beside Izzy, pulling him flush against his body. "Hmm. You need a bath."

"I know." Izzy replied, but he leaned into Ed all the same. Ed smelled nice, as nice as he always did.

Ed's arms were loosely wrapped around him, mindful of Izzy's back. His hand rested on Izzy's hip, his fingers splayed possessively. Izzy dared to worm his way closer, tugging the blanket a little tighter around them. This was nice. It would end as soon as Izzy healed but, for now, it was nice.

"Well." Said Bonnet. "I'll just leave you two be, then?"

Ed made an unhappy noise. “Stede, come snuggle.”

“I’m not quite sure that’s the best idea... Izzy might not like that.”

“It’s fine.” Izzy mumbled. He didn’t have a right to lay claim to any piece of Ed and if Ed wanted Bonnet in the bed with them, it wasn’t Izzy’s place to say anything about it. Maybe, maybe, if Ed’s touch wasn’t making him feel so light-headed and fuzzy, he might’ve found it in him to say no.

Gingerly, Bonnet tucked himself in beside them. The bed was a bit too small for three and Izzy found himself being rolled onto Ed’s stomach. He didn’t mind, but he did jump when Bonnet’s hand came to rest on his arm.

“Oh, I’m so sorry, Izzy. I should’ve asked first before I touched you.”

“Why would you *want* to touch me?” Izzy asked incredulously. He’d thought Bonnet had just been reaching for Ed but... had that been on purpose?

“Why wouldn’t I want to touch you?”

“Because you don’t like me.”

“Oh, Izzy.” Bonnet sighed. “It’s not that I don’t like you. It’s just that, well, sometimes you’re a bit... overbearing. Prickly, as Ed put it.”

“...Sorry.” Izzy mumbled, because he didn’t know what else to say. He couldn’t deny it; it was true.

“It’s quite alright. I know that you just wanted the best for Ed, I see that now.”



“Loyal to the core, aren’t you Iz?” Ed teased lightly.

“To the ends of the earth, boss.” He replied, echoing a conversation they’d had so many times before. Ed would ask how far Izzy would follow him. Izzy would always reply the same way. To the ends of the earth.

Bonnet was smiling at them fondly when Izzy glanced back at him. “May I touch you, Izzy?”

“I still don’t know why you’d want to.”

“Because I do.” Said Bonnet simply.

“...Fine.” Izzy allowed after a long moment of silence. Ed liked Izzy, but he wouldn’t push his luck about being thrown out by pissing Bonnet off. He was trying to figure out what Bonnet wanted from him, but no answer was forthcoming. A whim perhaps?

Izzy closed his eyes, expecting to have to weather flashbacks and discomfort, but Bonnet’s touch was nothing like that. His hands were soft, the hands of someone who’d never worked a day in his life, so unlike the rough touch of a sailor’s. Bonnet massaged his shoulders, working at the knots that had built up in them after so many years. Izzy could’ve melted. Maybe he did. He was starting to feel like pudding, soft and boneless as the jellyfish that sometimes floated alongside the ship.

And Ed was touching him too, gently stroking his hair. Izzy whined, leaning into his hand. Bonnet must’ve done something to him. Used some sort of mind control or magic because he didn’t feel like himself. He felt... warm. Soft. Loved. He pawed at Bonnet’s hand when he tried to take it away, greedy for his touch. He was tired, but there was no urge to go and fetch a knife. He was safe. Ed would keep him safe.

Izzy slept. For the first time since he’d been captured, he had no nightmares.

Stede was a light sleeper. Louis had been a difficult, sickly baby and Stede had spent most of his infancy stirring at the lightest of noises. He blinked in the twilight air, the sun's rays bouncing off the water and through his window. Was it morning or evening? Either way, he still felt sleepy and he wondered what had woken him up.

He extracted himself from Ed's octopus-like embrace and padded out into his cabin. He jumped when he discovered Izzy curled up in an armchair, a book in his lap. He recognized the cover; it was *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, the play he'd been reading to Izzy when he'd been unconscious.

"Izzy?" Stede broached softly. "What are you doing?"

Izzy jumped. Apparently Stede had been being much quieter than he'd thought.

"Reading." He replied, holding up the book. He gnawed on his lip. "Do you want me to leave?"

"What? No! How'd you get that?"

Izzy shrugged. "Figured you'd want me out now that Ed's not awake to care."

"I don't." Stede said. "Stay."

Any animosity Stede had once held for Izzy had long ago slipped away. He couldn't hate him anymore, not after he'd sat by his bedside praying that he didn't die. Was it on Ed's behalf that Stede now cared for him? Maybe not entirely.

Stede settled down on the sofa across from Izzy, pulling his legs up onto it. "Did you have a nice sleep?"

“Better than usual.” Izzy’s fingers tightened on the cover of the book. “What do you want from me?”

Stede blinked. “I’m not sure I know what you mean.”

“I mean, why do you give a shit about me? You’re being nice to me.” Izzy shook his head. “Ed wouldn’t mind if you weren’t, you know. He adores you too much to ever be upset with you.”

Izzy didn’t sound like he was stating something as a matter of fact, he sounded like he was gently begging. Stede realised that, no matter what he’d said to Ed, Izzy still believed he wasn’t worth anything and he wanted them to stop teasing him.

“This isn’t about Ed.” Stede said firmly. “This is about you. I want to help you.”

Izzy sneered. “I’m not your pet project.”

“Of course not.” Stede replied. “You’re... well... perhaps a friend?”

“Pirates don’t have friends.”

“But if they did...”

“They don’t.”

Stede tried something different. “Ed’s your friend.”

“No.” Said Izzy. “He’s my captain. It’s different.”

“Try telling that to Ed. See what he says.”

“He’ll agree with me.”

“No,” Stede said slowly. “I don’t think he will. But, alright. Pretend we weren’t pirates. Could we be friends then?”

Izzy stared at the opposite wall, thumbing idly at a corner of his book. “I don’t know. I suppose. Not many people like me.”

“You try to make them not like you.” Stede said. “You think if you don’t let anyone in, you can’t get hurt.”

Izzy didn’t reply and in the growing light, Stede could see that he’d started to cry. Stede pretended he hadn’t noticed and went to go fetch them tea.

-

“For fuck’s sake, Ed! I’m not an invalid!”

“Stop complaining.” Ed retorted and dropped him unceremoniously onto the mattress. “You leave that bed when Roach says you can leave that bed.”

“I walked like three fucking steps!”

“Yes! Three steps too far! Stede, love, can you get breakfast? I need to stay here and make sure Izzy doesn’t try to run away again.”

“I was just across the damn room, Ed.” Izzy mumbled.

Bonnet was struggling to hide a smile. Yeah, wasn’t this just fucking hilarious? Izzy being bullied into bed-rest. “Of course, darling.”

“There’s work that needs to get done.” Izzy pointed out as Bonnet left the room.

“Uh-huh and the crew can do it.”

“No, they can’t.”

“I think they can survive a couple of days without you, hmm?”

“Where are we even heading, Ed? What’s to say the Navy isn’t chasing after us?” Izzy said. “What if some of Torres’ crew managed to get free? What if we run into another of our enemies?”

“Buttons is dealing with it. Chill.”

“Buttons talks to birds and believes in ghosts.”

Ed shrugged. “Aren’t most sailors a little superstitious?”

“Talks to birds, Ed.”

A mischievous twinkle shone in Ed’s eye. “Very judgy. Because I seem to remember catching you talking to a dolphin one evening.”

Izzy flushed and buried his face in his hands. “Shut up.”

“You still on good terms with your wife?”

“Shut up!” Izzy swatted at him. Was he never going to live that down? So what if he’d gotten a little (a lot) drunk one night and proclaimed his undying love to a dolphin?

Ed laughed and ducked away from him. He looked like he was going to make another smartass comment so Izzy swiped at him again. Ed caught his wrist and pushed him back into the bed. “I’m just teasing. Settle down.”

Izzy could meet Ed’s mischief pound for pound if the mood struck him. He grinned, practically daring Ed. “Make me.”

Ed called his bluff. He rolled onto the bed, straddling Izzy’s waist and pinning him down. Izzy struggled, just for the fun of it, but Ed had always been stronger than him. He entwined his hands with Izzy’s, pushing them flat against the mattress.

“Gonna behave now?”

“What do you think?”

“I think...” Ed mused, shifting both of Izzy’s wrists to one hand. “That it’s been far too long since I’ve done this.”

“No, Ed. Edward! Fucking- Hahaha, stop!” Izzy struggled as Ed buried his fingers into his annoyingly ticklish ribs. When they’d been kids, Ed had never missed an opportunity to tickle Izzy until he couldn’t breathe. He claimed it was the only time Izzy got rid of the scowl on his face.

Suddenly pain lanced through his body, so abrupt that Izzy couldn't tell which part it had come from. He yelped and Ed immediately froze.

“Iz? Shit, what's wrong?”

“My back.” Izzy gasped.

Ed helped him to sit up. He grimaced as he drew his hand away from Izzy's spine, his fingers wet with the blood that must have soaked through Izzy's bandages. “Fuck. I think we reopened your stitches.”

#### Chapter End Notes

really guys. howd u think that was gonna go u dumbasses

# Chapter 15

## Chapter Notes

why do i always write these chapters while half-asleep lmao if you see any mistakes in this, no you didn't <3

Roach was, understandably, not impressed. Neither was Stede.

“Really, dear, why did you think that was a good idea?” He chastened.

“Izzy-”

“Does not control you and you shouldn’t have done that.”

“I’m fine.” Izzy grumbled. “It’s not like I’ve never pulled stitches out before.”

“Hush Izzy, I’ll get to you in a minute.”

-

Breakfast was somewhat late that morning. Roach delivered it to a very silent cabin, kept that way by one Stede Bonnet. After having lectured both Ed *and* Izzy on the nature of their idiocy, Roach had left and then Bonnet had delivered the same lecture all over again. The withering look of disappointment was enough to make even Izzy feel guilty. Even if it had been him that suffered and not Bonnet.

“Can I sit with Izzy yet?” Ed pouted.



“If you promise not to roughhouse.”

Izzy scowled. “Are you seriously taking orders from him, boss?”

“Yeah, and last I checked you still take orders from me, so shut it.”

Izzy obeyed. He felt more comfortable now that the chain of command had been reestablished. Captain, first mate, and... captain's boyfriend...? Izzy didn't know what to call him and it certainly wasn't going to be co-captain. Bonnet was... fine, he supposed, but he hadn't done anything to earn that level of respect from him.

Bonnet sighed. “Of course you can. But be gentle with him, Ed. And yourself. You're lucky you didn't rip out any of your own stitches too!”

Izzy grimaced as he realized that Bonnet had a point. Izzy shouldn't have egged him on. What if Ed had gotten hurt because of him again? He'd almost forgotten that Ed had suffered any wounds at all; he was moving so easily and calmly.

Ed clambered up into bed beside Izzy, casually pulling him onto his lap and resting his chin on the top of his head.

“Your beard is getting in my eyes.” Izzy grumbled.

“That's rough.” Ed replied and didn't move.

Izzy sighed and resigned himself to being partially blind for the foreseeable future. Bonnet dragged a chair and a table over, displaying the breakfast spread across it with a flourish.

“Wow! Roach really outdid himself today!” Bonnet chirped.

“Roach was late.” Izzy pointed out.

“Roach had to lecture two idiots.” Bonnet replied and Izzy had to concede the point. With the way his back was stinging, he did kind of feel like an idiot. At least he hadn’t torn the ones between his legs. He did not want to be awake for the humiliating experience of *that* being stitched up.

“How do you take your tea, Izzy?”

“I don’t know, in a cup?” Were there different ways to drink a liquid?

“He means do you want sugar or cream in it?” Ed interjected, his voice a little muffled by the sandwich he’d already shoved in his mouth.

“Oh. No.” Sugar was a luxury that Izzy rarely touched. He would admit that he did have a sweet tooth, but he rarely let himself indulge in it. On an empty stomach, as his stomach often was, sweets would only make him feel sick.

Izzy’s hands had stopped shaking and he could now apparently be trusted with hot liquids. He took the offered cup and eyed it suspiciously. It was a different color than the tea Roach had given him, more brown than orangish yellow. He took a hesitant sip. It was... bolder than the other tea had been, but it was still passable. He’d have much preferred coffee but it would do. He looked up and saw that both Ed and Bonnet were watching him expectantly.

“What?”

Bonnet shook his head and quickly looked away. “Nothing.”

Ed pushed the tray closer to Izzy. “Eat something.”

Light and fluffy scrambled eggs, toast, bacon, sandwiches, crepes, and fruit. Izzy eyed up the toast, but bread wasn't going to be a safe bet this morning his churning stomach told him. He opted for a crepe. Folding the thin pastry in half, Izzy nibbled on it absently. It was weird eating this late in the morning. He usually woke a few hours before sunrise and he'd eat then, if he ate at all, so that any gagging and retching could be done out of earshot of the crew.

Izzy ate around what Ed went for, leaving the choicest bits for his captain. Dealing with that and his own eating issues left little that Izzy could actually eat, and it wasn't long until he'd decided that he'd had enough. He'd come back to whatever scraps they left him. In the meantime, he nursed his cup of tea.

"You didn't eat very much." Ed said accusingly.

Izzy shrugged. "Not hungry."

Lies. Izzy was always hungry, he'd just learned how to ignore it.

Thankfully, neither Ed or Bonnet pushed it and Izzy was left alone with his tea. The two of them chatted, quickly distracted by inconsequential things and Izzy gazed out the window at the sea, wondering when they'd kick him out. He hoped it was soon. He felt like a useless accessory, here because they pitied him and not because they liked him.

"-zy. Izzy!"

Izzy jumped, and it was a good thing the cup was almost empty or he would have had burns to go with his lash marks.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to startle you! Lost in thought?" Bonnet asked.

"Not really." He shrugged. Nothing important anyways.

“I was wondering if you’d like to get cleaned up?”

The memory of the last time he’d had a ‘bath’ flashed through Izzy’s head and he shook himself to clear it. No. It wouldn’t be like that. Ed would make sure that Bonnet wasn’t going to just dump a bucket of ice cold sea water on his head.

“Yeah. I would.”

Ed carried him to the bathroom, insistent that he not pull out his stitches again. Izzy grumbled and pouted the whole way. Bonnet fetched a bucket of water, gathered up what seemed like a million different bottles of floral scented goo, and gently shut the door behind him. Izzy almost laughed. What did Bonnet care of his modesty; he’d already seen Izzy as humiliated as he could possibly get.

“Here. Stand in the tub.”

Ed put him down and Izzy cautiously found his footing on the porcelain. He was barefoot; he hadn’t worn his boots since his capture. He wasn’t wearing a shirt either. Lifting his arms that high pulled at his wounds and hurt too much for it to be worth it. Besides, the bandages covered most of his torso anyway.

“Need help with your pants?” Ed asked.

He didn’t know what to make of this mother hen version of Ed. It was nothing like anything he’d ever seen from him before. Ed got angry when he was hurt, he didn’t stop and check up on Izzy’s wounds. Hell, sometimes he’d been the cause of them. Was this Bonnet’s doing? Izzy feared for Ed. How far would this go? How long before Ed became so soft and weak that he was vulnerable? This needed to stop before it infected Izzy too. One of them needed to be strong enough to keep them safe.

He rolled his eyes, brushing Ed off. “I think I’m okay.”

Izzy had no qualms about stripping in front of Ed. Pirate ships were small, privacy was a rarity. He made the mistake of glancing down at his bare hips and grimaced. Bruises, yellowing and starting to fade, encircled his waist in the shape of handprints. Where they'd grabbed onto him to hold him still. Izzy ghosted his fingers across them, as if he could just brush them away. They didn't hurt, not really, but the marks were a humiliating reminder of what he'd let happen to him.

"Why are you okay with this?" He asked before he could stop himself.

"I'm not." Ed snarled. "If any of those bastards are still alive, I'll kill them myself."

"That's not what I meant."

"Huh?"

Izzy shook his head. It didn't matter. He shouldn't have brought it up. "It doesn't matter."

"Iz." Ed said in that tone that Izzy knew all too well. He traced the lines of his bruises as he obeyed the unspoken order.

"This. You deserve a first mate that isn't so badly damaged. That's physically able to do their fucking job. That's not so damn *weak*." His body shook with the force of his confession and he braced one hand against the rim of the tub to steady himself.

Ed was quiet for a long, painful moment. "Would you think any less of me if they'd raped me?"

"Of course not."

"Then why do you think less of yourself?"

“It’s different. I asked them to.”

“To protect me.”

Izzy shook his head. “I liked it.”

Ed narrowed his eyes, confused, and Izzy clarified. “After you won their game, they took me into the captain’s cabin. Torres’ first mate... used me. I came.” He laughed bitterly. “I had to have liked it at least a little in order to do that.”

“So? That’s an unconscious reaction.” Ed replied, crossing his arms in a way that broached no further arguments. “Besides, didn’t I tell you to quit talking about yourself like that?”

Izzy remembered that he had and he idly wondered what the punishment for disobeying it would be. Before Bonnet, Ed had been liberal with them. He twitched the fingers of his unbroken hand, feeling phantom shards of glass still wedged within the flesh. That one had been for touching Ed’s things without permission. Blackbeard had been in a particularly bad mood that day.

“Sorry, boss.” He replied, clinging to the edge of the tub to avoid falling over when Ed hit him.

Ed began to tug at his bandages instead. “Lift your arms a little. I can’t get this one.”

Izzy held his arms up, just enough to be out of Ed’s way. The cloth strips were pristine and white, having been changed just this morning by Roach. Ed was gentle as he unwound them, forming a neat pile as he went. Izzy winced as he was finally allowed to drop his arms. Some of the lash marks wrapped around his ribs and there were stitches in his sides as well.

He jumped when a wet cloth touched his belly. “Ed, I can do it myself.”

“I know. But I want to. So hush.”

Izzy sighed but allowed the ministrations on his body. If this was what his captain wanted, then Izzy would let him do it. The water was pleasantly warm against his skin and the soap that Ed had chosen smelled of citrus. He closed his eyes and soaked in the tenderness. It felt good to be taken care of, even if it was something he didn't think he'd earned.

When Ed was finished, he hauled the bucket up onto a stool. “Alright, head back. I need to wash your hair.”

With a bit of trial and error, Izzy found a position that didn't completely feel like he was breaking his neck. Ed massaged shampoo into his scalp and Izzy bit his lip to silence a whimper. He shouldn't want this. He shouldn't be reacting like this. But he *did*, and he *was*. He let Ed push his head down into the bucket and rinse the soap from his hair, marveling at how very safe he felt. He closed his eyes; what heaven had he accidentally fallen into? Or was he simply dreaming?

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Ed smiled to see the blissful expression on Izzy's face. He wondered if Izzy knew that he was leaning into Ed's hands whenever he touched him. He was so touch-starved and Ed wondered how he hadn't noticed. He could, he *would* do better. He would look after Iz the way Iz always looked after him.

Izzy's eyes fluttered open when Ed took his hands away. Ed managed not to laugh at the brief pout that graced his face. “Bath's over. Come on, up you get.”

He watched carefully as his first mate stood and climbed out of the tub, knowing all too well that he'd follow Ed's orders even to the extent of hurting himself. Izzy winced getting out and Ed immediately scooped him up and helped him the rest of the way out. Izzy didn't like to show pain. If he did, it usually meant it was far worse than what he was letting on.

“Do you want more drugs?”

“It’s fine. I just... pulled something.” Izzy glanced away awkwardly and Ed winced as he realized just what ‘something’ Izzy was referring to. He felt a flash of guilt and he covered it up by tossing a set of Stede’s pajamas at Izzy. Izzy caught the fluffy bundle of cloth and raised an eyebrow at it. “These aren’t mine.”

“They’re Stede’s. Really soft and cozy.”

“Your boyfriend okay with me stealing his clothes?”

Ed felt his cheeks redden at the comment. He fiddled with his sleeves, the fabric nearly soaked, as he tried to hide his flusteredness. “Yeah.”

Izzy grunted, but didn’t quit giving them that same look. He’d change his mind just as soon as he put them on. Ed helped him get the bandages back on and then into the set of pajamas.

Ed grinned, wide as a cat, as he saw Izzy’s pleasantly shocked expression. “Soft, huh?”

“...Yeah.”

Ed looped a towel around his shoulders for Izzy’s hair to drip onto, and then he picked him up and carried him right back to bed. Where he would be staying put until Roach said otherwise, no matter how Izzy happened to feel about it.



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