

Rogan Phelan

"Slaver Inquisition"

"My seamen are now what British seamen ought to be ... almost invincible; they really mind shot no more than peas."

-Admiral Horatio Nelson, before his death in the
Battle of Trafalgar

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The skies are bleeding, and the waves are crashing against the hull of our clunky ship-of-the-line, the HMS Bellum. The wood creaks a gentle symphony of snare drums and flutes, touting the tune of justice not yet come to pass.

"Mr. Creedy!" I yell across the deck, past the scrambling, soaked crew.

"Yes, Captain Teach?!" He bellows back.

"Close distance! We'll cripple their ship and board them!" I yell, raindrops flying off my lips with every breath.

"Sir...I don't mean to question, but ain't it somewhat dangerous to be fightin' in the middle of a tropical storm?"

"I hope so." I reply, confidently.

I whip my long grey hair back and shove on my bicorn, as shipmates are yelling back and forth, scurrying to their battle stations. The enemy vessel closes in enough for me to stare their infamous captain in the eyes.

"KILL THEM ALL!" I yell.

"LET GOD SORT THEM OUT!" my crew replies, as we make a sharp turn eastwards towards the tyrants.

"Load grapeshot rounds...I want to shred their sails. Can't damage the cargo." I remind the crew, and we brace. A

massive wave pummels the deck, but it's the last thing on my mind at the moment.

We close in, able to see the stubble on the faces of the dirty yokels, as they taunt us and cheer.

"Prepare for a full broadside, Mr. Creedy. I want every round unloaded on their crew and sails."

He nods and repeats the orders to the firing crews on the lower decks. Suddenly, time stops. I savour the moment...I smell and taste and feel the sensation that is running through each of my men. Their worries, their thoughts of home, their fear of death, but above all, whether or not their powder is dry.

The piercing crack of thunder breaks the deafening silence, as the first volley of enemy cannonballs strikes the ship.

"FIRE!!!" I roar, as more shots ring out from each cannon, one by one, and smoke colours the rain black. One of the masts on the opposing ship creaks, splinters, and snaps, sending a sail down on the men below.

"LOAD!"

The crew shouts compliance and obeys. More iron shots shred the sails and the men on the deck. The sight of the loose limbs rolling from port to starboard demoralizes them. Suddenly, their lifestyles do not seem as appealing to them.

"One more volley should do, Mr. Creedy, then assemble a boarding crew."

"Will you be coming with us, Sir?"

"Mr. Creedy, I would not fathom otherwise."

Another volley from the opposition keels our ship violently to one side with its force, and several seamen cry out in pain as splinters and shrapnel pierce their skin. No one wavers however, as the adrenaline kicks in and morale is still high.

One more. One more volley...wait for it. Wait for it...wait for it...

"FIRE!!" I yell, thrusting my fist in the direction of the ghastly vessel. The deafening blasts of the cannons and their sonic booms are the crescendo, peppering their deck with dead tyrants and remnants of mast.

"Direct hit, Captain. Dead in the water, they are."

"Prep to board. Check your powder. Oh, and if you spot the captain, bring him to me." I order. They all nod and prep the planks to cross.

As they're laid down, we cross with caution onto the ravaged ship.

I carry six loaded flintlock pistols along the front of my coat, to look imposing. I grab one in each hand and hold them at the ready. I hear muffled crying and whispering beneath us...and as I look down, I see a wooden cage. Faint whispers of light peek through the clouds and brush across the deck, reflecting off the sorrowed eyes of the prisoners below. Slaves...all of them. Fresh from Africa.

"Mr. Creedy, take three men with you and free those souls. If you find the captain, restrain him and yell for me. The rest of you, let's make this a quick sweep. If it's not an officer, kill it."

We keep moving, fighting against the wind, and the rain flowing down our blue fabric. I spot the cabin, through the increasingly heavy downpour. We kick in the door, and move downwards out of the rain and blood.

We step down into a rather long corridor, with dashes of light pouring in through the cannonball holes. A man bursts out of one of the doors and begins to run. I draw, and fire. The shot hits his knee and he collapses immediately.

I run up to him, lift him up, and hang him out of the hole into the cold rain.

"We've been searching these seas long and hard for you, Mr. Lynch. In fact, I've grown quite tired of you..."

"Patrick Teach..."

"**Commodore** Patrick Teach."

"Well excuse me! The famous Slaver-Inquisitor's finally come for my head."

"You're in British waters, Mr. Lynch. Haven't you heard? Slavery Abolition Act 1833. Slave trade is illegal here..."

"Pfft, you couldn't care less about the morality of it. You send the slaves to court, sell whatever's on the Slaver ship to the highest bidder, and add the ship to your fleet. You're no less a pirate than I am, Teach."

"You sealed your own fate. I hold no value in the possessions of men who do not value life. They're Black, not animals."

"They're Black, and good business!"

I've had enough. I drop him into the raging, freezing currents below.

"Off to the Locker with you..." I whisper, as we head back to the ship.

"Mr. Creedy!! We're done here!"

Creedy guides the rest of the slaves onto the Bellum and acknowledges me.

"The ship is slowly sinking. Did you kill the last of them?"

"Yes, sir. The slavers are all dead."

"Good."

"Did you want to save anything from the ship?"

"No, let it sink. There's nothing of worth here. Oh, and uhm..."

"...Sir?"

"Tell them that the slavers died from shrapnel. Only we need to know what happened here."

"Aye, sir. Let God sort them out."