

83.

My jaw dropped in a moment of shock as I saw the *Perdition* suddenly appear and open fire. The next moment it clicked shut as I braced myself and began to prioritize.

“I want Drese on the forecastle intervening as possible! Mirash, get the volatile stuff from Mouse’s stash! Arnnaith, battle plan now. Gnar, be ready!”

Some had already been leaping into action, while my words shocked others into motion. Gnar would typically be the first to receive orders, but he and the war band were already kitted out and prepared.

I had all the warriors on the *Internment* and all the artillerists on the *Death’s Consort* with Sadeo. There was a reason for that: the *Internment* had no artillery. I had one ship with teeth and another with range when what I really wanted a single ship with both.

As I’d spoken, I’d focused on my seamanship skills and the flow of the wind and waters. As soon as my orders were acknowledged, I began adjusting my constructs to eek everything I could out of the hulk.

The first broadside from the *Perdition* had been absolutely devastating. Explosive bolts had been aimed for the portholes of the *Consort* and crippling their ability to return fire. Different bolts I’d never seen had been aimed at the gunwale and caused bursts of thorny brambles to take root and grow at an incredible rate into an area effect around each bolt.

Jones had good artillerists in his crew. It was only a few seconds later another broadside was fired. The *Death’s Consort* was leaking durability points like a sieve.

“Arnnaith, ideas?” I had reactionary plans, but I knew to listen to those with a talent for strategy.

“Submerge the *Consort* immediately. Sail straight on. Aim to put the *Internment* directly between the *Consort* and *Perdition*. Let it act like a sponge for his attacks while you transfer command to the *Consort*.”

I didn’t question him deciding we needed to abandon the *Internment*. The ship was incredibly useful against most sea monsters because of its perk *Containment* which was highly effective against blunt damage – a common weapon for monsters.

Davy Jones wasn’t going to smack us with a baton, though. He was going to tear us apart with enchanted munitions.

I was fighting a losing battle, I had no choice but to consolidate on my better equipped, more maneuverable ship.

Fishguts, to think I was calling a carrack my 'more maneuverable' vessel.

The Consort began to sink at my command, and I discovered several things. The first was a design flaw on the Perdition: the portholes for the artillery were arranged to fire either laterally or upwards. That made sense, given the ship was almost always below what it would fire at. However, that left a substantially sized opening as it was and there wasn't cause to let them aim down at all – Jones might as well just get rid of his hull entirely at that point!

The result was that as soon as my ship dipped below the horizon level, Jones' artillerists couldn't hit them.

Before we could rejoice, we were reminded that we were as new to this type of warfare as the modern navies, while Jones was the oldest hand at it on the seas.

Onagers opened fire, the catapult-like artillery on the main deck sending round balls in a high arc. Most of the balls peaked high above the Consort, but only a fool would think that they were misses. Once they were directly above the ship they flashed brightly and streaked straight down like a bolt of lightning.

Most ships could handle heavy weights hitting against them for a while. My cursed ships naturally more so. It didn't matter. These rounds punched straight through the main deck.

They weren't the only rounds fired, as I recognized some like the Enchanted Round of Mass that I still had stored somewhere on the Consort. I'd never gotten the chance to use it, but its effects were clear. The round would describe a normal arc like you'd expect a simple weight to, before the enchantment activated and it suddenly contained a much higher mass than when it fired, with all of its original velocity. They were tricky rounds to use because of the changes to their flight, but hit just as hard as a boulder would.

The last problem was that my method of submerging and avoiding fire was ultimately useless. Jones had probably invested millions of XP into adjusting his ship, the thing could rise to the surface like a cork and no doubt sink like a stone. It had no trouble adjusting depth to match the slower carrack. The only reason it wasn't still firing its ballistae at the moment seemed to be because they were circling the Consort like a shark circling a crippled dolphin.

Scarcely a minute had passed, and there was little we could do in the face of such an onslaught. Sadeo had tried, I'd seen some return fire as our explosive bolts targeted typical weak points, but Jones' investments had paid off again as the durability points and structural integrity of his ship were sound.

It was dawning on me that even sacrificing one of my ships and consolidating was less a viable strategy and more of a delaying tactic. Jones had gifted me my abilities; he had them better developed. I had one professional artillerist, he had a full firing team. I had a boarding team of professional warriors – who'd I'd been subconsciously counting on as my only true hope; but I'd seen the kind of professions Jones had offered me. My 'marines' might have an advantage

over the professionals the navy could host, but they couldn't compare to the powerful classes Jones could develop.

I'd broken free from my master's direct control, but I was still helpless before him.

"You can attempt to ram him," Arnaith said, correctly interpreting my expression and clenched grip on the helm. "But he's a hundred times more maneuverable than you and possibly twice your seamanship level."

"It wouldn't hurt to feint him, make him back off a bit."

Arnaith shook his head. "Any feint would leave you out of position to protect the Consort. He could duck around and fire on you both, as a matter of fact. Stay the course, Captain."

He was right. I took a breath to steady myself. This was why I had advisors – because not everything could be a half-planned trick.

I chugged a mana potion and cast my gust spell to fill the sails and shave some time off our intercept. I was carefully reading the minutiae of the wind and waves now, aware that a mistake would be an opening for Davy Jones.

A massive form entered my Domain.

"Kraken!" I bellowed. "Kraken incoming! Below, below!"

Nearly everyone had piled onto the deck to watch and prepare, now everyone scrambled to squeeze through the hatches and go below.

I didn't follow, not immediately. I could create a construct to man the helm and sail with my Domain, but the ship would only have the benefit of 10 levels of seamanship manning the helm. This hulk needed more than that to run interference.

Because I was still topside, I was able to identify the Kraken as its arms broke the surface around my ship.

Name	Kraken
Level	100
Health	186,000

Mana	3,450
Stamina	147,000

I recognized it. Long ago, when I'd first met with Jones and watched him sail away, this Kraken had shadowed him. Later, when I'd been summoned by Jones again, this Kraken had been pulling bodies from the remains of broken shipwrecks and eating them. It seemed that Jones had a favorite.

The surging arms didn't tower above the hulk as much as they would a smaller ship, but their size was still intimidating. They hovered there, streaking a cascade of water that misted over me. It seemed that Jones' favorite also had a desire to play with its food.

When the arms came crashing down on the deck it was with an intent to break the oversized hulk in half. They made the whole hulk jerk and shake like a sudden-onset hurricane, and it was only because of my sea legs and the attribute points I had strengthening my death-grip on the helm that let me keep my feet.

The kraken arms drew back after their smack, like the creature was surprised the ship was intact. Unfortunately for the creature, while I might not be equipped to take on Jones I was perfectly suited to counter it!

I recalled that the last kraken we'd taken had thrown a temper tantrum when it had failed to break us and prepared myself.

Jones' pet proved that there was a reason it had managed to attain the absolutely insane level of 100 – it didn't just throw a tantrum. Instead, its arms snaked across the deck and curled around each mast. It twisted and wrenched on those to snap them like sticks. Or it would have snapped them like sticks, if my perk didn't magically distribute durability points. The ship was worse off for the attack, but it didn't look it at all. Besides messing with my constructs trying to work the rigging around it, the masts and halyards were fine.

The kraken tried ripping the sails free – which necessitated me repairing the Internment's durability as well as the Consort's – but then it seemingly gave up. Its arms slipped below the water and the whole thing coiled around as though pondering the ship like a puzzle.

Then it swam off ... towards the Consort. It seemed like it wanted to test out whether both my ships had this strange resistance.

I knew the Consort didn't. I also knew that no amount of replaced durability points would stop that huge creature from breaking the Death's Consort to kindling.

What did I do? What should I do? What could I do?

I stifled the foolhardy urge to jump into the ocean after the kraken and try to fight it while also remotely managing the Internment. I didn't need Arnnaith or Gnar to tell me that was monumentally stupid and pointless. That left me with nothing to do but resign myself to the fact that I was about to lose the Consort and in the heat of battle there was nothing to do about it.

When Burdette had betrayed me he'd made a point about how the things I should have done were things that should have been done weeks prior, and that those choices in advance were the only thing that could have saved me. I hated the man, but I'd recognized the accuracy of his words. I'd tried to make good judgement calls since then, even if they weren't the most straightforward, pragmatic choice and even when my attempts came back to bite me.

Now I was seeing dividends from one of those choices.

As the kraken's arms extended for the Death's Consort and the few crewmembers on board, other arms extended from the deep for the kraken.

Cherry had something to say about a monster going after her friend.

The kraken changed its focus and its tentacles weaved and strained against Cherry's, their limbs resembling a monkey's fist knot. While their limbs were locked together, their mouths were rabidly snapping at each other. The kraken was older and much higher level, but Cherry's race was more powerful and even as a juvenile she held her own enough to keep its attention. She had abilities it didn't, and the kraken's insane strength couldn't crush her.

Her timely arrival diverted the kraken, but Jones was the greater threat and nothing had put him in check. I was certain that even if Cherry had gone for the Perdition, Jones would have countered her.

"Come on, you coward!" I growled. "Whatever you want, your quarrel is with me! Hash it out face to face with me like a man!"

Davy Jones has engaged your mental capacities!

You can resist your master's mental effects.

Speak of the devil.

My efforts at ripping free from Jones hadn't been worthless, as before I couldn't even resist when he crooked his finger. Now I had the option to flatly deny him. He'd put me in a position where I didn't dare to do so, however. I asked to speak with him? It seemed he was willing.

I was putting myself in the shark's mouth by accepting, but I had no choice. If Davy Jones decided there wasn't enough room in the ocean for the two of us, he would win.

I let Davy Jones teleport me away.

I appeared in a curved cave with glowing green moss hanging from stalactites and glowing blue algae in the water. This was where Jones had first pulled me, where he'd given me a choice of death or a life of cursed service, where he'd offered me my profession.

I spun around in time to see Jones disappear as he left the cave.

My mind took time to process that. Yes, my master was here. Or he was just here, because it seems he fled.

He fled?

No, not fled. After all, he'd once called this place his back-pocket. This was a place where he could tuck me away and deal with me later.

"Jones!" I called. I began to run around the corner of the cave, calling out his name. Scarcely a minute later I came across the disturbed algae where my splashing had started. "JONES!"

I was stuck here. Stuck here unable to do anything while Davy Jones did as he pleased. I'd fallen for a trap.

"Face me Jones!" I yelled, trying to get his attention like I had earlier. "You lily-livered coward! You carp-brained idiot! A dusted senile who needs a bilge for his trousers!"

My cursing got very creative as I pulled on my years of experience, all to no avail. My words didn't have bite enough to pull him away from his mission.

And being out of range, I lacked my ability to exchange XP for durability points.

It didn't take long. Two minutes from when he'd first portaled me here, I got the message I'd been expecting.

Your Vessel Death's Consort has been destroyed!

All invested XP has been lost.

It was gone. I'd expected the message, but it still took the breath from my lungs. I'd tried so hard to be rid of that boat that part of me was relieved. Yet it also left the fate of my crew at risk. I knew that Arnaith and Sadeo still lived, along with some who'd manned the artillery, but the question was whether Jones would execute them all, or target the Internment next and leave them all without any shelter.

"Talk to me Davy Jones. Don't make a move you'll regret."

"That sounded oddly like a threat," Jones said from behind me.

I spun around as he dropped a limply moving form into the knee-deep water with a splash.

Rhistel.

I felt a cold hand seize my heart as I knelt beside the elf and helped him to his knees, where he fought to breathe. I could see blood still oozing from his eyes and nose.

“Report,” I said softly, Jones simply standing there with his fists planted on his hips.

“Captain,” Rhistel rasped, latching onto the sound of my voice. “Davy Jones came from nowhere! We tried ... we couldn’t do anything! Sadeo told me we had to flee ... the vines surged through every hole and tore the ship apart ...”

“What of the men, Rhistel?”

He swallowed. “Sir, they’re either dead, clinging to the wreckage of the ship or trying to make it to the Internment before the Perdition.”

I felt like my chest turned to ice. I was about to lose my other ship, the one with nearly all my crew onboard.

I was responsible for those men. They’d been with me through my worst and yet decided to come with me again. I would not betray their trust. I would do anything for them.

The last time Jones had brought me to this place I’d been willing to exchange my freedom for my life. Now I was willing to give up my life in order to save those who’d put their trust in me.

My face was steel as I looked up and stepped between Rhistel and Davy Jones. “My men,” I said. “Are off limits.”

He regarded me; taking in my appearance, looking over my stats, and soaking in my brazenness. In the end, he chose to ignore my ultimatum entirely.

“You’ve swum outside of your waters for long enough. You’re interfering with my mission. I’ll either cull you here and now or have you yoked so tightly there’ll never be another question of who’s in command!”

“And what is your madman mission?” I said. “You always spoke to me like havoc and chaos were integral parts of your nature, that you loved them for their own sake! Yet you’ve been stacking the deck in this naval war – one-sidedly supporting the humans. You know that sending me to fight against the humans wasn’t a counterbalance for that. It wound up bringing more humans into the fight. All of this isn’t the rationale of a man who just wants to watch the world burn.”

“You went hunting for answers after you slipped your leash,” Jones said. He started to pace around, stirring the blue algae and causing it to glow brighter. “Did any of your answers tell the story of an Exterminator Captain?”

“I’m not familiar with the title,” I said warily.

“I was a top-class monster hunter in an age where the monsters of the deep roamed freely. I was the best of the best, not because of any of my skills or my ships but because I loved the wildness of the sea. I understood it.

“My home nation bowed down to the empire of Ma’ata Kamris, and I was in greater demand than ever. Those expansionist landlubbers lacked the salt to ride the waves and wanted them tamed. They took my family and locked them in a gilded cage to make sure I did as they wished. For years, I helped them.

“Then one day, I returned from three seasons spent at sea. I slipped into port to surprise my family and their jailors both, only to have the tables turned and be the one truly surprised. My family’d died, and they’d planned to use actors and illusions to fool me. I refused to be anyone’s fool, and the empire learned regret.

“One night I’d ambushed a troop transport, maddening a school of kappa right under them. Out of nowhere this strange trireme ship appeared. Nothing could hide from my sea sense even then, so I took it for some special stealth craft just to catch me. When I went to ram it though, the sea itself twisted so my ship missed. Then I saw that all of the oars were moving on their own – the ship sailed without any hands on board but one man. Taking him for a wizard, I leaped to his ship to attack him close!

“The moment I stepped foot on that ship, I ... I wasn’t myself anymore. That was the night I met the Ferryman. The experience was much like when I first plucked you from the depths. The only difference was the Ferryman was tired. He had once been but a man as well, and the centuries had made him wish for oblivion. He tried to make me his successor. His magic was powerful, but ... misguided. I would have perished that night if not for the sea itself stepping in, streamlining and tailoring the magic into the curse that I carry even today.

“In my arrogance I thought the sea had tasked me to carry out its will. I thought the taming of the seas had to stop, so I mounted a terrible campaign of retribution that broke the back of the expansionists and returned the sea to its pristine, wild state.

“And ... she suffered.

“I watched it over the decades. The spirit of the sea is a fickle thing and hard to understand, but I eventually realized the error of my ways. I’d let my need for revenge taint my thinking. She never wished for me to conduct the war that I did.

“And now after decades of waiting and planning, history repeats itself. The empire of Ma’ata Kamris comes again, only this time I’ll right the scales.”

“All this time ... you’ve really been supporting the humans.”

Davy Jones sneered. “I don’t support the humans. I support the sea, and this is what she needs!”

“I seem to recall you and the sea having something of an argument the last times we’ve met.”

“She doesn’t always stay the course she needs. You can’t always go with her fancy, sometimes you need to push back! She wanted me to take you in another direction. You were an unexpected asset – claiming you as my lieutenant galvanized the whole world into a current that otherwise would’ve taken them years to get themselves into – but you were far too flighty. I needed you to be a hatchetman while you were trying to plot your own course.”

He took a menacing step towards me and held a finger under my nose. “You went from wandering away to actively working against me, boy. I admire your grit, you’ve grown a lot since I first found you. But you’re making the mistake I made all those years ago – fighting for a side. I can’t have that. So today it ends. Your flagship is splinters. That other abomination you claimed won’t hold up against me and you know it! I’ll give you this choice once again: serve me completely or die!”

He pointed at the ground I stood on, demanding I kneel. I glared and remained on my feet. I’d spent enough time regretting my first choice to repeat it.

“You’re wrong on several points, Jones. Some I’m only guessing at, but of a few I’m sure. The first? You don’t have the authority to control me anymore.”

“There’s many types of control, boy. For example, the crushing power I’m holding over your head!”

“You’re trying to make me willingly join you again. Was it so long ago that you could make me do anything, even take away my stats? I broke free of your power Jones. I couldn’t get it started on my own, though. Your curse, your control; they were too strong. It took the sea intervening to open those cracks. The sea intervened between us, Jones.”

His expression changed. He understood me, and what I was saying. Rather than be angry, he looked like an old sailor giving a young one a warning of dangerous seas. “Be wary, boy.” He said. “Be wary of the powers you call on.”

“Don’t we both love her?” I asked. “Let the spirit of the ocean direct our courses. I refuse your offer, Davy Jones.”

The knee-high water we were standing in suddenly surged, and in seconds the tunnel was filled up. The water pressure continued to increase more and more, until the stones cracked and the spatial realm Jones had pulled us both into disappeared.

I was floating in dark water. Jones was gone. The tunnel was gone. There was nothing around me but liquid.

I was in the heart of the sea.

I felt the soothing balm of the sea's presence on my heart. I reveled in it. I appreciated it. Then without warning I was riding the crest of a wave a thousand feet high, hurricane winds tearing across the shifting mountainous landscape. There were ships below that fought to stay afloat, fought to avoid the destruction all around them. I came crashing down and they were utterly destroyed.

Then I was in tropical waters, with such a host of life all around that the greatest cities of civilization couldn't hope to match the teeming activity.

I witnessed a leviathan devour an entire pod of whales.

A doldrum of placid, unnatural stillness on the sea.

The harsh grinding of thousands of pounds of ice in seawater nearly ice itself, a landscape that would kill all that tried to enter it.

I saw a dozen extremes: life and destruction. As I watched, I felt a question hang in the water: did I understand?

I did. This is what the sea was. It was as uncaring as it was nourishing, as merciful as it was vindictive.

Any sailor could know this. I understood it. And still I felt myself drawn to it.

"There are not many who I would answer when called."

I didn't hear the words with my ears, but I understood them. "I risked it because I would not be Davy Jones' slave again."

"Your willingness to serve him the first time was disappointing. Always my prospects seek the blessings of their predecessor rather than my own."

"Your ... prospects?"

"Those who have a seed that can grow – the perk that could be more. Yet you surrendered your control to Davy Jones instead. Why?"

"Fear," I answered. "Fear and hope."

"Duality," the voice said softly, carrying hints of amusement. "Our vice."

The scene shifted again, and floated on the surface, staring at the two moons above. Now I could feel the ocean's longing. Abruptly the moons were replaced with Jones and I; him taking the form of the larger Callis he larger one, and I was the smaller Uropa. The longing changed to something else.

"We're embodiments of different principles."

“Yes, and you two pull on me and fight each other just as the heavens do.”

“Davy Jones has lost his way.”

“Yes, but perhaps not for the reasons you suspect. Remember, I am as callous and ruthless as he as well.”

I thought of my men, and what might wait for them – and me – now. “Was I wrong, then?”

“To pursue your course? No. But things will not progress as you expected. I wished for Davy Jones to cultivate you as his heir. The seasons are changing, and the role of antagonist will change to the role of support. He presumed to speak for me and claim you for his own.”

“I gave him my heart,” I said, understanding the implications. “If it was in his control, I wasn’t a candidate for you anymore.”

“And you also wrested it back.” The emotions conveyed were of smug amusement. “He has clung to it but dares not use it, for he knows that attempting to do so as you are now would cause it to break free from his grip entirely.”

“He wanted me to surrender so I would give him control again.”

“He would destroy you either way – the illusion of choice was to make you accept your fate.”

Well, if I’d considered it more I might have seen that coming. “Can I take it back from him?”

“He will return it when you see him next.”

“I ... why?”

“Because I have demanded it of him.” The voice carried a finality to it like the crashing of a wave. “Chart your course, Domenic Seaborn. Be true, and mind the balance that must be struck in all things.”

Water shifted around me, and I was pulled/pushed in what felt like a short distance but which brought me to the waters directly below where I’d started just a short time ago: the sediment was still settling around the anchor and chain of the Death’s Consort had fallen. On the surface far above floated most of the wreckage, and strewn between were all manner of debris being sorted and cast about.

I could immediately pinpoint the Internment, still intact, as well as all my surviving crewmembers. Jones had indeed held off on attacking my other ship until after he’d dealt with me.

Even as my mind processed all this, Jones teleported into my Domain. I tensed, ready to argue, fight, and defy him however I could.

I didn't need to say or do anything. Jones was already a defeated man.

"She found me wanting," he whispered, the words hanging heavily in the water around us. "She ... she relegated me to the depths." He took a deep breath and steadied himself. "For now, Domenic Seaborn, the seas are to be divided. I am resigned to the depths for my role. Yours is the surface. This was her decision. With your agreement, the two of us can meet to discuss exceptions."

He said it as a statement, but it was indeed a question that he waited for my acknowledgement before proceeding.

"Take my advice, lad, and accept that your time is limited. There's creatures thousands of years old in the depths, but the likes of us she replaces like the seasons. You are stepping into my place, as I filled the Ferryman's, as he filled someone else's."

"Our time is always limited," I replied. "This is simply an opportunity to do more with it."

He chuckled ruefully but said nothing. Instead, he stretched out his hand. My heart suddenly appeared in it. "I was told to give this back to you freely; it is yours to do with as you will."

He extended the organ and I took it. As soon as it was in my grasp, it began pulsating in rhythm with the blood circulating in my veins. Most would find the sight of their own heart in their hands to be incredibly disturbing – for me it was a relief.

"Do you have something to ask me before I go?" Jones said expectantly.

I met his gaze. "My instruction was to chart my own course, so I won't ask your advice. I consider most of our interactions to have been terrifying times so ... well, it makes it difficult, but I still thank you for the very first time, when you gave me the profession I have."

It was hard to say that. Given how much I'd worked to free myself from Jones, thanking him for what he first did felt wrong. Yet he had saved my life, and though his actions had changed afterwards he'd also given me a sense of wonder and freedom. Since it seemed that we were to be something like distant partners, I thought I'd wave a flag of peace by acknowledging it.

His guffaw in the face of my truce irked me. "I think what you meant to say, boy, is 'Davy Jones, will you please remove my curse?'"

I looked at him askance. "Why would I want that?"

We regarded each other in mutual confusion for a moment before Jones waved me off. "I'm certain we'll see more of each other than either of us wish."

I agreed. Once more would probably be too much.

The Perdition submerged and turned to sail overhead as Jones shot up to meet it. The kraken – still tangled with Cherry – twisted free and followed. The juvenile Charybdis was looking a bit ragged and let the older monster leave.

The ship submerged further and further. The only time it would rise to these water again would be with my permission.

I was the sea's avatar on the surface now.

"I believe," I said quietly, holding my heart. "That this was supposed to be a test."

A sense of expectation in the water surrounding me.

"I believe this belongs to you." Rather than claim my heart as my own again, I extended it out. I'd surrendered it to Davy Jones, but it was a representation of the seed the ocean had spoken of. A seed that could grow if planted right.

"I accept your loyalty."

The heart disappeared, and I felt as though my body soaked up a sea's worth of water, leaving me stunned and gasping.

Perk 'Heart at Sea' upgraded to 'Heart of the Sea'.

There were other prompts waiting, but they would have to wait a bit longer. My men were up there, foundering and directionless. They needed me – like I needed them.

As I shot upwards with all the speed my skill and stamina could manage, I sensed approval in the waters behind me.

I swam up to the Internment and emptied my mana pool summoning constructs to man the lines, deflecting questions from my crew on board until after we'd picked up everyone else from the Consort's wreckage and patched them up.

Once all the surviving crew were found, I searched the area for the bodies of those that had died, so there could be a ceremony and farewell for them. It was as we were accounting for the last casualty that we all heard it ... felt it.

BEWARE ...

A voice of the sea, like thunderous waves crashing into a Cliffside, resounded over the entire ocean.

BEWARE ... THE MAGICAL RESTRAINTS SEPARATING THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA FROM THE SURFACE HAVE BEEN LOOSED. DANGER AND EXPERIENCE HAVE BOTH INCREASED STEEPLY.

BEWARE THE SEA.

As the message to the world ended, every member of my crew, for some reason turned to me like I was to blame for it. Had it been only my advisors, I would have protested my innocence and explained what had happened. In front of the whole crew, they needed more than that. They needed direction.

“That’s our cue to look lively!” I bellowed. “It’s not every day the ocean’s kind enough to give a head’s up. Come on, step to! There’ll be thousands of helpless saps out of their depth out there, and it surely won’t be the navy saving their sorry hides!”