

# Fresh

by Lubnaa J

‘The new batch is nearly complete, expected arrival time: twenty-two hundred hours.’

‘Thank you, Dr Svedka,’ said the Captain. ‘Your research has been greatly appreciated. It is –’ he halted, rummaging for the right words, ‘– it is with great sorrowfulness that I part with you.’

Dr Svedka smiled. ‘Good luck with the operationments, sir.’ She looked at the gathered troops for the last time. ‘I am sure your men will perform just fine.’

The Captain tipped his hat in her direction, taking one last look at the citron-coloured hair he had grown so fond of; the narrow neck, small rounded mouth and voluptuous body glazed with a crystal-like encoatedment that made him expressly grateful for his heavily bearded face, for fear of rouging at the very thought of its sparkfulness.

‘Goodbye, Svedka,’ he said, as they took her away.

The Captain knew this moment was coming – once their purposefulness was served and they became but empty shells, once brimful with rumbustious promises of recreation and physical dependence, it was a custom that they be taken to the lands where Rees Ykle Bynn, Knight of the Triangular Arrows, was said to rule soup reem, which the Captain guessed to be a form of amalgamative democracy.

The taken ones would of course be duly replaced from the land the God of the Black Ties referred to as the Qué Bard (legend goes that they were once all inhabitants of this land post-creation, but little memory did they have of this faraway place, guarded as it was by

the heavysset gates of pure wood, very large and quite ugly). From here were harvested drafted servicemen from Russia, Sweden, Germany, Puerto Rico, Italy; many bore the same impersonation, same shape, same organic compound, same appellation. Svedka, however – he had never met anyone quite like her. Alas, the Gods of the clinking sounds and name badges paid no heed to love or friendship.

The Captain stood silent, ruminative. As Captain, his duty was on the front line, and past trespassings and drills alike indicated that, as a favourite, he would be one of the first to go, to be in time also replaced by another. Their world was not one built on endurance; it was a life of duty, of sacrifice. Hedonistic in principle, medicinal in flavour, toxic to the sybaritic.

‘ATTENTION!’ the Captain yelled suddenly, his thoughts uncrinkling. ‘All troops report for duty!’

As they trickled into formation, a blue-brown figure came forward, dewy-looking from having barrelled all the way from his lookout spot. ‘Private Fosters reporting for duty. Permission to speak, sir.’

The captain kineticated for him to go on.

‘Sir,’ exclaimed Private Fosters, ‘expected number in Main Room by twenty-three hundred hours: twelve-hundred, sir.’

Everyone knew that Mary’s sum was never to be disputed.

‘Very well,’ the Captain said, dismissing Fosters, who gave a salute before hopping back to the White Tower, where he was stationed at The Coolers under the command of Lieutenant Sberg, of Nordic origin, namesake to his second-in-command, Carl, descendant of the Ing dynasty.

Unrumpled by Fosters' ensightedly scarifying informationment, the Captain began: 'Tonight,' he spoke fiercely, 'we face an army thirsty for our necks.'

He paused, frowning. 'While young, impassioned and potentially violent, they are also slow and slightly dumb.'

Another pause. 'But the point,' he continued, 'is that they want to drain us, and we *want* them to drain us!' he yelled, to exciteful cheers.

'Night combat is not for the faint-hearted.' The Captain gesturicated for silence. 'Though you know the map by heart. We enter through the alimentary canal, where it will be dark and potentially disgusting.' He nodded. 'But we penetrate the centre, attacking the weak spot, right into the organ.' He gave Hunter, Meister of bombs, a knowing look.

'Some of you will make it,' the Captain paused, 'and some of you will not,' he thought of The Olds; the lost troops. 'But remember: you thirst for their blood just as they thirst for you!'

The troops whistled.

Signalling for their quietitude, the Captain spoke cautiously. 'While they want us to go down, they will, however, try to expel us, sometimes tactically,' he lamentated. 'But,' said the Captain, his blue cape floating around his pirate-like costume, red cotton velvet framing him in magnificence, 'we were brewed for this mission! And our mission is to infiltrate tonight —'

All spirits rose.

'— and attack tomorrow!' he yelled.

Everyone cheered incomprehensibly, in imitation of the enemy, prone to a savage language of nonsensical mutterings and strange repetitive rhythmic rituals of the body

shapes.

‘So blur their vision! Slur their speech! Let them wear your goggles!’ the Captain roared. ‘We attack at the break of dawn!’

The sound of bottom-feets clamoured on the floor.

‘Tomorrow we leave them weak,’ he yelled.

‘And dehydrated!’ shouted Cool-Hal.

‘It is by no denting of the axes,’ continued the Captain, ‘that we have been writ notorious in the pans of history, dating back to the philosophies of Jake Wan, the memoirs of Bee On Say and the revelations of the Tiny Temp-huh.’

The Captain stamped his left foot on top of the oak barrel, his sword standing proudly at his right side. ‘The Freshers are coming!’ he roared. ‘But tomorrow,’ he rumbled, ‘they will be not so fresh! Tomorrow,’ he yelled, ‘we hang them over!’

Cheered on by the words of their brave Captain, the gathered troops tapped into each other in ceremonial recognition of congratulatory merriment, though carefully, so as to avoid over-spillage at enemy base.

‘To love, life, loot!’ they chanted.

‘And to Captain Morgan!’ Mary yelled, from another tail of their division, stationed on the rocks. Arms at the ready, Mary was dressed in red, ready for battle; for Mary could punch; Mary was spirited; and Mary loved to get bloody.

Copyright © 2015 Lubnaa.J