

Mutiny

By C. Jade Wyton

Darcy Felix has been stranded on a deserted island with his crew of sailors and a rival crew of pirates for months. He's been trying to get the crews to work together to get off the island, but his captain is too stubborn to entertain the idea of it.... It was only a matter of time before Darcy snapped.

Contains mentions of death.

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Five months.

Five months on this godforsaken island, and nobody had come for them.

They must have been further off the trading route than they'd thought....

Darcy thumbed the barrel of his flare-gun and contemplated the single shot it had left in it.

Nobody knew he had it. They couldn't be trusted with it. When all the others had been bickering and searching the beached remains of the shipwrecks for food and other supplies, he had found the gun under a mangled piece of sheet metal.

The device had looked mostly undamaged and upon a once-over, the trigger still seemed to work. So he'd taken it, hiding it away in his jacket pocket so none of his crew-mates could waste the shot.

It was the most valuable thing he could possibly have salvaged; something that could alert a passing ship of the sailors' presence and get them home....

He couldn't trust anyone else with this responsibility.... Not even his captain.

No.

He was the only one with family back ashore. The rest of the crew, at least those who had survived, always bragged about having no ties to the land and teased Darcy for talking about his wife and children.

*Good gods, what must they think had happened to him?*

They probably thought he was dead.... And, honestly, it was a miracle he *wasn't*.

Few members of his crew had survived the battle. And even less had survived the storm that had ended it.

His captain had said that the silver lining was that, though many of the sailors had died, at least twice as many pirates had fallen.

Darcy disagreed on the colour of the lining on that cloud.... No death was *silver*. Death was the dark, black rumble of the storm cloud's centre. Not the light peeking over the sides.

He could never celebrate a death. No matter who it was or what they had done.

It was useless and petty, Darcy thought, to hold a grudge out of nothing but one's own pride.

Criminals could be redeemed. And they deserved the chance to prove themselves.... Not that the pirates had seemed to care about their redemption.

That blue-feathered veltacra woman, Juliana, had scoffed at Darcy's proposal to search for a source of water together. Though she'd kept her aggression solely in her words; sheathing her sword and simply walking away when Darcy had made clear his suggestion was serious. That had told him that there was at least *some* hope of cooperation.

He thought that if she had made it physical, he might not have let slip to her white-feathered companion where the river was the next day.

*Ah, who was he kidding?*

He would have told the man, regardless.

He didn't have to succumb to the constant petty squabbling like the rest of his crew all seemed to.

He could remain sensible, and offer and accept help where it was needed regardless of who was on what side.

Just like that woman, Daffodil.

That poor, poor woman.

She was a fisher and been caught in another storm last month; washing ashore and sparking new conflict between the two crews as both tried to recruit her as their own.

*Idiots*, Darcy thought with a huff. *Buffoons, all of them! We should be working together to survive....*

Daffodil had thought that, too. And she'd had the sense to stay neutral in a fight that wasn't her own.

She was a smart one.

Darcy sniffed and pocketed his gun; not taking his eyes off the horizon.

He recalled speaking about Daffodil with the pirate's young cabin boy— Or, was it cabin girl?

The two'd had a strange and brief conversation about Daffodil being transgender, and Darcy couldn't have been more sure that the runt of a kid was questioning *something....*

Luckily, the teen's questioning had made them more open to conversation than they had been before Daffodil's arrival. Darcy was able to gain their trust and the pair had discussed the state of their respective crews.

Darcy had learnt that the pirates had managed to salvage several crates of non-perishables, but had no means of creating stable shelter.

And in return, he'd offered the information that *his* crew had been lucky and found tarps, and rope, and enough wood to build several strong shelters in the woods just up from the beach.

*They each had invaluable resources that the others needed....*

It seemed a no-brainer to Darcy. He couldn't understand how nobody else seemed to see it.

At least the kid had gotten the point. And with some gentle persuasion they had promised to suggest it to their own crew....

Though Darcy knew without his own's cooperation that it would lead nowhere.

*Curse them!*

Darcy scowled as he thought of his captain's defiance, and stood up so he could begin his way back to camp.

The thought of simply marching over to the pirates grew more and more tempting with each passing day; though he couldn't leave his crew-mates behind just because his captain was a prideful idiot.

'Hmp,' Darcy gave a snort as he pushed his way through the underbrush towards the clearing his crew had set up camp in.

He could hear arguing.

A *lot* of arguing.

Then Darcy breached the tree-line and saw the cause of the noise.

The captain of the pirates was in camp having a screaming match with his own captain.

Both of the crews stood on opposite sides of the camp, weapons sheathed but hands on their handles, looking tense and tired as they waited for someone to push the fight further.

Nobody seemed to notice as Darcy entered camp— Except for the *one* pirate that was on his crew's side of camp.... It was the young teen again, looking at him with wide eyes and hands bound in rope—

*Damn it all! His crew had captured one of the pirates? Why would they do something so stupid?!*

'What's going on?' Darcy asked, quietly, taking his place by Terrence's side.

'That teen thought it was wise to suggest sharing resources,' the man said, motioning with a tilt of his head. 'She was halfway through introducing herself when Captain hollered for her capture.... Couple of hours later, her crew showed up.'

*Her, then,* Darcy made the mental note to himself. 'Captain didn't hurt her, did he?'

'Course not,' Terrence shook their head. 'Even the captain isn't stupid enough to hurt a kid.... I just want to know what could have put an idea like that in the poor thing's mind!'

'That was *me*,' Darcy said, simply. 'I suggested she talk to her *own* crew about sharing resources.... Didn't think she'd show up in camp on her own.'

'C'mon, Darce,' Terrence replied, his deep voice humoured. 'You're the one with the kids. You should know what they're like.'

Darcy just grunted in reply and pushed past Terrence to the front of the crowd where the child was being held by Jamie; a firm but friendly woman who he thought of as one of the more sensible of his crew.

'You alright?' Darcy asked the child as he moved to her side.

'Yeah,' she said with a weak nod.

'Hm,' Darcy gave a grunt of confirmation, before eyeing Jamie. Then, without a word, he pulled out his knife and grabbed the teen by the arm.

There was a distressed outburst from the pirate crew that distracted both captains and brought all attention to Darcy as he pulled the child out of Jamie's grip.

Then they went silent as he sliced the tightly-bound rope around the girl's wrists and gave her a gentle shove in the direction of her crew.

'Go on,' he said, loudly and clearly over the top of the quiet. 'Your intentions were good, even if the way you went about it was stupid.... Let me deal with it from here.'

The girl gave a nod and turned, hurrying past the two captains as she ran back to her crew.

Her own captain pet her back as she passed, as if making sure she was still completely there, before Darcy's own captain turned to him with surprise and anger.

'Darcy, why did you—'

'I distinctly remember, Captain,' Darcy interrupted, as loud as he could while keeping his voice even. 'A time when we were passing through the North-East trades route. You said anyone who would take a child from their family was a hopeless heathen who deserved whatever they got.'

The captain's lips pressed firm and tight as Darcy spoke, before finally curling in annoyance. 'This is not the same situation, Darcy.'

Darcy's own face turned in anger, and in three long strides he was in his captain's face, growling; 'How so?'

'Because these people,' the captain motioned to the pirates. 'Are criminals!'

'Because it being government-sanctioned suddenly means it's *moral*?' Darcy spat back. 'Hypocrite! That's what you are!'

'Don't you *dare* speak to me that way! I am your *captain*—'

'You're nothing but a man in a blue coat!' Darcy growled. 'A man who has failed, time and time again, to protect the people he is supposed to be responsible for! You're a hypocrite and a failure, and you're not my captain anymore, *Christopher!*'

At use of the man's name, the entire crew of sailors gasped— Though none moved or spoke up as Darcy grabbed the man by the collar of his jacket and slammed him into the side of a nearby shelter to hold him firm against it.

'I've sat by and watched you fail us for long enough!' Darcy snarled. 'Your pride is *killing* this crew! We want to go *home!* And all you seem able to do is flounder around and pick fights with the people we need help from most!'

'They're *pirates!*' Christopher cried. It was clear he was trying to sound authoritative, but the crack in his voice betrayed his fear. 'They're on the wrong side—'

'Quite frankly, *Christopher*, I don't care *whose* side *who* is on!' Darcy growled, giving the man a furious shake. 'I *will* get home to my wife and children even if I have to strangle the gods with my bare hands to do it!'

Then Darcy pulled his captain close, pressing his nose against Christopher's own and speaking in a tone that was slow, and angry, and serious.

'*And if your pride gets in my way, I'll strangle you, too.*'

He dropped the man, letting him crumple to the ground— And then he snatched the hat off his head and spun around to throw it into the campfire.

Both crews watched in silence as it burnt; the fabric charring and curling and withering as the symbol of the ex-captain's authority crumbled into ash....

'YOU!' Darcy shouted, loudly, and pointed to the pirate captain— Who jumped in surprise and stood up straighter. 'Go get the supplies you salvaged. Bring them back here and we will divide them equally. AND YOU!' he turned to his own crew; all of whom flinched. 'Get together the leftover materials and start building more shelters! NOW!'

Both crews sprang into action immediately; rushing to follow the orders they

were given.

Darcy felt a hand grip his pant leg, and looked down to his old captain.

‘This is mutiny!’ Christoper growled.

‘Yes, it is,’ said Darcy, tugging his leg out of the man’s grip. ‘Count yourself lucky I’m not locking you away— We need as many hands as possible to get through this, so make yourself useful and go find more firewood.’

‘I’m not following orders from you—’

‘I’m in charge, now!’ Darcy snapped, grabbing Christoper by a horn and yanking the man to his feet. He dragged him viciously towards the woods before shoving him forward and shouting; ‘And you *will* cooperate!’

—END—

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