

Amethyst looked to the *Raven* and beckoned for Darien to join her.

“What’s this? A package?” the captain said with a laugh.

Darien moved across the plank.

“If ye also wish to join, ye must also prove yerself. Are yer skills tha same as yer companion?” he demanded.

Darien drew his sword. “Care to challenge me?” he asked, his voice calm.

The captain paused, assessing Darien closely.

Perhaps he was debating the wisdom of accepting the challenge. Or perhaps debating how he might handle a loss. Amethyst dismissed that thought. This captain seemed the type to think a loss for himself impossible.

The captain drew his sword. “Aye,” he responded to Darien with a grin. “Defeat me, and ye’re welcome aboard.”

Amethyst stepped back, as did the *Bloody Moon*’s crew. She noticed the way Darien’s eyes flicked over the captain. She knew he was silently evaluating him, trying to see his potential weaknesses.

Darien didn’t wait for the captain to attack. He stepped forward and the captain parried, a confident smirk finding itself onto his lips. Darien attacked once more, his footwork beginning a dance as he maintained balance and swung wide.

The captain continued to block, not quite attacking his opponent. Was he trying to wear Darien down by not allowing him to land a blow?

Amethyst had sparred with Darien enough times to know he was only beginning. A sweat hadn’t even broken on his brow yet.

She grinned silently to herself as Darien’s eyes narrowed slightly and his attacks become more serious, swift, and steady. He had learned the captain’s pattern of movements.

The captain’s confident smirk vanished as he fought back, their blades colliding.

Darien narrowly avoided a blow to his shoulder and the captain in turn dodged one to his face.

The captain lunged in, and danced away, but Darien followed, thrusting his sword inward.

The captain’s parry glanced off Darien’s blade leaving a sharp wound in his arm.

However the captain’s sword plunged downward gashing Darien’s thigh.

The height of the battle seemed to have dulled their senses as neither of them showed their pain.

The fight continued, and both seemed equally matched.

Their breathing became heavier, their skin beginning to glisten in the brilliant sunlight.

Darien was pushing the captain backward, cornering him against the mainmast.

The captain snarled, ducked and whirled, attempting to land a blow to Darien’s side.

Darien didn’t falter, but rather lunged back, blocking the captain’s blade.

The captain moved in again, a flash of silver glimmering as a knife was produced from his person in combination with his sword’s attack.

Darien blocked the captain’s sword, and Amethyst wasn’t sure if it was blind instinct, the flash of silver in the sunlight, or his heightened senses in battle, but she couldn’t help the wave of relief crashing over her as he moved to his right, the knife slicing through the air beside his neck and he grasped the captain’s wrist which gripped his sword.

Darien’s thumb pressed into the captain’s wrist, causing his sword to clatter to the deck as the captain hissed, attempting to strike with his knife once more.

Darien gripped the captain's other arm, releasing the arm he had previously grabbed and landed a solid punch to his gut with his now free hand.

The captain grimaced but attempted to quickly regain his composure. He stepped back, reaching down to pick up his sword.

Amethyst smirked.

Served him right for trying to fight dirty.

Perhaps the captain had hoped no one would notice. Or perhaps she had been right and he really was the type to think a loss for himself impossible. Perhaps he had realized the falsity of the notion and decided to change his tactic.

In either case, she rushed toward Darien as soon as the duel was over, partially in case they suddenly found themselves under attack for the captain's defeat.

The captain straightened himself, returning his sword to its sheath.

"Well fought," he said with a grin as though he had indeed won the challenge. He then turned his gaze toward the *Raven's Call* once more. "Captain Ehren! Ye let these go with such ease? Perhaps ye mean to cast away yer filth?"

"Nay Captain Siilas!" Ehren called back. "Ye'll see fer yerself their worth and value. I let them go that they may follow their decided path."

At that Captain Siilas, as Ehren had called him, fell silent a moment, eyes scrutinizing Amethyst and Darien.

Finally, he spoke once more. "Very well. Welcome aboard!"

He turned then, waving a hand. "Set sail, ye dogs! We continue due east!"

"Aye, aye!" resounded from the crew.

Amethyst and Darien moved toward the rest of the crew and began to aid with their duties.

As they sailed away, Amethyst glanced back toward the *Raven's Call*. She couldn't think of regrets or what Ehren was thinking. She needed to move on for her own future. And with that, she pushed thoughts of it aside.