

Chapter one: I Sail the High Seas...on a Pile of Driftwood

I, Magic Lizard, glanced curiously downward at all the people looking curiously *upward* at myself.

In case you're a little out of the loop, I work for an adventure group called Poptropica. The majority of my adventures involve time travel, by which I am capable of with a small, bronze pocket watch; and *all* of them include my large, state-of-the-art yellow blimp with the word "Poptropica" inscribed all across. So everyone knew who I was with as soon as I landed(crashed.) Which isn't always the best strategy.

Now I was on a mission titled "Project Skullduggery" Which had something to do with pirates. I didn't pay attention during the opening instructional speech.

Today though, I had landed(crashed) right on the top of a small portico. The portico was built over a long wooden bridge, both sides roped to slender stakes in the grassy terrain. I slid out of my overturned blimp-basket, and found that I had an audience.

A group of hungry looking villagers all glared up at me. But they seemed more frightened than angry. A few of the older women had fainted and were being fanned by the younger ladies.

A hushed murmur took over the crowd as a figure pushed their way to the front.

A man most likely in his late thirties appeared at the front of the crowd, looking gaunt but confident.

He held up a thin hand and spoke one, questioning word:" M'lady?"

I smiled, mischief practically oozing from the corners of my upturned mouth.

"No sir." I shook my head, then I did what I knew they weren't expecting: I took a few large steps back, digging the heels of my combat boots into the iron roof, envisioning myself doing the stunt I'd practiced numerous times. I took one more step back, just to ensure my start off... and then I was falling.

Tumbling off the roof of the portico.

In the next instant though, I was put out of my misery.

I landed flat on my butt in a small pond-like body of water, leading off the edge of a sandy cliff.

However, I was not wet. I never was.

Being a child of Poseidon, I could come to almost no harm in the water... except being body slammed by a Hydra... but that's another story altogether.

The townspeople were a noisy hubbub of shrieks and curious theories as to how I was not wet.

The man I'd spoken ever so plaintively to before now rushed over and offered his hand once more, except this time he gave me no choice as to take it or not, he simply grabbed my arm and pulled me out of the pond.

Now up close, I got my first real look at man's appearance.

He had long, sandy blonde hair pulled into an odd looking ponytail, and sea green eyes. His expression grim; a crooked line of freckles crossed his nose and continued on both sides of his face.

He wore a weather beaten jacket like those I'd seen confederates wearing in photos back in history class.

The pockets were rimmed with small gold leaf designs, and the collar circled his whole neck, vertical for almost three full inches.

He had off-white pants with rust covered stains, most likely from the dirt.

The man's shoes were almost like a pair of Mary Jane's, except instead of having an opening in the middle, these were closed in a consistent string of laces intertwining back and forth.

He gazed curiously at me, then observed, "You are not wet?"

My eyes widened and he chuckled.

"W-water resistant clothes, sir." I lied.

He nodded, uncertainty clear in his mannerism.

"I... I've come to help with..." I glanced down at my palm and saw in scrawled, rushed print the words 'Pirate issue'

"I've come about...the pirates."

A horrified gasp rose from the crowd, and about two dozen spectators backed away from me.

But the man directly in front of me did not seem slighted in the least upon hearing those words.

"Ah. Then you are speaking with the right man."

I cocked one of my eyebrows self consciously, and the man must have noticed.

"I'm the governor, Miss." He smiled.

The governor of Fort Ridley, Johnathon Grace, explained to me that a deranged, waterlogged pirate by the name of 'Captain Crawfish' was trolling the high seas, though he no doubt had other aliases.

Johnathan placed a heavy sack in my cupped hands, smiled, then departed from me.

He had left me at a small building.

I glanced at the sign above the door. I couldn't understand the old English, but it looked suspiciously like a Kroger sign.

I pushed on the old wooden door, curious to see what was beyond it.

It was a general store.

Everything from corn to what I think was toothpaste could be found in the Fort Ridley "general mart".

I eyed the sack in my upturned hand suspiciously, then loosened the string around the top.

I gasped; my eyes wide open.

Inside was about forty small, pure gold coins.

A little too smugly, I sauntered up to the wooden counter and flung down the pouch.

The clerk gave me a gaze as if to say, *what is this, I suppose?*

I smiled a lopsided grin and loosened the satchel as much as possible.

"What can a girl buy with this much?"

I sashayed confidently through the town, getting little gasps and murmurs about who I was all through my halibut of followers.

No one knew.

All they saw was a very richly dressed girl.

She wore a large red cavalier hat with a huge white plume coming from the side. It hung low over her face, just barely revealing her electric blue eyes. Small brown freckles danced across her nose and cheeks, and her nose held an odd crook.

Her smile was sideways; almost sinister. But her pale pink lips and flushed cheeks made her seem more ethereal and delicate.

Medium length dark brown hair streamed down her back, and flopped all about as she walked.

She was dressed in a blood red blouse tucked in at her waste. Her sleeves streamed down just slightly past her fingertips, which she curled and uncurled again and again.

Her long legs bobbed up and down, looking like dark tendrils attaching from the bottom of her torso.

For bottoms she wore fitted black silk sailors pants, for that was what she was now.

It was what she had to become.

And that girl was me.

I finally reached the edge of town, tired of keeping up such a haughty air.

I looked all around for the ship that was to be mine. But... I saw none.

Just a sad looking pile of driftwood that was floating carelessly towards the bank.

Except... there was a rope attached to it.

I peered more carefully at the brown blob.

It wasn't a pile of driftwood.

It was a raft. A sad looking pile of raft.

Behind me, I heard panting and racing footsteps. I turned.

There was a boy, maybe eight? running at me. He seemed quite a jappery young fellow, seldom frowning. He stopped just behind me and smiled warmly.

"Are you Ms.Lizard?"

I ran my tongue along my teeth. "You can call me Captain Lizard. Or Magic," I shrugged carelessly.

The boy laughed slightly. "Okay Magic. I'm Jack!"

I looked closely at the boy. He had wild jet black hair framing his head, and olive skin. An orange bandana encased most of his hair, though. He had dark eyes and a goofy smile. He wore a scraggly striped shirt and black shorts. He wore no shoes and stood about five feet.

I scrunched up my eyes. "So... Jack. How old are you exactly?" I held my breath.

"Ten. And a half."

"Ten..." I murmured.

"And a half," Jack added helpfully.

"Yeah yeah yeah, don't care." I muttered.

Jack folded his lips over scornfully.

Again I heard a noise, but this one was more uneven. I heard labored breathing and stressed movements.

I looked back yet again. There was an old man.

His left leg was fine; perfect you might say. But where his right one was supposed to be, there was a long wooden peg. Maybe even a chair leg.

He hobbled with great speed towards the direction where I stood with Jack.

He stopped and pulled the wooden pipe I hadn't noticed out of his mouth momentarily, and scratched his patched white beard.

His voice was rough and leathery, just like his appearance," Who're you'ns?"

I noted that my best friend, Icy Crown, would've about had a fit if she heard such atrocious grammar.

"I'd be Magic Lizard, sir, and this is Jack... what's your last name kid?" I whisper-screamed the last bit in Jack's ear.

"Tristan."

“And this is J.T.”

“Hey!” Jack protested.

I shushed him.

“Tristan, aye?” The old man scratched his chin again.

“And you, sir?”

“Pemberly.” He replied offhand, not bothering to supply me with a last name.

A large, green stocking hat sat off kilter on his head, a casual look on his weathered face. He had placed the pipe back in his mouth and began blowing smoke right in my face. I shifted my position alongside Jack to avoid a direct blow. He wore a cream shirt tied down the middle with a rust colored scarf around his neck. Her wore oversized brown pants and one leather boot with a hole in the big toe.

I glanced out at the blue green water, longing to just dive in and swim away in my own territory. Nevertheless, being a teenager was not so easy. Responsibility really throws a wrench in your plans.

By now the raft was close enough to see clearly. It was larger than I'd thought, but still not very impressive. In the middle of it there was a tent with some hay and a stool inhabiting it. There was a large mast and a torn sail that whipped threateningly about in the mostly calm wind.

I looked at the two males who were also watching the raft intently.

I gulped down the suspicions that I wanted so badly to evade, but I knew the truth now. It stared me in the face. A ten year old face.

“So...” I locked eyes with first Jack, then Pemberly. “I’m going to guess that this is my crew. And that is our ship.”