

## Chapter 42: A Kraken Plan

### Captain Wolfsbane has given you a Quest!

- **Man the Cannons!**
  - Assist the Crew of the Tempest in defeating the Void Kraken
  - Failure to complete this task will cause Wolfsbane and his Crew to become hostile.

"There are eight cannons on the stern, four on the bow... and you have three gun decks below, with fifty-six cannons on either side!"

Captain Wolfsbane shouted over the waves, gesturing at the different areas of the ship with his free hand while the other gripped the wheel tightly. He was confident and determined as he deftly steered the ship along the currents of the maelstrom. He spared a passing glance at the Dread Pirate, a wry smile on his face.

"Who knows, maybe I'll even let you join my crew if you prove yourself?"

Quest Updated: Man the Cannons!

- **Man the Cannons!**
  - Assist the Crew of the Tempest in defeating the Void Kraken
  - Reward: Opportunity to join the Legendary Crew of Captain Wolfsbane. (Auto Fails Quests: Defeat Captain Wolfsbane, Claim the Tempest)
  - Failure to complete this task will cause Wolfsbane and his Crew to become hostile.

James dismissed the notifications as he glanced once more at the shore in the distance. The next part of the plan was about to begin.

As the Dread Pirate went down the steps from the helm, he could appreciate the magnitude of the ship. While they were underwater, the sails were furled. Now, they billowed triumphantly as they pulled the colossal vessel forward. He could see dozens of men rushing across the deck, pulling at ropes, dangling off rigging with many of them shouting indecipherable commands at each other. James didn't understand any of what they were doing, but it was oddly satisfying to watch them all work as a team.

"You're on my deck."

A feminine voice snapped from behind him, causing James to turn around in surprise, only to see the robed figure from earlier.

She gave off a similar vibe to Shari, in the sense that she exuded an aura of danger from simply standing still.

James couldn't discern any of her features since the black robes concealed every part of her.

A Good Eye For People has been activated.

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|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Name:</b>       | Vetra                         |
| <b>Level:</b>      | 10                            |
| <b>Rank:</b>       | Unique                        |
| <b>Class:</b>      | Storm Mage                    |
| <b>Affinity:</b>   | Lightning, Wind               |
| <b>Assessment:</b> | Ambitious, Calculating, Loyal |
| <b>Crew Role:</b>  | Navigator                     |

"You're a Navigator?"

James asked as he glanced through the stats in front of him. It made sense to have someone that could control the weather be in charge of powering the sails.

"I'm the First Officer. I repeat, you're on my deck. You won't find any cannons here, so I suggest you get out of my sight."

Vetra's response was immediate and cutting.

Raising a gloved hand, her fingers snapped, which caused a trapdoor on the deck to magically open.

"The Captain has given his commands. You'd be wise to follow them."

With that said, Vetra moved past the Dread Pirate and continued to shout orders to the crew.

James dropped to his knees and looked through the hatch before descending into the darkness. There were no flashing red lights to show incoming danger, so he felt it was safe to proceed.

That said, some amber lights that represented the crew on the deck were slowly growing darker, which James took to mean that he was taking too long. It appeared their goodwill towards being

saved was currently wearing off. He couldn't blame them. They were in the middle of a maelstrom, about to lay siege to their sworn enemy, the Void Kraken... and their saviour was running around the deck talking to people and investigating the ship.

"Let's get to work."

James muttered to Otto on his shoulder as he slid down the sides of the ladder, and into the gun decks below. The darkness disappeared at the ladder's base, where a passage filled with hanging lanterns revealed itself to him.

Instead of moving forward towards the lights, James turned on his heel and started searching around the ship. From his conversations with Jackal, he could make a few educated guesses about where he was in the ship and where he needed to go.

James moved purposefully, speeding up when he heard voices from both above and below him. He kept to the port side of the ship, which was facing the sky instead of the starboard, which was looking directly into the looming threat of the Kraken.

His leather boots made no sound against the wood as he swiftly moved in search of the crew quarters.

A roar of cannons ripped through the ship, signalling that a salvo was just sent at the Void Kraken. Shouts of dismay followed quickly as the cannonballs failed to hit their target.

Captain Wolfsbane has noticed your absence from the Cannons.

James grinned at the notification. If this weren't a game, that sentence alone would be terrifying.

The cries of panic were the only signal that James got before the Tempest rocked abruptly to the side, throwing him completely off balance and against the wall. Above him, the sounds of splintering wood and anguish told him that a tentacle had retaliated.

Gritting his teeth, James got to his feet and rushed forward, finally reaching his destination after checking a few of the different compartments. He had found two separate storage rooms, what looked like a canteen area and a locked door he could only assume had plunder or alcohol locked behind it.

Countless hammocks hung from a series of posts and hooks in the ceiling. The stench of sweat was practically overpowering, and James wondered why they had made that sense so potent in the game.

Reaching into his pocket, James withdrew a small pouch with chalk and a vibrant red crystal.

His eye glanced over the embossed insignia that glimmered in the darkness.

Vigo Syndicate

James dropped to his knees and drew a series of symbols that Fibber had shown him earlier.

In front of him was a piece of parchment that he used for reference. Everything needed to be perfect.

Suddenly Otto flinched, and James abruptly lifted his hand containing the chalk. It was just in time as a tentacle collided with the hull. Shouts of alarm and anger echoed throughout the ship, but none of this concerned James who resumed his drawing.

Your practice has yielded some results! You have learned how to interpret basic Runes!

You have learned the skill: Rune Reader!

James blinked for a moment as the runes in front of him suddenly took on a different form. Lines that he had previously thought were perfect now looked crooked and wrong, which he quickly rectified. The appearance of the skill helped him correct his mistakes and speed up the completion of the diagram.

As the Dread Pirate got to his feet, he touched the Cultist's Garb around his waist fondly. Without it, he wouldn't have had the required intelligence to learn new skills. It made him excited for the battle ahead to see what else he could learn now that he was free of Calista's curse.

Dusting himself off, he stood back and watched the red crystal expectantly, wondering if this was going to work.

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"Pedro! You're up!"

Fibber shouted as he poured magic into his side of the teleportation gate.

The Butcher finished securing his gauntlets as he stepped into the circle. All the revelry and jokes had disappeared from the Dread Faction when the Void Kraken broke the surface of the water.

Whatever they had suspected or believed went to one side when they witnessed the terror that it brought with it. Not only that, the ship itself... the Tempest, was a floating fortress and completely unlike anything they could have imagined.

Pedro gripped his fists and assumed a crouching position, not sure exactly what sort of environment he was about to teleport into.

Whatever was waiting, he was ready.

Pedro gave the leader of the Vigo Syndicate a curt nod before he abruptly disappeared.

"Next!"

Fibber shouted as he turned to look at the procession of Dread Faction that had queued up, waiting for their turn to teleport through the gate.

Aos Si approached next. In his arms was a dark black grimoire, which took Fibber by surprise.

"You're a magic user?"

The Elf merely nodded as he stepped into the circle. Fibber's smile turned into a grimace as he inspected the Elf.

*He's strong.*

Aos Si's grip on the grimoire tightened slightly before the magic circle teleported him to the ship.

"Why do I need to keep calling this out? There's a big fucking clue when someone has teleported!"

Fibber shouted at the crowd, many of which flinched at his annoyance. The next person to step into the circle wasn't one of them.

"I'm pretty sure you're supposed to be here, protecting me?"

Fibber remarked as he watched Shari enter the circle.

The Death Blade turned with a terrifying expression on her face.

"Dervius didn't make me create a Kill Team... so I could protect you."

With that said, Shari gave Fibber a wink before she too disappeared through the gate.

Behind her place in the queue, a group of rogues stood quietly... waiting for their turn.

Rolling his eyes, Fibber waited a moment before looking at the space in front of him.

"I swear to Calista... If I need to tell someone to step into this circle..."

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|--|
| First Officer Vetra has detected a foreign magic on the Tempest. |
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James held his Moonlight Pistol at the ready as he watched the corridor for any signs of approach.

You have failed the Quest: Man the Cannons!

Captain Wolfsbane has ordered the crew to attack you on sight!

The notifications started becoming quite threatening the moment he had finished creating the teleportation gate on the ship. It really didn't come as a surprise though, since they had a Storm Mage as a First Officer.

Shouts from the decks above and below showed they were searching for him, but James was calm and collected. The reason that he had picked the crew quarters was because of how far away from everything they were. That the Tempest was colossal really worked in James' favour. It would take them quite some time to find him.

"Sylvian."

Pedro's voice was unnaturally quiet in the darkness, and James felt a wave of reassurance wash over him.

James turned around to face the Butcher and noticed that the larger man was wearing an armoured chest piece. The fearsome gauntlets on his hands only added to his terrifying presence.

The dull red glow from the crystal throbbed again, and Aos Si joined them in the crew's quarters. Before James or Pedro could say a word to the Elf, his grimoire flew open and light filled the room. His expression was serious as he whipped his hand up in a series of intricate motions.

Aos Si has applied Cloak! You are now undetectable to Mages.

Aos Si has applied Shadow Step! You can now move silently.

Aos Si has applied Blunt Resistance! You will now take reduced damage from blunt weapons.

"He's going to stay here and buff everyone that comes through the gate. We can move on ahead."

Pedro whispered as he gestured towards the corridor.

"Not without us."

Shari's voice appeared behind the Butcher, which caused James to do a double take.

"What are you doing here? You're supposed to be on the beach?"

The Dread Pirate whispered, but Aos Si interrupted him.

"I placed a ward around us. You don't need to whisper."

Pedro whirled around.

"You can speak the common tongue?!"

Aos Si's jaw twisted to one side as though he was trying to contain his anger.

James ignored the two as he turned back to Shari.

"Is everything okay on the beach?"

The Death Blade nodded her head with a smile as she drew her knife.

"I received this because I survived on that beach. It's a reminder that I can forge my destiny."

James looked at the knife in her hands, curious where she was going with this.

"Which is why... I'm deciding to be on your crew. Even if you say I can't, I'm going to prove myself capable."

Shari's squad surrounded her, with their cowls drawn over their faces. Had they not moved, James might not have noticed them at all in the darkness.

James wanted to tell Shari that he'd happily have her on his crew, but he didn't know how to explain that it was simply a pop-up that told him she wasn't eligible. The determined expression on her face made the Dread Pirate pause, which caused Shari to give a wide smile.

"Give me my orders, Captain."

The Dread Pirate took a moment to think as he watched more and more of the Dread Faction appear through the gate. Duelists, Assassins, Rogues and Archers started filling up the crew's quarters. His chances of victory ticked upward more and more with each additional fighter that joined his side.

"Shari, you're going to lead your Kill Team through the lower decks. I want you to kill all the gunners while they're distracted with the Void Kraken."

James explained as he gestured toward the Butcher and the Elf.

"Pedro will switch if too many attack or retaliate, and Aos Si will act as primary support and secondary attacker."

Shari turned to look at the group of Dread Faction members that had come through the teleportation gate. She didn't even need to ask, as James was already answering.

"Rangers and Duelists that have attained the 'Aim' attribute will follow me after your team has cleared out the first gun deck."

A group of men and women dressed in black clothing silently made their way to one side near the Dread Pirate. They drew their pistols and bows in preparation.

"Assassins and Rogues will work with Shari as back-up support. One of you should volunteer to stay here and inform everyone that comes through the teleportation gate."

A lone ranger raised a hand, electing himself for the task. James watched as he took a knee and drew his bow. His eyes locked on the entrance to the crew's quarters.

Pedro tilted his head as he looked at the two distinct groupings.

"Why are we splitting up? Doesn't it make more sense for us to work together?"

James shook his head as he gestured at the Duelists and Rangers beside him.

"The Dread Faction has two distinct quests right now. Your job is to fight the Tempest's crew and take the ship. Our job... is to kill the Void Kraken."

Shari's grin faded into smoke as she vanished from sight. As if it was a signal, all the Rogues and Assassins under her command melted into darkness. Aoi Si nodded in James' direction as he moved incredibly silently past the Dread Pirate, following the tendrils of smoke left by Shari's squad. Pedro moved to go after him, but paused for a moment, clasping James on the shoulder.

"Good luck, Sylvian."

Just as James was about to respond, the Butcher leaned closer to him.

"If you die... I'm taking the coat back."

A few seconds later, Pedro was gone. As if to remind them all why they were there, the Tempest lurched awkwardly to one side as a tentacle collided with the hull. Cries of dismay echoed out once more... but this time, those screams didn't stop.

Unsheathing his blade, the Dread Pirate Sylvian laughed.

"Lets kill this Kraken!"