

A Good Ship and Crew

by Justin Cien

Captain James Tillerby Hubbard: That was the name of that self-righteous fool. It was a nonsense name. A nonsense name for a nonsense man. And nonetheless my condemnation of that man and his name, it be he alone that have led the good ship and crew of the Marigold Bleu to the farthest reach of the almighty deep to bring plunders and riches ashore.

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I was but sixteen years when first I met the braying ass that were to be my captain. At that fruitful, young age I was further along than a lad yet little more than a mawkish dope to any capable seaman. And so despite my wizened age, I grazed the wharf's grimy docks with delusions of grandeur swirling 'round my head. It were thanks to me weary, old mum that I carried such shameful wonderment in me breeches. And so it was also thanks to her that I came to be doomed to the cursed crew of Captain Hubbard. Each morning as she scrounged in the kitchen she sang the merits of Lillyport's navy. And each day as the sun sunk west over the splintery dockside did she wrap me in my bed sheets and recount tales about champions of the sea. Steadfast and hearty sea captains sent raiders and sea beasts alike to the deep each night in my dreams. And each morning I woke to the sunken, sullied shack that grandfather left mum. A proper seaman didn't live in squalor, I'd tell myself. A proper seaman wore the brass and blue of Lillyport so his mum could retire to the sprawling fields of Demrose. That's where the seamens' mums lived, as far away from the smell of fish guts as a brine-blooded wharf rat could.

So as soon as mum finished cooking me her special meal on the eve of me sixteenth birthday, I chased the merchants down the crumbling cobble of Ducibus Court to where the

officers slept and dumped my coin in their lockbox. The price of enlistment was steep, but I planned on sending every penny I earned right back to mum's hidey-hole so she wouldn't miss it long. My first stint as portside swabbie was within the week and I scrubbed that deck 'til the varnish split. And for all my supplication to that sorry ship I didn't see it leave the harbor for a month and three days. Word among bottom feeders was that the ship's captain had gone lame after an encounter with a strange green mold. Well, I had never heard of a green mold. I were a salty-skinned Lillyport native what lived north of Merrywhack street me whole life, and were there ever a mold that weren't grey I'd have heard of it. But strange as the story of a seaman's death by mold, even stranger was the course it set upon me and the crew of the Marigold Bleu. Them hoighty-toighty upper-ups sent us a new captain, a fledgling officer from the north shore of Pellard Bay. Squawk on the dock was that he'd never seen a naval engagement in his life. People said his brow smelled of honey and his feet smelled of wine. And the silliest word I'd heard was that he was descended direct from old William Tafferty, the only man ever told to have married a sow and never know.

As little as I merited the gaff of deckhands, once I finally laid eyes upon the blaggard himself I must admit to have been more than doubtful. I could recall with exact precision the way he wobbled on deck with his spindly little legs. That weren't the walk of a seaman, no. It was more akin to the walk of a drunken spider if I had to place it. And the way he smiled all crooked, it'd be endearing if he didn't mean for it to demand respect. But worst of all was the mess of his clothes. An officer's uniform was his pride and the mark of his authority. Never have I heard the story sung of a hero whose coat was drab and whose belt hung straighter than his epaulettes. Now that's all to say that I knew from the ready that this captain would be the Marigold's demise.

It was another month and a day before I ever saw the Marigold launch from Lilly's sodden, sorry harbour. My dreams turned to dread over the course of that month. Each day the captain's displays of ineptness slowly wrenched the itch for heroics from the very pit of me gut. And when the day came for the good ship and crew to take to the wake, the waters were choppy and the wind stung fierce. I ground my teeth to fine chalk watching Hubbard try and leave port. Lucky for him the veteran crew knew their way but if it weren't for them he'd have been shanghaied to the salt mines by the port authority.

Our first outing was meant to be survey and patrol by the crew's measure, but just as soon as we'd hit open waters good the captain started spouting nonsense of a seek-and-destroy mission. The crew, befuddled, took it upon themselves to organize preliminaries of a mutiny. But despite his blunders over the following weeks, the crew charted no corrective course. It wasn't for a few weeks still that I uncovered the prize of their inaction. Thanks to Private Sweeny's gastric bout with Chef's naan I were on lookout duty one foggy night. And from upon my perch, I bore witness to James Hubbard's clever quelling of the crew.

In the shadow of the lower deck, flicks of candlelight caught my vision, as it were still sharp in those days. In the flickerlight, Captain murmured hushed tones to Quartermaster and Private Tannin and bestowed to them a pouch. Now, in my frightful inexperience, I weren't prepared to start a scuff with me captain, but I knew then that treachery be afoot. And it were a treachery that I would not allow to stain the parchment on my record of heroic feats. Too strong was my sense of authority to confront a higher-up, but Tannin were not my superior and my righteous indignation saw me to his breechy bunk early that next morning. I thought to catch him unawares in his dream-ridden stupor and exact the truth from his witless tongue. Now Tannin were only but a year my senior and I was bigger than him by a foot if you didn't count that

feathery plume he called his hair. That's to say that I had myself a foolproof contingency in case the bird wouldn't squawk.

I rattled his hammock.

"Eh, wot?" He grumbled and rolled.

"I've got business with ye, that's wot." I knocked him in the arm. His lids popped open like a cray-bird and he shouted.

"Oy! What ye think this be ye nutshell? I need me a full rest or I'll drop dead during engagement!" That were the first I'd heard of engagement. Me heart skipped and rattled. If we were to be led through cannon blast by Hubbard then we'd all surely be driftwood in tomorrow's morning tide. Then he really started hooting.

"I swear if you're here to proposition me then I'll rap you right in yer lousy-" he started singing, but I had heard enough caw. I unholstered a belaying pin from me breeches and cracked down his shoulder, brutality not withheld.

"What's this of an engagement?" I said to he.

"Wot in the seven rings of Sunday? I'll tear the breath from yer gills if ye ever-" he sure must have thought himself a rowdy one. I raised me pin again and before I had to bring it down he'd learned who were in charge.

"Fine, fine! Belay! How've you not heard of engagement? Captain's only been prattling on about seek and destroy for the past weeks. Ye should've been ready for engagement at any hour." I warned him not to be terse or he could face engagement with a broken nose.

"Please," the lout begged, "can't ye just let me get my rest? Reports are that we're soon upon the enemy vessel, that we should be upon them no later than noontime tomorrow." As much as the prospect of combat chilled me, I'd come to Tannin for a different reason.

“And what of the captain’s gift to you and Master Charon?”

“What’s any of that to you?”

“Is he bribing ye?” I asked.

“No! Look he’s just looking after us alright, now be off it,” he started with his usual trill until he remembered the pin. “It’s just some citrus, okay?”

“Citrus? What’s that to do with anything?”

“Lemons, oranges, little limes. Haven’t ye ever heard of ‘em? Me and Master Charon been having an itch in our gums something fierce and Captain made sure to have us in healthy order, got it?”

“Why not just take them to the mess?”

“Because then the whole crew could eat ‘em. These are from Hubbard’s private stock and he didn’t want to rouse any jealousies.”

“Show me,” I ordered. His brow furrowed but he obliged. He rolled over and produced a small sack holding a lemon, an orange, and some little limes. I grappled the orange and left the privates’ quarters.

The next morning I stood on needles as I awaited the sight of a tiny ship on the sealine. My crow’s nest vigil had gone on while Private Sweeny continued retching himself across the poop deck, so it’d be my eyes that first laid sight upon such a ship. At a quarter sharp past ten I heard the ratty tin of the gathering bell alight. Once the crew was compiled the captain wobbled out from his quarters, his swath of matted hair only half covered by his crooked cap. Addressing the crowd, he shouted with more breath than I’d have wagered his meek lungs could carry. And here’s what he said:

“Hail, brave crew of the Marigold Bleu! By reports of our ship’s fine navigation, we are soon entering unfriendly waters. Seeing as this is the case, I measured that I best inform you all of the secret task our fine ship has been entrusted with. Now I’ve been leery of sharing with you all the details but as we stand on the precipice above battle I say you’ve earned my trust as I hope I have yours. Admiral Kent has informed me of turncoat soldiers of the Lillyport navy who have plundered the island port of Weymouth. They mean to make off with her riches to the tropics of Malay and it is our righteous duty to procure their treasure and confound their ship. So should you brave lot be valiant enough to scourge the devils then by my word we shall host a heroes’ banquet on the shore of your fair Lillyport where they will speak legends of your every good name! What say you, my proud ship and crew?”

The crewmen lauded the captain with eruptions of praise. If we were as near the enemy as I were to believe then they could have heard our joyous cries. But while the crew celebrated I stumbled slack-jawed. For the first time, I had seen Hubbard act a captain. I wasn’t sure if it were the fear pounding in me stomach or the worth of words he had stomped to the helm with, but the whole scene wrenched a single tear from me eye.

My stupor was cut short by a cry heard off the starboard side, the enemy ship had been spotted. I yanked at me spyglass and rattled off pertinents from the crow’s nest. That ship was hulking. So much smaller were we that closing the gap between us would be short work. There’d never been a tortoise to outrun a hare, and there’d be no way for a hefty lugger such as she to maneuver beside our mighty, little cogger. Oh, we would catch them to be certain, but what does a fisherman do with a bull shark in his net? He can thump it or let it drown him, the bull floats on either way. Thus, we hastened toward the dreadful prospect of a ship what stood near twice as tall as ours. They soon saw our approach and weighed a sharp turn to align us with their cannons.

Our course was unchanging; I saw neither man, mouse, nor microbe standing head at that ship wheel. I heard the first blasts and clenched my boyish eyes in terror. A sudden silence followed by the splashdown of no less than twenty cannon bolts echoed north against the southern wind, crashing empty against the waves. Down on deck, it were none other than Hubbard himself rending the very knobs from the wheel as he cranked it portside. And with a stance that squealed like a legless lamprey, James Hubbard swayed our ship from the cannons' course. It was then that I saw that man for what he truly was, a Captain of Lillyport's Navy. What made a hero? I knew not anymore, but perhaps it weren't had nothing to do with the shine and shimmer of a man's brass.

The gruel of that battle was rightly pitching. I pulled muscles on my meager musket as I peppered deckhands with pellets from on high. By the end of the clash, we'd sustained a broken mast and somewhere near forty breaches in the hull. But we had won. By the Seer, we had won! We chased off every straggling survivor in their rotty rowboats and recovered their unlawful plunder. And that night we set the deck on fire with our hooting and prancing in the name of Captain Hubbard.

It was after we'd had our festival there on the Lillyport wharf that I'd decided to never again question the manners of James T. Hubbard. He gave a rousing speech about the valiant crew and was accepted lovingly into the fusty embrace of Lillyport's kinship.

After that day, I began to notice the little things Captain James would do to keep his crew contented and as Tannin had put it, "in healthy order." If you'd been snacked on by a wharf roach, he'd buy you fine balm from a village healer. Or if you'd been bitten too harshly by the muddled grey sun he'd order Private Todd to lather your neck in loach oil. Or perhaps you'd driveled something rank on yer cheesecloth, well then he'd let you boil it down in Chef's cobble

pot. Hubbard ruled his ship with kindness and forethought. And he taught me what a real hero looked like.

And, of course, once I'd stopped asking questions, I'd started getting answers. Had I not been blinded in the other direction, as young boys tend to be, I might have started collecting the bits and bobs that showed me the man Hubbard truly was. At the time, I was elated just to bask in his closeness; just to walk the same floorboards as he; to swab our shared poop deck. I think back to that sorry boy in grotesque displeasure as if his faults were not me own. For how could a man who knows what I do fall so hopelessly for a captain? No, that is the frightful idolatry of a lad. But as many curses as I could rain upon myself for me predilections, I've learned by now that there is no use. So instead I'll pluck rotted teeth and recount the signals that my boyhood so dignantly neglected:

Two days and three nights after our seaside celebration, I walked the lower deck in search of a rat-thing to hold and snuggle dear. It was a poor habit I'd picked up since I'd started with the navy, but when the ship got mighty rocky and it came too tough to sleep more than winks I'd clumse 'round the ship in search of a fuzzy-like creature, the kind that ran 'round the rafters. Oh, and I'd bludgeon it something fierce till it hadn't the life in it to chew fingers while I cuddled it in me bunk. The best places to look were Chef's pantry, the soldiers' strongboxes, and the cargo hold, the last of which being the least detectable. And so there I found myself, red-eyed and weary, staring down the good captain through his foggy bifocals. He'd had a paper wrapped around his arm board and a feather-quill pen tapping down the script. I saw stern Charon and that bilge rat Tannin rooting through chest-crates and bag-pouches, sifting apart the rot-goods from the silvered ones. Of course, I'd seen those crates before, the same crates I'd plundered from those blasted turncoats as I spat indignations on their names. Now, what an unfettered fellow

might've thought is: Well, if this be the propriety of Weymouth as the cap'n'd said, and *if* it'd had been our sole mission to douse its captors and return it to the Admirals then why was it still here on our ship being run through by the likes of Tannin? And of course, there was a simple answer to that but not one I could see. Nonetheless, Cap'n H turned me 'round and told me, "Off to sleep for we'd be coursed to Malay by morning." And I'd certainly heard of the tropical Malay prior but with how soft he'd spoken it I'd refused to place where.

The next morning as I wrung out me dishrag and got it ready for the deck boards, Cap'n Hubbard approached me. He'd come with a proposition, "My young boy," he told me, "don't think I haven't noticed your hard work around here, lad. I want you to know that I've got my eye on you and if you continue to impress me with your skillsmanship well then I may just have use for you as an officer of my crew." My belly churned and giggled making me look antsy while I gave him the Yes-Sir-Thank-You-Sir. But my gassy disposition didn't seem to give too much away since he clapped my shoulder and bid me good day. And with that small bit of recognition, I'd become insatiable. Everything I did on that ship I did to get Cap'n Hubbard's attention. I'd find myself waiting in the crew shack, the cedar hallways, the captain's stoop way, anywhere I knew he'd be just so he could see me brandishing my hard work. But despite all my supplication nothing seemed to change. Three months bent and passed and not yet another time had I seen his praising of my accolades.

Yes, it seemed my mounting merits were caught up against a mighty blindness. That is until I really roused him with my fencing. Now, this must have been about a half-year deep into my servitude and since then I'd come to be quite the dab hand when it came to parley with the blade. You'd never guess it by my scrawny frame but I could skip, jump, and prick like a pinwheel when I had a slim blade between my fingerbones.

One night, Captain told me we'd be off to Malay, but since then he had given us all the grim notice that there was much hard work to be done in the Far North. Up there were many a threat to Lillyport's livelihood he'd said, and that was how we'd found our ship locked in unrighteous combat against the long-oar of some follicular fur tradesmen. Terrible and mighty, these Northmen stood a six-inch-monkey-knot taller than even the lankiest Lilliportian. And if size be the metric of their might, you can only imagine then how tall upon the prow must've stood the straw-headed tower that called himself their chief. Blonde hair and axe blades they swung at us after we'd refused to buy stock of their mink pelts. Their blades chopped ship wood like it were fresh lumber and their brutal helms defied our sharp points in a tragic game of needle and thimble. But I'd been a quick learn at games such as these, and being the astute swordsman that I was, I'd quickly deduced a way to thread that needle. I recall that the thought was first brought on by their flowing locks. I figured if the hair on their head be so righteous and flowy then what be of their underarms? You see, I had just started with bristling follicles of me own down there, the same color as the crop on me head. And if theirs were any like what they whipped around beneath their iron caps then there'd be no stuffing it down into the racket of those iron plates they wore. I stuffed my blade beneath the arm of the nearest Northman and with a shout and a gout he were on the floor dying. But I was taken from my triumph soon as I'd landed on it. The cry of Captain Hubbard rang loud against the groans and grunts of men at war. I looked to see him barreled down by the chieftain and his shield. I scampered. My feet traced mousey little patterns 'cross the deck, all full of fear and hurry. I was the spitting image of me mum's fabled seamen. A double right pirouette and lousy side thrust were all it took to fell that beast. Quicker than any blade, my hand shot out to help with Hubbard. His crooked smile set me stomach lopsided.

Desperate for his tutelage, I watched his footwork for the rest of the skirmish and could not make mast nor sails of his movements. His swordplay was like that of a mighty fool and yet the enemy steel could abrade but the crust of his grimy sea coat. Side by side, we skewered blonde brigands till they changed the offer on their mink pelts to include a rather hefty discount. And once the blades were laid down and the longship set to burn Captain Hubbard approached me and asked if he could speak candidly. Of course, he could.

“You know I have yet to choose a first mate and skipper among this crew don’t you, boy?”

“Why yes, sir, I’d think of trying my petition if I weren’t but a deckhand,” I teased.

“Well think no longer, Swabbie, 'cause I’ve seen all the trying I need.”

“Whatever do you mean, captain?”

“Well, I mean to say that from here and onward, I name you my left blade and my secondhand.”

I tell ye, standing side to Captain Hubbard were like reliving the night visions of my youth days. His heroic deeds were pervasive and plenty as we dashed on together across the shimmering seas of summertime and into the red lips of autumn. And with each accolade added to Hubbard’s soaking digest, I did acquire a few drips and drops to sponge down me own deed docket. Yes, I would do anything the good captain asked of me: Taking the Marigold to port, *I* showed the deckhands to the shoreline brothels; Leading a raid on an enemy vessel, *I* sent the last cannon bolt through the sorry louts; Commanding security tithes from the no-good scrap merchants passing through the old naval channels, *I* had the gravel in me gullet to procure it. Those were the greatest years ahead or behind me, I’d wager. And all the while we were honest

men of Lillyport's navy, that's what I believed. But a seaman's ignorance makes him good at taking orders, not perceiving harsh truths.

For a year and three days, I did sail that ship as the side-hand of Heroic Hubbard, and all it took were one black and sticky day to muck it all to a close. It was on that foul, stinking morning that we found ourselves moored in the dingy gunk-towne of Blackpool. Blackpool were the sister city of Lillyport and what a daft sibling she was. Its main exports were wilted mushrooms and other pallid little swamp things that Blackpudlians enjoyed. We had found a wizened crack in our center mast following a right furious thunderstorm and we'd needed to stop at the nearest port for repairs. Finally, we were headed for those tropics in Malay of which the captain seemed so fond. But to the shame of any sailor who'd ever launched from lovely Lillyport, we found the gray wash of Blackpool to be our only choice. And as it had turned out, we weren't alone in our lack of options. Another naval vessel stood proud and large amongst Blackpool's woeful dockside. They flew the proud flags of Pellard Bay and though I couldn't name the vessel, it were as magnificent as ships came in those days, even with its shattered stern. It had been a right-furious storm, after all. Seeing as I was so trustworthy, Captain called me to his office and charged me with finding a service to repair our fine little boat.

"Skipper," he said, "now I want you to go find us a crew of sturdy shipwrights to mend this vessel so we can be off to Malay as sharp as sundown. Is that clear?"

Something were off about the captain, I could tell. I studied him shamelessly with our each interaction and something had his good-natured charm warped stiff like a swordfish. But I obliged, "Is everything alright, captain?" I'd asked. But his reply was simply:

"Do not speak to a soul other than the shipbuilders, do you understand?"

“Yes,” I’d said, but I didn’t understand. Thinking back on it, the captain’s question might be what gave me any awareness at all. I’d have been perfectly content without understanding until he posed to me such a dire question. He paced backward to a row of coin coffers and popped one’s glittered maw agape. “Would you like me to take those to the cargo hold?” I asked.

“No!” The captain sputtered, “Just take this and tell the shipwrights to keep what’s over for an expeditious repair.” He plucked some gold and silver from the chest and handed it to me. “If I’m not back when you return then just wait for me. I’ve got an old friend here in Blackpool that I’d very much like to visit. Now quickly, off with you.”

I shuffled from the captain’s quarters, grooves deep upon me brow. Maybe seeing that friend of his had the captain all worked up, I thought. Or maybe it were his mum! It’d had been months since I’d last thought of dear mum, and maybe Hubbard was the same. Maybe he was afeared of what his mother would think. I brushed my concerns aloft, confident in my explicating. But as I plodded down the wharf-cobble my mood was soon to be soured. Approached, I was, by a truly menacing case of a captain. Trim and tidy were his coattails and other fixings. Long and black were his cape and his grimace. My eyes opted for the cobblestone over the coarse captain, but soon as I’d passed he’d stopped me. Me dingy, old boots must’ve crunched over some stink beetle with the way they squirmed beneath my toes. He glared down at me with that unchanging bulldog expression he wore. In his gruff manner, he grunted biddings that his shaken, white swabbie heard then heeded. The swabbie spoke sloppy and in a warbling voice:

“Pardon, good Skipper,” he gesticulated towards me patch of rank, “but did you not come just now from that proud navy vessel of Lillyport?”

“Aye, it be true,” I offered him, “and who might you be?”

“This be the illustrious Admiral Beck Worthington, Commander of Pellard’s Dire Fleet and Drowner on the Murky Coast. We are seeking out a captain of Lillyport’s navy, one who goes by the name of James Tillerby Hubbard. Wanted, be this devil, for the crimes of desertion, smuggling, and above else piracy.” Of course, I knew well the name Beck Worthington. All around the isles of St. Ives, scoundrels and soldiers alike dare not more than whisper the name of that damnable dastard and his Ironwood Hulk. I glanced once more in his direction out of a perverse and morbid desire to witness such a feared specimen up close and quicker yet I cast my eyes back to the street bricks.

I wanted nothing more than to free myself from his horrific gaze. I offered them a shaky nod and said, “I’ve never heard the likes of such a captain.”

The swabbie cocked an eyebrow at me. Worthington cocked his short gun. “Are you certain, good Skipper? Is that fine, floating driftwood not the vessel known as the Marigold Bleu?”

“Eargh, I think I’ve found our confusion, mates.” My bravado bubbled like a bladderwrack. “That fine vessel is none other than... the Rockweed – the Rambler’s Rockweed – it is.”

“The Rockweed? I’ve heard of no Rockweed sailing under the White Lilly. Then what of the Marigold?”

“It sank.” I told ‘em.

“It sank?” He knew.

“It sank, I told you!” I scattered Hubbard’s gold and silver at them as I flung meself around to face none other than the name emblazoned on the stern of me ship. I cried into me shirt pocket as I scrambled towards the rope ladder.

Bootsteps pounded behind me but I were quicker by knots. I swung up deck towards where captain last was and rapped something fierce upon his chamber doors. When there came no response, I grabbed for the captain's spare key and gave it a heaving twist in the lock. I flung the door wide to be met with a mess of swirling papers and flung drawers. I surveyed the wreckage: Among the scatterling were receipts of purchases made in gold, correspondence with far-shore officers I'd never before heard of, and a shattered glass jar housing a dejected lump of green mold. I ran to the open window where I found a knotted rope slung down the height of the ship and to the shadows beneath the docks. Pinned to the windowsill was a lone note written in the captain's cursive:

Be easy to forgive and forget. I would apologize that I could not take all your luck and skill along with me, my young skipper, but you'll learn someday that when brass comes to bullets the only person you can depend on is yourself. My final order as your captain: Be a lad and send them off my trail, would you? - Cap'n H

As though we were still connected, my optics shot past the windowsill to hone in on a rowboat toiling away toward the open sea. Sat upon it was the illustrious outlaw I'd called my captain. Frightful were the storm it made, those captain's boots what came thudding right behind me. I could not decide. He were my captain, he were my hero. But had it all been farce, my idolatry? By my neck and shoulders, I were grappled down by Beck Worthington and his poor old swabbie. Oh how sweetly sour that it could have been me just a few moments prior, performing acts of derring-do next me captain. But no, instead I sold out the sorry cur and spit pieces at him from my grieving, sniveling mouth. The deckhand held me down as Beck Worthington rose with his flintlock already smoking, held firm towards James Hubbard. Never had I seen such long-range mastery with a short gun, but I suppose you don't become as dreaded

as Worthington without reason. One smoky pop from the pistol and Hubbard's paddles plunked no more.

"Let the fool-boy up," he said, "and then go collect the body." He looked down at me bereft of sympathy and said, "Fool-boy, for your acts in aiding and abetting an active fugitive of Pellard Bay's Royal Navy, you are subject to a hearing before Pellard's High Court. Do you oblige or will you be shot down like your mongrel dog of a captain?"

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As I stand here today, it be fair and obvious what my choice were. Worthington had my crew drawn and dungeoned in the brig of his inviolable vessel where we were taken to Pellard Bay and held deep within the salt mines. Three months and a day, we toiled through the stark, white quarries. Three months and a day until Lillyport negotiated the terms of our release.

Now I live as far from the sea as a brine-blooded wharf rat could. Here in the sprawling fields of Demrose, I can barely hear the crustaceous wealth of betrayals that howl my name from the bottom of the deep. And here in the fair fields I am lauded by my countrymen as the one who felled fair Lillyport's Great Betrayer, though I can think of no man alive more deserving of such a title than meself. I only wish me mum were still here to see them call me a hero, though I know it be not more than a farce. No, what I am is a villain through and through. No matter what I'm called on green fields, I've no claim to anything other than what the sea calls me. I be nothing more than a coward, a fool-boy, and a pirate.