**Black Lioness: *Desdemona*’s Singapore Vacation 1: Rule 34**

The crew of the *Desdemona* were enjoying their liberty despite the heat and humidity. Singapore, the Lion City, appropriately enough, was broadcasting joy at their mild temperatures of late, but to Ryker, “mild” might as well have been the Malaysian word for “sweltering.” Liberty port or no, the crew still had to be under *some* discipline. At least he didn’t have to wear that bloody stifling uniform, and *Dear God, I just used “bloody” – I’ve been hanging around the Brits too long.*

He was in jeans shorts and one of his favorite t-shirts, worn thin through the years, the video game graphic on it faded so as to be nearly unrecognizable. He had his comfiest sneakers on, and had skipped brushing his hair or shaving today. The ship was technically in drydock for “maintenance and upgrades,” but, aside from Freeman (who swore forwards and backwards that he couldn’t bear to leave his Lady in such a sorry state of repair), there wasn’t really anyone hurrying to get things done. The Captain was sleeping off a late night of shopping and barhopping with the Lieutenant, leaving the only standing orders as being, “Let them enjoy themselves, so long as we’re ready to hit the sky by next Friday.”

Some of them were shopping, a few newbies were off playing tourist, and the rest were lazing about under propped up tarps, drinking whatever they fancied and talking. Ryker decided that “crew discipline” in nearly 90 degree heat (and nearly 100% humidity) consisted of taking a walkaround every hour or two, then diving back into his air-conditioned hotel room to have another dungeon crawl in the new MMO he’d downloaded. He’d only been on this pass for five minutes and already felt sympathy for an ice cube. Supposedly, this country had just *finished* a heat wave; he was going to have to teach the Singaporeans better English, clearly.

Rounding the bend, he found Hirota, Smith, and Russell in lawn chairs, playing cards on a couple of cargo boxes. Each man had a sweating drink on the “table” next to him, soaking into the wood. Smith and Russell hanging out together was normal, but Hirota was a bit of a surprise. He headed over, already crafting a smartass remark about “strange bedfellows” when their conversation caught his ear.

“…and then the captain just climbs on top of him and just GOES TO TOWN!” Russell was saying. He was one of the few other Americans on the boat, with a Midwestern twang to his speech. He, like Ryker, was unshaven, but that was normal for the aircraftman. He was clearly enjoying telling this story, brown eyes lit up like Christmas, as he continued, “And don’t ask me how, but somehow, she’s still wearing the black leather getup – I guess it unzips all the way down, if you know what I mean…” Smith guffawed.

Ryker’s eyes narrowed. He continued to walk towards the group, making sure to be as quiet as possible. Russell hadn’t stopped relating his lewd tale about his commanding officer. “She’s really into it too, all moaning and demanding more, more, more…” Russell finally shut up when he saw the look on Hirota’s face, because the helmsman, sitting across from the storyteller, had finally seen who was coming up behind him. He had been blushing at hearing the story, but all the blood ran straight out of his face at the look on the bosun’s. Mr. Everhart looked deadly cold – he might have even stopped sweating, despite the humidity – and that icy gaze was fixed on the back of Russell’s head.

“What’s up, man?” Russell asked, an ominous dread stealing over him. Hirota just pointed behind him. He didn’t want to turn around, and when he felt a man’s hand hit his shoulder with a thud of dead weight, pressing him down into his chair more, he knew he was in a world of shit.

“No, no, keep telling the story, guy. What’d Your Captain, Whom You’re Sworn to Serve and RESPECT Do After That?” Ryker was failing at sounding like he was genuinely interested in the story, and Russell knew it was deliberate.

“Look, Mr. Everhart, sir…it’s just a story…”

“Oh I know it is. I’m more interested in what would possess you to make up something like this about the Captain.”

“I didn’t make this up!” Russell yelped defensively. “I read it! On the Internet! I was just tellin’ Smitty and Hirota about it, that’s all! Honest!”

“You read it,” Ryker repeated disbelievingly. “Really. You’re telling me someone’s writing fanfiction about the Black Lioness.”

“O’ course they are!” Smith rushed to his friend’s defense. “Ya on th’ Internet more than anyone else on this boat, sir! Ya know they write tha’ stuff about everyone.”

“Your defense for this is Rule 34. SERIOUSLY.”

“I can give you the address, sir,” Russell offered.

“Oh, I’m sure you can. But I’m also sure I can go into the ship’s computer and find it myself – along with everything else you’ve been…viewing. And I’m sure I can bring it up with the captain.” Normally, Ryker didn’t bother dealing with porn site access aboard ship. Whenever there was a new recruit, male or female, he went over the rules of Internet access, and he always included a bit on the safe way to view and download porn without riddling the system with viruses. Everyone swore they didn’t look at those things, but he knew better. Threatening to take Russell’s personal site history to the Very Prim-and-Proper Lady-in-Charge was hardly fair, but he wanted to make the man sweat. More so than they already were in this weather.

He was gratified to feel the aircraftman jump under his hand. “Honest, sir, it’s the truth and I won’t read those things again or even talk about them, I was just curious ‘cause they say if you can think of it, it exists, so…”

“So you were thinking about this sort of thing?” Hirota dropped his head into his hands at Russell having trapped himself, as the accused yelped again and began stammering his protests. Ryker just let him blunder and flail verbally for a bit, then cut him off. “I’ll go find the site you claim has these stories. If it pans out, you’re off the hook. And whatever other porn you wanna find, that’s your business. But we have to respect our Captain, and this sort of thing is NOT respectful. Got it?”

All three of them saluted and shot off brisk “Yessir!”s in his direction. He relieved Russell of the pressure of his presence and stalked inside to double-check the crewman’s story. First things first: the *Desdemona*’s A/C was offline for repairs. Freeman was gonna have to bring that back up if he was going to be stuck on this boat for a bit.

It wasn’t surprising to find Ryker hunched over his laptop, even at a workstation. He routinely had two or three computers up and working when he was busy with something. The workstation was running what looked like some sort of overdone search program, occasionally spitting out a URL result. Ryker was completely oblivious to her approach.

“Is there a problem, Mr. Everhart?” she asked when she was immediately behind him. She smirked at the way he jumped, and arched an eyebrow when he slammed his laptop shut. When he swiveled his chair around, he was red-faced.

“Just…investigating something, Captain. Nothing to worry over.”

“What sort of investigation?” Delia folded her arms under her breasts. It didn’t escape her notice that Ryker’s eyes darted to her chest at the motion. This didn’t help his blushing, even though it was momentary. His reactions were interesting though: she was wearing her new cream colored cotton tank top – it was modest, not even made of a racy material like silk or lace. It covered everything of normal male interest. She was in a skirt, true, a favorite khaki one, but it went to her knees. She narrowed her eyes, having smelled blood in the water. *I shouldn’t tease him…but this is interesting.*

Ryker was stammering, trying to explain without explaining. She interrupted the string of “um”s and “you see”s. “I don’t really care if you’re looking at pornography, Mr. Everhart; I just thought you’d do that sort of thing in the privacy of your own room.” A thought occurred to her. “Unless it’s occupied at the moment? I’m not sure where Lucius is…” The quartermaster didn’t exactly have a girl in every port, but he could obtain one quite easily on short notice if he wanted one.

“No, no, it’s not…and I wasn’t…exactly…” Ryker’s eyes darted away. Another interesting reaction; this was a man used to staring her in the eyes and telling her off.

“What’s going on then? You’re not acting like yourself.” She put her hands on her hips and gave him her best “The Captain is Not Amused” glare. He sighed heavily.

“You don’t want to know this.”

“Don’t want to know what?” Lucius asked, strolling onto the bridge. He was tossing pieces of popcorn into the air and catching them in his mouth as he walked.

“YOU especially don’t need to hear this,” Ryker spat instantly. He made a shooing motion with one hand. “Go sniff around somewhere else.”

“Nuh-uh, now I KNOW I need to hear this!” Lucius flopped into the chair next to Ryker’s and peered at the workstation screen. “What are these addresses? http://adultfanfiction.net? http://roleplayvideo.com?” He eyed his roomie. “You could’ve just asked me to nap somewhere else.”

“NO. This isn’t…I’M not…” Ryker used both hands to shove his head back, as if he were trying to scrape his words straight out of his mind. “Look, fine, on your heads be it.” He swiveled back to the Captain. “Know what Rule 34 is?”

“Rule 34 of what?” she asked.

“Of the Internet.”

“What are the other 33?” Lucius chimed in.

“Shut it, Lucius,” both Ryker and Delia said, in unison. The werewolf grinned hugely at this.

“Rule 34 states that if something exists, there is porn of it. No exceptions.”

Delia stared at her bosun, waiting for more information. “So you were looking at pornography, I believe that’s where we started this conversation.”

“**I**,” he corrected her archly, “am creating a program to block certain very specific pornography from reaching this ship.”

She frowned. “You cannot seriously tell me any of my crewmembers are pedophiles.”

“What? No! Ew. And anyway, that’s already filtered and blocked. No, this is…um…a little closer to home.”

Lucius beat the Captain to the punch. “You found Black Lioness porn?! Show me!”

“It wasn’t ME!” Ryker squealed in self-defense. “I heard some of the crewmembers talking about it. So I went to track it down and squelch it but…well, there’s a lot more than fanfiction out there. I can’t spend all my time tracking down every new site and fic, so I’m working on a filter. I don’t think you’d appreciate your crew viewing that sort of…”

“Oh wow, this site has VIDEO!” Lucius hooted. He had brought up one of the URLs on the workstation on his own terminal. His monitor displayed a woman in an unmistakable costume, straddling a naked man who was handcuffed to a bed. She was brandishing a cat o’ nine tails and grinning lasciviously down at her captive. Lucius was laughing. “Get this: That…” he pointed at the man, “…is the bosun.” He grinned at Ryker.

Red-faced, the actual bosun glanced at his captain. He didn’t think he’d ever seen her so clearly, obviously mortified. It looked like she’d obtained the most sudden case of severe sunburn in the world, eyes widened and mouth slack-jawed in disbelief. He whirled around to reopen his laptop and tapped in some commands. Within seconds, the video on Lucius’s monitor was replaced with “Feed Unavailable.”

“Awwwwwww…that was just getting good, too!” Lucius pouted. He threw a handful of popcorn at his roommate.

“You’re cleaning that up,” Ryker retorted, stepping on a piece.

Delia cleared her throat, trying to remember not only how to speak, but how to sound in control again. “You said there were…a lot of these sites?”

Ryker glanced over at her. “Ah. Yes, I’m afraid. The videos are pretty much…well, like what you saw…” he cleared his own throat, then continued, “but the fic is all over the board.”

Lucius, in his best imitation of proper High British (which was very good indeed), began reciting, “She slid her soft leather-gloved hands over her lieutenant’s nubile body, letting her tongue follow after to trace her lover’s soft yet firm breasts…”

“STOP THAT!” Delia demanded.

Ryker leaned over to look at Lucius’s monitor. “Wait, you found lesbian fic? I could only find the hetero stuff…”

“Anything you want, I can get for you. Even in cyberspace!”

“Mr. Everhart!” she snapped. She thought she was going to faint from sheer embarrassment. But then something occurred to her. “Wait, how do they know my lieutenant is female?”

“And nubile?” Lucius added.

“I don’t think they actually know,” Ryker responded, tearing his eyes away from the sapphic story. “They just write whatever they like, usually putting themselves into the story somehow.” He ticked the options off on his fingers. “Captured prisoner, punished officer, rewarded officer…”

“A lot of BDSM…” Lucius muttered, scanning down the fic list.

“Well, the costume…” Ryker pointed out.

She all but growled, “Mr. Everhart, I’ll thank you to finish creating that filter you mentioned. And I’ll thank YOU to stop looking at it, Lucius! Now, if you’ll excuse me…” She turned on her heel and stalked out with as much dignity as she could retain.

As she left, Lucius chuckled. “All of this imagination about her, and they missed her one true love.”

“And who’s that?” Ryker responded warily.

“Haagen-Dazs.”

“Nope.” Ryker scanned down the list on his laptop screen and double-clicked. “See?”

“Oh, guess you’re right. Rule 34, huh?”

“Rule 34,” Ryker nodded.