

THE ONCE AND FUTURE NERD
Book II - MYTH MADE FLESH

Chapter 3
"Bridges"

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PART FOUR:

24 EXT. SEAHOLD - DAY

24

A rural village on the coast. Busy but not super-crowded; definitely some gulls.

NARRATOR

We resume our tale in the southern port town of Seahold, nestled against the Sea of the Ancestors, in the shadow of the keep of Ivan, son of Morris. It was here that Billy's river barge was pulled to dock by a suntanned stevedore.

The barge splashes in the water and gently bumps against a dock.

BILLY

Thanks dude.

Billy steps on to the dock.

The Seahold denizens have Cockney accents.

BILLY

So listen my man, I'm trying to find--

STEVEDORE

--Do I know you?

BILLY

Probably not, I'm just trying to--

STEVEDORE

--Then I'm sure I'm not your man.

He walks away.

BILLY

Shit.

NARRATOR

And if you'd had an ear against one of the barrels just then, you might have heard a very frustrated Nia, talking to herself as if trying to will Billy's comprehension.

Quick cut inside a barrel:

NIA

(sighing; to herself)

Billy. We talked about this.

Quick cut back out.

BILLY

(*to himself*)

What did Nia say? Uhhh.....Oh, oh, oh!

NARRATOR

Billy searched for someone nearby who looked friendly. His eyes fell upon a woman with graying hair and a hempen robe, who seemed to be finishing a conversation with a small crowd of peasants. She had the air of a teacher, or--no, that's it. A minister. She and the peasants made the sign of the circle around their hearts and the peasants departed looking fairly pleased with the interaction.

BILLY

Hail and well met, good woman!

Back in the barrel:

NIA

(*cautiously optimistic*)
There we are.

And back out.

SEAHOLD WOMAN

(*panned and a little distant*)
Yes? Hullo?

Footsteps approach.

NARRATOR

The woman approached Billy. She looked nearly fifty.

BILLY

(*trying to remember his "lines"*)
I, uh, seek to hire passage across the seas. Can you...
point me towards where I might do so?

*

SEAHOLD WOMAN

Aye, of course. You see that steeple over yonder?

One last time in the barrel:

NARRATOR

And inside her barrel, Nia cupped her mouth with her hand to conceal a gasp.

NIA GIVES A MUFFLED GASP.

And we're back outside.

SEAHOLD WOMAN
That's our chapel.

NARRATOR
For of course one does not easily forget the voice of
one's own mother.

SEAHOLD WOMAN
Head down there, and right across the square you'll
find a public house, big badger on the sign. Most
seafaring folk are known to take their meals there.
Should find someone to give you a fair price.

BILLY
Many thanks to you.

SEAHOLD WOMAN
Simple kindness is the least we owe to strangers. Go
with Galadon, young man.

BILLY
Oh! Right. I, uh, have heard that some seafarers are
less honorable than others. Are there any you would
avoid?

SEAHOLD WOMAN
This is a decent burg, full of good, Galadon-fearing
folk. Brigands and rogues find little welcome here.
(quieter; not gossip rather genuine concern)
But between you and me, I've heard some troubling
whispers about Otto Olafsson. Nothing for sure, you
know. But maybe best to steer clear.

BILLY
I thank you for your sage guidance.

SEAHOLD WOMAN
If I'm really being honest, you're best to avoid anyone
who frequents Armstrungard like he does. City has a way
of changing even good folks.

NARRATOR
In her barrel, Nia hung her head at what she was
certain was an admonition in absentia.

BILLY
I...Okay, thanks again.

SEAHOLD WOMAN
Safe travels.

Some wagon wheels roll.

NARRATOR

And Nia could not fully stop at least a few tears from welling up, as Billy began carting his friends towards the aforementioned public house...

25 INT. THE BUSY BADGER - NEARLY CONTINUOUS

25

We're inside a lively tavern.

NARRATOR

...Where he of course immediately sought out Captain Otto Olafsson.

Olafsson talks like an old-timey New England fisherman.

OLAFSSON

Armstrungard you say?

BILLY

They told me this would be enough.

A coinpurse clanks onto the table.

Olafsson picks up the purse, opens the drawstring, and jingles a little to inspect.

OLAFSSON

Ayup. That'll getcha there. Fixing to leave at dawn.

BILLY

What about...right now?

NARRATOR

The Captain raised an eyebrow at this.

Another coinpurse hits the table.

OLAFSSON

I'll gather up the boys. Just you and your cargo?

BILLY

Yeah.

OLAFSSON

Your business is yours but I do like to have some idea what gets loaded onto my ship.

Another coinpurse.

OLAFSSON

But I don't require it exactly.

BILLY

So we all set?

OLAFSSON

Not until I've said this. This cargo - if it has to breathe, drink, and eat, that's not cargo. That's stowaways. And stowaways go straight overboard, no ifs ands or buts. Got that?

A long, tense beat.

BILLY

...There's eight aside from me.

OLAFSSON

Eight?

BILLY

No wait, nine.

OLAFSSON

Well that's lot more risk for me, then.

NARRATOR

With some reluctance, Billy reached into the traveling pack he had with him.

OLAFSSON

Use your head, lad. Under the table.

A big heavy sack of coins slides across the floor.

Drawstrings open.

OLAFSSON

All right. You can load 'em up. But they stay in the cargo hold the whole trip, and someone'll bring food and drink down. Got that?

BILLY

Fine. So can we go now?

26 EXT. SEAHOLD - A LITTLE LATER

26

We're right on the coast of the ocean, with gulls and breaker waves.

NARRATOR

And so by that afternoon, Captain Olafsson had raised his anchor and lowered his sails.

We hear a chain winch raised and some big sails unfurl.

NARRATOR

And with our party concealed in the cargo hold, he put out to sea. Not a moment too soon either, as the vessel had just cast off when the first banners of the Th'ar lo-Hyyl began appearing on the hill overlooking Seahold.

27 INT. MERCHANT VESSEL CARGO HOLD - DUSK

27

We're below board on a rickety, medieval seafaring vessel as the sun is going down.

NARRATOR

Once they had set off, Billy pried his friends loose of their very unbecoming containers, so they could at least stretch their legs while confined to the cargo hold.

GWEN COOS SOOTHINGLY TO THE CRYING BABY ON OUR FAR LEFT.

BRENNEN RETCHES VIOLENTLY ON OUR FAR RIGHT.

NARRATOR

Admittedly, some had taken to the ocean better than others.

BRENNEN GROANS FOR AIR, DESPERATE TO BE DONE PUKING.

REGAN

Well this is all very fucking regal.

NIA

Sir Brennen, you might have mentioned you were prone to seasickness while were planning this endeavor.

BRENNEN

Would it have diminished--
(stifles gag)
--Our need to travel by sea?

NIA

I could have at least tried to find some ginger or peppermint for you before we left.

BRENNEN

(*clearly wishful thinking*)

I ought to be myself again soon. There's nothing left to spew.

REGAN

(*hint of respect*)

I don't think I'll ever understand you, Brennen.

NARRATOR

Regan then took a moment to look out the one porthole available to her. The coastline was plainly visible, barely half a mile away.

REGAN

Why the fuck are we still so close to shore? Billy, go get the Captain. I gotta talk to him.

BILLY

("Go on...")

Okay.

REGAN

I think we're safe overnight, but come the sun we gotta be further out. Might as well fucking wave to them from here.

BILLY

I can just talk to the Captain myself if you want. We've got like a good rapport going.

REGAN

No, this is gonna be a pretty tricky needle to thread.

BILLY

I got us this far on my own.

JEN

Better leave it to Regan, okay babe?

BILLY

(*pretty bummed out*)

Okay.

Billy walks slowly, almost morosely over to a ladder.

BILLY

Hey Jenny did you see me steer the barge? It was pretty sweet.

JEN
No, I was stuffed in a barrel.

BILLY
Oh.

JEN
But...you did it! We got there. Good job.

JEN **BLOWS HIM A KISS.**

BILLY
Andrews with a Hail Mary into the endzone...
Billy takes a few steps back.

BILLY
...And Williams has it! Put six on the board.

JEN **GIGGLES**, CHARMED.

BILLY
One Captain, coming right up.
He practically skips up the ladder.

A beat.

Mixer will now break scene into three mini-locations. The first, panned center:

JEN
What? What's that look?

REGAN
You gotta stop stroking him off every time he manages basic shit.

JEN
Does everything out of your mouth have to be mean and gross?

The second, panned right:

NELSON
You okay, Nia?

NIA
(jolted out of her thoughts)
What? Yes. Sorry. I'm fine.

NELSON
You had like a thousand-yard stare going on.

NIA

There's been much to mull over as of late.

The third, panned left:

ARLENE

Well, one more hurdle cleared, I suppose. *

The baby fusses.

GWEN

For now. The milk we brought's like to turn 'fore we arrive. Best to keep him sleeping long as we can.

ARLENE

*Young Rosie left the path one day. \
Wandered past the fence and through the hay. \
She walked and walked until she fell \
In the clearing of the faerie's wishing Well.*

The baby's quiet.

*Then, back at center, heavy footsteps descend
the ladder.*

NARRATOR

But the calm of Arlene's song was disturbed by the return of Captain Olafsson.

OLAFSSON

All right, there better be a good damn reason you--
(smells puke)
--Agh! Who's been sick all over my damn cargo?

BRENNEN

(holding back gags throughout)
Apologies, Captain. I'll find my sea legs soon.

OLAFSSON

Someone start talking.

REGAN

What do you think about maybe heading out past these breakers?

OLAFSSON

Ha! None of your business and slim chance anyway.
Anything else, or are you done wasting my time with foolhardy questions?

REGAN

Hang on, hang on. Lemme talk to you in private a second?

Regan's footsteps.

NARRATOR

Regan gestured the Captain to follow her into a secluded corner of the cargo hold.

OLAFSSON

If you hadn't noticed, I've a whole ship to mind.

REGAN

C'mon, just a second.

OLAFSSON **SIGHS.**

NARRATOR

He reluctantly followed.

Footsteps.

NARRATOR

Unsure of what exactly their Queen was thinking, Regan's retainers surreptitiously moved their hands towards their weapons, as the Captain disappeared with Regan behind some barrels.

Regan and the captain talk quietly to each other.

REGAN

I wanna get further out to sea.

OLAFSSON

Good for you. I'm the Captain and you're technically cargo.

REGAN

What'll it take to convince you?

OLAFSSON

It's out of the question.

REGAN

(a little bit flirty)

Where I'm from, nothing's out of the question if you know how to ask.

OLAFSSON

Well where I'm from, the Captain decides where his ship goes. So unless you forgot to mention you're an Admiral, there's no negotiation to be had.

REGAN

(*a lot a bit flirty*)

I've always dreamed about venturing out onto the open seas. The loneliness. The tossing about. It just thrills me. How about it, Captain? Wanna give a girl her wildest dreams?

NARRATOR

The Captain looked down in confusion as Regan clumsily pawed at his arm with a bandaged mitt.

Awkward beat.

REGAN

(*back to business*)

I'm sorry, I've had a rough couple days. My heart's not in this. But I gotta get out to sea. How much coin'll it take?

OLAFSSON

Gal, if you could pay me enough, you'd own your own fleet.

A beat. Is she desperate enough to lay it all out?

REGAN

All right, look. I can't give you the details but--

OLAFSSON

--Now, now, now stop right there. I sure as Selbirin don't wanna know your business. But I know anyone who pays top dollar to board this rickety hunk of junk is running from something or someone. And I know we're too far out for you to be worried about human eyes spotting us.

REGAN

So if you know all that...ain't you worried about getting on a certain pointy-eared someone's shit list if they find us?

OLAFSSON

You see, gal, that'd be much more of a you problem. I've got what you call plausible deniability. You know what that means?

REGAN

You know I do.

OLAFSSON

But there's far worse than Elves out on the open seas.

REGAN

You don't know the Elves like I do, then.

OLAFSSON

Cutthroat raiders patrol those waters. And beasts that'll make your nightmares piss their britches. Ever seen a squid that could eat a fishing boat whole? I have. Not to mention that storm up in the mountains might head our way. Best case we get fully lost in a fog. Worst case, it turns into a tempest and rips this old rustbucket apart.

REGAN

Whole lotta maybes. My coin is a sure thing.

OLAFSSON

Maybe so. But for the last time, it's my ship. And I'll be taking my leave of you now, 'fore I have to get rude. Gruel and grog'll come down at sunup.

He walks away, and then climbs up the ladder.

REGAN

Balls.

28 SAME - A LITTLE LATER

28

NARRATOR

As soon as the Captain was back above board, Regan sought the counsel of her retainers.

Throughout this scene, everyone whispers.

REGAN

Anyone got any ideas for persuading the Captain? He's a stubborn motherfucker and buying him off won't work.

JEN

What, he was immune to your feminine wiles?

REGAN

Lemme tell you the state of my feminine wiles right now. I've had a cavalry charge, a three day hike, and almost died in a fire since my last bath. Plus I'm wiping my ass with a rag on a stick. It's a fucking shipwreck down there. So if you wanna offer to spit-shine his masthead, I won't stop you. But you're on your own.

JEN

Yeah, no thanks.

NIA

Ah, lady Arlene. Perhaps you might cover your ears.

REGAN

We could probably take his crew in a fight if we had to, but then no one knows how to drive this damn boat so that leaves us ass-fucked and shit outta luck.

YLOWYYN

Your Grace, at the risk of becoming the proverbial hanged messenger...

NARRATOR

Ylowynn was at the moment looking out the porthole with grave concern.

REGAN

What is it?

YLOWYYN

There's an Elven frigate maybe five hundred yards to port.

REGAN

Gods fucking dammit.

YLOWYYN

I think it's just a routine patrol, but small comfort that is.

REGAN

We gotta do something now.

NIA

When you spoke with the Captain, did he let slip any personal details that might be used to apply pressure to him.

JEN

(to herself, thinking)
Pressure...

REGAN

Not really. Strong silent type, that one.

JEN

I have an idea. It's gonna sound a little crazy but bear with me. I....I think I know how to...control wind.

BILLY

You what now?

JEN

I could do it in a small area I think. It's just air pressure - more molecules in one place than another. Should be even easier than lightning, theoretically. No ionic bonds to break.

REGAN

This honestly doesn't shock me.

NIA

(sighing, half to herself)
Why must it always be storm magic?

REGAN

Heh. Shock. Get it?

NIA

(remembering)
"I shall ride to safety on the wings of the Storm."

JEN

Huh?

NIA

Sorry, continue.

REGAN

Wind is good. But won't they just correct at the helm?

BRENNEN

Not if--
(retch)
--Not if we disconnect the tiller.

REGAN

Good thinking. I could probably get to the pulleys real quiet like.

JEN

No offense, but we'll need to untie them or something, not just cut them. so we can steer the ship again when we need to. Knots might be a little tough for you right now.

REGAN

You're right. This is getting really fucking old.

YLOWYYN

I'll go. I think if I'm careful I can avoid detection.

NARRATOR

Regan stared at Ylowyyn for a long moment.

A beat.

YLLOWYYN

Shall I, Your Grace?

REGAN

My eyes'll be glued to that porthole. If the coast, or
the Elf boat, start getting bigger, you're shark food.
Now go.

NIA

Try and keep your bandage dry. I'm worried about your
wound.

NARRATOR

Yllowynn bowed his head low before stalking off.

REGAN

All this still depends on the crew not getting wise.
Can we keep them distracted somehow?

BILLY

On it.

*Billy jogs away and begins climbing the
ladder. But before he's even fully gone...*

BILLY

(belting, wildly off-key)
I'm sai-ling! A-way!

Gwen and Arlene are still panned left:

They both whisper.

GWEN

M'lady, maybe you can help.

ARLENE

Help? How?

GWEN

I doubt the sailors would say no to your singing.

She hesitates, unsure.

GWEN

What's the harm in trying? Better than just sitting
around praying.

ARLENE

Very well.

(Full volume)

Your Grace. I think I can help with the crew.

NIA

Thank you, my lady. That is much appreciated.

Light footsteps cross from left to center then up the ladder.

REGAN

Jen, you got what you need?

JEN

("We'll see...")

Think so.

NARRATOR

Then Jen closed her eyes, and concentrated deeply.

A magical pad fades in, extremely subtly, just audible.

29 EXT. MERCHANT VESSEL DECK - NIGHT

29

We're above deck on the ship now.

NARRATOR

And above deck, the sails began to fill, ever so slightly.

The sail starts the flutter in the wind, just a little.

30 INT. JETHRO'S CELLAR - NIGHT

30

There's a subtle but disturbing magical presence around us. We're in horror mode.

NARRATOR

You might recall that General Traft the Unfortunate had recently been drugged and kidnapped by a woodsman who lived in the mountains. We return to him now, just as he comes to. The first thing he perceived was the sight of his own breath, and the stinging nettles of frigid air in his lungs.

TRAFT STRAINS AND STRUGGLES.

NARRATOR

He tried to move, but found his wrists and ankles spread apart and bound with thick rope. And as he turned his head to the side--

--TRAFT SCREAMS IN ALARM.

NARRATOR

He came eye to eye with a corpse - motionless, eyes glazed over, and the first hints of frost just beginning to overtake its skin.

TRAFT

Gods dammit what the fuck.

TRAFT **STRUGGLES AGAINST HIS RESTRAINTS AGAIN.**

JETHRO

Now that won't help any of us, boy.

A stick taps cold dirt a few times.

NARRATOR

Then Jethro the woodsman walked into view. He wore a robe, that may have once been the deep black of the Templars of Discord, but was now a dusty and threadbare grey. But even more disturbing to Traft was the staff with which Jethro now walked, which somehow instilled a very visceral sense of terror in the seasoned warrior. It was sharpened at the bottom, and the markings on it were...wrong. The shapes on it...were not things that should be. At least in Traft's mind.

TRAFT

So, you're a Templar. That what this is about, then?
Listen, just 'cause I lost the battle--

JETHRO

--Nay, nay, nay, I put them and their small little minds behind me long ago.

TRAFT

Listen, if you just let me go, I can bring you more jewels than you've ever seen.

JETHRO

(*scoffs*)
I'm sorry you think I'm such a petty man, who cares for baubles and trinkets.

TRAFT

Whatever you want, I can get you.

JETHRO

Now that, I think, is true.

NARRATOR

As his eyes adjusted to the dark, Traft began to discern the shapes behind Jethro. Hanging on hooks from the ceiling were frozen corpses, in various stages of mutilation and butchery.

Chains rattle.

TRAFT

What the fuck did you do to them?

NARRATOR

By their tattoos, the corpses were mostly but not exclusively Orcs.

JETHRO

Well, there were mistakes in our explorations. On my part, yea, but also on theirs. And once the spark's gone out the body it's just meat anyhow. Never could see the sense in wasting it.

TRAFT

(gagging)
You're out of your gods-damned mind.

JETHRO

I'm not, I promise you. But not for lack of trying. I got faith in you though. I got faith in you, because we got a mutu'l friend.

TRAFT

Mutual friend? I swear if this is gonna be some damn scripture-thumping, personal-lord-and-savior, self-righteous--

JETHRO

--Oh, who needs scripture when you got the genuine article? You knew Queen Dagmar, didn't you?

TRAFT

(beat)
What's it to you?

JETHRO

Well she's who got me started on this path. Showed me it was possible.

TRAFT

What was possible?

JETHRO

To walk between the worlds. To move like our shadows do. To become our own shadows.

TRAFT

Old man, if I gotta die in this shit-hole of yours, I wish you'd get it over with and spare me the gods-damned riddles.

JETHRO

No, you damn idiot! I need you to survive! But unless you wanna end up like old Caleb there - walking around begging for food, licking his own bumhole - then you gotta listen to what I'm telling you.

TRAFT

Why would I believe a word out of your mouth?

JETHRO

You wanna see her again? I know I do.

TRAFT

I guess you ain't got a town crier up here, you old coot. Dagmar's dead. Has been for more than a month.

JETHRO

Oh believe me I heard. You wanna see her again?

TRAFT

Great. Another loon thinks he can raise the dead.

JETHRO

I don't have to raise anything. The gate between the living and the dead is like my table upstairs. Our bodies can't pass through it, but our shadows? Mmmm, they got a chance. So I ask you again. You wanna see her?

TRAFT

All right, why don't you prove it then? Make one of those sorry bastards stand up and start doing a dance.

JETHRO

Nay, nay, nay, I can't with them.

TRAFT

Well that's a shock.

JETHRO

They ain't got no wills left. Soon as the will leaves your body, if you ain't careful it...falls through your grasp like sand. I tried to tell them like I'm telling you. But they didn't believe. And they didn't have no ties to the likes of Dagmar.

TRAFT

Yeah, I'm sure that was the problem.

JETHRO

She's out there somewhere, boy. I can feel her, and I think you can too. If you knew her, then you always felt like there was something to her that she wasn't letting you see. And when you heard she died, a part of you knew she wasn't really gone.

TRAFT

(a little bit shaken)
You're bluffing. You're just saying what everyone thinks after someone dies.

JETHRO GIVES A LONG, FRUSTRATED SIGH.

JETHRO

Everybody's so damn incredulous these days. Don't move.

NARRATOR

From a nearby workbench, Jethro retrieved a thick book bound in some crude kind of leather. Traft realized with mounting disgust that the patterns on the leather were also Orcish tattoos.

Jethro quickly thumbs through his gross book.

JETHRO

There you go.

NARRATOR

He held the book open in front of Traft's face. And there, bound into the horrid tome, was a yellowed old letter, written with a hand that Traft still recognized.

DAGMAR (V.O.)

You're coming to a crossroads, my love. The world is coming to a crossroads. And you shall choose its path.

TRAFT

Where'd you get this?

JETHRO

What you think, you the only one she took a roll around in bed with?

TRAFT

Let's say for some damn fool reason I was to believe you. What then?

JETHRO

Well, then I'd start trying to send your will. Short little hops at first, very easy, not much risk. Then once you start to see for yourself what I'm telling you, we can start to get more ambitious.

TRAFT

What do you get out of this?

JETHRO

Told you. To free myself from this bought-and-paid-for little world.

TRAFT

So why don't you just go yourself?

JETHRO

Because if I muck it up, there ain't nobody left to try!
(beat)

Your kind spend a lot of time in mines, don't they? And in mines, don't you sometimes bring a little birdie to make sure it's safe? Well you're gonna be my little birdie. Only if the miner's bird lives, all she gets to do is do it again the next day and hope for the best. But if you live through this, there ain't gonna be a cage built by man or gods that can hold you. And! You'll get to see her again.

Traft weighs this all out for a beat.

TRAFT

What am I supposed to do?

JETHRO

For now, just close your eyes and take a few deep breaths.

Pages in the book flip.

NARRATOR

The gnarled old man flipped through his grisly grimoire until he found the spell he sought.

JETHRO

There we are. Nice and easy to start.

NARRATOR

And as he silently mouthed the words of the spell, an unsettling presence crept into the cellar.

Mixer: We should hear some kind of creeping eldritch horror. Have fun.

31 EXT. MERCHANT VESSEL DECK - MORNING

31

We're back on the deck of the ship. Jen's magical pad is really in full effect now, and the sails are fluttering noticeably.

NARRATOR

As the sun rose on Otto Olafsson's ship, the crew found themselves wholly enraptured by Arlene's singing.

Arlene's singing has some localized magical reverb on it.

ARLENE

She looked in the well as the mists did clear \ In faith that her lover would appear. \ But she saw not her man, nor moon, nor stars, \ Just her face all full of scars.

For she's gathered her skirts above the knee. And she's gone to the Wishing Well to see \ If the man that she loves waits for her, \ All alone at the Wishing Well.

As Arlene's singing finishes, so too does the magical pad and the wind in the sails.

OLAFSSON

Ah, now that was some lovely singing, gal. I ain't heard that one since...when was it?

NARRATOR

In his reverie, he turned his face to the rising sun.

OLAFSSON

(confused)
Ye gods, where in Selbirin...

NARRATOR

As it dawned on him, he wheeled on Arlene, choking on his own fury.

OLAFSSON

What've you done, you gods-damned harpy?! What siren spell have you cast?

NARRATOR

The crew of the ship was now catching up to their Olafsson's realization.

As the crew starts to realize what's up, they groan in anger and fear.

ARLENE

I was only--

OLAFSSON

--You've killed us all, gods-damnit.

NARRATOR

He advanced, red-faced, towards a stunned and frightened Arlene, but Billy got in the way.

BILLY

Hey watch it, dude.

OLAFSSON

Had a feeling about you lot, shoulda thrown you overboard soon as I did.

BILLY

(Yelling to be heard below deck)

Well there are a lot us! So I'd like to see you try!

NARRATOR

And then the Olafsson's eyes fixed on some point over Billy's shoulder, and his face went white.

A fast bass drum begins to waft towards us.

OLAFSSON

Oh, you stupid, stupid child. Little good that'll do any of us now.

NARRATOR

All turned to look at where the Olafsson was staring, and saw a grotesque masthead pierce the fog, ahead of a sleek hull blackened with pitch.

Oars beat the water.

NARRATOR

As the thick morning fog parted, the sound of a coxswain's drum wafted towards our heroes, as oars furiously beat the water. And then the dread vessel raised high a black flag.

OLAFSSON

Pirates. Galadon help us all.

END OF CHAPTER.