

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: This story is intended to replace The Sun Reborn in my first Sunday Slot. However, it's more experimental than most. Be sure to read the closing Author's Note after you finish the chapter!

Summary: An AU where Leon Bartfort took one look at the situation he found himself in and said 'fuck that', skipping out on all of that nonsense to go and do his own thing. His own thing just happens to be being a Sky Pirate!

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"Yar-har fiddle de dee, being a pirate is alright to be. Do what you want 'cause a pirate is free, you are a pirate!"

"... Must you sing that infernal jingle, Master?"

Standing at the helm of his airship as they fly atop the cloud layer, skimming the white fluff below them, Leon Fou Bartfort glances to his side where a white metal orb with a glowing red eye bobs in the air. Grinning, he arches his brow.

"What's wrong with a bit of singing, Luxion? Don't be such a sourpuss."

The orb's red eye flickers for a moment.

"It is not the singing that I have a problem with. It is the choice in song. Surely we can do better."

Leon laughs at the judgmental tone the AI is giving off, well used to Luxion's derisive standards by this point. He tilts his head to the side and hums.

"I don't know... what does 'better' mean in this context? I'd still want something pirate-themed, after all."

“... That can be arranged.”

Oh? Leon doesn't even get a chance to ask Luxion what he means by that before the slow stomping begins. His eyes move away from the orb out onto the deck of the airship... where dozens of automatons dressed to look like human beings are moving too and fro, making sure the airship remains in tip top shape.

With an eerie synchronicity only really made possible by their inorganic states, the robots all start to stamp along with one another, even while continuing to maintain their respective stations, not a single one of them actually failing to do their jobs even as Luxion's voice begins to overlap leaving their speakers.

*Yo, Ho haul together, hoist the colors high
Heave ho, thieves and beggars, never shall we die*

As the first words of the sea shanty wash over him, Leon can't help but sigh and lean back a little, his hands still on the helm but his eyes drifting shut as he opens his own mouth and sings along.

*Yo, Ho haul together, hoist the colors high
Heave ho, thieves and beggars, never shall we die*

How long had it been now since he last saw Earth? How long has it been since he reincarnated into this world? Over a decade and a half now, wasn't it? He'd had his second twentieth birthday just the other month.

*The King and his men stole the queen from her bed
and bound her in her bones
The seas be ours and by the powers
Where we will...we'll roam*

He'd woken up in a five year old body as Leon Bartfort those fifteen years ago, alone in a field. His past life, as a Japanese Man on Earth, had become like that of a dream. He did remember everything though... save for his old name.

Yo, Ho haul together, hoist the colors high

Heave ho, thieves and beggars, never say we die

From there, he'd come to discover that he was in the shitty otome game that his bitch of a sister had bullied him into playing so much. The same game that he was pretty sure had killed him back on Earth. Suffice to say, Leon had not been pleased. Especially not when his stepmother had turned out to exemplify the Evil Stepmother Stereotype to a T.

*Some men have died and some are alive
And others sail on the sea
With the keys to the cage
And the devil to pay
We lay to Fiddler's Green!*

He'd lasted ten years in that environment, treated like trash right alongside his brother because they were boys and his stepmother's children were girls. Being just a child again and too young to strike out on his own had been hard enough, but being in that abusive household had made it even worse.

And then, just when he thought he was going to get away, albeit by attending the Royal Academy, a place he recognized from the game and honestly had no desire to go to... his stepmother Zola had pulled the rug out from under him again and tried to marry him off to some old hag.

*Yo, Ho haul together, hoist the colors high
Heave ho, thieves and beggars, never shall we die*

Needless to say, Leon hadn't been interested in letting that happen. He wasn't interested in playing any of their games, really. But fortunately, there were aspects of the otome game that this world was based on that he could exploit. Namely, that 'adventurer' was a very real profession that someone could take up and expect to earn some money from by exploring the ruins of ancient, lost civilizations and uncovering their tech.

He was so desperate to escape his fate that Leon had agreed to his stepmother's demands. Namely, if he wanted her to call off his marriage to that

old hag friend of hers, he would need to find and give her the money that she would have gotten from selling him off in the first place.

*The bell has been raised from its watery grave
Do you hear its sepulchral tone?
A Call to all, pay heed to the squall
And turn your sail towards home!*

At first, Leon had been fully prepared to do exactly that because he had no desire to be stuck looking over his shoulder as his stepmother's goons hunted him down for the rest of his life. Better to just pay for the clean break, he'd initially figured.

But then... then he'd come across something special. Something he recognized. Leon had found a warp device that he remembered from the game. And remembering how to use it, he'd landed on a floating island where he'd discovered an ancient laboratory that held Luxion.

*Yo, Ho haul together, hoist the colors high
Heave ho, thieves and beggars, never shall we die*

Luxion was the game changer. Luxion was his path to freedom. In other worlds, maybe other versions of him might have used Luxion to make enough money to pay off Zola and go to the Royal Academy anyways. But not this world. Not this Leon. Because the key difference between this Leon and any other Leon was simple.

... This Leon had always wanted to be a pirate. He loved Pirates of the Caribbean (the first three movies only, to be exact), he loved One Piece, and most of all, he loved the pirate fantasy. To live on the open sea, to be free to do what you wanted and plunder whoever crossed you... that was the kind of thing Leon could get behind.

And with Luxion on his side and the things Luxion could build... Leon no longer had to fear his stepmother hiring goons to hunt him down. Let them come for him... let them take a piece out of Sky Pirate Leon!

“Master, I’ve just picked up an airship on the sensors. It’ll be directly below us soon.”

Blinking, Leon pulls himself from his thoughts, realizing that the sea shanty ‘Hoist the Colors’ had already come to an end and he’d gotten lost in reminiscing. Looking over at Luxion’s orb body, he grins.

“Take us down then, Luxion. Let’s see what spoils we can plunder this time!”

“As my Master wishes.”

The helm that Leon had been holding onto this entire time begins to twist and turn of its own accord and he lets go of it, even as they begin to descend through the cloud layer. This airship... it was an extension of Luxion in a way. Not his real body... his real body was a sleek black thing that was more futuristic sci-fi spaceship than it was steampunk fantasy airship.

No, this airship, which Leon had named Partner, was a great big imposing thing brimming with cannons on both sides! And thanks to its automaton crew, it was a fully operational battle station! (Alright, so he might have liked Star Wars too...)

Regardless, as Leon gets his hat, complete with the skull and crossbones motif, he walks down to the deck and looks over the edge just as their prey is coming into view. The much smaller, much less advanced airship doesn’t even notice them in time to do anything truth be told, but to be fair... nobody ever expects something like Partner to be hiding above the cloud layer. It simply isn’t fair.

But then... piracy is never fair. Leon grins as the automaton crew readies itself for boarding and Luxion brings Partner up alongside the other airship, which is just now beginning to fill with shouts as they realize they’re under attack.

Five years now, Leon has been doing this. Ever since he realized his choices were between marrying an old hag, paying Zola and going to the Academy... or just fucking off entirely and living a life of crime and infamy. He’d spent the past

five years doing whatever he liked and developing a reputation for himself across the airspace of this world. And yet, every time was as amazing as the last.

Luxion's robots all swing over to the other ship and begin the attack. Leon doesn't lead from the front, but he also doesn't stay behind forever. He swings over on the second wave, letting out a brash laugh as he draws his sword and blocks a desperate strike from some airship sailor more terrified than anything.

He kicks the other man's feet out from under him and then knocks him unconscious with a boot to the skull before continuing on from there.

The battle is brutally short and one-sided, until finally Leon calls out.

"Surrender! Surrender and your lives may still be spared!"

They quickly take him up on his offer, tossing their weapons down. Especially since by this point they've realized that they're not fighting real humans but rather 'golems' in their vernacular. And how are they supposed to beat wave after wave of tireless, unending golems?

Soon enough, the captured airship's Captain is dragged before him. The man looks like he's on the wrong side of his age, with a bald spot and beads of sweat on his brow. He certainly doesn't come across as very captain-y, but Leon has seen all sorts in the past five years. He's come across plenty of men claiming to be Captains who aren't worthy of the title.

"Tell me, do you know who I am?"

Swallowing nervously, the older man nods his head.

"Y-Yes... you're him. You're Leon 'Devil's Smile' Bartfort."

Leon can't help but grin wickedly at that... a grin that sends a shiver through the other Captain's body and causes a few whimpers from the crew members held nearby. It never got old, hearing his pirate title said back to him. Although...

“That’s Captain Leon ‘Devil’s Smile’ Bartfort to you, my good sir!”

The other man sputters and falls over himself trying to correct the misstep, but Leon just waves him off. Admittedly, it’s a bit of a mouthful when you tack on Captain, he knows that. He would have liked to do away with his last name if he could, but nobody seemed to be willing to let him forget where he came from.

... Eh, you win some, you lose some. He’d been the one to start seeding ‘Devil’s Smile’ after brainstorming ideas with Luxion after all and look how it’d taken off! He was quite proud of his success there, at least!

“Right then, with pleasantries out of the way... tell me what I’ve won, man!”

The other Captain blinks owlshly at that.

“Uh... won, s-sir?”

Rolling his eyes, Leon wraps an arm around the man’s pudgy shoulders and sweeps his other arm out over the deck of the captured airship.

“I’ve successfully stopped, boarded, and commandeered your airship. You and your crew are entirely at my mercy. So now, if you want everyone to live, you’re going to tell me exactly what cargo your transporting so I can decide how much of it I want to take for myself. Alright? Alright!”

Letting go of the other Captain, Leon steps back and smiles a friendly smile... or at least, he tries to make it friendly. Considering the way the older man shudders again, it probably only adds to his epithet’s legend. Ah well, he doesn’t mind.

“O-Oh, right... of c-course. Ah... the only problem is... Captain Bartfort sir... we’re not currently on a cargo run.”

Leon pauses at that, looking around the airship for a moment and letting his incredulity show on his face. As previously mentioned, he and Luxion had been doing this for five years now. Which meant they both knew the difference

between a passenger ship and a merchant's vessel. And this... this was not some sort of passenger liner.

Oh sure, Leon probably would have attacked a passenger liner as well, especially if it looked expensive enough to hold a bunch of rich fucks worth robbing in it. But he would have approached it differently as well.

Seeing his incredulity, the other Captain sweats a bit harder as he blanches.

"N-Not to say we aren't a merchant ship C-Captain, because we are... it's just that we've been contracted to transport a different *type* of cargo this time."

And then the Captain's eyes light up and he suddenly looks like he just had an idea. Ugh. Leon hated it when his prey got ideas.

"Actually... we might just be able to make a deal, Captain Bartfort!"

A deal?! He was trying to plunder them! Not make a fucking deal! Still, as much as he was beginning to have 'buyer's remorse' regarding this particular stoppage, Leon waves a hand through the air all the same.

"Very well. What kind of deal."

Swallowing hard, this time not out of fear but to try and contain his excitement, the other man begins to explain. As it turns out, they really don't have any conventional cargo for Leon to steal here. Instead, they were contracted to specifically deliver a noblewoman and her commoner handmaiden into their exile. The noblewoman had done something bad enough back home to get thrown out entirely.

However... that's where things get interesting.

"See, we were asked to do this discretely by one party... but then another party approached me before we departed and said they'd paid triple if the noblewoman didn't survive the trip! If she 'doesn't make it' then we're due a

massive payday... one I'm sure all of us here would be happy to cut you in on if you'd help us out by doing the deed!"

Leon stares blankly at the opportunistic weasel of a man. The balding Captain had gone from terrified for his life to trying to cut a deal with Leon. Good lord, what sort of reputation did he have that they thought he'd be interested in something as vile as all of this?

... Oh right. Sky Pirate. Still... Leon hides his distaste behind a common demeanor and shrugs.

"Hm. Very well. Bring them out so I might see these two women for myself."

The Captain nods eagerly and sends a couple of his men down with a few of Leon's automatons. It's not even a minute later that there are feminine shouts and the sounds of struggle... and then the doors to below deck are pushed open and Leon's automatons drag the noblewoman and her servant out before them kicking and screaming.

"Unhand me at once you... you golem! You won't get away with this! Do you know who I am?! Do you know who my father is?! He won't stand for this!"

Well, the noblewoman is kicking and screaming. The servant also fights back but is a lot quieter, even as she shoots distressed looks at her mistress.

Leon, meanwhile... just stares. And stares some more. He stares long enough that everyone else on the deck starts to get a little uncomfortable as the silence becomes... awkward. Even the noblewoman stops struggling after a bit and looks around before realizing he's staring right at her.

As she stiffens up, paradoxically coloring and paling at the same time under his intense gaze, Leon just continues to stare.

Because standing in front of him held by his automatons is Lady Angelica Rapha Redgrave. And next to her, held by more of his automatons, is the commoner

Olivia. These two women were both special in their own way... which made their presence here on this ship together all the more ridiculous to Leon.

Seriously... why were the first villainess and main heroine from the otome game being sent into exile together? How the fuck had THAT happened?!

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A/N: So up above I mentioned this story is more experimental than most. That's because while I think that this story will find a solid audience both on my Patreon and on the public websites I post to, I don't know for sure.

So basically, if you want this story to continue, show it some love with Likes and Comments. If I see it getting a lot of attention, then I'll continue it forward. If it doesn't seem to resonate with enough of my patrons though, this will be a one-shot and I'll go back to the drawing board.

Oh and suggest title ideas if you want to see more of this story, we'll vote on a title next chapter!

Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!