

OUR FLAG MEANS DEATH

PILOT

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Based on some ideas by

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EXT. THE REVENGE, ESTABLISHER - DAY

A ten-gun sloop sails on the high seas. It's impressive looking. And very clean. Still has that new ship smell.

EXT. THE REVENGE, DECK - MOMENTS LATER

CAPTAIN STEDE BONNET addresses his assembled crew. Middle-aged, healthy-looking, he's a man who's seen little hardship.

STEDE

What we're about to do will be perilous. Very perilous. Some of us won't be coming back. Others may be wounded. Still others may come back looking totally fine, but in reality be *mentally devastated* by what they've just witnessed. And if that's the case, what'll we do?

The crew is silent. They're an odd bunch. Rougher and tougher than Stede, they're still the sales rack of pirates.

STEDE (CONT'D)

... it's something I always encourage...

A lanky, blond pirate with a Nordic accent (THE SWEDE):

THE SWEDE

...we'll talk about it?

STEDE

Yes! If someone returns mentally devastated, we will *talk through it as a crew*. Because that's how we do things here on The Revenge.

A chewed-up, bearded, Willem Dafoe-ish older pirate (NATHANIEL BUTTONS) calls out from the bridge.

BUTTONS

Approaching the vessel, Cap'n.

STEDE

Right! Places everyone! Look scary!

EXT. TEENY FISHING BOAT, DECK - DAY

Two elderly fishermen sit on deck, both have dozed off. They're awakened by the BOOM of a CANNON, followed by a cannonball splashing into the water nearby.

STEDE (O.S.)
That was a warning shot!

They turn to find The Revenge on the other side of their tiny boat, dwarfing them. Stede looks down from the edge.

STEDE (CONT'D)
Surrender! You've no chance of escape!

ELDERLY FISHERMAN 1
The hell are you supposed to be?

STEDE
You're addressing Captain Stede Bonnet of The Revenge and his Savage Pirate Hoard.

ELDERLY FISHERMAN 2
(beat)
You don't look much like pirates.

STEDE
Well we are. So.

The fishermen look over to Buttons for confirmation.

BUTTONS
(sheepish)
He's right, we are.

STEDE
Don't look at him, look at me, I'm the Captain. Prepare to be boarded, curs!
(to Buttons)
How do we get down there?

BUTTONS
Ladder, I reckon. May not be long enough tho. She's a teensy ship.

STEDE
She's not *that* little.
(to the crew)
Has anyone seen the ladder?
(Shrugs. No one has)
C'mon, really? We knew were doing a raid. No one thought we'd need the ladder? We look like assholes.

Elderly Fisherman mutters to his buddy:

ELDERLY FISHERMAN
I don't think they're really
pirates.

TITLE IMAGE:

A beach. A solitary black flag flaps in the wind, the words
OUR FLAG MEANS DEATH emblazoned on it. This is accompanied by
a harpsichord sting. (This image will change every episode).

EXT. ROPE LADDER - DAY

Quick cuts: 1. A rope ladder unrolls. 2. The bottom run hits
the deck. 3. A boot touches down on a rung.

Stede slowly makes his way down a shaky rope ladder. He looks
very bad doing this. He freezes halfway down.

STEDE
Is it supposed to shake like this?

BUTTONS (O.S.)
Aye, Cap'n. Perfectly normal.

Stede continues to move tentatively down the ladder.

INT. TEENY FISHING BOAT, DECK - SECONDS LATER

Stede's boots hit the deck of the fishing ship. He looks
around as his men rummage through everything.

ELDERLY FISHERMAN 2
I told ye, we 'aven't got anything.

ELDERLY FISHERMEN
We're just fishermen. We're not
even good ones. We're old.

STEDE
That's what they all say. We'll be
the judge of that.

STEDE (V.O.)
Some men are born to be pirate
captains ...

Stede looks around the ramshackle ship.

STEDE
There must be something of value on
this ship.

STEDE (V.O.)
 ...others learn on the job.

Stede walks into the cabin and sees a lush plant.

STEDE
 Hello, what's this?

ELDERLY FISHERMAN
 That's me plant.

JUMP: Stede approaches the ladder with the plant. The fishermen call after him.

ELDERLY FISHERMEN	ELDERLY FISHERMEN 2
But I love that plant! I	He loves that plant!
raised it from a seedling!	

STEDE
 Should've thought of that before
 you were dicks.
 (climbing ladder, badly)
 We seem like pirates now, don't we?

STEDE (V.O.)
 Me? I'm a pretty solid mix of both.

INT. THE REVENGE, STEDE'S OFFICE - DAY

Close on the plant as it's rotated into the perfect position.
 Pull back to find Stede admiring it proudly.

STEDE
 Really fills the space, doesn't it?

Lucius Spriggs (20's, bookish, spritely) writes everything
 Stede says down in a thick book.

LUCIUS
 Yeah. It's fine.

STEDE
 Anyway, were was I?

LUCIUS
 Being a pirate captain --

STEDE
 Yes! Every pirate captain captains
 pirates differently. Traditionally,
 piracy's a culture of abuse:
 floggings, keelhaulings.
 (MORE)

STEDE (CONT'D)

And *my* thought is: why? And also:
what if it weren't? Like that?

INT. THE REVENGE, BRIDGE - DAY

Stede and Lucius walk the deck.

STEDE

For example, if your average pirate
doesn't steal, he doesn't eat.
That's a lot of mental pressure. I
pay my crew a salary. Same wage
every week, no matter what. Took
'em a while to get their heads
around it, but...

EXT. THE DOCKS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Stede talks to a couple of new hires, ROACH (compact, slick,
shifty) and FRENCHIE (a French-Nigerian hipster pirate).

ROACH

What if we steal more one week?

STEDE

You make the same.

FRENCHIE

But what if one week we steal less?

STEDE

Again, paid the same. A light week,
a heavy week, it balances out. See?

ROACH

(silence, then)

What if... one week... we steal
like... a *lot*?

Stede inhales, patiently, game to go through it again.

INT. THE REVENGE, STEDE'S CABIN - DAY

Stede stands in front of a large shelf of books.

STEDE

Also, I've included a few
amenities.

(gestures to library)

Full library. The crew's free to
borrow books whenever.

(MORE)

STEDE (CONT'D)

You're the only one who's taken me up on it so far, but...

LUCIUS

I'm the only crew member who can read.

STEDE

That's not... is that true?
(Lucius nods, tired)
Huh. Didn't know that.

EXT. THE REVENGE, DECK - DAY

Stede addresses the crew, Lucius at his side.

STEDE

Very nice work on today's raid!
We're really starting to look like a band of cutthroats and murderers.
Give yourselves a hand.

The crew looks demoralized and pissed off. Only Wee John Feeney (massive, kindly Irishman) claps. He stops, elbowed by his brother, Big John Feeney (small, semi-feral Irishman).

STEDE (CONT'D)

But I have notes. Our scribe here, Marcus--

LUCIUS

It's Lucius, actually --

STEDE (CONT'D)

-- was good enough to jot them down.

The pirates glare at Lucius. Someone mutters: "Suck-ass." Stede puts on reading glasses and looks at Lucius's book.

STEDE (CONT'D)

(scanning notes)

So let's see what we... my opening speech went well, very inspiring... keep the ladder handy, that's a big one...

(then)

Ah! Here's an overall note: More Energy. It's exciting stuff we're doing, you know? We're swashbuckling and looting, let's have fun with it --

BLACK PETE (bald, skinny, thinks he's the ultimate pirate, isn't) cuts in:

BLACK PETE

Stealing a plant from two old geezers is hardly swashbuckling.

STEDE

Well it falls more cleanly under "looting", technically, but --

BIG JOHN FEENEY

A feckin' embarrassment is what it is.

Snickers among the crew. Stede tries to find the culprit.

STEDE

What was that? Who said that? John Feeney was that you?

WEE JOHN FEENEY

Me? No --

STEDE (CONT'D)

No, the other John Feeney.

BIG JOHN FEENEY

And what if it were?

Ooohs from the crew. Is this going to be a standoff?

STEDE

Uh, well, if it were you... I'd ask you to reframe that criticism as a suggestion. What's one thing you'd change around here if you could?

BIG JOHN FEENEY

We don't even have a flag for one. Any pirate worth a damn has a flag.

Murmurs of agreement. Stede nods supportively.

STEDE

A flag. Very useful feedback.

EXT. THE REVENGE, BOW - DAY

Stede strikes a Captain's pose while talking to Lucius.

STEDE

What's a captain's most important instrument?

LUCIUS

I don't know. What?

STEDE

Guess.

LUCIUS

I don't -- can you just tell me?

STEDE

C'mon guess, guess. I'm the
Captain, that's an order.

LUCIUS

...A compass?

STEDE

No. Incorrect.
(touches his ears)
These. Ears. For listening.
(then)
Write that down, Marcus.

LUCIUS

Again, my name's Lucius --

Stede stares into the sea, striking a different Captain pose.

STEDE

Write it all down. We want a warts
and all accounting of our voyage.
For posterity. Someday people will
read about our exploits at sea...
(far away now, a little
regret creeps in)
...free ...to be you and me...

EXT. THE REVENGE, DECK - MOMENTS LATER

Two large tables have been pushed together. Stede empties a
basket of fabric onto them as the men look on.

STEDE

Each of you will create a flag.
Afterwards, we'll vote on the best
one, and that'll become the
official flag of The Revenge.

BLACK PETE

I'm not fucking sewing. That's
women's work.

STEDE

Come on Black Pete, that's not
true. How many of you sew?

A few raise their hands. A few more raise theirs when they see the hands. SALTY (looks like an old biker) speaks up:

SALTY

Sewed me arm up once, after I been stabbed.

STEDE

See? He sewed his arm up. Sounds to me like sewing can be pretty tough.

(then)

Anyway, everyone take some fabric. Have at it! Express yourselves!

JUMP: The men pick through the fabric.

STEDE (V.O.)

A lot of the guys are sweethearts deep down.

Two tough-looking pirates grab the same piece of fabric and it turns into a standoff. One pulls a knife. They struggle. The men rush to restrain them.

Jump - Stede's calmed them down. Men hold each of them back. He hands each of them another piece of fabric.

STEDE (V.O.)

They're just dealing with a fair amount of trauma.

STEDE

No problem. We simply select another piece of fabric.

JUMP: The pirates work on their flags, focused cutting and sewing, etc. They look like murderous kindergarteners.

STEDE (V.O.)

Creative projects give them a chance to work through it....

As everyone works, Black Pete glares menacingly at Stede, who by now stands up at the bridge.

STEDE (V.O.)

... and maybe even share a bit of what's going on *inside*.

BLACK PETE

Whelp, guess it's time.

OLUWANDE

Time? For what?

Black Pete slams his dagger into the table.

BLACK PETE
To kill Captain.

Frenchie realizes Black Pete stabbed through his flag.

FRENCHIE
Allons! Je dois le coudre
maintenant! (Hey, come on! I have
to sew this now!)

In the distance, Buttons watches from the bridge...

EXT. THE REVENGE, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

...lighting his pipe. Stede talks to Lucius behind him.

STEDE
If I can help this crew grow, as
people, leave them just a little
better than I found them, than I've
succeeded as a pirate Captain.

BUTTONS
A word, Cap'n?

STEDE
Of course Mr. Buttons! What's on
your mind? Everything good?

BUTTONS
Well, no. Mutiny's a-brewing.

STEDE
(Beat, then he laughs)
Mutiny? That's... I mean...
(smile fades)
Really?

BUTTONS
Aye Cap'n. Been on many a ship 'n
the nose ne'er lies.
(then)
Plus they asked if'n I wanted to
join.

STEDE
...What'd you say?

BUTTONS
Told 'em it's better if I recuse,
seein as I'm first mate and all.
(MORE)

BUTTONS (CONT'D)

At any rate, crew's itchin fer a
killin.

Stede notices Lucius writing all of this down.

STEDE

Stop writing.
(Lucius writes "stop
writing")
I mean it.

LUCIUS

Sorry, I'm confused. You said
record everything, warts and --

STEDE

Not this!
(rips page out of book)
Just... maybe take a walk or
something.

EXT. THE REVENGE, ARTS AND CRAFTS TABLE - DAY

Black Pete addresses the crew. Most of them still work on
their flags, half-listening.

BLACK PETE

You think Blackbeard's crew sews?
No. We were too busy killing. Or
drinking. And when we weren't
killing or drinking we were
scheming, plotting or just
generally being badasses.

SALTY

Ye never sailed with Blackbeard.

BLACK PETE

Oh yeah? Then who gave me this?

Black Pete pulls up his shirt to reveal a tiny scar.

THE SWEDE

Gave you what? I can't see it.

BLACK PETE

This, this, right here, the scar.
It actually healed pretty well --
I'm a quick healer, always was --
but it's here. Blackbeard himself
stabbed me. Cause he was threatened
by me. But that's a story for
another day.

SALTY

A bullshit story for a bullshit day.

FRENCHIE

(calls across table)

Pass the black thread, s'il vous plaît. Merci.

Roach looks at Frenchie's flag. It has a large cat on it.

ROACH

What is that? A cat? The flag's supposed to be scary.

FRENCHIE

Cats are terrifying. Everyone knows this. Because they're witches. And they have knives in their feet.

BLACK PETE

Can we forget about the flags for a minute and focus on the mutiny?

FRENCHIE

Dans tous les cas nous aurons besoin d'un drapeau. (Either way we'll need a flag.)

BLACK PETE

Look, point is, we should be pillaging, not doing arts and crafts. Weeks we've been out here with nothing to show for it.

(some nods among the crew)

The current management's gotta go. Who's with me?

*
*
*

BIG JOHN FEENEY

If we can light him on fire I'm in.

BLACK PETE

That's one. Who else?

A few more raise their hands. Oluwande (a seemingly easy-going, but very watchful Somalian fella) takes all this in. Meanwhile, Lucius joins the group.

LUCIUS

Hey guys. So, uh, Buttons told him.

BLACK PETE

Oh goddamnit! You can't tell him anything!

LUCIUS
Yeah. I'm still in by the way.

EXT. THE REVENGE, BOW - DAY

Stede's taking this hard, Buttons attempts to comfort him.

STEDE
I just... I can't... *mutiny?*

BUTTONS
I wouldn't take it personal. It's just that they don't like ye. Or the way ye do things.

STEDE
What more do they want? I'm supportive, caring. I'm responsive to their needs.

BUTTONS
See, that may be what's contributin to the poor overall impression.

STEDE
What is the overall impression?

BUTTONS
That yer weak, soft-bellied, yella--

STEDE
Ah. I see.

BUTTONS (CONT'D)
yer craven, ill-equipped to lead men--

STEDE (CONT'D)
Understood! Thank you.
(then)
What would you do? In my position?

BUTTONS
Pick a man at random 'n execute him, most likely.

STEDE
Hm. Seems rash... but I feel like I'm hearing they could use more structure? A firmer hand?

BUTTONS
Aye... or an iron fist. Make 'em earn their wage. Give 'em somethin to really sink their teef inta.

EXT. THE REVENGE, ARTS AND CRAFTS TABLE - DAY

The mutiny discussion continues.

WEE JOHN FEENEY

Question: who's gonna be Captain if we kill Captain?

BLACK PETE

We vote on it. And then it'll be me. Cause I'm the most experienced.

Grumbles. Black Pete isn't hugely popular.

FRENCHIE

Buttons is the most experienced.

LUCIUS

Right... but he's maybe insane...?

EXT. THE REVENGE, PORT SIDE - DAY (QUICK POP)

Buttons laughs very hard, he's just heard something funny.

BUTTONS

No! Stop it! Oh god that's rich!

Reveal: he's talking to a seagull. The seagull squawks. Buttons grows deadly serious. It's become a standoff.

BUTTONS (CONT'D)

Ye take that back.

Lucius watches all of this from nearby.

INT. THE REVENGE, ARTS AND CRAFTS TABLE - DAY

Crew nods. Buttons is out.

ROACH

How bout Jim? He looks experienced.

Pan to JIM, a shadowy, dangerous-looking pirate. It's hard to make out his face under his hat, eye-patch and scraggly beard. He sharpens a huge knife on a strop in the distance.

BLACK PETE

Uh, well, he's a mute, for one. Which seems problematic in a leader.

(to Oluwande)

No offense, I know you're mates.

OLUWANDE

None taken, it's true. Plus Jim's not too keen on politics.

BLACK PETE

How about you, Oluwande? In or out?

OLUWANDE

I don't really have a problem with Captain. I mean... he reads us stories at night. That's nice.

Murmurs and nods of agreement. This is popular all around.

OLUWANDE (CONT'D)

If we kill him, we'll never find out what happens to the wooden doll who wants to become a real boy. Because none of us can read.

BLACK PETE

Lucius reads.

ROACH

But can he do voices? Captain does the voices.

BLACK PETE

Do a wooden boy voice.

LUCIUS

What? I don't think I --

BIG JOHN FEENEY + OTHERS

Talk like a wooden boy! / Yeah, do it! / Go on!

Lucius clears his throat and attempts a wooden boy voice.

LUCIUS

Hello... I'm a little wooden boy. And this is my voice...

WEE JOHN FEENEY

(beat)

Christ, that was awful.

Disappointed murmurs. That sucked. This is a problem.

STEDE (O.S.)

Avast ye!

PAN to find Stede, hands on hips, more alpha than we've seen him. He kicks a bucket for emphasis and hurts his foot.

STEDE (CONT'D)

Ow. Ouch.

(then)

Alright, listen up, cause I'm only saying this once! Of course if anyone needs clarification later, come find me, as always --

(Buttons clears throat)

But this really should stick the first time, so listen up! Now I gather some of you feel we're not "real pirates." Well here's the deal, buckos: we've got our eyes on a ship. A big one.

(surprised looks among crew)

And we're going to catch up with it forthwith and then we're gonna *kick* its *ass*. Any questions?

ROACH

Is it really a big ship this time?

STEDE

I just told you --

ROACH (CONT'D)

I'm not asking you, I'm asking him.

BUTTONS

She's quite impressive, aye.

BIG JOHN FEENEY

Can we light it on fire?

STEDE

I'd be disappointed if we didn't.

Excited looks and murmurs from the crew. Stede starts giving marching orders, Buttons interprets them for the crew.

STEDE (CONT'D)

You two, set up the really big sail! The fancy one!

BUTTONS

Hoist the mainsail he means.

STEDE

And you guys do the same with the teeny tiny little sail.

BUTTONS

He means release the jib.

STEDE

Everyone else, do whatever needs doing. You know what you do. And gird for battle!

Everyone moves to position, leaving Black Pete alone.

BLACK PETE

Wait! We haven't voted!

THE SWEDE

Let's check back in after the daring raid.

EXT. THE REVENGE - DAY

An establisher of The Revenge cutting through the water, winds fully behind its sails.

EXT. THE REVENGE, BRIDGE - DAY

Stede and Buttons walk through the ship. Everyone is engaged in a task, singing a simple seafaring tune as they work.

STEDE

I think that worked.

BUTTONS

Aye. They do seem less inclined to murder ye, Cap'n.

Stede looks around deck as everyone prepares for battle:

- Big John Feeney smears tribal Celtic war paint on his face. Tilt up to find Wee John Feeney doing the same. They look terrifying.
- A thrown dagger embeds in post, joined shortly by another. These come from Jim, thrown from quite a distance.
- Oluwande swings a massive sword repetitively, like a baseball player limbering up his joints.

As Stede takes this in, it dawns on him that they're headed into armed conflict.

STEDE

You don't think this'll actually get that bloody, do you?

BUTTONS

Hard to know for certain. Raids are like snowflakes.

STEDE

Ah, yes. No two quite alike?

BUTTONS

Well, no, almost always they end in terrible bloodshed. Snowflakes may not be the best comparison.

Buttons has taken something wrapped in cloth from his pocket.

STEDE

What's that?

He removes the cloth. It's a set of SHARP METAL TEETH.

BUTTONS

Me fangs. In case I have to chew through someone's throat. Gettin' too old fer hand-to-hand violence.

There's a SCREAM on deck. Stede turns. Roach, machete over his head, slashes a watermelon. Its seeds, juice and flesh spill everywhere into a soggy mess as Stede looks on, queasy.

EXT. BONNET PLANTATION - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A stern older man (FATHER BONNET) stands on the grounds of a large plantation with an eight-year-old boy (Stede). Father Bonnet motions to the acres of land around them.

FATHER BONNET

One day all this will be yours. Not because you deserve it, not because you earned it -- Lord knows you didn't do that -- but because you lucked into it. What do you suppose that makes you?

STEDE

...fortunate?

FATHER BONNET

Makes you a little rich boy. Come with me.

INT. BONNET ESTATE, BARN - MOMENTS LATER (FLASHBACK)

Father Bonnet, now in an apron, cleaves a bird's neck. Blood hits his apron and face. Stede covers his eyes with his hand.

FATHER BONNET
Open your eyes, child. This is what
a man's work looks like.

Stede looks, instantly queasy. Father is disgusted.

FATHER BONNET (CONT'D)
Fetch some eggs from the goose.

The goose stands in a pen nearby. It's much larger than Stede. Father hands Stede a bucket. Stede hesitates.

FATHER BONNET (CONT'D)
It's just a goose, boy. Do as
you're told.

JUMP - Stede approaches the goose, bucket in hand. It watches, motionless. Stede presses onward. The goose stares. Stede forces himself to meet its gaze. Just before Stede takes another step, the goose honks. Stede vomits.

JUMP - Father Bonnet looks disgusted as Stede walks by him. The goose honks in the background. Stede hands over the bucket, unable to meet his gaze.

As Stede walks out of the barn, his father calls after him, apron still covered in bird blood.

FATHER BONNET (CONT'D)
A weak-hearted, soft-handed little
rich boy. That's all you'll ever
be, Stede Bonnet!

YOUNG STEDE
I know --

INT. THE REVENGE, STEDE'S CABIN - DAY

Stede sits on the edge of his bed wringing his hands. He wears a silk dressing gown.

STEDE
-- Papa.

He's startled by a knock at the door. He opens it to find Oluwande and Jim.

OLUWANDE (O.S.)
Buttons sent us to check in.
Everything alright, Captain?

STEDE
(pale, sweaty & tense)
Doing really great. Really great.

OLUWANDE
Were you sleeping? You're in your
pyjamas.

STEDE
Ah, no just meditating. Before the
big battle. I find the feel of silk
very calming.

OLUWANDE
(beat)
Alright, well, we'll leave you--

STEDE
No, hey, uh, come in, come in.
(they enter)
You know, it's actually been a
minute? Since I've seen a little of
the old hand-to-hand? Could you
maybe give me a... refresher?

OLUWANDE
Jim's seen the most combat.
Anything in particular, or...?

STEDE
Just the basics. Should do it.

In a series of moves, Jim brings his blade dangerously close to Stede's arteries and vital organs. Oluwande narrates.

OLUWANDE
There's a kill, that's a kill,
that's a kill --

<p>STEDE Wow. Alright, that's quite a--</p>	<p>OLUWANDE (CONT'D) Kill, kill, that's a kill, slow kill, slow and painful kill.</p>
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STEDE (CONT'D)
Um, do you know anything a little
less *permanent*? Like maybe a stun
move?

OLUWANDE

A stun move...

Jim shrugs. He points to a spot at the base of his skull.

OLUWANDE (CONT'D)

I suppose if you hit someone here,
you'd knock them out.

STEDE

(very relieved)

Oh my god. That's great! Does it
have to be with a sword, or -- ?

OLUWANDE

Anything heavy should do it.

(Stede practices this)

Captain, if I may... pirating's not
for everyone. It's a very dangerous
lifestyle.

STEDE

Some of us thrive on danger.

OLUWANDE

Yeah... but me and Jim, we don't do
this because we like it. We do it
cause we have no other choice.

STEDE

I hear that. Tough lot we've been
forced into.

(holds up a fist)

Solidarity.

They stare at him for a beat. Stede wilts, eyes welling up.

STEDE (CONT'D)

I've made a terrible mistake. I'm
not a pirate. I'm an idiot.

Stede starts openly sobbing. Oluwande tries to comfort him.

OLUWANDE

There, there, Captain...

STEDE

I shouldn't be here. I've done
irreparable damage to my life--

A cannon booms. The Revenge rocks violently.

STEDE (CONT'D)

What the hell --

EXT. THE REVENGE, BRIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Stede, Oluwande and Jim have joined Buttons on the bridge.

STEDE

-- was that?

BUTTONS

Warning shot, Cap'n. We finally caught what we been chasin'.

WHIP PAN to a much larger, meaner ship yards away, flying the Union Jack. WHIP PAN back to Stede, stunned.

STEDE

Why is that so big?

BUTTONS

She's an English Naval warship, turns out. Twice as many guns, twice as many men.

(then)

Have ye been cryin'?

STEDE

What? No.

The ship fires another shot. It nicks the top of the mast. Everyone hits the deck.

STEDE (CONT'D)

Alright. Nobody panic. We'll just turn around and leave. Right?

BUTTONS

Aye, aye, Cap'n. But it'll take the better part of an hour.

OLUWANDE

An hour?! We'll be dead by then!

BUTTONS

Oh most certainly.

EXT. POV FROM A SPYGLASS - DAY

A spyglass has The Revenge in its sights.

VOICE (O.S.)

They're still not moving.

EXT. BRIDGE, BRITISH SHIP - CONTINUOUS

A BRITISH OFFICER (Officer Wellington) lowers the spyglass.

OFFICER WELLINGTON
Permission to blow them to hell,
Captain?

He speaks to CAPTAIN NIGEL BADMINTON, exactly Stede's age but much more dashing, looks absolutely fantastic in a uniform.

CAPTAIN BADMINTON
(stifles a yawn, then)
I suppose so, yes. And we're quite
certain they're pirates?

OFFICER WELLINGTON
Hard to say. One appears to be a
heavysset woman in a silk dressing
gown.

Badminton puts the spyglass to his eye.

EXT. POV FROM A SPYGLASS - CONTINUOUS

The spyglass finds Buttons and Stede arguing, flat on their stomachs. We can only see Stede's back.

FIRST OFFICER (O.S.)
You can see her there, cowering.

Stede turns, his face becomes visible.

EXT. ENGLISH SHIP, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

CAPTAIN BADMINTON
What the devil? Stede?

INT. THE REVENGE, BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

STEDE
Do you have any plans where we
don't die?

BUTTONS
No.
(then)
Wait. Maybe.

STEDE
Go on.

BUTTONS

We raise the flag of surrender, let
'em come good and close...

STEDE

Good, sounds good.

BUTTONS

Then we light our powder keg,
blowin' both ships to kingdom come.

STEDE

...But then we'd die.

BUTTONS

(beat)

I suppose so, aye.

Frenchie calls over from the starboard side.

FRENCHIE

Captain, they're sending over a
tender!

They look over the starboard side. A tender (a rowboat,
essentially) manned by two officers approaches.

STEDE

Everybody hide!

Everyone on deck scrambles for a hiding spot.

EXT. THE REVENGE, STARBOARD SIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Officer Wellington calls up to the ship.

OFFICER WELLINGTON

I say, does one of you happen to be
Stede Bonnet?

(no response)

We know you're there, we saw you.
From our ship.

Some whispers: ("Go." / "Stand up."). Stede slowly stands.

STEDE

Uh, yes. I'm he. Hi. How are you?

BRITISH OFFICER

Captain Badminton of His Majesty's
Royal Navy sends his regards.

STEDE
 Captain Badminton? Nigel Badminton?

OFFICER WELLINGTON
 One and the same. He's dreadfully
 sorry about the cannon fire.

STEDE
 Oh, that's-- no problem, we're
 good.

STEDE (CONT'D)
 He'd like to come aboard and
 apologize in person. Over tea.

STEDE (CONT'D)
 Oh. Uh, that's not necessary --

BRITISH OFFICER
 I'm afraid he insists.

STEDE
 Ah. I see, well, in that case...

Stede looks behind him. The pirates lay flat on the deck, holding swords, etc. Black Pete urgently runs his hand across his throat, mouthing "say no." Stede turns back.

STEDE (CONT'D)
 That'd be lovely. Give us a smidge?
 To tidy up?

INT. THE REVENGE, STEDE'S CABIN - DAY

As Stede digs through his closet, several of the crew put on his fancy clothes and powdered wigs.

STEDE
 We went to boarding school
 together. Haven't seen him since I
 was fifteen.

BLACK PETE
 So lemme get this straight: earlier
 today we were sewing. And now we're
 serving the English Navy high tea.
 What's next, ballroom --

A powdered wig hits him in the face.

STEDE

You're Lord Peter Gravelston, minor
royalty from Essex, and you love
riding horses. Next!

INT. THE REVENGE, HALLWAY OUTSIDE STEDE'S CABIN - DAY

Black Pete and the other pirates look at each other,
demoralized, dressed in Stede's powdered wigs and finery.

BLACK PETE

Who's for killing Captain?

Everyone raises their hands, except Oluwande. Oluwande sees
even Jim has his hand raised. Reluctantly, he raises his.

EXT. THE REVENGE, ARTS AND CRAFTS TABLE - DAY

The arts and crafts table has been covered with a tablecloth
for high tea table. Captain Badminton chats up Stede.

CAPTAIN BADMINTON

Terrribly sorry for firing on you
earlier, Stede.

STEDE

Ancient history. We easily could've
done the same thing.

CAPTAIN BADMINTON

Exactly. I mean, thank god you
didn't or you'd all be dead now.
But you're a wonderful sport.
(looks around the table)
So, tell me about your colourful
crew.

STEDE

What's there to tell? Just a bunch
of upper-crust lads trying our hand
at the seafaring life. Right, boys?

Stede's crew sits around the table along with three English
naval officers (Shaw, Wellington, Hornberry).

EVERYONE

Aye / Yep / Arrr / Indubitably.

Further down the table, Officer Shaw talks to Black Pete:

OFFICER SHAW

I don't think I got your name.

BLACK PETE

Yeah, well, I'm Peter Horses. A tiny prince. From Gravelston.

OFFICER SHAW

Gravelston? I've never heard of Gravelston.

Under the table, Pete cocks a pistol aimed at Shaw's crotch.

BLACK PETE

No one has really. It's just a small town.

Across from them, Buttons chats up Officer Wellington:

BUTTONS

See, the fink about bein' rich is, it's a bit of a grind, innit? Sometimes it's fun ta get away.

OLUWANDE

More tea, sir?

Oluwande poses as a servant. Hornberry sneers at him.

OFFICER WELLINGTON

It's "Officer," slave. And you've interrupted us.

OLUWANDE

Apologies. More tea, Officer?

OFFICER WELLINGTON

Uch, no. Tastes like dishwater.
(to Buttons)
I'm not surprised, it's clearly been made by savages.

Frenchie, also dressed as a servant, moves his hand toward his knife. Oluwande catches his eye and shakes his head.

At the head of the table, Badminton laughs, arm around Stede's shoulder. He speaks to Lucius and The Swede.

CAPTAIN BADMINTON

We were rowdy school chums, always playing pranks on each other. Remember the day with the rowboat?

STEDE

The rowboat? I'm not sure if I...

CAPTAIN BADMINTON

Oh come now, the rowboat. It was hysterical!

EXT. FIELD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A heavysset twelve year old Stede picks flowers by the edge of a river. He hears "There's Bonnet! Get him!" and turns to see a group of bigger kids chasing him.

He runs, head still turned. As he picks up speed he turns his head forward just in time to collide with a tree.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROWBOAT - DAY

Stede squints under the hot noon sun. He's been tied to the bench of a rowboat in a seated position, his arms tied to the oars. A rock strikes the hull of the boat. Then another. We hear kids laugh. A third rock hits Stede on the forehead. Reverse to find the kids taunting Stede from the shore.

KID

Row fat-ass! Row!

Stede rows around the pond as the kids laugh.

EXT. THE REVENGE, ARTS AND CRAFTS TABLE - DAY

Stede twists his napkin in his lap at the painful memory. Even Lucius and The Swede are a little uncomfortable.

OFFICER BADMINTON

It was all in good fun of course.
An initiation of sorts.

STEDE

Funny, I don't remember it happening to anyone else.

OFFICER BADMINTON

Oh! And there was the time with the horse! Where we made you French kiss the horse! Remember? --

STEDE

What a treat it's been catching up!
But I'm sure you've got a lot on your plate. With the King and the Navy and all.

OFFICER BADMINTON

We don't, actually. It's dreadfully boring out here at sea. I mean, how many pirate crews can one obliterate before it becomes a chore? I jumped when I saw the familiar face.

STEDE

Ah, well. Yes. As fun as this is, we're actually on a bit of a tight--

OFFICER BADMINTON

Just a darling little ship you have here. So efficient. And tiny. I'd love to see the rest of it.

STEDE

(beat, picks up the hint)
...would you like a tour?

OFFICER BADMINTON

Yes! I would! Wonderful!

As they stand to leave, Wellington calls out.

OFFICER WELLINGTON

We really should be getting back, Captain.

OFFICER BADMINTON

Oh keep your pants on, Wellington. We'll be back on our smelly old ship soon enough.

(to Stede as they leave)
Really, smells of ass and runny cheese on that thing...

As Wellington sulks, he spots a basket of fabric under the table. A partial skull is visible on one piece.

INT. THE REVENGE, STEDE'S CABIN - DAY

Stede shows his library off to Badminton.

STEDE

And here's my pride and joy.

CAPTAIN BADMINTON

Good god.

STEDE

I know. Isn't it / something --

CAPTAIN BADMINTON

(laughs)

Ridiculous! I mean -- who takes an entire library to sea? Baby Bonnet, that's who.

STEDE

(a cloud passes over him)

Yes, well. I do enjoy reading.

CAPTAIN BADMINTON

It's just-- it's perfectly you. It's so impractical. I mean what if there's a storm? Don't the books fall out?

FLASH: A storm. As the ship rocks violently, Stede struggles to hold the books into the shelf.

Then, back to the present:

STEDE

We've managed so far.

CAPTAIN BADMINTON

(flips through a book)

And to think of the ridiculous rumour going round about you.

STEDE

Oh? What's rumor's that?

CAPTAIN BADMINTON

You haven't heard? Forgive me, it's so silly, so outlandish.

STEDE

Go on.

CAPTAIN BADMINTON

The rumour is that you left your wife and children --

FLASH: The Bonnet Plantation. Stede, Mary and their two kids have their portrait painted.

CAPTAIN BADMINTON (CONT'D)

-- upended your entire comfortable life --

FLASH: Stede and Mary at an opulent dinner. Everyone toasts and laughs. He looks miserable and far away.

CAPTAIN BADMINTON (CONT'D)
--to become a pirate!

Stede faces his desk. On it sits a HEAVY BRASS PAPERWEIGHT.

STEDE
Oh. That's true.

Beat. Badminton's face drops. Then he laughs harder. Reveal: Stede now holds the heavy paperweight behind his back.

EXT. THE REVENGE, ARTS AND CRAFTS TABLE - DAY

Silence. Everyone awkwardly sips tea and avoids eye contact.

BUTTONS
Any of ye ever conversed with a sea
bird?

OFFICER WELLINGTON
What on Earth is this?

Wellington holds up a crude flag featuring a skull eating another skull.

BLACK PETE
That? Just a flag. From some
pirates we met. And killed.

OFFICER SHAW
Why's one skull eating the other?

SALTY
Um, probably because it's really
fucking scary, that's why.

OFFICER HORNBERY
But I don't... were they cannibals?

SALTY
Who can say? All I know is, I
wouldn't mess with those guys.

BLACK PETE
I mean we *did* 'cause we killed em--

SALTY
Right, yeah, but they were super
tough. Super, super tough. With a
flag like that? Please.

Wellington holds up another flag: a headless skeleton holds a skull under its arm like a football.

OFFICER SHAW
Pirates as well?

THE SWEDE
Oh yeah. Those guys were even
tougher. Than the others.

SALTY
No they weren't. Doesn't even make
sense.

THE SWEDE
He's holding his own head. That's
terrifying. When I saw that, I was
like: Whoa. Those are mean folks.
Up on that ship.

INT. THE REVENGE, STEDE'S CABIN - DAY

Badminton's still laughing.

CAPTAIN BADMINTON
Sorry, I'm sorry...

STEDE
It's not *that* ridiculous.

As Badminton wipes his eyes with a handkerchief, Stede
fixates on the sweet spot of his neck.

CAPTAIN BADMINTON
It is! Baby Bonnet became a big bad
pirate! You were so fat and soft
and you cried all the time and
picked flowers.
(Stede approaches from behind)
And -- and -- you were deathly
afraid of geese --

Stede lifts the paperweight, ready to strike.

EXT. THE REVENGE, DECK - MOMENTS LATER

Shaw holds up the cat flag. The officers laugh.

OFFICER WELLINGTON
Truly, you've tangled with some
fearsome outlaws.

FRENCHIE
Everyone knows cats are very evil.
They steal children's breath.

OFFICER WELLINGTON

Enough interruptions, slave! Your captain may suffer uppity behavior, but not me--

A knife pins Wellington's hand to the table. It was thrown by Jim, who has appeared from hiding. Wellington screams. Oluwande pours hot tea into Hornberry's lap.

The door to the bulk storage is kicked off its hinges. Wee John Feeney appears, still covered in warpaint, accompanied by several other pirates who were also hiding. They charge.

As Shaw jumps to his feet, Black Pete pulls the trigger.

INT. THE REVENGE, STEDE'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The shot is faintly heard. Badminton turns to Stede who puts the paperweight behind his back.

CAPTAIN BADMINTON

Did you hear that?

STEDE

Hm? No. Nope. Don't hear anything.

Faint screams and scuffling. Badminton draws his sword.

CAPTAIN BADMINTON

We're under attack.

STEDE

Just wait, it might blow over --

CAPTAIN BADMINTON

Still a coward. Pathetic.

As Badminton turns to the door, Stede strikes him. Badminton crumples, accompanied by a sickly CRUNCHING sound.

EXT. THE REVENGE, DECK - CONTINUOUS

The Officers have been subdued. Wellington tries to free his hand from the table, Frenchie has Shaw up against the mast, the point of his sword at his throat.

STEDE (O.S.)

Excuse me? Can someone come down here? A minute?

INT. THE REVENGE, STEDE'S CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Oluwande and Lucius look at something disturbing off-camera. In the background, Stede sits on a couch, in shock.

STEDE
I USED THE STUN MOVE!

Reverse: Badminton lies on the floor, ass up, face down, sword poking through the back of his head.

LUCIUS
He looks pretty stunned.

STEDE
Oh god. Oh my god. It was an accident. This isn't happening.

Oluwande slaps him.

OLUWANDE
This is happening! Do you want to live?

STEDE
That's a tough question.

OLUWANDE
(slaps him again)
Do you want to live?!

STEDE
Ow! Stop -- I think so! Probably!

OLUWANDE
Then pull it together because everyone up there wants you dead!

LUCIUS
It's true.

OLUWANDE
And that's a shame. Because you're a good captain.

STEDE
I am?

OLUWANDE
(beat)
Mm-hm. Now, do you want the respect of your crew?

STEDE

I mean, yeah, that'd be nice--

OLUWANDE

Then this was no accident. You did it intentionally.

EXT. THE REVENGE, BRIDGE - DAY

Badminton's body hits the deck. Stede stands over it. Hornberry screams, Shaw cries. The crew's impressed. Stede takes this in. He's never been feared before. He likes it.

STEDE

I did this. On purpose. So.

SALTY

Gaw. Stabbed him right in the face.

ROACH

Respect.

OFFICER WELLINGTON

You'll never leave here alive, pirate scum!

FRENCHIE

(gagging him)

Silencieux. What is the plan, Captain?

BUTTONS

Shall we blow ourselves up now?

STEDE

Maybe.

(then)

No. Find some rope.

EXT. ENGLISH NAVAL SHIP, THE BRIDGE - DAY

A seaman notices The Revenge is starting to sail away.

ENGLISH SEAMAN

They're leaving? Where's Captain?

ENGLISH SEAMAN 2

There.

They spot the tender being rowed toward them. It appears to have the Captain and three officers inside.

EXT. TENDER - CONTINUOUS

Officer Shaw rows, gagged, tied to the bench and the oars. He tries to scream, but all he can do is row to the mothership. The other officers and the Captain look slightly off, slumped at odd angles. The Captain's head shifts and falls off.

REVEAL: It's a coconut. The other uniforms have been crudely stuffed with rags and propped up. The cat flag hangs out of one of them.

In the distance, The Revenge sails off into the sunset.

EXT. THE REVENGE, DECK - SUNSET

The crew watch Stede as he stands by himself at the bow, hands clasped behind his back, deep in thought.

SALTY

You know how hard it is to drive a sword through someone's skull?

ROACH

It's always the quiet ones.

FRENCHIE

C'était dur à cuire (that was badass).

THE SWEDE

You gotta admit, he pulled it off.

BLACK PETE

Pulled what off? Making us dress up like a bunch of fancy boys?

SALTY

Least we got some hostages.

*
*
*
*
*

Officers Wellington and Hornberry are gagged and tied to the mast. They're in their underwear.

WEE JOHN FEENEY

Won't hurt to give him another day.

BIG JOHN FEENEY

We can always kill him the day after.

Slightly away from them, Lucius talks with Oluwande.

LUCIUS

He's a terrible captain.

OLUWANDE

We're not the best crew. Are we?
As long as he's around we're gonna
be paid, fed and we don't have to
work too hard. He'll be dead soon,
may as well enjoy it while it
lasts. Or do you want to be
captained by that?

Black Pete taunts the hostages by sticking his tongue out and bringing it very close to their faces.

EXT. THE REVENGE, BOW - SUNSET

Stede stares into the sunset, slightly proud.

FLASH: Bonnet plantation. Stede and his family eat dinner. *
The kids and Mary laugh. A happier time. *

BACK TO PRESENT: Regret mixes with the pride in Stede's face *
He did it. He's a pirate now. And a murderer. *

STEDE

My family's here, now. At sea.

STEDE (PRELAP) (CONT'D)

His wish had come true. At long
last, he'd become a real boy.

EXT. THE REVENGE, DECK - NIGHT

Stede reads aloud to the crew, now lying in hammocks strung around the deck.

STEDE

The wooden puppet looked down at
his legs, his hands, his feet.
Whatever would he tell the woodsman
when he came 'round for breakfast?

SALTY

(sniffles)

Stupid puppet pulled it off.

INT. THE REVENGE, STOREROOM - NIGHT

A storeroom has been made into a makeshift bedroom. From behind we see Jim take off his hat. Then his beard, followed by his nose. Finally, he lets down long, dark hair. There's a knock at the door.

OLUWANDE
Jim? Brought some dinner.

INT. THE REVENGE, STOREROOM DOORWAY - CONTINUOUS

Oluwande holds a tray of food. The door opens slightly. "Jim" answers. He's really a dark-haired woman in his twenties.

JIM / ANA
Thank Christ, I was starving.

EXT. THE REVENGE DECK - NIGHT

As Stede continues reading, we track past the English officers, still gagged and tied to the mast, sleeping now.

STEDE (O.S.)
(wooden boy voice)
"Morning Mr. Woodsman," said the wooden boy, "Don't panic, I can explain everything"...

At the top of the mast, several flags fly. Among them:

1. A skeleton holding its own head.
2. The skull eating another skull.
3. A skull that seems to be vomiting the word DEATH.

One final flag joins them, hoisted into place by a rope:

4. A newly crafted version of the cat flag.

The Revenge sails onward, toward the moon on the horizon.

END OF EPISODE