Freda Luxford felt a smile stretch across her muzzle as she looked through her spyglass. The island she had been searching for was finally in view.

A few nights ago, the young rabbit was sitting in the Stumbling Rat tavern, listening in on an old sailor recounting his recent voyage. His crew had come across a chest with the symbol of a dragon on it, and by opening it with its matching key, they had discovered a king’s ransom of gold.

“The chest had no bottom to it,” he had said. “Scoop it up, pour it out, dig in with a shovel if ye fancy, the gold just won’t run out. Spend as much as ya like, there’ll always be more.”

Naturally, a budding pirate like Freda got shivers at the idea. A chest of gold that never ran out? She was surprised the likes of Hemorrhage Harry or Ben the Blackguard hadn’t gotten their dirty paws on it by now, instead of this honest-looking adventurer. She could certainly use a bit of wealth, with her dirty shirt that she was sure was white once, her weather-worn black pants, her old brown boots and the blue water-stained rag wrapped over her head.

“But the more me crew gave away,” he went on, “the less their buyin’ would satisfy. The finest clothes, the freshest food, the most pleasurable of company… it were never enough. Consumed by their greed, they were. I never touched a single piece of the gold, meself - always had a bad feeling about it. So once everyone was a-sleepin’, I took the chest away on a rowboat, found meself the farthest, most unsuspecting spit of land I could find, and buried it away. Got the key and drew meself a map, so that I can warn anyone greedy enough to go lookin’ for it to keep away.”

Freda listened to the entire story, taking in the warning. Such a powerful curse would indeed be dangerous in the wrong paws. And so, she did what anyone with common sense would do - she waited till the sailor had passed out from one grog too many, nicked the map and key from his pockets, and sailed off into the night.

She was lucky the map was easy enough to read, telling her to go northwest from Holson’s Bay til she found a small island that seemed to be shaped like a crab with one pincer. And it was finally in sight. Her boots clumped on the deck as she bounced eagerly on her heels. Within the hour, she would be the richest rabbit on the seas!

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Once Freda was close enough to the island without hitting the shoals, she lowered the anchor, grabbed her shovel and took the rowboat to shore. Once on land, she turned the map over to read what was scribbled on the other side.

*The top pincher’s where you’ll find the gold*

*But a final warning ye be told*

*A single coin now, then it be two*

*Your fortune will grow, and so will you*

She cocked an eyebrow as she read the cryptic message. “Of course my fortune will grow,” she muttered to herself. “I’m about to get endless gold.”

It didn’t matter to her anyway - the first line told her where to go, and that’s all she needed. Shovel over her shoulder, she ventured toward the area resembling a crab’s pincer, and began to dig into the sand. She dug one hole and swore under her breath when she saw no chest.

“Bugger.”

So she dug somewhere else.

“Bugger.”

And then somewhere else after that.

“Bugger.”

The hours dwindled away and the sky began to turn from a beautiful blue to a warm purple as the sun crept beneath the horizon. Holes dotted nearly every inch of the indicated area, and a frustrated Freda tossed a newly-emptied water bottle into the sea. Had that old codger taken her for a fool? Led her on a wild chase to punish her for her greed?

She looked down at the hole she was in the middle of digging. The last bit of sand she hadn’t searched. With every one, a bit of hope dwindled away. Still, she may as well see this last one through. Then she could sail back to Holson’s Bay and take her shovel to that old sailor’s head.

With a sigh, she forced the shovel back in.

**thunk**

Her long ears perked up. The shovel blade had struck wood.

Sand flew over her head as she dug with newfound energy, getting ever more eager as something came into view.

And with a few more swings, there it was. A small brown chest with golden hinges. On the front of the lid was the symbol of a dragon - a perfect match to that on the key that she fished out of her pocket.

Her heart racing, she quickly took in her surroundings. No ships bar for her own sloop, and no signs of life. Should she risk a peek now, here in the open?

Her paw answered for her by placing the key in the lock and turning. The tumblers clicked and clunked, and the lid propped open just a bit. She swallowed and raised the lid, being met with the biggest pile of golden coins she’d ever seen in her life. She lifted one up to take a closer look.

“These look and feel like real coins,” she breathed, unable to control the smile on her face. “It’ll fool the shopkeeps for a while, anyway.”

But she had to know: Was the chest truly bottomless? She raised her paw, intending to plunge it in and see how far it would go.

*No!* a thought screamed at her, freezing her in place. *What if it isn’t bottomless and you lose some in the sand?*

Making sure no coins slipped out, she gently closed and locked the chest, and carried it back to the rowboat. Despite all the coins inside, it was surprisingly light.

Once back on her ship, she set the chest down and reopened it. Feeling more certain she’d not lose any coins, she plunged her paw inside, causing a few to jingle onto the deck. Her arm reached down so far that she was shoulder and cheek to the top of the pile.

“Surely I’d be reaching the lower deck by this point,” she said, then her body shook a little with excitement. “It’s bottomless! It’s truly endless gold!”

She grabbed the coins on the deck and stuffed them back in the chest, locking it and tucking it away in a dark corner of the lower deck. The key stayed with her, and as she sailed back to civilisation, thoughts of spending swamped her mind.

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Once she reached a port, Freda entered a tavern of much less ill repute - one that sold *food* as well as drink. She was eager to put her new fortune to the test, and her stomach was groaning louder than the old hull of her sloop.

She waltzed up to the bar with the confidence of a baron, and regarded the tavern keeper, an older terrier with a tint of grey on the ends of his moustache.

“What be your catch of the day, my good man?” she asked.

“Cook brought in a mighty fine cod this morning,” the terrier told her. “Still fresh, too.”

Freda’s tongue slid across her lips. “I’ll take it. Nice and brown, with a mug of your finest ale.”

“You sure, lass?” he asked, looking her up and down. “It’s a *biggun* - might not have the stomach for it. Or the purse, for that matter.”

“I shall let my stomach judge that for itself,” Freda boasted, and fished a sizeable sack from her pocket, the telltale sound of coins jingling inside as it fell to the counter. “As for my purse…”

The terrier weighed the sack in his paw, then emptied it onto the bar. Quite an amount of gold piled up before him - more than enough for a large fish and an ale.

“Sure enough, ye have the coin,” he said with satisfaction, only taking what was owed, to Freda’s relief. “Have a seat at a table, lass. I’ll have the cook bring it out when it’s done.”

Grinning ear to ear, Freda gathered her remaining coins and took an empty table for herself. Her coins had worked! She couldn’t remember the last time she had a properly cooked fish, and she was going to enjoy it. She could already smell it wafting in from the kitchen.

Fortunately, she didn’t have long to wait. A large, golden brown cod was set down in front of her, with a big mug of ale next to it. She grabbed a fork and ripped a steaming chunk off, cramming it in her mouth. A loud purr escaped her as she slowly chewed, savouring the juicy taste.

She enjoyed bite after bite, occasionally washing it down with a mouthful of ale. Eventually, all that was left was a skeleton picked clean, and an empty mug. She rested her hands on her stomach, which had become taut and bloated under her shirt. A small burp escaped her as her fingers drummed on that solid little dome. She couldn’t remember the last time she ate so well. She felt like a queen with such a big, warm meal all to herself.

*A queen, eh?* she thought, smiling to herself. *I like the sound of that.*

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A few weeks had passed since then. Now that Freda was sure she could *eat* well, the next logical step would be to *sail* well. And by that, she meant it was time to buy a new ship. Her humble sloop had served her well, but its age was showing. A leaky hull, a sail with more patches than sail, and to be quite frank, she began to find it too… *small*.

Hence why she was in the market for something bigger. Something *better*. Something like the mighty galleon she was inspecting.

“I think you’ll find she fits what you’re looking for rightly,” the shipwright told her as they stood in the captain’s cabin. “Strong, fast, plenty of weaponry… and plenty of room.”

He tried not to stare as he added that last point. The rabbit was certainly well-fed, sporting a round belly that peeked just a little from her shirt. Her thighs and backside looked rather stuffed into her pants, and her confident smirk looked more endearing on her round face. She had the look of a sailor, but the body of a baroness.

“Though, I daresay you’d have a fair bit of a struggle sailing her alone,” he added. “What, with her being such a grand ship.”

“Oh, I’m planning to hire a crew,” Freda assured him, fishing out a large sack of gold from her pocket. “I trust this’ll cover the cost?”

The shipwright weighed the sack in his hand. His eyes widened. “More than enough, actually. Especially with you trading in that sloop.”

“Then keep the rest for yourself, my good man,” Freda grinned. “I have plenty to spare. Though, before you take that ship, I just need to move a few… effects.”

“Of course,” he said. “Let me know when you’re all moved out.”

The two walked back onto the docks, and Freda immediately went over to her old sloop, lifting the chest from the lower deck. Finding a crew for her new ship was her *second* priority; the first was finding a good place to hide the chest on it. That table in the captain’s cabin would be perfect, she wagered. And with the key now on a chain around her neck at all times, there was no way her precious fortune wouldn’t be safe.

She covered the chest in some tarp, just in case that old sailor was hanging around and spotted her with it. She left the sloop and gave it one last look. A small pang of remorse spread through her body at the thought of getting rid of it. She was grateful it passed as quickly as it came. She had a new ship now. A ship befitting a queen of the seas. A fresh coat of paint and a nice new figurehead, and it would do nicely.

But before that, she needed to find a crew. And before *that*, she needed some new clothes. Clothes befitting her wealth.

She tucked the chest beneath the table in her new cabin. A low growling filled the air, and she put a paw to her stomach. With a smile, she lifted the key from around her neck and opened the chest.

Before all that, she could use another fine meal. And she knew who to hire first - a chef.

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“You expect me to sail under your colours just like that?” asked Sofia Newbury. “Just because you asked nicely?”

“Oh, not just because I asked nicely,” Freda said, leaning forward on her desk, “but because you’ll like what I have to offer.”

It had been a year since Freda had found that beautiful chest, and ever since, things have only been getting better. Her galleon had become infamous across the seas, for the gold along her red hull and the sails and flag depicting a golden rabbit’s skull. Her decks were filled with dozens of the finest sailors the captain could buy, all dressed in somewhat regal wear that had become rough and worn in the rough weather.

And Freda hadn’t stopped at just one crew, hence to why she was sitting in her cabin with fellow captain Sofia Newbury. Freda had long ago decided that just one ship wasn’t enough. She had begun convincing other pirates to sail their ships under her colours, not through intimidation but simply by paying them. And at that moment, she was set to make “Sofi the Slayer” agree to be the twelfth ship in her fleet.

Sofia couldn’t’ deny that Freda certainly looked like she could afford it. Not only was the cabin decked out with jewels and fine silks, but this young commandant was dressed to impress in a white frilly shirt beneath a fine royal-blue coat and matching hat. The heel of her buckled shoe brushed the chest, which she kept tucked beneath her. Sofia was impressed that extravagant chair could hold up all that rabbit, though she could see Freda’s love handles squashing out over the armrests. Her bulbous backside, stuffed into her purple slacks, was quite tightly squashed into the seat. Her doughy breasts pressed out against her fabrics, giving her an impressively curvaceous appearance. Her round cheeks dimpled from her cocky smirk, and her thick slab of double chin covered the topmost frill on her front and jiggled when she talked, or partook from a platter of chocolate treats on the desk, which was much more frequent.

In fact, Freda almost never stopped eating anymore. Ever since that first fish, she couldn’t get enough of the finer foods in life. She had decided, while she would treat herself to fine clothes and accessories, most of her boundless wealth would go toward feasting. All the freshest fruits, juiciest meats and finest sweets were at her disposal, the kitchen bursting with a selection that would make a king’s chef jealous. It was no wonder the blob of a bunny not only needed help squeezing out of her chair, considering she had begun found *walking* rather tedious. Or in her case, *waddling*. She had hundreds of pirates at her beck and call now, so she decided that if she didn’t have to do something personally, she wouldn’t.

Popping another bit of cake into her mouth, Freda continued as she chewed. “You’ll have my protection, and the benefits befitting a member of my fleet. Not to mention all your expenses being covered.”

Sofia crossed her arms.The strong tigress still wore a look of defiance. “My crew are doing just fine on our own, so what can you truly offer me?”

“Ahh, there it is,” Freda said, stifling a burp. “Why settle for ‘just fine’ when you can have ‘fantastic’ or ‘amazing’? Besides, what pirate says no to more gold?”

To accentuate her point, Freda’s other chubby paw set a large, jingling silk sack onto Sofia’s side of the table. Sofia couldn’t help but weigh it in her paw, and Freda caught her eyes widening.

“Even so, I don’t need to be part of a fleet to prove myself,” she insisted, then watched as Freda set two more sacks of gold next to the first. She took a moment and swallowed. “So, how much of my plunder do you want?”

“Oh, just a meager ten percent,” Freda said, her smirk almost as wide as her waistline. “You can take these as your first payment in advance.”

Sofia’s heart raced, and she found herself pocketing the sacks. “This better be good for me, Luxford.”

“Oh, trust me,” Leda smirked, holding out a plump paw, “this will only be good for both of us.”

The two shook and Sofia made her way out, leaving Freda to lean back in her chair. She popped another piece of cake in her mouth as she looked at her cabin. All the fine silks, furniture encrusted with the best jewellery, piles of treasures all around. And now she had one more ship to add to her fleet.

She patted her stomach, sending it wobbling under her shirt. It wasn’t enough, of course. She needed more. More treasures. More jewels. More pirates under her command. She was going to take over every corner of every sea. Make all the waters belong to her.

Just like a captain should. A commodore. A baroness. A *queen*.

She chugged from a bejewelled mug of ale, and called for a sailor. “Have the chef bring up some more cake, and another ale,” she demanded, burping as she waved her empty mug. “Maybe prepare a nice big fish for me too.”

She was going to be queen of the seas, and she was going to look like it. And especially *eat* like it. She had all the gold in the world, and she was going to make herself fat with it. Even if she was too fat to leave her cabin, or even her little throne.