

~~SMEE~~

~~So comme il faut, Cap'n. So very comme il faut.~~

(STACHE surveys his reflection in a mirror. He's pleased with what he sees.)

STACHE

I say, Smee - what is it the men call me?

SMEE

Nancy, sir?

STACHE

No, the other thing.

SMEE

Ruthless, sir. Ruthless, Heartless, and Peerless.

STACHE

(so sweetly)

Guilty as charged.

(to ASTER)

Now, give us the key!

ASTER

Never.

STACHE

Playing games is for children, Lord Aster, and I hate, I hate, I hate children!

(hurls his bucket at the mirror, smashing it)

Bring it in, Gómez!

SÁNCHEZ

It's Sánchez, sir.

STACHE

(so hard to find good help these days)

Just... bring it in. Thanks ever so.

(PIRATES drag in the trunk.)

The *Wasp* is my ship now, and everything aboard her belongs to me, including the treasure Victoria thinks nobody knows about. Silly old Queen.

ASTER

God Save Her.

STACHE

Queen.

ASTER

God Save Her.

STACHE

Victoria.

ASTER

God Save Her.

STACHE

Banana.

ASTER

God Save—

STACHE

(gotcha!)

Oopsy!

(The PIRATES appreciate ASTER's humiliation. STACHE perches on the trunk.)

Here's two things. When I open this swag, I'll be the single most significant pirate in the world, the solar system, or other places yet to be discovered anywhere in the universe.

(A moment passes.)

ASTER

That's only one thing—

STACHE

The second thing is a dilemma, a large one, the Cadillac Escalade of dilemmas, in point of fact - for a little bird tells me that your darling daughter is sailing to Rundoon on the safer southern route, aboard the *Navel Nerd*.

SMEE

The *Neverland*, sir.

STACHE

Huh?

SMEE

The *Neverland*, sir.

STACHE

Same letters: *Navel Nerd* - *Neverland*. I was close. I was pretty darn close! Splitting rabbits, really...

SMEE

Hairs, sir.

STACHE

Splitting hares, that too.

(to ASTER, cheerfully)

Oh! OH! Just a sec! I know you love your Molly above rubies. What say you to a quick detour, we pluck her off the *Neverland*, and you can watch her die! Unless you're feeling a weensy bit more amenable?

(eyes ASTER, whose hand gives him away)

Love yer locket! But what's in yer pocket? Oh, allow me!

(reaches in and extracts the key)

Done 'n' dusted, kippers 'n' custard. Here's the key, boys!

(The PIRATES are so focused on the key, they don't notice that the amulet around Aster's neck begins to glow. There is a sound of bells. FREEZE.)

SCENE SEVEN: The Wasp - Captain's Cabin

(STACHE enters, finishing his own fairy tale.)

STACHE

"... and that beautiful baby had a big, bushy handlebar, and it grew out as he grew up and they both lived awfully ever after. The end."

(rises, exultant, key in hand)

From this day forth, it'll be nothing but pleasure cruises and the odd America's Cup for me. Now, open -

(unlocks the trunk and throws open the lid)

and perpend!

(A Piratical Silence of Great Awfulness.)

What is that?

SMEE

It's sand, sir.

ASTER

~~Sand? But that's impossible.~~

STACHE

When you say "sand," do you mean the utterly worthless granular material one associates with the water's edge?

SMEE

Yes, sir.

STACHE

I see.

(then, to ASTER)

Perchance you think a treasure trunk sans treasure has put my piratical BVDs in a twist? How wrong you are. Yes, I'd hoped to be hip-deep in diamonds, but they're a poor substitute for what I really crave: a bona fide hero to help me feel whole. For without a hero, what am I? Half a villain; a pirate in part; ruthless, but toothless. And then I saw you, and I thought, "Maybe? Can it be? Is he the one I've waited for? Would he, for example, give up something precious for the daughter he loves?" But alas, he gives up sand. Now, let's see. Hero with treasure, very good. Hero with no treasure... doable. No hero and a trunk full o' sand? Not so much.

(suddenly monstrous)

NOW, WHERE'S MY TREASURE?!?

SMEE

The pirate captain they call... BLACK STACHE!

(The PIRATES shriek and bemoan the hearing of this terrible name. And suddenly, there he stands - THE BLACK STACHE, carrying a bucket... into which he pukes and spits.)

STACHE

(waving cordially to ASTER)

Hallo.

(The PIRATES shriek again and bemoan what might happen next. STACHE continues, winsomely.)

Oh, to be in England, now that April's there,
But whoever's not in England gets to see my facial hair.

(to ASTER)

Now, you're likely wondering: Can the fellow before you be entirely evil? Can no compassion un-crease this furrowed brow?

SMEE

Brow.

STACHE

Brow. Well, fret not, *mon frère* - I'm a romantic! There's a poet in these pirate veins, and so I plug into the muse.

(holds his hand out to SMEE for a manicure)

But what to do? Which style to use? Iambic? Box office poison. Haiku? Samurai-don't-think-so!

(suddenly vicious to SMEE)

Mind the cuticle, Smeel!

(Eureka!)

Hoopah! Got it!

(a steely glare at ASTER)

A pirate with scads of panache
Wants the key to the trunk with the cash.
Now, here's some advice
Tho' I seem to be nice -
I'LL CUT YOU!!! Slit you up one side 'n' down the other so ye can watch yer own stomach flop around on the deck.

(STACHE)

(holds a straight razor to ASTER's throat, but ASTER doesn't flinch)

I say, Smee—you did explain to my lord that I'm a bloodthirsty outlaw?

SMEE

Aye, Cap'n. But he still wouldn't give up the key!

STACHE

We haven't got all night, Smee. People have paid for nannies and parking. Stand aside. I'll have to do it myself, or I'm not— I'm not—

(heartbroken)

WHAT AM I??

PIRATES

BLACK STACHE!!

STACHE

They refer, of course, to THIS!

(The PIRATES gasp!)

The trademark nose-brush of every man, woman, and child in me family, dating right back to the amoeba. Yet, for us, the face foliage has been, oh, so much more than a lawn on the lip, sir. 'Tis what we are, and why we are it. And when everyone else got out of the pirate business, The Stache stuck it out, knowing one day my ship would come in. This is the day. This is the ship.

(menacingly)

Now, cough up that key, My Lord.

END

ASTER

Not a chance, you spam-faced tool bag.

(STACHE throws a tantrum at this insult, then recovers.)

STACHE

(to SMEE)

Why, is that My Lord's coat you're holding?

(SMEE helps STACHE on with Aster's coat.)

SMEE

Looks to be about your size, Cap'n.

STACHE

What the well-dressed "tool bag" is wearing this season.