

Flurry the Bear

The Rising Tide



J.S. Skye

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CHAPTER 3

PLAN B

The Arctos was a massive ship. The imposing shadow it cast enveloped its prey as it closed in on the smaller vessel that only a moment ago attempted to flee. Black Bear'd stepped out from the captain's cabin and addressed his crew. "Bring me the prisoners! Theran has something special planned for them!"

The crew groveled at the sound of his voice. "Yes, sir! Right away, sir!" they all replied.

Black Bear'd was a sight to behold. If being a grizzly bear was not enough to incite fear, the sheer fact that he stood more than eight feet tall would make anyone quake in their boots. However, Black Bear'd took it a step further. The tips of his beard were on fire. Nobody knew how that was possible without catching the rest of his beard or even his clothes on fire, too. His crew assumed he had dabbled in evil powers of some kind to achieve that. With his eyes aglow like burning embers, fearsome was an understatement when Black Bear'd came to mind.

The pirate captain stood on the deck of his ship and observed his crew board the runaway vessel. Little did he know what took place right below his boots.

Flurry and the others had now snuck

aboard the ship. They left the polar bears back on the other ship. That would have seemed like a cowardly thing to do if it was not all part of the plan. Drizzle had explained to him that the polar bear crew would be brought aboard and act as a distraction from their mission to free their friend Björn, also known as Captain White Cloud.

It was Shinyuu who started Cloud's nickname. Björn was a big, white polar bear, and Shinyuu liked to refer to him as a big, white, fluffy cloud.

Flurry agreed with Shinyuu's assessment when they entered the brig and found more polar bear prisoners, along with Björn himself. Flurry now only thought of him as Cloud.

“Cloud!” Shinyuu cheerfully shouted.

“You’re alive!” The red panda rushed over to his friend and removed his shackles.

“Shinyuu?” Cloud replied, unsure if his eyes were playing tricks on him or not. “Is that really you?” The polar bear grabbed Shinyuu, picked him up, and gave him a big bear hug. With a boisterous laugh he added, “It’s great to see you, old friend!”

After being set back down, Shinyuu gave introductions. “I’m sure you remember my closest brother, Chingu. He’s the one you should thank. We couldn’t have done it without him.”

Chingu bowed, but Cloud approached and grasped the young warrior by the wrist and shook. “I’m honored to be in your presence, again.”

“Likewise,” Chingu replied.

“And who are these little ones?” Cloud

inquired.

“My name is Drizzle,” the black-furred cub spoke up first. “I travel with Chingu.” He pointed to the others and continued. “This is Flurry, Noah, Caboose, Boaz, and Honja.”

Cloud motioned at the other polar bears and responded, “These are what’s left of my crew. This is my quartermaster Einar; the big brute of a bear in the back is Egil; and standing behind all of you is Stian. I wish more of my crew had survived, but sadly we’re all that’s left.” Grief filled Cloud’s face when he relayed his words.

“Not true!” Flurry responded. “The others are alive, too.”

“What?” Cloud’s face lit up.

“Yeah, it’s true,” Drizzle replied as he shot Flurry a frustrated look. The two of

them were always in competition with each other. These were Drizzle's new friends, but Flurry always wanted to be the center of attention and take credit for everything. Flurry had a smug look on his face. With his arms crossed, he stood there and stared back at Drizzle. Drizzle grunted and turned away.

The sound of many footsteps were heard up above, and a sudden commotion. "What's going on?" Cloud asked.

*Chingu spoke up. "That's part of our plan. Your *crew is being brought aboard as captives. Black Bear'd has no idea we are down here or that you have been freed. When we attack, our full force will be on his ship. He won't know what hit him."

Life came back to the faces of the polar bear captives. They quickly armed themselves. "Bring it on!" exclaimed Egil,

the largest and most forbidding of the polar bear team.

Chingu and Shinyuu had already taken care of any enemies below deck before they worked their way to the brig. Their only opposition was up above. As they made their way to the final set of steps, Cloud suddenly froze. He slowly turned to Chingu with a stone-cold expression on his face. “You did make sure ‘he’ isn’t on the ship, right?”

*Not understanding the question, Chingu replied, *I’m certain Black Bear’d is on the ship.”

“No, not him. I want him here; I have a score to settle. I’m talking about his friend. The evil sorcerer.”

“We haven’t seen any sign of him,” Shinyuu replied.

“Perhaps he’s on the other ship?” Drizzle

inquired.

“Let’s hope so,” Cloud continued. “If he’s here, this will all be for nothing.”

Flurry swallowed hard. He was not certain who Black Bear’d or the sorcerer were, but by the way they all talked about those two, Flurry imagined the worst.

Chingu looked back at the cubs and said, “Just like last time, all of you stay behind.” Chingu inched his way forward, paused, and then turned back and added, “Flurry, I mean it! Stay put this time.”

Flurry was incensed with Chingu’s statement and shouted, “Me? Why is it always me?” Noah leapt toward Flurry and put his paw over the bear’s mouth, but it was too late. Flurry had blown their cover.

A pirate whirled around and pointed at them. “There! We have stowaways aboard!”

Black Bear'd shifted his flaming gaze toward them. Before he could react, Chingu, Shinyuu, Cloud, and the other three polar bears charged with a bellowing battle cry. The rest of the polar bear crewmembers took advantage of the distraction. That was their chance. They broke free from their captors, armed themselves, and a full-out battle ensued.

Flurry and the others watched as swordfights raged on. He felt tense when Cloud and Black Bear'd locked blades. With Cloud's blue coat and Black Bear'd's red coat, it was easy to pick them out from the drab, brown chaos. The captains growled and roared at each other as they traded blows from each other's fists.

Chingu was magnificent with his blade and defended against all incoming attacks.

Shinyuu still had not drawn his sword. In fact, Flurry had not observed Shinyuu take out his blade even once since they met. Shinyuu fought using his paws. He delivered punches, kicks, leg sweeps, arm bars, and grappled his enemies.

Flurry turned to Drizzle and asked, “Have you ever seen Shinyuu use his sword?”

“No. Why?” Drizzle replied.

“Oh, just wondering,” Flurry answered.

* Flurry, Drizzle, Noah, and Boaz watched the skirmish while Honja remained hidden beneath the bottom step. Caboose was inexplicably absent, yet again. He had a habit of slipping away without anyone ever noticing. When Flurry looked back at his friends, he was dismayed at the absence of his most loyal follower.

“Caboose? Caboose?” He asked the

others, “Have any of you seen Caboose?”

Noah shook his head and shrugged. The others answered, “No.”

They scanned the area, but no trace of their plush polar bear could be found. The gang was immediately concerned and jumped to action. They quickly descended the flight of steps and looked around while they called out for their friend. “Caboose! Caboose! Where are you?”

*“Oh, dear! I hope he’s okay,” Drizzle commented with genuine concern.

“He always does this,” answered Flurry, equally concerned.

“We need to keep a closer eye on him,” Boaz chimed in.

Noah pulled out a pair of binoculars, to indicate he was looking, before he put them back wherever he got them.

“Whoa! Wait a minute! Did you guys just see that?” Boaz asked.

“What?” shouted Flurry and Drizzle in unison.

“Noah!” Boaz replied.

“We’re looking for Caboose, silly!” Flurry answered.

“No! I mean, he keeps doing things that should be impossible,” Boaz insisted with a frustrated tone of voice.

*“What are you talking about?” Drizzle asked. * “Are you seeing things?”

“Yeah, I’ll have to agree with Drizzle. You’re sounding kind of crazy,” Flurry added.

“I’m not! I’m not! He had a pair of binoculars, and now he doesn’t. Earlier today he had a rifle and a sword, back when we were prisoners. He’s been doing this

stuff for months now! How's it that none of you ever notice it?"

"Okay, Boaz, you've had your fun. Now can we get back to looking for Caboose?" Flurry attempted to put an end to Boaz's crazy talk.

Boaz sighed and in an irritated tone replied, "Fine!"

The gang continued their hunt while up above the swordfight raged on. The fury between the two crews had grown into an all-consuming fire, filled with roaring, growling, clawing, and smashing.

"Come here, you little ..." shouted a panther. He was Black Bear'd's first mate. The panther grew weary as he chased Shinyuu around the mast. The red panda was too quick. With the enemy's every punch or lunge with the sword, Shinyuu would

counter, sidestep, or redirect his opponent. He truly knew paw-to-paw combat unlike any other.

Chingu was light on his feet and danced through his opponents like he was part of a ballet. Now, with his sword split into two halves, he deflected attacks from both sides. He did not even break a sweat as he dealt harshly with his attackers.

White Cloud and Black Bear'd continued to pummel each other. Their deep-seated hatred toward each other was set loose. Cloud had a long-standing hatred for the grizzly bear captain. Black Bear'd murdered Cloud's father long ago. The polar bear had been on a quest for revenge ever since.

The battle was clearly in Chingu and Shinyuu's favor, but for Cloud it was not so clear. At times it appeared that Cloud had

the upper hand; at other times, Black Bear'd. One distraction could lead to the other's demise, and that was when Cloud made a mistake. A defeated groan filled the air. One of Cloud's crewmates had fallen by the sword. That split-second distraction allowed Black Bear'd to catch Cloud off guard. The grizzly punched Cloud in the face and swept his leg out from under him. The polar bear captain crashed down to the deck.

*Black Bear'd kicked the polar bear's sword away and pointed the tip of his own weapon right in Cloud's face. "Well, this is how it ends," said the fiery-eyed grizzly.

Cloud looked up at his enemy and growled at him in anger. "This isn't over!"

"Oh, but it is!"

"Never!"

"You fail to realize that nobody can beat

me,” bragged the evil bear.

“I’ll get another chance; mark my words.”

“Consider them marked.” Black Bear’d raised his sword and prepared to deliver a death blow when his own distraction came.

BOOM! One of Black Bear’d’s cannons fired. The evil pirate looked in the direction of the blast. Cloud grabbed Black Bear’d by the hem of his coat and threw him over the side of the ship into the raging waves below.

**BOOM!* Another cannon fired. Smoke filled the air. The ship shook, and wooden debris flew every which way as the smaller ship was being blown to bits. *BOOM!* “What’s going on?” White Cloud shouted.

Down below, the source of the cannon fire was quite evident. “Caboose, Stop! Caboose! Don’t do that! Stop!” shouted the others.

Caboose had found a flaming stick. He was fascinated with the way it made sparkles when he touched it to the tiny ropes he kept finding all over the place. He believed it was some kind of light show, and he enjoyed every moment of it. Caboose went around to all of the cannons to see the sparkles. The loud booms were like fireworks to him.

Noah held up an eight-sided red sign with the word STOP on it and waved it back and forth. Boaz glanced over at Noah and did a double-take.

“Where did you get that?” Boaz asked the tall, slender lion. Noah shrugged and acted like he giggled. Boaz climbed up some crates, grabbed one side of the stop sign, and hollered to the others, “Guys! Look! I’m not crazy! Noah has a stop sign! This isn’t

possible!”

Noah ripped the sign away and stashed it before the others looked. Annoyed, Flurry replied, “Boaz, this isn’t the time!” Flurry turned back to Caboose and continued to call out to him.

Boaz flopped down on the crate. He felt discouraged. Boaz looked over and saw Honja, partially hidden behind a distant barrel. “You saw it, didn’t you?” Honja nodded his head in agreement. “Finally, somebody who doesn’t think I’m crazy,” Boaz grunted to himself.

At the sight of Flurry, Caboose hustled toward him. He wanted to show his pal what a great toy he had discovered. As Caboose ran with the stick in his mouth, he inadvertently lit other things on fire.

“Stop, Caboose! Stop!” shouted Flurry

and the others.

“Caboose, put it down!” Drizzle bellowed. He rushed over and stamped out the mini-fires while he kept his paws over his ears – which he had been doing the entire time. Drizzle hated loud noise. In fact, he hated busy environments, too. So his adventure was more than he bargained for. He desperately wanted to hide himself away in a crate or something.

*Caboose came to a screeching halt and dropped the piece of wood. “What? It makes sparkles! See, Flurry?”

“Yes, yes, I see it,” Flurry quickly responded with obvious anxiety in his tone.

All of them tried to calm down and get their breath back. They were exhausted from their attempt to chase the little fellow down.

Boaz panted heavily. “Guys, remind me

to start exercising if we get out of this alive,” said the lion cub.

“Surely nobody noticed that, right? Right?” Flurry asked optimistically.

“Are you kidding me?” Drizzle loudly exclaimed. “Of course they noticed! That ship is sinking as we speak!” Drizzle leaned against the wall, rubbed his head, and groaned. “Man, do I have a headache!”

“I’m sure it’ll be fine,” Flurry replied uneasily.

“Maybe if I can get away from all of this noise,” answered Drizzle.

“Not you! I mean the ship,” Flurry responded.

“If by ‘fine’ you mean sunk beneath the ocean ... then yeah, it’ll be fine,” came Boaz’s sarcastic remark.

“This changes our plans. We can’t keep

the prisoners here. What should we do now?" Drizzle asked himself out loud.

Noah ran up to a board, grabbed it, and laid it at an angle against a barrel of gunpowder. He then walked across the plank, acted like he was holding his nose, and jumped off.

"What's he doing?" asked Boaz.

"Swimming!" shouted Caboose. "Can we go swimming?"

"That's it!" Drizzle shouted. "We throw everyone off of the ship!" Drizzle did not waste any time. He ran off faster than anyone could react.

"Seemed fairly obvious to me," Flurry commented.

Boaz shouted, "I swear! It's like I'm not even here!"

In a moment of sarcasm, Flurry turned to

Boaz and said, “What did you see? A shark?” Flurry giggled to himself. Boaz huffed, crossed his arms, and looked away.

On the main deck of the *Arctos*, the two crews continued to battle. They did not have time to worry about the sinking vessel on the starboard side. Drizzle ran up to Chingu, but one of the coyote pirates swung at him. Drizzle pulled his sword to deflect the incoming blade, and he shouted to his friend. “Chingu, throw them overboard! Let’s finish this and steal the ship!”

Chingu smiled and nodded. One-by-one, their enemies went for a swim. In a moment, the ship was theirs.

“Hurray!” shouted Flurry and the gang as they ran out onto the main deck. Honja hid under a fallen pirate hat. He was only willing to peek out from time-to-time.

Everyone took a moment to cheer and exchanged hugs and pawshakes.

Cloud wasted no time taking command of the Arctos. He ordered his crew to set sail, and moments later they were off. The ship sailed out to the open sea.

