

Neptune takes charge

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Neptune takes charge

by [Sasheeka](#)

Summary

There is only so much pining a dog can stand to witness.

Written for the prompt: mutually dense and pining boys being brought together by a third party

Thomas Jopson was carrying a tray with two china cups of hot steaming tea for the Captain and Mr. Blanky, sequestered together in the Great Cabin for a chat about the ice and possibly their views on the Expedition's leadership. Thomas remembered how afraid he was when he started as a steward that he would spill whatever he was carrying on a tray at the time, always breathing a sigh of relief when his load was delivered successfully. Now he did not even have to think about it, the tray always perfectly balanced. His mind could therefore be set on other things; at the moment he was mentally running through a list of his tasks to be done after making sure the Captain had everything he needed —the linen to be washed, the silverware to be polished for dinner with Sir John tomorrow, Neptune's walk on the ice around the ship. Thinking of his duties was a good way of keeping his mind occupied, stopping it from wandering to unsafe waters. Too often would his treacherous mind fill with images of soft dark eyes and a delicate slanted bow of lips and nothing good could come out of that impossible fancy.

He was so busy deliberately not thinking of lieutenant Little that he almost walked into the man. Thomas staggered to a stop and blinked in surprise at the scene in front of him. The lieutenant was crouched down with one knee on the wooden floor, both his hands engulfed in the messy black fur of the Captain's Newfoundland sprawled in front of the sliding door to the Great Cabin. The dog noticed Thomas, turning its huge head towards him in greeting, the man did not.

“What a good boy you are,” Little was saying in a low voice. Thomas felt his cheeks redden, whether from the words or the tone of the lieutenant's voice he was not sure.

Thomas gave a polite cough and said, “Sir.”

Little jerked slightly, turning around and swiftly hopped to his feet. If Thomas didn't take a quick step back he would have knocked the tray out of his hands.

“Ah, Jopson! You walk as silently as a ghost,” Little said, his cheeks flushed. He gave Thomas a small embarrassed smile.

“My apologies, sir, I didn't mean to startle you,” Thomas inclined his head, his own face schooled into an expression of professional blankness.

“It's quite alright,” said the lieutenant as he brushed his knee off. Neptune lifted himself off the floor and nudged Little's pocket with little jabs of his sizable nose. Little took what looked like a small biscuit from his pocket and gave it to Neptune from an outstretched palm. Thomas couldn't help the smile that tugged at his lips at the display.

Edward Little was very easy on the eyes. He was handsome, with a well built figure, his dark brown hair carefully coiffed, his whiskers neat, and those eyes –gosh, they made Thomas' breath catch in his throat whenever he caught the lieutenant's gaze. They were kind, and soft and fanned by lashes so long and dark any woman would be lucky to be thus adorned.

Edward Little was also a lieutenant in Her Majesty's Royal Navy, a gentleman of good family, and so far out of Thomas Jopson's league that it was almost laughable. In the close

quarters of a ship it was easy to forget the insurmountable gap between their standing in society. Someone like Edward Little would not look at him twice had they met back in England. Would probably not even notice him. Provided they had an opportunity to meet, of course. Different worlds, different circles. Thomas' smile fell.

“Oh, sorry, I must let you get on with your duties.” the lieutenant spoke as he moved to the side to make room and opened the sliding door to let Thomas through.

“Thank you, sir,” said Thomas and walked in.

Thomas was polishing the table in the great cabin when he tripped over something on the floor where there wasn't supposed to be anything and had to make a big side step to regain his footing and avoid falling on his ass. Looking down at the floor he noticed a dark tail peeking from under the table.

“Neptune!” exclaimed Thomas.

Thomas had no idea the dog was sleeping here when he had come in earlier. It was not easy to spot a dark lump on a dark floor in the dim light of the oil lamps.

Upon hearing his name called the massive beast sprang from under the table and wagged his tail. Thomas scratched the dog behind his ears, eliciting even more enthusiastic wagging. Running his fingers through the thick mane, Thomas couldn't help but remember seeing lieutenant Little pet the dog several days ago. Nearly eight months into their voyage and Thomas had had no idea the lieutenant was fond of the creature. He wondered what else he did not know about the man. He sighed.

Sometimes while he served at meals he managed to catch a few interesting tidbits about the officers from their conversations. Sometimes, like with Commander Fitzjames, he heard more than he cared to. He had learned very little about lieutenant Little though. He knew his father was also a navy man and that he had an abundance of siblings. He knew he preferred beef to mutton, didn't imbibe excessively and rarely smoked. That was all.

Thomas often watched lieutenant Little during meals, admiring that handsome face, his quiet demeanor, his hands –well maintained, strong, capable– and longed to touch and be touched in return.

Yesterday he had caught Little's gaze over the dinner table. the lieutenant had noticed him staring, his eyes widened, and he did not avert his eyes for several beats of Thomas' restless heart, not until lieutenant Hodgson's exclamation of “Isn't that right, Edward? Edward?”

Thomas busied himself by refilling the officers' glasses with Allsopp's, but his hands were not as steady as usual. Still, he managed to get through the rest of the dinner without spilling anything, or otherwise making a fool of himself. That look though, he couldn't stop thinking about it for hours afterwards.

He sighed again.

Neptune gave a deep huff and nudged Thomas' thigh. That seemed to snap him out of his reverie, he gave the dog another scratch and said, "Alright, back to work now." Neptune shot him a disappointed look and trotted away to sprawl himself in front of the warm stove.

Edward was sitting in his cabin by the light of the patent illuminator, writing in his notebook. He made notes on the day's scientific observations, an anecdote—for once actually funny—George told over breakfast, the result of a football game played between the crews of Erebus and Terror on the ice. His father had given him the leather bound notebook and asked him to write down the daily events from the voyage, so that he had something to draw on in case he wanted to write his memoirs in the future. Edward didn't think he was the right type of man to write a memoir, he was neither heroic nor interesting, but he did want to please his father and it gave him something to do.

He paused over the page, read through what he had written and put the quill down. He rubbed his temples and closed his eyes. What the daily entries lacked was a touch of the personal. He didn't write down his thoughts, his wants or wishes. And today, he didn't include the highlight of his day—he never could. And yet...and yet the fact that this day, December 12th 1845, his fingers brushed those of Thomas Jopson, was, to him, the only thing worth remembering.

Edward had the afternoon watch and as he stood on deck, he saw Jopson on the ice, throwing snowballs to Neptune who ran around joyfully, biting into them. He watched the pair frolic around for several minutes with a smile playing on his lips. It was such a sweet, peaceful scene. Too soon did Jopson call the dog to him and took the beast back to the ship. The exercise made Neptune rather excited, thought Edward, as he heard the thuds as the giant dog ran across the deck. He heard Jopson call after the dog, but Neptune paid no heed, making his way across the deck and to Edward. The animal stopped in front of him, sat and extended one big paw in a demanding gesture.

"Neptune!" called Jopson again, but the dog stayed put. Jopson jogged over, panting slightly, his cheeks flushed pink from the cold. God, he was lovely. Edward almost forgot to breathe whenever he came face to face with the beautiful steward. And seeing him then he couldn't help but note that Jopson was perhaps the only man Edward knew who looked good in a welsh wig.

"My apologies, lieutenant," Jopson said, shaking his head in disapproval at Neptune. He took off his mittens and stuffed them into his coat.

"It is I who should apologise. It seems he got used to me carrying around treats for him," Edward said, sheepish. He turned to the dog, "Sorry, old boy, my pockets are empty today."

Jopson gave Neptune a look of fond exasperation and reached for his collar at the same moment Edward decided to give the mischievous dog a rub behind the ears. Their fingers met and the entire world seemed to stop. Jopson's beautiful, expressive eyes fixed on his, his mouth parted slightly, but his hand did not move away from the dog's neck and Edward's touch. They were both wearing fingerless gloves, so the touch of skin to skin was absolutely minimal and yet it was the most erotic thing that had ever happened to Edward.

The ship's bell rang and they broke away. Jopson stepped back, his eyes darted around in uncertainty, then he took hold of the dog's collar and with a quiet "Sir" turned and left.

Edward woke suddenly, aroused and disappointed to find himself alone. His dreams have taken a decidedly sordid turn lately. And he doubted some of the things his unconscious mind conjured up were even physically possible. Not that he wouldn't like to try them out to make sure, though it would have to be in places less prone to discovery than his dreams supplied. His cabin would do nicely. His only neighbour was George, and he slept like a log. George wouldn't hear any of the sweet noises Jopson would make under Edward's ministrations.

Edward took himself in hand and dealt with his physical needs quickly and efficiently, Jopson's face was clear in his mind and remembering the feeling of his fingers touching Edward's own fuelled his arousal.

After he was finished, he pulled a handkerchief from under his pillow and wiped away all evidence of his activity. He made a mental apology to Gibson, for having to deal with the soiled cloth, and yawned deeply.

It did not take long after his orgasm for his rational thoughts to come back. His dreams were shameful. And very disrespectful to Jopson. He would surely be appalled if he knew what Edward's dream self did with him night after night. Even if there were moments when Edward thought Jopson might return his interest –when their eyes met, when Jopson smiled at him– Jopson was probably just being polite and Edward was reading too much into every single interaction they had. Wishful thinking that was. And anyways, he could hardly make a move towards the man. Jopson was a steward, Edward was an officer. How could Edward make any advance that Jopson wouldn't feel pressured to accept? It was hopeless and he would do well not to do or say anything inappropriate.

Later Edward would not be able to recall why he went back to the Great Cabin after the command meeting had dispersed. The Captain was not there, so he couldn't have wanted to talk to him. Maybe he had forgotten something in the room and went back to fetch it. It scarcely mattered.

What mattered was that he did go there and found Jopson puttering about cleaning away used china and rolling up the maps. Alone.

"Can I help you, lieutenant?" Jopson asked, turning towards Edward. He looked devine.

Edward slid the door behind himself out of habit and strode into the room. He only noticed Neptune on the floor below his feet at the last moment and had to take a big step forward to avoid stepping on the creature. That got him a lot closer to Jopson than he intended. Edward had effectively trapped the man between the table and himself. Jopson's sea grey eyes widened in surprise, his lips parted in a silent question. He looked at Edward, not moving. Edward's eyes kept darting towards those temptingly parted lips.

“Jopson,” he started, but Neptune, disturbed from his nap by the skirmish of legs above him suddenly rose from the floor, leaning into the back of Edward's knees with force, forcing him forward and towards Jopson. Edward's mind registered panic and then his lips were touching Jopson's and Jopson opened his mouth and they were kissing. Oh God, they were kissing. Edward thought for a moment he must have fallen asleep during the meeting, surely, surely this was a start of one of his fantastic dreams. But the feeling of soft lips against his own felt real, the body pressed against his was solid, and the hand that wound itself around his neck was a firm weight. His own hands found their way to Jopson's slim waist, holding him close. They kissed, lips and tongues meeting in an intimate dance that made Edward's body sing with pleasure. When the need for air forced them to break the kiss, Jopson looked dazed, not unlike Edward himself was feeling, but he was smiling.

“Is this alright?” Edward asked.

“Yes,” Jopson breathed, “It's perfect.”

Neptune barked, once, and with what seemed to Edward like a satisfied huff, went to resume his nap on the floor. They looked at the dog and back at each other and laughed.

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BONUS:

Thomas was picking up cups from the table when lieutenant Little came back into the cabin. He deposited the china on a tray and asked, “Can I help you, lieutenant?”

Little did not reply, but suddenly strode forth towards him, pressing him to the table. Thomas looked at him in surprise, the lieutenant looked back at him, his beautiful eyes seemed startled, perhaps at his own boldness. He saw the soft gaze drop to his lips, and his breath caught in his throat. Could it be? Thomas heard his name and then suddenly the lieutenant closed the gap between them and touched his lips to Thomas'. Thomas opened his mouth instinctively and then they were kissing and it felt as good as he had imagined.

He was surprised when, a while later, he heard Neptune give a sharp bark. He didn't even know the dog was in the room.

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