

Blackbeard, Inc

Strident ringing shattered the quiet of the plush office. “Alright, alright.” A woman muttered as she came into the room, “I’m coming already!” She reached across the sleek glass desk and grabbed the handset.

“Blackbeard, Inc” she answered, “Annie Gilly speaking.” She moved around the desk and dropped into the leather chair behind it. She grimaced and held the phone away from her ear, the voice on the other end raging at full volume. The man’s angry words filled the immediate space around her. She caught the gist of what he was bellowing about. It seemed Captain Hook had lost his First Mate... again. She waited until he stopped to take in some air, and then interrupted him.

“I understand you’re upset, Captain.” There was a note of false sympathy in her voice. “But this is the fourth crew member you’ve lost in the last six months.” She tapped a key on the iPad that set in front of her. “Did he go the way of the other three?” Annie asked out of curiosity as she brought up the list of available First Mates waiting for positions in New Providence. Now talking in a more contrite voice, Hook related that his missing First Mate had indeed been pirated away by that scallywag from Neverland.

“Ah... so Pan’s recruiting again?” Annie asked, making a mental note to let Blackbeard know. Peter Pan had been a thorn in the pirates’ communities for months now, pilfering crew from all ships. No one could figure out what he was up too, but the pool of crew for hire was dwindling fast. She frowned as she looked at the very short list of First Mates on her iPad. Only three names were listed. Hook was silent now, waiting for Annie to find a fifth First Mate.

“I have three names on our books. Would you like me to send them too?” She asked. Hook grumbled a yes and rattled his email address. Annie grabbed a pen from the bucket shaped pen holder on the desk.

“Can you repeat that please?” Annie asked. She repeated his email address as she wrote it down on a pad next to her iPad. “capt_hook@jollyroger.org, correct?” Hook confirmed it was.

“Alright.” Annie said briskly. “Let me get this list to you.” She paused, listening to Hook,

“Yes, I’ll let Capt. Blackbeard know about Pan’s activities as soon as he returns.” She paused listening, “I’m sorry but I’m not at liberty to give his itinerary out.” Annie rolled her eyes as Hook continued to talk. When she just couldn’t stand it anymore, she broke into whatever he had been whining about “Oh I’m so sorry, Capt. Hook, but I have another call coming in.” Her voice was sugary sweet. “Thank You for being such a loyal patron of Blackbeard, Inc.” With that she replaced the handset in the cradle of the phone.

Annie sighed and pinched the bridge of her nose. She’d been running the recruiting agency for six weeks now. Alone. *And where is that freebooter Blackbeard?* Annie thought a scowl marring her pale, smooth face. *Off drinking grog and chasing women, and looking for that next booty of gold!* Which left her, as First Mate, to run Blackbeard, Inc.

Annie sighed, sometimes it sucked being First Mate to the most notorious pirate ever to sail the seven seas. But being in the office was better than sailing any of those seven seas. Her share of booty was good and being on a ship in the middle of the ocean was so not good for hair. She picked up her ipad and she worked for a few hours. Sending Hook the names of available First Mates and answering the rest of the email that came in daily to Blackbeard, Inc.

Annie walked across the room a few hours later and dropped into the soft cushions of the overstuffed leather sofa. *The pirate business just isn't what it used to be*, she sighed as she reached for the TV remote. *Too high tech now*. CNN sprang to life on the 60 inch flat screen that hung on the wall across from her. Annie's mouth dropped open, there on the screen, was the Jolly Roger, sailing into the port with Pan at the wheel. And hanging from the yardarm upside down, surrounded by the missing crew members, was Captain Hook.

Annie started laughing. She bet Hook, not the sharpest crayon in the box, was asking himself *What the hell had happened?* So that's what Pan was up too, she thought, hijacking the Jolly Roger. Still chuckling, she rose from the sofa just as the phone on the desk started ringing. Reaching it, she picked up the phone, sinking into the chair... her chair. "Blackbeard Inc, Annie Gilly speaking." She smiled as she got back to the business at hand.