

Captain Cotton

By : **The Novelist**

Here is my short story for Future Author's contest! In my opinion, it is funny. And it has a good ending, as far as my endings go. It is most likely the first time I used the word bloke in my writings. And when I say pounds, I mean English currency, not the weight. I hope it wins! It's up to you guys to give me the likes and reads that will help me win! It has 2832 words!



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Captain Cotton

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His name was Captain Stewart Cotton. Captain Cotton. He didn't really like his name. It wasn't really intimidating or pirate-y. It was soft and warm and used to make clothing. But Captain Cotton wasn't soft or warm or a tailor. He was a pirate.

Albeit, business wasn't going too well as a pirate. His latest attempt at plundering a ship had resulted in half of his crew being killed. That was a total of five men. Cotton promptly apologized and was left with a warning.

Cotton's men didn't even manage to kill any men on the other ship. And now Cotton only had a five man crew. Three of which were idiots.

He looked at his ship. Dear Lord, he hated his ship. It was in terrible condition, the wood was cracked, there were barnacles everywhere, and the name was awful. Just terrible. "The Dirty Lie". Who would name their ship that? Cotton had bought it from a man of whom he didn't know for an outstandingly low price. It came with the name and Cotton didn't have enough gold to change it.

Cotton walked into the tavern, then walked out when he saw at least ten other men much larger than him. He wanted to look more intimidating, but he was scrawny and had only a little stubble on his chin. Barely even counted as a beard. Cotton was blonde, which wasn't a very intimidating color of hair. His eyes were a shade of blue that gave you the sense of innocence. He wasn't very tall either.

As Cotton was walking back to his ship, he ran into Captain Ed Wilson.

"Stewart, good to see you again," Wilson said. "How's your ship, what was it called, Sea Cutlass?"

Cotton swallowed his pride. "It sunk."

"Oh really? Was it shot?" Wilson asked. He was a nice and popular captain, who pirated in some other countries.

"No, it just sunk one night."

"Sabotage?"

"Idiot crew," Cotton replied.

Wilson patted Cotton on the shoulder, and smiled pityingly. "That's a shame. Did you get another ship?"

"Yes," Cotton said, eyes cast down.

"That's good, what's it called?"

"The Dirty Lie."

Captain Cotton

“Not a great name, I must say...”

Cotton scowled in embarrassment. Wilson was an acquaintance, but Cotton usually tried to do better than him. Which was pretty impossible, considering the ratio of Wilson’s success to Cotton’s. The odds weren’t very good for Cotton.

“It was the only ship I could afford.” Cotton told Wilson.

Wilson scratched his well cut shaggy brown hair. He didn’t have a beard, but he was strongly built and intimidating when he wanted to be. His eyes seemed black, but as he talked to Cotton, they seemed less scary and more concerned and caring.

“Hey, if you want to be a good pirate, I wouldn’t suggest plundering in town. My crew and I are going to the Spanish Main in a few days, you know, away from England here, and you’d be welcome to come along. It might be too much for me and my crew to handle and we can split the earnings in half.”

Cotton considered the proposition. His pride told him to refuse, but his sense of wealth begged him to do it. Pride or wealth, Cotton thought. Pride or wealth...

“I’ll come,” said Cotton.

“Great! We’ll be leaving by the end of the week, so get your supplies together.” With that, Wilson walked off towards his ship.

The end of the week had come, and Cotton had barely been able to get enough supplies. He was in a deeper debt than before. Cotton hated debt.

As he walked onto his ship, he realized that there were a lot of things he hated about his life. His appearance, his ship, his name, his financial position.

But that would change after his plunder. Most of his debt would be covered if Wilson’s estimation of the profits was accurate.

Wilson’s ship, “The Devil’s Pride”, sailed near the docks. “Cotton!” he shouted. “Are you ready?”

“I suppose so,” Cotton shouted back. He had his first mate- well, new first mate- raise the anchor and unravel the sails. “The Dirty Lie” sailed forward, pursuing “The Devil’s Pride”

They reached the Spanish Main in about three weeks, and Cotton had lost another man. He’d had a cut on his leg as he fell into the water, and when they tried to save him, a shark ate him. Cotton didn’t really like that man anyway.

There were no ships about, so Cotton and Wilson anchored their ships and walked onto the shore.

“So what do we do?” Cotton asked Wilson when they met up.

“Well,” Wilson said, scratching his chin, “I think we’ll rest until morning. We’re only just at the Spanish Main, so tomorrow we’ll head farther in and find a few ships.”

Captain Cotton

Cotton happily agreed. He could use a few hours of sleep.

Night went, and morning came. Wilson woke Cotton up, and they sailed further into the spanish main. An hour after their departure from the shore, they came across a fair ship. With wilson on one side and Cotton on the other, they boarded the ship with fearsome roars.

But no one was there. Wilson had his crew search the ship, and they came back with an estimated ten thousand pounds worth of gold. After the loud bellowing and cheering was done, Wilson asked if they found any people.

“No, sir,” one crewman said. “Well... we did find what looked like rotting skeletons with a few pieces of meat left on them, and there was some sort of disgusting looking prisoner whose screams were ragged and raspy. We killed the bloke though.”

Wilson stood there, thinking. “Take me to the skeletons,” he said.

The crewman guided Wilson down to the skeletons, with Cotton pursuing. The stench was incredibly nasty. Cotton turned to the side briefly and threw up. Then he recovered himself and caught up to Wilson.

There were five rotting skeletons with the occasional meat chunk in it. The crew man showed them the prisoner. Using keys from a skeleton’s belt loop, he opened the prisoner’s metal bar doors to see if the dead prisoner had anything valuable.

He flipped the prisoner over, and it bit his arm. He screamed along with Cotton and backed away.

“I know he was dead!” the crew man yelled. “I stabbed him in the chest! He was clutching his arm, which was bleeding profusely. Cotton began to feel nauseous.

Wilson got the crew man back up the stairs, with everyone looking with shock.

“W-what was that thing?” Cotton asked as they set the crewman down.

“My guess is that it was some sort of spawn of black magic,” Wilson responded. “Someone was cursed. I’ve heard about this. They’re called the undead, and whoever they bite becomes infected. They become one of them.”

This did not help the crewman’s fear, and he began to panic. “There’s got to be something you can do, Wilson!” the crewman shrieked.

“I’m sure there is something I can do, Patrick, but if there is, I wouldn’t know.”

The crewman screamed out and fell dead. Wilson leaned over to Cotton and said, “I would advise stepping away.” Cotton backed up as Wilson pulled out his flint lock.

A raspy moan escaped from the crewman’s throat. He opened his eyes to reveal yellow, glazed things scanning the area. Wilson shot him in the head.

“My crew, listen up! And Cotton’s crew, you’d better do the same. Do not get bitten by one of these creatures. If they get close to you, try to shoot or stab them in the head.”

“Why don’t we just leave now?” one of Cotton’s men asked.

Captain Cotton

“Did you see how much gold we got from this ship?” Wilson asked. “There’s bound to be more ships around here! These creatures aren’t hard to kill! They’re slow and loud! Our journey here was more dangerous than these creatures!”

Confidence was building in both crews, but Cotton was still uncertain.

“Do you know how many more of them there are? There could be thousands!” Cotton was becoming fidgety. His hands were wiggling uneasily.

“I don’t know how many there are,” Wilson said, “but I’m sure they couldn’t even get onto our ships if they tried.”

The crew was calmer now, and Wilson smiled. “Let’s get back to our ships. This plundering expedition is going to be easier than I expected.”

Once they were back in their ships, Wilson led the way down the Spanish Main until they came across another vessel.

This time, they could see people. But they were slow moving and hunched over a little. With Wilson on one side of the vessel and Cotton on the other, they both boarded the ship with their crews. Wilson’s crew did it like professionals, while one of Cotton’s men accidentally fell in the water.

Cotton cursed the man’s name and attacked an undead near him. He didn’t know it was an undead when he attacked, though. He thought it was an enemy crewman and when he realized that it was undead, he screamed and cut its head off.

“That’s the way to do it, Cotton!” shouted Wilson. He stabbed an undead in the eye and moved on to another one.

While Cotton tried to regain his breath, one of his men stabbed an undead in the gut. He laughed, then screamed as the undead bit his arm. One of Wilson’s men shot the undead, and then stabbed the man through his forehead.

It was at that moment that all the undead were dead and Wilson saw him do that.

“Connors!” he yelled.

“Aye, sir?” said the man.

“What did you do?”

“I killed him and the undead,” Connors said.

“And why did you do that?” Wilson asked.

“He was bitten, he was going to go anyway.”

“You had neither the permission nor the right to do so!”

Cotton caught his breath and spoke. “Actually, I don’t mind. He was a twit anyway.”

Captain Cotton

“ Nevertheless, Connors shouldn’t have killed him.”

“ Well,” said Cotton, “ to tell you the truth, I probably would’ve like to kill him myself.”

“ Not the point, but I’ll take it,” said Wilson. “ Connors watch it. You remember what happened the last time someone got in trouble with me, don’t you?”

Connors’s eyes widened, and he nodded and apologized to Wilson and to Cotton. Then he walked away.

“ Uh,” said Cotton, “ what happened the last time someone got in trouble with you?”

Wilson smiled, laughed, shook his head, and walked away.

Cotton stood up and followed him. “ That doesn’t exactly answer my question.”

“ I don’t want to answer your question. I want it to remain a mystery.”

“ But I-” Wilson stopped him by holding up his hand. He was staring at the coast, eyes wide in disbelief. Cotton looked too, and uttered a high pitched squeak.

On the coast, walking slowly, were hundreds upon hundreds of undead. They were all heading toward the ship, moaning and limping. Some were in the water already, and a scream pierced the air. No one knew where it came from, then Cotton remembered his crewman was still in the water. He looked over the edge, and, sure enough, the crewman was being eaten by undead.

Cotton cursed. He only had two men now.

Wilson was ordering his crew to prepare the cannons on the ship they were on. Cotton’s first mate asked him what he should do. Cotton tried to remember the first mate’s name. It took him a few seconds, but then he remembered the name Scotch.

“ Scotch,” Cotton said, “ I need you to gather the rest of the crew.”

Scotch nodded. “ Alright.” He cupped his hands over his mouth and shouted, “ Hensworth, come over here!”

Cotton’s last crewman ran over to them. He was short and scrawny and looked to be in his early twenties.

“ Yes, sir?” he asked.

“ I want you to help Wilson’s crew with the cannons,” Cotton told him.

Hensworth saluted, and ran off. Cotton and Scotch walked over to where Wilson stood.

“ They’re beginning to surround the ship,” Wilson told them. The cannons began firing, and Cotton watched as they took out a few undead.

Wilson cursed. “ Stop firing the cannons!” he shouted. “ They’re hardly doing anything!”

Then there was a cry and someone yelled, “ They can climb! They can climb!” Cotton recognized the voice as Hensworth’s. The sound of flintlocks firing was heard and the men began to fall back as the undead came aboard.

Captain Cotton

Wilson took out his sword, and Cotton did the same. Scotch took out his flintlock and ran over to the crowd.

“We need to get to the other ships,” Wilson told Cotton.

“Well, we can’t get to yours,” said Cotton. “Most of them are coming from that side.”

“So we’ll have to go to yours,” Wilson concluded. “Gather your men. Or, what’s left of them. I’ll try to gather mine.” Wilson began yelling for retreat, heading towards “The Dirty Lie”. Cotton began yelling for Scotch and Hensworth, then just Scotch as he saw Hensworth get taken down by multiple undead.

Scotch presented himself, and Cotton began making for “The Dirty Lie”.

He took down a few undead, but after a close call with one, he tried to avoid them. Wilson was almost at “The Dirty Lie”, but the undead began to surround him. He hacked and slashed but he had nowhere to run and they were almost upon him. A rush of bravery swept over Cotton, and he leaped over and began stabbing and slashing. Wilson was able to escape the horde, and began helping Cotton take down the undead.

“Thank you for that, Cotton,” he said.

Cotton stopped his attacks and tried to regain his breath. In the middle of thee wheezing, he managed a “You’re welcome”.

Some of Wilson’s crew had made it to “The Dirty Lie” and were helping others onto it. As Cotton and Wilson were approaching the ship, they heard a scream from behind, and Cotton turned just in time to see Scotch get buried by a horde of undead.

Cotton and Wilson were now at the edge and were about to jump onto “the Dirty Lie”, when an undead grabbed and bit Wilson’s leg. He cried out and stabbed the undead in the nose. Cotton grabbed onto Wilson, and Connors came over and did the same on the other side. They leaped and barely made it to the ship.

Connors and Cotton lay Wilson down, and Cotton yelled for crew members to get the ship moving. A few did so after a moments hesitation.

“Wilson, Wilson!” Cotton exclaimed. “Stay with me!”

“I’m having no trouble remaining conscious, Cotton,” said Wilson. “You don’t have to be dramatic.”

Cotton wanted to say that Wilson would make it, but he knew that was a lie. “What should I do?” he asked.

“You?” said Wilson. “Well, first, since I’m going to die any minute now, I’m placing you in charge of my crew.” He tilted his head back and yells, “You hear that, crew? Captain Cotton is now your commander.” Wilson looked back at Cotton. “I think your share of the gold we collected from the previous ship should be enough to pay them for a little bit. I would advise more trips like this, but with less undead.”

Cotton nodded. “Are you just going to wait for death now?”

Captain Cotton

Wilson laughed. "Well, I thought about ending my pain and having someone shoot me, but that's a coward's way out and I don't want to put anyone through that. Help me up," Wilson told Cotton and Connors. They did so and when he asked them to bring him to the edge of the ship, they did that too.

"What are you going to do?" Connors asked.

"I'm going to jump into the water, so I don't potentially hurt my— sorry, Captain Cotton's crew. And to avoid you shooting me."

Wilson looked at Cotton. "Take good care of your crew," he said with a smile.

Cotton, with tears welling up in his eyes, responded, "I will. It's been great working beside you."

Wilson smiled wider, then flinched in pain and jumped into the depths of the sea. He never came back up. Cotton noticed, after staring at the spot where Wilson jumped, that the coast was long gone, a mere background image. He composed himself and began shouting orders. After everything was in order, he looked at Connors and asked, "Who was Wilson's first mate?"

Connors hesitated, then said, "Um, Jefferson, sir. But he was eaten by the undead."

"Then I'll appoint you as my first mate, Connors."

"Aye, sir," Connors said and saluted.

Cotton walked over to the head of the ship. He had approximately five thousand pounds in gold, and a new crew. Aside from one of the greatest friends he had ever known in short time dying, things were looking up for him.

Captain Cotton

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