Summary

Hard-a-lee: The command given to come about (tack against the wind)

Flint watches Silver turn the men to his side, and remembers someone else - someone he does not want to compare to Silver in any way.

Notes

Missing scene from episode 2.07

Convince them, Flint had said. Convince them that this is in their best interests. Now he sat watching Silver do exactly that with what seemed like effortless ease. The words were chosen carefully. Silver had a way of speaking to the men that made it seem like he had no power over them, that he was merely the lowest of them. When he paused between sentences, it was only long enough for the men to take in what he’d said and form a concept of it, but never so long that they could start working out solutions for themselves.

Flint fixed his gaze on his... what? Bed partner? It was the closest he could come to naming what there was between them. They were certainly not lovers - that required a degree of trust that Flint would never entertain.

A memory came to him of Thomas, with his eyes full of fire, his words calm and measured and just a little self-deprecating. Thomas had the same way of speaking to a crowd, that way of sounding like...
he was talking only and directly to one person while at the same time addressing all of them. Flint watched Silver pause for emphasis, watched his whole stance shift, slipping from resignation into something else. For a moment, there was something like real fervor in Silver's voice.

It was put on, Flint reminded himself firmly. Silver didn't give a damn about anything but himself. He might be clever, and silver-tongued, but that was where the similarities between Silver and Thomas ended. Thomas had used his skill to try and change the world - Silver used it to keep ahead of everyone else. He was always seeking the advantage, and he'd made it quite clear he would cheerfully turn on anyone if it would advance his own ends.

Flint may as well have handed Silver a loaded pistol tonight. He did not know what could have possibly possessed him to say something so deliciously useful to someone so relentlessly manipulative. 'I need your help' was only the tiniest step away from 'I need you,' and Silver would have heard it in his voice. Flint had no idea when it had become that - when he had started leaning on Silver, counting on his support, not only using him but needing him as well. He had no illusions on the mood of the crew. If Silver brought them around on this venture, it would not be their love of Captain Flint that did it.

The part that truly burrowed under his skin was that Flint did need Silver. He was the only person the crew seemed to listen to, and the only person who was actively working in support of his captain. Billy was still an unknown - Flint saw him too often with Dufresne to trust him. Even now, the two stood together. Silver was the only one Flint could even hope to rely on. He could take none other into his confidence as he had Silver, let none other see the way he thought and maneuvered.

He had not realized how profoundly he had missed having someone to lean on, to conspire with, until it was seconds from slipping through his fingers.

Silver grinned, and it almost looked sincere, his white teeth flashing in the tan of his face. There was a stir low in Flint's belly, and he gritted his teeth. That was the worst of it. Silver's quick smiles and his nimble fingers and his damned sky-blue eyes made it all the more difficult to pull the lust apart from the sincere admiration of Silver's ability. Not many could land on their feet as he did, over and over again whenever the winds shifted, quick as a cat. Not many knew the way people worked, and could use that knowledge to climb inside their heads and drag their fears and their desires both out into the light.

He and Thomas were truly two sides of the same coin, and the thought nearly brought bile up in the back of Flint's throat. He normally shied away from comparing the two of them. What he and Silver had was an arrangement of convenience, a partnership only while their interests aligned, nothing like what he's had and lost with Thomas.

Flint told himself that again - repeated it twice, in fact - when Silver finally came sauntering back to the tent, bright-eyed and flushed, jittering with energy. It was the look that suited him best, and Flint wished it didn't cause his trousers to get tight and his eyes to flick appreciatively over the other man as he slung himself into a chair, one leg hooked over the arm of it in a careless sprawl.

"Well?" Silver asked, smirking like he knew exactly what he was doing to his captain. "Convincing enough for you?"

"It isn't me you have to worry about," Flint said, watching the group of men Silver had addressed dissolve into little pockets of discussion.

"I have them in the palm of my hand," Silver said, waving the appendage in question in lazy circles through the air. "They would have agreed to storm the fort, if that's what I wanted them to do. As it is, I believe they'll come to the conclusion that Charleston is our best direction at present. Rather a
reverse course from our previous goal."

Flint only grunted. They were indeed hard done by, with the loss of the gold. Silver's near-accusation that he had wanted it to happen still rankled.

Silver pulled a face, one of his mock-offended expressions. "I'm beginning to think you aren't appreciative," Silver said.

"Should I be?" Flint asked. "The vote's not in yet."

That made Silver roll his eyes and sit forward, propping his elbows on Flint's desk. "I just sold them a story I don't even believe in - a vision of the future that is, quite frankly, ridiculous and impossible and unattainable. I sold it to them so well that some of them are talking about what will happen when they don't have to sail, or climb up the rigging, or go over the rail. What they'll do with their lives. I just won you that vote, Captain. I think I deserve your gratitude, yes."

The old reaction rose in Flint - the knee-jerk instinct to defend Thomas's vision with his sword if necessary. But Silver's cynicism only wearied him further. The gold was lost, the delivery of Abigail uncertain, and their coming reception in Charleston even more so. "You did well," he said grudgingly. "You have a talent for this. For persuading men to your side."

Silver shrugged. "I'm a hard man not to like," he said. "When you don't hide your motives - when it's plain to everyone around you that your only concern is yourself - people can trust you to choose the most prudent course. After all, nobody is going to deliberately get themselves killed." The corner of his mouth twitched up in that familiar smirk. "Except you."

"Lord Ashe and I-"

"Are old friends, yes, certainly. I'm sure that was before he hanged anyone who had so much as breathed on the deck of a pirate ship, and I'm sure you have an explanation as to why he got that way. I don't care to hear it." Silver's eyes were locked steadily on Flint's from the other side of the desk. "I'm fairly convinced you're going to get us all killed with this, but as you said. Where else do I have to go?"

Flint hadn't been thinking when he said that. He hadn't meant to paint his crew as a last resort, and he didn't like the way those words sounded coming out of Silver's mouth, now. What Silver needed from him was a lot less tangible - and a lot less vital - than the other way around. Flint needed Silver to secure his power. Silver needed Flint only for the feeling of importance he gained on this crew.

"Listen," Silver said, apparently sick of Flint's brooding silences, "I'm as upset about the Urca gold as you are. More, perhaps. But we should be celebrating. You got what you wanted." Silver grinned again, and this time it was the hooded expression Flint had grown familiar with only behind closed doors. "Besides," he said, "I had to get all that energy from somewhere, and I've gotten myself all cocked thinking of getting fucked hard enough I still feel it when we're underway."

Flint knew that - had seen it from the minute Silver swaggered into the tent. It showed in the way the blacks of his eyes were half-blown and the way he walked with a roll to his hip, like he was trying to draw Flint's gaze down. "You think I'm going to just give it to you whenever you fancy bending over, do you? I distinctly remember you telling me you wouldn't let me manhandle you whenever it pleased me. Perhaps I'm not in the mood for seduction."

Silver scoffed, like he didn't believe it for a second. "You've been staring at me like you want me since you ordered everyone else out of the tent." When Flint didn't answer him, he shrugged and rose from the chair, stretching both arms over his head in a motion that was no less calculated than the
heated look he threw Flint from beneath his eyelashes. "There's a bungalow with a bed, and I intend to use it whether you're there or not."

"It's my bungalow," Flint said. Silver threw a grin over his shoulder and continued on his way, still with that rolling stride like he was walking the deck of a ship. For a man who claimed to hate the sea, he certainly moved like a sailor.

He let Silver vanish around the corner before he got up to go after him. Hornigold was nowhere to be seen, now that he was sure to lose the vote. Flint could afford to be scarce for a small while. He stepped widely around the crew, with a quick stride that brooked no interruption. It wasn't far, and he hadn't given Silver much of a head start, but Flint couldn't catch sight of him down any of the twisting streets.

The bungalow was little more than a one-room thatched hut. It had a small porch that creaked under Flint's boot, and a door that barely hung on its hinges. Flint only slept here when he couldn't sleep aboard the ship - when his presence on the beach was needed.

He pushed open the door, his eyes adjusting to the dim light of only one lamp. Silver lay on the bed, stripped, sprawled carelessly across it. His eyes were on Flint's the moment he stepped in, all blacked now, the blue a slim ring around the outside. Silver's hand was on his cock, fingers curled in a loose fist. He worked his hips, pushing himself into his hand, knees spread wide and feet flat on the bedclothes.

"I said I intended to use it," Silver said. His voice was too even, still with that uncaring levity he forced into it whenever he spoke - this was a show for Flint's benefit, not a display of passion.

Flint felt a sound rumble up through his chest like a growl. He jerked his coat off and let it fall, the same with his belt, sword and pistol clattering to the floor. The boots gave him some trouble, but he reached the bed and bore down on top of Silver in his shirtsleeves and trousers. He wrapped his hand around Silver's shoulder and pinned him with an arm across his chest. Silver bucked against the hold and Flint tightened, pressing down. Silver lifted his head to look, the smirk gone from his face, as Flint knocked Silver's hand away and laved his tongue over the head of Silver's cock.

"Oh fuck," Silver said, his head thumping back onto the pillows. Flint took him in his mouth, as much as would fit, sucking with his tongue pressed flat to the underside. He wrapped his free hand around the rest of Silver's cock and pumped him slow. He would have none of that coquettish play-acting here, as if Silver thought he was the kind to be seduced so easily by bared flesh and flattery.

Silver surged up against Flint's arm again - Flint took his hand away from Silver's cock and pinned his hip down, leaning his weight into it. Silver's hands groped for him, one of them locking around the bicep of the arm that pinned him and the other hovering over the top of Flint's head, restrained but close enough for it to brush the his hair.

"I might start to think you have a problem ceding control," Silver gasped, his voice nowhere near as steady as it had been. Flint counted that as a victory, as well as the groan he pulled from Silver with a hard suck to the head of his cock. He pulled off with an obscene sound, his eyes traveling up the lines of Silver's body to the dazed look on his face, the way his mouth hung open and his lip was reddened like he'd been chewing on it.

"I might start to think you like it better that way," Flint said. He leaned his weight in harder, pressing Silver down into the mattress, and watched his throat bob and his tongue dart out to wet his lips. He opened his mouth, but Flint didn't give him the chance to regain the upper hand - he wrapped his lips around Silver's cock again and swallowed, turning whatever Silver wanted to say into another half-strangled moan.
Aboard ship, their encounters had been hurried and mostly clothed out of necessity. There was nearly no privacy, never any time to lead up to the act. Flint wasn't sentimental, and there was an attraction in rutting half-clothed in the captain's cabin, but having Silver like this was better by far. The muscles in Silver's thighs bunched and strained, trying to shove his hips up, and he clutched at Flint's arms.

Flint pulled off again, nosing down to the base of Silver's cock to lick a wet stripe up its underside. Silver cursed fluidly, twisting in Flint's grip, his fingers tightening and digging in hard enough to leave bruises.

"Come on, come on," Silver said, unwrapping his hand from the arm Flint had across his chest and winding his fingers into Flint's shirt instead, yanking at it.

Flint had to let him go to sit up and pull his shirt off, and Silver sat up with him, apparently keen on not being pinned again. As soon as Flint's shirt was gone, Silver was plastered to his front, hands shoving down the back of Flint's trousers. Flint wound his fingers in Silver's hair, sliding them against the back of his skull. He pulled, and Silver couldn't but go with his direction, their mouths meeting like a clash of wills, Silver's teeth clicking against his own, breath huffing out over his lips.

Silver's fingernails scraped along his spine, and Flint felt the sting of sweat over the scratches. His trousers were too confining, and far too hot - he pulled Silver away from him and untangled his hand with an unkind yank. Real annoyance flashed across Silver's face.

"I won't have that any more than I'll have you choking me," he said.

"Unintentional," Flint said, yanking at his trousers until he could kick them off. Silver sat back on his elbows, letting Flint shove his thighs apart and lean down to cover him.

"Is that an apology from Captain Flint? Close enough, I'd say-"

Once was chance, twice was coincidence, so Flint grabbed both of Silver's wrists and pinned them over his head to see if there was a pattern.

Silver's breath huffed out of his chest on a noise that was as much the end of a sentence as it was an expression of delight and definite interest. Three times. Pattern.

Flint let his weight settle on Silver like a hot, living blanket. He rolled his hips and Silver pressed right back against him. His knees slid up to frame Flint's ribs - it gave him more leverage to press his hips up, and Flint lost himself for a few moments in the hot slide of his cock against Silver's. He turned his head and fastened his teeth over the sharp edge of Silver's collarbone.

"Ahhh fuck, Captain," Silver said, straining against Flint's hold while at the same time pressing as much skin together as he possibly could. Flint's teeth worried their way up Silver's neck, beard rubbing the skin raw, until he pressed the flat of his tongue into the soft place just beneath Silver's ear.

The sound Silver made then was punched-out and half-strangled. Flint closed his lips around that patch of skin and sucked - too gently to coax a bruise to the surface, but certainly hard enough to have Silver swearing and bucking against him, his foot sliding on the bedclothes as he twisted and strained in Flint's grasp.

"Enough!" Silver rasped. Flint pulled away to see his face - mouth hung slack and wet, his eyes half-closed and glittering dark in the lamp-light. He looked halfway to gone, and them barely started yet. A smirk pulled at Flint's lips. "You did wind yourself up thinking of this," he said. He kept Silver's
hands pinned, though he couldn't do much about the way Silver was screwing his hips up, rubbing skin on skin and driving Flint to distraction.

"Works every time," Silver said - then his lazy expression froze on his face, his eyes shuttering like he expected Flint to pounce on that and turn it against him.

Flint would on any other day, certainly. To hear that Silver had fantasized about their couplings to set him in the right kind of mood for putting out the arresting energy he used to work a crowd sent a thrill of something through him that felt far too close to possession. The thought went straight to his cock, in point of fact, and it twitched against Silver's. He let the smirk widen, but he didn't take the opening, instead letting go of Silver's hands to roll away and grope blindly off the side of the bed.

Silver was sprawled out for him when he rolled back over with a bottle of spare lamp oil - not in the showy, vulgar way he'd spread himself out for Flint at first, but like he was content to laze back and let Flint have his way for once.

There was less teeth when their lips met now, more of the wet slide of tongues and the press of lips. Flint pressed his palm against Silver's ribs and let his fingers settle there one by one, testing the way they fit. Silver grabbed for Flint's hips and pulled him in - he was always like this, it seemed, seeking to press them together as close as possible. Flint pulled Silver's lip between his teeth and bit just hard enough to have him arching and panting into his mouth.

One-handed, Flint fumbled with the bottle of oil, reluctant to sit up. Popping the cork wasn't difficult, but he ended up making a mess of the bedclothes, pouring far more there than over his fingers. He swore, and one of Silver's hands peeled away from his skin to close around the slippery glass. Silver pulled free of the kiss and squirmed until he could see what he was doing, settling the bottle precariously on a square of mattress that seemed unlikely to be disturbed for now.

Flint sat back, sliding slick fingers down the back of Silver's thigh, over the swell of his arse and between. His free hand splayed across Silver's stomach, the back of his thumb brushing Silver's cock, holding Silver down as he pressed one finger inside, the oil making it well slick. Flint twisted his wrist, pulling out and pushing back in with two. Once he was in deep enough, he crooked up, tapping across the smooth button of flesh behind Silver's cock.

"Good Christ," Silver swore, the oath trailing away into a long groan when Flint curled his fingers harder and pressed relentlessly, his other hand keeping Silver flat to the bed.

Flint hadn't had a chance to get a good look at Silver as he did this - he took his time now, spreading his fingers apart as he drew out and then pushing back in, aiming unerringly for the spot that made Silver push against him. Silver grabbed for Flint's shoulders, his head falling back against the pillows again. There was a small wrinkle between his brows, his mouth hung open and panting, and his eyes almost closed but for a bare, glittering sliver of blue between his lashes. Sweat shone on his skin just as it did Flint's, and the flickering lamplight threw long shadows over them both.

Flint nudged another finger in beside the first two, looking down to watch them sink into Silver. The sight was enough to make him impatient, and the feel of it was worse - hot and clinging and velvet-soft. Flint went slow, but he needn't have - Silver shoved back into it, his grip digging into Flint's shoulders.

"Get on with it," Silver said, but it had no bite behind it. Silver's throat was bared, and Flint leaned up to lick over the throbbing point of his pulse.

"You wanted gratitude," he said, his breath washing over Silver's ear. "Are you really complaining?" Silver twitched like he was trying to contain a shudder. It made him tighten around Flint's fingers,
and Flint moaned into the skin of his throat.

"If this is your way of showing gratitude, shouldn't you be doing what I ask?" Silver sounded half-breathless, his chest heaving.

"I didn't hear any requests, only demands," Flint said.

"Back to begging," Silver said. "You have a fixation."

"You seem to have difficulty remembering who is in charge." Flint bit at the place below Silver's ear that had made him squirm before.

Silver arched his back like a sail caught in a full wind. His eyes screwed shut and he let out a choked yell, one he cut off and strangled into, "Flint - Captain-"

Flint decided that was probably the closest he would get to having Silver beg like he had when they fucked the first time, when he'd sounded desperate and just short of ruined. "Where did you put that-

Silver scrambled for the oil and shoved it at Flint, struggling up onto his elbows again. He wasn't affecting any seduction now. His hair was plastered to his skin with sweat, and he stared at Flint with unconcealed want. Flint could admit to himself that he liked Silver better this way - as attractive as he was when he plied his rhetoric over a crowd, here was where Flint saw the man behind it. If the privilege was as rare as he thought it was, then for Silver to allow him to see this was something near-exceptional - something worth examining.

Flint shook the thoughts away, slicked himself, and settled between Silver's spread thighs. He guided his cock into the tight grip of Silver's body, his other hand sliding up to spread across Silver's breastbone, fingertips nudging at the hollow of his throat. A groaning sigh left him at the feel of Silver yielding around him. He went slowly, reveling in the sensation of his cock wrapped in that slick, soft heat.

The sound Silver made was loud and nearly wanton, a moan of pure satisfaction, his eyes sliding half-closed again. He looked up at Flint with the hint of a smug smirk on his lips, like someone who had gotten exactly what he wanted, letting himself fall back onto the bed, his hair tangling around him on the bedclothes. He reached for Flint, who leaned down to make it easier for Silver to grab him. Silver slid one hand along the hard plane of Flint's chest, up to his shoulder, and wrapped it around the back of Flint's neck. His palm was warm, slipping in the sweat of their bodies, and the weight of it on Flint's nape quelled some obscure instinct in his breast, bringing with it a feeling that was far too close to contentment for Flint's liking.

He drew back, his eyes slipping closed as the drag of Silver's body pulled along his cock, and pushed in with a hard, short thrust. He slitted his eyes open to find that Silver's grin had widened, his face transformed into a portrait of delighted pleasure. Flint growled and grabbed for the bend of Silver's knee, pushing his leg up to his chest. It changed the angle enough that that infuriating smirk fell off Silver's face. His eyes shot open, dazed and glassy.

"Mother of God, Captain," Silver breathed, and now it was Flint's turn to smirk, driving into him with hard, relentless strokes, battering the sensitive knot of flesh with every rough screw of his hips. He leaned his weight on the hand pressed to Silver's breastbone, and Silver's mouth fell open on an incoherent string of syllables that were equally likely to be curses as they were to be praise.

Flint's breath came in uneven pants and sweat dripped from his brow. Every time Silver tightened down on Flint's cock it sent a jolt through him like a mouthful of strong drink - raw and hot and just
as intoxicating. Silver shifted, like the direct stimulation was becoming too much, and Flint moved obligingly, communicating in twitches of muscle and glances like Silver truly was his lover, and not a convenient ally.

It was too hard to hold onto that thought in the midst of this, and Flint didn't try. He reveled in the thrill of pleasure pooling at the base of his spine and the sight of Silver, sweat-soaked and laid out beneath him, his lip caught between his teeth and his eyes fixed on Flint. The way he looked - it wasn't mocking, or flirtatious, not the way Flint usually saw him. It was pure, naked greed.

Silver wrapped his hand around his cock, letting the force of Flint's movements rock him into the tunnel of his fist. His eyes closed, and though Flint would rather see that look, the way he tipped his head back and bared the skin of his throat was nearly as good. The hand resting on Flint's neck tightened, fingers digging into the knobs of his spine. Flint leaned down, letting go of Silver's knee and dropping to his elbows, covering him with the weight of his body.

He pressed his mouth to Silver's, sucking his lip from between his teeth. A tremor started in Silver's thighs, and his body locked up tight, squeezing around Flint's cock. It wrung Flint's pleasure from him, and he groaned into Silver's mouth. A rush of wet, sticky fluid slicked their stomachs, and Silver bit down on Flint's lip this time, a jolt of hurt that prolonged his orgasm. Flint sagged atop Silver, only barely propped up by his elbows.

Neither of them spoke for the span of half a dozen panted breaths. "Off," Silver huffed.

He hadn't released his hold on Flint's neck, and he pushed with the heel of his hand. Flint allowed his head to be moved only far enough to bite at the hinge of Silver's jaw, seized by an almost playful impulse in the haze of his satisfaction. Stubble prickled under his tongue.

Silver squirmed, his knees shoving at Flint's ribs. The motion made him flex around Flint's cock, soft and sensitive and Flint swore and sat up, drawing out with a hiss. Silver's belly was smeared with his come, his chest still rising and falling with short breaths.

Flint had never seen him quite like this. Silver's face was unguarded - there was the barest curve to his reddened lips. He stared at the ceiling while he got his breathing under control, lax and sprawled out, his thighs still splayed wide.

Words seemed slow to return. Flint stretched out beside Silver on the bed. It smelled like sweat and come, and the air in the bungalow was oppressively hot, but the languid feeling had not yet drained from his bones.

"Are you planning on staying in here until the vote comes back?" Silver asked. Flint cracked his eyes open - he wasn't sure when he'd shut them. Silver's features were composed again, arranged into the public face Flint knew so well.

Flint sat up a little too quickly, abruptly realizing that he was disappointed to see that mask settle back in place. "No," he said, but offered no further explanation. Silver's eyes seemed to bore into his back, and Flint could feel the weighty question in that stare.

"Whenever you're ready, then," Silver said. The bed rustled as he got up, and Flint tracked his progress around the bungalow out of the corner of his eye as Silver poked around for something to clean the mess from his stomach.

When Silver began pulling his clothes on, Flint felt that same faint prick of displeasure. He looked away. Had he lacked for physical intimacy for so long that he was allowing it to blind him to the kind of man Silver really was?
Then again - he'd had so many opportunities to leave, or to leave Flint to twist in the wind. There had been no reason for Silver to pull him out of the water when he was drowning, no more than there was any real reason for him to have pulled off what he'd done tonight.

"John," he said.

Silver's eyebrows were lifted when he looked up from tugging his boots on, and Flint thought the surprise there was real. "Yes?"

Flint hadn't meant to use his given name, but it was too late to correct himself now without seeming like he was backing away. "What you did for me tonight. Thank you." It was not as hard as he expected to force those last two words out. Silver had done him a good turn, and while Flint was sure there was an ulterior motive at work, he was grateful. A failure to regain his captaincy would have meant an unacceptable setback.

Silver's brow wrinkled, a small movement that was nearly imperceptible in the darkened room. He looked at Flint like a man would look at an old, weathered map, unfamiliar and indecipherable. "You're welcome," he said. Flint thought it might even have been sincere.

"I'll be right behind you," Flint said.

Silver looked him up and down, his gaze lingering like it always did on Flint's bare form. He shrugged one shoulder and raked his fingers through his hair, shaking some of the sweat from it and attempting to set it to rights. Then he left, the door creaking shut behind him.

Flint watched the closed door, a tangle of confusion worrying around the back of his skull. It was a hard thing to admit, but if their paths continued to align, he could actually learn to like that man. Silver was self-serving, practical without quite becoming cynical, and adaptable as quicksilver. He had zeal to him, something he might try to hide but that showed nevertheless when he set himself on a goal. Nothing would stop him from getting what he wanted.

He was dangerous. Too dangerous for Flint's thoughts to dwell on him like this, too dangerous to hold so close to the vest - but it was also far too late to keep him at arm's length. They were growing into something more than allies, yet still less than lovers.

The most dangerous thing was, Silver was the only one he could trust.

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