

FAR FROM THE BARBAROUS COAST

(AKA Monstrous)

Written by

J. Phillip Wilkins

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - NIGHT

A three-masted frigate christened BONNE AMITIE glides along the choppy ocean waters.

SUPER: ATLANTIC OCEAN, SLAVER ROUTE, 1791

EXT. BONNE AMITIE, OBSERVATION DECK - NIGHT

On the ship, CAPTAIN PHILLIPE ROUSSEAU (40s) watches from his place behind the wheel as members of his crew throw the body of an African man over the side of the main deck.

A line of around eight other injured and sickly Africans await a similar fate while crewman with cutlass and knife stand guard.

After a dull SPLASH, the body drifts past, bobs in the wake of the sailing ship.

BOSUN'S MATE (20s) approaches.

BOSUN'S MATE

That'll show 'em not to spread rumors. A slave rebellion in San Domingue, *tsk*. To think they'd have the intelligence to organize something like that.

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU

What was it this time?

BOSUN'S MATE

That one couldn't hold the oar. Got no use for something that can't do its job.

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU

Job?

BOSUN'S MATE

Sir?

Captain moves to the rear of the ship, stares down into the murky waters, spots the body.

A moment later, a massive, dark form surfaces just long enough to devour the body whole, an African girl with iridescent skin that glints in the moonlight.

The creature ducks down into the depths just as smooth.

No reaction from the captain, as if he's seen this before.

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU
There she was again.

BOSUN'S MATE
What, sir?

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU
The devil that's followed us from
Port-Novo.

The bosun's mate peaks over the edge.

BOSUN'S MATE
Don't see nuthin'. Just some voodoo
the slaves like to chant about.
Some story about Mami Wata.
Absolute drivel.

Crew members get ready to throw another African overboard.

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU
And them?

BOSUN'S MATE
Had their tongues cut out as a
warning. Let's see if they can swim
home. I'll keep the rest in line.
They'll fetch a pretty penny in St.
Domingue.

A SPLASH, another African drifts past the ship, struggles in
its wake.

Bosun's mate departs.

The dark form surfaces, its dorsal fin slices the water, then
its body before a massive mouth opens. The shark is
monstrous, with rows of aerated teeth the size of a man's
hand, moonlight absorbed by its obsidian skin.

The African girl on its back stares up at Captain Rousseau as
the creature swallows the African whole, prepares to descend,
but not before rolling, its Stygian eye looks directly at the
captain before it descends to its world.

Captain stares down at the churning water, mesmerized by the
swirls. His hands shake, then grip the rail to steady
themselves.

A soft voice finds him.

RHANU (O.S.)
Don't be the monkey.

The Captain turns, reaches for his cutlass when he sees an young African girl on the observation deck.

RHANU (16) bows her head in the dark, raises her hands with open palms.

RHANU

Captain, I mean you no harm.

His hand moves off his cutlass.

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU

Why should I fear a woman? How did you get up here? You are no doubt needed in the galley.

RHANU

The crew seems distracted.

Another SPLASH.

Captain turns his head to watch another body drift past, one eye on the woman.

The monstrous shark rises, the African tries to swim away but is caught in its jaws. The beast drags the helpless man under the surface.

RHANU

You think the creature is your friend?

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU

The devil is no friend of mine.

The gold cross that hangs from a silver chain around the captain's neck catches Rhanu's eye.

RHANU

You have similar goals, do you not?

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU

Enough of this blasphemy. Bosun!

His call for assistance is drowned by the SCREAMS of the next man to go overboard.

Rhanu steps closer, her face finally illuminated by the torchlight. She looks like the girl from the back of the shark.

Captain retreats when he sees her left eye is milky white, her left arm withered.

With her right hand, she holds up a crudely carved wooden cross hanging from a leather cord around her neck.

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU

So, you're not a heathen after all.

RHANU

I was saved by a Dutch missionary. Taught to read and write. Told many things. Some good, some evil. Both things reside in your Bible.

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU

I am blessed by His word, my duties consecrated by scripture. "Slaves be obedient to your human masters with fear and trembling in sincerity of-

RHANU

-of heart as to Christ. Yes, I know it well. How about, "Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you. Although, if you can gain your freedom, do so".

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU

I not familiar with-

RHANU

As Peter says, we're all God's slaves.

Captain winces at the mere suggestion he is a "slave" to anyone.

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU

You slander me with your disrespect.

RHANU

Ah, Timothy. So many contradictions in God's word. Maybe because these are the words of man and not our heavenly master.

Again, the accusation that he has a "master", the Captain has heard enough.

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU

Time for your duties. Maybe you can stifle long enough to make dinner.

RHANU

There is already revolution in your home country. Might it sweep across the world?

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU

What's this nonsense?

Another SPLASH.

Captain turns to the rail, watches the sharks' ritual play out again.

RHANU

The devil feeds well. We seem to be more alike than you know.

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU

Ridiculous.

RHANU

We both make dinner for monstrous vengeance.

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU

Bosun!

(sotto)

Where be that fool?

Her voice suddenly sounds very close.

RHANU (O.S.)

Don't be the monkey.

He turns to see she's snuck up next to him.

His hand moves to his cutlass as her withered hand raises and lays on his chest.

He is paralyzed, eyes wide, words stuck in his throat.

RHANU

You had a dream. That this is your last voyage. Nothing but the dark for you after this. No future for you, for your wife, your two girls.

At the mention his girls, his eyes blink, mouth still struggles with speech.

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU

How do you...

RHANU

Beautiful girls. They shall never
have the worry or fear of being
taken from their mother. Sold as
virgins. I bet they would fetch a
pretty price.

Captain tries to call out but can't.

RHANU

What those callused hands would do
to them.

He can express nothing but a single tear.

RHANU

Slick tongues over young flesh.

Captain's eyes drip with fear and frustration.

RHANU

Imagine their cries for you. Why
aren't you saving them? Why are you
allowing this happen. Why is God
allowing it to happen?

A terrified SCREAM and then a SPLASH.

RHANU

Save them.

Something rises from the water, jaws crush bone.

RHANU

Save them.

Another SPLASH.

RHANU

Save them.

Someone frantically swims in the ocean before the jaws close
on them.

RHANU

Save them!

She releases her hand, the gold cross is white-hot.

Captain rips it from his neck, throws it over the rail.

The palm of his hand has a cross-shaped burn.

In the distance, the lights of Haiti's Saint-Domigue Port twinkles.

Captan turns back to Rhanu only to find her gone.

He stares over the railing and watches the demonic creature submerge, the African girl on its back.

EXT. SAINT-DOMINGUE PORT - NIGHT

The Belle Amitie docks, ropes are throw out for expectant hands but none arrive to attend to the ship.

Captain looks out over the docks. Fires rage among the buildings. Dead sailors and merchants lay strewn about.

More fires burn in the distance where plantations have been torched.

African men stand at the dock, machetes, axes, pitchforks, torches in hand. They stare at the crew, sullen-eyed and determined.

The eerie silence unnerves the crew.

BOSUN'S MATE

What are they waiting for?

(to the slaves)

You there! This ship needs
unpacking. Get to it or you'll feel
the lash of my-

He's cut off by the THUNK of a spear to the chest.

He drops, clutches at the spear, blood puddles around him as he GURGLES his last word.

Captain looks at his burned palm.

CAPTAIN ROUSSEAU

'Tis our just fate.

The CLAMBERING from below decks reaches his ears. Bare feet on planks, chains RATTLE, murderous SCREAMS as an undulating shadow sweeps up to the deck and consumes him.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. CARIBBEAN SEA - NIGHT

The bow of a frigate glides into view, the original name Bonne Amitie barely visible under the tar paint, the new name of MAMI WATA painted over.

Captain Rhanu stands atop the steerage deck of her newly christened ship.

Several of the French crew are hanged from masts. The former captain is lashed to the steering wheel, his skin almost flayed entirely off his body.

The African crew stand at the railings, others climb the rigging, ready to board the British slave ship in the distance.

CAPTAIN RHANU
God is hungry. Feed him we shall.

A ROAR explodes from the crew as they streak toward the British ship.

A dark form follows in their wake, its dorsal fin carves the water.

THE END.

