



Puzzle #19: Hard-Boiled Story



The scalawag, Ol' Itchy Eggcorn, was buying his time at the dive bar, The Rusty Cuddlefish, when the bartender confronted him.



"Some she-devil landlover's been looking for ya," he snarled. Never one to mix words, the barkeep pushed another drink towards Itchy. This day in age, both of the fellows are a dying breed.



Sighing, Eggcorn pushed away the mug and sat up straight. He'd dropped into the tavern to exercise his demons and escape his worries, but he'd been here hours (days?) now, and it seemed the chickens were finally coming home to roast. In his better days he was a fair Jack of all traits, but at the moment he felt himself in the throws of death. To be honest, he wanted nothing more than to curl up in a feeble position and sleep for a long, long time.



True, it took quite some daring-do to drink nearly your weight in the ale that his buddy, Fat Sam, served here, but Itchy decided that maybe he finally had to come to terms with his problems. But which problem to confront first? His drinking, or the crazy old hag who'd see him to an early grave?



"Lady troubles, my friend?" Itchy looked to his left and drew a beat on a stranger. Was that rascal eardropping on him and Sam? His anger was quelled, however, when he realized the man was not, in fact, a stranger. Now he now had a third problem to deal with.



"That's right, Itchy," the thug continued. "Captain Mick doesn't forget his friends." An evil grin spread to a broad smile. "He's calling 'anchor's away' in under an hour now... and he's truly hoping you'll join him on board."



Eggcorn turned his gaze forward again toward his bartending friend. Fat Sam cleared away a few empty steins and went about his business. Itchy stood slowly and tossed three coins onto the bar.



"Fine," he said with resignation. "Between the Devil, the Deep Blue Sea, and all that." Stepping foot on that coal-hearted captain's boat was practically suicide, but Itchy's demise was not a far-gone conclusion. In fact, if he played his cards right and showed a little metal, he might just be able to extract revenge on a couple of old "friends" himself...



14-5, 1-4, 8-1 / 10-3, 2-6, 10-4, 12-5, 9-5 / 18-4, 14-7, 13-2, 13-3, 19-5 / 4-2, 14-12 /
18-3, 18-2, 20-5, 2-9, 6-8 / 8-6, 10-2, 19-2 / 9-6, 20-8, 3-6, 5-2 / 15-2, 1-2, 2-3, 15-6 /
6-7, 2-10, 16-2, 11-4, 11-2 / 19-5, 19-1, 7-4, 2-4 / 16-1, 7-3, 18-1, 18-6 /
3-8, 11-5, 3-3, 11-1 / 1-5, 14-2, 12-4, 3-9 / 3-5, 4-5, 11-6, 20-7, 20-9, 9-2



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