

Back and forth. Back and forth. Salt stung their noses and burned their throats dry. Stomachs churned. Babies wailed. The boat was anxious to dock. Captain Lou had a firm grip despite his many days at sea. The bags under his eyes had gotten heavier. His brow furrowed at an agitated angle. The resources were slim. They've been at sea for a week, maybe two weeks now with no sight of land. Captain Lou began to worry. Had escaping the King's reign of Jalgo been a mistake? Would eighty-two rebels, including women and children, die at sea? Captain Lou desperately hoped not, but the crew worked groggily, the passengers rumbled anxiously, and Captain Lou was on his last string of hope.

Ever since King Phillip IV inherited the throne, the powerful land of Jalgo became a land of terror. The true throne inheritor James III was murdered, stabbed twenty times in his bedroom a day before he would inherit his rightful place. James' cousin, Phillip IV succeeded in his place to take the throne, and has been ruling with an iron fist ever since. The people of Jalgo immediately became suspicious when James III suddenly passed. When the people rebelled they were met with massacre after massacre. That's when Captain Lou, a veteran Marine decided to gather his old veteran's crew along with his family and fellow Jalgo neighbors in search of free land. A *thud!* Captain Lou snapped back to reality as his first mate rushed on to the mast.

"Land Captain! There's an island straight ahead!"

Captain Lou did a double take. He reached into his burlap sack and pulled out a long pair of binoculars. Land! He shouted a mighty command to his crew and they eagerly manned the sail for shore. The passengers bolted to the deck. Whoops and hollers scorched the air. Land, finally. A new start, a new beginning.

The men collaborated under the massive oak tree to decide their new land's fate. First, the name of their lovely new homeland.

"Jameson for our old kings!"

"Freelandia because of our newly found freedom!"

"No, it'll be Oakston because of our great, big oak tree. It will mark our first meeting in Oakston and will someday be written and taught throughout the rest of history!"

Next, was deciding on Oakston's government. Debate filled the open chasm circling the tree, but because of their poor experience with Jalgo's monarchy, they decided to reign Oakston under a rule of no rules. How perfect they imagined. The men shook hands and crafted an official Oakston Declaration.

The men eagerly proclaimed their new beginnings in Oakston to their wives and children. They happily built huts and picked delicious berries from the wild bushels of their great land. They even started plowing fields, weaving blankets, and constructing a schoolhouse. Oakston flourished as everyone settled into their new home. However, nobody, but Captain Lou, realized the dangers of a land ruled with no rules.

Captain Lou knelt under the center tree in Oakston with his palms cupped into his face. A land without rules, he thought was inevitably destined for failure. It was like a crew without a captain. Chaos. Miserable chaos. Captain Lou was angry too. The townsmen of Oakston called him a crazy, old captain.

"How dare the seasick captain protest Oakston's equal rule of no rules?" claimed the angry townsmen. The captain shuddered, then mozied back into his ship's quarters. Captain Lou ironically preferred sea to land. It will only be soon, he imagined, that he would regretfully take his ship and fellow Oakston neighbors back to Jalgo.

The sun radiated down their backs. Their poor excuse for shoes were caked with dirt and their palms were calloused. Farming was a back breaking job. Toby, the leanest and stubbornest member of the farming crew, was exhausted. He slumped on his rake, catching his breath when he suddenly had an epiphany. Toby immediately dropped his rake and proudly marched into the center of Oakston, under their grand tree.

The rest of the farming crew was concerned about Toby. Why did Toby leave the field? Had he fallen ill? Had sun poisoning harmed him? They still had daylight to burn, and they needed another man's strength to back them up. Toby could help them if he was ill, right? During their lunch break, a few of the farmers hustled down to the grand tree in search of Toby. To their surprise, they found Toby comfortably lounging under the tree, laughing, and enjoying a bottle of rum.

"Toby, what is going on? Are you sick? Did sun poisoning seep through your thick skull?" exclaimed the burliest farmer, Bill.

"No, sir," Toby exhaled as he lifted the bottle off his chapped lips.

"Then get up, Twiggy. We got daylight to burn!" Bill stood over Toby like a man would to his troublesome son. Toby should have shuddered like he did in the old days. Back in Jalgo, Twiggy was his pet name. Toby despised his puny pet name. He came to Oakston for a fresh start, a new beginning. He wasn't about to fall into his old ways. He wasn't about to endure the joking and taunting he received in Jalgo. He wasn't about to take orders from his archenemy, old neighbor, handsome, charming, everybody's favorite guy, Bill, anymore. No, sir! In Oakston, it's Toby's time.

Toby lifted his hat off of his sweaty head. Then, mustered the courage to look directly into Bill's demanding eyes and said, "Imma stay right here with my keg of rum, while you stupid folks enjoy the fields. I ain't gonna spend one more second out there. My fingers are blisterin', my back is aching, and heck I'm sunburnt like a tomato!"

The other men shifted uncomfortably around Bill. Nobody argues with Bill, but Toby did have a good point.

"Sun poisoning had to have gotten into your stubborn peanut head, Twiggy. I've never heard you say anything brave for the centuries I've known you. Get up now or I'll make you move myself!"

Toby mocked a contemplating expression, then slapped his hat back on to his head. He had no idea what he was getting himself, and Oakston, into when he easily replied, "I'd like to see you try, Bill."

A fist slammed into Toby's stomach like a rocket. He doubled over gasping for whatever air his lungs could hold on to. He clutched the tree, pulling up his heavy head before the next strike. This time, the familiar fist only nicked him in the jaw causing his bulky hat to fall over his fearful eyes. Toby whipped off his hat and was stunned. The farming crew divided between him and Bill.

Fists flew, legs kicked, hands grabbed with a tight death grip. The commotion of the farmers, under the grand tree, alerted the tailor, the butcher, and several construction workers. The muscular men pulled the fighting apart.

Toby wheezed as the tailor clutched his shirt collar into his heavy fist. Bill had a dark, purple circle forming over his left, almond eye. Only the butcher could hold on to Bill's enormous strength.

Arguments blew up the open chasm. Who would work? Who decides what to do? Who can stop us? A civil war on the verge. They called for rules. They called for no rules. They called for work. They called for no work. They called for a solution. They called for war. They called for blood.

Night had begun. A full moon illuminated the battle field. The air was cold. The soldiers shivered as they anxiously waited. Then, the men choose their sides. Rules in red, no rules in blue. Muskets were rounded. Powder was plentiful. They were ready. There would only be one winner, and that winner would officially establish Oakston's official government.

The children huddled in an established safe zone. Their tense, wet faces confirmed their fears. War was on the brink, they could feel it. Women waited in the assembled infirmary clinics, their fingers madly tapping the stretchers. They figured they had escaped the madness when they arrived to Oakston. They longed for their old lives in Jalgo. Despite, the new King's rule, Jalgo had always been a peaceful land. All kings have their perks and snags, right? Is it too late to return home? Will they become widows at the end of this? Should they have stepped up sooner? The women cringed in fear, then awoke to three blasted shots.

Three musket shots into the air marked Oakston's civil war. Battle cries pierced the air. Bullets whizzed their way into tender flesh. Agonizing wails were heard for miles. Brother fought brother. Friends were now enemies.

In the dusk of the night, a fresh glow filled the air as the grand tree of Oakston erupted in flame. Captain Lou watched as dark figures charged each other under the halo of the blazing tree. The tree, by which they named their land after was no more. What a shame! Captain Lou and his fellow comrades watched as the tree roared, raged, and smoldered in disappointment. The figures grew fainter and fainter as the waves eagerly pushed the ship out to sea.

Captain Lou's few comrades huddled on deck as the glow of Oakston faded out of sight. It was silent. Back and forth. Back and forth. Salt stung their noses and burned their throats dry. They followed a familiar path. Despite the madness in Oakston, none of them could repress their smiles.