

A BROOKE DE LAURONT NOVEL

ASHLEY
BRION

THE
BLACK
ROGUE



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Watch for more at <https://www.slucas0.wixsite.com/author-ashleybrion>.

To the loves of my life, the men I loved and cared for deeply, who without them I would have never finished this or had the material to keep going. Probably ever.

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To my best friends and everyone else who has supported me in this long endeavor, thanks guys. Salut et Viva la France!

Want to listen to music while you read? Check out The Black Rogue Spotify playlist! It's full of ASMR ocean sounds and sea shanties to get you in the piratical mood, plus a few classic Colonial French tunes that Tryniti would often listen to.



Scan Me



Chapter 1

*“For we’ve received orders for to sail for old
France....”*



THE CARIBBEAN, 1792

CAPTAIN TRYNITI BROOKE DE LÁURONT stared into the open sea. The sky was crystal clear, bleeding into the blue of the Caribbean Sea. They melded together as one, the only contrast in a sea of crystal baby blue was the dark ship with black sails cutting through the water just off the coast of St. Martinique. The salty smell of the sea air and the spray of the ocean licked her sun-kissed face. Her crew singing “So Early in The Morning” caressed her ears and lifted her heart. She looked up and spotted Henri in the crow’s nest. She hoped his eyes were better than his intelligence. *Why the devil couldn’t he ever do his job, right? He must be replaced once we reach Shipwreck Cove*, she thought. Her captain’s hat blowing in the wind and ready to retreat from her head at any moment, she thought about how her mother once stood in her place. Tryniti was the only woman captain since her mother sailed the seas on the *Midnight Tryniti*. Her parents could not stop her love of the sea and she followed in their footsteps. Tryniti’s mother and father were the famous couple of Captains L and Harlique. Want-

ed throughout the Seven Seas, their pirate names were used to hide their true identities from blaspheming their royal blood.

Tryniti felt a tugging at her side which broke her out of her trance. "Yes Azula, what is it?"

"Tryniti just where are we going? You promised me we'd go to Cancun," Azula whined.

"Cancun? Is that what I said?" Tryniti mused. "I thought we set course for Tortuga."

"Dammit, Tryniti! Mother won't allow it; you know I can't go there!"

Tryniti's eyes turned to heated slits over Azula's damning mouth. Foul pirate language was not tolerated when it came to a thirteen-year-old girl, especially when that thirteen-year-old was her sister. Being around pirates all her life made Azula much too bold.

"Devil take it, watch your mouth young lady! Next time you can get the Prayerbook and get to work or be whipped!"

Tryniti didn't really mean those words but someone had to teach Azula proper manners while away from their parents. Being on a pirate ship most of the year didn't help matters. She didn't want their parents finding out their strict orders weren't being followed while out at sea. Their orders were meant to keep them safe, and their true identities safe, and Tryniti is to keep Azula safe and school her while on the ship. Being a mere thirteen, Azula was not even old enough for her first season, while Tryniti was first born and almost twenty and five within a fortnight. When Azula wasn't on board, Tryniti had sleepless nights over her own predicaments. It was about time that she settled down and found herself a husband.

She didn't want a man to tie her down and keep her from sailing, but she didn't want a pirate either. Last night while resting in her cabin, she decided she would never marry unless she gave up the sea or her scruples. After all, no one but her crew knew she was a woman who had never lost her maidenhood. What husband would believe that, after decades of pirating, a woman captain would have her maidenhood intact? Certainly not the man she would choose.

If her uncle had his way, all of these thoughts will be for naught anyway. *Damn those royal rules....*

Azula looked to see her sister's face was dark; she was clearly deep in serious thought. Azula didn't want to interrupt Tryniti, but she could feel her older sister's pain. It wasn't proper for a royal heir Tryniti's age to be unwed and without child.

Suddenly, Azula looked out to sea and spotted a dark figure on the horizon. Grabbing Tryniti's spyglass out of her belt, Azula trained it on the moving spot. Damned if it wasn't a merchant ship, making its way to England judging by its course. Azula looked at Tryniti, her eyebrow raised with curiosity wondering if Tryniti spotted the ship. Azula groaned, a low sign of hope Tryniti wouldn't go after it. With being so close to Shipwreck Cove, the crew was restless and eager for rum, food, and women to fill their beds.

Tryniti saw the ship out of the corner of her eye and turned her head to look at it. The corner of her mouth turned into a slight smile, and she let out a low huff. She had heard Azula's low groan of disapproval. "No, Azula, I'm not going after it. There will be plenty more ships to capture later. We're just heading to the Cove for supplies," Tryniti said, never looking

toward Azula, but keeping her eye trained on the merchant ship.

Azula looked a bit confused at her sister's remark. "Supplies? Oh, dear Lord, you're not really taking me to Tortuga, are you?"

Tryniti let out a small chuckle. "No, dear sister, we're going home to France. I got a letter from *maman et papa* just last week in St. Martinique asking us to come home for a visit. Our dear brother is going to be home for a while."

Azula jumped around the quarterdeck like a child just out of the schoolroom. "James will be home! I've missed him so much. Why he wanted to join the military is beyond me. And the French Navy at that. It's like he wanted to stop our pirating days because he wants to be the good child!"

Tryniti laughed at her little sister's accusations of their brother. "Dear girl, it's nothing like that at all. When we were younger, you, of course, were still a baby, and *maman et papa* decided I was to take over the 'family business' as they put it. Not that they had much of a choice." Their brother James didn't possess the courage and ruthlessness Tryniti acquired from their parents. James wanted to do something for his country, to prove himself of his French heritage. When Tryniti was given *the Black Rogue*, James had vowed to never come seeking her at sea, unless it was urgent and utter emergencies. Knowing the courses Tryniti would take on her travels, James did well not to have the old Captain near Tryniti's ship. Now a captain of his own vessel, the fear of being caught by the French Navy was slim.

"Well, I guess that's alright then, putting it that way. Why was I never told?" Azula asked.

“You were told. You just don’t remember.”

Before Tryniti had a chance to tell her little sister she too chose a life of pirating, Henri bellowed from above, “Land hoooooo!”

Tryniti’s demeanor changed in front of her sister’s eyes: from the strict, but sweet sister, to the ruthless pirate captain she’d become. “*All hands to braces! Stem to stern!*” Tryniti yelled as far as her voice would carry, and then some. “Put your backs into it, you scurvy dogs! Prepare to dock!”

Azula’s eyes lit up, entranced by the sight of the enclosed island. The rocky mountain island set in the middle of the sea, surrounded by thick fog, opened to a small but tall cave entrance surrounded by jagged rocks.

Tryniti expertly moved around the rocks and sailed into the dark opening. The entrance was just big enough to fit the three-masted ship into its gaping dark mouth. There was no light in the tunnel, except for the oil lamps lit on the ship. The light shined off the wet onyx rocks, and the reflection of the flames danced and gleamed along the black water. After some time creaking through shallow waters with only lamplight to guide them, the tunnel opened to another entrance, twice the size of the initial opening.

Light and singing filled the air, and the ship broke into new waters. The heart of the mountain was open to the sky, the rising sun filling the mountain with light. Azula looked ahead to see almost a dozen ships docked at the giant island of broken and repurposed ships that created Shipwreck’s Cove. Broken pieces of old ships built a giant home in the middle of the mountain on a sandbank to make a safe haven for pirates around the world. Tryniti herself was an “owner” of the Cove,

for her great-grandparents helped build the massive home. Rumors spread that the Brooke de Laurant family were descendants of Blackbeard, which only her parents knew for sure if these rumors were true.

Tryniti docked beside a familiar pirate ship, captained by her old friend Vasco de Garbon. His true Spanish name was only known by a few, but by the other pirates, he was known as Captain Tango, for his ability to dance and persuade the ladies.

“Well, Azula, it looks like we have an old friend in port,” Tryniti told her sister.

“Is that Vasco’s ship?”

“Indeed it is,” Tryniti said with a smile. “Let’s say *salut* before he gets too much rum in him.”

“There’s such a thing as having too much rum?”

Tryniti laughed at her sister’s comment as she led them off the ship and down the gangplank to find Vasco.



Chapter 2

“He cause the girls to loose their hearts’ delight”



CAPTAIN SEAN REILLY wasn’t one to run from a fight. He spotted the large three-masted ship with black sails just off the coast of St. Martinique, headed toward a vast expanse of rough waves, mist, and fog. He knew he couldn’t follow it, for only pirates were able to navigate those waters, and he could be spotted and taken down by the pirate ship. He sighed and thought of his goal of getting home to England. His first mate, John Picnill, saw the longing on the Captain’s face.

“Aye she’s a prize mate, but there’s no need ta be goin’ there. If it be true to my knowledge, she looks out of supplies and needs to rest. There isn’t any goods on that beauty.” John said.

“And how would you know that?” Sean quipped, full well knowing he was prodding John to get his goat.

“Nae dunna be testin’ me knowledge Cap’n! Why in me youth I knew all a’ these waters sailing with the most infamous pirate crew there was. Poor Cap’n. . . God rest his soul down in Davy Jones’ locker now thanks to tha’ damned French Navy bastard.”

“I’ll take your word for it, John. I was just trying to vex you. I’m in no hurry to acquire another ship. Pierce would have a fit

having to put another ship on the accounts. Tell the men we're to stop in Jamaica before heading home for England. I'd like to trade this cursed gold we found in the Middle East for some spices and sugar cane." Sean said.

"Aye, Cap'n."

As John made his way below deck, Sean decided to take another peek at the pirate ship making its way west of him. Training his spyglass on the ship, he found the ship's Captain at the helm, talking to a young girl. Sean blinked in astonishment, thinking his eyes deceived him. She had to be only thirteen or fourteen! Not even out of the schoolroom. His first thought was the girl must have been kidnapped, for she was far too young to be the Captain's mistress; a woman aboard was the worst luck. And no pirate would take their daughter aboard ship. The girl must be bait for her family to pay a fat ransom to have their child back. He trained his spyglass on the Captain, unable to see the man's face since his back was turned toward Sean. All he could see was black breeches, a flowing black shirt, and a large tri-corner hat. Pirates had no decency about them; rape and pillage were their only objective.

"John! Up at the helm now!" Sean bellowed in his best captain's voice.

John came waddling up the stairs from the bow to the quarterdeck beside Sean.

"Cap'n, what the bloody hell got ye worked up like ye is? Ye about had 'alf the crew jumpin' out they skins!"

"There is a young girl aboard that ship, and I have no doubt she's been kidnapped for ransom. Tell me my eyes aren't deceiving me."

John took the spyglass from Sean and peered at the little girl. She was bouncing around merrily and looking at the Captain in awe.

John handed the spyglass back to Sean and nodded. "Aye sir, she's been kidnapped, I seen the likes o' it before. The little ones me old Cap'n, rest in peace. They would bounce around him like the lass there is 'round the helm. He'd tell him stories he did, kept 'em busy an' not one o' em feared us o' they lives."

"We'll change course, then. I will not have that child ransomed off like a prize. Keep an eye on that ship John, but we'll keep a safe distance, so she doesn't spot us and try to take us. Once the ship docks, I want you to follow it in and find that girl. Take her while the crew isn't there to watch her. They'll be cavorting around too drunk to notice she's missing till morning. By then we'll be long gone on our way to Jamaica."

"Aye, Cap'n. I won't be noticed since I been a pirate before. The other ship's men will think I got meself out of retirement. Lord knows I was itching to get back to the sea. Me ol' Cap'n was mates with the famous Cap'ns L an Harlique. I be hearin' rumors o' they 'ave a daughter tha's a pirate now, an' maybe I get them to be thinkin' I be a member of her crew."

"A woman pirate? That's famous! Do whatever you have to John, I want that little girl."

"Aye. I won't let ye down, sir."

John left Sean standing alone at the helm, and his thoughts began to wander again. A woman pirate? A woman who loved to sail the seas, and a Captain no less? If she wasn't a pirate, she most certainly would be a prime catch. Sean's own reason for returning to England was to find a wife. The hunt was already difficult since he wanted a wife who would sail with him.

A woman on a ship was as rare as himself, any woman on a ship, especially a pirate, was the worst of luck. A member of the ton being a captain of a ship. Who would think the Marquis of Winchester would become a merchant? If it wasn't for his brother, Pierce, the Duke of Harrington, the notion would have been a complete scandal. Good thing Pierce had connections to the King, or the scandal would break across London and eventually all of England. But the worst scandal will be once he finds a wife. His betrothal to the Princess of France wasn't known in England, and he'd prefer to keep it that way. This arranged marriage idea was starting to get old. Those rules were abandoned years ago! Weren't they? Only royalty was still forced into these things, and he was not royalty. And yet here he was, stuck with a fiancé he did not want. Well, if the woman didn't want him either, he would for sure take on a lover. But the thought didn't matter for no woman would want him with his dark secret, one only he, Pierce, and John shared. *How could a woman ever want me knowing that I can't. . .how can you even explain it?*

Sean shook the thought from his head, gazed at the sunset, and sighed again. Finding the perfect wife to replace the Princess and run away from Europe was going to be harder than rescuing the girl.



Chapter 3

“What will we do with a drunken sailor...”



BANG, BANG, BANG! Tryniti smashed her fist against the wooden table in the pirate bar. The bar kept itself stocked with various alcohol from the other pirate ships bringing in goods from all over the world. The Cove itself didn't have its own fleet to gather supplies so for many centuries the pirates visiting the Cove stocked it themselves. Tryniti's crew were already half drunk and slithering over the tables after meeting Vasco for a few rounds. Vasco had left hours ago to bed his newest mistress he found in Cancun. Tryniti took her sword and knocked it against the table.

“Gentlemen!”

Azula and her crew burst into laughter at her remark.

“You're right you aren't gentlemen, you lousy bastards, but you're the best crew a pirate could have! Not to mention you save face when you happen upon me naked.”

That enticed another bark of laughter from the crew. Tryniti sipped at her glass of fine French wine in hand while her crew continued its roar of laughter. They immediately silenced themselves when she gave them a stern look and a cough implying *I wasn't finished.*

“But anyway, dear boys, we came away with a good haul this voyage and I believe a rest is in order. I have no need for such things but it’s best I let you cavort about and enjoy a wench or two. Go on and catch a ship home if you must! I’m headed to Paris! Meet here before the sun rises a week from now.”

The crew applauded in delight. They were tired of being at sea for almost a year and needed a rest. Azula’s eyes widened in delight.

“We’re really going home? To see James *et papa et maman*?”

“*Oui, ma sœur*. Home to dear ol’ France,” Tryniti said with a sneer and another sip from her glass.

At that moment, the door to the bar swung violently open, startling the bartender so badly he almost fell off his stool. The sound made Azula jump suddenly and caused Tryniti to turn quickly and draw her sword, but there was no one there. *Must have been the wind*, she thought. But whipped open that violently? The wind couldn’t have done that. Still cautious, she sheathed her sword and went back to laughing and enjoying her time with her crew when she heard a voice coming from the bar.

“Barkeep! A port, and wine for Lady Black Rogue.” She could tell it was a man’s voice, velvety-rough and poured out like grease. The sound of it made her skin crawl. Adhering to the pirate code, each pirate was to call the other by their pirate name. Tryniti’s name was the same as her ship, the *Black Rogue*. She turned swiftly towards the bar at the sound of her name.

“Who dare speak of the Black Rogue?” Tryniti bellowed in anger. Her eyes widened in shock, disbelief, and pure hatred. Her stunning, sharp, sea blue eyes turned to a dark stormy blue

and black at the sight of the man who sat the bar giving Tryniti a stunning smile. He was abnormally tall and muscular, with olive skin and golden blonde hair from the years of sun bleaching the color away. He wore skin-tight, spotless black breeches and a flowing white shirt unbound at the chest. His well-polished boots shined in the dim lighting of the bar. His dark eyes were the perfect windows into his soul. He stood up and moved closer to Tryniti.

“Why, Captain Tryniti, do you not remember me?” His thick Italian accent pierced her ears. Her face looked as if death was on her doorstep.

“Piazzo Dimonti,” Tryniti announced with a sneer. “What the devil do you think you’re doing setting foot in Shipwreck Cove? You were banned from ever coming here again!”

“Didn’t you hear the news, Captain? I’ve been reinstated since I’m no longer the Captain of the *Italian Lady*. As long as I am not captain of a ship, I’m free to come and go as I please. But you wouldn’t know that with how little you make an appearance.” Piazzo sneered.

Tryniti slowly reached for her sword. “Then kindly leave my place, or didn’t you hear the news that I now own this establishment?”

“No, I did not. My apologies m’lady. Accept my offering of wine for friendship.”

Piazzo took the wine glass from the bar and handed the bloody liquid to Tryniti.

“You will have no friendship of mine,” she snarled, and threw the wine glass to the floor, smashing the crystal shards to pieces of glittering diamonds.

Piazzo's hardened face showed no emotion. "This means war m'lady."

"Then so be it."

With those words, Tryniti turned her back to Piazzo and walked back to her crew. She called over her shoulder, "Men. Show Piazzo how welcome he is in my bar."

Her crew jumped from the tables, picking Piazzo up by the britches, and shoving him out the doors. Tryniti could view the docks from beyond the open door, only a few feet above the water. She smiled as she heard the splash of a body into the sea below. Nonchalantly, she walked through the doors to see a dripping wet Piazzo, struggling to emerge from the seaweed entangled in the docks.

"My feelings toward you Piazzo are as cold and harsh as the sea. The seaweed entangles you in your web of lies all these years. I never want to see your face again."

Tryniti flounced back into the bar, her face flushed with anger. She sat down with force, snarling at the table. "Gill, a port," She demanded of the barkeep.

Gill came around the bar with a bottle of port and put it in front of the Captain.

"Tryniti...port? You know how you are when you drink port. Your mother and father are the same way," Gill said, placing the glass on the table next to the bottle.

"Yes, but I need it. Dealing with that man makes me sick. He has vexed my family for too long."

"Stay upstairs tonight. No going out of this bar."

"You're a good friend, Gill. That's why I hired you. Now, what's this about a certain lady friend of mine you have designs

on?” she said, taking a sip, and peeking at him out of the corner of her eye.

Gill chuckled. “You never stop do you?”

“Course not. No fun in that.” She gulped down the entire glass in one shot.



Chapter 4

“For old England we will steer...”



“AYE, CAP’N, THERE SHE is.”

Sean trained his spyglass on the three-masted vessel he spotted earlier. The ship had been docked for hours now, giving them a chance to locate the girl. John had scoured the cove, taking to those he knew would give him information. He found that the little girl was with the pirate captain in the bar.

“A bar? What the devil does the scoundrel think he’s doing taking a young girl into a pirate bar!”

“This here’s the pirate headquarters, Cap’n. There be no scruples here. The man that took that girl controls the island with his friend, another pirate Cap’n. The Cap’n we seek owns the bar. The girl is staying with him upstairs from what me ears be hearing from the crew.”

“The second floor, eh? Guess that military training in my youth will come in handy.”

As the night grew, Sean and John kept watch outside the bar, hoping for a glimpse of the girl to find which room she would be staying in. After hours of hearing the Captain’s bellow from too much drinking, they heard another voice echoing from inside.

“A’ight now, Cap’n, ye had too much port. It time ye slept it off.”

They heard the captain grumble, an oddly feminine noise, and then a loud *thud* sounded from inside.

“Cap’n! Ye can’t even make it upstairs... ‘Ere now, lass, I’ll carry you.”

“Lass?” John and Sean whispered together.

Sean thought about what John had said earlier about a woman pirate captain. It couldn’t be. Women didn’t belong on ships, let alone as a captain. They couldn’t see what was happening in the bar, and Sean figured the barkeep must have been talking to the girl to help her up over the knackered captain.

John and Sean looked up to see a light shining from the second floor window above them. They saw the barkeep lay the Captain down on the bed, and the little girl followed in. She took off the Captain’s shoes and laid them beside the bed. She took the captain’s hat off, but they couldn’t see the face as she hung the hat on the bedpost. The girl covered up the Captain, kissed them on the cheek goodnight and turned down the lamp. She closed the door softly.

“Well, Cap’n the man, er, woman I suppose, is asleep but ‘ere now where did the girl go?”

As John spoke, another light came on a few feet away.

“There!” Sean hissed, pointing ahead of them.

Sean ran to the light, John trailing after him. When Sean looked into the window, he saw the girl undressing to her chemise, and laying down to bed. She turned down the lamp, and all was quiet except outside where drunken pirates constantly cavorted with women and liquor. Sean edged his way around the bushes to the edge of the stone building. Running

alongside the girl's window was a wooden lattice, covered in ivy reaching into the windows.

"John! John!" Sean whispered.

"What is it Cap'n?"

"Hold this lattice; it might break under my weight."

"Yer aff yer heid! Ye might be seen!" John retorted.

"The devil I will. Now brace it."

John braced himself against the lattice, holding it in place for Sean to climb. Halfway up, grabbing tufts of ivy, the green foliage snapped, sending Sean to the ground. John quickly moved out of the way, laughing at his friend sprawled on the ground.

"At least ye arse broke yer fall, lad!" John said in a fit of laughter. Above them, a lamp turned up and pointed out the window.

"I say, what the devil is going on out here? I'm trying to sleep!" A young woman's voice called.

Sean and John looked up to see the girl leaning out the window, shouting at them.

Bloody hell, we've been caught! Sean wasn't sure what to do except expose themselves and hope for the best.

"Our apologies, Miss," Sean stated. "We will take our cavorting elsewhere."

"Please see that you do. Waking my captain is not wise with too much port in the blood."

"Your captain? Dear girl, were you not kidnapped by that pirate ship you came in on?"

She laughed. "Heavens no! What gave you that idea? I am the first mate of the *Black Rogue*."

Sean looked at the girl in shock. A woman willingly aboard ship? And the first mate at that! He couldn't believe his ears. If the girl wasn't a mere fourteen he would take her for his wife. Seeing the look of shock on the men's faces, Azula began to laugh.

"You thought I was kidnapped? Oh, that's famous! You must be new to the cove Now if you please, good night. I'd rather not have the

Black Rogue awakened by your shenanigans."

Azula turned and stalked off to her bed, ignoring the men below her window. She almost turned back to get a better look at them since it seemed odd they asked her if she was kidnapped, but she chalked it up to them being drunk and thought nothing more of it. It was odd, to her, however, that they didn't sound very drunk, but she was tired and dismissed it. Down below her window, John was still doubled over trying to contain his laughter. "Ye hear that, Cap'n? She ain't been kidnapped!" "What person in their right mind would take their sister aboard ship? And a first mate no less!"

"Ere now, Sean, the lass might be raised differently. She might even be raised on the sea. We don't know the cap'n, could be they lost their parents, and they had to take her with him. An' come o' think o' it, that 'gent' didn't sound like much o' a gent to me."

Sean thought about that for a moment. "Seems logical, John. It doesn't sit with me, though. And the man had so much port any man's voice would be raised from that."

"Well, ye can't take a woman from her brother. S'not proper. Let it go, Cap'n and let's get out of 'ere before we're not welcome." John said. Sean nodded in approval.

Sean and John walked along the docks talking nonchalantly about the oddness of the situation when Sean ran head-on into a man that almost knocked him on his arse.

“*Esplodere!* Watch where you’re going, *uomo!* Can’t you see...” As the man looked up to Sean, he stopped and stared at Sean’s massive chest and solid arms.

“*Mi scusi*, sorry ta’ bother you, *compagno*. I best be watching where I’m headed.” The man took off the other way without another word, leaving trails of seaweed behind him.

“Look ‘ere, Sean, how the man runs from ye. Ye a scary brute,” John said with a chuckle.

“I wouldn’t call myself a brute John, but maybe a little.”

The men laughed heartily as they made their way back to the ship.

“Home to England then, Cap’n?”

“Yes, we’ll set course for England, John. We’re going home.”



Chapter 5

“Pay attention to orders, now, you one and all...”



TRYNITI WAS AWOKEN by Azula first thing in the morning. Tryniti was slow to get up, for the bottle of port caught up to her from the night before.

“Tryniti, you wouldn’t believe what happened to me last night. I had grown men climbing the lattice below my window to rescue me!”

“Oh, *sacre bleu*, not so loud, Azula! I have a pounding headache. Blast it if that man drives me to the drink,” Tryniti moaned.

“You let Piazza get under your *peau* too easily, Tryniti.”

“You don’t understand, dear sister, the things that man put our family through. You were not born, and too *jeune* to understand the difficulties he put *mama et papa* through.”

“You’re right.” Azula sighed. “I don’t know what happened, but why will no one tell me?”

“Mama *et papa* will tell you in time, *ma sœur*. For now, you are not ready to hear the family story.”

“I’m a pirate’s first mate and I’m not ready to hear the family story?”

Tryniti laughed at her little sister. "In time my dear. In time. It's not my place to tell you. Oh, I'm in desperate need of a bath. Have Gill bring up some hot water for me, will you?"

"What am I, your servant?"

"For now, yes. That's a good sister."

Azula grumbled to herself as she slammed her sister's door shut. Tryniti could hear her stomping down the stairs to find Gill in the bar.

"If you break those stairs, little lady, you'll pay for them out of your pockets!" Tryniti screamed from inside her room, giving herself a jolt from her migraine. The stomping stopped immediately.

As Tryniti was undressing behind the crescent moon and cherry blossom painted silk screen, Gill brought in pails of water.

"Gill!" she shrieked, trying to cover herself with her hands.

"Tryniti, I seen ye naked as a babe. And yer behind a silk screen nae. Yer like my daughter, it's nothing new ta me."

"Well, that's comforting," Tryniti mumbled.

"Would ye like me to pour it in for ye?"

"No thank you, Gill, I can handle it. Lock my door on the way out will you?"

"As you wish, lass."

As Gill shut and locked the door behind him, Tryniti edged out from behind the screen in all her glory. She bent down and picked up the hot heavy buckets one by one to pour into the tub.

Easing into the hot bath, she sighed.

"What a lovely day. No storms in sight, and clear Caribbean waters ahead," she told herself. She looked over to-

ward the window and gasped when she realized she forgot to close the shutters and let out a frustrated groan. “Oh well, no one can see this high, anyway.”

As she started to wash her hair, she heard a small giggle coming from the next room.

“Azula!” she called. “You better not have a boy in there!”

“Tryniti!” she yelled back. “Why do you always have to ruin everything?”

“Because I am in charge when you’re not home and you will do as I say! Get rid of the boy!”

“Just because you’re a bloody virgin doesn’t mean I have to be!” Azula screamed through the wall. That made Tryniti’s blood boil enough to want to hop out of the tub naked and wet just to spank her sister. She started to rise from her bath, but Azula must have sensed her movement for she immediately saw the boy’s feet run past her door down the stairs.

“That’s what I thought,” Tryniti whispered with a huff.

Tryniti laid back in the steaming tub, thinking to herself of her predicament her sister so happily reminded her of. How could a ruthless pirate be a virgin? *If anyone knew my secret I would be the laughingstock of the seas! And how can I go home and say my flower is still intact after sailing for years? Azula must learn to keep quiet or she’s in for a rude awakening of being locked down at home. I’m almost twenty and five years...it’s time I start to find a husband. But what man would be with a woman like me? A pirate? I will not marry another pirate. I love the sea, but I cannot marry someone like me.* Her train of thought was interrupted by an urgent knock at the door.

“What is it?”

“Tryniti, ye must leave now. There’s no time for rest,” Gill exclaimed, pushing his way in the room after unlocking the door.

“Whatever are you talking about, Gill? We’re not set to leave until next week.”

“*Poseidon’s Poison* just docked. The Cap’n said a hurricane is headed this way. You’ll never make it home to France in time once that storm hits. Ye best leave and make good time befo’ it reaches ‘ere. I already ‘av my men stocking yer ship.”

“Dammit! You’re right, we need to leave immediately. Thank you, Gill. Do me a favor and round up the crew that’s coming along with me. I’ll be out in a few.”

Tryniti grabbed the robe from beside the tub and sighed as she wrapped herself up. She stared into her full-length mirror across the room, daring herself to make a comment about her unnatural beauty. Her naturally red lips were the color of blood from biting during her thoughts. Her sun-kissed French skin was smooth and caramel, begging to be touched. She looked down at her breasts, realizing within the past few years they had grown considerably plumper and were bigger than most of the women she knew. Being a ship captain, her body was lean and well-muscled to withstand the tossing of the sea. She was still a very slender French woman but built better than any woman in France. She admired her looks in the mirror and thought herself just an average half-French, half-British woman. She hurriedly dressed in her black shirt that stretched tightly across her chest. Her leather weskit pulled tightly around her chest, making her breasts flat as a man’s muscled chest. No one would look twice at the breeches that passed her off as a man, though they formed nicely to her backside. She grabbed her captain’s

hat, toiletries that were needed, and hustled out of the room. Running down the steps she ran headfirst into Azula, almost knocking them both down the stairs.

“What the devil do you think you’re doing, Tryniti? You about knocked us over!” Azula exclaimed.

“If you haven’t noticed, dear sister, a storm is coming, the tide is in, and we must be going before it disappears.”

“I was just going to get my things now; the crew is headed aboard.”

“Well, well. Gill is very speedy in his actions.” Tryniti shooed her sister along, taking the steps two at a time. “Hurry and get your things, we must be going.”



WHEN SHE REACHED THE bar, Gill was already waiting with her morning mug of tea.

“We actually keep tea in this establishment?” she said, wincing as she sipped the tepid liquid.

“Only for you, *ma cherie*.” Gill chuckled.

She took another sip of the rose hip tea Gill kept on hand strictly for her. “Mmmm...delicious Gill. You always make the best drinks.”

“If I didn’t you wouldn’t keep me as bartender and tavern keep.”

“Very true. Is the ship ready?”

“Almost, Captain. The bos’n just came aboard.”

“Very well. I’ll be seeing you soon Gill.”

Tryniti tossed her mug to Gill, swinging her hips as she walked out the door.

“That woman...” Gill mused as she left, “never saw a broad like that in my lifetime. She’s one of a kind and a damn good catch for anyone who wins her heart.” Gill said to himself.

Tryniti stared into the sea from the helm, her sister diligently waiting by her side.

“Why does James want to see us anyway?” Azula asked. “I have no idea, dear sister, but mother said it was urgent news.”

“Cap’n!” Her cabin boy called to her from below.

“What is it, Giardi?”

“Gill gave me this letter to me before we set sail. He asked me to give it to you right away.”

“Why the hell didn’t you give it to me before?” Tryniti demanded. “We’ve been a day at sea now!”

He shuffled his feet, wringing his hands and tilted his head toward the ground, refusing to meet her gaze. “I’m sorry, Cap’n, but I forgot it in me weskit. I didn’t think of it till now.”

“Well, damn, man, give it to me!”

Azula snatched the letter from Giardi and handed it to Tryniti. Tryniti ripped it open and scanned the letter. Gradually her face turned red, her eyes turning to dark blue slits.

“Sister...make course for England. Piazza will be expecting us.”

“What the devil is going on Tryniti?” Azula asked, squinting her eyebrows toward her sister.

Tryniti handed her the letter, her face still as stone. “Read this.”

Azula scanned the letter, her face turning white. “Oh dear...”

“Yes. We must rescue our poor brother. Make course for England.” “Yes, ma’am.” Azula turned her head to yell into the wind, “Men! Change of course! England bound!”

The crew looked at the first mate in silence, wondering why in hell they would be headed toward England. Tryniti, with her darkest scowl, came down to the deck and addressed her crew.

“Men, my brother has been kidnapped. A friend of ours, Captain Tango, has spotted *The Intrigue* making headway towards England, and my brother was spotted aboard said ship. We are to follow the ship to rescue my brother from the clutches of our old friend Piazzo.”

The crew cheered, ready to help the Brooke de Lauront family at any cost.

“Sister, that ship has a day’s head start, we’ll never make it in time,” Azula whispered to Tryniti.

Tryniti laughed. “Azula, you’re talking to the best pirate on the seas. I can make it to that ship in time.”

“That storm we passed near the Americas is coming for us. You’ll have to beat it to make it to *The Intrigue*, or you’ll lose them and never find them.”

“That is true, but trust me, dear sister, I know what I’m doing.”



Azula gave her sister a quick glance, rolling her eyes at her sister’s stubbornness before making her way down the stairs from the quarterdeck to find the bos’n. Tryniti looked out into the open sea, worried about her brother. She wished her cabin boy had given her that letter sooner. Damn, why didn’t he ever think straight? *I could’ve been farther out and closer to that ves-*

sel. Gill must have gotten word from *mama et papa* that I was headed to the Cove before making my way home. James must have gotten impatient and wanted to meet me there or halfway home at least. What was so damned important that he couldn't wait to see me? It better not be about that damned betrothal. *One of the reasons I even left France to become a pirate was to escape the betrothal forced upon me at birth; a Crown Princess could not go unmarried for as long as I have.* She was broken out of thought by a man calling her name.

"Cap'n!" Her man called down from the Crow's Nest.

"What do you see, Pierre?" She said very nonchalantly and didn't even bother to look at him from her slouched pose on the wheel.

"The ship we been lookin' for! Starboard straight ahead!"

Tryniti straightened up quickly and shot her gaze towards the starboard side.

"Well, well, and Azula thought I couldn't catch up that fast," she mumbled mostly to herself.

"I can hear you, Tryniti," Azula called from the corner, eyeing the black dot in the waves of the ocean.

Tryniti jumped at the sound of Azula's voice and looked her up and down, her face flashing a quick twinge of shock.

"How'd you get back up here so fast?" Tryniti said. Azula curled her lips into her devilishly child-like smile and let out a small chuckle.

Tryniti grabbed her scope off the table and trained it on the vessel she was steadily approaching. She spotted the Captain standing on the quarterdeck having his spyglass trained on her!

She curled her fist around the spyglass as she lowered it. “He wants a fight, he’ll get one.”

“Tryniti, do you see James?” Azula asked with some concern in her voice.

She trained her spyglass once again on the retreating vessel and scanned the deck. She finally found her brother making his way up the quarterdeck to speak to the Captain. The Captain of *The Intrigue* had his back to her, rendering her unable to see if it was Piazzo.

“He’s there, Azula. Talking to the Captain.”

“I have this feeling, sister, the Captain of that ship didn’t kidnap James. I think we’re making a mistake.”

Tryniti raised an eyebrow and gestured toward the ship.

“It is *The Intrigue* is it not?”

“Yes, but...”

“That’s what our letter said does it not?”

“Yes, but Tryniti...” Azula pleaded.

“No buts, Azula. We’re taking that ship.”

Azula lowered her gaze. “*Oui, ma sœur.*”

Tryniti took the wheel and steered the ship towards the vessel that held her brother captive. Gaining the help of the current and the winds, *The Black Rogue* advanced upon the three-masted handsome ship ahead of them.

“Azula, take the helm!” Tryniti called.

“*Oui!* Please be careful.”

“Aren’t I always?” Tryniti smirked.

Tryniti jumped down and made her way onto the bow, grabbing ahold of some rigging to swing herself over the sea for a better look. *The Black Rogue* was gaining fast on *The Intrigue*, and the other ship had no time to prepare for her attack. As

their ships met abreast of each other, Tryniti placed the gangplank across the decks and boarded the other ship, her crew following behind her, though Azula and a crew of men stayed behind at the helm.

“This ship is being taken in the name of piracy!” Tryniti announced. “Men, take any goods and burn it to the ground.”



SEAN COULDN'T BELIEVE the pirate Captain he saw in the pirate hideout was abreast and taking his ship! Just like that! And right after he rescued this fellow James from another pirate vessel! *They all must be in league with each other*, he thought. He would be damned if anyone would take his ship! Sean jumped down from the quarterdeck to look the Captain of the *Black Rogue* in the eye for terms of negotiation. He still wasn't quite sure if this was truly a woman in front of him or a young boy, but he was about to find out.

“I am the captain here!” A tall, man announced, striding quickly towards Tryniti, his hand on his scabbard. “By what means do you have to take my ship, Captain?”

“You, Captain, kidnapped my brother and I am here to take him back,” Tryniti countered.

Tryniti thought for a moment at the words she spoke, when she realized Piazzo had stolen her brother. This man was calling himself Captain, and he certainly wasn't Piazzo.

“Your brother?” Sean said, breaking Tryniti's train of thought.

Tryniti stopped and slid her sword back in its scabbard. “You have my deepest apologies, Captain, for I received a letter

saying my brother was kidnapped and aboard your ship. I will take my brother and be on my way.”

Tryniti spoke too soon, for the sound of a cannon firing whistled in her ears, and she felt the ship toss underneath her.

“*Arrêter!* Those were not my orders! I didn’t say use the bloody cannons!” Tryniti’s words were tossed to the wind as *The Intrigue’s* crew began to attack Tryniti’s ship in defense. Sean pulled his sword out and pointed it at Tryniti, signaling he was looking for a fight.

She sneered. “Captain, you have met your match.”

“I would say not you, putrid pirate.”

At the mention of those words, Tryniti pulled her sword from her sheath. Sean took the first blow, knocking Tryniti backward a few inches. Tryniti countered with her own slash downward, slicing through his flowing shirt. The sight of his thick muscles took her breath away for a moment, but she stayed focused on his lethal sword. Blow after blow, they danced in circles, not getting a single slice into flesh or bone. Tryniti demanded his gaze, daring him to fight her to the death.

When Sean saw her eyes, he knew immediately something wasn’t right. A man couldn’t have those dashing dark blue eyes as turbulent as the sea, with long thick lashes that would sweep a man’s breath away. Who the devil was this pirate? Behind the pirate captain, he caught a glimpse of the ship’s name: *The Black Rogue*.

Merlin’s beard! This was the most famous and ruthless pirate on the high seas!

Whether or not the rumors were true that the captain was a woman, no one had pinpointed exactly what the Captain

looked like; 'he' never left anyone alive. Sean took a moment between breathless blows to study the human figure in front of him. He could tell underneath the weskit, as she heaved for her own breath, there were breasts bound and tied, trying to be hidden from sight. And the delicate derriere would never pass even as a young boy's. The curve of the waist was nothing like a man's. Far away on another ship, with the breeches she wore, she would easily pass as a man. But still, he wasn't sure, for the face was hidden beneath her wide-brim tri-corner Captain's hat.

At that moment, Sean's ship took a violent blow, a cannonball straight through below deck, knocking the ship about so violently both Captains lost their footing. Sean landed atop the pirate Captain, knocking the hat off and sword out of hand. The *Black Rogue* was unmasked for the first time in many years. Sean looked down at the beautiful woman underneath him. Her brown hair was tied into a bun on top of her head, easily concealed by the hat he just accidentally flung off of her head. Her face was smooth as velvet but dark and sinister. He was stunned by her exotic beauty, for it was nothing he ever saw before. Her features proudly revealed French heritage, but the tan of the Caribbean sun and years of pirating made her even more exotic and beautiful. The turbulent blue eyes spat daggers at him but miraculously softened to a sky-blue glow. This aroused his manhood; he couldn't help himself being so taken aback by her beauty, and he knew she could feel it for she gasped underneath him. He couldn't help staring at her eyes, they were not the eyes of a French woman, but an English woman, much like his own heritage.

“Get off me before my dagger goes through your heart!” She cried breathlessly.

“A woman like you no man would ever want to let go,” he whispered before he could stop himself.

Underneath him, she blushed a fiery red. How dare he say such crude remarks to a lady! She thought again and decided, *he’s allowed to say such things, I’m a pirate after all. It’s not like I’m aboard this ship in a fancy ballgown—I have breeches on and sword in hand!*

He had her pinned to the deck, and at first she didn’t fight. Her mind told her to struggle and kill this man, fight him, but her heart told her to hold him and never let go. Tryniti never felt a whirlwind of such emotions, a heat she never felt before trailing from her chest down to her unmentionables. The emotions engulfed her, sending her into fright for she didn’t know what these feelings were. She could feel his manhood growing, and the thought of it terrified her; she only just met him in a sea battle! This wasn’t possible!

She struggled suddenly at the thought of this handsome devil trying to take her; surely he was not to be trusted. She stared into his dark blue eyes, the color of the sea, and it warmed her heart in places she didn’t know existed. She struggled to get out from underneath him, but he only held her tighter. The man was amazing! His body was chiseled from a life at sea, his tan was the color of hers: a creamy caramel from the warm tropical sun. Judging from his accent, she could tell he was an Englishman.

Yet, this made her all the angrier, for it reminded her of her betrothal to an English lord at home. She lost her wits thinking about the very thing she was running from, and here once again

an Englishman was trying to hold her down. Not thinking and full of bubbling rage, she wrenched her arm free and punched him in the jaw with all her strength.

Sean had no idea what the lady was thinking, but all he remembered was feeling a sharp pain in his cheek, and then darkness.



Chapter 6

“Oh, have you heard the news, me Johnny...”



“TRYNITI, WHY DID YOU harm that man and leave his ship crippled?” James screamed at his sister. “The devil do you think you were doing? He was saving me, not harming me! *J’ai honte de vous!*”

“*Chere frère*, how was I to know the dear Captain wasn’t the man who kidnapped you? All the letter said was you were kidnapped by Piazza and on the ship *The Intrigue*. Well, I found you on that ship, and no sign of Piazza.”

James frowned quizzically at her. “*Ma soeur*, who wrote you that letter?”

“Gill did. He gave it to my cabin boy before we set sail to go home.”

“Whoever told Gill of my predicament was mistaken. I *was* captured by Piazza; I was halfway to see you since I knew you would stop at Shipwreck Cove before coming home. But Captain Reilly saved me, for he saw my signal for help.”

“Well, I am deeply sorry, James, but the manmade advances on me and I was having none of it!”

“What do you mean the manmade advances on you? No one knows you’re a woman!”

The screaming battle continued on the quarterdeck, with Tryniti and James biting at each other's throats. Being so close in age, the constant rivalry showed in every light, especially when their parents weren't around, and both tried to use their authority.

Their shouting match revealed things to the crew that many of them probably didn't want to know about the Brooke de Laurant family: James was the Captain of the *Persephone*, aptly named for his love of the Greek Goddess of Spring, and wife of Hades. He saw himself as a human version of Hades, ruthless, and ruler of the dead, when really Tryniti was more fitting for the title since James only sailed for Naval fun and traded with the Orient.

Tryniti sailed because the sea was her calling, and so was the family tradition of piracy. She was born at sea; her mother and father were famous pirate Captains in the heyday of piracy. Their parents were the perfect idea of a loving and happy couple. Their parents occasionally quarreled, but it always ended up with them giggling behind closed doors. Tryniti was made upon the Captain's bed, and was born upon the Captain's bed, in the very same bed she now sleeps on. But she was sure to buy herself a new mattress when she inherited her mother's old ship. When Tryniti was old enough to sail the seas as Captain, she inherited her mother's old ship, *Midnight's Tryniti*. Tryniti had to change her ship's name and give it a small make-over to make herself a famous pirate Captain so no one would recognize her mother's ship.

When she was younger, the three of them sailed together on the high seas, looting and plundering to their heart's content. Tryniti, of course, was not as ruthless as her parents were

years ago. Her parents would leave no man alive and would cripple every ship they chanced upon. They even terrorized a few cities and were treated as royalty in Tortuga and Singapore. Tryniti laughed at that since not many know that her parents are due to inherit the French throne once her aunt and uncle pass away. Her uncle Louis was not a nice man to many people but doted on his family, especially his beloved niece. It was he that refurbished his sister's old ship and gave Tryniti her riches. He was very unhappy when Tryniti told him she wanted to sail the seas as a pirate. Eventually, seeing the passion in her eyes and in her heart he came around to the idea, as long as she stayed far away from France during her questionable activities. "Go and conquer the seas just as your uncle is conquering the land," he said to her. She would never forget those words he said to her, for now, he is the ruler of France, and her nephews were to inherit the throne. Her father was half French and half British since his mother was French and his father was English. Her father's parents died just after she was born to a deathly illness they caught in Africa. Her mother was fully French, having found Tryniti's father during their seafaring days and happened to attack each other's ships. It was love at first sight and he began to court her mother every day since that battle. Tryniti had never seen anyone so much in love as her parents. She wanted that for herself, but with the arranged marriage her uncle set up she would never find that happiness, which is why she decided to sail forever till the day she died in the first place. She wanted to avoid ever meeting this Englishman, and never be tied down to a man that would never let her sail again or keep her pirating ways. She would never let a man tie her down, and

she was determined to keep that promise and avoid that man at all costs.

“Tryniti, you’re an evil woman! Cruel and heartless!” James continued to yell at her.

“James Louis Brooke de L’auront, you will never speak to me that way again on my ship, do you understand? I am Captain of this ship, and you do not *parler* to me that way *Captain*.” She sneered. “So kindly take your false accusations elsewhere or I will make you walk the plank.”

James fumed at his sister, his face turning a bright red after being scolded and treated as if he wasn’t family, but as just another conquered ship captain.

“That man you have to marry better teach you to behave. Serves you right.”

At these words, Tryniti flushed in anger, and let go of the helm to tease her brother’s face with her sword.

“I believe, dear brother, you want your face... *réarrangé*. It could use a few improvements.”

“*Vous ne seriez pas*. You wouldn’t.”

“Oh, I would, James. For I am not a woman who wants to even hear the mention of the man I’m forced to marry by *oncle*.”

“Devil woman.”

“Heartless, walking d...” Tryniti began, but her sister interjected.

“Tryniti, stop!” Azula yelled.

“Must you, little one?” James snarled.

Azula stomped her booted foot on the deck. “I may be almost a decade younger than you both but at least I act like an adult!”

Tryniti sighed with her arms crossed. “She has a point, James. She’s going to end up growing up like us. We never did really have a childhood.”

“Oh come off it, we never wanted a childhood. All we wanted to do was sail the seas. We didn’t want a proper education like our uncle expected of us.”

“Of course not!” Tryniti said, appalled, placing a hand on her chest and her mouth in a wide-o shape, clearly mocking her brother.

“Where is your ship, brother? You said you were coming to meet us?” Azula said, obviously trying to sway the subject.

“Probably home by now, Azula. I told my men to sail home.”

Tryniti gasped. “Piazzo didn’t cripple your ship?”

“No, he didn’t. He said he only came for me. My men fought valiantly, but Piazzo’s men had them beat. I went in peace to save my crew. Next thing I know, I’m being bound and gagged in the Captain’s quarters. Must have been some chloroform in the gag for I was out in a matter of seconds. Then I wake up and I see another ship sailing by. I was able to undo the ropes around my hands to signal to Captain Reilly I was kidnapped,” James said, nonchalantly.

“His name is Captain Reilly?” Tryniti asked.

“Yes.” James said, looking at Tryniti incredulously.

“That name sounds oddly familiar...where have I heard that name before?” Tryniti said, tapping her finger on her chin, looking down at the deck below.

“It does sound familiar...” Azula said.

James waved a hand in the air. “Oh never mind that, there is a reason I came to find you Tryniti.”

“And that reason *is*, James?” Tryniti said haughtily.

James rolled his eyes. “Must you make such snide remarks? The reason is that it’s time you come home and accept your responsibilities.”

Tryniti stomped her foot, her hand on her blade. “The devil you say! I will not be treated as such by you, James! I accept my responsibilities as a possible heir to the French throne, but I will not accept the betrothal Uncle set for me!”

“You must, dear sister. I came to bring you grave news; it is why I went home to France to ask *mama et papa* where you were. Things are not well in France. Our uncle is in terrible danger due to the Revolution. He may not make it past the year. He wants to see you before...” James could not finish his sentence at the thought.

“On...*mon oncle*...” Tryniti whispered, a tone only ever heard by her family. It was the voice of a heartbroken woman, the pirate façade she carried wiped out, and left a small, beautiful woman full of heartache and despair. She could not believe her uncle was in grave danger due to this silly revolution. He only just came to the French throne! It hadn’t been that long, had it? She couldn’t believe the great King Louis and her Aunt Marie may not live much longer if they couldn’t squash the rebellion. What would that mean for her?

“How...*how*?” She screamed at James.

“How? Did you not know our aunt has been spending money like it comes out of thin air and our country is falling into despair?”

“Yes, I did...go on.”

“Well you see, our friend Comte de Mirabeau has tried to reach terms with the leaders of the Revolution with no success.

They tried to escape to Montmedy, and in Varennes, our dear *Oncle* and *Tante* met their downfall. They are now under constant watch in the Tuileries. You must come immediately. You know it was written in the laws that you must marry your betrothed before our uncle passes,” James explained.

“I... James...” Tryniti was speechless. She never would have given a thought to King Louis losing their beloved kingdom and blamed for Queen Marie’s actions. Tryniti had been on the open seas for almost six years on her own, and out at sea all her life. *This doesn’t make any sense*, she thought. *Why me? Why must I carry on the throne?* Tryniti didn’t understand what was happening. About a month ago, Tryniti received word from Gill that it had been decided by these Revolutionary leaders that they wanted Tryniti to rule France, and her Aunt and Uncle renounce the throne! Who could think of such a thing? It went completely against the foundations of the monarchy for hundreds of years! Even after the rebellion by Henry IV he even gave the throne to his son! She could never dream of giving up the sea for a man she must marry for the sake of her country and becoming the ruler of France when it wasn’t even her true birthright.

But her duty was to her country, and she couldn’t forget that. She could no longer hide the fact she must assume her duties as a princess of France and the future Queen. It was easy to hide her activities now since her family was not watched under constant scrutiny. Once her uncle passed she would be watched and have to assume her royal duties. She would never be able to sail the seas ever again. The marriage contract was specially drawn up by her uncle and her parents that Tryniti would have complete control over her royal duties, that now included rul-

ing France, and the husband acted as just that, her husband in name only. He would have to claim to her riches and would only act in her stead if she was away on business or an emergency situation, if she decided her head of state wasn't fit enough for the job. As Queen, she would certainly change the rules of the French monarchy for the better. As she thought of this arrangement, she thought being married may not be as bad as she always thought it would be. This man might actually prove to be an exemplary husband, and maybe she could love him.

Tryniti shook her head in disgust. Her face darkened in deep thought and anger over this idea her uncle cooked up almost twenty and five years ago. *What am I thinking? Me? Married? Never! No man will ever accept my love of the sea. He will never accept that I would settle down and leave my sea-faring days behind.* James could shove his proposal up his arse, for she was not going home to France to become a restricted wife.

"You can tell the Marquis of Winchester that I decline his proposal, and I will not be tied down by any man. I will accept my duty as Princesse de L'auront, heir to the French kingdom, but I will take on a husband on my own terms," Tryniti said darkly.

Azula and James jumped at the sound of her voice. They only ever heard that voice once before in their lifetime, and that was right before she did a dark wicked deed that all pirates must have to do in order to become a true pirate. There was a reason Tryniti was called the Black Rogue. Her eyes, when intensely angry, would turn from her normal sea blue to black as coal. Her anger would control her every move, letting her fury unleash on anyone who stood in her way. The deaths of many men were by her hand. Being a pirate, escaping capture was one

of her fortes, no matter how cruel the deed was. If it wasn't for her uncle being the ruler of France she would have been tried and hanged for her actions. Her uncle never truly condoned her pirating, but covered up her dark secret, nevertheless.

James coughed and braved his sister's fury to speak to her. "Tryniti, please, you must do this for your subjects."

"I know what I must do for my subjects! But I will do it my own way, do you understand?" she threw at him.

"Uncle will not allow it, Tryniti," James tried to protest.

"I don't give a damn! I'm not marrying the Marquis!"

"You're marrying him, or you'll be forced to the altar!"

"On whose authority?" Tryniti scowled.

"On the family's authority. *Mama et Papa et Oncle* and even *Tante Marie* regrettably insist on this wedding. We must think of our subjects before ourselves, sister."

Devastated, Azula took over the helm as Tryniti collapsed over the helm and clutched her sword tight. James ran over to grab his sister.

"Tryniti, please go rest." James pleaded.

"No. I'm fine." She shook off her brother, struggled back to her feet, and took the wheel from her sister. Tryniti couldn't hold on from the intense shaking.

"Go!" James commanded in his best Captain's voice.

"No," she challenged back in her own Captain's below.

"Tryniti, please listen to James." Azula pleaded. "We can handle the ship."

Tryniti sighed, "Only because you asked me to Azula." and let go of the wheel. She patted her sister's head and slowly walked down the steps to head towards her cabin but stopped to address her men.

“Men, Azula and Captain Brooke de L uront will take over for now. Treat them with the same respect as you do me. I will be in my cabin if I am needed.”

“Yes, Cap’n,” they echoed.

Tryniti trod carefully to her cabin, examining the ship as she went. She never savored the workmanship it took in building this ship, or the history with it. She imagined her mother walking toward the same cabin with her father in tow. Oh, how she wished she had a man she could love to do the same! She entered her cabin and collapsed on her exquisite bed lined in satin sheets.

Her cabin d cor was proof that she was a French Princess and heir to the royal throne. Her desk was made of solid oak, intricately detailed French architecture, as well as her bed frame and bookcases. Her bed was fit for a Queen, with a soft feather mattress and pillows galore of soft satin in a variety of dark and pastel colors with intricate black silk sheets. Her sea chest filled with clothes was also oak, painted black and engraved with her initials B.R. for her ship. In the corner of the room, near the elaborate hand-cut windows, was her bathing area. Her tub was bear-clawed and big enough to fit two people comfortably. She had a hand-painted silkscreen to cover her changing area, painted to represent a warm summer evening looking over Paris with the Cathedral de Notre Dame in the background. From her bed, she could look out the windows to gaze upon the churning sea. When she looked out on the sea, she felt she was a part of it, a small drop that escaped from the waters of heaven.

Every emotion swelled up inside her as she lay on her bed, recalling the day’s events. She couldn’t get Captain Reilly out

of her head, and when she thought about him, a heat rose up in her body spreading from her breasts and reaching down to lower areas. *What is this feeling he can invoke in me? I've never felt anything like this before. I can barely understand what it means. How could a man make me feel this way? The emotions churning inside me are terrifying, for I never felt them before. I must stay away from this Captain Reilly, for he could be my downfall. This man might interfere with the royal throne and end my marriage with the Marquis...that's it! I can use Captain Reilly to prevent my marriage to the Marquis of Winchester. But he would never oblige me. I left his ship crippled in the middle of the Caribbean. I could apologize, but pirates do not apologize for their actions! But yet, I am a Princess, but even Princesses only have to apologize to the King and Queen. Oh uncle why didn't you stop Aunt Marie? Knowing him, he did this on purpose just so I would come home and marry this man. He never thinks for himself, just what his advisors tell him to do. But it's also his way of ruling France, he was an excellent delegator and appeased his people.*

A knock came at her door, as tears started to fall down her face and she bid them entrance despite the wetness on her cheeks.

Azula entered and silently closed the door. "Tryniti..."

"I don't want to hear it, Azula. I've come to my decision."

"What have you decided?"

Tryniti searched her face for a moment. "That I must go, and hold my place as *Princesse de la France*, and I see I have no choice but to marry the Marquis of Winchester."

Azula stayed silent, feeling her sister's pain, for she knew how badly she did not want to give up her life at sea, especially not for a man she was being forced to marry. She hugged her

silently, as Tryniti's tears streamed down her face. "I'm sorry," Azula whispered.

"It is not your fault, Azula. I must do what I have to for my country and my subjects. I only hope this man will make me happy. And that

Uncle Louis knew what he was doing when he arraigned this marriage."

"I hope so too, Tryniti." Azula got up and left, walking back to the deck to help James with the ship.

Tryniti looked out the window and sighed to herself. "Take care of this old ship, little sister. For I shall leave her to you."



Chapter 7

“Juliana, Juliana where do you go?”



“THAT DEVIL WOMAN! I’LL find her and kill her!” Sean fumed. He stormed about his ship, surveying the damage the Black Rogue had done to his pride and joy.

“Cap’n!” John called to Sean.

“Yes, John! How is the ship?”

“Aye, she crippled us good, sir. But nae’ so bad that we can’t make it to the next port. We must head for the Americas, for our closest port is in Virginia.”

“Good. Very good. I have some friends there that can help us. They own their own shipping company as well and will be able to help us get fixed up to head home to London.”

“Aye, sir. Do you want me to take over?” he called.

“Yes, John please do. I’ll be in my cabin if you need me. I have a splitting headache from that wench knocking me over the head and tying me up to the mainmast. It took me hours to free myself!”

“Aye sir. She ‘ad us roped up an’ hogtied good if I say so. Nasty wench. I only ever seen works like that since the days of me old, Cap’n.”

Sean mumbled something about admiring wenches when he walked away from John to head to his cabin. When Sean

entered he immediately went to his desk for a spot of whisky. Brandy and port were much too weak for this occasion. He took the bottle from his drawer and decided against pouring it into a glass.

His cabin was furnished with the finest oak wood England could provide. His bed frame was accented with sandalwood and African Blackwood, as well as his sea chest. The sheets and pillows that adorned it were a soft sea blue made with the finest silks from India, a gift from a merchant he traded with. He turned away from it since it reminded him of that pirate's eyes. He walked over to his grandeur windows and stared out at sea towards the spot where he watched the Black Rogue sail off. That woman...a devil in disguise! A nasty spirited fighter and the thought of her made his breeches a bit tighter. He groaned at the thought of the beautiful pirate Captain.

A woman!

He couldn't believe what he saw: a woman pirate captain. Never has the seas seen a woman like that since the days of the pirate queen Harlique on her ship the *Midnight's Tryniti*. He heard stories about her when he was a young boy in school from friends and his family. She was the devil of the sea, and people claimed she was the sea itself incarnated to be a woman. But also there were stories about her being Davy Jones' wife. None of these stories were true he found out, but she was really a French woman hiding from her past. She ended up marrying the terror of the seas, L. He was a ruthless pirate, rumored to be the descendant of Blackbeard. He only gave that one letter to anyone who spoke to him. They were a match made in heaven. Rumor in the bars at the Cove had it their daughter now sailed the seas, terrorizing the coast of every continent and

living up to her parent's expectations. He had never seen what L or Harlique looked like, but during his brief campaign infiltrating that pirate hideout he heard she was the most beautiful woman a man could ever lay eyes on and that she was a prime piece. L was rumored to be very handsome and had every lady scrambling for his attention no matter his profession.

He stared out to sea in deep thought, his attention again wandering toward the Black Rogue. She was the most beautiful woman he ever saw, with delicate skin, tanned to a stunning caramel color by the Caribbean sun. Just from her skin, it was noticeable she spent a life at sea. Her eyes made his heart race, his manhood aching to break out of the fabric of his breeches. He imagined how luscious and curvy her body was, since it was hidden underneath men's clothing that were tailored for a woman. Her black flowing shirt showed off her curves, and her small waist. He knew she had to have wonderful breasts; the poor delicate mounds being forced into a girdle to make them lie flat but still managed to peep out a bit not fully hiding them beneath her weskit. Her breeches were really what did him in to make his own manhood explode. No matter how much she tried to look like a man, the breeches were made specifically for her to show off her womanhood. She must have had them specially tailored so other pirates and her crew wouldn't get her confused with someone else. The delicate light breeches formed to her derrière to arouse any man's desire.

Her crew must beg her to be with them.

At the thought of this, his face turned dark with anger. The woman probably has been with all her crew! And who knows how many dirty pirates after that! He couldn't understand why he was getting so angry at the thought of her being with another

er man. She wasn't his for the taking, and he'd just gotten word that King Louis was in grave danger, which meant he had to return to England and travel to France to marry his betrothed.

Why me? Why wasn't this Princess marrying a Prince or a King? Why was I chosen when I am only a Marquis in England? Surely the King of France had no idea what he was thinking! But then again, King Louis was a very wise man and had many colonies. There must be a plan for him if the King and Queen Bourbon would choose the Marquis of Winchester for their niece's husband.

Then a thought occurred to him. This Black Rogue, she could be his ticket out of this marriage. He did not want a wife who wouldn't sail with him, no matter the superstition. But then again, halfway across the world, the French monarchy would never know about his dalliances. But yet, where was this new Dauphine? The rumor was she hadn't been seen for six years, only occasionally visiting her parents and her aunt and uncle in the royal palace. From a mutual friend, she was rumored to have been seen on a ship that was consistently headed toward the Caribbean, the logs unable to be touched. They were hidden from the public because the ship was part of Bourbon's personal fleet. The King also owned a ship called the *Persephone*, which supposedly belonged to the Princess's brother.

Sean slammed his fist on his desk. "What is this damned woman doing to me? I have an obligation to the King of France that I cannot break. But I want her!"

He slammed his fist against the hull then, almost breaking his fist in the process. Dammit! Damn that Black Rogue! He never felt this way about any woman. No one ever stirred his

intentions like this one. Not since he first met his betrothed as young children. He had met her when he was thirteen and had felt something for her the moment he saw her. He decided then she might make a good wife in the future, even though he really didn't want to deal with girls at that time. The Princess was also beautiful for a twelve-year-old girl. Womanhood had not taken her yet, and her face and skin were pale as a French woman should be.

But this Caribbean wench was even more stunningly beautiful. Her eyes made him think he remembered her from somewhere. Her dark blue eyes were the color of the sea, ever changing and wicked. But when she was filled with happiness and passion they turned a sky blue. He noticed right before he passed out: when she was very angry, they turned coal black. He'd rather see her with her blue ones than those cold black ones. His manhood pushed even harder at his breeches.

"Damned woman. Have to take a cold bath now. For even she wouldn't want me with my secret. No woman would ever want a man like me."

The thought of his secret made the pressure on his loins ease. Even a pirate woman wouldn't want a virgin for a lover. It was absurd to hear of a man almost twenty and six years to be inexperienced. He thought about bedding wenches in his past, but none ever appealed to him. No woman ever sparked his interest or his loins like the Black Rogue. Not that it mattered with that damned pre-nuptial agreement. It was decided that she was going to be the first woman he would ever bed. No matter how much she protested, she would eventually give in to his charms after her reaction when he held her close. This woman, this beautiful French beauty, would not escape him.



Chapter 8

“Safe and sound at home again...”



“HOME SWEET HOME. VIVA la France!” Tryniti said as she sailed through the English Channel to reach her home city of Paris.

She gazed upon the docks at familiar faces, and yet ones she didn't know. No one in France knew that she was the Black Rogue except her family, which led to changes before she sailed in familiar waters. She had to change from her pirate garb, into beautiful silk and lace gowns that she kept aboard ship. Her brother James would take over as Captain, allowing her subjects to not recognize her as the Black Rogue and think she just went on a trip with her brother. Tryniti fished out her tiara that signified her as a princess, regrettably placing it on her head. Her ship's name was hidden with the royal seal, so it would not be recognized.

Tryniti came up from her cabin in her elaborate dress, showing her detest for the newest fashion of royalty. She loved tight clothes, but this was just over the top. With her chemise, she had to wear a corset and hoop skirt to make her dress fuller in the bottom. Sometimes her aunt forced her to wear a pannier. Wrapped in the corset, she could barely breathe with the dress on and another cincher within the dress. The dress for

today's homecoming was a lilac purple with a black lace cover. She wore silk black gloves up to her elbows since she never liked to wear long-sleeved dresses. Even her piratical shirts were short sleeved or had the sleeves cut off. She sighed again at her dress. She hated wearing dresses, absolutely abhorred them. But while she was home in France, she had no choice. In the distance, she gazed at Notre Dame and her home, the Tuileries. When she looked at the grand pillars and high windows, tears filled her eyes. She hated her parents for giving up the sea. They chose the duty of their country over their hearts, making Tryniti feel guilty for leaving France to become a pirate and follow her heart. All good things come to an end, she thought. And now her end was here in a matter of days. As the ship sailed into port, the palace carriage was waiting for her arrival.

"Tryniti what the devil are you wearing?" James said.

"A gown. I would think you'd know what one looks like, since you seem to be underneath them constantly," she retorted.

"Dammit all to hell, that's not what I meant." He paused and cleared his throat. "Excuse my language, dear sister. *Why* are you wearing *black*?" He sneered.

Tryniti looked down at her dress, then back at him. "Am I not allowed to?"

"Don't play like a naive school-girl. You know black is reserved for mourning. It's completely against tradition."

"But I am mourning. Mourning my freedom."

James rolled his eyes at her as the carriage rolled to a stop a few steps from the plank of the ship.

"I hate this," she murmured to James. "Why must I be a royal Princess? Every girl wants to be a princess and they're com-

pletely mad! You can't do what you please and you're forced into things for the sake of politics. Since when has a princess married for love?"

James laughed at her accusations. "Tryniti, if you recall *mama et papa un mariage d'amour*."

"They did marry for love, didn't they?" Tryniti said. "And that's exactly what I'm trying to explain. Why was *mama et papa* allowed to marry for love and I am not? Mama is the daughter of Maria Josepha and Louis XV, why did he not make her marry a man she doesn't want?" She moaned in despair.

"Tryniti, that's a question for you to ask Uncle. Of all people, you would be the one to know not me. You get told everything since you were first born, and now you're the Crown Princess," he mused.

"But I'm not! I was not meant to be the Dauphine!" she whined.

"Tell the men to take care of the ship. We need to get going."

"Men!" James yelled in his best Captain's bellow. "Take care of the ship your Captain says for the royal family is going ashore."

"Aye, aye, Cap'n!" Her crew shouted. Not one of them would dare give away the Princess's secret. Especially not when her aunt and uncle were the King and Queen of France.

"Your highness...your chariot waits," James waved an arm with a soft chuckle.

"James, that is too cliché." But she giggled anyway.

"I try, *ma sœur*. After all, I'm supposed to be the extravagant Prince who has no scruples and a taste for fine dining and fine women."

“I do know of your ‘reputation’ dear brother. I do keep tabs on my family while I’m at sea.”

“Touché,” he exclaimed.

Tryniti, James, and Azula walked down the gangplank to the awaiting carriage.

“*Votre Altesse,*” The coachman welcomed them as he opened the door.

“Good to see you again, Aramis,” Tryniti said politely.

“Same to you Dauphine Tryniti,” Aramis said.

“Aramis,” James nodded.

“Prince James.” He responded in kind.

“Hello, Aramis!” Azula smiled and gave him a little wave.

“Well, hello, little *Princesse* Azula.” He greeted her with a smile. “Not so little anymore, my dear?”

Azula blushed and hurried into the carriage.

Once inside the carriage and on their way to the Tuileries, Tryniti began to laugh. “Well, I think dear Aramis has a crush on Azula.”

“He does not!” Azula yelled, blushing once more.

“You two spend too much time out on the high seas,” James interjected.

“We do not!” Azula and Tryniti protested at the same time.

“Look who’s talking, Captain James!” Tryniti added. “You’re Captain of your own ship and out at sea for months at a time!”

“But at least I visit home more often than you two do. *Mama et papa* have been worried sick about you. The last time you were here was over a year ago.”

Tryniti frowned at his accusations. “Actually, it was a little less than that, James, for you were not here when I visited.”

He ducked his head. "My apologies."

The carriage suddenly stopped and Tryniti sighed once more.

"If you keep sighing like that, I'm going to beat you," James growled.

"You could never beat me," she growled back.

"You're right. I'd get your new husband to do that," he snarled.

Azula backed away immediately to the corner of the roomy carriage for she knew a fight was about to ensue. She saw Tryniti's face darken with anger. Her blue eyes turned black, her muscles tensed showing their strength and hardness. She was raised up like a cat, ready to pounce at any moment. James looked taken aback by her response, realizing what he said was wrong.

"Tryniti, I didn't mean it that way." He said quickly, holding up his hands. But he said his apologies too late, for Tryniti already pounced on him. She wasn't a normal woman; she punched him straight in the face. Her rock-hard fists were able to reach his face and his stomach before the carriage door forcefully swung open and she was yanked out of the carriage.

"Tryniti Bourbon Brooke de L'auront! What is the meaning of this action on your brother?"

"Papa! He started it!" She struggled against the arms grabbing her from behind. "He said he would get that accursed betrothed husband of mine to beat me!" she screamed.

"Azula?" her papa said as he looked at his youngest daughter.

"It's true, Papa. He did say that."

"James. Inside. Now." Their father snarled.

James jumped out of the carriage and strolled across the grounds to the house. Their father turned to them, Tryniti's face white with fear. The only man in her life she ever feared was this looming paternal figure in front of her.

"You must stop those un-lady-like actions. You are a Dauphine and while you are in France you are going to act like it! No one must know of your...*activities* outside of France. *Comprenez-vous?*"

"*Oui père*, I understand," Tryniti mumbled with her head held down.

"*Maxémillion!* Will you stop terrorizing our daughter?" A woman's voice called from the grounds. "Let them in; I haven't seen them in so long and I miss my little girls!"

"Alicé, she had to be punished for her actions," Max told his wife. Alicé walked up to her husband and flashed him a stern look.

"Our daughter is a famous pirate captain," she whispered, "and she does not need to be reprimanded for her actions. As far as I'm concerned James deserved what he got."

"You must not condone her actions, my love."

"I will do as I please! Honestly, Max, I sometimes think you forgot your days as a pirate."

"I have not, my beloved. It is just Tryniti must accept her role as *Princesse* when she is home." He said smugly.

"I will let my daughter do as she pleases, for I never condoned this marriage in the first place but I couldn't go against my father. I'm lucky he allowed me to marry you, for you are not of royal blood of any kind." Max looked at his wife darkly. He did not want to be reminded he was just a commoner living in England before he decided to sail the seas as a pirate. "I did

have a distant relation to a Baron my dear, please remember that.”

“*Un* Baron? Well, *mon amour*, I do apologize,” she said as she winked at her husband.

Tryniti laughed at her parents arguing. They never really argued; only play fought for the sake of entertaining themselves and their children. Being locked up in a place all day certainly must get boring having to take care of things at the Tuileries with their aunt and uncle detained.

Alicé smiled at her daughters, happy to finally have them home. She stared at her oldest, feeling the pain she had felt as a young girl. She was also destined to marry another man, the Crown Prince of Italy. She refused her father and became a pirate on the high seas to quench her thirst for adventure. The man she was destined to marry was cruel and cold, and not the loving husband she wanted for herself. He also sailed the seas looking for Alicé, and eventually found her when a member of her crew was captured and tortured by the heartless wretch.

“Tryniti,” Alicé said, “Please go see your *oncle*. He and your Aunt Marie must speak with you immediately.”

“*Oui la mère*.” She bowed and walked toward their grand home.

Azula turned to follow her but was stopped by her father.

“No, Azula. She must do this on her own.”

“But *père*, she is only going to speak to them. Why can I not go along?”

“She is not going to only visit them, little one. She is also going to ask your uncle to change his mind and let her marry the man of her choosing, like your mother.”

“You were not chosen to marry *maman*?” Azula said in surprise.

“He wasn’t, *petit*. *Maman* was destined to marry the Crown Prince of Italy,” Alicé chimed in.

“Who was that, *Maman*?” she asked.

“It is not important now, Azula. Let us go inside, it’s a bit warm out here.”

Azula laughed at her mother for accusing the weather of being hot.

“*Maman*, you sailed the seas for *années* in the Caribbean, and you think it’s hot?” She giggled.

She sighed and fanned herself delicately. “It has been many years since I last sailed on my ship, or your father’s. I’m not used to the tropical weather anymore.”

“Oh, Mother, it’s beautiful in the Caribbean this time of year. We visited Vasco on his small island earlier in the year and it was so exotic. And thanks to Tryniti and Vasco, the Cove has been cleaned immensely. It’s now a beautiful haven for other pirates to visit, with luscious orange and banana trees, and Tryniti even has Gill making his own liquor there.”

Max roared with laughter with his daughter’s storytelling.

“Gill making his famous wine and whisky? I do miss that man. He was the best member of my crew when I sailed.”

“And he was also so sweet to me and helped me with anything I need. Even when Tryniti was a little *bébé*. It’s sad he wanted to stay there and take care of the Cove while the rest of us were gone.” Alicé sighed.

“He was a pirate through and through, my dear. The sea is in his blood and so is pirating. I think the change was fitting for him.”

The family walked into the house, escorted by their trusty butler Aramis. Aramis opened the door for the royal family and carried Azula's bags up to her room. Azula looked at Aramis as he walked through the grand hall and blushed as she stared at his backside. Alicé saw the blush on her daughter's face. She waited until her husband walked into the dining room for a light lunch and pulled Azula into the parlor. "What is it, Maman?"

"I see the way you look at Aramis. You have a bit of a crush on him. And I see the way he looks at you in longing, and he always speaks of you when you're away on trips. He misses you terribly when you're out at sea with your sister."

Azula's face turned bright red at her mother's words, embarrassed she knew the truth.

"I am only but almost fourteen, Maman; he does not want me."

"It is not that he doesn't want you. He knows he cannot have you since you aren't even out of the schoolroom, but I truly feel he will wait for you."

"Tis four *années* until my first season, mother! Am I not to have a proper season?"

Alicé smiled, knowing full well Azula wanted nothing to do with having a season and coming out into society for a worthy husband. She sighed and looked at her daughter, who was a spitting image of her when she was little, and almost looked exactly like her sister with the Caribbean tan. She didn't have the trademark French blue eyes, but instead her father's vivid green ones that shown like emeralds when she was happy or angry. Much like her sister, her eyes also turned a coal black, a trademark of their father. Alicé learned of those black eyes when she

first attacked her husband's ship, for he hated her for months after until they fell in love. She blushed at the memory of meeting her husband, she broke out her fan to hide her flushed face.

"Azula, listen to me. I do not know why your *oncle* is forcing your sister to be betrothed to a man she fears she cannot love. Your grandpère did the same to me until I defied him and married your father behind his back. The Crown Prince I was betrothed to was furious and attacked your grandfather. He lost many men in that battle, and still to this day he tries to harm the family."

"*Maman*, who was this man?"

"It is not for you to know. That's why your sister constantly watches you and doesn't let you go on your own without an escort. You are not strong enough yet to fight this man like your sister is. Even she is not quite ready for him like she thinks she is. You may be a pirate and a second, but only because I allow it. But you are not ready and do not know what it truly means to be a pirate yet like your sister does. But that is not the point. I can see that Aramis cares for you, and you care for him. I promise you he will wait until you turn eighteen. And if you do not want a proper season, then so be it. Your uncle is known as *indécis and insensé* but he is not heartless. We are a family who breaks tradition and sets new rules. When your *oncle passe*, your father and I will be *les gouvernants* de la France. And your sister *est la princesse héritière*. She will be Queen when they pass, and I see her making many changes for the good for our subjects and for you and your brother."

"Mama, why will I never be Queen?" was all she could say.

"Oh *ma chou chou*, someday you could be queen. Your sister is Crown Princess, so if she is to have *les bébés*, her children

will become king or queen. But if your sister leaves the throne without an heir, it will go to your brother and he will be king. If he dies or leaves without an heir, you will then be queen.”

“That seems impossible, then. Tryniti will be forced to have children with this man, and James likes to...well you know how he is, mother. He is a sea captain.”

Alicé laughed at Azula. “You spend too much time on that ship, Azula. You are getting a brash mouth and forget you are royalty.”

“Sometimes’ it’s nice to forget you are. The weight of royal etiquette lifts off your shoulders and you feel free to fly and do as you please,” Azula mused.

“I remember what it was like to feel that way, *ma fille*. But we all have to give up our dreams for our country sometime. But I’ll tell you a secret.”

“What is that, Mama?”

“Your father and I have a plan for this man if he treats Tryniti wrong. We fear your aunt and uncle will not last long due to this uprising. There are ways to get what you want as royalty. And we will have the man beheaded and burned at the stake if he upsets her and not let her sail. We’re still pirates after all, and still as ruthless.” She winked at Azula.

She smiled at her mother, happy they thought of a way to get Tryniti out of this situation once something happened to King Louis and Queen Marie. They didn’t know what was going to happen, but something was stirring in France to take them down. She knew there was no possible way her parents would let Tryniti marry a man she didn’t love, for they themselves believed in true love and you only marry for love and nothing else. Her parents were a perfect example of that for

they were always happy and smiling, and she saw the love they shared in their eyes. And it inflated Azula's heart to know her parents made her out of love, and not just as an heir, for they wouldn't have three children if they didn't love each other and loved the thought of having a happy family. Even though Tryniti and James fought so much for they were so close in age, it was only out of love and for the sake of being happy. They were never truly happy unless they were fighting with each other.



Chapter 9

“Damnation seize my soul if I give you quarters or take any from you.”



TRYNITI SLOWLY WALKED up the grand stairs, and to the left down the hall where her uncle’s study was. The palace had three floors and multiple wings, all separated by staircases and vast hallways. The King’s rooms were located on the first floor, while the Queen’s rooms were located on the second in the south wing. The Brooke de Laurant family resided on the third floor.

Tryniti strolled up the plush carpet staircase that led to her doom. A robber would try his best to rob the royal palace if he got past the guards and dog but would never be able to find their rooms or their treasury for when Catherine de’ Medici built the palace, then expanded by Henry IV and Louis XIV during their reigns, they made it almost impossible to navigate unless you lived here all your life. She faced the hallway where her uncle’s parlor was and took a deep breath. All the years of pirating and sea battles couldn’t prepare her for the fury that lay ahead when she asked King Louis XVI to please call off the marriage. Tryniti had decided that she would marry this man, but immediately take off after the honeymoon to head back to the Caribbean. She would never tell her husband where she was

going or let him know she was the most ruthless and feared pirate that sailed the high seas.

This wretched man didn't need to know what she was up to, for he was only becoming Crown Prince of France through her! He was nothing but a Marquis in England, not even a Prince! What was her uncle thinking on such actions? Her grandfather chose a Prince for maman, but a Marquis for her? She was determined to ask Louis why her grandfather would make the King do such a thing. Make her marry out of tradition was upsetting, but a given, but marrying an English Marquis was out of the question! It could at least be the English Prince! *Oh never mind*, she thought, *he's already married to the Princess Anabel of Scotland*.

As she drew herself closer to her uncle's room, she could hear speaking, and it sounded like some of the men from the National Constituent Assembly. She could not help but shed a tear for her beloved uncle, for he was the only uncle she was close to. Her intuition told her that something horrible was going to happen to her family. Why did he do this to her? She was hoping her uncle would forget about this silly pact he made with her grandfather, so she never had to marry this man. What if he already has a mistress? Or another wife? The vile black sludge of hatred rose up inside her, daring him to take on another woman. She was his betrothed and if she had to be faithful in this relationship he will be damned to do so as well, or she'll drag him out to sea and send him to Davy Jones' locker herself.

No more stalling, judgement day had come. She took a deep breath and knocked on his parlor door. "Uncle? May I come in?" Tryniti said softly.

“Come in,” a gruff, yet soft and gentle, voice announced, and Tryniti pushed the heavy, ornate oak door open slowly. “Ah! *Oui petite fille*, I must speak with you.”

She looked at her beloved uncle, the famous King Louis XVI, who was now weak and degenerate. She had never seen him in such a condition. She always saw her uncle as a strong man, soft, yet knowledgeable and always knew the answer to everything. She saw herself in him, a leader and fierce soldier. Well, possibly the soldier part from her grandfather. Only her battles were on the sea, while his were trying to quiet the rebellion. He waived his council away so he could talk to her in private. Louis sat in his grandeur sofa, covered in gold leaf, soft pillows, and red silk upholstery. You could tell he enjoyed being the Roi de France. He wasn't an extremely handsome man, and awfully short. But Tryniti loved him anyway. She walked over to his desk and sat down next to him. By looking at her face and the emotion in her eyes, he could tell she was full of despair and depression though she was trying to hide it with a mask of smiles.

“Tryniti, do you know why I called you home?”

“*Oui*, Your Majesty. I do.”

“Now, none of that, dear girl. You are my *petite fille*, not a servant or subject and I wish you to remember as such.”

“Yes. *Oncle* Tonuis.”

Tonuis was a nickname Tryniti gave Louis as a play on his name. She couldn't say uncle or Louis when she was just beginning to talk in French and English, and screamed, “Tonuis!” trying to get his attention. It had stuck with them ever since.

“*Beaucoup mieux*. Much better. So, you know why you must marry this man?”

Tryniti sighed and coached herself to tell her uncle the truth.

“I do not uncle, Why must I marry this man? Why can’t I marry for love like *Maman et Papa*? Or like you and *Tante*? He is nothing but an English Marquis! Not even a Prince or King! Why am I being forced to marry him?” she blurted.

Louis was taken aback by her brashness, yet he could expect no less from a pirate captain, and the most ruthless one at that. He admired his niece’s qualities and her ability to take orders from no one. It did not matter to her whether she was a Princess or not, she would do as she pleased, which was why he was about to tell her his decades-long secret. He was never going to tell her why he made this choice, but now that the situation in France was getting worse and he loved his *petite fille* very much; he could not bear to marry her off to a man without knowing the reason why.

“It is because you are going to marry for love dear girl. That is why he is not a Prince or King.”

Tryniti’s face was frozen in shock at him. Marry a man she barley met for love? It was absurd! He must be going senile or the stress from the Revolution must be clouding his mind. Tonuis, what does that mean? I don’t understand.”

“Your grandmother had a dream when you were younger, you might call it a vision, when you were still in the womb. She saw a strapping, handsome *l’homme* that made you very happy. She even described exactly how you looked today, every little detail from your eyes down to your *le corps*.”

Tryniti blushed and turned her face away from him.

“No blushing now, pirates don’t blush at that *parler*.”

“Was grandmother a gypsy?”

“I wouldn’t say a gypsy, but a *sorcière*.”

“Grand-mère was a *sorcière*? Why was I never told?”

“Because it is not condoned in society, Tryniti. You must know that. Do you remember King James the sixth of Scotland?”

“Yes, but that was almost two centuries ago! Surely the accusations have calmed by now.”

“It has, my dear. But when your grandmother and grandfather married, the American trials in Salem were still fresh in the minds of every European.”

“’Tis true. Go on with your story, Tonuis.”

“Well, your grandmother insisted I betroth you to this man when you were born. I asked her the name of said man. She said all she knew was he was the Marquis of Winchester. I searched for this man with your grandmother before her death and called the Marquis of Winchester to our home. He was an older man, much too old for you, about my age. Your grandmother asked him if he recently had a son. He confirmed it and brought his son along with him on the next visit. She whispered to me that the two-year-old boy was destined to be your husband, and I, along with your grandfather, struck up a deal with the late Marquis of Winchester to have his son betrothed to you. After all, who wouldn’t want their son to marry a Princess?”

Tryniti laughed at the last comment he made. “Very true, any man would want to marry a Princess.”

“One even as pretty as you would send every boy in the world after you.” He smiled.

“Oh, *oncle*! You’re nothing but an old tease.”

“Now you speak like your father. He laughed at her insight. “Do me a favor, dear girl, and never tell anyone of this. Will you please marry this man for me? And make me a happy King to see his niece married before...”

She stared at him, waiting to finish his sentence, but he only turned away from her. “Before what, *oncle*?”

He smiled at her and said, “Nothing. Just losing my train of thought. I have all these policies and things to deal with, just... before I get too busy.”

“But...why? I was never meant to be *the* Princess. Not the one to take over the crown. My cousins are to take over, not me! And why can't it be *maman et papa*? Why does the Assembly want me? Why is this happening?”

“Tryniti, stop,” he demanded in his kingly voice. “Please, let me be.”

“*Oncle!* I *must* know. *S'il vous plaît*. I'm sorry to be so rash, but I don't *comprendre*. I don't understand anything that's happening.”

He sighed and looked at the pain in her eyes. This woman was about to take his place, and he could leave her in the dark no longer.

“Tryniti...” he swore softly in French. “This Revolution is getting worse. I fear the worst after what your aunt has done. Citizens are rioting in the streets; we have been condemned here by the Assembly. The people will stop at nothing but to have our blood spilt, and I don't see them sparing the children. The Assembly has agreed for you to take our place. You are only known for your good deeds and your kind heart among the people. You have brought many riches to France from your travels, and when the people see you, you are nothing but kind

to them, giving them bread to eat and coin when you can. Not many have seen you these last few years, but when they do, you leave a trail of good behind. Especially your so-called anonymous donations to the poor. They all know it's you by the signature you leave. They want you to lead."

"But I don't..." She started.

"Hush, now. I'm not finished. I know you never expected to take over the crown. I know you haven't been properly trained for this moment. But I feel you will do well. Your grandmother dabbling in witchcraft is nothing but an old family rumor, started by some servants and extended family since she was a very reserved woman but had such a strong hold on your grandfather. What she wanted; she was given. She was adamant about this marriage for you. It was not me. And I will tell you another family secret. But you must promise never to mention a word to anyone."

"*Oui, oncle.* I won't breathe a word. After all, I'm rather versed in keeping secrets."

"That you are, *ma fille.*" He smiled sadly. "There is one more thing before you go, Tryniti. Your mother is not who you think she is. Your mother... was a bastard. The public does not know. Even we do not know if she is your grandfather's bastard with another woman, or your grandmother's with another man. There was time between your grandmother's marriage to your grandfather King Louis XV. You will recall that your grandfather was married to Infanta Maria Teresa Rafaela of Spain. Well, this was before I was born, but somehow, your mother appeared one day next to your grandfather and grandmother. It was said they announced her birth as theirs, and the Queen had been pregnant with their child for quite some time.

Now, this is all rumor and hearsay. The story has become muddled over the years. All we know for sure is, she is not the child of them both. Your grandmother had the same vision with your mother as well but wanted to test her theory. She never betrothed the both of them, because she knew it was going to happen. So the fact that your mother and father married for love is true, but it was also a secret betrothal on your grandmother's part."

Tryniti sat in shock. If any of this got out about her daily it would be a complete scandal. Her mother a bastard? Her grandmother being able to see visions of the future? Her parents' marriage was for love, yet a secret betrothal test by her grandmother? That is why she is arraigned to be married to some lowly Marquis?

"But...*oncle*. If all this is true, how did they get away with it? I thought royalty had to marry royalty. As a princess I have to marry a prince. And the same for my parents and before them..."

"While that is true, there has been exceptions throughout history. In title, your aunt was the archduchess. After Queen Katherine, King Henry VIII had all those wives that were not of royal blood. Times are changing, *ma fille*, and the people of France love you. The Assembly loves you. I think you will be alright marrying a Marquis."

She sighed and bowed her head, but then smiled sweetly at him. "For you Tonius, I will. But what about invitations, arrangements, and actually getting the groom here? I am not going to marry in England!"

"Slow down, *petite fille*, I was getting all of that covered. Your groom has been sent for at the same time I sent you your

letter. He should be receiving word from me that he is to come and marry you immediately.”

“Will it be a big marriage?” She asked.

“Of course.”

Tryniti sighed. “That’s what I was afraid of. What if I cannot love this man? I will take him to Davy Jones’ locker myself if he so much as has another wife or mistress!”

“Why so upset? You never wanted to marry him.”

“*Oui! Non!* I mean, it would be scandal! The *Dauphine de la France* can’t keep her husband in the marriage bed! I will not allow it!”

Louis looked at her incredulously. “Adultery is quite common my dear, you know this. Nevertheless, I suppose it doesn’t make it any less upsetting, especially if you’re in love.”

“I’m not in love, Tonius.” She huffed. “I’m simply stating that my ideals do not fit the societal acceptances people allow.”

Louis sighed. “As you wish. I never said if he ever made you unhappy or hurt you that you didn’t have the right to... take care of the matter. But also, my dear, a Marquis is hardly considered a commoner.” He winked.

“Oh, thank you, Tonuis!” She gave him a big hug.

“I am only doing what your grandmother asked of me. *Car elle avait toujours raison*. She was always right.”

“So do you think he will love me?”

“I am positive of it.”

“*Merci, mon Roi*.” She bowed in his direction.

Louis laughed at her defiantness and told her to go on and rest before the big day. She walked out of his room smiling and closed the door behind her after the maids entered to attend to

him. She flounced back down the stairs and turned the corner to take the stairs to her own wing.

Before she got halfway up her mother, father, brother, and sister were all waiting for her.

“Have you all been waiting there this entire time? *Quelle honte! Qui pensez-vous que vous êtes?* Shame on you! Who do you think you are, spying on me?” She growled.

“You will not speak that way in this house young lady, *comprenezvous?*” her father spoke.

“Max, she just had a trying conversation with her uncle, *S’il vous plaît faire preuve de compassion*. Please, show some compassion,” Alicé scolded him.

He gave her the look of death but then smiled softly at his wife. Azula pushed past her parents and jumped like a school-girl at Tryniti’s side, her eyes wide for information.

“What did he say?” Azula asked.

“I’ve decided I will marry the Marquis of Winchester, for he thinks it’s in my best interest, and he said I wasn’t not allowed to kill him if he so much as set his sights elsewhere.” She said drolly.

“I was hoping he’d say that. This was all the doing of *maman*’s I know it. He always listened to her and did as she asked,” Alicé complained.

“There isn’t much we can do now, *Maman*.” Tryniti said, “I agreed to marry him and that’s that. But he will not stop me from leaving for the Caribbean as soon as we’re done our honeymoon.”

“Tryniti! You wouldn’t,” James said.

“Oh yes, I am. Azula, we leave right after my honeymoon. I’ll be back for you; we will take my ship and no one else’s. I will

not be held captive on another man's ship when I have my own, and it makes it easier to dispose of him."

"Tryniti, don't talk of such things just yet. He may prove to be a faithful and loving husband." Alicé looked at Max. "Like your father." She smiled at him. He smiled down at her and gave her a gentle kiss.

Tryniti rolled her eyes at the happy couple and walked past them to reach her room at the end of the hallway. She could hear Azula screaming, "Ewwww!" while James laughed and steered her toward their rooms.

With everyone gone, Tryniti closed the door and breathed a sigh of relief finally to be alone. She flopped on her bed, it felt much like her one on the ship, and her room was secretly made to be fashioned just as her ship was, so she never felt far away from the sea. Outside her window was a large pool that stretched across the entire grounds, and was built just for her to swim in. When she looked out the window it made her feel as if she was back on the sea. She glanced out the window and saw the new Pantheon shining in the distance. She picked this wing for her own because she could look out and see her homeland of France and the grand medieval structure of Notre Dame that stood for her country. She sighed, wishing she could run away and hide atop the tower.

Certain days she cursed being the granddaughter of a King, and the niece of a King, and other days she realized being a Bourbon had its perks. Slowly she walked to her desk and pulled out her lockbox. She opened it to reveal old and worn letters, handwritten and fading. She sifted through her birth certificate, her family heirlooms, her hand-painted portraits of her family, love letters from admirers that tried their best,

and she came to a letter attached to her marriage certificate. It was a letter from her future husband, explaining he thought her a very beautiful woman, but wished to not marry her. She laughed as she read it aloud to herself:

Dear Princesse Tryniti Bella Bourbon Brooke de L'áuront:

I know you may be looking forward to our imminent marriage, but I can also remember from the look in your eyes that you wish to not marry me. I see you are a free spirit and wish not to be tied down to a man you never wanted to marry. If you still do not want to marry we can make a mutual agreement. We will attend our wedding, then leave each other after the honeymoon to go our separate ways. I will return when it's time to take my place as King upon the throne if that situation ever arises. It is not that I don't find you beautiful and stunning my lady, it is that I am a man not ready to settle down. I wish to sail the sea as a merchant and own my own ship when I am older. I fear a woman of your stature would not like to sail the seas with me, but rather stay at the palace. I am doing this for the both of us Princess Tryniti. Forgive me if I hurt your feelings.

Your fiancé,

S.R., The Marquis of Winchester

Tryniti looked at the initials at the bottom of the letter and stared at them, trying to think. S.R.? Who has the initials of S.R.? It sounded so familiar, as if she heard it only recently. Then it dawned on her: that man! The captain of the *Intrigue*! Could it be him? No... it couldn't be. James never said his full name... did he? She grabbed her shawl and ran out of her bedroom down the hall to reach James' and Azula's wing of the house. She ran so fast she almost tripped over her skirts and about tumbled down the steps. Running down the staircase, she finally did the inevitable and tripped, tumbling headfirst to almost smacking her head on the stairs, but was caught by strong arms.

Aramis had seen the Princess fall and ran to catch her. He caught her in his arms and stood her upright.

"Princess, where are you going so fast you almost *vous blesser*? You could've killed yourself *ma Princesse. Ralentir!*"

"*Désolé, Aramis,*" she apologized. "I have to see James. Do you know where he is?"

"*Oui, Princesse.* He is out in the *cour*, swimming like a fish in your pool."

"Devil take that man using my pool! He has his own! *Ce cul!*"

"*Princesse!*" Aramis looked shocked at her language. "Remember you are home now, not *voile sur la mer. Princesse, pas pirater.* You're not on the seas, you're a princess, not a pirate."

"Oh, right, I forget sometimes, Aramis. Is he there now?"

"*Oui.*"

"*Merci!*" Tryniti gave him a quick hug as she pulled up her skirt to run down the stairs. She quickly passed the dining room to head to the back of the house to reach the elaborate

sunroom and botany garden her grandfather had put in. From the windows, she could see James swimming in circles, entertaining Azula. She opened the doors to let in the sweet French air, the warmth of the sun washing over her. Compared to the Caribbean, France felt quite cold, even at the height of summer. She ran to the side of the pool to see James spitting water at their sister.

“James! I must speak with you.”

He smiled at Tryniti, still swimming around.

“Well, speak, dear sister.”

She did a quick pout but decided against telling Azula to leave since her little sister must also hear her idea.

“What was the name of that man?”

“What man?” James asked, amused.

“The devil you know what man! The Captain who rescued you! What is his first name?”

James stopped swimming to look seriously at his sister.

“If I recall, his name was Sean Reilly.”

Tryniti’s face turned a pale white through her Caribbean tan. She swooned, unable to catch her breath, and fell into the pool. James quickly raced to her and pulled her sinking body to the surface for air. Azula ran to jump in to help, but James has already beat her to it. Tryniti woke up from her fainting trance, spitting and sputtering from drinking the water.

“What has gotten into you? You never faint or are unable to swim!” James exclaimed.

“That...that man! The Captain! I knew I knew those initials from somewhere!”

James placed her on the edge of the pool and gave her smelling salts he always kept by his side. She sniffed at the salts to ease herself.

“Tryniti, what are you talking about?” Azula asked.

“I was searching through my documents when I saw a letter I got over a decade ago from my fiancé attached to my marriage license. I reread the letter, and the initials were signed S.R. That has to be him! It all fits! S.R. means Sean Reilly! That Captain is my fiancé!”

James and Azula gaped at Tryniti with shock. They couldn’t believe the man on the ship she attacked was her future husband.

“How can you be so sure?” Azula wondered.

“How can I not?” Tryniti countered.

James thought about it, his serious face taking over.

“Just because the initials match doesn’t mean it’s the same man, Tryniti. It can just be a hazard.”

“I know it. I just know it, James. It’s the same man.”

“If it is the same man,” Azula began, “Then what would the problem be? I saw him kiss you on deck. That was a passionate kiss. And you wouldn’t have to worry about giving up the sea! You could still sail!”

“Yes, I could still sail. But I couldn’t be a pirate! *Je serais ruinée!* He wouldn’t let me go back to pirating. I would have to sail as a normal woman aboard ship – if he would even allow such bad luck aboard!”

“You don’t know unless you ask, Sister,” James said.

“Ask? Ask?” Her fury enlightened. “I should have to ask nothing! He answers to me! I am the Princess, the Dauphine! He is nothing but a Marquis in that bloody country! He an-

swers to me and asks me! In this country, it is the elite who rule, the hierarchy rules. Not the rules of marriage the English have! We do not answer to men no matter our status as England does. He will answer to me. He will be lucky if I ever let him sail again!”

James jumped out of the pool and his towering figure loomed over her. “Dammit, Tryniti, you can’t be that way! Taking a man’s ship from him and telling him never to sail again? It’s the same as him taking you away from the sea! You know how you feel about the sea, and you would do that to your husband?”

She looked down at the pool, watching her reflection in the ripples of the clear blue waters. “No, I wouldn’t. But it will work for bargaining if he ever makes me angry. *Il va payer s’il ne m’a jamais fait mal!* He will pay if he ever hurts me.”

“Well, I can understand your reasoning there. But for me, sister, listen. He is a very dangerous man.”

“And I am a dangerous woman.” She swung her skirt in his face as she walked away toward the house. Azula went to follow her, but James stopped his little sister in her tracks.

“Let her go, Azula. She needs to be alone.”

“But James...”

“No. I’ve known our sister a lot longer than you have, and I am wiser than you. Let her be.”

They watched her flounce away, but they couldn’t see the tears welling up in her eyes.



Chapter 10

"The sea and its fury are part of this land..."



HOLDING IN HER PAIN, Tryniti was able to make it to her room before anyone could see her tears. Slamming the solid oak door behind her, she flung herself onto her bed and shoved her face into her new lilac silk pillows. She screamed heart-wrenching sobs, so loud she knew her servants could hear her. But everyone left her alone, for it wasn't often Tryniti would cry. And when she did, you weren't to mess with her, because she'd get so angry you might end up dead. She held her pillow to her face to try to stifle the screams. She punched and beat it and then slammed her fist into the wall. Luckily, the wall was made of brick, so the hole in the wall was replaced with an almost broken hand. She tore and clawed at her dress, ripping the expensive silk to pieces in a fiery rage, revealing the black breeches she wore underneath. She never once wore a dress without her breeches because dresses were much too uncomfortable. Grabbing the metal hooks of her corset, she ripped them off, allowing her to breathe properly. Her breasts bounced out, and the perky devils relaxed in the warm air, grateful for the chance to be free. She rubbed her breasts and soothed the red line that developed underneath them. They were aching with pain, and she decided she would take a hot,

soothing bath with her oils and salts to ease her discomfort. She picked up her shredded clothes and rang for her maid. In a matter of minutes, the maid was at her door, knocking shyly as if not to disturb her. She took deep gulps of breath so she could speak clearly.

“Come in, Chablis.”

Her maid walked in and seen the ripped heap of colorful mess in Tryniti’s arms.

“Dauphine! *Vos vêtements! Ze is ripped!*”

“*Oui*, I know, Chablis. *S’il vous plaît*, take these to Madame Grieré. They need to be repaired immediately before *Maman* sees them,” Tryniti ordered.

“*Oui*, Dauphine.”

“Oh, and please ring for Burgundy, for I am in need of a hot bath.”

“*Oui*. I will send Burgundy with *votre eau*.”

“*Merci*, Chablis.”

Tryniti finished undressing and tore off her silk chemise and bodice. She put on her black silky robe, an ironic trademark of her name. She once again looked out the window, out over her manmade sea. How she longed to be back on her ship, capturing vessels and taking whatever goods she wanted. She heard a soft knock at her door, and as she opened it, thinking it was Burgundy with her water.

“Auntie Marie! What are you doing here? Come in, *s’il vous plaît, assis*.”

Tryniti took her hand and led her aunt to her favorite Georges Jacobs chaise, where Marie sat with a look Tryniti had never seen before. She looked as beautiful as ever, with her blonde hair done in a fancy coiffure, her satin pink gown shim-

mered in the light atop a regal pannier with roses and lace adorning it. Tryniti wished she was as beautiful as her aunt, the cream of French beauty with her pale face and rosy cheeks. Underneath her beauty and makeup, Tryniti could see something was troubling her aunt.

"I came to see you, *petit*. It is about your husband," Marie said.

"What about him? I already know who he is."

"You do? *Comment?*"

"I met him on the seas, *Tante*. I attacked his ship, thinking he kidnapped James!"

"Oh, *Cher*. This is a predicament," Marie said, her fingers clutching her handkerchief.

"*Ce que est erroné?* Please, I must know what's wrong."

"What's wrong? He is on his way. He just arrived in England and will arrive at the palace shortly."

"Impossible! I left his ship disabled! It was sinking to the bottom of the ocean as I left it. He could not have made it home this soon."

"I was told he had friends in the Americas who lent him a ship while his was being repaired from your... *attaque*. Really Tryniti, you left his ship crippled?"

"*Oui*. Very badly. I wanted to make sure he'd never follow me."

"What are you saying?"

Tryniti could see her aunt was confused by what she was trying to say. There was nothing more to do than tell the truth.

"He does not know I am *ze* Black Rogue. When he sees me, he will remember my face. He will have me hanged *pour le piratage!*" she yelled.

“He will not! I am still Queen, and your *oncle* is still King of this country. We have not been deposed of yet. You and your parents are royalty. You will not be prosecuted in your own country. I forbid it. As a matter of fact, I will draw up a law with the Premier Ministre to never have any royal heir prosecuted for any crime, unless the family votes on it.”

“*Merci*, Auntie. You’re the best.”

“I try, my *petit*. Rest now, for he will be here in *une semaine*.” “One week?” Tryniti exclaimed.

“*Oui, ma fille*.”

Tryniti helped her aunt up from the chaise, and at that moment Burgundy arrived with the buckets of steaming hot water.

“Burgundy, take my aunt back to her parlor, *s’il vous plaît*. I will get the buckets myself.”

Burgundy raised an eyebrow. “Are you sure, Princesse?”

“*Oui*. Could you please step outside for a moment before you take her?”

“*Oui, Princesse. Je vais*. I will.”

Burgundy curtsied to the royal family and quietly closed the door behind her. Tryniti grabbed her aunt’s arm, a little too roughly, and the Black Rogue was back.

“Auntie, what is happening? What are you and *oncle* hiding?”

“It is none of your concern...” Marie started to say, but Tryniti cut her off sharply.

“None of my concern? It is my concern when all of a sudden I am now Dauphine instead of your children. That decision does not come lightly, let alone well against the royal bloodline.”

“There are just some things you won’t understand. Many monarchs have overthrown kingdoms. Why look at Henry IV in England...”

“Some things I won’t understand? If I don’t understand something as simple as why I am now heir to the throne how can you even put me in such a position!”

Marie sighed and grasped Tryniti’s hand. Marie knew she wasn’t going to get out of this situation, and she had to face it bravely.

“Tryniti. Your *oncle* and I have been accused of some wrongdoing. Some deeds were done, some words said, and that is why we are here in the Tuileries instead of Versailles. We are being held prisoner here. This Revolution has gone on too long and gone too far. The women’s march on Versailles, the storming of the Bastille that started it all, and now your *oncle* has been forced to swear on this new constitution that was helped drafted by an American. How ungrateful they are after your poor *oncle* helped them win their own Revolution. I fear that we are not safe anymore, Tryniti, and neither are the children. We agreed with the Legislative Assembly for you to take our place if anything should happen. They love you, and the people love you.”

“How? I am never around. I’ve been gone for years at a time for the last six years. The people don’t see me, let alone probably have any idea where I am. They know nothing of my identity and only that I’m gone more than I am home.”

“That’s where we stepped in. We’ve been spreading stories about your whereabouts since you decided to... sail the seas. You’ve been on mission trips, visiting other royal countries, finding ways to fix our problems. It’s endeared you to the peo-

ple. We had to think of something where all those goods and coin have come from you've been giving them."

Tryniti couldn't believe what she was saying. Her family had been lying to the people about her. But if they hadn't, the country would know her secret. She couldn't risk the world finding out about her identity.

"Auntie, I appreciate you and *oncle* covering for me, but now I am an image in France's eyes as a sweet and caring leader. That's something I am not. I may have been helping my people, but I am a cold-blooded killer. A ruthless pirate. Anyone who so looks me in the eye without my permission ends up in Davy Jones' locker. My heart belongs to the sea, not to the people of France."

"Tryniti, if you do not accept your new role you will be guillotined for treason! Do you understand? This is not a choice, this is life, a demand. You will marry the Marquis, you will take over our legacy, and you *will* be Queen of France whether you like it or not. You have no choice."

Tryniti didn't utter a word as her aunt flounced out of the room and slammed the door behind her. Burgundy sheepishly opened the door, almost fearful of having Tryniti's temper turn on her. Seeing that the Dauphine wasn't moving, she grabbed the buckets from outside her door and placed them just inside and closed the door. Being a pirate, Tryniti was extraordinarily strong for a woman her size. She could take down any man she faced, and a little bucket full of hot water was nothing but lightweight to her. She tossed the water into her awaiting tub. She placed the four giant buckets outside her door for Burgundy to collect when she was done her bath. She undid her robe, letting it fall halfway down her body till she caught it and

hung it on the hook by her tub. She climbed in and sunk into the deep porcelain, relaxing from the comfort of the warm bath. The steam rose from the water, and the scent of fresh lavender and roses from the fields filled her senses.

“Cela sent si bon,” she whispered to herself. But as she looked toward her still open lockbox, she began to cry again. She was being forced to marry in one week. Granted, it was wonderful her husband was a sailor, but he would never condone her actions, and he would refuse to marry her once he realizes who she is. *That’s it!* she thought. *Once he finds I am the Black Rogue, he will want nothing to do with me and refuse to marry me! I will be free!*

Maybe...



Chapter 11

“She stole me boots, she stole me clothes, she pinched me plate an’ pannikin...”



SEAN LOOKED AROUND the London docks, breathing in the harsh smoke-filled air. He hated the docks and the drab grey scenery, but he loved London. It was better than living in his country estate of Winchester. London was more his lifestyle than living by himself in solitude. His crippled ship stayed back in Jamestown, his friend Alexander was in no use of his ship anytime soon, so he lent Sean his ship to make it back to England while his ship was being repaired. He looked upon the other ships and his eyes happened to glance down to see his brother standing on the docks.

“Pierce! You devil, how are you?” he bellowed.

Pierce smiled a dull smile, looking at his brother. Sean called to John to tell him to take care of the ship and grabbed a rope to swing down onto the pier before the gangplank could be put down. Sean saw a piece of parchment in his brother’s hand and his smile instantly faded.

“What is that?” Sean asked.

“A letter. From France.”

Sean's face turned white as he shakenly grabbed the letter from Pierce. He silently read it to himself, but part of the letter was written in French by Louis' hand.

"He's in grave danger, Sean. He doesn't have much time. I already sent word you'll be in Paris in a week."

"What are you saying, Pierce?"

"You have to marry the Princess now. It was his father's wish that she was to marry before the King dies. You know this, Sean."

Sean ignored his brother's last words and hopped in the family carriage that was waiting for them. Pierce followed his brother inside and continued to browbeat him.

"Sean! You have to do this! You can't deny the King of France!"

"I will damn well try! I never wanted this marriage to happen. I never thought this day would come. I can't marry a Princess! I'll never be able to sail the seas again if she insists on me staying in Paris."

"What the devil are you talking about? You are the man; a woman cannot tell you what to do."

Sean laughed at his brother's naiveté, "Pierce, it is different in France. Their law is not the same as ours. They go by the traditional hierarchy. I will only be a Prince by marriage, and even then I know that woman and her grandfather drew up a law..."

"It was her grandfather and uncle but go on..." Pierce interjected.

"...so that I have no power on the throne unless in emergency situations or whatever the devil it is they do over there! They still follow traditional Middle Age law on certain aspects.

I will have to answer to her, she does not answer to me. Unless...” Sean grew an evil grin on his face.

“Unless what?”

“Unless I can get her to England. Then I can control her.”

“Practically kidnap the Crown Princess of France? That’s absurd man! Her military would be all over England!”

“Not if I take her out to sea. No one would ever find her. Wait...what was that about *Crown Princess*?” Sean said, his eyes growing wide.

Pierce scoffed at him. “Did you not get my letters again? Or did you just tear them up and decide not to read them this time?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about dear brother,” Sean said mockingly. “I always read your letters.”

“Then if you *always* read my letters, dear brother, you would know that in the letter I sent you about a month or so ago told you that the situation in France is worsening due to the Revolution and the Assembly has decided to make a deal with the King and Queen that if they renounce the throne, your betrothed is to be crowned the Queen of France. King Louis accepted their offer, hence the summons for you to come home and us leaving right away for France.”

Sean couldn’t believe what he was hearing. The betrothal was one thing, but to be forced into becoming the Crown Prince of France with this woman as his wife that he barely knew? Surely this was all in jest.

“No, you must be daft. I will *not* do this. I am not prepared to become some royal monarch! If I have to marry her so be it, but I’m not staying and playing the submissive husband to her.”

“I don’t condone your actions, Sean. You’re asking for trouble. You don’t deny the royal family. Her parents would be sure to find you and hang you for treason and kidnapping!”

“That’s for me to worry about, isn’t it? I’ll still marry the girl, but she’s not getting her way.”

“Don’t bring the Crown on me, Sean. I promise if I know where you are I’ll lead them straight to you.”

“I know dear brother. That’s why I’m not telling you where I’m headed when I take her. She is my wife, after all, there is no harm taking her on a little trip.”

“You still have this idea about taking her? I hope you know what you’re doing,” Pierce growled.

They rode in silence the rest of the way back to Sean’s townhouse on Piccadilly. He passed his own friend James and gave him a wave, and his brother Anthony were riding through the park with old George and their daughters. When he reached his townhome, he let out a sigh of relief. No French officials there to collect him to take him straight to the princess.

“Grab what you need, Sean. We have to leave immediately.”

Sean mumbled and growled as he walked in his townhouse, servants attendant as always. His trusty butler Alfred was waiting for him.

“I won’t be staying, Alfred. I just have to grab a few things. It’s time for my wedding.”

“Sir?” Alfred looked sad, knowing how much the Marquis didn’t want to marry.

Sean walked up to his bedroom and pulled out his wedding suit that he bought over a year ago out of the closet, at Pierce’s request. The bag was collecting dust, unused, and brand new. He looked at it with disdain. He dreaded the day he had to

wear this suit, and now it was only a week away. He hated Louis for making him marry his niece. Why, out of all the men in the world, did he choose him to marry the princess? Why not a prince? Or another king? Why him? He gave the suit to his footman and grabbed the rest of his belongings. He ran downstairs to his study and pulled open the door to his desk. He took out his lockbox and pulled out the marriage contract. Attached to it was a letter. A letter from the princess! It was dated almost a decade ago. He smiled at the words of the princess, not able to even write without adding in some French words.

Monsieur Marquis de Winchester,

I wish to inform tu it was not mon choix, in picking you for my husband. I would rather choose my own and be happily dans l'amour. I have big plans in my life, and it's not staying at home being a Princesse de la France. I want to sail the seas, as my family once did. I was born on the sea, and plan to stay there my entire life no matter how it must hurt people. I know my duty to my country, and I will still marry you, for the sake of my subjects. But s'il vous plaît, do not ask me to stay and be a proper Princesse, for my heart belongs to la mer.

Your royal highness,

Princesse Tryniti Bella Bourbon Brooke de L'auront

Sean laughed as he looked at this letter, wishing he remembered it before. If the woman wanted to sail the seas, then why

not? If she still had the same intentions, it would seem she would gladly sail with him. Maybe this marriage wouldn't be so bad after all with a woman whose heart belongs to the same brash lady as his, the lady of the sea. After all, the whole women aboard ship as bad luck was just a myth. Except for the fact she did destroy his ship...



Chapter 12

“I took this fair maid’s lily-white hand in mine as we walked along the strand...”



“TRYNITI! WILL YOU PLEASE hurry? He should be arriving soon!” her mother called.

“In a minute, *Maman!* I’m trying to do this fancy coiffure these women talk of,” Tryniti called back.

She’d been at sea for so long, Tryniti didn’t have the slightest clue on the newest fashions of London, or even France for that matter. Her mother had bought her a new dress when she arrived home, in the latest style of the elite. The bodice and corset were so tightened, she could barely breathe. The material was a light flimsy silk, making Tryniti a bit cold being used to the hot sun of the Caribbean Sea. It was a light lilac purple, mixed with a beautiful Caribbean blue lace to set off her eyes and remind her of the place she was closest to. The bodice made her breasts look twice as big, even though they were already over a nice handful size. Her small waist was accented in the beautiful silk, and her derriere accented from her full skirt. The fashion of wearing panniers she never understood since she thought it made women look like a box. Her new slippers that matched her dress were delicate and light, not made for going outside, except around the pool and courtyard. She was

doing her toiletries, trying to fix her hair in a fancy coiffure, like the style of London. As soon as she got most of her long locks up, more fell down flat in her face. She huffed and blew a curl out of her face and looked at the mirror so fiercely if it was a living object it would have walked the plank to escape her fury. She may not want to marry this Marquis, but she was at least going to look presentable, so he would never look at another woman except his future bride. Her maid Chablis and Burgundy helped her do her hair, for they kept up in the latest fashions of England, France, Italy, and Germany. They even knew the latest styles of the Orient and America, and Tryniti would never ask how they get their information. They helped get her long brown locks up, and she looked beautiful with strands of long curls framing her face. She tried to look her best aboard ship, but of course most of the time she was dressed as a man. She smiled when she looked in the mirror at her new hairstyle. She was a damn good-looking woman, and deep down she wanted to make her new husband regret ever being with another woman while betrothed to her, and she would make him be only hers. She shook her head in disbelief.

I only ever met this man over ten years ago, I don't want to marry him in the first place why do I care if he's been with other women, and forcing him to only be with me when I don't even want him? What's wrong with me? Natural woman instinct, she decided. She was the Princess, and her man would be faithful to her since she was faithful to him, even though she didn't exactly want him... or did she? She knew now her husband was Sean Reilly, and the stirrings deep down inside her were things she never felt before. She'd looked at other men before, but none ever affected her like Sean did. She felt warmth

grow inside her, and a feeling of lust she couldn't describe. She felt herself moistening... and was embarrassed for it might ruin her new dress. She tried to put him out of her mind, and she picked up her skirts to carefully walk out of her room and down the stairs. Before she reached the door, she turned back and stared at the small black velvet box sitting on the vanity. Tryniti sighed and walked back to retrieve the box. She opened it and took out a large, sparkling diamond ring she picked out earlier in the week and placed it on her wedding finger. The diamond was large with smaller amethyst stones surrounding the diamond in the shape of a lily flower. Tryniti admired it for a moment before returning to her stoic demeanor and headed out of her room. As she reached the stairs, she saw something out of the corner of her eye and curiosity got the better of her. She looked out the window, three stories below. Part of her wing also overlooked the front of the palace, and she could always see if a carriage arrived or if they had callers. She would sit up there and watch for hours, her grandfather and uncle's men and partners coming and going. She would know who was coming towards the Tuileries before anyone else.

She looked out and saw a carriage approaching. It was one she didn't recognize, and wasn't made in the traditional French architecture, but was rather English. She was very cultured in English ways, since her father was half English and half French. He embraced his French side more openly so than his English most of the time, but he still had an English accent from growing up in London. Her face turned a scarlet red, and her heart began to beat faster and faster. She knew it was the Marquis of Winchester, her future husband. She stayed in the shadows, watching the carriage pull up, the click of the horse's feet on

the cobblestone road leading to the doors. She wanted to be able to watch him while he couldn't watch her. She watched as Aramis opened the carriage doors, and out stepped a man she didn't recognize. He had black hair, with vivid green eyes, and a dazzling smile. He was extremely good-looking, with toned muscles and a broad chest. But she didn't feel those feelings looking at this man as she did with Sean. She was confused, this couldn't be the man she was to marry. It was impossible. He looked nothing like the Captain she met. Maybe... it wasn't him. Maybe she thought too hastily and put clues together that weren't really there. She felt herself die a little inside at the disappointment. She turned from the window and walked down the stairs, dejection clear across her face.



AFTER ARAMIS HELD THE carriage door open for Pierce, Sean jumped out like a man still aboard ship.

“Be gentle, man, you’re like a bumbling baboon. What’s gotten into you?” Pierce demanded.

“I’m meeting a Princess for Christ’s sake! I think I have a right to be nervous! I haven’t seen the King of France since I was a young lad, and that was the last time I saw her. She was beautiful back then, who knows what she looks like now!”

Aramis smiled at the two men’s bickering.

“If I may interject, *Monsieurs*, the *Princesse* is a very beautiful woman. She has grown since you last saw her. For she is almost twenty and five years old. You will see her soon. But I warn you, she isn’t a typical *Princesse*. She has a fiery temper, and won’t take orders from anyone, not lightly, of course. I’d

watch yourselves around her, for you do not know what she's capable of like we do."

"Thank you for the insight Aramis," Sean said. He looked up in the third story window, where he remembered peeking out with her, spying on anyone who came by. He saw a swish of lilac purple and sea blue material. He wondered if that was her, Princess Tryniti, looking out the same window watching him arrive. He smiled, laughing at the curiosity of his fiancé, for she hadn't changed in all these years.



TRYNITI RAN DOWN THE stairs, heartbroken at the fact the man outside wasn't who she was expecting. She was half relieved; her secret now won't be revealed. But she secretly hoped Sean was her betrothed, not this man out in the courtyard.

She took a deep breath, she had to walk out to receive her husband, slowly walking down the stairs, awaiting her fate. She saw Azula coming out of her end of the wing, looking sadly at her sister, feeling the pain. James was behind her, smiling, trying to cheer Tryniti up. She smiled a dull smile back, but she was still hurting inside. She continued her death march towards the receiving parlor. When she reached the bottom of the first set of stairs, she heard men's voices. Two voices she didn't recognize, one she recognized as her father, and also her uncle.

But who were the two men? She peeked around the corner, staying hidden behind the giant vase with her favorite flowers that adorned the grand foyer. She peeked through the giant lilies, watching them. She saw her uncle, dressed in his best

short coat of a baby blue and gold leaf with those ridiculous red shoes, and a hand on her father. She could see the man she saw earlier, but who was hiding behind her father? She wanted to come out and find out for herself, but she stayed hidden, watching just a bit more.

“Princess what are you doing?” Aramis said behind her.

She was startled by his voice, and when she jumped, the vase went tumbling forward. They both reached to grab it, but it was already too late. Tryniti fell forward, not able to catch her balance. Aramis reached to grab her, but her silky dress slipped from his hands. She tumbled headfirst down the stairs, rolling over each step, messing up her new coiffure, and landing in a man’s arms at the bottom. She looked up at her savior, for if she landed on the hard marble floor, she could have broken an arm, leg or even worse. The stairs were soft enough from the plush carpet that it broke the worst of her fall, and her skirts sustained much of the damage. She gasped as she looked at the man that saved her, the long golden locks swept in her face, the vivid eyes bore into her soul and the muscular chest was warm and inviting, fresh off the sea. She could smell the salt of the water on him, and it made her heart soar. Her eyes widened at her rescuer. It was the man she fought on the high seas: Sean Reilly.

“This isn’t the way I exactly had in mind for our meeting Princesse,” he drawled, his voice like sweet honey in her ears.

She looked startled, unsure of what to say. So it was true! This was the man she was to marry! But... his father died many years ago. Who was the man with him?

“*Desolée, Monsieur.* I didn’t mean to drop in like this.”

“Of course you didn’t. That’s why you were sneaking around the corner hiding behind the plant,” James announced, coming from the same direction she had just tumbled from.

“How dare you accuse me of such accusations, brother!” Tryniti demanded. “I have stories about you even father wouldn’t like to here!”

Sean looked at the fiery woman in his arms, gaining a nice smile. Max was appalled by Tryniti’s words, for of all times, she loses her properness in front of her future husband.

“That is no way to meet your betrothed daughter,” Max growled.

“But I will not be false *père*. He will learn of my ways soon enough. I have to have children, don’t I? Might as well act as my true self if this man is to be my husband. Also, if you wouldn’t mind, please put me down *monsieur*.”

Sean stared at her in complete disbelief. This was the woman he was to marry? And when she was angry she could speak like a perfect English woman and completely lost her French accent! How did she do it?

Wait a minute... that Black Rogue had a rather interesting accent as well. And this woman sounded exactly like her. He looked into her eyes, the very same stormy eyes he saw before she left his ship crippled. There was a way he could find out... as he put her down his hands gently washed over her breasts. Hidden from the sight of his brother and her family who were helping Aramis pick up the now broken vase, he kissed her, his tongue delving into her mouth. She went limp in his arms, responding by kissing him back and putting her hands on his tight chest. She closed her eyes, savoring the kiss. But when he touched her breasts, at first she allowed it, but then her sea blue

eyes turned dark and her body turned rigid, and she punched him. Normal women slapped him, so he knew this was the Black Rogue since this wasn't the first time he'd played that game. He dropped her, and she landed on her feet with grace.

Ah! Just like a sea captain.

"My apologies, *Princesse*." He leaned closer to whisper in her ear, "Or should I say, *Captain*?"

Tryniti's face blushed dark red. She was embarrassed at having her identity called out even if he did so privately. Did her mother and little sister hear him, standing inside the parlor entry? Tryniti wasn't sure what to say, so she did the only thing she could do.

"That's Captain Black Rogue to you," she hissed, keeping her voice low as well. "And I would appreciate you not uttering that information in my country, or I'll have you hanged for whatever reason I see fit." She growled in anger, ready to pounce on her victim.

Sean gaped at Tryniti, ready to strangle the girl. So she really was the pirate! The most feared pirate on the seas! That must mean her parents were the famous L and Harlique from the heyday of piracy! He turned white with shock. He was marrying into a family of ruthless pirates! The king was probably a pirate himself in his day! How else could a man like that become king?

Sean smiled recklessly. "You'll regret those words... wife."

"I'm not your wife... yet. I'm only doing this for my country. Nothing more," she growled.

"We'll see about that, Tryniti. You'll be begging me for... something... by the end of this."

How dare he! She thought. He deemed her to be deflowered just because she was a pirate! *I might be a pirate, but I damned well at least still have my dignity and expectations!*

“I follow the rules and laws of my country, *monsieur*. Do not ever assume anything about me, for you know nothing. Unlike you, I’ve been faithful to you during our entire betrothal, which has been our entire lives.”

Tryniti hit a nerve in Sean, for he realized she had no idea of his secret. He wasn’t sure to be happy she didn’t know, or angry. As a princess, he thought she would probably keep tabs on him so she could prove any infidelity and get herself out of the marriage or have him killed.

Well, since she didn’t know, it turned out she didn’t give a damn all these years about him. He didn’t know why, but it made him angry and upset inside.

“I’m sorry, Princess, I guess I’ve let you down in your expectations; after all, how would you know what I was up to, being out on the seas yourself?”

Tryniti had had enough of his wicked mouth. He’d gone too far, coming into her home and insulting her! Her parents and uncle wouldn’t stand for it, for her uncle and aunt were hidden in the parlor and heard every word of their conversation. The King had taken off earlier, to see how they would interact without his interference, but it turned out they hated each other. He looked up at the ceiling, then back down at his necklace hidden inside his tunic. He pulled out the small locket his father and mother had given him as a child.

“I hope you know what you were doing.”

He smiled as the gold began to shine off the rays of sunlight. He grabbed Marie’s hand and walked into the foyer. He

saw the heat in his niece's eyes and smiled a dull smile. He saw she was angry at Sean, ready to kill him. But beneath that rigid exterior, and her hot temper, he saw the love she felt for him. He knew it was love and not just lust. She just didn't know it was there yet. He looked over at Sean and he saw the same thing. He saw the anger and heat in his eyes, but also the love that was beneath them. He knew his mother and father knew what they were doing, this couple just needed to get their tempers in check, and realize they love each other. He puffed up his chest, happy he was going to leave this country in the hands of a wonderful woman deeply in love with a man, just like her mother. He hoped they would realize their feelings for each other before the inevitable happened. He wanted to die seeing his niece happy and in love.

Tryniti's face was growing dark, and before she reached for the hidden knife she kept in her bodice, she turned away from him and flounced out to the courtyard. Ripping the dress off along the way.

"No wonder she never has any decent dresses. She rips them to shreds." Max said.

"Leave her go," Marie said. "She needs some time to herself. And Sean, go after her."

There was no way Sean was going after that wench. That fiery devil girl could stay out there. But he knew he must do as the Queen said or face her wrath. He slowly walked out to the courtyard, and he looked around. He didn't see Tryniti anywhere. He looked towards the pool and found her walking her gangplank across it. She stopped halfway, staring out into the man-made sea. Pieces of her beautiful dress were strewn across the courtyard, the wind blowing most of them through the air.

All that was left on her was her chemise. This was the only time she didn't have a tunic and breeches on underneath her dress.

She had a feeling someone was watching her, but she didn't really care. There were many times aboard her ship she would walk out at the helm, naked, enjoying the sea breeze on her skin, feeling the moonlight and the spray of the ocean wash over her on the ship. There were things she felt she couldn't quite explain. She took off her chemise, bearing her naked body. Sean marveled at her perfection. Her breasts looked soft and full, bigger than any normal French woman. It would take two handfuls to fill them. Her flat stomach was toned and tanned, and there was something he never seen before, there was no black fluffy triangle down below. She was a brave woman to shave there, and he instantly hardened at the thought of burying his face in that luscious skin. Her buttocks were amazing, full and plump, just perfect. Her hair cascaded down her back, a brown mass of curl, whipping in the summer wind. The setting sun accented her body, sending a shadow across the water. He couldn't help staring at her beauty. It was if the sea had taken a human form, begging him to come to her. She jumped headfirst into the pool, swimming elegantly like a mermaid. He wondered if she really was part of the sea. He was told she was born aboard a ship, and she sailed with her parents growing up. She never once left the sea, or a ship really, to settle down on land long enough. And she looked like a woman that really didn't want to. She swam around, but then jumped out and looked toward the setting sun. It was setting behind the Tuileries, and tears sprung to her eyes.

Sean wanted to grab her and hold her, just to tell her he was sorry, and everything would be alright, but he couldn't move

closer to her. He took a step forward, and the pebbles crunched under his feet.

Tryniti heard the movement and quickly jerked her head around to see who was behind her. In a flash, she had her sword to his throat. How the hell did she get that and how did she move that fast? Sean had a beautiful naked woman holding a sword to his throat, and he didn't know what to think.

"Tryniti, please put the sword down," he begged.

Her voice was firm. "No."

"Tryniti..."

"No!"

"Dammit, woman, will you listen to me?"

She paused for a moment and lightened her grip. "Hmm. Fine, what do you want?"

"Nothing. I, uh, just wanted to speak to you."

"There's nothing to say. After all I'm not a princess to you, I'm just a dirty pirate!"

"I didn't mean it that way! And will you please have some decency and put some clothes on!"

"Oh, you didn't, didn't you? My arse!"

"Tryniti!" He screamed, and he grabbed her, making the sword fall to the ground. He turned her towards him, and his mouth went down hard on hers, exploring her mouth sensually. He couldn't stop kissing her; she tasted wonderful, like the sweet salty air of the sea, but also of divine French pastries. She smelled of flowers, lily to be exact, and her skin was so soft you would never know she sailed unless you felt her hands. They were soft but hard and calloused from handling the helm. Her stance was firm with him, not swaying to the emotions she must have felt.

His kiss was wonderful, he tasted of the salty sea air, and it made her want him even more. She wrapped her arms around him, and he did as well, hesitant because she was naked. His tongue explored her mouth more sensually, and she melted in his arms. He cupped her breasts and kneaded them softly.

She reached up to whisper in his ear. "Don't let me go."

"Never."

His mouth came back to hers, and then explored her neck and down her chest to find a hardening little nub, the fiery mark of his tongue resting on it, nibbling it to the peak of perfection. She moaned, a hot feeling creeping up inside her. What the hell was she doing? Anyone could see her! Oh, but at this point, she didn't give a damn. She had a secret veranda hidden in the garden she built for herself. No one knew it was there, and it was a perfect place to take him.

"Come with me," she breathed.

She grabbed his hand and led him down the secret path, hidden by some of her favorite flowers she found in the Caribbean. She opened the glass doors leading into the garden, for her flowers were inside a greenhouse to assimilate the hot temperatures of southern waters. Sean looked around, seeing the beauty he was used to in his travels. He smiled, glad that he found a woman like Tryniti. But he couldn't dare marry her, she was a pirate and a princess! His heart told him to marry her, but his brain said no. Sean didn't know what to do. She would never want to sail with him, for he would curtail her activities she was used to aboard ship. He couldn't have her giving his men orders. He didn't know how to handle this woman. He knew he felt something with her, for he never felt this way about any other woman. But he had to have her.

She led him down a path to a beautiful veranda, covered in ivy and exotic flowers. The warm air was fragrant, and when he looked at his naked bride, he was filled with warmth. He wanted to bathe her in flowers, watch her naked, underneath the waterfall she constructed behind the veranda. He watched as her naked body was caressed by the ivy and orange blossoms, seductively moving inside it to where he couldn't see her anymore. He hurriedly followed, finding her wrapped in black silk sheets on a feather mattress. He looked a bit confused as to why she would keep a bed out here in the veranda. She smiled at his confusion.

"I'm much more comfortable out here on a soft surface and I keep the blankets here so I can stay warm."

"Oh. I thought this was where you may have your trysts, pirate." She frowned at his accusation.

"Captain Reilly, I assure you, *Monsieur*, you can find out for yourself of my... virginity."

His face darkened at the mention of her virginity. He himself was a virgin, how would he know if she was or not? He remembered John telling him if a woman was a virgin, you would feel a barrier preventing you from entering and blood would cover her legs when you broke it. Is that how it was to be? Bloody and hurtful in order to have pleasure? He wasn't so sure he wanted to do this anymore; he didn't want to hurt Tryniti. She was so beautiful, lying naked underneath the black silky sheets, waiting for him to please her as a husband should. But why was she being so submissive when just a few hours earlier she was ready to kill him? What was wrong with this woman? Or was she reacting this way because she didn't understand the feelings inside her?

Didn't she know what lust and love felt like? But of course, how would I know as well, for I never had a woman. She makes me feel things I never felt before, and I think I love her, but I'm not so sure. She makes me angry, ready to beat her, but she's also so beautiful and delicate, and all I want to do is go lay in the sheets and hold her forever. This marriage may have been the right choice for us... but is it the fact we don't realize it?

Tryniti stared at Sean's face, unable to read what he was thinking. He looked annoyed by her, but also unsure if he should be doing this. Tryniti didn't think there was anything wrong. They were to be married tomorrow, and they've been betrothed since birth, why couldn't they make love before the wedding? She wanted him and she knew it. All the stories about lust and passion she heard from her friends in the Cove was enough to prove it. But she was nervous. She knew she was a virgin, but Sean didn't trust her. He thought just because she was a pirate she slept with other men. Dammit, why couldn't he make love to her so she could prove it? Why the hell was he just standing there staring at her?

Sean couldn't take it anymore, he needed Tryniti badly. They were to be married tomorrow, so why not consummate their marriage early? No one had to know they made love before the marriage bed. He walked over to her and crouched beside her. "Tryniti, I don't want to hurt you."

"I know. But please, I want this. I've been waiting much too long. I'm almost twenty and five and betrothed to you my entire life. I'm ready."

"But you don't want me, nor do you wish to marry me."

"That was true, before today, but... I can learn to love a man who loves the sea."

He smiled sadly. She didn't admit her feelings for him, and that was a dagger to the heart.

"I can learn to love a pirate..." Sean said, looking into her stormy eyes before kissing her again.

She grabbed him and held him close, his mouth exploring hers once again. She melded herself into him. Slowly he took off his tunic to reveal a broad and muscular chest, still warm and tanned from the hot Caribbean sun. She held him close, longing to feel the heat of him. His chest and back were deliciously smooth, but as her eyes traveled lower she could see a thick golden patch of hair through his loosening breeches. Slowly she grabbed them and slid them off, looking at him to dare her not to do it. He didn't stop her even once.

She stared at his thick muscled legs, strong and toned from balancing on a ship. As her eyes traveled upward they locked on his thick manhood, hard and muscular waiting to be treated to by a princess. She never saw anything so big! She wasn't exactly sure what to do with it, but she knew the warmth growing inside her was where it was meant to be soon. She looked up at him, begging him with her eyes to tell her what to do. But he looked lovingly back at her and held her close. *Well...* she said, *time to put all those overheard stories to the test.* She bent down to kiss it, but then she began to lick it and enjoyed it. Sean moaned with pleasure, never feeling anything like what Tryniti was doing to him. She couldn't help but stick his entire manhood in her mouth and suck on it gently. Sean grabbed her head and ran his fingers through her hair; he loved the sight of her long flowing hair around him. He moaned and gasped at the pleasure of it and held her closer. She couldn't take much

more of the overwhelming feeling inside her. She had to have him.

If he ever was with other women he wouldn't be now, for he was hers and only hers and would kill any woman who stood in her way. He picked her up and laid her on her back. She looked up at him as he kissed her, mounting her. She looked into his eyes, feeling pleasure, excitement, and fear. He put his hand on her cheek and held her close to ease the pain as he entered her. He felt the barrier, and almost broke into tears at how happy he was that she was telling the truth about being a virgin! He stopped, just before breaking her maidenhood.

"Tryniti..."

"Please, Sean just do it!"

"But Tryniti... there is something I must tell you."

"Can't it wait?"

"No, it can't... I'm a virgin as well!" he yelled.

Her eyes widened in shock. Was he? How could he be? How did she know? There was no way of telling if a man was a virgin, and he could be lying to her. She grew angry, her euphoria leaving at the thought of Sean having lied to her. Why did she even care? He saw the raging heat in her eyes, knowing she was ready to start a fight.

"Tryniti, I am not lying to you, my dear. I promise. Here..."

He slowly pulled out of her, to show her something in the pocket of his breeches.

"Have you ever read our marriage contract?" he asked.

"Well, I have, but I never thought to fully analyze it..."

"There is a clause in it that says I must remain a virgin, or else be beheaded for treason."

Tryniti examined it carefully, not sure to believe him. It was there in her own grandfather's handwriting and signed by him. It stated that if Sean broke any rules of the contract he would be beheaded for treason. Was someone watching him this entire time? He must be a virgin if he wasn't dead yet, and ready to lose it to his bride in waiting. At this point, she didn't care, but she did wonder why her grandfather would put something as silly as a virginity clause in their contract.

"It matters little to me, because I want you more than any woman has wanted a man," Tryniti confessed, and her lips locked again with his.

He slowly lowered himself down onto her, reentering her slowly. He held her tight, scared of the pain she was to feel as he breached her maidenhead. To get it over with, he rammed himself hard into her, her virginity breaking away and she screamed a light squeal of pain. She grew limp in his arms, scared of feeling the pain again.

"You will not feel that again, my dear. I promise," he soothed her.

He slowly moved inside her, gently, savoring the feeling of her warmth and wet softness. She moaned as he moved inside her, and he panted and moaned at the feel of her. The tenderness he was feeling was amazing, and she never knew she could feel like that. It was pleasure beyond comprehension. He moved faster, sending her body into convulsions.

She scraped and clawed to hold him closer, her body responding to him. She molded her breasts to his chest, longing to feel every inch of him. He began to move faster and faster, sending them to the height of ecstasy. He felt her nails on his back and arched into them, loving the feeling of the sharp plea-

sure and pain. He couldn't take much more, she felt so good. He sensually made love to her, her body soaring to new heights. She felt a warmth growing, a feeling that was ready to burst inside her. He moaned with her, sending his lips down on hers. They climbed together to their climax and floated down on a cloud of passion.

She couldn't believe the feelings he invoked in her, she never felt like anything close to that before. She cuddled close to him, under the silk sheets. She savored her time with him because she was scared he would leave her after the wedding tomorrow, and back out to sea, not giving a single thought to her.

Sean held her tight, fearing the same. Would she leave him and not come back? Would she forget about him? He wasn't going to take it; she would sail with him one way or another. This raving sea beauty was not going to leave him. He'd be damned if she got away from him. He knew he loved Tryniti, he was sure of it ever since the day he laid eyes on her during their sea battle. He couldn't believe he met his bride on a high seas battle, and she left his ship crippled. How dare she. He decided to confront her about her actions.

"Tryniti, why did you leave me stranded in the Atlantic?" he asked softly, as they lay in each other's arms.

"I didn't know you were my future husband. Honestly, I didn't. I was only doing my duty as a pirate. At the time I was so angry I had to marry you I probably would've left you more crippled than I did had I known who you were. I would have made sure you wouldn't have been

able to make it to port without the aid of another ship."

"Why the devil would you do that, woman?"

“I hated you. I guess I didn’t hate you, I hated the fact I was being forced to marry someone I thought didn’t love me, and I couldn’t love.”

“Tryniti, I never felt like this with any woman. You’re the only one all these years I’ve had any feelings for. I stayed away and only visited you those few times so I could better myself for you. After all, I am only

a Marquis and you are the Princess of France!”

“None of that matters now, Sean. I wasn’t the Dauphine until recently. I stayed away because I wanted to be my own woman. I wanted to do what I wanted and not have a man tie me down and give me orders, I didn’t want to lead France. My heart belongs to the sea. I couldn’t live without her. How could a man expect me to give that up?”

“I don’t expect you to give anything up except one thing, well except what you just gave up.”

“I don’t understand.”

He got up and crouched next to her and held her hand.

“Give part of your heart to me.”

Tryniti blushed, startled that Sean would say that. “You already have it. I wouldn’t make love to you if you didn’t have it.”

He looked at the bright diamond engagement ring on her finger and thought of an idea. “I’m sorry we never got to do this properly. Will you please?” and he reached for her hand. She gave him her hand, and he pulled off the engagement ring. He got down on one knee in front of her. “I’m asking you now, Princesse Tryniti Bella Bourbon Brooke de Láuront, La Princesse héritière de la France, marry me. Make me a happy sea Captain.”

Tryniti didn't know what to say. She was amazed he would properly propose to her, giving her a choice in the marriage! She was so happy he was doing a proper proposal. But of course, she knew what her answer would be.

"Yes."

Sean was shocked. He gave her a choice, and she said yes! Yes, of all words to say she said yes! "Why?" he asked before he could stop himself.

"It is my duty."

"No, Tryniti, what's in your heart?"

"I... I ..." She didn't know what to say.

"Your answer, m'lady."

"Yes." She said with her stoic demeanor.

"Is this what you want?"

"Yes."

"Do you say anything other than yes?" Sean quipped.

Tryniti smiled, "Of course."

"That's the same as yes."

"No, it's not."

"There you go. Something other than yes."

They giggled together, laughing at their quips. They talked for the rest of the evening, and the sun went down before they realized how many hours they've been gone. Aramis knew of her secret veranda, in case of emergencies. Aramis kept the veranda clean and fresh just for her, and he even trimmed the ivy and weeded the garden. He got dressed, but Tryniti looked around. She forgot she'd ripped her clothes to pieces. Dammit! Sean went to hand her his tunic when she remembered a secret stash of clothes in the veranda balcony Aramis kept for her. She walked up the spiral steps to reach the hidden room, and there

lay on a chest of drawers a fresh, clean pair of breeches and a flowing tunic with her variety of undergarments. She put on her clothes and bounced back down the steps. Sean instantly grew hard again looking at her. He couldn't help but think she was very sexy and beautiful in those breeches she had made especially for her. The tight black tunic accented her breasts with the corset underneath, and he couldn't help but want to make love to her again. She grabbed him by the hand and led him back down the path to the glass doors.

"This is a very beautiful greenhouse. How did you do this?"

"Little by little I brought back flowers from the places I visited, and my grandfather actually helped build this secret greenhouse before he died. Only he and Aramis know it exists. Well, and now you. It's my safe haven. To get away from the problems of the world and the stress of being royalty. I never wanted this life. I just want to sail the sea."

"Your parents really will not be King and Queen before us?"

"No. The Assembly specifically wants me. All I want is to sail the seas. I've thought about passing it on to my brother or sister. But they would have had to marry as well, and I was not forcing them to marry as I have to."

He frowned at his future bride's words.

"I thought it to be a burden and a bad thing, Sean. But now, I know I'm going to be a very happy wife."

He smiled at his built, fiery bride. He was finally happy. He was going to marry a woman who loved the sea as he did. If only he knew years ago how she felt, but the letter she sent to him was only placed with the marriage license and forgotten about. Tryniti also did the same when her license was handed to her

when she was just a little girl. If they had read each other's letters sooner, they may have begun to love each other a lot sooner and not hated the thought of one another, running away from the prospect of marriage. Tryniti led him into the foyer, realizing it was only just after dinner, and the buffet table was still hot and set out for them.

"Dinner, my lord?" She said with a sly grin.

"Only if it's with you, Your Majesty." He bowed to her, and she giggled at his antics. She walked with him into the dining room where the maids set out their plates. Burgundy already knew Tryniti's favorite foods and had them piled high on her plate. But she had to secretly ask Sean what he liked, and it made Tryniti laugh at the maid's blush, scared to ask her mistress's future husband any question.

"It's alright, Burgundy, nothing to be ashamed of."

"Oui, Princesse."

"Are you only French, Tryniti?" he asked. "You have a well taught English accent as well as your French one."

"No. As you can tell, my father is English. Rather, he's half English and half French. But he grew up in London all his life. His mother was a playmate of my grandmother, rest her soul. And that's how they met and fell in love. More like they didn't really know then, but they met on the high seas. I assume you know who my parents were."

"Of course. The famous L and Harlique. They sailed the seas, the most ruthless pirates in all the lands."

"You speak very highly of my parents."

"It is an honor to have their daughter as my bride."

She blushed when he said that, not sure what to say back to him.

“Sean?”

“Yes, Tryniti?”

“I... I love you.” She didn’t know what she was saying! Of course, she did, she was saying I love you to her husband. Well... he wasn’t her husband yet.

“I love you, Princess.” He said back.

She smiled, but she was sad he didn’t say her name, and all he said was Princess.

“Can’t you say my name?” she asked.

“Of course. Tryniti.”

“Sean.”

“Yes... yes. I know. Tryniti... I love you.”

That made her spirit soar, and she jumped over the table to kiss him. Burgundy, Chablis, and her other maids saw this and were startled. They never exactly saw Tryniti as she behaved on the ship, but now they were getting a taste of just how much she forgets her manners and the fact she was now Crown royalty. They stared as she flopped over the table to kiss Sean. He didn’t reprimand her, but he took her in his arms and kissed her passionately.

“All of a sudden I’m not so hungry,” he said.

“Neither am I. But we must eat. We have to keep our strength up. And the groom isn’t allowed to see the bride before the wedding remember?”

“Very true. I must enjoy the little time I have left with you.”

“Eat up, my love.”

His heart fluttered when she called him that.

“Do you...?”

“Do I what?” She said.

“Do you have your... dress?”

“What dress?”

“You’re wedding dress, of course. Or do you plan to walk down the aisle in front of your country in breeches?”

“I do not, but it would be a nice idea. I don’t particularly like the new fashion of dresses, they’re tight and hard to breathe in just for looks. Its hideous women would do that to themselves in order to be in ‘fashion.’ I prefer my tunics and breeches, but yes, I do have a wedding dress. But I am wearing breeches underneath. I’m not going without them again.”

“White ones I hope.” He smiled.

“Of course. In honor of my wedding day, the Black Rogue is becoming the White Bride.” And she laughed.

“I rather like you as the Black Rogue. I think you’re much more... attractive in black.”

“Where will you be sleeping, my lord?”

“I am not sure. I thought you would know.”

Tryniti looked at Chablis and Burgundy and called them to the table.

“*Oui, Princesse?*”

“Chablis, Burgundy, where will the Marquis be staying?”

“The king suggested in your wing, Princesse. He said to tell you, so your groom is... close to you.”

Tryniti blushed, having figured out her uncle knew exactly what she was doing in the veranda earlier. Aramis must have tattled. She continued eating her dinner, thinking about where Sean was going to sleep in her wing. She had the entire wing to herself, over twenty bedrooms, three studies, an exercise room, a music room, and even a room that was her wine and rum storage, along with her herbs and teas. She didn’t exactly want to put Sean in one of the bedrooms, she wanted him in her bed.

The problem was she couldn't have him in her bed, for it was the eve of their wedding. In normal tradition, the groom was not to see the bride before the wedding. So, to be slick, to have him close to her, she would put him in the room next to her, where there was an adjoining door she could leave open and still see him. It would be the perfect idea. And if anyone came by all they had to do was close the door. Tryniti realized she barely touched her food while Sean was already on a second helping.

"Hungry?" She mused.

"Very much." Sean said, slurping down another mussel.

"Did you sail your ship here?"

"It's not exactly my ship. I borrowed a friend's ship while mine is being repaired in America. If you'd like you can come with me to trade ships."

"I would. But I'd like to sail my own ship if you don't mind." Tryniti said without even looking at him.

"Why would you want to sail yours when you can be with me on mine?" He said.

"Because. I just don't feel comfortable not being on my ship."

Sean narrowed his eyes at his bride. "You just don't like the fact you're not giving orders."

"Sean, don't start."

"That's the only reason, Tryniti."

Tryniti slammed her napkin on the table. "That's not the only reason!"

"Then what is? Please tell me," He said, turning his palms up in the air.

“I need to go back to the Cove to settle some things, is that a problem?”

Sean started to mutter under his breath, “And I can’t take you there? I *do* know where it is.”

“No! How could you possibly know, you’re not a pirate!”

Sean hesitated before quickly responding with, “But I will be a pirate’s husband. It gives me the right.”

He almost let it slip that he knew where the Cove was after he followed her thinking Azula was her prisoner.

“No, it doesn’t. Piracy doesn’t have the same rules!” She yelled.

Sean tossed his fork down on the plate. “You’re pushing my buttons, woman!”

“And you’re pushing mine!”

Tryniti pushed her plate away and stomped from the room angrily.

She looked back at him with her stormy black eyes.

“Burgundy... Chablis... he will be staying in the adjacent room.”

The maids looked at their majesty confused. She was shooting daggers at this man but yet she wanted him in the room next to hers that was eventually meant for her nursery. They couldn’t disobey their mistress’ orders.

“*Oui, Princesse.* We will tell Aramis to move his bags there.”

“No bother. I’m sure I will meet him along the way.”

She flounced out of the room, smashing a vase along the way, which was a common occurrence in the Bourbon household. He stared at her backside, watching it as she walked away and up her spiral staircase.

Sean glanced over at Burgundy. "What exactly is the adjacent room?" he asked.

"It is ze room meant for her nursery, Monsieur. It has a door that connects ze two rooms."

He smiled as the maid told him this. He would have a little fun with his bride tonight for making him a fool at the dinner table. He was going to enjoy this.



Chapter 13

“In smiling Bacchus’ joys I’ll roll, Deny no pleasures to my soul.”



SEAN AND TRYNITI STARED angrily at the closed door between them. She was not unlocking it for any reason. The door only locked on her side, and there were no doors other than the one between them that led out of the nursery. She had it designed that way so no one could see her child unattended. She had her future husband locked up in the room she chose for him.

Sean was furious at Tryniti for locking him inside the room. The only way he could get out was through that door, or through the window by the bed, which had a sprouting willow tree just close enough for him to jump on. But he wasn't going to dare try that and have the guards after him, for he bet they patrolled the grounds at night.

Tryniti looked out her window towards the city. It was now glittering and shining bright. She could hear the calls of rowdy patrons from the bars, the calls to lovers out on the balconies, and the sounds of the Parisian nightlife. She let the balcony doors open, enjoying the warm night air and the smell of the bakeries and restaurants wafted in, for Paris never slept. She breathed it in deeply, wishing she could enjoy the nightlife of

Paris. That was the only thing she missed about her home when she sailed the seas, the hustle and bustle of the nights in Paris she couldn't enjoy. As a princess, she was not allowed to do such things. If her subjects saw her out and enjoying the town, a scandal would ensue. She wanted nothing more than to eat out under the stars at one of the restaurants with her lover, to look out over Paris atop the highest point of Notre Dame, and she wished she could go to some of the women clubs, with music and dancing and frolic. But as long as she was a princess she couldn't. Sometimes she thought about disguising herself, but she knew someone would see her and expose her. It wasn't fair that James was out there, allowed to enjoy the night because he wasn't Crown royalty. He would only be King if Tryniti died and didn't have an heir, if the Assembly would stick to traditions. She knew he rather enjoyed the seedier parts of Paris, out with his long-time girlfriend Angelique. She was jealous of her brother in this aspect, but he did help Tryniti out in some ways, bringing her back presents from his romps and giving her paintings of the unknown world she couldn't grasp.

She sighed, the night air soothing her temper. She breathed deep and decided to open the door to the eventual nursery where she had Sean locked up. When she unlocked it, she found Sean naked, playing with his manhood. She was thoroughly embarrassed, her face turning a deep red. He smiled as he saw her expression.

"I'm sorry, Tryniti. But I wasn't waiting for you."

She looked sad, knowing he could please himself without her. Staring at him with his manhood in his hands practically brought her to tears. If he wanted pleasure why didn't he just come to her? She didn't understand. *Well*, she thought, *you did*

make him angry earlier and lock him in a room he couldn't escape. She felt the salty liquid start to roll down her cheeks, confused as to why she was even upset at all. Was she that naïve in love-making that any little thing upset her? To hide her tears she turned away and ran from her room. Sean thought he was getting revenge on Tryniti, but when he saw the expression and tears in her eyes he felt guilty and terrible. He hurriedly dressed and ran to follow her.

All he saw down the hall was a swish of purple nightgown heading... out the window!

He ran full speed toward the window screaming for Tryniti. He stuck his head out and looked three stories down. There was no sight of her. He knew he saw her go out the window, what happened to her? He felt something drop on his head. He looked up and saw a small ladder. She climbed up on the roof! Tryniti had so many secret doors, stairs, greenery, and other things built into the house only she knew where they all were. She liked her privacy and for no one to find her. Sean climbed up the ladder and found her standing atop her room on the roof. She crossed her arms, still looking towards downtown Paris.

“Tryniti... I'm sorry. I didn't know that would hurt you. Please, come back down and I'll let you pleasure me. Come to think of it how do you *not* know about these things as a pirate?”

“Go away,” she told him.

“Tryniti, please.”

She turned to face him, tears streaming down her face.

“I hate it, Sean! I hate this! I hate being a Crown Princess! I want to be out there!” She pointed toward downtown Paris,

and beyond that, the English Channel. "I want to enjoy the nightlife! To have fun and not worry about proper etiquette! Not worry about being royalty! I want to enjoy myself like everyone else! My dear brother gets to enjoy the nightlife, but I can't for I'm a Crown Princess! I'm not allowed to have such...indulgences!" She fell to her knees, crying from her screaming and heartache.

Sean ran to hold her and gathered her in his arms. "Tryniti, I know. I promise you that you will get to enjoy it one day. I will make it happen. It may not be in Paris, but you can enjoy it in London, my home. It is ok for royalty there to enjoy the nightlife and parties of London society."

Tryniti hiccupped and was able to form the words, "It is?"

"Of course it is. Yes it's mostly elite you will meet, but it's all the same you know."

"Thank you, Sean. You're a wonderful future husband."

"And you are the same, my princess. A wonderful blushing bride."

"I'm sorry I got upset. I'm afraid I don't know much about lovemaking outside of stories on my travels. Quite absurd isn't it? A pirate knowing next to nothing about the bedroom."

Sean smiled, "Not at all Princess. You kept your word to the marriage contract. I believe that my own pleasure without you wasn't what truly upset you."

"You're right. It wasn't only that. I was having thoughts before I opened the door and seeing you... in that state only upset me further."

"I do apologize Princess. Now, will you please come down? I'd love to make love to you."

"Really?"

“Really. Now come with me. I can’t stand being away from you much longer. But you didn’t answer my question...” Sean said as he picked her up in his arms and carried her back down the ladder. He let her on her feet when they came back in through the window. And standing there was dear Aramis, waiting for her.

“Aramis! What are you doing?”

“Looking out for you, Princess. I heard your groom screaming your name and saw him go out the window. I realized you must be on the roof again. I stayed here to keep watch in case anything happened.”

“I’m perfectly alright, Aramis. Sean was... doing his duty as my future husband and fiancé in taking care of me.”

“*Oui*. I’ll be going now to check on Princesse Azula.”

Tryniti smiled, knowing Aramis was in love with her sister. “You do that Aramis. I’ll warn you ahead of time. She’s undressing at this time.”

Aramis blushed at what the older sister told him and made a hasty exit.

Sean cocked his head at her. “Why would you tell him that?”

“It’s perfectly true dear. I’m sure Azula wouldn’t mind him watching her.”

“You play such dirty tricks, Princess.”

“I do not. I’m only honest.”

Sean grabbed her hand and walked her back to her room. He laid her on the bed and stared into her eyes. She was so beautiful; he never saw a woman more beautiful than she was. He couldn’t help but just stare at her in all her glory, even though she wasn’t naked yet. She was dressed in a thin lilac

purple nightgown that went to the floor. It accented her figure and the silky material molded itself to her, showing all her luscious curves. He grew hard instantly and wanted her bad. He watched her breathing, her perfect breasts beating up and down and he wanted to suck and nibble on them. He undressed himself, and once more showed her his throbbing manhood aching to bed her. He slowly took off her nightgown, kissing her body as he made his way up to her lips. He kissed her sensuously, his lips caressed hers, his tongue exploring her mouth. Tryniti played with him herself, her tongue dancing with his. She closed her eyes, savoring the taste of him. He felt the heat growing in her belly, ready to take him in. He bent down to play with her breasts, kneading one in one hand while he licked and suckled on the other. She moaned in pleasure, ready for him to enter her. He mounted her, but he still continued to play with her breasts, his manhood inches from her warmth.

She wanted him badly, and she was ready to get on top of him just so she could have him. She'd never been on top before and wasn't sure how to do it. She heard stories, but she was hesitant to try. *What the devil am I thinking? I'm the fiercest pirate on the seas I can handle one man!* She wrapped her legs around him, and with her strength, was able to flip him over onto her bed. She ended up with her legs still wrapped around him, and he was underneath her. She looked down at him, trying to ask him what to do next. He wasn't exactly sure either, but he remembered watching others do it. He picked her up and placed her gently on top of him to make her more comfortable. He took her hips and lifted her onto his throbbing manhood. He let her down hard on top of him and she let out a squeal of plea-

sure. She was sure she screamed so loud the entire palace heard her and the guard would come soon. She heard a noise outside her window. And a man's voice was calling to her.

"Princesse? Princesse Tryniti?"

"*Oui*. I'm alright Monsieur Marcel. Don't worry about me."

"I heard you scream."

"It wasn't the scream you were thinking of, Monsieur!"

"Oh, *desolée*, Princesse! I will leave you."

She heard him walk away, and she looked down at Sean. "Damn you."

"You're the one who screamed." He said, smiling his devilish grin.

She bent down and whispered near his ear, "I wasn't expecting it to feel that good!"

"Or this?"

He moved slowly inside her, his hips grinding into hers. He slowly worked his hips underneath her. She got the idea of how to work on top of him, and she slowly moved her hips, getting her rhythm. She bounced and swiveled on top of him, getting the feel of being in control. She started to enjoy it too much and rode him hard. Once she got her rhythm she went faster and harder, making him groan with pleasure. She bounced and bounced, having more fun with it than pleasure. She was feeling pleasure at the same time, but she was having too much fun in control of him. She bounced harder and harder, faster and faster, ready to release her passion down on him, and he was ready to release himself inside her. He wanted her so bad, he couldn't get enough of her soft body, her tight warmth. At that moment, scrambling for the feel of her, for her passion, he

was sure he loved her. But did she love him back just the same? She said she loved him, but he didn't know exactly how much she loved him. Would she leave him at the altar tomorrow? Or would she go through with it and then leave to go back to the Caribbean? He wasn't sure what to think about her.

Tryniti's mind raced while straddling him. She tried her hardest to please him, she wanted nothing more than him to feel pleasure from her and only her. She wanted him to beg for her, to never leave her. She wanted him to only want her, and no other woman. She didn't realize he already felt that way, but she couldn't read his expressions or look into his eyes because they were closed. She sensed he loved her, but how much? Would he leave her at the altar? Or would he marry her and then leave out to sea, never to see him again unless she happened upon him in a sea battle? She didn't know what to think of him. She was marrying a man she barely knew. He was marrying a woman he barely knew. But they had no choice but to marry. *Wait a minute*, she thought, *he gave me a choice. He took off my ring and gave me a choice. I had the choice to leave him or marry him. And I choose to marry him. I must love him! I have to love a man in order to marry him and I chose him. But he gave me a choice, did that mean he didn't want to marry me?* Was that a clue he was hoping she said no? It couldn't be.

He was underneath her, clawing for her body. But that could be just lust, not love. What is love? Her head swirled with passion and pleasure and she couldn't think anymore. All that mattered now was that she had him to herself, and no one else could touch him. She would marry him tomorrow, and no other woman could have him. She'd kill any woman who stood in her way, or any man for that matter. No one was taking Sean

away from her, no one. At the thought of him in love with her and having him all to herself, she released her passion on him.

“Oh, *Dieux! Sean! J'taime! J'taime!*” she screamed her love for him.

Sean wasn't exactly sure what she said, he knew French, but he was too lost in the growing ecstasy to try to translate. But from her tone, he knew she said, ‘I love you.’ He released himself deep inside her warmth, his passion reaching great heights, at the thought of her being in love with him. They both floated down from their ecstasy, happy to just be in each other's arms. She curled herself into him, feeling the warmth of his chest as he laid her down back on her bed. He cuddled her close, wishing he could sleep with her tonight. But he knew he couldn't. He kissed her gently.

“I must go, *mon bien-aimé*. I will see you tomorrow, *pour notre mariage*.”

Tryniti smiled brightly at Sean's fluent French. She decided to test him with full sentences.

“*Et comment avez-vous appris à parler couramment le français?*” She inquired if he spoke French.

He looked at her, puzzled at first, but then realized she was testing him. He smiled and spoke to her.

“*Ensez-vous que mon fiancé, que je n'aurais pas apprendre votre langue puis que je suis d'épouser une femme belle et fougueuse? Je ne peux pas obtenir assez de toi Tryniti, je t'aime tellement,*” he said to her.

Her eyes widened in surprise that he could speak her language, and even more happy he said he learned it for her. He declared his undying love for her by saying, *are you sure my fiancé, that I wouldn't learn your language since I am marrying*

a beautiful and fiery woman? I can't get enough of you Tryniti, I love you so much. She decided to return the favor in his language.

"I love you very much, Sean. I can't bear to leave you. I want you so much all the time, I can't get enough of you. Please never leave me or hurt me. I'm walking down that aisle tomorrow because I love you. Will you be waiting at the end because you love me?"

Sean almost broke into tears over how happy he was. He could only answer a few words to his loving bride.

"Oui, ma amour. Je serai là pour vous?"

"Oh, that accent was terrible. Yes, my love. I'll be waiting there for you."

She kissed him once more, and tired from her escapades, she fell asleep in his arms. He slowly let her go so she wouldn't wake up. He snuck quietly back to his room and tried to sleep. He was too excited for tomorrow but thinking about Tryniti made him fall gently asleep from his exhaustion with their trysts.



Chapter 14

“As I sailed, I laid him in his gore, not many leagues from the shore.”



THE NEXT MORNING, THE air was warm, the sky was a brilliant blue with no clouds in sight. The sun beamed down on Sean like a beacon, leading her to safety. He looked perfect in his wedding suit, and she looked lovely in her white and silver gown, reminiscent of her aunt’s during her wedding. She slowly walked down the aisle. As she got closer to Sean, guests started disappearing around her. The sky was no longer clear but grew dark and cold. She looked around her, scared, searching for her family. They were nowhere in sight. She looked back at Sean and the sun was gone, he no longer looked at her, but held someone else in his arms. She watched as he caressed and kissed this other woman, then threw her a smile only a rake could do. She felt herself being dragged away, she tried to run to him, sword in hand, but the distance was gathering between them.

Tryniti woke up in a cold sweat, her own screams waking her. The nightmare had turned her blood cold, and she was angry. *It was just a dream.* She realized it was dark outside, probably in the middle of the night. The moonlight crept into her room, giving her light to reach her water basin. Something didn’t feel right. She looked beside her and noticed Sean was

no longer in the bed. She checked the nursery, there was no sight of him. She opened the door to the hallway and there was no one there in the candlelit hall except the guards at either entrance.

Where could he have gone? Maybe he's gone up to the roof for some fresh air?

She tip-toed to the window and shimmied her way out. She hoisted herself up to grab the first rung and climbed up. Once she reached the top, she saw it was empty. Her heart started to race; she feared the worst. Did he leave? Would he rather die than marry me? Her judgment became clouded, she couldn't think straight. In a daze, she climbed back down the latter and flung herself through the window. She landed on her feet as quiet as a cat. She had to find some answers. *The guards!* They had to have seen him. Maybe they would know where he's gone. She ran down the hall and tapped Michel.

"Excusé moi, Monsieur Michel, have you seen my fiancé?"

Michel jumped in surprise at the Dauphine addressing him, and in improper clothing. He gave a slight awkward bow.

"Desoleé, Dauphine. He did not think you would wake. He is out walking in the city getting some air. He said he needed to clear his head."

She tried to keep her emotions hidden as she thanked him for his help. *"Merci, Michel."*

Her face turned to stone after hearing the news. She immediately ran to her chest to get her tunic and breeches. How dare he! Out in the city? After she opened her heart to him about how badly she wanted to be out there, he takes off and mocks her! Damn it all to hell, and damn being royalty! The Black Rogue will do as she pleases! And she pleases to find her

husband-to-be in the thralls of Paris. She bound her breasts quickly and donned her tunic. She quickly pulled on her black breeches and boots and grabbed a cap to hide her hair. There, she thought, no one would recognize her. She made sure to grab her dirk and her pistol in case of trouble. She quietly opened the door and slipped out, padding across the carpet to the window. She made sure the guards weren't looking as she jumped out the window and scaled the three floors. She moved like water as she jumped from the tree and shimmied down into the bush below. Luckily, there were no guards prowling the grounds by her wing. She was able to walk across the grass to the high wall and jump over it without being seen. The nightlife of Paris awaited her, and he bloody well wouldn't get away with this.



SEAN AWOKE TO HIS FUTURE bride fast asleep in his arms. She looked so peaceful and beautiful in the moonlight. He couldn't believe how fast his life was changing and the events of the day. His head started to swim at the thought just a few months ago this woman tried to destroy his ship and kill his crew. He couldn't think, couldn't breathe, everything was happening so fast. He was still intoxicated from lovemaking, drunk off her scent and ecstasy. He needed some fresh air, for in the morning he'd no longer be a merchant sea captain bachelor, the owner of a vast shipping company, he'd be the Dauphin of France.

He got up and looked out the window, watching the streets glitter in the distance. It was his last night as a single man, and

he deserved a proper night out. He just needed to walk and clear his head, and possibly stop for a drink, if France had any decent whisky. He quietly got dressed and snuck out the door, careful not to awaken his fiancé. As he shut the door, he was confronted by one of the guards.

“*Arrêtez!* Where do you think you are going, *Monsieur* Reilly?”

“Oh! I’m sorry sir, I just need some fresh air and fancy a walk,” Sean said. He was a bit startled by the man sneaking up behind him.

“At this time of night *Monsieur?* The Dauphine may not be pleased. Would you like an escort?”

“No, no, my good man I’ll be fine on my own. I just need to clear my head is all. I’ll be back before she wakes.”

Michel nodded and let Sean pass. He watched Sean as he made his way down the hall. Michel didn’t like the fact Sean was wondering off in the night and thought he should send someone to watch him anyway. Although, he wasn’t fond of the Dauphine having to marry an Englishman, so it might be better if he ends up walking to his death.



TRYNITI WAS SO FURIOUS at Sean she almost lost her way. She was finally in downtown Paris but didn’t stop to take in the beauty of it. The city full of light, grand architecture, music, dance, and the smell of baked goods and wine. She didn’t know where to even start looking for him. In the city of Paris, where would a man like him go? If her intuition was correct,

he'd be down by the docks, or at least close to it. He may be of some nobility, but he doesn't flaunt it. She pulled her cap tighter over her head and fixed her posture. She was no longer the Dauphine of France; she was the Black Rogue disguised as a man ready for a night on the town in the seedier parts of town. Le Cygne D'or sounded like the best place to start her search. She found out his ship was docked not far off and a beggar on the street said he saw a man with Sean's description enter the bar not too long ago. He may possibly still be there, and if he was, she was going to confront him about his appalling actions. She gave the beggar a sack of coin and made her way toward the entrance. She entered, greeted with a face full of smoke, rowdy laughter, and the smell of wine and ale. It was just like being back at the Cove. She walked to the bar and sat down, asking the bartender for a spot of port in her best manly captain's voice. As she sipped from her glass her eyes scanned around the room. Through the haze she spotted no sign of Sean. Her eyes were as sharp as ever, and there would be no way she could miss him. The bar was small, one room made of stone and cement with wooden ceiling beams. Two giant wooden support beams in the middle of the room held everything together. There were wooden stairs leading up to the rooms of the trumpery, three-penny upright, and putains. She felt terrible that even in her own country, there were women so poor they had to reduce themselves to such professions. Tryniti thought possibly she could rectify that once she became Queen.

Oh well, guess it's on to the next place, she thought.

She finished her drink and headed for the door. It wasn't until she went by the stairs and looked up that she saw Sean with a strumpet straddling him against the wall.



SEAN ADMIRERD THE REVELRY and beauty of Paris. The bars were full of drink and laughter, and he could smell the bakers at work for the morning rush. Music flooded the streets, the sweet dulcet tones caressing his ears. There was nothing like this back in London. Even with a Revolution, it still seemed safer here on the docks than in the worst parts of London. He decided to seek out some of his crewman who said they'd be frequenting a place called The Golden Swan. He wasn't that fluent in French, but he figured out Le Cygne D'or was the place he was looking for.

"I guess it does help when there's a bloody giant swan on the sign," he muttered to himself. As he entered the bar he was met with familiar smells and sounds, with a French twist. The musicians sang in French and the bar served some ales and port that were not available in the Caribbean. He signaled the bartender for a drink.

Just one or two, he thought, and back to the Tuileries before she wakes.

Sean had his two, and then three, four, five, and six. Hours later, he was well past being a tosspot. He tried to sing with the other men and played a few rounds of cards. He realized he had to get back to the Tuileries, so he said his goodbyes to his crewman. As he crossed the path to the upstairs, she got in his way.

"Well tu are a 'andsome *compagnon*, monsieur. Tu look like tu need some excitation," she said in broken French and English.

“What the devil? Get out of my way, you jade,” he demanded. How dare this woman try to make advances at him in her low-cut corset and skirts? She was a thing of beauty, with pale skin and beautiful golden hair. Her body was exquisite, and one of the most beautiful women he’d ever seen. In the past he may have taken her up on her offer, but now he only had eyes for one woman, and that was the tanned, brown-haired siren of the sea sent from Poseidon himself that awaited him in her bed.

“*Monsieur*, you dare call *moi* that? Come, tu look like a man wit’ troubles. I will take them away from tu.” She expertly caressed him, putting her hands on his chest and making her way down his body. He tried to pull away, but somehow he was being pushed up the stairs.

No, he thought, *I can’t let her do this*. He decided to reason with her. “*Mademoiselle*, you are beautiful. But my heart is promised to another. There are consequences to my actions beyond your comprehension.”

“Now *Monsieur*, tu do not ‘ave to *promettre tu heart tu moi*. How you say, promise tu heart tu me. What your Dame does not know won’t hurt her.”

She pushed Sean against the wall and pressed her body against his. He was so drunk his body refused to fight back. He tried to lift his arms, but she had him pinned. He knew this woman had him pegged from the start and was looking for an easy drunken target. She straddled him and pressed her face close to his, and the next thing he saw was the strumpet being ripped to the ground and tossed down the stairs.

Tryniti had him by the throat and a blade to his stomach.

How. Dare. He! How dare this man, the man who said he loved her and wanted to marry her get into bed with a strum-

pet! That blackguard! Seeing that woman on him shattered her heart into a million pieces, and then she saw red. All it took was one thrust and a squeeze and he'd be out of her life forever. For some reason, she couldn't do it. He wouldn't willingly get into bed with a whore, would he? And ruin everything they had together, putting his life on the line?

"Talk. Now," she growled.

Sean saw in her eyes how angry she was. If he said one wrong word she'd send him to Davy Jones' locker.

"Could we please speak outside? I need air..."

"No!" she yelled.

"Please? Tryniti, I can't breathe." He croaked.

Her eyes never left his, and her hand was steady with the knife near his stomach. "Good."

"You don't understand..."

"Fine. Outside. Now."

She kept ahold of him and flipped her dagger into his back as they walked down the stairs. She kicked the woman in the head as they walked out the door.

"You didn't have to do that."

"Damn you to hell, Sean! How dare you! Can you even begin to comprehend what this means? The *stupidité* of your actions? Once I tell my *oncle* and *papa* what you've done you'll be sent to the guillotine at dawn!"

"It's not like that! She came onto me!"

"She came onto *you*? Do you truly think I would believe that *des orduers*?"

"I expect you to because I trust you; why do you not trust me?"

“Trust? I just saw you in the arms of another woman and you speak of trust?”

“I did nothing with her! I was drunk, still am in fact, and she tried to take advantage of me! I tried pushing her off and telling her no, but...”

“Oh, a muscled sea captain like yourself couldn’t push away a mere woman? You are nothing but a blackguard and a *séparateur de barbe!*”

He grabbed her and pulled her close, not caring that the dagger was close to breaking his skin. “I could never push you away if I tried.”

She could smell the stench of port on his breath and there was heat behind the glaze in his eyes. “Flattery won’t save you, Sean.” She ripped out of his grasp and stormed down the cobblestone streets.

“Tryniti...Tryniti! Tryniti, where are y...you going?” he screamed, slurring words and loud enough for the entire street to hear.

“Dammit, man! *Arrêter!* How dare you!” she sneered. She turned back and grabbed him, pulling them into a darkened alley. “I am a member of the royal family!” She whispered. “You are a complete blunderbuss you cad! Do you understand what could happen if someone overheard you? The consequences are surmountable! Shut your gob or you’ll be missing a cock.”

“See... that’s the... the trouble with you, love. You like my cock too much so that is an empty threat.”

“*Mon dieu*, you are a horrible drunk.” She sighed. “Let’s get you back to the Tuileries. I don’t need my future husband nursing a hangover during the ceremony.”

“I suppose you’re right.”

Tryniti grabbed Sean's arm and hoisted it over her shoulders. She placed her other arm around his waist to stabilize him and lead him out into the street.

"How can you..."

Tryniti silenced Sean before he could finish.

"The most feared pirate captain on the seas and you're going to ask how I can carry you?"

He remained silent and continued to glance at her.

Tryniti glanced over at him, catching him watching her. "What?"

"Will you listen to me now?"

"No."

Tryniti continued to ignore him as they walked up the street. She pulled her hat down tighter to obscure her face. She wanted to remain just another man dragging his friend home from a night of revelry. She felt him start to regain his composure under her arms. *At least he's stopped swooning all over the place*, she thought. Before they got about halfway to the Tuileries, she felt Sean stiffen under her, and the next moment she felt his strong arms pull her into the nearest alley.

"What the devil..." She began demandingly, but he held a hand to her mouth. She started to hear the faint clatter of steel and voices raised in anger. The people were screaming about justice, about bread, about money, and even her *Tante*. She removed Sean's hand from her mouth and held her hand up to his chest as she silently made her way closer to the entrance of the alley. She could hear boots and heels clicking and clacking against the cobblestones, she could see the reflection of flames off of the brick and stone walls of the buildings around them. Her heart started to race.

Revolutionaries!

She could hear the old palace guards commanding orders at the mob, as she went to peek around the corner, she heard screams and the sound of gunfire. She quickly and quietly ran back to Sean, who was leaning against the building, watching her.

“Come. This way,” she whispered.

Tryniti grabbed his arm and pulled him deeper into the alley. She pulled him into another dimly lit alley, and then another, twisting right and left then left and right and left again. He felt like they’ve been running for hours, twisting through the streets with the smells of fresh baked bread, strong coffee, and a swirl of classic French dishes. Soon they saw a shimmering growing light, and she pulled him out of the darkness into a well-lit street. Sean looked around and saw no one, nothing but candle-lit cobblestone streets and a bridge in front of them. He saw the mighty Seine making its course through the thick barriers between them and the island ahead.

“We must keep going,” Tryniti said.

“There’s no need, Tryniti, there’s not a soul around.”

“No. I’ll feel safer once we cross the bridge,” she exclaimed.

“What’s across the bridge?”

She pointed up toward the sky. A looming figure he could barely make out in the darkness stood before them. A massive structure of stone with colorful stained-glass windows. The glass glittered from the moonlight and dim shadows from the candle flames inside.

“Is this Notre Dame?” he asked.

“*Oui. Le Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris.* As long as we are close by and can enter, we can claim sanctuary. No mob can hurt us, then.”

They hurried across the large stone bridge and entered the parvis. She led him across the parvis and motioned to sit on the Cathedral’s steps. The entire walk she was silent and avoided his gaze.

“Nothing like an angry mob to awaken your senses,” Sean remarked.

She was turned away from him, her gaze staring out into the Seine. He sighed, knowing she was still angry at him for that tavern wench.

“Tryniti, you must listen to me. I wanted nothing and did nothing with that wench. She cornered me, and next thing I know you were standing in front of me with a sword at my throat.”

“Actually, the sword was at your stomach. My hand was around your throat.”

“Devil take it, woman stop being so obstinate! I would never do anything to perturb you or put my life, or yours, in a precarious situation.” His voice flustered with fury.

Stoic as ever, she made no reply. As he was about to scold her again, she turned around and stopped him.

“Do you even think about anyone but yourself? I may be a ruthless pirate who takes great pleasure in the life at sea, but at least I think of others! I would not be here, in my war-torn home if it wasn’t for my duty and the love I have for my country and her people! Do you think I wanted this? Everything is just...”

Tears started to well up in her eyes, a rare occurrence for a woman of her standing. She couldn't let him see her tears. What was she saying? Her emotions were getting the better of her and she couldn't control them. The weight of everything that was riding on her came crashing down and seeing Sean with a strumpet was the catalyst.

"Tryniti if you think I didn't think of anyone else when that wench pushed herself on me, you're mad. I thought of you. I thought of the life I wanted. As soused as I was, and may possibly still am, I only wanted you and I'm not afraid to admit it. Hurting you is the last thing I would want to do."

"I know what I saw, Sean. I was not deep in my cups, as you were. Your pleas will not get you out of this."

"I know it won't. But I'm asking you to trust me. I love the sea as much as you, do you think I would give that up for a whore? When I have you? Do you really know so little about me that you think I'd give up my life, and you, and if I'm going to be prude, a chance at being King of France, Prince, whatever it is I am, for some low-class riff-raff?"

She thought about what he said and realized what was she thinking? She was blinded by jealousy and rage. When she looked back at the scene she was able to notice subtle hints. Sean's back was arched away from the woman. Her knuckles were white in defense, trying to hold his arms down. His eyes said that of a drunk, not of someone deeply intoxicated with lust. What had she done?

"Sean, I... I'm sorry. What were you doing there anyway? Why did you go there?"

"I could ask you the same question."

“I came to find you. The guard said you went for a walk. I knew you’d come to find your crew, I thought you were running away.”

“Run away? Why would I run away?”

“I’d run away if I was you. Being forced to marry, having to give up the sea.”

“Who said we’d have to give up the sea?”

“I know you’re drunk, Sean, but you can’t be that daft! Once we are married we will take the throne, as I have been ordered, and we must rule the country. We cannot sail ever again!”

Sean crossed his arms. “Since when do you take orders from others?”

Tryniti began to pace on the cathedral steps. “It’s not that simple. I know something is going to happen. Something terrible is going to befall my auntie and *oncle*. That is why they agreed with the National Constituent Assembly to appoint me as Queen. The throne has to stay in the family.”

“But what about their children?”

Tryniti stayed silent. She knew if harm was going to come to her family, they wouldn’t stop at just her aunt and uncle, they’d come for their children too. She didn’t think she could save them, and if she tried, she might be killed herself.

“Sean... I don’t think they’ll be here long enough to take the throne. The way this Revolution is going... we must do what the people ask of us. You saw what happened near the docks. We must bring the country back together and help our people,” she pleaded.

“The most cutthroat and ruthless pirate of the seven seas has a soft spot.”

“I do for my people. It seems in all the tales, no one’s ever said the Black Rogue never attacked a French or English ship.”

“Then why did you attack mine?” he protested.

“You know why. Through miscommunication, I thought you had kidnapped *mon frère*. That was the only reason I attacked you and I didn’t purposely attack you if you remember correctly. I was leaving with James and my men misread orders and attacked your ship. It was a simple misunderstanding.”

“Tell that to my ship in America.”

“Well, I’m truly sorry for that but nothing can be done about it now. You’re here now, aren’t you?”

“Yes, I am. And I don’t plan to go anywhere.”

He looked around and realized where they were. This is what she wanted all along, to explore Paris without being royalty. Her disguise worked well since even he didn’t recognize her in his drunken haze, but now he was sobering up and unless you were looking very closely it was difficult to tell this was the Dauphine of France.

“I have an idea,” he said.

“An idea?”

“Yes. Would you like to go home and get more rest before the morning, or would you like to spend the last remaining hours before dawn living your dream?”

She smiled and looked around the city before them. “Where shall we start?”



Chapter 15

“The worst old ship that ever did sail...”



TRYNITI WAS AWAKENED by the bright sunlight and chirping birds outside her window. She stretched and remembered she didn't have any clothes on. She smiled, remembering the night before. Even with the mishap, they had a wonderful time on the streets of Paris hitting every tavern along the way home. Tryniti slipped back into her room before anyone knew she was gone just before sunrise. She turned over to see the door closed. She was sure he was here when she fell asleep. She got up and put her robe on and walked to the nursery door. She slowly opened it, then banged it wide open. Sean's rumpled bed was unmade, and he was nowhere to be found. Anger rose up from the fires inside her, he ditched out on her! She was furious! Angry! She pulled the bell to ring for Chablis. Chablis and Burgundy ran in immediately.

“*Princesse!* It is very late! You must get ready!” Burgundy said, exasperated.

“Ready? I haven't even had my morning coffee and tea yet!” Chablis looked at Burgundy and shooed her to the kitchen.

“*Pressé et obtenir son café et le thé de Bugundy, elle doit être prête!* Hurry, grab the *Princesse* her coffee and tea, she is already late!” Chablis yelled.

Burgundy quickly ran from the Dauphine's room to fetch her morning drinks.

“Chablis, what is going on here? And where is that wretch of a fiancé?”

Chablis was startled by her mistress. She must have forgotten it was her wedding day. “It is your wedding day, your Highness. You cannot see him before the wedding, remember?”

Tryniti smacked her forehead. She completely forgot today was her wedding day. And she'd overslept!

“How many guests are here, Chablis?”

“I'd say around two-hundred so far, your Highness. The King is keeping them busy. Your intended is getting ready in the South Wing.”

“Are my bridesmaids here?”

“Yes, they are in the Violet Room down the hall. They didn't want to wake you; you looked so peaceful. And from last night...” she grinned, “you needed your rest.”

Tryniti blushed at her maid's words. She groaned. “Everyone heard, did they?”

Chablis chuckled. “Not everyone. Just the guards and a few servants. None of the family heard anything.”

“Well, let's keep it that way. I don't need anyone other than my *oncle* knowing what I was doing yesterday with my intended. After all, we're to be married today, I didn't see the harm in it.”

“That blackguard better not leave you at the altar then, *Princesse*, or we will all have a piece of him.”

Tryniti smiled at her maid's anger and protection for her mistress. “Thank you, Chablis. I greatly appreciate it. But after

all, I'll have his head if he leaves me standing at the altar. Remember, the Black Rogue takes no prisoners."

"*Oui*. But what would the *Princesse* Tryniti do?"

Tryniti thought about it for a moment, knowing full well she couldn't reveal her identity in front of her subjects. She knew what she would do to him, but what could she do as a Princess? Just sit and cry? Have the guards find him and kill him? She couldn't harm him herself with everyone watching. She'd have to get him alone. But what was she thinking? After what he said last night he wouldn't dare leave her. He'd be standing at the end of the altar just like he planned. *This man has my thoughts distraught this isn't like me a'tall*, she thought.

Tryniti stared out into the pool from her balcony, watching as her guests mill about the courtyard. She recognized every guest, except a few. There was one she thought she recognized, but he didn't look like the man she thought he was. She kept a close eye on him while Chablis did her hair in a fancy high coiffure, wondering who this man was. She looked down at him constantly, and Chablis had to keep moving her mistress's head upwards to finish her hair. She had an uneasy feeling about him. When she was finished, the bridesmaids came in with her wedding gown. Azula was holding the long train, and Vasco walked in behind her.

"Vasco! What are you doing here?"

"You didn't think I knew where you were, Dauphine? I found out from Gill you had to go home to marry that man you've been running from for years. I'm a bridesmaid, I guess, though I'm dressed in a suit. But I'm on your side, my dear."

"Oh *merci*, Vasco! You are a wonderful friend."

“Gill is here, too. Came aboard with me. We arrived this morning. Your *padre* is down there talking his ear off.”

Tryniti laughed at her friend’s accent. Every once in a while, his Spanish accent would slip, mixing with his English one. Her old friends from countries around the world carried her dress, which looked heavy and huge. The dress was snow white, with pearls decorating it in beautiful swirls. It was silk, soft and light. Her train was longer than she was. It took five of them to help her inside her dress. The corset tightened around her waist, though she was already so curvy it didn’t have to be laced tightly. Before they could slip the dress on her, she brought out her white breeches. Vasco laughed and so did Azula, but the rest of her friends didn’t understand.

“I’m the Black Rogue, remember? I don’t go without breeches.”

Her friends laughed, sometimes forgetting she was a fearsome pirate and not an obedient royal princess. She slipped the skin-tight breeches on, then allowed her friends to help her in her wedding gown. Although the dress looked heavy and tight, it actually fitted nicely and was light and airy. The bustier accented her breasts, making them look full and plump, her delectate silver lace barely covering them. Her dress was what she called “poofy” and spanned wide with her pannier. Her sister climbed the chair in her room to reach her head to place the Royal Crown with the attached veil on her head. Azula went to pull the veil over her face but stopped her.

“Only virgins wear such things...” Tryniti said.

“But sister you are a... to the gods you didn’t!” Her sister screamed.

“We did. We made love yesterday. We didn’t see the problem for it is our wedding day today.”

“You shouldn’t have done that sister.”

“I did anyway. And it was wonderful.” She smiled and her face flushed with the thought of Sean making love to her again.

“You’re terrible. And I love it,” Vasco said.

“Don’t condone her actions! She wasn’t supposed to bed him till tonight!” Azula chastised their old friend.

“Oh, what’s a day’s difference matter? It was inevitable today so what’s the trouble if she did the deed and had herself deflowered today or yesterday or tomorrow for that matter?” He said.

“The difference is she’ll be a wife tonight, and she wasn’t yesterday!” Azula scolded. “Please Tryniti, at least do it for society’s sake! It’s not proper for someone of your stature,” Azula said as she pulled the veil back over her sister’s face.

“But it was still with her intended was it not? They were virgins were they not?”

Tryniti’s jaw dropped at Vasco’s knowledge. “How did you know he was a virgin?”

“Because, *mi querido*, I was the one who kept tabs on him all these years. I’m much older than you. I had to keep him in check.”

“All this time and you didn’t tell me?” Tryniti demanded.

“I was sworn to secrecy by the King and your parents, you can’t blame me.”

Tryniti knew she couldn’t blame her best friend for his secrecy. When you were sworn to secrecy by the royal family of France, you couldn’t break it, or dire consequences would en-

sue. Presumably, death was the action taken by her uncle. He wasn't one to forgive deception, well, auntie more so than him.

"If you kept tabs on him all these years you didn't..."

Vasco cut her off. "Stop you from killing him last night at the tavern? You had things handled, it was actually very entertaining my dear. By the way, I lied. I arrived two days ago, Gill came this morning."

It was hard to make Tryniti blush, but Vasco had no trouble making color rise to her cheeks with the realization he saw everything last night. Finally, Tryniti was dressed in her full wedding gown, but she could barely move in the blasted thing. She knew she would tumble down the steps if she tried on her own. Her friends grabbed her dress and lifted it straight up so Chablis could put on her new white high-heeled boots she'll eventually use for pirating after they're painted black. They kept hold of it and helped her walk out of the room and down the hall.

When she reached the steps she stopped, worried she would fall. *Damned these blasted steps.* Azula and Vasco sensed her anxiety and held onto her waist as well, lifting her dress a bit higher so she could slowly walk down the many steps to the foyer. The wedding was being held by the pool, which was Tryniti's personal request. She looked out the window at the top of the stairs to see all the commotion. Chairs and tables were set up around the pool, enough for five hundred people. A giant white tent was set up with long poles to keep the guests out of the sun, decorated with silver ribbons and her favorite flowers. She wasn't expecting that many people, but then she remembered all of France's elite members would be attending the wedding with their dates. She didn't want this huge wed-

ding her uncle set up for her. She wanted a nice quiet wedding with only friends and family in attendance.

But that was not the way of French royalty.

Today of all days she wished her hardest she wasn't royalty. She knew many of her subjects wished to be her, with the fame, money, and high status, and she would gladly give it up to them. After a while she knew they wouldn't like it either. There were many rules to follow, most of them she'd already broken. If her uncle didn't love her so much she may have been hanged and burned for many of her actions. She knew once she saw Sean she'd feel better about this wedding. Her face turned red under her lace veil. She couldn't stop thinking about him, and she wanted to see his face when she walked down the aisle in her elegant wedding dress. She reached the foyer, and a select group of people were waiting.

Some of her friends were there, and of course her family. Her father and uncle were to walk her down the aisle to give her away. They were waiting for her at the bottom of her stairs, dressed in all black for the occasion, mocking her position. She thought it was an endearing thought, but also quite funny to honor the Black Rogue by wearing all black. She was sure Sean did the same. She imagined him in his top hat and tailcoat, and she began to get hot, and a feeling unfurled in her belly. Did they even make all black wedding ensembles? Dammit, she couldn't want him now! She had to hurry and get this wedding done so she could have Sean in her bed.

Her heart ached for him; she missed him greatly. She was tired of being betrothed and his intended. She wanted to be his wife already. She looked around the foyer just for a glimpse of him. She peeked into the parlor, and there he was sitting on

the sofa, with his back to her. His brother Pierce caught her looking, and he closed the parlor doors just before Sean turned around to look at her. She pouted; angry his brother had to ruin it. Well at least she knew he didn't run out on her.

"Tryniti, we must go out to the courtyard. The wedding will be starting soon," James said.

"But Sean is in the parlor..."

"He's stuck in the parlor because you're standing here, you dumb wench."

"You m..." Tryniti's fury unleashed on her brother, but Vasco held her back along with her father. How dare he speak to her that way on her wedding day! Dumb wench indeed... when he was about as smart as a horse's ass.

"James! Out! Now!" her father screamed. "I don't need her ripping her dress apart and her hair a mess before her wedding because of your antics!"

James ran as fast as he could to the courtyard, even more terrified of his father's fury than his sister's.

Azula watched him run like a little girl and she laughed uncontrollably. Tryniti saw what she was laughing at and burst into laughter. Her brother was nothing compared to her, even though he could hold his own in a fight if he had to. She lifted her skirts once more and walked out to the garden. The aisle started in the garden and came down to the pool. She sat on the little wooden bench with plush cushions underneath a large tent adorned with flowers with Azula and Vasco, waiting for her father and uncle to come to get her. She heard the music playing, and knew Sean and Pierce were waiting at the end of the aisle. One by one her bridesmaids left to walk down the aisle. Azula was to hold her train, and Vasco was last to go,

for he was what he liked to call, the “Man of Honor” since he wasn’t a woman. Azula was also her Maid of Honor, but she chose to hold her train, for Tryniti was a clumsy mess in dresses.

Vasco looked at Tryniti. “Here comes your padre and tío.”

She looked down the garden path to see her father and uncle coming to walk her down the aisle. She wasn’t sure if her sudden lack of breath was from her fears or the tight corset.

Vasco chuckled at her distress. “You’ll be fine. You’ve braved hurricanes, drunken men, killed men at that, epic sea battles, and Piazzo, the bastard, and you’re scared of a little wedding?”

She laughed, knowing it was silly to be scared of her own wedding. It was true, though, she really did all those things. She almost lost her ship in sea battles and terrible hurricanes, braving death and the churning sea, why was she so scared of a little wedding ceremony? Probably because it wasn’t so little. It was a wedding full of people, five hundred people plus the public watching. It was a scary experience.

“You ready, *mon petit*?” Louis said.

“*Oui, mon Tonuis*,” she said, sighing.

“This is a day of happiness, *ma fille*! Why the sad face?”

“Wedding day nerves, *oncle*. It’s scary getting married in front of so many people.”

“I guess I should also tell you many of London’s elite are also here. Including the entire royal English family, and the Mallory clan.”

“Who are the Mallorys?”

“You met them when you were much younger when your father took you to London. They are friends of your father’s and of your intended. They have a very large family.”

“Oh, my...” Her face turned a pale white. More people? That could mean another two or even four hundred people! Her nerves got the best of her and she couldn’t move. The music started to play, and her uncle and father went to walk but was pulled back because Tryniti couldn’t take a single step. She was terrified. She didn’t want to go out in front of all those people.

“Tryniti, what’s the matter?” Her father asked.

“I can’t do it, Father. I’m scared. All those people...”

“You will be fine my dear. Your mother and I went through the same problem. I was terrified and so was she.”

“*Maman* said you were married aboard your ship! That you were married by another Captain friend of yours!”

“It’s true. But do you think your grandfather settled for that?”

“He made them come home and have a proper wedding, *ma petit*.” King Louis whispered softly. “He wasn’t standing for a ship marriage. They got what they wanted, and he had to get what he wanted. The daughter of a King was not going without a proper wedding in her home country.”

“You really did that, *Père*?” Tryniti said.

“*Oui*. We had a wedding just as big as this. You can do it.” Max bent down and gently cradled his daughter’s chin in his hand. “You have your mother’s strength as well as mine. You can walk down this aisle to your beloved.”

Tryniti took a deep breath, grabbed her uncle’s and father’s arms, and slowly walked down the aisle.



SEAN WAS WONDERING where in the hell Tryniti was. He knew she was here, since earlier Pierce hurriedly closed the parlor doors so he couldn't see her. He hated leaving Tryniti this morning, wanting to spend the entire time with her after what happened last night. He watched her as she slept, so beautiful and peaceful. She was an angel asleep. He kissed her, and she responded by kissing him back, still fast asleep. He quickly ran out to meet his brother, Pierce, getting ready in the Bourbon wing.

"Was she still asleep?" Pierce asked.

"Like a rock. I think I wore her out last night."

Pierce blinked at him. "You did what?"

"Wore her out."

Pierce's face grew dark. "What did you do to her?"

Sean smiled his devilish smile. "I only made love to her."

"How could you? She's only engaged to you, not your wife!"

"Ah, but she will be in a few hours."

"You had no right. But I see you're happy finally feeling the pleasures of a woman..."

"Of course I am. There's nothing better than your first time being with your beloved."

Pierce walked over to the table with a crystal glass decanter filled with a dark garnet-red liquid and a few glasses sitting on a silver tray. He picked up the decanter and poured two glasses of port. "Since when did you love this woman?"

"Since forever. I just never realized it."

Pierce handed Sean one of the glasses as he took a sip from his own. "I'm glad of that. I was afraid this would be a terrible marriage. But I see you're both going to make out very well."

"I hope so. I love her Pierce. I hope she loves me the same."

"I have a feeling she does."

Sean, dressed in all black, downed his glass of port. After trying on his suit, Sean found he had gained muscle since his purchase a year ago and could no longer fit his tunic. Pierce ran out to the royal seamstress earlier yesterday to grab a new tunic for him, letting him in on the jest. The men dressed in all black in secret honor of the Black Rogue.

"I bet she's angry she has to wear white," Pierce said, letting out a small chuckle.

Sean adjusted his top hat and tailcoat. "I bet she is, the little devil."

Pierce couldn't help but release his curiosity. "How was she brother?"

Sean felt the bile rise up in his throat at his brother's curiosity.

"She was wonderful, amazing, and beautiful. Now please don't ask me a question like that again if you value your life, Pierce."

"I was just curious."

"Curiosity killed the cat."

They walked out of the room and downstairs to the dining room where her family was eating breakfast.

"Come. Sit and have breakfast with us," Alicé said.

"Thank you, your Highness," Sean said.

Alicé giggled and blushed.

“Oh, there’s no need for that, boys. I’ll be your mother-in-law soon.”

“That is actually quite nice.”

Louis spoke up, “My mother was very fond of your grandmother, boys. It’s a shame she went how she did.”

“Thank you, your Highness. That means a lot to us,” Sean said.

Sean sat down at the table with his brother next to Azula.

“What time does your sister usually wake?” Pierce said.

“Oh, depends on how late she went to sleep. Usually, she’d be up by now.”

Sean blushed a bit, knowing it was his fault she was sleeping in. She was so beautiful he didn’t want to wake her. He focused on his plate and shoveled food into his mouth. He thought about taking a plate up to Tryniti, but it would be disastrous if she woke up. He was a believer in superstition, and he didn’t want to see her before the wedding. It would ruin the effect she would have on him later on. As he sat in the parlor later, he listened for any sound of her, the swish of her dress, her beautiful laugh, or just her voice. When he heard her laugh carrying down the stairs, he wanted to turn around immediately. But he knew he couldn’t see her in her wedding gown before the ceremony, Pierce made sure of that.

Now he was standing at the end of the aisle, and she was nowhere in sight. Her bridesmaids were already at the altar, and Vasco just arrived. But where was she? Did she stand him up? Did she leave? His nerves got the best of him and he turned white.

Pierce saw his brother sweating and nervous. “What the devil is wrong with you?” he whispered.

“Where is she?” Sean hissed.

“There are many people here. She’s probably just nervous. Give it time.”

“What if she stood me up?”

“She didn’t, otherwise her father and uncle would’ve come back by now, now calm down.”

Sean sighed. “Alright.”

The music continued to play, but there was still no sign of Tryniti. Where in the hell was the girl? Then he saw a swish of white silk. She came around the corner and he almost fainted from the sight of her. She was absolutely beautiful, an angel walking toward him, to be only his forever. Her dress was very full, almost taking up the entire aisle. She walked slowly, for her dress looked heavy with many layers of fabric and both her father and uncle on either side of her. A few times her uncle looked as if he was going to collapse, but Tryniti held him close to her, helping each other down the aisle. When she reached the end, she let go of them and her uncle took his royal throne. Her aunt was already seated in her chair, which was across from her uncle and adorned both sides of the altar. Her father took her hand and handed it to Sean. Max pulled him close to whisper to him.

“If you ever hurt my daughter, it will be your head.”

“I promise you, sir, I’d give it to you on a pike,” Sean replied solemnly.

Tryniti smiled, knowing full well that Sean loved her and wouldn’t hurt her. At least she hoped. He kissed her hand and walked up with her onto the altar. Tryniti wasn’t a religious girl, but her uncle had the arch deacon of Notre Dame specially come to marry Tryniti and Sean.

“Dearly beloved, we gather here today to marry the Dauphine of France, Tryniti Bella Bourbon Brooke de Laurant, to the Marquis of Winchester of England, Sean Charles Reilly. Is there anyone who does not wish to see these two in matrimony?”

As soon as he finished, a voice rose from near the back.

“I do.”

Tryniti snapped around to see who dare defy her wedding. It was the man she saw earlier that she didn't recognize. So angry, she forgot all her English teachings and screamed at him in French.

“Qui osent défier la princesse de France? Qui osent défier mon bonheur expliquez-vous l'homme!” She screamed.

Who would dare defy the Dauphine of France! She demanded that the man explain himself. The man took off his hat and revealed his face. She almost didn't recognize him. His beard was shaved, and his hair was clean-cut; something this man never was before. Those piercing eyes bore into her soul, and she grabbed Sean's arm and held him close.

“I, the Crown Prince of Italy, Prince Piazzo Vetrici Dimonti, object to this marriage.”

At this point, Alicé stood up to defy him. “You have no jurisdiction here, and you have no right to stop my daughter's wedding Piazzo!”

“Oh, I do. For that should be my daughter, Princess. With you. But that Maxémillion stole you from me. I intend to get you back one way or another. If I have to marry your daughter, then so be it.”

His crew surrounded the wedding and even his royal guards. The French guard was on alert, and Louis told his men

to call in the French Army. Piazzo wasn't to be taken lightly. The next thing Tryniti knew she was being ripped away from Sean's arms. "Sean!" she screamed.

Sean turned around and saw Piazzo's men rip Tryniti from his arms. She was a strong woman, but not strong enough to fight off six men holding her down. Sean came up swinging, his brick fists colliding with her captor's faces. She turned around and pulled out her sword from underneath her dress. She sliced it open to reveal her breeches, tunic, and boots. Now she was able to move freely and attack.

"This is why I wear breeches and boots under dresses."

She sliced through her first captor, sending blood over her white attire. She turned around and sliced through her second one, but that was as far as she got. Her sword was pulled from her hand by Piazzo, and ten men held Sean down. The crowd was trying to run, except for the Mallory boys who were expert pugilists. Tryniti kicked and punched as hard as she could, but she was overpowered. Piazzo had more men than palace guards, and the army was still making their way through the crowded streets of Paris to reach them. Her arms and legs were pinned by four more men. She was then tied up with a long halyard rope and carried away from the crowd. She bit at the ropes, hoping to chew through or at least reach the dirk in her boot. Nothing worked since they had her wrists and legs tied and wrapped more rope around her body. There was nothing more she could resort to than scream and wriggle through the ropes. She then had a blindfold put over her head before reaching the Tuileries wall. All she could see was a thin black cloth blurring her view and smell the stench of unclean men. She kicked and screamed as hard as she could, yelling for Sean. After a few

screams and trying to bite Piazzo's men, she felt a sharp pain on the back of her head, and all she saw was pitch black.



Chapter 16

“With our cracked four-pounders we made to fight...”



WHEN TRYNITI AWOKE, she felt the rocking underneath her, and immediately she knew she was on a ship. She felt around and found a sharp object attached to the pole she was tied to. Putting her hands around the object she sawed at the ropes and ripped the ties around her hands. She took off the blindfold and saw she was on a ship unfamiliar to her. She knew it had to be Piazzo's. The last thing she remembered was fighting off his men, and now this.

Where was Sean? Why wasn't he here? She snuck to the stairs and hid underneath them. She looked up through the cracks and saw no one above her. She could tell she was down in the hold and she needed to slowly make her way on deck to see how far out the ship was from land. There was no one in sight in the crew's quarters, which was odd. She made her way up on deck and peeked up at the helm. Piazzo was steering the ship, keeping a close eye on the doorway to the hold. She ducked down so he couldn't see her, and she made her way back down. What was she going to do? Piazzo had her kidnapped! On her own wedding day! Oh what was she to do? Sean wasn't there to protect her, and her family was gone. Was anyone com-

ing after her? Her parents and her brother certainly would. But what about Sean? She wanted Sean to come rescue her. Would he? Or was this all a set-up to get himself out of marrying her? He couldn't! He said he loved her! Why would he do this to her!?! But... he couldn't know Piazzo, could he? Tryniti was a tough-as-nails woman. She never cried, never complained, and stood up for herself even if that meant she'd get hurt in the process. She sank down onto her knees, staring at her blood-stained wedding outfit and cried. She cried harder than she ever cried before. She wanted to get the hell out of there and be in Sean's arms. She wanted him to find her and save her and protect her. To hold her and kiss her and love her and tell her it was going to be ok and kill Piazzo Dimonti in front of her, if she didn't get to him first. She cried and cried hard, staining her shirt with tears, the blood running down her shirt. She had cuts and bruises on her face and arms from where his men tied her down. She didn't know if she would ever get out of there alive. She didn't know what Piazzo was going to do to her, but she knew for certain he was going to make her his. He was going to find an unholy way to marry her, and she damned well didn't like the thought of it. For the first time, she felt helpless.

Stop it Tryniti, she thought. You never needed a man before in your life and you don't need him now. You are the Black Rogue, the terror of the seven seas. You'll make your way out of this. But without a weapon, and on a ship with Piazzo and his men, this was not going to be easy.



PIAZZO KNEW TRYNITI could see him and that she escaped from the hold. He had to hurry to his hideout before the French Navy and her fiancé came to find her. It was a stupid idea kidnapping her at her own wedding, but it was the only chance he could get away with her. He was going to have his revenge on the Brooke de L'auront family. Alicé Harlene Bourbon was to be *his* wife! *His* woman! *His* betrothed! He was to marry her when she reached marriageable age, but she took off to be a pirate on the high seas like he did. That Maxémilion Brooke de L'auront took his wife for his own! He saw how much Alicé loved Max, and he hated the way they looked at each other. He hated the love they shared when he was to love her, and she was to love him! He loved Alicé, and that was why he chose her to be his intended many years ago. But he would get his revenge. He would marry her daughter, and he would still be an heir to the Bourbon family fortune. The royal French family were one of the richest families in Europe and became even richer with their alliance with Austria. If that wench in Le Cygne D'or did her job like she was supposed to, Sean would have been beheaded by now and things would have went more smoothly. No matter, he will have that fortune, and the woman, no matter what it takes.



TRYNITI WAS FAST ASLEEP underneath the ropes in the bulkhead. She mumbled to herself, dreaming away about Sean. She mumbled the same words over and over, so it sounded jumbled up

“Yes, yes, oui, yes! Oh, Sean! Oui! Oh no! Oh, my beloved oui! Just...right there... Oh please...”

She woke up startled. How in the hell in the midst of being kidnapped could she have a dream about Sean making love to her? It was absurd! She couldn't believe what she was doing.

She looked down and saw herself soaking through her breeches with her fantasy pleasure. Even though no one was around she was very embarrassed by her actions. She dragged a sheet around her but it was too late. She heard someone coming down the steps, but they were too quick for her to find a place to hide.

Piazzo looked at her standing in the middle of the hold. “Well, my dear we're soon close to my home.”

“How brave and idiotic of you to take me to Italy, Piazzo,” she sneered.

“No, no! Dear girl, do you think I'd be that stupid?”

“*Oui?*”

He became angered at her words. She was a spitfire, and she would have to be tamed. He knew she was a virgin having to keep to that ridiculous marriage contract, and he was going to take advantage of that.

“What is ‘soon’ to you, Piazzo?”

“In a month we'll be at my home in your favorite part of the world. Did you think I wouldn't keep a close eye on the Cove while you were gone? After all, you don't spend much time there.”

“I have Gill to look after it! And Tango! The Cove is none of your concern and you shouldn't have stepped foot there if you didn't weasel your way out of the deal.”

“Yes, well, they won’t be for long. After all, we left them back in France, and we’ll make good time beating them back to the Caribbean. Enjoy your stay aboard ship, Dauphine.”

Piazzo left and his men went to grab her. She went to pull her sword out and realized she didn’t have it. It was back home in France. But she did have another trick up her sleeve. The jostling of the ship reminded her of two secret weapons they didn’t think to search for. She kept two small pistols in her bustier, well hidden by her plump breasts. She pulled out her pistols, firing off two shots. His men went down in front of her, covered in blood. The blood-spatters covered her clothes once more, and she sighed.

She was ready to take Piazzo down and steer this ship back to France. As she went to fire off a shot at Piazzo’s back, she felt another sharp pain on the back of her head and the last thing she said was “Dammit!” before she looked up at the man who hit her with a pistol and darkness took her again.



Chapter 17

*“Oh, I am a sailor brisk and bold, long
time I’ve sailed the ocean...”*



SEAN COULDN'T BELIEVE himself. He let Piazzo get away with his bride. And now he intended to marry her. Damned if he would let that son of a bitch marry his fiancé! Stole her right out from underneath him! He could take on many men, but there was no taking on twenty of them without help. Sean was taken down and beaten before the French Army arrived and rounded up Piazzo's men. They were taken down to the prison to be hanged and guillotined for treason and attempted murder of the royal family. Sean was being attended to by Azula and Aramis. The rest of the family went unharmed, except Max who took a few good blows from Piazzo himself. Alicé was left untouched by any hand, and so was King Louis and Queen Marie.

The sun was starting to set on their wedding day as Aramis wiped the blood from Sean's face where his brow was split open. Aramis was also a surgeon and doctor in the Royal Army at a point in time and knew his medical practice. He was stitching up Sean's brow with Azula's aid when Max came over to him.

“Azula, leave,” Max commanded.

She left the men, obeying her father's orders.

"Where is she?" Sean asked.

"She's being taken back to the Caribbean, to a private island that son of a bitch owns. I'm having my men get my ship ready, along with Tryniti's."

"I will have my men ready my ship."

"No, you can come with me. I'd rather not have a friend's ship destroyed in battle."

"Good point," Sean said.

Sean's eyes traveled down to the ground, looking at the cobblestone walkway toward the garden entrance. She was so beautiful, a dazzling beauty in a white gown, and she was taken from him. The love of his life was snatched away by a black-guard man who wanted revenge for something he was bound to never have! And my bride... my bride is being forced to endure that revenge! A woman who could've been his daughter! How dare he treat her that way! He would pay for ruining their wedding day, the perfect day of his life, marrying the woman he loved with all his heart! Piazza will pay, he said to himself, he will pay for the wrongs he's done for the Brooke de L'auront family, and to the Reilly family. He wanted to get up and run after her right then and there, but he couldn't because he was still being tended to by Aramis. Azula was watching from afar, looking at Aramis with longing in her eyes. He wondered if Aramis knew Azula was in love with him.

Sean looked up at Aramis and didn't think twice. "Aramis, what are your feelings for the Princess?"

"Oh, she's a lovely woman sir. She can be a fiery one, but she'll make a sweet and loving wife I can promise you that. She loves you very much."

Sean laughed, for Aramis thought he was talking about Tryniti! “No, no, man. I mean the other Princess. Azula.” Aramis blushed at the mention of her name.

“She’s wonderful sir. A kind, loving, and caring woman. She’s sweet and perfect in every way. And she could hold her own in a battle. She’s the perfect woman...” Aramis trailed off realizing what he was saying about the woman he loved but couldn’t have.

“Then why don’t you tell her, Aramis?”

“I think she knows, sir. I’m sure she knows in some form that I love her. And... I’m positive she loves me as well.”

“Then what’s the problem?”

“Well, sir, she is only a mere fourteen. I am almost twenty and seven. I have to wait till she is a marriageable age to marry her.”

“Not unless a ship captain marries you.”

“Sir?”

“Tryniti is a ship captain, is she not? Why doesn’t she secretly marry you both?”

“I never thought of it. I wouldn’t mind the Dauphine marrying us. In secret, of course.”

“Of course, man. And if my intended wife says no, well, I’ll marry you myself.”

“You would do that for us, Captain Reilly?”

“Of course man, anything to help out a man in love. And she obviously loves you. Look at how she looks at you, I look at Tryniti that way, and so does... she...”

His words trailed off into silence. She really did love him! She gave him that look every time she saw him! It was proof she loved him deeply and dearly! He had to save her! He had

to reach her in time before Piazzo made her his wife! Tryniti would never do it. She'd fight to the death to get away from Piazzo. He knew she'd end her life before she'd marry that son of a bitch. And he wouldn't let that happen, he couldn't live without her. She was his life and soul, and he was sorry he didn't realize it years before when they last saw each other.

He wanted to find her and get her back more than anything. He needed Tryniti, and he wasn't going to stop till he got her back.

"There you are, sir. All fixed. Now get out of here and bring the Dauphine back," Aramis said.

Sean bounded out of the chaise and went to gather his things in the nursery. When he walked into her room, his heart sank. He looked at her newly made bed remembering the love and memories they shared and made in that bed last night. No doubt the maids already put on new sheets, the rumpled ones with their passion out for the wash. He sat on her bed; the room smelled of her sweet perfume. He didn't know how she did it, but somehow her room and she smelled like the salty sea air, mixed with the scent of Caribbean flowers. He loved the smell of her, he breathed in deep. Then he remembered his mission. He was to find Tryniti and get her back so he could marry her.



Chapter 18

*“And noo they have laid him down in his
cauld grave...”*



A MONTH INTO THE VOYAGE, Tryniti started to get restless. She'd been locked up in the hold for so long, her food and drink brought to her by her guard. She'd only eat it when he wasn't around, she wasn't going to let them see she was starving. She wasn't going to give them that satisfaction. She looked haggard and unkempt with only quick rub-downs on the journey, and she was still wearing the same blood-stained clothes. Piazzo actually took pity and gave her a dress from a mistress he kept but she ripped it to pieces, screaming curses and insults a lady shouldn't know or even be repeating. She left her old clothes on as a reminder she was a captive, not a guest.

They finally arrived at the island, and if it wasn't for it being her new prison it would have made a beautiful home. The flowers were in full bloom, the heady scent filled the air. She could've made a second home here if she took it from Piazzo. He came down with two men and proceeded to tie her up again. She let them this time since there was no use for escape in the small hold. If she could break free of them on deck she might have a chance.

Piazzo grabbed her arm and dragged her up from the hold and onto the deck. She kicked and screamed the entire way up, trying to break free. But there was no use because there was nowhere she could run. She could take his ship, but she'd need a crew, and his certainly wouldn't help her. She silently walked with him deep into the dark jungle that lay ahead. The sun shone through the trees, making beautiful paths of light along the dirt path. Further down the path on a slight hill was a small home by her standards that seemed to have been left abandoned centuries ago. It had a few new renovations, but was still unkempt, the stone walls crumbling.

"Sorry my Princess, I haven't had much time for redecorating. But you can do that for me because you'll be here forever."

"I'll never be your wife you son of a bitch! Get your hands off me!"

She tried to punch him, but it was no use. He caught her mid-blow and threw her to the ground.

"You will learn to respect your husband, my dear," he growled.

"I do. But he's back in France." She said and spit in his face.

Piazzo couldn't take any more of her backtalk and backhanded her across the face. She felt her cheek take the blow, but his slap was so strong her face started to swell and bruise. She charged after him but only fell to her knees since her hands were tied behind her back. He picked her up and threw her over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes. He carried her the rest of the way to the house, kicking and screaming, yelling curses at the top of her lungs. When he entered, he proceeded through the decrepit foyer and up the crumbling stone steps to the second-floor rooms. There was one refurbished room

with finished floors, walls, carpet, and a bedding ensemble. He tossed her onto the bed and before she could scramble off of it, he grabbed her around the waist, knocking the wind out of her and tossing her back on the bed. He had chains attached to the posts of the bed and grabbed her kicking legs. She was able to reach a kick to his groin, and he tumbled onto the floor in pain. His men heard his scream of pain on the floor below and immediately ran up to the bedroom. Five men grabbed her and held her legs down. They chained her to the posts and grabbed her hands and untied them. She came out swinging, but they held her down tight. Tryniti struggled with all her might but she was no match for these brawny seamen. They held her down and her hands were chained to the bedposts. She struggled with all her might against her restraints, but they wouldn't release. Piazzo got up from the floor using the bed as a crutch and looked at Tryniti with hatred in his eyes.

“You will pay for your treachery, Princess. I assure you.”

Piazzo left the room, leaving Tryniti chained up and spread eagle. She struggled, trying to find a weak spot in the tethers, but they were attached to the wall from the bedposts. There was no way she was getting out of this. The more she struggled the sleepier she got. The room began to spin, and she couldn't move her body. She realized the food she was given a bit earlier didn't taste right and had a bitter flavor. She realized too late that the food they gave her earlier was drugged and began to fall fast asleep.



SEAN LOOKED OUT OVER the deck, trying to spot the island in the distance. They were getting closer and closer, not far behind Piazzo. They left immediately and was fast approaching his private island thanks to the man they tortured for information. It was cruel, but he deserved it after what he'd taken part in.

“How much farther, Max?”

“Not too much farther, Sean. Keep calm.”

Max and Alicé were aboard the ship, once again their famous identities of L and Harlique. The famous couple was ready to avenge their daughter, for no one ruined their daughter's wedding day and got away with it. Sean found John before they left tending to the ship, and all it took was “We have to go kill a man,” for John to drop everything he was doing, put the third man in charge, and head with them on Max's ship. They saw the island in the distance, and Piazzo's ship was docked at the makeshift pier.

“Sean go to my cabin and fetch my sword and pistols. And the lady's sword, pistols, and dirk if you will.”

Sean nodded his head in acceptance and ran to the Captain's cabin. He found the chest Max kept his weapons in. He pulled out their swords and four pistols. He also took an extra sword and pistol for himself. He wasn't taking any chances with Piazzo Dimonti. He ran back up to the quarterdeck to hand them their weapons.

“I think this will do, my good man,” Sean said.

“Don't worry, Sean. We'll get her back. I can promise you that.” James and Azula ran up on deck, arguing.

“Daddy! James won't let me go to find Tryniti!” Azula yelled.

“She’s much too young and can get killed, father!” James protested.

“He’s right, Azula. You’re too young and inexperienced to be in a battle like this, but so are you, James. You will stay on the ship to keep her company and keep watch in case anything happens.”

“What? Why must I stay on the ship?” James demanded.

“Because that’s what I ordered you to do! This is my ship James, not yours, and you will do as your father and Captain says!”

James backed down and went in the corner to keep watch on the approaching island.

“We will take the dingy and row to the island for a surprise attack. Sean, you will come with me. Gill, go ahead of us and scout around the coast. Harlique and Aramis will search his ship and we will surround the place with the Army. If they ever catch up...”

“Aye, what about me?” John said.

“John, if you don’t mind will you stay and make sure these two don’t get into any trouble?” Max said.

“Aye Cap’n L. I’ll watch the lad and lass fer ye.”

They settled into the dingy and were lowered down into the sea. Max rowed the boat gently, trying not to stir any attention. He had to save his daughter quietly in order to save all of their lives.



TRYNITI AWOKE TO THE feeling of someone kissing her. She thought it was Sean and went to respond when she realized

they weren't the soft and tender kisses he gave her. They were hard and unfeeling, possessive. She opened her eyes to see Piazzo standing over her, kissing her. She instantly spat at him and kept spitting to get the taste out of her mouth.

"Dammit, you wench!" He went to lay a hand on her but thought otherwise. "No, I'll punish you in a better way. At least I'll get pleasure out of it, but I'm not sure you will."

Piazzo was standing only in his breeches, his tunic and shoes off. He was going to take advantage of her, and she knew it. Her eyes grew wide at that revelation of what he might do and she screamed bloody murder. She prayed there was someone else on this island that wasn't under Piazzo's command. He ripped off his breeches, and she started to cry, still screaming curses as loud as she could.

"Shut up!" he said, shoving a gag into her mouth.

She moaned against her strains, struggling to break free. He ripped off her breeches, and she shivered from the cold and fear welling up inside her. Tryniti smiled at Piazzo's stupidity; he didn't realize Tryniti already lost her maidenhood to Sean. He would be sorely disappointed. He went to mount her, her fear growing.

"I'm going to make you beg for it, Princess. By the end you'll want me so badly you'll beg for me to bed you!"

"Never!" She was able to make out through the gag.

"So be it!"

She screamed against him, her squeals of pain were muffled by the gag, and tears streamed down her face, hoping Sean would come to her rescue soon.

"There's no one here to save you, Dauphine, just enjoy what was meant for you."



The dingy was able to dock on the sand without a sound. There was no one around, so they must be farther in the jungle.

“Harlique, go with Aramis to the ship and see if she’s there. We’ll go farther into the jungle and look for her.”

“*Oui*, my dear. Come Aramis.”

As Alicé and Aramis made their way towards the ship, Sean and Max crept their way into the overgrown jungle. They found a dirt path with fresh footprints, and one pair looked as that of a woman’s.

“Boots, smaller than a man’s. They have to be hers,” Max said.

“Look, the footprints disappear but his continue,” Sean told him.

“He may have picked her up, I could see her fighting him and refusing to walk,” Max said.

“Where do you suppose he took her?”

“Wherever these prints lead, Sean.”

As they followed the prints the jungle started to clear and came to a large meadow. There were beautiful orange blossoms, lilies, and hibiscus. In the middle of the clearing was a decrepit stone home that looked like it was once used as a fortress. The stone walls were crumbling, as well as the three-foot tall wall that surrounded the home. They heard screams coming from the top floor, and it wasn’t a man’s. Sean went running towards the house, but Max grabbed him and held him back.

“Are you mad, man? You can’t rush into these things. If you do you’ll ruin our cover and be overrun with his men. You

must calm yourself. We'll sneak around the back, search for any guards. We have to be careful not to alert Piazzo to our presence."

"Sorry Max, it's just..."

"I know. I feel the same way. We'll get her out of there, but we have to be discreet."

Slowly they made their way around the meadow, careful not to step on any sticks and hidden behind the grand leaves of young banana trees and jasmine pinwheels. They saw two men at the entrance and one other scouting the perimeter of the wall.

"There's only three," Sean said.

"There could be many more inside," Max interjected.

"We can take them."

"Sean—don't get ahead of yourself. You don't know Piazzo or what you're walking into."

"Yes, sir."

They made their way from around the bushes, careful to not let the guards see them. Sliding along the wall of the gate, they looked up to see the guard pass them. Silently Max grabbed him and snapped his neck while pulling him over the wall.

"You'll have to teach me how to do that," Sean said.

"My pleasure. Watch this."

Max started to take his clothes off and Sean looked on in shocked curiosity.

"What the devil, man? What are you going to do?"

"Just watch, dear boy."

Max undressed the dead guard and put his clothes on himself. He jumped over the wall and casually walked towards the two remaining guards, whistling along the way.

“*Ciao*, Marco. Why aren’t you guarding *il muro*?” one said.

“Oh...” Max said, “Piazzo said to switch with Federigo.”

The other guard sensed his lie. “Hey, there’s no Federigo...”

Before he could finish his sentence, Max ran them both through with his sword. Sean came running up to him as the last light died from their eyes.

“And that, my boy, is how pirates use a disguise.” Max said as he wiped the blood from the sword on his shirt.

“Not bad.”

A piercing scream floated its way down the inner stone steps and caressed Sean’s ears standing at the door. He immediately took off at a run, shooting straight into the house. Max’s pleas to stop were a faint cry in the distance as he made his way towards the steps. Sean stopped in his tracks as a hoard of men came running down the steps to block his path. He took out his pistols and shot three of them point blank in the head. Three more came from the adjoining room and grabbed his arms. His pistols were knocked out of his hands as he was slammed against the cold, hard wall. The room started to blacken and the ringing in his ears grew louder. Through the haze, as a guard raised his pistol to Sean’s chest, he saw a bullet wound make a gaping hole in the guard’s body. He turned to see Max standing there with both his pistols in hand. He could hear him, but he saw his lips mouth the word, “go.”

Sean ran up the steps, faintly hearing the screams coming from a room at the end of the hall. He clumsily made his way there, fumbling against the walls for balance, his head swim-

ming in pain. When he tried the knob to the door it wouldn't budge.

"What was that?"

Sean heard the voice on the other side was gruff and greasy, with a heavy Italian accent. It had to be Piazzo.

Tryniti's cries broke through, "Let go of me! I promise you, Piazzo, you'll choke on your own blood for what you've done!"

"Stai zitto!"

Sean had heard enough. He rammed his body against the door, but it didn't budge.

"Help!" he heard Tryniti scream.

He tried ramming it again. The warped wooden door started to splinter but still didn't give way to his weight. When he went to hit it with his boot the door flung wide open and Piazzo stood in front of him with his breeches off and his shirt off. Behind him he saw Tryniti chained to the bed, her clothes torn off of her. His vision turned red. He screamed and grabbed Piazzo by the neck and slammed him into the wall. He forgot all his skills and wildly punched Piazzo in every area he could reach. Piazzo gave him an uppercut square in the jaw, causing Sean to stagger back into the dresser. Tryniti struggled against the chains, pulling as hard as she could. The hard metal and rust started rubbing her skin raw and started to bleed. Piazzo kicked Sean into the wall and once again slammed his head into the wall.

Then Tryniti saw nothing as both men rolled onto the floor. She heard the sickening crunch of someone's nose being broken. Piazzo stood up and staggered backward, blood running down his face. Sean stood up and jabbed him in the face again, sending him over the bed and onto Tryniti's lap. That's

when she saw it. The key to her chains dangled from Piazzo's waist sash and it was just in reach for her to grab it by shifting her weight onto the sash. As he got to his feet she grabbed the key with the silken skill of Robin Hood. She twisted and contorted her body, moving the sash closer to her chained hands. Once the key was close enough to her armpit, she twisted to grab it with her mouth, and with her tongue and teeth, she maneuvered the key into the lock.

As she was racing to unlock her chains, Sean and Piazzo had each other by the throat, locked against the dresser opposite of the bed. She tried to work faster when she saw Sean's face turning shades of red, melding into a plum color. Her teeth began to ache with the strain of turning the key, the cold metal becoming slick with her own saliva. She cocked her head back with one sharp movement and heard the click of the lock. As bad as she wanted to rub her raw wrists, she wasted no time in getting the chains off her other hand and legs. The two men had no idea she was free.

"Come off it, Piazzo!" Sean gritted.

"Never. I'll take what's mine!"

Tryniti looked around the room slowly, careful not to make any sudden movements that would alert Piazzo. She noticed her gun was still on the chaise lounge. Piazzo left all of her belongings in the room, the fool. His carelessness would cost him. She tried to get Sean's attention to no avail. His eyes were set on Piazzo like a hawk waiting to catch its prey. Piazzo still had his hands around Sean's neck. With one swift kick, she aimed for the back of Piazzo's legs, making him lose his grip on Sean and fall to the ground.

"Sean, my gun!" she cried.

Sean kicked Piazzo in the face so he could get a quick look around the room. He saw the gun laying on the chaise. As he ran for it, Piazzo grabbed him by the ankles, sending Sean face down into the hard floor. The two men tripped over each other reaching for the gun, and Tryniti held silently still in fear of being shot herself if Piazzo got to the gun first. Sean reached the gun first, tumbling over the chaise. With a greasy slick move, Piazzo ducked out of the way as soon as Sean stood up from behind the chaise and Piazzo grabbed the barrel of the gun. Tryniti watched in horror as the two men fought for control. She had enough. Tryniti lunged for Piazzo only to lose her stance from lack of blood to her extremities, and both men were sent out of the window onto the balcony below. Her heart dropped when she heard the sound of the firing crack of gunpowder, and a sickening crunch of bones on the stones below.



Chapter 19

“I loved that girl with all my heart....”



EYES WIDE, HANDS SHAKING, her skin turned cold, Tryniti looked at the window in shock. She was afraid to look out and see who was now dead, lying on the stones. With a heavy heart and a quickening breath, she rushed to the window, the sound of her heart beating hard in her ears, her face flush and hot, her stomach turning over and over...

“Tryniti? Are you all right, darling?”

She fell to her knees as she saw Sean with the gun in his hand, and Piazzo broken with blood oozing over the stone wall below, a smoking bullet hole between his eyes. Tryniti didn't think twice about jumping out the window and shimmying down the curtains and stone to the balcony below.

“Are you mad, woman? You could've hurt yourself!”

His ranting stopped when her hard but velvety arms embraced him. She wrapped her entire body around him, burying her lips with his. He melted into her arms and kissed her back.

“I thought I'd lost you,” he murmured against her lips.

“*Moi? Mon amour*, you could never lose me. I had him right where I wanted him!”

“Tryniti, you know as well as I do being dragged off from your own wedding to a secluded island is not right where you wanted him.”

She laughed, trying to hide her pain and subsiding fear. “You’re right. But how did you find me?”

“You’re not the only one well versed in persuasion, Black Rogue.” He grinned.

She went to kiss him again when she heard a voice calling her name.

“Tryniti!”

She smiled in excitement. “Down here, *Papa!*”

Max looked out of the window onto the balcony below. He immediately turned around to face away from Sean and Tryniti.

“Tryniti, please! Could you make yourself decent?!”

She looked down and realized she still wasn’t wearing any clothes after Piazzo ripped hers off of her. Sean took off his coat and shirt and handed them to her. She quickly donned the shirt and coat.

“Are you two alright?” Max said, looking away from them. “Nothing two sea dogs can’t handle, *Papa.*”

He rolled his eyes and laughed at his daughter.

“Can we please get out of this bloody house and back to the ship? We have a wedding to finish,” Sean announced.



AZULA AND JAMES LEANED against the ship's railing, looking toward the spot where their father and Sean disappeared.

"It's been hours, James. What if something happened to them?"

"Azula stop it. I'm sure they're fine. Father and Sean are perfectly capable of handling themselves."

"Aye lassie. If I know yer father more'n anybody, 'cept yer mum, he and Cap'n Sean will be fine. These things take time." John said. He had just come down from the helm, watching for Aramis and Alicé to return.

Aramis and Alicé were climbing up the side of the ship.

"Have they come back yet?" Alicé asked, hauling herself over the side of the ship and breathing heavy.

"Not yet, Maman. Did you find anything?" Azula said sadly.

"No, the ship was deserted. Not a soul aboard."

"They must be on the island, then. Let me help them; they could be in danger!" James roared.

"You will do no such thing, *mon fils*! I will not lose you too if anything has happened to your papa!" Alicé cried.

While James and his mother continued to argue, Azula sighed and looked out onto the island where Sean and Max disappeared into the jungle.

Aramis walked up beside her and placed a hand on hers that was resting on the ship's railing. "I'm sure they are alright, Miss Azula. Your father is a very capable man. And he has Monsieur Reilly to assist him." Azula smiled and looked up at him.

"I know, and how many times have I said you don't have to call me 'Miss?'"

"I may have lost count after the first few hundred, Miss," he said with a smile.

"Aramis.... I must ask, even though it is not proper for a lady of my station but...." she began, but Aramis interrupted her and pointed towards the beach.

"Miss! Look! *Monsieur* James! *Madame* Alicé! Come quickly!" James and Alicé rushed to their side.

"What is it, man? What...." James began but stopped at the sight of Max and Sean coming out of the jungle, with Tryniti in Sean's arms.

"She's alive!" Azula cried.

They watched as Max rowed the dingy back to the ship. As soon as Tryniti climbed over the railing she was tackled by her family.

"I was so worried...." Alicé began. James cut her off.

"You of all people in this world...." Azula forced her way between them.

"I knew you'd be fine!" she said.

Tryniti's head was swirling from the shouts and jumbled words. "Merci! Please! I'm quite alright. I'd like to lay down for a spell." The happy cheers and joy from her family suddenly stopped, and concern crossed their faces. "Non, it's not like that. I'm just tired and need time to myself. I love you all, thank you for your concern and coming to rescue me. I never thought I would be the one in need of rescue."

She smiled and hugged her family tight. As she made her way to the Captain's cabin, she remembered this was not her

ship. She looked back at her father. He smiled and said, "It's alright, dear girl. You can use my cabin."

"Oh, no, *Papa*, I would never do that to another captain."

"The other beds are made of straw and not as soft as the feather downed bed in the cabin. You need a nice rest," Max assured her. Azula and James stared in shock at their father.

"This whole time..."Azula began.

"You had us sleeping on straw beds when you have a feather one in your cabin?" James said.

"Now is not the time for arguing, children. Go on your own ship if you want better accommodations."

Azula and James looked at each other.

"We would have if you didn't insist on your bloody ship..." James muttered.

Tryniti ignored her sibling's bickering and grabbed Sean by the arm. She dragged him into the captain's cabin with her.

"Tryniti, good god woman, not in front of your family!" he said with shock yet heat and curiosity behind his eyes. Tryniti closed and locked the door behind her and laughed.

"Sean, that's not what I was thinking. Not after I just got through with a treacherous and repulsive situation." She looked down, away from his gaze. A cloud came across her face and her eyes looked lost in thought.

"Tryniti...?"

"How did you manage to make it so quickly? If you hadn't arrived at that moment..." His laughter stopped her, and a fleeting look of anger came over her.

"You, the Captain Black Rogue asking how one of the most infamous ships made it across the Atlantic in record time?"

“You’re right. It’s silly. With the proper wind velocity, and all sails at full mast, plus the luck of avoiding a hurricane...”

Sean grabbed her by the waist and silenced her with a kiss. She began to melt in his arms and mold herself to his body. He pulled her at arm’s length and searched her eyes. “What’s wrong?”

She looked up at him and then turned her gaze. “Nothing. I’m just a bit shaken from this entire ordeal and...”

Sean frowned, concerned. “No. There’s something more you’re not telling me.”

She sighed. She had to tell him the truth. He was going to be her husband after all, one person she would be able to trust besides her family.

“I never want to go through that again. To feel so helpless. I’m the most feared pirate in all the seven seas, more than Blackbeard or Zheng Yi Sao, and I was bested by a worthless member of royalty playing his hand at pirate at my own marriage filled with guards and military men. If he could so easily get away with it, am I even fit to be the Black Rogue? And if I’m not fit enough for that role, how can I be fit enough to lead a country?” As she spoke, she walked over to her father’s desk and pulled out a bottle of port. She pulled on the cork with her teeth and spat it on the table, taking a long, hard drink of the sweet and heady intoxicant.

“Tryniti, he did not best you. In anything. He was a bitter man blinded and enraged by jealousy. A tyrannical narcissistic child who would do anything to get his way. Hell, he took us all by surprise. By the time we made our way through his men you were gone. We stopped at nothing to find you. You are fit to lead the people of France. You may be a ruthless pirate, but one

thing you do have is compassion and kindness for your people. People can say what they like about the Black Rogue, but what they didn't say was how you never touched women or children. You never sank a ship where innocent men couldn't reach some nearby shore for help. And you never took more than what you needed."

Tryniti laughed. How fitting that the good deeds of a pirate were left out of the tales. "It's true, all very true. But if the tales are wrong, how did you find out the truth that I supposedly didn't leave any survivors?"

"Simple. The women would say how you never let anyone touch them and protected them. Looking at a ship's course and where you took their ship deduced they were never far from land. Logs showed what went missing from the ships and rumors trickled that these good either showed up on a nearby island given to the poor or never seen again. Those never seen again were, I presume, taken to Shipwreck's Cove for supplies."

"Very good. I see you did your homework on me."

"When I own a merchant vessel company, I make it my business to know how to protect my ships," Sean said with a hint of a sneer.

"Is that resentment I detect?"

Sean laughed with a sound that sounded somewhere between a snort and a chuckle.

"Well, my soon to be wife, you do owe me for my ship."

She sighed. "That I do. Don't worry once we get back to France I'll make sure reparations are made. Or... I could just buy you a new ship. One much grander and fitting for the husband of the Queen of France?"

Sean looked at her as if she had just spat the devil's own words from her mouth.

“Christ woman! A better ship? You...”

Before he could finish, she pounced over the desk and kissed him deeply, their tongues lost in a dance only they could perform. She could feel Sean almost quivering in her arms, holding her tighter to his breast. “Come now dear. You should know I didn't really mean it. Really, to think this sea captain couldn't fathom the attachment to a ship. We are our ships. They are an extension of who we are. Now wipe that astonished look from your face, you look like you've just been challenged to a duel.”

Sean smiled at her. “I think I have been.”

“Oh?”

His eyes become heavy and filled with fire. He couldn't hide what he was feeling, prevalent above the surface of the sea in his eyes.

“Sean!” she said. “Not in my parents' cabin!”

“Well, what else can do we do to pass the time? I can think of nothing better.”

Suddenly his lips were on hers, his tongue exploring her mouth. She wrapped herself around him, hoisting her legs around his waist. Sean was taken by surprise; he didn't know she could lift herself up with such ease and grace! Through breathless kisses, she said “I wouldn't be so surprised, it's not like I haven't climbed the rigging before.”

He smiled and kissed her again. “How about we climb a different rigging right now.”

Sean carried her to the bed and laid them both down gently onto the feather mattress. He didn't have much to take off

of her, since she was still wearing the shirt and coat he gave her from that dead pirate. Her clothes were quickly whisked over her head. She grabbed Sean's hands, slowing him down. She was eager, but she wanted to savor this moment. After all, they've never made love aboard ship.

She swiftly switched places with him, watching him curiously as his muscles rippled and the heat in his eyes grew. She moved her hands down his chest and reached for his breeches. As she unbuttoned them she heard a low groan of excitement from Sean. She leaned down, kissing his chest and making her way towards his manhood. Slowly, she took it in her mouth, feeling it with her tongue. She never tried this before, and since it was new to him, he seemed to be enjoying it. Sean let out a moan he couldn't hold onto anymore.

She felt sensational, an entirely new feeling in his loins. He felt her tongue wrap around his manhood, the climax coming closer. The warmth increased, yet there was fire wherever she touched. No, he couldn't reach the ecstasy yet. Gently, he tried to push her off, but she held her ground. Holding his hands in hers, she leaned her entire body onto him to keep him still. She licked and nibbled once more and let go. He had enough. He wanted her, and he couldn't hold on any longer. He took her by the waist and flipped her, positioning himself on top of her. Before he entered her, he stopped. A look of concern crossed his face and Tryniti noticed he became lost in thought.

"Sean.... what's wrong?" She said. Her voice was breathless, lost in what was about to happen.

"Are you sure you want to do this?"

"What do you mean? We've made love before, and I...."

“No, Tryniti. I mean after what happened to you.... are you sure you want to do this now?”

“Oh....” She realized what he meant. After almost being taken advantage of, deflowered in the worst sense, she should be off crying in hysterics, not allowing anyone to touch her. She was shaken after the ordeal, but it was her pride that was hurt more than her feelings. After already having this conversation with him before the mood turned them into lustful wantons, she didn’t want to get into it again. All she knew was she just wanted him and to forget about what had happened. Piazzo was gone, and he couldn’t harm her family any longer.

“Sean.... all that matters right now is I want you. And only you, forever. Please....”

She didn’t have to finish her sentence before he understood what she wanted from him. He entered her fast, sending out a scream of pleasure. He started to move slowly, drowning in the sound of her voice. she wrapped her arms around him, and then her legs. She wanted him as close as she could without them melding into one person. Their bodies may be two, but their souls were one. They both felt the heat growing inside them, and with one last thrust they reached the peak together. Slowly he laid down beside her, not letting her out of his arms. She snuggled closer into his chest.

“Well, we’ll have to keep this from *Papa*.” She giggled.

“Was that a giggle from the most notorious deadly pirate since the days of Blackbeard and all those other pirates you named?” he teased.

“Only with you.” She kissed his chest softly and looked up at him. “Will it always be like this?”

“Like what?”

“Perfect.”

“I hope so. As long as you’ll have me.”

“I guess I have to don’t I? After all, I need to be married to become the Queen. Might as well be you.” She teased back.

He held her close, afraid what would happen if he told her the truth. The thought had bothered him the entire trip, and it was time he said what was on his mind.

“Tryniti.... this may be the last time you’ll sail the seas like this.”

“I know. Free. People think being royalty is the ultimate freedom. In reality, it’s the ultimate prison. I have to do what’s right for my family and what my country asks of me. My desires cannot be above so many others who will look to me for guidance and help. *Que les dieux m’aident.*” She sighed.

Sean’s face lit up with a brilliant smile. “I may have thought of a plan.”

“A plan? Oh, do tell, my dear. Swashbuckling with pirates? Taking a tour of the Caribbean? Sailing to the Orient to pick up exotic spices and dodging the East India Trading Company? Exploring the New World?” She quipped. “Exactly.”

She looked at him with astonishment. “You can’t be serious. Sean we can’t, we have to go back to Paris and marry, I have to take over the throne you don’t understand...!”

“I understand perfectly. I understand his Majesty wants to see you married and take over the throne to save the country. We will. And I’ll be by your side helping you at every step. But what if we ran into a hurricane?”

Tryniti took the hint and understood what Sean was up to.

“Or met up with a fearsome pirate on the seas and the ship had to be taken to America for repairs?”

He laughed, remembering his ship was still in America thanks to her.

“Or maybe you couldn’t find me right away. You lost Piazzo’s ship in a storm or some dense fog.” She continued.

“Your sense of style and cunning is impeccable Dauphine.”

“This isn’t the work of a Dauphine; this is the work of a seasoned pirate,” she said, smiling.

“Shall we?” Sean said, holding out his arm for her to take.

“We shall.” She took his arm and almost pulled him out of the cabin in excitement. A little detour couldn’t hurt.



Chapter 20

*“I’ll go no more a-roving with you, fair
maid...”*



WHEN SEAN AND TRYNITI arrived on deck to tell Max and Alicé their plan, they had their reservations at first, but it didn’t take long for them to come around. Azula and James were immediately for it, and John would never say no to being out on the sea longer. He was always happy to have a deck under his feet. Aramis was happy to be with his extended family and near Azula, sharing in her seafaring experiences. What was supposed to be a month’s long detour turned into much more than a few months. Half a year had gone by, not including Tryniti’s abduction to the island. Tryniti showed them some of her favorite places in the Caribbean as they made their way to Singapore and visited other islands in the Orient. Azula was under constant supervision of course at the request of their mother.

From there they stopped in India and traded some spices and gunpowder for silks and curry. As much as they loved the rich foods of France, Tryniti and Azula had taken a liking to the exotic foods of India and the Caribbean. Tryniti laughed as she gave Sean a traditional Southern Indian dish of biryani and the look on his face was that of a man who had just eaten fire. At

one point they saw a Spanish ship in the distance and had the idea to fly the black flag and take her. Max, Alicé, Tryniti, and Azula were donning their attire when Sean and James pleaded with them not to in fear of being recognized as the royal family. It ended with Sean and James being locked in the cabin with John and Aramis in stitches watching the door as the pirates of family battled the Spanish ship, taking their bolts of cloth and gold. Sean and James were furious when they were let out of the cabin, but it didn't take long for Sean to calm down with Tryniti in his arms. James on the other hand needed a nice cold bath. A bath that consisted of salt water and a trip off the plank.

The last few months were grand, almost too perfect, sailing the seas and having her love and her family by her side. She wished it would never end, but they realized they'd been gone for far too long and they had to get back to France to finish the wedding and crown Tryniti the new Queen of France. As they made their way up the Seine, Tryniti started to feel those same feelings of resentment and fear of having to leave her life behind. When she looked at Sean, those fears faded away and she was happy to have him and her family by her side as she undertook a new journey. Tryniti and Sean were at the helm while her parents rested, and James was helping John with his duties. Where Azula and Aramis were below, well, Tryniti didn't want to think about that.

As Tryniti steered the ship through the cold waters, Sean held his arms around her and kissed her neck, looking out over his new home.

“Sean....”

“Yes, dear?”

“Be honest with me. Do you really want to do this? Becoming the Prince Consort de France is a frightening ordeal for someone who is not used to being a royal and I understand if you don’t want to marry me. I will appease my uncle and find a way out of this contract.”

As she babbled Sean let out a hearty laugh. “Dauphine, I would have jumped ship back in India when you fed me that awful curry dish if I didn’t want to marry you and be the new Duke de Orléans.... wait. Did you say Prince Consort?”

“*Oui*. Why?”

“I thought I was to be the king.”

“Oh....right. I should have mentioned this to you earlier *mon amour* but since I am first in line as the queen and you are marrying me, you cannot have a title higher than I. Surely it works the same in England does it not?”

“It does but you could have told me how it works in France. You had me thinking this entire time that I would be called a king!”

Tryniti spun around to meet his gaze. “Are you saying you’re upset because you will be Prince Consort and not a king by title?”

He shrugged. “Well I was looking forward to being called Your Majesty....”

Tryniti laughed and said, “Well that I can allow. *Votre Majesté* it is. But don’t think I’ll bow to you because that won’t happen.”

The day past as they sliced through the French waters. As they came closer to Paris the sky glowed an orange hue. Tryniti looked into the sky and realized although it was close to sunset,

the sky around the city had a glow no sun could produce. Tryniti called for her parents.

“Maman! Papa!”

Alicé and Max came running to the helm from the Captain’s cabin. James had called into the cabin when he saw the city.

“Tryniti, what’s wrong? *Quel est le problème?*” Alicé asked.

“Maman, look. The color of the city. Something isn’t right. Papa, should we continue to port?”

“Yes, Tryniti. We’ll be fine. We need to get you back to the Tuileries and end this Revolution. You need to fix what your aunt and uncle have broken. If anyone can end this, it’s you.”

As they sailed closer, passing Notre Dame, they saw the flames.

Paris was on fire.

The city wasn’t engulfed, not yet, but there was rioting in the streets. She saw priceless heirlooms from Versailles being carried through the streets, and she hoped her family was unharmed. She became terrified wondering what happened to the city in their absence. Tryniti looked to Azula and saw the fear in her eyes. Aramis held her tight as they made their way toward the royal port, the fire dancing mockingly in their glistening eyes. As they docked, people started to stare at the ship. A few ships down she looked for her beloved ship and saw it safe from harm, surrounded by members of the Royal Navy.

James followed Tryniti’s eyeline and said, “I’m going to see what’s going on here. I’ll be right back.”

She watched as the men saluted her brother and the spoke for a brief period. When James turned to come back, he ran to the ship and immediately grabbed her.

“We have to go, quickly. All of us.”

“Go? Go where? James! What’s happening?” Azula said, her voice cracking.

“I’ll explain on the way. We must get to the Palais Bourbon. Hurry!”

Tryniti looked around but the royal carriage was nowhere to be found. “James! The Palais is blocks away we can’t get there on foot! The carriage is gone!” As she spoke she saw a familiar carriage pull up to the dock. A man opened the door and yelled to them.

“Get in! Quickly! My second carriage is coming behind. Tryniti, Sean, James, please come with me.” His voice sounded familiar and friendly, but his face was hidden by a large hat. She ran to get into the carriage when Sean stopped her.

“You can’t get in that carriage. We have no idea who that man is. Let me handle it.”

“Sean, no!” James said. He stepped in front of him to explain the man was Robespierre, an old family friend. Sean calmed himself and allowed them to enter the carriage. As soon as the door closed behind them the carriage took off as fast as the horses could take it.

“James, you explain yourself this instant. What is happening?”

“Tryniti, the Revolution has come to a head. We aren’t safe here. The riots have gotten worse. Something has happened, and the guards refused to tell me.”

“I promise everything will be explained when we reach the Tuileries. The Assembly needs to see you immediately,” Robespierre interjected.

“The Tuileries? I thought we needed to go to the Palais Bourbon?”

“The Assembly has moved to the theatre in the Tuileries since May. They will see you there.”

Tryniti could see he was upset, and his eyes were red from tears. He was hiding something and refusing to tell her. Sean held her hand tight, and the ride was silent the rest of the way. Thoughts swirled in her head. *What happened to my family?*, she thought. As they pulled up to her home she didn't even allow the footman to help her down, she jumped from the carriage and ran up the steps with her family yelling her name and trailing behind her. She burst through the doors and passed the servants. They looked at her in shock as she stormed her way through halls to the theatre. She threw the doors open and found the Assembly together.

“What's happened here? Where is *ma tante et mon oncle*?” She shouted. She looked at them, red with fury as they stayed silent. “I will not ask again: I am the Dauphine of France and you will answer my questions.”

“*Were* the Dauphine of France.”

Tryniti spun around to come face to face with Robespierre. “Maximilien? I don't understand here. Please tell me what has happened to my country, what has happened to *ma famille*?” She pleaded. Tryniti never broke under pressure, but her voice let out a crack of despair.

“A lot has changed since you've been gone, Tryniti. We thought you were dead, and your family and your betrothed killed by either Piazzo himself or a storm that had sunk the ship. The class system has been abolished. The Assembly is now the *Comité de salut public*. A committee to see the end of this

revelry and rid France of the monarchy and the aristocrats with it. The government has changed hands many times as factions have broken off to challenge us. I'm sorry to be the one to tell you this, but the King and Queen are gone. King Louis was beheaded shortly after the wedding and Queen Marie a few days before you arrived. Their children will be exiled, and you will no longer take the throne. France will now be a democracy, led by government officials. We thought having you take the throne would heal our country since the people love you. The people only love you because you were not around to destroy us like your *tante et oncle*. You have not betrayed France and have done what was asked of you, and for that we thank you and grant you your freedom. You may live your life as you wish, but you and your family will be stripped of all royal titles."

Tryniti stood there, in the middle of the theatre, as still as stone. Her aunt and uncle? Beheaded? Their children to be exiled? Her family and Sean had entered behind Robespierre and heard the entire conversation. Tears welled up in her eyes. That's why Louis wanted to see her married so quickly. They knew they were going to die soon, and they wanted to make sure the Bourbon legacy was intact. She felt Sean's arms wrap around her and grabbed her tight. She looked back to her family, they were crying, but smiling. James walked up to Tryniti and hugged her tight.

"It's all right, Tryn. I'm still a member of the Royal Navy; I'm well off and have some money saved. I have enough to live comfortably."

"We will be fine, *ma fille*. Your father and I have been thinking about getting a townhouse here in Paris and visiting your father's estate in London," Alicé said.

“*Maman*, what about Azula?” Tryniti protested.

“Tryniti, don’t you see?” Azula said. “This is our way out! You don’t have to take the throne anymore. You can marry Sean because you want to, not because of that silly contract. You can still sail the seas!”

Tryniti looked at Sean and saw the bright smile on his face. She put a hand up to her mouth to conceal her beaming grin and coughed, regaining her composure.

Tryniti turned back to Robespierre. “Well then, Robespierre, I thank you for sparing the other members of my family. We will quietly take our leave and renounce our royal titles. If the Committee should need anything from us, don’t hesitate to send us a message.”

“*Oui, Mademoiselle de L’auront.*”

Tryniti curtsied respectfully to the Assembly and walked out of the theatre. Her family followed close behind and as soon as the doors shut behind them Tryniti burst into tears. Sean immediately took her hands to comfort her.

“Tryniti, what’s wrong? The devil are you crying for?”

“I’m sorry, *pardon moi tout le monde*. I’m just overcome with joy.”

“Joy? You just lost your aunt and uncle and your royal title and you’re happy? I don’t understand you woman.”

“I will grieve for *ma tante et mon oncle*. I will miss them dearly. There’s just so much at once. We are free. We can sail the seas for the rest of our lives if we want.” She held Sean tight to her chest, kissing him passionately. “I still get a Marquis in the process. Unless you no longer want me since I am stripped of the French royal title....”

“Devil take it, be quiet, and let’s go.” He kissed her back and picked her up in his arms.

“Well, Sean, what do you say? Are you going to turn pirate like my sister or are you going to try and reform her and have her sail as a merchant ship captain’s wife?” James said.

“Watch it, James. If she wants to have a go at you, I can’t hold her in my arms for long. And I’m not just a merchant ship Captain, I’m the owner of a private shipping company with a fleet of ships. I think we’ll figure that out after the honeymoon.”

“Sean, as much as I’d like to get married straight away, could you please give me time to mourn my family?”

“Oh, yes darling. I’m truly sorry about your aunt and uncle.”

“I knew it was coming. I felt deep down that something awful was going to happen to them. I just didn’t think the wedding would be the last time I would see them.”

“You will see them again one day, I promise.” Max said. “Now about that wedding....”



AFTER A MONTH OF MOURNING her aunt and uncle’s passing and getting their affairs in order, Tryniti once more donned her wedding dress and walked down the aisle. Only this time, the aisle was the deck of *The Black Rogue*. Sean agreed to have the marriage aboard her ship, with just family and friends in attendance. The Brooke de L’auront family’s belongings were found intact in the East Wing of the Tuileries.

Robespierre had kept them guarded for their return. All of Tryniti's belongings were now being loaded onto her ship. After the wedding, she watched as her parents loaded their things onto their ship, and saw James loading up the last of his things onto his own ship. Azula was standing on the deck, leaning over the railing on the starboard side.

Tryniti walked up beside her, still in her wedding gown.

"Azula? Are you alright?"

"Oh.... yes I'm fine. I'm just.... I'm not sure where we go from here."

"Wherever you like. You can sail with Sean and I, or you can go with *Maman et Papa*."

"I don't want to leave Aramis behind."

"Behind? Who said anything about leaving Aramis?"

Tryniti stepped out of the way and revealed Aramis was standing behind her.

"Aramis!" Azula jumped into his arms and hugged him as hard as she could. "Are you coming with us?"

"Of course, Miss Azula. I've always wanted to be a swash-buckling pirate."

Tryniti laughed. "You'll get plenty of adventure with us, Aramis. Just don't tell my husband. I don't think he's quite taken to living the pirate life yet."

As they made ready to sail into the Seine and out into the Atlantic, Tryniti and Azula hugged their parents and James goodbye, but only for a little while. Azula and Aramis decided to sail with Max and Alicé until Tryniti and Sean were finished their honeymoon and then they would meet up in St. Martinique. Tryniti and Sean made their way up the gangplank and waved goodbye as they maneuvered the ship out into the Seine.

Sean manned the helm as Tryniti worked the ropes and let some of the sails down. As she came up onto the helm and her crew started yet another shanty, she leaned up against him and he reached around her waist to pull her close to his side. “And what is this about a certain husband of mine promising Aramis he would marry my sister?”



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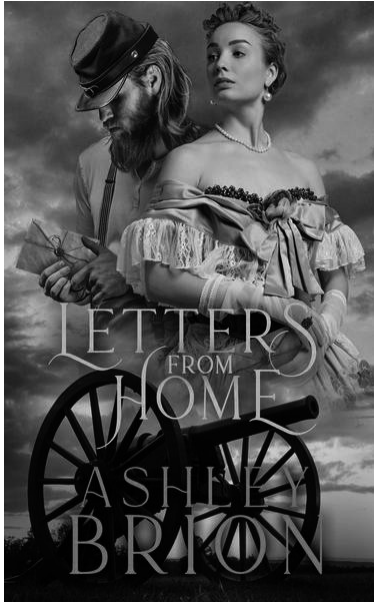
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wounded and in need of care. As a Union sympathizer, Zerelda takes him in. What she never expected was for a young lady like herself to fall in love with an older man.

Lawrence is a man set in his ways and convinced that life is cold and incomplete after losing his wife and child to smallpox. After deciding not to return to the Caribbean where his family's shipping business waited for him, Lawrence left Gettysburg, ready for the war to take him. But life has a way of making demands when we least expect it, and this world isn't finished with Lawrence just yet, having thrown Zerelda into his path.

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"It's Gone With the Wind but the Union side!"-Crab from Crab and Bell Booktok

Read more at <https://www.slucas0.wixsite.com/authorashleybrion>.



About the Author

Ashley Bríon is a 2013, 2015, and 2019 BA, MA, and MFA graduate in English and Creative Writing. Ashley has a long history of French and English heritage. She is bilingual speaking both French and English. She spends her free time gaming with her friends, acting, tap dancing, practicing yoga, and playing with her pets. Ashley embraces her love of history and different cultures through her writings, and is autistic and is a “social justice warrior” advocating for LGBTQIA+ and POC rights. Her favorite holidays are Halloween and Christmas and enjoys a cup of sake every evening.

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