



Sweet Redemption
Blade's Lust

By Kenna Fallon

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Chapter One

She moaned with pleasure as she glided her clit along the long, hard length of him. Her pussy was wet and eager to take him inside but she hesitated, allowing the extreme pleasure she saw on his face to continue. She moaned softly as she raked her fingernails along his chest lightly, tilting her head back as the juices flowed from her center, hot and wanting.

He had his eyes closed, his lips slightly parted and the soft groans of passion coming from deep inside his chest brought further pleasure to his soul. He opened his eyes to gaze into her face, the face of a beautiful woman he wanted desperately to fuck. Her pussy felt like heaven as it smoothed along his length, all wet and impatient for a wild ride on the hard cock of a man who wanted the same. He would be more than happy to oblige her.

He pushed her onto her back and laved one dusky nipple with his tongue as his right hand slid between her thighs, his fingertips brushing softly over the sweet nectar of her desire. He smelled her scent, wild and exotic and it furthered the sensations of the longing that fired within his chest. The sweetest temptation he had ever known.

Running his tongue along her belly as he made his way to the opening of his rapture, he delved a finger inside her hot pussy, feeling the luscious wetness that aided his plunder. He heard her soft groans as she raised her hips to meet his fingers, begging him to fuck her as she tossed her head to the side and licked her lips in anticipation.

He exhaled the breath he had been holding, blowing the warm air over her pussy as she squirmed beneath him, and further parting her thighs for his pleasure. He withdrew his fingers from her and brought them up to his mouth, slowly licking the sweetness of her from his hand. He watched in fascination as she became impatient and ran her own fingers over her pussy. Her moans sounded softly about his chamber in obvious pleasure as he continued to watch her fingers delve into the hot sheath he had but moments before been enjoying, to swirl over the swelled flesh of her clit and then back into her juicy pussy once again.

Pushing her hand gently out of the way, he languidly licked along the folds of swelled pink flesh at his leisure, dipping his tongue inside and wiggling the tip slightly.

She groaned once more and pleaded for him to fuck her, fuck her hard and long. But he did not want to stop what he was doing. He craved the taste of her upon his tongue, in his mouth, upon his lips. He continued to kiss, to lick, and to gently dip his tongue into the sweet abyss that the hardness of his cock would soon know...

He awoke with a start as the sweet dream ebbed away slowly. He groaned aloud and felt the hard throbbing of want reach deep into his soul. He allowed his hand to grasp tightly to his length and move slowly in an up and down motion, increasing in his movements after a short time until he ejected his seed into the palm of his hand. His breathing had become labored in his effort and he closed his eyes as the motion of his hand came to a slow stop. He pictured her face above him as she tilted her head back and let out a soft moan depicting the sweet release she herself had just found.

He lie there for a moment and enjoyed the image of her as she leaned down and kissed him, the delicious movements of her hips continuing to entice him. He groaned aloud to the quiet cabin, wishing that she were here with him. Wishing that she were not just a wondrous vision in his mind.

Shaking himself back to the present, he sighed and rolled out of his bed, finding a cloth to clean himself with and knew that his release had not sedated the lust that still raged within him. Her tight, wet pussy surrounding his cock would be much better than the rough palm of his hand and he cursed as the familiar desire for her coursed through his soul once again. She had become an affliction to him, making the deep desire he felt for her increase with each passing second.

And she did not even know he existed.

Grasping the cup of rum he had left on his desk earlier, he swiftly drank down the contents and placed the cup back down on the desktop as the liquid burnt a fiery path to his stomach. Reaching for a cigar, he lit the tip as he went to stand next to the window of his cabin looking out over the sea as the moon softly glowed above him. He closed his eyes as he took another drag upon the cigar and wondered how long he could continue on with this madness. He needed to rectify this situation immediately before his sanity was lost completely.

The fragrant smell of the cigar wafted gently around him, enveloping him within a

grayish-white cloud. He breathed deeply of the cherry scented smoke, exhaling slowly as he thought of her once again. She was all he reflected on of lately. She invaded his dreams, cursed his days with her sweet vision until he did not think he could function and he often found himself daydreaming while at the helm, running his ship amuck in the open sea. He had to find a way to ease the torment of his mind, his very soul, from this woman. But how? No other would be able to compare to her he knew, nor did he wish to ease himself with another woman. It would only leave him feeling unsatisfied and still fighting the fires of lust that burned within the pit of his being.

He opened his eyes suddenly as a roguish grin lifted his lips. He pulled the cigar from his lips slowly, blowing out a cloud of smoke overhead. Of course. He had the perfect solution to his quandary. Why had he not thought of this before?

The sweet redemption he had only dreamt of would finally be his.

It was now his turn to lick his own lips in anticipation.

"Is she the one, do you suppose?" Marlon looked over at his companion with slightly blurred vision and had to blink several times to force his eyes into focusing a clear image. His cohort did not seem to be fairing any better and he knew that the captain would have both of their hides. He shook his head and closed his eyes for a bit, letting the dryness ease out slowly.

Bart on the other hand, was caught up in an image of a little piece of ruffle that he had just left. Trisha was her name and he smiled as he recalled with vivid clarity, how she had screamed her pleasure when he had pumped into her with deep, hard thrusts. The image disappeared abruptly when he was rudely brought back to the present with a sharp jab to his ribs.

"Hey!" Bart's harsh whisper at his companion's mishandling had his eyes narrowing dangerously at his companion.

"I said...is that the chit or not?"

Bart focused his eyes in the general direction that Marlon pointed, keeping them narrowed as the image of the woman who was across the thoroughfare came into view.

Bart rubbed his chin thoughtfully. She seemed to have the blonde curls his

captain had described and she was richly appointed in her velvet gown of what appeared to be a pale shade of pink. An overcoat of pure white settled over the frame of her body, bringing with it the look of a heavenly creature. A pure angel, the captain had called her. She *looked* to be the one they had been told about and she *did* look like a scrumptious dessert, just like the captain had also said.

He nodded once to his companion, praying that she was the right woman. “Yep. That be her! Let’s follow her for a spell an’ then get her in an alleyway. I have the gag an’ the sack under my jacket so we can get this done quick like. Cap’n Jack is not a tolerant man an’ we have been gone for way too long.”

Jacie Monroe walked along the shop fronts and gazed into the windows with mild interest, seeing absolutely nothing that tickled her fancy. Her father had encouraged her to get out this day and that is exactly what she had done. She raised her brows and grinned at her reflection in the glass. She thought also how her unfaltering ways would likely get her severely reprimanded once again for going out on her own. He had warned her about taking a chaperone when she left the townhouse, but she did not need the tag-along slowing her down. She sought adventure and excitement and having a stuffy old maid to thwart her plans was not how she wanted to spend an afternoon.

She flipped her waist length curls over her shoulder and ducked into the nearest alleyway alongside a shop, hiding behind several empty crates stacked on top of one another. She pulled a half smoked cigar from her small wrist bag and lit the end, taking deep heavenly puffs. She thought how furious her father would be if he saw her right about now and she blanched at the annoyance she saw in his vivid green eyes. He would probably disown her as he had threatened to do many times before, throwing her out in the street!

Taking one last puff and dropping the cigar stub on the ground, squishing it under the toe of her fine leather ankle boot, she stepped from behind the crates, intending to be on her way back home quickly when a rough hand slammed over her mouth from behind.

Rage and fear filled her chest as she tried to wrench out of the attacker’s grasp, twisting this way and that to no avail. Gathering a deep breath, she slammed her head

back into the chin of her assailant and gave a satisfied shake of her head. When she heard his grunt of pain, she delivered him a solid jab to his ribs with her elbow.

Trying to remain calm, Jacie gained little pleasure that she had indeed hurt the goon, if his grunt of pain was any indication. She drew her foot forward and slammed her heel into the shins of the attacker behind her. It was then that she realized there were two of them, feeling another set of hands upon her shoulders that clamped over her flesh with a tight grip.

As a gag was being stuffed into her mouth, her hands were pulled behind her back and tied tightly with a rough piece of rope that dug into her wrists harshly. She began to kick out fiercely then, knowing that if she did not, she would be taken to God knows where. Oh, why had she not listened to her father just this once?

She was shoved upon the ground and her feet kicked out relentlessly as her booted heels connected with various body parts again and again. On one man, she had given him a gushing bloody nose, the other a cracked and bleeding lip. Just when she thought that she would be able to get away, seeing one small avenue of escape, the first man had slipped a burlap bag over her head. She felt another one being pulled over her feet at the same time.

When the bag was tied in the middle and the squirming bundle was left to wriggle freely until the two men caught their breaths, Bart wiped at his still bleeding nose.

"The li'l brat! She got me right in the nose!" He held a piece of cloth to his bleeding nostril and cursed under his breath. "*A pure angle*, my ass! The captain has to be out of his mind to tangle with this little hellcat!"

"Aye, an' she got me on my lip that was already sore!" Marlon shook his head. "We should just tap her on the head an' knock her out. We can't take her on the docks with her squirmin' an' movin' about. Someone will stop us for sure!"

Bart winced. "Aye, an' the Cap'n will be mighty upset if we were found out." His eyes narrowed upon the still squirming bundle and he nodded, drawing out his pistol from the inside of his knee high leather boot. "I will do the deed, Marlon. We can't linger much longer, that's for sure." He leaned down and felt her head through the bag and then brought the butt of his pistol down upon the back of her skull. The activity

inside the bag stopped immediately and he winced again, hoping he had not hit her too hard.

Marlon sighed in relief and sat down beside the bag to rest for a moment. When the biggest part of his bleeding had been wiped away, Bart hauled the bag over his shoulder and both men made their way back onto the thoroughfare, heading to the south end of the dock. Two blocks down, a finely dressed gentleman accidentally bumped into Bart, nearly sending the bag landing in a heap upon the hard wooden planks of the walkway.

"Hey, watch where yer goin', mate!" Bart readjusted the bundle and puffed out his chest in agitation.

Dover Monroe raised his brows at the seaman and tapped the tip of his cane upon the boardwalk under his feet. "Sorry, my good man. I was in such a hurry that I was not paying attention to where I was headed." He bowed slightly. "My apologies." He eyed both men now as they began to fidget uncomfortably in his presence. He took in their faces and the burlap sack the one braced over his shoulder, wondering from where they hailed. He decided that he would not even bother to ask. More than likely, they worked for him on one of his ships. He raised his eyes to the heavens and made a mental note to tell the captains of his fleet to screen the crews a little more carefully. He tipped his hat to both of them and then continued on his way, dismissing them completely as his thoughts turned to his daughter Jacie and what trouble she was embroiled in this day.

Marlon and Bart started on their way again, dodging in and out of the throngs of people that milled along the shop fronts. It was beginning to get very busy in the early evening and they quickened their paces, wanting to reach the long boat and row out to their ship before darkness set in. The ship was well hidden, not very far from shore and if they hurried, they could make it in plenty of time.

Jacie knew she was upon a ship, distinguishing right away that it was not her own. She had been manhandled, to say the least, and she remembered putting up a good fight...and then nothing. Whoever her captors were must have hit her over the head with something, for her head hurt like the very devil! Touching the spot gingerly, she sighed

in relief when she felt no wet, sticky blood. Only a bump the size of a goose egg. Oh, when she found out who had done this, she would rip into their asses for sure! Who knows how long she had been here or *who* had been with her. That thought only fueled the already hot fires of her rage and she knew for a certainty that her captors could count on a sure retribution!

Looking around her, Jacie noticed that she was in some type of storage room that held supplies, mostly foodstuffs. As she looked around further, she discovered that it was the neatest supply room she had ever seen. There was a place for everything, right down to extra blankets and even toiletry items such as soap. She raised her brows, impressed with the organization. But then her brows dropped down once more in agitation. Jacie did not care what the supply room looked like! She wanted out of here and she wanted to talk to the captain, posthaste.

Locating the door, Jacie got to her feet and stomped over to the thing, beating on it until her hands ached. Damn! It was too sturdy so there was no use in trying to beat her way out of this one. She would just have to continue to pound upon the hard wood until someone answered her shouts.

“Cap’n, she’s beatin’ on the door! She is demandin’ to be let out an’ she wants to talk to *you*!” Marlon leaned heavily upon the desk, obviously out of breath after running up the stairs from below.

Captain Jack Blade sat back in his chair and grinned, allowing the map he had been viewing to slip from his fingers. His long blonde-streaked chestnut hair fell to his waist in a dozen or so braids, shining in the light that filtered into the cabin. The material cap that covered the top of his head to his brows tying at the nape of his neck was of a deep blue color that matched his twinkling eyes. His grin was lopsided, showing a glimpse of even white teeth and he raised his brows as he tugged upon one small silver hoop earring that hung from his earlobe.

His white linen shirt hung open to his waist with the ends being tucked neatly down into a pair of very snug fitting black britches. Knee high black leather boots completed his ensemble but no matter how simple the clothes, the man made them

something of a luscious display. Mostly in part because of the body that was obviously present beneath. He was deeply tanned and large of muscles, bulging in his arms, legs and chest, and he was most handsome, to be sure. Some would say that he was almost *too* handsome for his own good. But it was mainly the sensual blue of his eyes that had most women throwing themselves at him, pining away for that one good fuck he was reputed to dish out gladly.

"Is she now?" His grin widened and he stood to his full height of six foot two. Leaning over his cluttered desk with his hands braced before him suddenly, a serious look passed across his face. "Then see the lady to the lower deck, my man. I shall be there shortly."

Marlon gave a short nod and left to do his captain's bidding while Jack made himself presentable.

Blade grinned as he sat back down and took a sip of his rum, thinking of the beauty that he now had custody of. Jacie was a delight to gaze upon and he would warrant that she was a delectable fuck as well, giving account to her own...*questionable* reputation. He grinned suddenly, thinking that he will most assuredly enjoy their journey together. Ah, dare he hope that his achingly long nights spent alone could very well be at an end?

He stood as he gave a forlorn sign, selecting an overcoat of rich blue velvet and grabbing his cutlass from the desk. Blade slipped the metal under the sash that was tied around his waist as he took leave of his cabin a short time later.

Stopping abruptly before he stepped foot on the deck, Blade was able to view the woman that was being contained by Marlon and his partner. Jacie struggled within their grasps and he saw the fire erupt in her eyes. She yelled out every curse word he knew and then some he had never heard of before. He grinned at her obvious displeasure, hoping to turn that one single emotion into *pure* pleasure.

She was a true beauty, slim of form and wild in her stance, but what drew his attention the most was the abundance of dark blond curls that shimmered in the sunlight every time she moved her head. Blade could see her emerald green eyes vividly from where he stood in the shadows as they sparked in irritation. He felt himself become more

aroused with the lady's appearance and her beautiful face with each passing minute. *Too damn gorgeous!* He clicked his tongue as a smile slid onto his face.

He knew that she just *had* to be the best fuck he was going to have the pleasure of taking, if her untamed display was any indication! Taking a deep breath as if the action would tamp down his arousal, he stepped ceremoniously onto the deck and placed his hands upon his hips bellowing out an order for the woman to be released.

Jacie ceased her struggles as the deep bellow wrapped around her body, hugging her with its strength. Turning slowly, she swallowed as her eyes met the sapphire blue ones that regarded her calmly with a blatant display of humor.

He was absolutely the most handsome man she had ever seen in her life and she had been known to travel quite a bit. He was too handsome for words, not that any could describe this man-god creation. He was like a mouth-watering entrée waiting to be passed over the lips of a ravenous woman. She watched as his too sexy grin deepened. Immediately Jacie thought of his nude image lying across a bed of silk, his hard cock throbbing with want. He would have a teasing smile gracing those succulent lips of his, beckoning the receiver of his affections to come and partake in the feast he offered.

Trying to shake her head from the fog that had sprung on her suddenly, she felt the surprise of her wayward thoughts flow through her mind and she almost smiled. There was not much that could shock her these days, but damn, who could not help but to think such things. He was obviously a man made for fucking!

Bringing herself reluctantly back to the present, she licked her bottom lip at the delectable fading image. Jacie raised her brows in mild scrutiny as the man made his way to stand fully in front of her. His scent of salt water and fresh air made her stomach tingle with the inhaled fragrance. *Fuck me*, was the only words to describe the scent and, for that matter, *him*. She swallowed the groan that came to her lips before the actual sound was released in a satisfying growl of lust.

"Allow me to introduce myself, love." The handsome pirate bowed at the waist and gave the woman a devilishly sensual smile. "I am Captain Jack Blade. But my friends call me *Blade*."

"You!" Jacie eyes widened suddenly as she felt a deep rage well up in her chest.

She snapped her arms quickly out of the now slack grip that held her, planting a hard, open-palmed cuff upon the pirate's left cheek. Gone were the erotic feelings she had felt just moments before. In their place was a deep wailing fury. How dare he make her feel those delicious sensations after what he had done to her family!

Blade raised his brows and gave the woman a saucy smile. "Not sure that was truly justified, love! Perhaps you can now explain why your dainty hand print is on my cheek, hum?"

Jacie seethed at the man. Obviously he did not know whom he dealt with. "You-you...*scoundrel*!" Her hand itched to slug him upon that sexy smirking mouth of his.

"Ah, you forgot bounderer, pillager, womanizer, thief, *de*-virginizer which I am not sure why they call me that," he wiggled his brows at her with a decidedly wicked grin, "and, my personal favorite, *Best Cock of the Sea*!" He crossed his arms over his chest and smiled at her, noticing that his last words had not even phased her one whit. She was a true gem, to be sure and the worst kind of woman there ever was: sensual, sexy and seductive! The cursed three 'S' woman, to be true!

Blade maneuvered himself suddenly to duck her tight fisted swing. It came at him in a rush and he laughed outright at her aggression. "At least tell me why you have your feathers in such a ruffle, my sweet." He stood well out of her range of fire now but kept an eye on her just the same. He crossed his arms over his chest as he awaited her answer. His teasing grin slid easily back into place as he soaked up her loveliness with his eyes like a sponge. Mmm...to taste her spoils would be like a delicacy! His mouth actually watered at the thought of how she would taste upon his tongue. He cleared his throat quietly and tried to keep his eyes on her own, lest he face a more severe retribution from her.

"You have stolen from my father!" Jacie placed her hands upon her hips and tossed the long blonde curls over her shoulder. Her look dared any of the crew who stood around to come at her. *Best Cock of the Sea*, indeed! She did not doubt that declaration for one moment, but refused to be lured into the sensual aurora that surrounded him like a fine mist. Oh he was too good to be true and she felt her mouth water at the tantalizing tastes this one would certainly have!

"You will need to be more *specific*, love! I *steal* so many things. And why don't you tell me your name while you are at it."

Jacie rolled her eyes and crossed her arms over her chest as well. "I am Jacie Monroe and *do not* change the subject! I will have you know that my father owns the *Eagle's Shipping Line*." She took a step closer to him, narrowing her eyes. "You have relieved us of several rather large shipments to England."

"What *cargo* did she carry, love? A *little more specific*, if you please. If I am being accused of theft, I want to make sure all of the facts are correct, you understand." Humor was rich in Blade's voice and he knew he pushed her to her limits. He dared a glance at her ripe breasts that strained tightly under the luscious pale pink velvet of her gown. The hardened nipples that poked teasingly through the material seemed to call his name and invite his eager touch. Regrettably, he moved his eyes back to her face and saw her anger at the obvious liberty taken was not appreciated in the least.

"Bolts of cloth, you idiot! Fine bolts of the softest silk and the richest velvet!" Jacie's hands itched to slap him again for his ogling of her chest. And she cursed her body as she felt her nipples harden even more, seeming to crave his attentions further.

Blade's eyes widened and then he grinned at her. "*Now* I remember!" He looked down at the royal blue velvet coat he wore. "Aye, love, I *did* do that. And I must compliment your father. The weave is absolutely impeccable!"

Jacie shrieked her rage. "You *bastard*! I will have that cloth back...and your coat!"

"Love, no need for name calling. I did admit I had done the deed." He placed a well-manicured finger upon his upper lip and tried to smooth down his mustache, his grin still in place. "Unfortunately, the cloth has been...er...let us say...*disposed of*. But, I can tell you that the coin I received for the merchandise was top price."

"Then I demand the coin!" Jacie's green eyes snapped with the rage that broiled under the surface. "And while we are on the subject, I insist that you replace my coat *and* my gown. The imbeciles who manhandled me have destroyed both!"

"The *imbeciles*, as you so kindly refer to them, will be reprimanded." Blade roared with sudden laughter. "Marlon! Bart! An extra ration of rum to you both!"

That did not sit well with her at all. Jacie relaxed a bit and she put forth one of her best smiles, starting to see the game he liked to play. "I see you deal out punishment like you deal out common sense to your crew. I will remember that, for future reference, *you understand.*"

Blade's smile deepened as he took in her lovely smile and allowed her mocking words to flow over him indifferently. Absolutely brilliant! "Careful, love. I may just throw you into the pits with the lot of my crew, letting them do to you what they will."

Loud cheers resounded as Jacie's eyes widened. "You would not dare!" Would he?

"Do not *dare* me, love. A dare is something that I *rarely* pass up."

More shouts of laughter had Jacie gritting her teeth in fury. "When my father gets hold of you, I will wager that the overconfident smile you have settled upon your face will be justly wiped clean!"

"Perhaps, love, but I doubt that your father and I shall ever meet. As soon as I take you to your destination, I will probably never set eyes upon your exquisite face again. Pity. It is such a beautiful face." Blade gave her a mock fiendish look for good measure, knowing that as he did so, he could very well be facing the wrath of Medusa herself.

"And just where *are* you taking me?" Jacie took a step forward and wanted so desperately to grab the man's cutlass that hung by his side and run him through!

Blade's grin was mischievous at best and he clasped his hands behind his back and rocked forward upon his toes. "Ah, now that is a surprise. I can't tell you no matter how many kisses you deliver to me upon my waiting lips." Oh, the delight he would find in that adventure!

Jacie snorted amid further shouts of laughter from the crew. "Do not flatter yourself, Jack Blade." She pushed at his chest when he leaned down as if to take that unpromised kiss. "I am not one of your willing wenches who flaunt their wares for all to see."

Blade raised his brows. "Right you are, love. I am sure that your tight ass would need a rather large wedge inserted to gain the smallest crack!" Oops! He had *not* meant

to say that one. It had just slipped out unexpectedly. But it was all in fun, *right*?

Jacie slapped his other cheek and curled her hand into a fist. She said not a word, just stared heatedly at him, daring him to come at her.

"All right, I did call for that well placed wallop, but be warned love that I like the slap and tickle game just as much, if not more, than any other man."

"Oh, you are absolutely infuriating! No wonder you are the most hated man I have ever heard of!" That statement was true...to an extent. Only the *male* gender had commented on that. But what she had heard from the *female* point of view was entirely different. All she could recall right at the moment was what a savvy lover this man was...and how he *is* the Best Cock Of The Sea.

"So you *have* heard of my reputation then!" Relief flooded Blade's face and he smiled, showing perfectly white teeth. "At least I know that I am a running topic of conversation in the circle of the wealthy." He bowed before her and then straightened suddenly when he heard his man yell from the crow's nest above, giving warning to a ship sighted on the horizon. "Sorry, love. We will need to continue this at a later time. It would be in your best interest to go below and hide yourself away. We are about to go *a-stealin'*! Take her below, Marlon!"

Chapter Two

Fuming pissed is what Jacie was! By the eyes of God, if she had her cutlass, the handsome rogue of a pirate would think twice before ordering her about again. Or placing her in a storage room that now served as her make-shift prison cell for that matter.

Pacing along the isle of the supply room, Jacie heard the commotion up above her as the booted feet of the crew scurried hither and yon. She heard the grappling hooks clamp loudly onto the ship's starboard rail, feeling the ship give a slight lurch as shouts and laughter rang out overhead. What the devil? Did he have a party with all the ships he plundered? She stopped pacing for a time, just listening to the shouts above her and wondered what was going on.

After about an hour had past, at least that is how long it *felt*, she began banging upon the door once again, demanding to be let out. Perhaps the other ship's captain would see mercy in her situation and help her back to the mainland if he was able. Studying the door more closely this time, a slow smile began to form across Jacie's mouth as she ceased her banging. The hinges were located on her side of the door! All she had to do was find something to pry the metal bolts out with and she could easily pull the door open. Beginning her search in earnest, she set about locating a tool to aid her in her escape.

"Pirate, you are certainly in for a treat this day!" Her grin was mischievous at best.

"Blade! How the hell are you?" Zachary beamed from ear to ear sitting across from his long time friend. "I bet it has been, what, at least six months since last we spoke?" He took a swig of his rum and set the tankard down heavily upon the table that sat between the two of them. He raised his brows as he crossed his arms over his barrel chest, seeing the look of near contentment on his friend's face. Now what the devil was *that* all about?

Zachary was an intimidating figure with his massive structure and arms as big as main masts. He stood at least seven feet tall with shoulders as wide as the table in front of him. His deep brown eyes were kind, as always, and his weathered face was deeply

tanned. He kept his long blond hair tied at the nap of his neck with a pink ribbon, which his wife had given to him on the day they wed. He had even named his ship after her, *The Pink Polly*.

Blade grinned and shook his head. "Aye, at least that long if not more." He studied Zachary with a twinkle in his eyes.

Zachary grinned. "Tell me my friend, what have you been up to all these months besides pillaging and fucking beautiful women!"

Blade smiled brightly as he raised his brows. "I got her, Zach. I finally have caged the *Tigress*."

Zachary whistled low and then gave Blade an exaggerated wink. "And have you enticed the wench with your seductive wiles as of yet?"

"Nay, I have not. Not *yet* anyway."

Zachary grinned and shook his head. His most trusted friend had been in love with this little snippet of a demon-girl since he was but fifteen years old. Certainly a long time to hold a burning flame in any aspect.

Blade grinned. Pining away for this woman for the last ten or so years now seemed like a long time but the itch she had put in him needed scratched. He had followed the girl for what seemed like an eternity, scrutinizing her every move, staying in the shadows and had watched her become a full-blown woman. And what a woman she had turned out to be!

Beautiful beyond the ordinary, she was quite a bit of fluff! Her father was a well-to-do merchant with a fleet of ships a mile long. And when she would take a trip with her father or one of her brothers, she would be right out there with the rest of the crew doing whatever was necessary to keep the ship running smoothly.

When she had secretly commissioned her own ship's crew to set up her own little *privateer* business a few years back, no one was more surprised than Blade! She had named herself the *Tigress* and had dubbed her ship *The Sea Whores*, a gorgeously sleek ship that rivaled her lady captain's own beauty. So Blade had followed her steadily for the past three years now and had learned just six months ago that the lady, Jacie May Monroe, the *Tigress*, was engaged to marry a wealthy shop owner in the south of France

in less than a year.

Blade had never felt anger like that before, but that time was something he would just soon forget altogether! He had been enraged and swore that he would hold her captive until she agreed to marry *him*, the infamous Captain Jack Blade! And now he had taken the first step in his mission. God give him strength from above, because he knew of the *Tigress's* furious reputation and he doubted that the lady would take her kidnapping as anything but full-blown retribution! His smile widened suddenly as his thoughts drifted to the inevitable fucking she had coming to her.

"It's your call, Blade." Zachary raised his brows and grinned at his handsome friend. He hoped that the *Tigress* would go easy on him!

"She will come to see reason." Blade laughed outright then, a rich rumble that sounded just a tad bit arrogant. "I will have her eating out of my hand within a fortnight, I guarantee that!"

"Your conceit is likely to get you with this one, Blade. She is unlike any of the other women you have dealt with before. She knows how to fight better than most men we know and she can wield a cutlass as easy as that whip she hangs by her side. Beware her claws, my friend! I would not see you hurt."

"For as long as I have been watching her, I would be warranted to say that I know her next move better than she herself will. I promise you that she will be my wife and not by force mind you, within the span of thirty days."

Zachary laughed. "I am a betting man, Blade! Would you care to make a wager on that one?" His eyes held the same humor as his voice did and he waited for the man to take him up on his offer.

Blade leaned back in his chair and he wrapped his hand around his cup of rum again. "I will take your wager, my friend. And my winnings shall be your presence by my side when I marry her."

Zachary snorted. "I will do you one better, my friend!" He smiled. "I will let you have a week at my mansion on the Lost Heaven Island. But be warned: she must wed you willingly or no deal! You know I do not give up my own private heaven for nobody, but in your case I will make this one exception."

Blade saluted the other man arrogantly and grinned. "Agreed! She will wed me willingly. I promise you."

There was a loud ruckus heard suddenly outside the door to Blade's cabin. The door burst open, slamming against the wall behind it with such force that it rattled the windows across the cabin.

Jacie stood there with a cutlass in her hand pointed at Bart's midsection. Her eyes spit her fury as she glared at Blade. "I am the *Tigress* and I demand that you let me off this ship now or so help me God, this piece of shit is a goner!"

Blade tipped back his head and roared with laughter. Oh, this was priceless! She was living up to her name and he loved her display of aggression. No wonder she made it to his cabin without being stopped. His crew must be laughing their asses off right about now, praying for poor Bart's hide! "Easy, love...or should I call you *Tigress*? Fortunately, I know exactly who you are, dear lady. That is one of the reasons why you are on my ship right now." He smiled as he saluted her with his cup, taking a quick sip of rum in the process. "But be careful, love. I know old Bart does not look like much, however, he does have a wife and a few brats running around at home."

Her face softened slightly and she released the man abruptly. "Be gone you bugger! And know I do this for your children, *not* for you!"

Bart scampered down the steps to the lower deck and then turned back toward her with a grin on his face. "My thanks, lady, but I have no children. An' no wife, neither!" He disappeared quickly, sending out a small laugh behind him as he met the shouts of laughter from the crew who stood on deck awaiting his return.

Jacie turned slowly and looked at Blade with narrowed eyes as she slammed the door to his cabin closed. A grin played about her lips as she saluted him with her cutlass. "Well done, Pirate!" Her emerald eyes flashed with her indisputable humor. "I can see that I shall have to watch you. I fear that the value of your words do not hold the truth that they are spoken with." She laughed then and thought once again how very handsome this pirate was. Her eyes boldly raked over his entire length as he lounged casually in his cushioned chair. The silver hoops in each of his ears gave him a sexy aura and the scent of him was still fresh, filling the cabin, invading her mind and haunting her soul.

Blade raised his brows at her as he grinned. "I suppose I will need to watch what I say to you since you now know my secret to smooth talk." He rather enjoyed the fact that she let her eyes roam over his body at her leisure. He felt the caress of her eyes as if it were her hands that actually touched him, giving him a luscious feeling of much needed warmth. He also felt his body's sudden reaction to those caressing eyes, allowing himself to swell fully, knowing that she would completely see the outline of his hard cock under the black britches he wore.

"Smooth talk is right! The stories I could tell you about your *smooth talk*, especially where bedding women are concerned, would likely curl your toes and further your justified conceit!" Jacie saw his erection coming to life under his britches and she had to laugh. So he liked this little game, did he?

Justified conceit? Hum, he liked that! "Don't believe all that you hear, love! I would wager that one in ten comments made are *not* true."

Jacie laughed outright, a soft tinkling sound that embraced his soul and stole his breath as she tossed her head from side to side, sending her hair in a golden sweep around her shoulders. Blade made a mental note to dig her out some britches and one of his linen shirts as was his custom to seeing her dressed while on her own ship. Ah, yes, the *thin* material of his shirts would suit her fine and would be sure to put a smile on his face.

"It is rumored that you are one of the most succulent pirates that have ever sailed the seas." Jacie smiled at him and allowed her cutlass to fall by her side, feeling no physical threat from him what so ever. "And every woman who utters your name from between her lips will most likely be *serviced* by you in time." She did laugh at his astounded look. As if he did not know he was too gorgeous for words! Indeed, he was absolutely the most prime male specimen *she* had ever seen!

Her flirty words sent little fingers of passion running down Blade's midsection to his groin. Ah, this was too good to be true! "Careful, love. I believe I heard you utter my name a time or two since you have come to be on my ship. I am, and will always be, at *your service*. You will find that flattery will get you *everywhere* with me."

"Oh, I do not try to flatter someone who knows what the true art of love is all about. And it is something that he flaunts as freely as waving his pirate flag on the main

mast.” She wished that her intended were as sexy as this man, not to say that he is an *unhandsome* man. Far from that statement, for he was truly something to gaze upon. It was just that being handsome and being sexy were two entirely different things. And when the two were paired together, like with Pirate Blade, it made for one delicious man.

Jacie stared at him boldly, wondering what went on in that gorgeous head of his, what his thoughts were made of and how she could become a part of those thoughts. This surprised her, for she actually like the mild flirting that passed between them. And it surprised her further that she would have his attentions rather than that of her own betrothed, Jason.

“*Flaunts* is too harsh of a word. I would rather you use the phrase, ‘*a light dusting*’, perhaps?”

“Either or. It amounts to the same in the end.” She loved his smile and wondered why she had never seen him before on any of her adventures. He must keep a low profile out on the sea. The price on his head was jumping by leaps and bounds every time he pissed off another merchant, so she had heard.

“Ah, love, there is a difference. One I would wager you would want to find out about?” Blade raised his brows at her and held his grin in place. Damn, how much more blatant can she be? She was trying to challenge him in this bedding game and he would be the first to call her hand on this little issue. He could almost taste her now!

Jacie grunted and shook her head. “Alas, I am engaged to wed a fine man. I honor my engagement as if it were the actual wedding that has taken place. I, for one, am very, *very* committed to only *one* man at a time. I do not believe in fucking everything that moves, if you get my meaning.”

Ah, a small snag in his plans but one he would be able to overcome with a little persuasion. It was good to know that she would remain faithful to her man, though. “But, my sweet, do you *love* the man? Do you love everything he does to you?” Now why did he ask *that*? He really *did not* want to know anything about her past lovers.

She grinned. “I love him well enough.”

Blade nodded his head and noticed that Zachary had somehow slipped past the both of them and had left them quite alone in his cabin. He stood and walked slowly over

to her, taking advantage of their solitude. "Then a test of your love, fair lady. I bid you let me kiss you and then you tell me if what you feel for him is...*love*." Before the permission was denied, he dipped his head and met her lips willingly against his own. They were warm and pliant and he groaned at the sweetest pleasure he had ever known. He especially liked it when she dipped her tongue into his mouth to lave it over his own, sucking on the tip lightly. Dear God, how long had he waited to taste her? Years and years it had been. And she was better than he could have ever imagined.

Jacie felt the fire spark within her stomach and move over her entire body, instantly making her pussy wet, begging for his touch. He tasted so damn good and he felt hard and solid in her arms. And he kissed as she had been told he had. She stepped back suddenly, breaking the kiss and giving him a saucy smile, belying the wild beat of her heart that almost made her breathless. Her mind swirled with the thought of wanting to push him to the floor and fuck the brains right out of his head. Oh, he was good!

"What do *you* feel, Blade? If you claimed to love someone and I kissed you, would you still profess undying love for that woman?" She eyed him with a smile gracing her lips, wondering if he looked at her with that too seductive little smile because he really liked the way she kissed him. Or perhaps he just had his mind intent upon another female conquest?

Blade shook his head, still dazed by her short but sweet onslaught that had his cock springing to life once again with a deep throbbing need. "Nay, I would say I hold no love in my heart for a woman who could not kiss me the way you just did." He captured her lips once more, vowing to hold on to her tightly lest she pull away from him again. He pushed her into the panel of the door to his cabin and groaned as her arms circled around his neck, pulling him closer.

Chapter Three

Jacie felt his strong hands roam over her back, feeling the heat through the thin material of her gown. She felt him press the entire length of his solid body next to her own as his lips sensually moved over hers, sliding his tongue inside her mouth to caress and demand a response. And she responded willingly.

Wrapping her arms around his neck, she delved her hands into his hair and felt the silky braids run along her palms. She felt herself becoming consumed by his scent...by *him*.

Blade continued to lave her tongue and run his hands along the contours of her back expertly, coming to rest on her ass as he pulled her toward him tighter. He pushed his hips forward slightly and he knew she had to feel the long length of his desire, hard and pulsing next to her thigh. He groaned into her mouth as he deepened the kiss.

Jacie's thoughts swirled around the inevitable fucking she had coming to her if she did not stop this madness right now. But she found that she did not want to stop, she wanted to go on and on, letting him take her on a sensual ride of enchantment. She wanted to feel the hardness of his cock inside her wet, eager pussy. She wanted this and she wanted *him*.

Becoming emboldened by the passion he had instilled within her since their first meeting a few hours past, she began to run her hands along his shoulders and over his chest. Jacie felt the raw strength and brawn of his body as it quivered under her fingertips.

She grazed her hands along the waist of his britches and pulled the shirttail out, finally able to have a skin-on-skin contact. He was warm, ridged with muscles and hard with his obvious power. She pulled her lips from his and found the stiffness of his nipples very enticing as she lifted his shirt slowly and softly laved her tongue over the hard nubs. She wished earnestly that it was the hardness of his cock against her tongue and after gaining a couple of soft groans from him, she continued her exploration of his body. She moved down over the hard muscled planes of his stomach, dipping her index fingers into the waistband of his britches. She allowed her tongue to mimic the slow massage that her fingers did to the bare skin of his waist, tasting his flesh with ravenous

licks of desire...hot, wet and ready to fuck him before she lost her mind.

Blade felt on fire. She had brought out such a wanting in him that he felt as if his cock would burst with the delicious feel of her hands upon his bare flesh. He yanked the shirt off his body and shoved the bolt into place on the door that she leaned against, loving her hot tongue as she laved it over his waist. He groaned aloud as her hot mouth closed over his throbbing need through the material that covered it from her pillaging hands and tongue. He pulled her to her feet, finding her lips once more and decided that she had pushed him to the point of no return and *now* it was his turn.

Starting at her neck, Blade massaged slow circles under her silky hair and onto her shoulders as he delved his tongue into her mouth, the soft grunts of the sweetest rapture he had ever known filling his cabin. His impatient hands found the buttons at her neckline were so small that his fingers fumbled with the things for an eternity before he grasped both front sides and pulled them apart, sending the tiny buttons flying in all directions. She did not seem to notice in her heightened state of ecstasy and to his delight, she wore nothing beneath the velvet material. Ah, the true hellion revealed! His *Tigress*. And what a lovely creature she was!

The creamy flesh of her breasts was fully exposed to his eyes and Blade drank in her beauty as he dipped his head to lave the dusky tipped orbs with his tongue. She tasted delicious, like fine wine and he grasped her hips and pushed the gown to the floor as he knelt on his knees before her. He kissed along her belly, smoothing his hands over her silken flesh, glorifying in the feel and taste of her. He heard her breath quicken as he made his way to her center, kissing every bit of exposed flesh on the way.

Blade's fingers pillaged sensually over the wet pussy he found there, smelling the delicious scent of her desire and wanting to taste the folds of swelled flesh that awaited him. Licking along the tight blonde curls that covered what his tongue sought the most, he parted her thighs and groaned as she tossed one leg over his shoulder, opening herself up to his plundering. His tongue licked over the wetness of her, tasting the nectar he had craved for so long, delving into her pussy with the clear intent of making her his own this day. Her glorious taste heightened his desire as he continued to plunge his tongue into her. He took soft licks along her pink flesh and heard her moans of passion as she held

his head in place, moving her hips in rhythm with his tongue.

Blade's hard cock throbbed at her willingness to his ministrations and he reluctantly pulled his tongue from her hot pussy, licking every drop of her desire from his lips as he stood. Picking her up in his arms, he carried her over to his bed and laid her gently upon the silk cover of crimson. As he pulled the boots from his feet and quickly pushed the britches from his hips, he settled himself between the luscious thighs that opened willingly to him, offering to him a glimpse of the heaven he knew awaited there. He felt her heat and her desire as it smoothed over his hard length before he entered her fully.

But the barrier that he encountered made him hesitate suddenly.

She was a *virgin*? Damn me!

With her reputation, how in the hell had she been able to keep her virtue intact? Jacie had led him to believe that she was a seasoned woman, ripe for the taking, begging him to fuck her.

Jacie squirmed beneath him unmercifully, calling his name on a whispered groan, wondering why he had stopped. "Blade. Now...*please*."

Blade closed his eyes to the sweet sound of her whispered words and of her tightness around him, knowing that he had reached the point of no return. He could no more stop himself from fucking her than he could stop his ship from gliding along the gentle waves of the sea. Pushing his hips forward slightly with a small groan, he opened his eyes to gaze into the face of the lovely woman beneath him.

Jacie felt him breach her maidenhead and bit down upon her lip for the pain that was to come. He seemed to slice thought her like his namesake, making her nearly scream out in the process. But he took in her hurt, murmuring his apologies and allowed her the opportunity to become accustomed to his size. And for that she was grateful.

After a few moments of him tenderly kissing her cheeks and lips, Jacie instinctively moved her hips slowly under his while he remained still and heard his groan of pleasure. She was tight around him, feeling every inch of him that had invaded her center, feeling as if she would split in two. But as he continued to kiss her, beginning to move slowly inside of her, she felt herself virtually melt. She became filled with a fire

that blazed along her pussy, moving deep inside where he now laid claim to her heat. With slow precise movements, his hips met hers as she followed his lead. She brought her knees up to his waist and wrapped her legs around him, pulling him closer into her warmth, feeling him pulse erratically as he softly whispered her name.

Blade had never felt anything like her before, not even in his dreams. She was tight and hot, wet and silky, making him slid closer to the edge of a release that would be great. He heard her moan his name, urging him on and pulling his buttocks forward to gain more of his length. Tender palms brush over his skin softly and he felt himself swell further with his need. He looked down at her, her face full of the pleasure that they shared and her eyes sparkled with passion as she gazed at him with half closed eyes.

Jacie breathed heavily and moaned as her fingernails dug into his back when she found her first sweet release. Her body seemed to melt under his own, bucking wildly as wave after wave of a delicious pulsing moved over her.

Her soft center convulsed gently around him and Blade felt the tightening of her as she seemed to massage and suck his cock from within, bringing his own release in great waves of passionate longing finally spent. He felt as if she had pulled the very soul from his body, making his breath exhale sharply against her ear.

Jacie held on to him for dear life, allowing him the pleasure of his powerful thrusts to continue. He felt smooth and hard, throbbing deep inside of her. He began to slow his movements as she continued to rub her palms along his back, kissing his neck and running her tongue slowly over his chin. She smiled as she closed her eyes, feeling the contentment of this man's love grasp her body in a tight hold. She sighed allowing her mind to drift along where it may. She knew deep down that her whole world would come crashing in around her soon as the sweet sensations she had felt moments before slowly ebbed away.

Jacie's eyes popped open suddenly as she held her breath. Dear God, *what had she done?*

As the horror of her losing her virginity sunk into her brain, Jacie barely felt Blade kissing her on her cheeks and neck. Her thoughts were a million miles away, trying to hush the ragged emotions in her heart of what she had allowed to happen. She was to

wed her fiancé in less than three months and now she would have to explain *this*? How could she even begin to explain?

Jacie closed her eyes and tried to think as the awareness of his gentle attentions entered into her thoughts finally. It was difficult to think of *anything* other than him with his hands gently roaming over her and his lips tenderly kissing every bit of exposed skin from her face to her waist. It *was* delicious in a sense that her first time had been with this too handsome rogue pirate. Her and about a *million* other women!

Dread filled Jacie even as she enjoyed his enticing caresses, his gentle touch making her skin tingle lusciously. He had not taken advantage of her that was obvious, for she felt as if she had flung herself at him with all the intensions of gaining a good fuck. And she had. But besides the obvious emotions of lust still coursing through her body, her mind screamed her shame in what she had done. And now, her body craved more of what she cursed.

She dared to look at him then, *really* look at him and she only saw the spent passion on his face. His sapphire blue eyes were half lidded and a lazy smile curved his mouth up, giving him the look of everything that screamed *fuck me again*. He was so enticing that Jacie had to smile back at him, wondering why she did not see anything in his eyes to reflect another conquered woman to add to his list. She knew with a certainty that was exactly what she had been to him.

"Tell me why you look at me so? What are you thinking?" Blade kissed her lips soundly as he rolled off of her and lay by her side. He propped his head up on one hand, keeping her close as his other arm draped across her middle. She was too exquisite for words and he had finally tasted the sweetness of her body as she had given it to him freely. It thrilled him that she had come to him so willingly, far exceeding any of his expectations. But he did detect a small amount of trepidation from her in what she had done. He sighed. At least one thing was for sure: she could not possibly love another man after what they had shared. Her passion for him had been much too great and she had screamed out for his touch by voice and by her body language.

Jacie sighed as well and ran her fingers over the arm that lay across her belly. Such a strong arm, tanned and muscled, with long fingers that had given her much

pleasure. "I don't know what to think, Blade." She sat up then and looked down at him, her emerald eyes shining with hesitated humor as she rested her back against the wall behind her. "I guess I worry that my intended will be slightly disappointed that I am not the virgin he has thought me to be."

Blade's muscles bunched in his arms as he tried to gain his composure, wanting to put forth the attitude of not caring a whit about what her intended thought. But he did care. Jacie was his now and he intended on keeping her that way. He felt the start of a rage fire up in his chest and decided to remain silent before he said or did something he did not want to do.

Jacie tried to read into his thoughts but could not. She bowed her head and wondered if he thought her an inexperienced little wench that needs to improve her lovemaking prowess before he bedded her again.

Again?

What in the hell was she thinking? Not that it mattered if she bedded him once or a thousand times over. The end results were still the same. She was no longer a virgin.

Lifting her face up as he placed the tip of his index finger under her chin, Blade whispered her name.

Jacie's eyes drilled into his with a sensual throng of excitement, a deep lust for lovemaking that now burned within her very depth surrounded by the fire that was hers alone.

Even though this had been her first time with a man, he could see the true passion that lay in wait just under the surface. She would become one fascinating wild ride and *he* would be the only receiver she would give this passion to. She was wild and untamed just like her *Tigress* name dubbed her to be.

Jacie smiled. He was so handsome, very much so, and she had shared with him the joy and thrill of her first time. She felt no remorse, only a deep satisfying relief and a little happiness, she had to admit. "I must confess that you are the lover you have been rumored to be, even though I have no one to compare you to."

Blade threw back his head and roared with laughter. She was absolutely precious! "The rumors of which you speak do not interest me in the least. I need only know that I

have pleased you as you have pleased me. And there is no comparison, lady. I am the only man who will be able to satisfy that deep craving lust I now see in your eyes. You need no one else but me.”

“So, I have pleased you then? Even with my not knowing what to do? This being my first time and all, I mean to say.”

Blade grinned and lifted his brows. “Even though you led me to believe otherwise, you were wonderful, love. And knowledge will come in time as we delve into more and *more* of what we have just shared.” His grin turned ornery as he wiggled his brows up and down at her, liking the light shade of pink that crossed over her cheeks.

“Blade...I am to wed in less than three months. I do not think it would be a good idea for us to continue with this. As I have said, I intend to be faithful to my husband.” Jacie sighed and knew that what she had experienced in Blade's arms she would no doubt find lacking in Jason's. She would not even begin to compare the two, for she knew her favor would lean toward the man that lay next to her at that moment.

Blade reached out a hand and covered her own, bringing it up to his lips for a gentle kiss. “You are not wed to him yet and I do not want to speak of this issue any longer. Let us just enjoy each others company and see what happens along the way.”

Chapter Four

Walking along the worn and scarred deck with bare feet, Jacie tilted her head back and closed her eyes, allowing the warm sun to beat down upon her as she leaned against the railing with her elbows. It felt good, like Blade's hot touch that had haunted her since the first night she had shared his bed.

And she had never left his cabin since that day.

Jacie enjoyed the time spent in his company, in his arms, and she liked the invitation she saw in his eyes every time she looked at him. Thinking about how she had experimented with new and appetizing things, teasing him and tantalizing his body, as well as her own, she found herself becoming too fond of a man she could never have. Her eyes opened as she looked up into the sky and she sighed. She decided not to think about anything but the hour she lived in, knowing sadly that it must all end soon.

Blade watched her from the deck above, loving how her hair flowed with the breeze coming off the sea. The soft white of the shirt she wore billowed behind her, reaching almost to her knees, as the wind pushed the cloth next to her breasts molding it to her form perfectly. The dark nipples were brilliant hard nubs that showed through the thin material clearly. He felt his cock harden with a deep desire to haul her over his shoulder and take her to his bed, to give her the fucking that they both craved.

Since the first time he had made love to her, Jacie had learned so much in the art of love that he could not seem to get enough of her wildly sensual ways. She was a very observant student and he loved the little things she did to him with her tongue and her hands. She thrilled him, she made him want to wrap his arms around her and never let her go. But most of all, she had endeared her way into his heart more so than what he had thought possible before he had even taken her to his bed. He loved her more now than what he had ever felt for any other woman and he refused to let her slip from his grasp. He tried to keep her enthralled with him, wanting her to share every spare moment with him, to make her try to forget her engagement to another.

Coming out of his own thoughts suddenly as he felt the soft hands rub across his bare back, Blade turned with a seductive grin upon his face and wrapped his arms around the object of his deep desire. "Ah, love, I was just thinking about you."

Jacie smiled up at him. "I can *feel* that you have." She boldly ran her hand over his length, feeling the hardness under the tight material of his britches. She ran the tip of her tongue along her bottom lip, giving him a small groan of longing.

Blade laughed at her boldness and kissed her nose. "Right you are, love. Will you do me the honor of gracing my bed once again, so that I can love you proper? I find myself totally insatiable now that I have known your true hidden nature belonging to the lusty wench beneath all your beauty." His blue eyes twinkled with mischief as he cupped one of her breast in his hand, making sure that he shielded her form from the view of his crew on the lower deck.

"I would do you the honor, sir." Jacie's smile was tentative and she bit her bottom lip lightly.

Blade's brows drew down suddenly at her pensive look. "What's wrong, love? You do not seem to be so entertained by the thought of my bedding you as I would have hoped."

Jacie turned from him and looked out over the sea as she leaned against the railing. Nothing but bright blue water, stretching out for an eternity before them met her eyes and she sighed quietly. "Blade, while I truly enjoy every minute I spend within the circle of your arms, I know that it cannot last. Just as I know that you cannot abide by bedding one woman for more than a few weeks."

Blade placed his hands upon the railing on either side of her, surrounding her with his arms and chest from behind as he nuzzled her ear tenderly. "I would not have you take your leave from me, *Tigress*. Tell me what I must do to keep you with me."

Jacie turned and looked at him with raised brows as his whispered words sent chills down her spine. "You can not be serious. The infamous *Pirate Blade* to stay with just *one* woman?" She snorted her disbelief. "Blade, I look at reality and know that I would never be able to hold you by my side any more than you would want to be held there. And what of the place you are taking me to? What happens when we reach our destination?"

"I have decided not to take you anywhere. You will remain with me. And do not speak for me, love. Do you know what I feel, what I truly want?" He grinned at her and

crossed his arms over his chest, trying to play off his true feelings lest she see the hidden truth too soon. "It may be that I *want* to be held by a single woman." He wanted to scream out his denial of her words and tell her how he truly felt, but he remained silent as his heart beat rapidly within his chest. To lose her would mean an end to his own existence.

"I doubt that, but still we both need to face the issue of my engagement...of reality."

Blade's smile faded and he dropped his hands to his sides as he stood to his full height. "Break the damned engagement."

"What? I can not do that." Jacie shook her head slightly.

"Why? Why can you not do that when all you crave is my touch and my lips upon your luscious body? We would make a very good team, you and I, in *and* out of our bed."

"I am not a pirate, Blade, as you well know. I am a *privateer*. There is a difference." Jacie tossed her hair over her shoulders as she looked into his handsome face. "I crave your touch, true, but will you still crave mine a week from now? Two, perhaps?" God, to have him all for herself would make her so happy, but she knew it could never be. She needed the stability of a husband who would not seek out another's bed when a pretty face would catch his eye. She could not have that with this one. He was much too delicious and she knew that her thoughts mirrored that of millions of women who had tasted his sweet love, who would kill for one more hard fuck from this sensual pirate. And by her own doing, she was just another fuck for him to brag about, not to love in whole. Another delusional woman among a list of many.

"I don't think that you would want for anything, my sweet, as I would keep you well satisfied." He wanted to beg with her, to plead for her not to say the inevitable. Damn! What must he do to convince her? Tie her up and not let her go until she saw his reasoning?

"But for how long? How long would I keep *you* satisfied? How long would it take for you to stray to another?" Jacie shook her head and touched her hand to his left cheek. "I will always treasure the time we have spent together, but I know that I will not be the only woman who will grace your bed from this point on. You love women too

much to settle for only one. Return me to my home, Blade, and let this end.” Her hand fell to her side as she rose on her toes to lightly kiss his mouth. She turned from him and went down the small set of steps that led to the lower deck.

Blade watched her go and wanted to yell at her, setting her straight on how she had misconstrued his affections for her. She had no idea how much he loved her, how much he needed her to survive. He had to find a way to turn her heart and her love to him alone. There had to be a way!

Jacie sighed as she stood in front of the window in Blade's cabin looking out over the brilliant blue sea. She wished that she could stay here forever and be with him always. But it just was not to be. These erotic feelings she now held for him had to stop. If they did not, she would end up torturing herself when she left him. And leave him she must. He would only end up hurting her. She bowed her head and prayed that she would leave soon while she still could.

Blade watched her from the door of his cabin as he slipped inside and silently shut the door behind him. Even as he viewed her from the back, he still could not get over how breathtaking she was. Her curves were lusciously formed and he knew her to be even lovelier without any clothing on. She was a goddess to him. And he wanted her to stay by his side. It scared him that she thought of leaving him. How would he be able to survive with out her? Moving forward slowly, he made his way over to where she stood.

Jacie sensed him, rather than saw him as he came up behind her. His strong hands grasped her shoulders and she breathed in the scent that was his alone. He smelled good, sexy and strong, with a slight tinge of soap.

She turned to face him and her eyes widened. He had taken is hair out of his braids and had let the blonde-streaked chestnut mass hang down his back unbound to his waist. If she had thought him to be handsome before, she could not think of a word that would even come close to describing him now. He sported a weeks worth of bearded growth upon his face, which she rather liked and those sensual blue eyes of his seemed to be a deeper color now. He wore no shirt, just his tight britches and her hands itched to feel the tanned skin of his chest under her eager palms. His eyes held no expression as

always, but the intensity of them made her breathless.

Blade knew she liked what she saw. He could see the start of a deep desire spark in the depths of her eyes and flush over her beautiful face. He said not a word as he reached out a hand and pulled the first tie of her linen shirt loose. It gaped open right above her breasts and he trailed his fingertips along the exposed silken skin, running slowly down to the next tie that would release her breasts to his hungry gaze. He lingered there, rubbing the tie with his thumb as he continued to stare into her eyes. He loved her so much, but he dared not to utter the words. Not yet. It was too soon and it would surely scare her away from him. Pulling the tie finally allowed him to glimpse the treasures she held beneath the thin material. He caught his breath as he ran his fingers slowly along the edges of the soft linen, feeling her heart beat strong under his touch.

Running his fingers over the mounds of her breasts brought a small moan to her lips and Blade was filled with delicious thoughts of raging lust that now ran rampant through his mind. She felt hot to his touch and he nearly groaned aloud himself with his wanting.

Sliding his hands down further to the last tie, he slowly pulled the length of cord apart, taking the end of one piece and slowly moved it over her belly. He teased and tickled her, leaving a sensual path of promise in its wake. Dropping the cord, he trailed his fingertips up along her bare flesh to her shoulders and pushed the shirt from her body, letting it fall into a puddle at her feet.

Blade looked at her, careful not to reveal too much upon his face, as he leaned down and kissed her softly. He ran his tongue along her parted lips and heard her moan quietly. He kissed and nibbled his way over her cheeks and down to her neck where he laved his tongue slowly over her silken skin, tasting her sweet and intoxicating flesh as his hands delved into her hair, pulling her closer to his chest.

Jacie moved her hands over his arms and felt the rigid hardness of his muscles as they jumped under her fingertips. She moaned out her desire and felt the urgent need to have him inside of her, to make love to her soft and easy. Slowly allowing her hands to smooth over his chest, she dipped her fingertips into the waist of his britches. She tugged gently on either side until the material pulled away to reveal the bounty that sprung

forward waiting for her touch. Moving over to his shoulder, she kissed him there as she laved her tongue over his chest languidly, making her way down his body to his waist.

Jacie got on her knees in front of him and ran soft fingers over his thighs to his backside. Continuing to kiss him along his front and down lower along the hard, throbbing length of his cock, her breath quickened as his heat surrounded her. He did moan out loud then as her lips closed over the tip of his pulsing desire, sucking gently. Laving her tongue along the underside of him, she enjoyed the small jerks that started suddenly, along with his soft passionate moans.

She liked the taste of him, the feel of him in her mouth and knew that he did as well. He rotated his hips in small thrusts, sliding his length along the hot contours of her tongue. Gathering him further into her mouth and continuing to lave him softly with her tongue, she felt him swell and begin to pulse erratically. She grasped him at the base of his cock and gently moved with a slow up and down movement sliding along the hard length of him. Hoping to further his enjoyment as she continued to suck upon the soft supple skin, her soft moans now mingled with his own.

Blade knew she had no idea how wonderful she felt to him, how she had pulled him further into the velvety recesses of her mouth, feeling the gentle laving of her tongue as she glided over his length. Ah, the feel of heaven is what it was and he never wanted her to stop! He heard her moan her pleasure as she slowly moved over him, feeling her hands run along his thighs, caressing him with her soft touch. He delved his hands into her hair and felt the silken strands wrap around his fingers as if tying him to her forever. He could only wish that it would be so and softly he called her name.

Coming to stand on her feet before him, Jacie ran her palms over his chest and felt the power there. His heavy lidded gaze emboldened her to take his lips with her own in a passionate kiss, delving her tongue into his mouth, underestimating the true passion that now lie in her heart. He stood by the edge of his bed and she gently pushed him back as she climbed on top of him after she slid her own britches from her hips. Smoothing herself along his hot length brought out a deep gratifying heat from her center, providing her with a feeling of utmost pleasure. She tipped her head back and gave a soft moan at the sensation, continuing on with the gentle motion.

Jacie felt Blade's hands upon her breasts and felt him tug gently on her nipples, bringing to her center a deep fire of passion that only this man would be able to quench. She afforded him one small smile before she settled herself over him and slowly allowed his heat to pass into her own body. He felt so good, strong and hard, and she began to slowly rock her hips over his own, feeling every inch of his delicious cock being caressed from within her.

Blade watched as she closed her eyes slowly and moved over his hips with her own. He felt her tighten and relax with each movement until it drove him to near madness. Her heat wrapped around him, as did her scent, and it was like he could taste her upon his tongue, the sweet honeyed nectar of her being that awaited him. Only for him.

Jacie's passion had grown more powerful as the motion of her hips intensified gradually. Thrust after powerful thrust, she moaned her pleasure as she became like a wild animal looming over him, raking her fingernails along his chest, biting his nipples as the deep obsession for him pulsed through her body.

Blade felt his body react to her ministrations, flowing along with the heat of her, gasping deep breaths as the pent up sensations he had been holding back burst through him like a dam breaking free. He felt relief and he felt a sincere longing to hold this woman to him for the rest of his life. His thrusts were wild and untamed as he growled his pleasure out loud, his body jerking with the wondrous feel of her around him.

She kept in time with his movements loving how his gentle caressing of her skin brought a deep delicious tingle into the pit of her stomach. She became more aggressive, feeling her clit rub with heated abandon over his length, bringing to her a deep emotion of raging lust and want. She felt the heat explode within herself, felt the hot wetness of her desire flow around his hardness with a velvet-soft touch.

Blade grasped her shoulders and pulled her down to meet his lips, his tongue hot with the imagined taste of her, now making it a reality. He felt her swirl her hips over him in little circles and he mimicked the motion with his tongue, grinning next to her mouth as she moaned out loud once more. And when she opened her eyes and gave him a look of absolute contentment after a few moments had passed, he laughed as he

smacked her sweet little ass playfully.

“Love, once again you have pleased me well. Take this kiss as a token of my appreciation.” He delved his tongue inside her mouth and felt her own tongue glide over his sensually, pleasuring him with another elongated moan.

“No words of appreciation is needed, Pirate.” She sat up straight and grinned at him. “I enjoy the giving as much as you enjoy the receiving.”

“Ah, ‘tis what I like to hear from my lusty wench.” He lifted one side of his mouth in a half grin and placed an arm under his head as he watched her stand. She turned her back to him and had leaned over to pick up her shirt when he noticed the tattoo, not to mention the too enticing display of succulent ass she turned his way. He sat up, enthralled with the tiger that covered her entire back and stilled her hands as she made a move to put on her shirt.

“I never noticed this before. It’s beautiful.” Blade ran his fingertips along the creation in wonder. The colors were vivid and the raging emotion that the tiger emanated seemed almost too real.

Jacie smiled at him over her shoulder as she pulled her hair aside. “How could you notice when you have had me on my back in a deep coma of delicious fucking for almost two weeks now.” She laughed and shook her head. “I had that done on one of my trips to India. It is where I got my name. That was the first time I had ever seen a real live tiger and I fell in love with the creatures. I even took one as my pet. They are so beautiful with their color and strength, their prowess. I spent a week in India while I got the tattoo done. It’s very detailed, is it not?”

“It is.” He traced his fingertips along the deadly claws that seemed to tear into her flesh like the blade of a sword. “She is magnificent.”

“She is.” Jacie turned toward him and grinned as a loud beating sounded suddenly upon his cabin door. She sighed. “Duty calls for you, Pirate. Better see to your crew.”

“Captain!”

The beating stopped suddenly as the ship seemed to lurch to the starboard side, tipping Blade out of his bed and tumbling him onto the floor beside Jacie where she had

landed as well.

Blade was on his feet immediately and slamming his legs into his discarded britches from earlier. "Stay here and bolt the door!" He pulled on a black linen shirt and shoved his feet into his black boots. Grabbing up his cutlass and belting it around his waist with a royal blue silk sash, he paused long enough to give her a sound kiss before he left his cabin quickly.

Gaining his feet upon the lower deck, Blade stopped suddenly as the sharp metal of a cutlass met his neck. Moving his eyes around quickly, he noticed that most of his crew was either tied up or lying on their stomachs with rough looking men holding knives or other crude armaments to their backs. He let out his breath slowly and followed the blade that led to the man holding it.

"Jack Blade!"

The blackened teeth of Pesos Rivers grinned at him even as the man's black eyes narrowed dangerously. "Pesos! Old friend. Haven't seen much of you these past years. Where have you been hiding yourself? And how in the hell did you gain footing on my ship? My crew should have let me know you were coming. I could have prepared some drinks for us." Blade's casual stance as he folded his arms over his chest belied the tight muscles in his arms waiting to lash out at the ogre that stood before him. Fucking beast! He should have killed him when he had the chance the last time they met four years ago.

"I would not go calling me friend and you know damn well where I have been!" The evil grin faded into a sneer of discontent. "I have one of me own spies in your crows nest. I wanted my visit to be a surprise to you all."

"Right you are, Pesos. But I must wonder as to how you got released from your untimely prison stay."

"I was not released, you bastard! I escaped by the skin of me teeth and barely made it out of the hell hole alive." He leaned forward until he was nose and nose with Blade. "And I have you to thank for that. And thank you I will do." He laughed and spit at Blade's feet as he took a step back. "I told you a long time ago that your day of reckoning would come. And today is your lucky day, *old friend*."

"Not sure about all that, but how about I take a dozen roses from you as an

apology instead and we call this even. *Old chum.*” He encouraged the man’s anger, craved it, for he saw the deliberate harm that was to come to him in the other man’s glare.

Pesos grinned at the intended words to ruffle his anger. “I will save the roses for your grave, Jack Blade!”

“I will take those roses, sir, with gratitude.” The soft feminine voice fairly dripped with honey as Jacie came to stand behind Blade, casually draping her arm over his shoulder as her cutlass touched the thick neck of this man named Pesos. She regarded him with raised brows. “Well? What say you, sweetheart? A dozen red roses in exchange for your sorry hide?” She clicked her tongue and grinned. “Not a bad exchange if I do say so myself.” She stepped in front of Blade then and grinned at the man as she placed her free hand on her hip, still keeping her blade steady.

“And who might you be, little miss?” Pesos swallowed at her unworried expression and the way her cutlass pressed steadily against his neck, knowing that with just a small flick of her wrists, he would die instantly.

“I could be the woman of your dreams...*Pesos*, is it?” Jacie grinned and took a step closer to him. “And, then again, I could be the *Tigress* that rips the flesh from your throat and feeds it to my pet. I have been taking in the pleasurable sights with my mate, Pirate Blade, and I am just itching for a fight. So how about it, love?”

Pesos’ eyes widened when he realized who the luscious woman before him was. *The Tigress*! He had heard about her, how vicious she is and how her bloodlust was as vast as her beauty. He swallowed loudly.

“*Tigress*, if you please, I can deal with this on my own.” Blade stepped in front of her and put Pesos’ cutlass blade back upon his throat. “Now, Pesos, where were we?”

“But I want to deal with him, Pirate! I have been with you for nearly two weeks now and I have had no action. Just this one killing, and maybe a dozen or so of his men, and then I will be satisfied for a few more days. Please allow me this one small repast. I fear I will start in on your own crew if I do not see some blood soon.” She placed her hand upon her hip once more as she gave him a somber look.

Blade sighed and took a step back as he shook his head at Pesos. “Women! If I do not allow this, I will never hear the end.” He shook his head again. “Nag, nag, nag!

Let me tell you, Pesos, if you were smart, you would never allow a woman upon your ship no matter how lovely she is.” He bowed with all formality at Jacie, giving her a quick wink of assurance. “Love, he is all yours, but mind the deck. The men have been working on repairs and I would hate to have blood spill on the unfinished wood. It stains so badly.”

Jacie grinned at Blade as he slid behind her again and sat casually upon the steps that led to his cabin above. She even heard him strike a fire stick along the rough wood and light a cigar, smelling the rich fragrance of cherries and fine tobacco as the smoke wafted in her direction.

“Light me up one of those, Pirate. I like to smoke while I kill.”

Blade chuckled as he pulled another cigar from his breast pocket and lit the end. He put it into Jacie’s outstretched fingers and grinned. “There you go, love.”

Jacie clamped the cigar end between her lips and took a few puffs, allowing the smoke to drift all around her. Holding the cigar with her teeth finally, she gave Pesos a menacing stare, her grin positively evil. “Well? Are we just going to stand here?”

“What the hell is going on?” Pesos demanded as the hand that held his cutlass was brought to his side slowly. “You would have a woman fight for you and take your place instead Jack Blade?”

Blade shrugged and gave the man a smile. “To be honest with you, I have never seen *Tigress* fight before so you can imagine my thrill in wanting to see the event. I have heard she is very deadly and her aim always marks true.”

Pesos snorted his disbelief. “I will not fight a woman!”

“And why not?” Jacie demanded, still holding her blade in the general direction of the man’s neck. She yanked the cigar from her mouth as she narrowed her eyes at him. “I am just as fair in fighting as any man. In fact, I will wager I am better than most men you have fought!” She heard Blade laugh and tightened her hold upon the hilt of her cutlass, gnashing her teeth together. “I *demand* that you fight me, Pesos.”

“I will not! I did not come here to fight with you. I came here to fight with the man who had me locked up in a prison cell for the past two years.” He rubbed his bearded chin thoughtfully and shook his head. “My problem is with him and not you,

pet.”

Jacie took a step closer and grinned as she settled the cigar between her teeth once again. “Too bad, *pet*. You fight *me* this day.” She raised her cutlass above her head and swung forward, catching the tip of his blade as he moved to defend her thrust. “You will need to do better than that if you expect to survive longer than a few seconds!” She thrust forward and caught his arm, right above his elbow.

Pesos howled his pain and took a stumbling step backwards. His eyes raged with his fury and he slashed out at the woman who had done his body harm. He watched in enrapture as she sidestepped quickly, doing a small half-circled spin and landed him another lashing blow to his right side. Blood poured from between his fingers as he held the injured spot tightly. It was as if the wench had him hypnotized for he felt powerless to do a damn thing!

“Pesos! I told you not to bleed on my deck!” Blade blew out a grayish-blue puff of smoke from between his lips and gave the man a slight grin. “I will be scrubbing for a week to get those stains out!” He laughed outright at the narrowed-eyed gaze that Pesos delivered to him. He rather enjoyed this little display as it gave him an opportunity to sum up the motley crew that Pesos had brought with him. The only thing any of these men had going for them was the fact that they carried some sort of weaponry. And having the time to give his men some hand signals would most assuredly have his ship back under his own command within minutes. However, Jacie beat him to the punch.

“Take your leave, *pet*, or you will be singing at the gates of heaven, or more likely, the doors to hell, this very eve. I have gone easy upon you thus far but my tolerance wears thin and I grow weary of this game. If a real battle is what you seek, say the word and I shall put my true mark forward. Unfortunately, you will not be able to witness my prowess for you will be a big ball of dead bones when I get done with your sorry hide. Stand and prepare to meet your maker, you bastard!” She thrust forward again, growing tired of the sparring game she played. She cleanly sliced a thin line across his chest from nipple to nipple and then another in a straight line down to his navel, making a perfect capital ‘T’.

Jacie laughed at his outraged sputterings as she moved forward to ward off two of

Pesos' men who decided they were brave enough to try their luck with her. The man on her right had his sword arm nearly severed from his body and now lay rolling in agonizing pain on the deck. The man on her left was minus the hand that held his sword after he thought to take her unawares while she fought his mate.

The man howled out his pain and watched in horror as his blood gushed out of the gaping hole where his hand used to be attached to his body. He looked at the woman in utter amazement before he fainted dead away, landing with a loud thud upon the wooden planks under his feet.

After that, the others quickly took flight, jumping back to their own ship and cutting the ropes that held the grappling hooks, not waiting to collect their injured crew, least of all their captain.

Blade stood and bowed at Jacie with a wide smile upon his face. "Love, you were absolutely marvelous!" He kissed her soundly after he pulled the cigar from her lips and then shouted out orders for his crew.

"Captain! What of these three men? The buggars still be alive and kickin'!" Marlon waited for the response he knew was to come with a grin upon his weathered face.

"Toss them into the waters, Marlon!" Blade placed his hands upon his hips as he clamped his teeth on the half smoked cigar. "The buzzards of the sea will take care of them!"

Jacie came to stand by Blade, still holding her cutlass in her hand. It dripped with the shed blood of the three men she had wounded and Blade looked at her with raised brows. He seemed as if he would say something but thought better of the act and just grinned at her. She took back her cigar that he offered to her.

"What are you looking at, Blade? Have you not seen bloodshed before?" She wiped her face with the sleeve of her shirt and finally pushed her cutlass into the sash of bright red she had tied about her waist.

"Nothing like this is for sure. I did not know you were so well versed in swordplay."

"You sound as if you have never seen a fight before."

“Not where the woman is the obvious winner. If I had a hat, it would go off to you, love. You took on three men who were twice your size and bested them all. I would not have believed it if I had not seen it with my own two eyes. The obvious rumors of your deadly revenge are proven to me this day.”

His sincere words had a smile gracing her face. “It is all meaningless bullshit for wretched souls that think they can best one another.” Jacie grinned over at him and shook her head. “Lucky for me that I knew I could best the mongrels. Pity that they did not see the danger until it was too late.” She gave him a quick smile of enticement then. “It would seem that you are indebted to me, Pirate Blade.”

Blade grinned and winked at her. “Aye! And I shall wait the lady’s bidding to return the favor!”

Chapter Four

Even after being aboard *The Blade's Fury* for a total of twenty days, Jacie still kept her eyes on the horizon. She knew that her crew would be looking for her now and she awaited their swift rescue. Not that she really wanted to be rescued. Blade was quite the satisfying lover and she, the attentive student, had learned all types of wonderful and erotic things in his presence. This art of love was turning out to be a wonderful pastime and she could barely contain herself for a stolen moment in his arms.

Her nights were spent loving Blade like a woman should love a man and vice versa, delving into the mind's power to overcome any additional thoughts other than what was at hand. His wit kept her laughing, but it was his lust that she truly craved the most. Hoping against hope that there would be some spark of emotion in his eyes to give her a small sign of encouragement, she would always turn from him with a sigh when she saw none.

Jacie closed her eyes against the brilliant glare of the bright sun upon the water. She had seen no such emotions upon his handsome face. That led her to believe that he would no sooner give or show those feelings any more than he would bow down and kiss the King of England's ass. And without the hope of at least a glimmer of affection for her, she began to pray for the sighting of her ship and crew so that she may be gone from him and what she considered to be the best days she had ever had in her life.

Looking forward to a marriage with a man that she cared for had left a sour taste in her mouth after what she had shared with Pirate Blade. This rouge pirate was everything she had heard and more. And it wasn't just the lover part. It was the softly spoken words after they had made love and the companionship from him that really had her eyes seeing him as a sensible man and not just the rascal scoundrel he was dubbed to be. Her marriage to Jason would give her stability in her life but she had to stop and think if stability was really what she wanted. Did she want the solitude of a loveless marriage or did she wish for adventure and lust?

Brought from her thoughts by a bellow from the main mast that a ship had been spotted on the starboard side gave Jacie a glimmer of hope that it would be *The Sea Whores*.

Shielding her eyes with her hand, she grinned broadly as she saw the crimson flag of her ship flapping proudly upon the main mast above the crow's nest even from the great distance they were from Blade's own ship. She was coming at them in all her fury, trying to gain back her mistress's safe return, to be on her way once again.

The activity on the lower deck gave Jacie pause as she watched the men prepare to board an unsuspecting schooner and make off with whatever she held. Did they have a rude awakening coming their way! Her first mate, Martease, would be looking at them from her spyglass right about now, summing up how many men she could take on by herself.

Jacie smiled when she thought of Martease. She was a dark-skinned woman of great beauty, with dark eyes and black hair that shone like brilliant diamonds in the sun. But her strength was as great, if not better than her own, and Jacie knew that she would gain this ship with no trouble. Her heart sank a bit at the thought of leaving Blade behind, but with no encouragement from him, she felt it best to sever the ties this day. Why let it continue? It would just be all the harder to let go, not that it wasn't hard enough now. She kept watching as the ship drew closer and sensed Blade behind her suddenly.

"A ship approaches, love. Would you prefer for wait in our cabin or stand on deck and watch the activities as we relieve her of her bounty?" He kissed her neck and ran his tongue slowly under her ear, becoming instantly aroused by her scent. "Or we could just let my men handle the situation while we go to our bed and stay there the rest on the day. What say you?"

Jacie turned and looked at him, wishing she had not. His hair was unbound and shone brilliantly in the sunlight. The deep chestnut color looked as rich and soft as she knew it would be. But now it was more blonde than chestnut as the sun had bleached the color becomingly. His two-weeks growth of beard and mustache made him look even more the sensual pirate and she wished that she could spend one last time in his arms. He wore no shirt, just his tight black britches and the royal blue sash tied around his waist that held his cutlass. But it was his laughing blue eyes and his ready smile that she would picture in her heart forever. He kept his booted feet widespread, taking in the rolling of

his ship on the waves as if it were nothing.

“Ah, Pirate, you know what I would prefer but I think you would miss out on the excitement if you took me to your cabin.” She smiled at him. “Plenty of time for that later, eh?”

Blade's brows rose as he studied her face. He saw sadness in her eyes and felt like she was just a hairs breath from slipping away from him. He pulled her to him suddenly, hugging her to his chest. She felt so wonderful and warm as he kissed her forehead gently. He tilted her head back and looked into the emerald depths of her eyes. Still, he could not shake the nagging feeling that she would not be in his arms this night.

He looked at the ship that was no more than a hundred yards from his own and as she turned about suddenly toward them, he read the name on the side. *The Sea Whores*. The *Tigress's* ship. Blade swallowed and looked back at her lovely face.

“Jacie, do you leave me then?”

Jacie said nothing as she tried to memorize the strength in the arms that held her. Running her hands up his hard muscled back, she tried to smile but could not. His tanned face took on an alarmed look and she finally placed hands on either side of his face.

“Pirate, what we have shared was nothing but wonderful. But we both knew that this would end. It just happens to be this day.” She looked over at the ship and clearly saw Martease salute her and shout out a greeting. Jacie's eyes met those of Blade's once more and she shook her head. “You are the savvy lover you have been reputed to be and I am glad for the time I have had with you. You will go off and find another to take my place and,” she drew in a deep breath as she went on with, “I will wed soon.” She kissed him then, a sad kiss of parting that should never have been.

Blade grasped her shoulders when she tried to turn from him and brushed her silken blonde curls from her face. He could not let her go! She was all that felt right in his world and he refused to give that up. His heart hammered in his chest and he tried to breathe deeply to slow the pounding that seemed to intensify in his ears, rendering him breathless.

“Stay with me. Jacie, I...” How he desperately wanted to tell her that he loved her, that he had loved her for so long and how it had nearly drove him to madness. But

he did not want to tell her those words. He wanted her to make up her own mind to stay with him of her own free will. He wanted her to tell him that she loved him. He prayed that she would! He wanted her to love him as she has loved no other and marry him and not some shop owner who would never give up his life to make her happy. Like he would do.

“Blade.”

Her whispered word upon his cheek sent tingle of desire racing through his midsection. He drew in a deep breath, filling his mind with her scent and further tightened his hold upon her.

“Don’t go, Jacie.” Blade’s eyes held a plea that his lips could not utter and he cursed himself for not shouting out the words he so longed to say.

“I am an infatuation to you, Blade. Like I have said, there will be another to take my place.” Jacie smiled at him then and brushed her hand across his tanned bare chest, loving the way his muscles jumped under her palm. “You have bedded the infamous *Tigress* and I would ask that you be kind in your tales. I am to have a husband who will eventually know that I am the privateer woman who has wreaked havoc upon his countrymen for several years now. I would not have high ended rumors about me floating about.” She paused as she looked deeply into his eyes. “Know that I will treasure our time together.” She pulled him to her and kissed him soundly, putting every bit of passion and longing she possessed into that one single kiss. She hoped that he felt her love for him, for she truly did love him but she refused to be in constant competition for his affections. Nay, that was not a life she would like to have with him, or with any one else for that matter.

When she stepped away from him, Blade felt like his whole world had shattered into tiny little knives that bit brutally into his heart. She did not understand that he wanted no other, that he loved her with a true passion, one of sincere longing and want. He knew that she would take his soul with her and twist his heart in the process, making him not whole. But he stood there looking at her and could not say a thing to halt her leaving. He would not do that. She would need to be the one who would have to stay on her own. And he knew that his life was at an end without her.

"You won't forget me, love, will you?" Blade pasted that sexy, sensual smile upon his lips, the one he knew she liked so much, as he crossed his arms over his chest. He ached to reach out and grab her to him and tell her that she would go nowhere unless it was with him. But he did not and it broke his heart to see her go.

"I won't forget you, Pirate." Jacie grinned back at him. "How could I ever forget you?"

"It was only ten days, *Tigress*! How in the bloody hell can you fall in love with a man in *twenty days*?" Martease sunk her teeth into a hunk of bread and wiped the butter from her lips as she waited patiently for her friend's response.

Jacie looked at Martease and raised her brows with a knowing grin. "It was twenty days spent with *Pirate Blade*, for God's sake woman! Who could not fall in love with that one?" She cradled her chin in her palm as she placed her elbow on the tabletop. She swirled her stew around in her bowl, not really hungry for food. Her hunger was for a sensual and sexy pirate whose touch she craved like a thirsty man craved water.

Martease snorted and then laughed outright. "Tell me, is he as good as the rumors have proclaimed him to be, hum?" She leaned forward in her chair and waited for the answer, eager to know the truth.

Jacie looked into her friend's eyes and nodded her head with a groan. "Better! He has definitely earned the phrase of *Best Cock of the Sea* for obvious reasons!"

"Then why did you leave, you silly woman! If he is the man of your dreams, you should have taken him captive upon your ship and made him understand that this is how it will be...and he will like it or else!" Martease grinned and tossed her bread down upon the table. "We only get one chance at love, *Tigress*. You need to take it when you see the opportunity."

Jacie shook her head and sat back in her chair. "Nay, not with him. How many times have we heard that he has bedded this woman or that woman and has had these love affairs with them for only a few weeks before he moves on to someone else?" She shrugged and stood up, going over to the window that ran the length of one wall along her cabin, to gaze out across the sea. It had just become that magical time of day when it was

not quite dark but not light anymore either, just simply beautiful. "I was just another knot on his belt is all. I knew that before the first time I bedded with him. But it did not matter at the time. All I wanted was the man, not the pirate. He is not the type to love any *one* woman and I could not abide by that rule." Aye, she had been well loved and now her heart felt the weight of a thousand stones as the love she felt for this man ate her up inside. It was too bad that she happened to fall in love with a womanizing pirate that loves to love women.

Martease shrugged and took a bite of her stew as she studied her friend. She shook her head and tried to find some words to console her, but could not find any. It had been almost a week since she and the crew had gathered *Tigress* back upon her own ship and she had moped around every day since. Oh, she had it bad!

"I hate to bring this up, but what about Jason? Will your love for Pirate Blade interfere with your wedded life to another man?" Martease sat back in her chair and tilted her head to the side, studying the outline of *Tigress* intently.

Jacie sighed and turned back to face the other woman. "Nay, it will not, for Jason will never know of Blade or the time I have spent with him."

"He will know you are not a virgin, woman! Do you not think he will question that one small thing, hum?"

"I will deal with that when the time comes." Jacie smiled then. "Come with me for a stroll upon deck. I love this time, right before the stars peek out."

Martease stood and shook her head. "I shall need to pass, *Tigress*. I am tired and would seek out my own bed. I will see you on the morn." She left quietly, taking the tin plates with her as she left.

Not willing to go to her bed alone for another night, Jacie picked up her cutlass and slid it into her sash and decided to go for the stroll by herself. She looped her whip in her hands and pushed the leather piece into her sash as she sighed. Maybe the cool night air would help clear her thoughts of the man who haunted her dreams with erotic touches and sensual kisses. It was too bad that everything around reminded her of him.

Blade stared up at the stars and thought of how lost he had been since the day

Jacie had left him. He could barely stand to sleep in his own bed and the only thing that made him lie on the silken sheets was the fact that her scent still lingered there.

He closed his eyes, almost smelling her now and breathed deeply of the night air. He shook his head finally and decided to go to his cabin and find his much needed sleep. When he opened his door, her scent wafted out to touch his heart with fingers of sadness. How he wished that she were here beside him, loving him and telling him how she would never take another man but him into her heart. Sitting on the edge of his bed, he grasped the satin encased pillow she had slept on and brought it to his face, inhaling deeply. He smiled when he caught the deep scent of jasmine and honeysuckle still vividly present. She haunted his nights and days, gave him no rest whatsoever and had him on the brink of lunacy with his want for her.

Blade craved her touch, her smile, her love. He wanted her next to him every night for the rest of his life, to have and to hold forever. It was absolutely asinine for him to have no other thoughts but her upon his mind. But it was how he felt. He wanted her and no other and he knew that he should have spoken up before she left. Aye, he should have told her how much he loved her. And he should have told her that the other women who had said they had shared his bed had lied. Of course there had been a few, actually more than a few, but not the magnitude who laid claim to his love. There was only one in his mind who could lay claim to his *true* love now and she had slipped from his grasp as if she were the wind on the waves.

Lying back upon his bed, Blade closed his eyes and thought of the deeply sensual woman who held his heart, his mind, his very soul. He thought about how he would never be happy in his life again until he had her back. And he thought how he could not let her marry another man. *He* should be the man she would marry and no other.

And as sleep eluded him for yet another night, he prayed that he would hold her in his arms again soon.

Chapter Five

Jacie laughed as Mjollnir roared his pleasure. The tiger prowled along the upper deck with his mistress, enjoying the fresh air and the load of fish that one of the crew had netted moments before. His powerful jaws chomped happily into the tender bones of the fish, only taking two chews before swallowing the entire thing. He would then go over to his mistress and rub his head along her leg but would then catch the smell of the fish and be off again for another taste.

"Mjollnir! Easy boy. I am sure that those fish are not going to jump back into the sea." Jacie scratched the soft orange and black fur between her pet's ears, running her hands along his face to grab playfully at his whiskered jowls. "But eat your fill. There is plenty more where that came from." Standing, she shielded her eyes and looked to the east and the rising sun.

"Captain! Do we head to the coast?" Martease called over her shoulder as she took the wheel of the ship in her hands.

"Nay, we do not."

Martease turned slowly to her friend and regarded her with a puzzled look upon her face, tossing her dark hair over her shoulders. "Come again? Did you change your mind since last eve?"

"I have." Jacie faced her friend and crossed her arms over her chest. "Inform the crew that we are going hunting." She smiled and winked.

"Hunting? Can I ask for *what*?" Martease grinned as well and knew where they headed.

"Not *for what*, my friend, but more like *for whom*!"

"Aye, right you are, Captain!"

Jacie turned back to look over the sea again and then up to the sky. It was just beginning to turn the pale sky-blue that she so loved. Almost the color of the eyes that had haunted her dreams for nearly two weeks now. It had taken her that long to realize that a life with Jason was not what she had really wanted. She knew that even before she met up with Blade. Her existence would have been dull and boring and she did not want to be tied to a man that she could never love.

She smiled then and thought of how she would deal with Blade. He may not like the idea of being with one woman for the rest of his life but she would make sure that he understood her way of thinking. Jacie had plans on keeping the man quite entertained and well loved, paving the journey of a sensual enchantment for them both.

She loved him. Plain and simple, she loved him. And she did not care if he did not love her back. She held enough love for the both of them.

Zachary looked at his friend with raised brows. What a sorry sack. The man looked as if he had lost his only friend. Ah, the powers of love and what it could do to a strong man's heart!

Sitting his cup of rum upon the table that sat beside his chair, Zachary rubbed his bearded chin and wished there was something that he could do to help this man out of his misery. He sighed and went to put a couple of logs on the glowing embers in the massive fireplace that graced his great room. He knelt down and adjusted the logs with the metal poker and then stood, admiring the mantle piece he had just put in place. He ran his hand along the polished mahogany wood carved with sea sirens and water serpents. Aye, he loved this place, his own private island and tried to do what he could to make it more comfortable.

Turning back to his friend, Zachary sighed and put his hands upon his hips suddenly, drawing his brows down into a frown. Was Blade this hopeless then? Damn it all to hell! He had to snap out of this.

"Why don't you go after her? You could just save yourself a lot of pain that way."

Blade stared into the fire and shook his head, not even bothering to look at Zach. "Nay. I will not have her resent me for tearing her marriage apart. I can not do that."

"But you will continue to do this to yourself and not think twice about it?" He shook his head. "Damn it, Blade! She isn't married yet so go after her or I will put you out of your misery! And mine too, for that matter."

Blade looked into his friend's weathered face and saw the reason there. But still he hesitated. "I don't want her to hate me. I would not be able to look at her every day and know that she hates me."

"She won't hate you. You said that you had seen the affection for you in her eyes many times over. Is that not a reason to go?"

"Nay, it is not. I wanted to see love and not just simple...*affection*."

"Affection leads to love, my boy."

"I can't do it."

"Fine then! Sit on that sorry ass of yours and let the best thing that ever happened to you blow out on the next tide." Zachary thought that shouting some sense into Blade would make the man come out of his reserve and snap into action. Unfortunately, it did not work. He shook his head and went to stand by the man's chair, squeezing the muscled shoulder gently. "Then go on with your life and let her be gone from you for good. There is no reason to sit here and pine away for a woman that will never love you back, even though I think you are wrong on that account. Blade, I think you should at least try with her. With as many times as you have bedded her, I would warrant saying that she will fall into your arms if you would but ask." He left the room then and found his way to his bedchamber where his wife had been waiting for him. He snuggled into her arms and pressed against her warmth, thinking that he was the luckiest man in the entire world to have ended up with his sweet Polly. He felt sorry for his friend's plight, but damn it, if he would only swallow his pride and go after the woman, he knew Blade would be as happy as he himself was.

Blade closed his eyes and thought of the only woman his heart would ever love. She was the most sensual woman he had ever set eyes upon and he loved her to no end. But she belonged to another man and he would not ruin her happiness. Besides, what did he have to offer her? He only had his ship and his crew. He had nothing else, nor did he need anything else. He liked living on his ship, liked the sea and all she had to offer. But if he were asked, he would give it all up for her love. He would become a respectable shop owner and would come home every night to the most beautiful woman ever. His wife. And he would do all of that for her. It would not matter that he would be miserable, just as long as *she* was happy. As long as she would *love* him.

Blade rubbed his eyes wearily and decided that he had had enough sleepless night to last him a lifetime. He needed to sleep or he would no longer be able to function

correctly. He passed up the beforehand offered bed in Zach's home and went, instead, back to his ship that was harbored in a little canal on the south side of the island, secluded and quiet. He wanted to sleep in his own bed and smell her fragrance next to his cheek. Nothing more. Just that. And he knew that he would once again dream of Jacie and her enchanting emerald eyes.

Searching for Blade was like looking for a diamond in a mountain of solid rock. The sea was vast and a ship could only sail so fast, but even with full sails set, Jacie did not see a sign of *The Blade's Fury* anywhere. With her heart sinking after looking for him for over a week, she decided that the time had come to turn about and set sail for the north. She doubted that he had headed in that direction but she felt that if she were meant to have a life with Blade, she would have found him long before now. So on they went to find a new adventure in a new place and time, wondering if perhaps her life was totally lost in misery and if she would ever enjoy the company of any man other than the sensual Pirate Jack Blade again.

Rough weather met *The Sea Whores* three days into their journey north and they suffered minimal damage. They had taken on quite a bit of water in the hold and every available crewmember formed a line from hold to port side, hauling up buckets of water and emptying the liquid back into the sea.

Hanging up garments to dry in the sun became a huge ordeal as well. Being that the crew were all women, all sorts of things were left to flap in the brisk sea wind tied to rope lines that stretched from one end of the ship to the other. They looked like a band of gypsies sailing the seas rather than the vicious privateers they were named and Jacie broke out a keg of rum by way of letting her crew know how much she appreciated them and their hard work. The festivities ran well into the night and as the sun was peeping its head upon the eastern sky, Jacie found her bed and passed into a drunken stupor, dreaming of nothing and no one this time.

With only two hours into the deep sleep that was afforded her, Jacie woke to a sudden wrenching of her ship. Being rolled next to the wall with a resounding thud, she came awake suddenly and knew what was happening.

They were being boarded!

Making her way to gather up her whip and cutlass as she pulled on her knee high black leather boots, she was making her way to her cabin door when it was slammed open suddenly.

Catching her unawares and not being in her right mind from the rum she had consumed, all Jacie could do was push the blonde curls from her face and look at the figure that filled her entire doorway as she leaned upon her desk. She gave the intruder a lopsided grin, which slowly faded to an astonished look as she realized who stepped into her private domain.

Jason!

At least that was who she thought it to be as he stomped up to her and stood no more than three feet away.

Jason's tanned face and deep blue eyes twinkled merrily at the woman who was obviously into her cups as she leaned haphazardly against the desk on unsteady legs. So it was true! The woman he was to wed was indeed the *Tigress*! Oh, this was priceless and too wonderful! His fortune was obviously changing!

He took in her appearance and wished that he had a few moments to spend with the wench. It would make for a very good moment spent, he assured himself, but now was not the time. He would make sure that it did happen in the near future, however.

Jason continued to study her, her hair mused and in golden disarray down her shapely back, the tight fitting linen white shirt and the nice body-hugging black britches she wore. The crimson sash she had tied around her tiny waist that held the lethal looking cutlass made him want to reach out and untie the thing, just like unwrapping a present for his viewing only. His handsome grin widened as he crossed well-muscled arms over his bare chest, tossing his long blonde hair over his shoulders to land in silken waves midway down his back.

"Jason?" Jacie tried to focus her eyes but found that the image that stood before her wobbled way too much for her to even consider staring at him for any extended period of time. She closed her emerald eyes and prayed for stability in her head.

"Aye, Jacie, you are correct."

His deep baritone voice boomed loudly in her head and she brought her hand up to massage her temples gently, keeping her eyes closed. "What...are you doing here?"

"I have come to claim my bride. And also to find if the rumors that I have been hearing are in fact true."

"And what rumors would those be?" Jacie finally managed to open her eyes against the bright light that flooded in through her windows. She squinted at him and could not believe that this man before her was actually Jason, the man she was to wed!

His hair was left unbound and looked windblown, and dare she say, *sexy*? Out of the ordinary, obviously, for his hair was always kept in a tight ribbon at the nape of his neck and she had never seen it as such. His pale face was now a light tan color, which brought out his magnifying deep blue eyes to perfection. His white teeth glimmered as he smiled and the chest that she had never seen before as it was always encased in a proper white shirt and breast coat was broad and muscled.

His slim hips were hidden underneath the pale tan of his tight fitting britches that seemed to bring out wicked thoughts in her mind as to what exactly lie beneath. His highly polished brown leather knee boots looked absolutely impeccable and as she allowed her eyes to travel back up his body, her face held another astonished look. This man was her *intended*? Oh, she was living in a nightmare and she prayed for her sanity to return, and soon!

"Although I appreciate your thorough investigation of my person, I must ask you to answer me true, Jacie Monroe. Are you the *Tigress*?"

Jacie stared at him and she thought him to be most handsome, unlike any other time she had ever seen him. He was truly swarthy and very...well, *sexy*!

Her brows rose as another image tore into her mind, an image of sapphire blue eyes and a smile that could light up the darkest night. A man that was more handsome and sensual than any other she had ever seen before, with blonde-streaked chestnut hair that licked the waistband of his britches deliciously. A scoundrel, a womanizer and...the man of her heart. Even though the man before her was quite appetizing, much to her surprise, he was still no match for Blade.

Jacie turned from him and went to sit on her bed, taking her head in her hands and

leaning her elbows against her knees as she gave a small moan.

“Well?”

Ah, dare she tell this man the truth of her identity and if she did, what would he do with the information? Jacie moaned again and pushed the curls from her face as her half-lidded gaze found his once more. “I am.”

“I *knew* it!” Jason’s smile broadened as he leaned toward her and kissed the tip of her nose, pulling her cutlass and whip from the sash at her waist at the same time. He tossed them across the chamber and then looked back down at her. His deep blue eyes delved into her own and he patted her shoulder as she leaned back slightly away from him. “Do you realize what the bounty is upon your head? The worth for your capture is far more than what I would have gained by being wed to you.”

Jacie’s eyes narrowed dangerously at his comment as the tingles of danger went up her spine. “What are you talking about, Jason?”

“I am talking about turning you in for the coin that is on your head so that I will not have a need to wed you any longer.”

She shook her head and tried to stand but she was pushed back down on the bed with rough hands. The fury that she felt right at that moment was in no way like anything she had ever felt before. Far from it. “And just how are you going to go about gaining my capture, and *why* for that matter?” Jacie kept her voice deadly calm and uncaring as she rubbed her eyes trying to think wildly of a way out of the situation at hand.

“Why? That is a simple one. My father has drunk his way out of his fortune. That is where you came in, only now I do not have to wed you at all. Ah, it does disappoint me to be rid of you before I have tasted your sweets, but now I have ways of obtaining the coin I need in order to survive without you.”

“And his ways happen to include me, *Tigress*!”

Jacie stilled in her movements and slowly brought her eyes up to meet those of Crystal Blue, the infamous female pirate and her most hated enemy. Oh, this was getting better and better! “Crystal. Good to see you again. How’s that nasty case of the crabs you had? Or do you still have the little buggars?” She grinned at the heated glance that raked over her face. Ah, still a bit testy from their venture of two years past.

"I never had that, *Tigress* and damn well do you know it!" The buxom red head sashayed her way over to Jacie and hugged her body next to Jason, throwing an arm around his neck as her pointy-toed red boots tapped on the wooden floor. Her bright red painted mouth turned up into a grin. "And you are one to talk. I will be betting that after the rumors I have heard you are infected with the little beasties yourself." Crystal Blue raised innocent brows in Jacie's direction as she smiled at her.

"What rumors are you referring to? I have so many flailing about, I would like to keep up on the news, you understand." Jacie almost grinned at her own words. She was sounding most like Blade now.

"Why, I speak of the rumors of your being Pirate Jack Blade's *whore*."

Jacie sighed and shook her head before she reached up and gripped the woman's hair suddenly, holding it tightly in her fist as she pulled down, bringing the woman to her level where she sat on the bed. "Bitch, back up your words or you will find my cutlass slicing into the flabby skin of your neck."

Jason wrenched the hand free of Crystal's hair and made sure that the woman he held in his arms now was all right. Trying to keep Crystal from killing the other woman as he kept a restraining hand upon one of her shoulders, he stared down accusingly at Jacie. "I do not care one way or the other. Being the whore of a pirate or the whore of a sea serpent matters very little to me at this point. I am only interested in the coin for your capture so that I may be on my way." He turned to Crystal and gently shoved her from the cabin and then turned back to Jacie, fury written upon his face like the banner in a market square. "Did you think I would not be privy to that information sooner or later? You slut! No wonder I did not find the idea of wedding you very appealing. It was my foresight to your wicked ways."

"Do not be so condescending, Jason. I am not worth as much as Crystal so why don't you turn her in instead."

"That is where you are wrong. Her worth is not as much as yours. You see, we have been planning this for some time, hoping that we would cross your path sooner or later. Your name is tagged to dozens of murders and plunderings within a fifty-mile radius. You have sweet Crystal Blue to thank for that." Jason smiled smugly at her.

“Besides, I will gain the instant notoriety status for your capture. I will be invited into the richest homes as a guest and will even be commended by the King himself. On any account, you have fucked another man and that I find to be a smear against my good name.”

“Oh, spare me the dramatics, Jason. You are just as much guilty as I am in wayward fuck sessions. You may want to have a physician check you out though. Unless, of course you *want* your dick to fall off after bedding the *Slut Queen*.”

Jason backhanded Jacie with his left hand and saw the blood that dripped from the corner of her mouth when she looked back at him, the rage in her eyes making him take a step back. “Get up. You are coming with me. Now!” He quickly grasped a length of rough rope from his boot cuff to tie her hands behind her back. Shoving her before him, he pushed her down the steps to the upper deck and then guided her to the lower deck where all her crew stood about at knifepoint not daring to move.

Jacie noticed that two members of her crew lay injured in the center of the lower deck and one hung from the mainmast tied upside down by her ankles, screaming her fury at being treated in such a way. The rage she felt intensified and when she spotted Martease, the woman licked the corner of her mouth with the tip of her tongue, a sign to her friend that all was well.

Jacie lowered her eyes and tossed her head to the right, giving Martease the sign to follow when she could. And as she was literally thrown over onto the deck of the *Sands of Time*, rough hands grasped her immediately and drug her down into the hold, slamming her into a caged box that was barely big enough to stand in let alone find any way to lie down. Not that it mattered. The muck that covered the hold floor smelled like raw sewage and Jacie had to try not to breathe in too deeply lest the stench overpower her lungs and take her life.

Chapter Six

Bringing his spyglass down to his side, Blade felt the bitter taste of hate upon his tongue. The man who had drug Jacie from her ship had not been one he had seen before. But the woman, Crystal Blue, he knew well. She was a conniving red-haired bitch who was only out for her own welfare and cared not for others. And that is what scared him. He had come looking for her, for the *Tigress*, so that he could swallow his pride and make her understand that he was not about to let another man take her from him.

That had been two days ago and at the end of that second day, they had crossed paths with Crystal Blue, keeping well out of her sites. He had no way of knowing that they pursued the same woman and he wondered why they had taken Jacie to begin with. It mattered little to him right at the moment. He would get Jacie away from them and back into his arms where she belonged.

Shouting out a command to Marlon who stood at the helm, he allowed his fury to fuel the fire that burned deep within his chest. He knew of Crystal's reputation and he knew that the bitch would kill Jacie with quick vengeance if given the chance. He would bide his time and make his way to *The Sea Whores* to find out what he could. Then he would go in pursuit of Crystal Blue and the man who now held his *Tigress*!

Martease saw the ship approach them quickly and she fired out commands for every crewmember to take her post, making sure that the injured women were taken below and the one tied to the mainmast was released. Grasping her cutlass in a tight fist, she prayed for the welfare of the *Tigress* and she prayed for the women who held *The Sea Whores*. But when the flag flew from the masthead that identified the oncoming ship as Pirate Blade's, she grinned and called the order to stand easy.

When Pirate Blade gained his footing upon *The Sea Whores* a few moments later, Martease had to nearly beat the crew from the poor man. He was indeed something to behold and as she led him to the private cabin of her captain, she knew why her friend had fallen head over heels for this one.

"Who has taken her?" Blade got right to the point as he crossed his arms over his chest and waited for an answer.

"It was the bitch Crystal Blue and my captain's intended, Jason!"

"What?" Oh, this was not happening! "What did he do? Become too impatient for the wedding day and take her by force?" Blade's voice held the tone of an underlying rage that was evident in the look upon his face.

Martease shook her head. "Nay, Pirate Blade. They come to take her and turn her in for the bounty upon her head."

Blade stared at the lovely woman before him in stunned silence. "Bounty on her head? What bounty?"

"The bounty that will make her fucking intended a very rich man!" She shook her head in her fury. "The *Tigress* is a very well sought after woman. For two years now we have eluded the Royal Navy's grasp making asses out of them all. And for the duration of those two years, we all wondered who was behind the untrue facts being spread about making the *Tigress* seem a ruthless murderer. The killing, the pillaging, the outright piracy. She always wondered if it was someone near and dear to her heart that tossed those rumors about. The information on some personal things that only the *Tigress* and her crew knew about always was leaked into the population somehow. Never thought it would be the bloke she was to wed though. Not that he was ever near and dear to her heart, mind you." Martease cocked her head to the right as she eyed Blade with curiosity. "I would wager that we have a spy among our own crew. She never told Jason about whom she was or what she did."

Blade took in a deep breath. "Find the spy and get rid of her for your captain."

"I will do just that. A few subtle inquiries should lead me right to the bitch."

"Do you know where they headed?" Bladed wanted to scream out his rage but tried to remain calm. Every second counted now and he must proceed with caution.

"It would be safe to say that they are heading for English waters and the sentencing of death for my captain! Not that it matters one whit what that Crystal bitch says, but she warned us all not to follow her. She says she will slice our captain's throat if she even suspects that we are in pursuit. And I believe that she would do the deed too."

"I assure you, lady, that your captain will be safe and sound in my arms by the end of this day."

Martease watched him leave the cabin without a backwards glance. She hoped he

was right!

Jacie looked at the man before her and sighed. The bastard! Her calm features belied the hate she felt crawling into her soul for this *gentleman* who would try to take advantage of her in such a manner. But how could she expect anything less? Finally his true colors show, and just in time, for he was obviously not the mild mannered man she had thought him to be. And now he wanted to take a small sampling of her wares before they reached their destination? Not bloody likely!

"I am sure that you will find plenty to keep you busy with Crystal Blue above. Go to her and take your pleasure. I want nothing of what you offer."

This angered Jason and he spat at Jacie through the metal bars. "Bitch! I will have you. It is only a matter of time and you can be sure that it will be nothing like what you have ever gotten from that fucking pirate."

"Of that you can be sure. You could never measure up to a true lusty pirate, Jason." Jacie grinned and tossed her hair over her shoulder, seeing the shadow of another coming down the steep steps from above. Seeing the tip of a red boot that belonged to Crystal, she thought to have some fun with them both. "But what of your lady, Crystal Blue?"

Jason grinned back at her, the ire on his face from seconds before disappearing altogether. "She is fine for right now but I feel the need for something a little less...*tainted*, shall we say."

Oh, this was too easy and Jacie had to smile at his ready change of attitude. "Then wait until she sleeps and get the key that unlocks my prison. I will come to you willingly if you take that one step for me."

"I will, but we must remain quiet and in secret." Jason liked her turn of opinion toward him, knowing that he would have her this very night.

"And you must make sure that the red-haired bitch knows nothing about your tryst!" Crystal's voice rang out angrily in the small hold as she turned her heated gaze on Jason. "You fucking prick! You would fuck that whore knowing that she is the leavings of Pirate Blade? How pathetic." She tossed her long red hair over her shoulder as she

made her way back up the steps, Jason following close at her heels with apologies dripping from his lying mouth. Jacie, not able to contain her amusement any longer, allowed her laughter to ring out loud and clear.

Good! Let them rut it out in the whore's cabin. She had better things to do with her time. Like getting the lock to the cage undone and making her escape. Jacie figured she would only have to tread water and swim for a couple of hours before her mates picked her up. Obviously a small price to pay for her freedom. Taking a thin, small dagger from the cuff of her boot, she began the task of prying the lock apart as she had started to before being interrupted by Jason's unwanted attentions just moments before.

Blade's expression was one of concern as he studied the crew aboard the *Sands of Time*. They were a beefy looking lot and he hoped that he would be able to gain his entry to the deck and find Jacie before he was discovered. His own ship would be waiting at the ready a few yards away and he hoped that the dark clouds that hung overhead masking the moon's light would stay as such until they were well on their way. His only concern would be the men who now stood guard on the upper and lower deck. Dressed all in black with nothing upon his feet, he knew he would blend into the dark night like a shadow. As he smiled with the thought of Jacie being in his arms yet again, he said a silent prayer for the people who held her captive. God save their hides from Jacie's sure wrath.

Taking a deep breath as he dove cleanly and quietly into the cold seawater, Blade thought of all he would do and say to Jacie when he had her to himself once more. But concentrating upon the task at hand was where his thoughts lie now. He hoped that she was safe and would be able to move quickly when the time called for it. He nearly grinned at that. Oh, she would be quick, as he knew her to be, and her fury would be great.

Seeing the anchor rope hanging into the water a few feet in front of him, Blade dove under the surface and grasped the slimy rope with his gloved hands. Quietly climbing up the rope to the lower deck, he hung suspended for a few moments to allow the water to drip off of his body before he continued. Slipping over the rail and crouching

in the shadows, he viewed his surroundings with a critical eye.

There were two guards positioned, one on the upper deck and one on the lower, and both looked to be half into their cups as they staggered to and fro. Blade grinned as he made his way over to the hold hatch and lifted the door hoping against hope that this was where Jacie was being held. Thanking God above that the hatch opened silently, he slipped inside and closed the door after himself. Letting his eyes adjust to the pitch black of the hold, he took small steps down the stairs until he gained his footing upon the slimy floor planks.

Blade snarled his nose slightly as the slim oozed between his bare toes. He stilled suddenly as he heard the click of metal scrapping metal and drew his own dagger from the waist of his britches at the ready for an attack.

"Jason, I swear to the Lord above I will slit your throat from ear to ear if you come near me." Jacie's hiss held a deadly warning of sure retribution if he moved any closer. She wished she had her cutlass by her side. Or better yet, her whip.

The vicious sounding words drew a grin to Blade's lips and he chuckled quietly. "Easy, love. I come in peace to help you out of your little...*predicament*."

"Blade? How in the name of Zeus did you find me?" Jacie placed her dagger back in her boot cuff and waited until he came near enough to her so that she could grasp his hand.

"It is the way of a true pirate, love, to search and seek out the treasures he holds dear to his heart."

The whispered words upon her cheek as he drew near to her sent tingles of lust coursing through Jacie's body. Dear God, of all the times to desire this man, this was neither the time nor the place! Her lips found his through the metal bars and she curled her arms around his neck as she pulled him closer, her tongue finding his and she moaned out quietly into the darkness.

"Ah, love, I see you have missed me. Let us get you out of this cage and back into my arms where you belong." Blade released her unwillingly and smiled as she guided his hand to the lock on the cage door.

"I have been prying on the damn thing all day and I can not seem to budge it. I

had a small amount of light before but now it will be difficult to see what you are doing.”

“I will manage, love, but how in the hell can you even breathe down here. The smell is horrible.”

“I try to ignore it but it has been difficult. I can’t wait to jump into the sea and cleanse myself of the filth that surrounds me.” Jacie grinned into the darkness and wished she could see his face. Instead she laid a hand upon his cheek. “My thanks to you, Pirate, for your timely aid. I owe you one.”

“You will owe me more than *one* when we make it out of here in one piece,” Blade teased gently as he pulled out his own dagger from the waist of his britches. “Stand back, love. This is going to get a little rough.” He slipped the edge of his dagger into the side of the lock and pushed with all the strength he had. He felt the lock give somewhat and eased up on the pressure as the cover popped off and fell into the muck at his feet with a plop. “Not that I would want to stay here any longer than necessary, love, but,” he opened the door to the cage and grasped her hand in his, “would you consider a quick spot of love right now?”

“Scoundrel!” Jacie teased as she placed her body next to his. “When we make it back to your ship, I will show you my appreciation for this help, I assure you.” Kissing Blade soundly, she grasped his hand in her own and pulled him behind her to the stairs.

“Going somewhere, my sweet?”

Jacie cursed under her breath as a fire stick was struck and a lantern lit, illuminated the hold. Her hand tightened around Blade’s and she felt his arm go about her waist in a reassuring hold.

Jason regarded the two with raised brows. He summed up the pirate to be a little older than himself, but the man obviously displayed his strength and prowess to its full ability. He was all muscle and sinew, making Jason hesitate in taking a step closer. He stood where he was and decided to pose a menacing figure himself as he held his cutlass in front of the two, pointing the tip at Jacie’s chest.

“I do hope you were not trying to take your leave, dear one. The disappointment would have been quite overwhelming.” Jason hoped his words sounded more intimidating than what he felt at the moment.

Jacie rolled her eyes and pushed the cutlass blade from her chest. "Stand aside, Jason, and you will keep your life."

"I do not think you are in a position to order me about." He sighed and allowed his eyes to go to the menacing look of the pirate that stood behind Jacie. The top of Jacie's head came to the bottom of the pirate's bearded chin, and the look that he was delivered was not friendly. In fact it was down right rigid. Did he expect anything less from this man who now held his intended tightly to his chest? Jason swallowed and decided that as long as he held the cutlass firmly within his grip, he had nothing to fear. He pointed the blade back in Jacie's direction, still looking at the pirate. "And you, Pirate Blade. I don't know how you got on board this ship, but I think your hide will look well gracing the walls of Crystal's cabin as a tapestry."

Blade raised one slim brow. "Honestly, love, if this is the man you are to wed, I think you should reconsider the act. He seems to be of a testy sort and not very likable." He narrowed his eyes on the man and thought that he seemed to be a tad over-bearing in his conceit. But he doubted the man would be able to hold his own in a fight if he was pressed into one. He tightened his hold around Jacie's waist. "Love, I think I am the much better man for you on any account. I am much more handsome than he is."

Rage shot from Jason's eyes as he heard Jacie's snort of laughter. "You have no say in the matter, you fucking pirate! Step away from her. She is mine."

"I am not yours. You ruined that three days ago when you took me from my crew." Jacie stepped forward and pushed his blade out of her way as her finger punched harshly into his chest. "Bastard! Did you think that you could get away with this? Do you realize how many disreputable people I know that will be looking for me...other than Pirate Blade?" She shook her head with a grin at the unintended pun and crossed her arms over her chest at Jason's astounded look. "You have just given yourself a sure date with the hangman's noose. And I hope you are not afraid of fish. You'll be swimming with them soon enough."

Jason's lips curled into a smile as the blade was held up once again. "Ah, my sweet, you do seem to want to press your luck with me. You have no idea the people I deal with either." His eyes slid over to Blade's as he held the grin on his face. "Pesos

will like the fact that he can finally seek his revenge on the both of you. Being that I now have two of the most wanted pirates in these parts, I will be a very wealthy man times two. Maybe I shall sell you to the highest bidder. I would be able to gain a king's ransom that way."

"I am *not* a pirate. If you insist in talking about me, I expect you to get the facts straight, Jason." Jacie waited for the chance when he would move the sharp blade away from her chest. She would spring upon him and rip his black heart right from his chest.

Blade grinned at the other man. "And you talk of my dear friend Pesos! How is he fairing? The last I seen of him, I believe we were tossing him into the sea right after his crew left him for dead." He crossed his arms over his chest and felt like ripping the man's head from his shoulders. Jason thought to scare them, but what he did with his foolish words was to give them warning and allow he and Jacie to devise a plan of their own.

"I do not believe that Pesos holds you as a friend, Pirate. I believe he wants to run you through," his gaze went to Jacie then. "And you I believe he just wants to kill you with his bare hands."

Jacie gave a short laugh. "That is what he thought the last time, but it did not work to his advantage." She smiled then as she took a step back and leaned her back against the solid chest of Blade. "And if you care to relay a message to Pesos, tell him that I know a friend of his that is just itching to see him again after all these years."

"And who might that be?" Jason's curiosity won out after a few moments. He shrugged as he stepped backwards onto the step behind him, making his way up the stairs and back onto the deck where several of Crystal's crew members stood looking down into the hold. "I believe we are to meet up with Pesos in the morning. I would love to deliver the message to him."

Jacie grinned. "Tell Pesos that Grenadine says hello. Tell him that Grenadine will be watching for his return."

Jason raised his brows, not recognizing the name. "So be it. And get comfortable, the two of you. You will be down here for a few more days until we reach our destination."

“And just where is our destination?” Jacie wanted to know.

“Ah, ‘tis a secret, my sweet. But you will feel like you are in *heaven* when we get there.” Jason’s laughter rang out loud in the night as he made his way back up the stairs and bolted the door to the hold from the deck side.

Chapter Seven

Jacie looked at Blade with raised brows. "I wonder what he means by that."

Blade shook his head. He had a very good idea what Jason had meant but he did not want to relay all the gruesome details to her right now. "I don't know, but I don't like the sound of it. Pesos is not a very good person to know, if you get my meaning. He is a back stabber and a cutthroat and he will do anything to get what he wants. Even if it is taking down his own brother to get it." He crossed his arms over his chest then and gave her a hard glance. "And do you really know Grenadine?"

"I do. He would follow me to the Indies on occasion. I usually see him a couple of times during the year. Why do you ask?"

Blade shrugged as he pulled her into his arms. "No reason. I know him myself and I would say that he is not the type of person I would guess you to associate with."

Jacie gave a small laugh as her arms tightened around his waist. "Grenadine is a very sweet man. He is just young and adventurous is all and I am sure you were the same way." She smiled up at him. "You still are in a sense."

Blade closed his eyes as he leaned his chin against the top of her head. Young and adventurous was an understatement for Grenadine.

Grenadine was a swashbuckling Spanish pirate that was notorious for his wiles with women. Not even Blade's own reputation could compare to that one. He had only see Grenadine once and it was in the company of a very rich Cuban woman who doted upon him as if he were her very own plaything. And he probably was.

The man was tall and dark, swarthy one might call him, and the most handsome man he had ever set eyes upon. Grenadine's dark good looks coupled with the pale blue of his eyes made him a much sought after pirate from every hot pussy who knew of him. He was indeed a searing commodity, with long black hair and a smile that could melt a woman's heart...and her reserve.

And Jacie knew the man.

Blade sighed as he tilted Jacie's chin up. He could barely see her eyes but he knew that she stared up at him. "And do you think that Grenadine is a handsome man?"

"I think him to be most handsome." She grinned into the darkness. It sounded as

if Blade were jealous. Dare she hope? "But I favor the pirate who has the sapphire eyes...the one who can make me wet with just a look. Pirate Blade is that man."

Blade's heart lurched at her admission and he felt a relief run through his body. He bent his head and captured her lips with his own, drawing her tongue into his mouth as he sucked gently. He felt her arms wrap around his neck as he drew her closer to him, feeling her heat seep into his chest. He breathed deeply of her scent and wanted so desperately to take her where he stood. He pushed her back against the steps and out of the muck upon the floor. He knew that they should be thinking of a way to plan their escape, but this seemed much more important.

Blade parted her legs with his hand and felt the intense heat of her warm his fingers as he grazed his fingertips firmly over Jacie's pussy. He knew she would be wet for him, knew that she would be ready for him to take. He heard her soft groan as he continued to kiss her lips and rub his palms over her center. And when her begging began, begging for him to take her, all he could do was pull her britches down to her knees as he released his throbbing cock and plunged into her heat.

He felt her jerk wildly under him as she clung to his back, digging her fingernails into his flesh. He did not mind. Blade loved the sex wounds that she gave him, loved how she raked her fingernails over his ass and how she pulled him forward to gain more of his hard length. He tilted his head back to groan his own pleasure as his thrusts became more intense. She surrounded him with her heat and wetness and he knew that he was at heaven's gates.

Jacie's hips rotated next to Blade's own, grinding against him as she pulled him closer. She felt his length harden further and felt herself lost within the pleasing space of his arms. His hold tightened and she spiraled toward the bliss of her release, a release that she had longed for, had craved for weeks now.

His thrusts grew fevered then as he pumped into her like an animal, wanting to claim her as his own. Blade heard her soft cries of pleasure and felt her wrap her arms tighter around his neck, pulling him down to her. He kissed her with all the love he possessed as he felt the sweet redemption begin to fill his body, flowing wildly through his veins. He tilted his head back and let go his release, feeling his seed leave his body in

a great rush.

Blade's thrusts continued for a few moments longer and then slowed altogether. His breathing was labored and he felt her soft palms run soothingly over his back and shoulders as her sweet lips kissed his neck. He would never tire of this feeling, this deep emotion of her lying beneath him, touching him. His soul screamed out silently of the love he held for her as he wrapped his arms tightly around her shoulders, kissing her forehead.

Jacie breathed out slowly, allowing her body time to come back to earth. Even though Blade had been the only man she had been with, she knew that there was none better than him. He made her feel so good, so...right. She knew that the secreted love she carried for him would forever be branded into her heart, but the last thing she wanted to do was to scare him away from her. For God sakes, both of their lives were in danger and still she was afraid to tell him how she felt. He was not a man who loved...he was a man who only felt for the moment. Blade was a man that took what he wanted. There were no eternal bonds within his chest, no ties to anyone or anything. Just the sweet satisfaction of time spent with one woman or another. And she was glad that he was with her right now.

"What are you thinking about, *Tigress*? Your fingernails seem to be a bit aggressive this eve." There was humor in Blade's voice as he trailed soft kisses along her neck.

Jacie sighed. "I am sorry, Blade. I guess I am a little unsettled about our predicament. A dilemma that you did not need to involve yourself in, I might add."

Blade shook his head. "Oh, yes I did need to involve myself. I knew you were in peril so I came to rescue you." He laughed softly against her neck. "However, I seem to have put myself in the same danger as you. But not to worry, love. My men watch us closely...as do your own crew. I have told Marlon that if I do not return within one day, he is to come and get us both."

His whispered words next to her ear sent tingles of lust coursing through Jacie's body once more. He was still deep inside of her and she could feel that he felt the same way. His cock hardened once again and she heard his soft groan next to her cheek. "One

day?" She let out a small moan as he licked under her chin. "Was that before you knew Pesos was coming?"

"Don't worry about Pesos, love. I will not let him get to you. I promise."

Jacie sighed her pleasure as Blade pressed his hips fully against her own.

Grenadine smiled as he lowered his spyglass. So the bastard Pesos was about once again. And he had a score to settle with that fucking pig. He turned and handed the spyglass to his first mate as a wider smile graced his lips. The guest crew members he had upon his ship, belonging to the *Tigress* and Pirate Blade, regarded him with amusement. He crossed his massive arms over his chest and winked at his sister, Martease.

"I know that you have something brewing deep within that mind of yours, Grenadine. Why don't you tell us what it is that you plan?" Martease tossed her long dark hair over one shoulder as she leaned casually against the railing, eyeing her brother with raised brows.

Grenadine laughed softly and went to his sister, kissing her cheek affectionately. "I think that a game of hide-and-seek is in order, don't you?" At her knowing smile, he turned to the two crew members from *The Blade's Fury* and summed them up to be two very intelligent men, although they did not put themselves out to be such. He noticed the concern that marred each of their faces and decided to put their fears to rest. "Do not worry, gentlemen. Your Captain will be safe enough. I have a feeling that the only danger he faces on Crystal Blue's ship is the *Tigress*." He laughed at his own joke and looked back at his sister. "Martease will give you the rules of our little game. Listen well to her, for I wish to be done with this quickly. I, of course, have other ships to plunder and a multitude of lovely women to fuck!"

Marlon looked at Bart and nodded his head with a grin as they made their way to Martease's side.

Jacie rolled her eyes in irritation. Jason had drug her up on the deck and was now

tying Blade to the mainmast with a thick rope. She was tied to the railing twenty feet away and had her first real opportunity to view the motley crew of Crystal Blue. They all looked to be bloodthirsty killers, sporting eye patches and even a few of them had peg legs. All of them carried lethal looking cutlass blades and a few selected ones had guns stuffed into the sashes at their waists. But her attention was grabbed all of a sudden by Crystal Blue stepping foot on the deck.

Crystal Blue made her grand entrance onto the deck just as Jason had finished tying the rope around Blade. Her red painted mouth grinned seductively as she sashayed over to the handsome pirate. She allowed her eyes to roam over his delectable form, taking in the fact that his chest was bare and tanned with a trail of chest hair that dipped sensually into the waistband of his black britches. He was well muscled and rigid with his power, making her sigh out loud at the picture he displayed. And when her eyes lit upon his face, she was thrilled that the gorgeous man smiled at her. He was the most handsome man she had ever set eyes upon and she vowed at that moment that he would grace her bed before this adventure was done and over with.

"Hello, love." Blade gave the buxom woman an overzealous leer, hoping that she would take his bait. She did.

"Pirate Jack Blade," she purred as her fingertips ran over his chest, caressing him with gentle movements. "I have always wanted to make your acquaintance. And now I get the honor."

"The honor is all mine, love." Blade gave her his best smile and a quick wink. "I have heard about you Crystal Blue, although I have never had the pleasure of...your company."

"Oh? And what have you heard?" Crystal's fingers trailed along his waist as she dipped her fingertips into his britches. She licked her lips with an invitation that she knew he could not ignore.

Blade smiled at her obvious enticement. "I have heard what a marvelous fuck you are, my sweet." He had dropped his voice and now whispered his words. "I was hoping that we might...have some time to ourselves. What do you say, love? I am sure that you will be most satisfied. 'Tis a promise I make to all my women. A promise of sure

paradise.”

Crystal could feel herself getting aroused and she smiled coyly up at Blade as she leaned her body toward his own. Her generous breasts pressed fully against his chest as she licked her lips. “If you could feel my pussy now, you would find that it is hot and wet and ready for you to take.” She sighed then and lowered her eyes coyly as she continued to brush her fingertips over his smooth chest. “This eve I will seek you out...that is...if your little *friend* over there does not mind.”

Blade breathed in Crystal's scent and thought how unlike Jacie this woman was. She was obviously accustomed to gaining a good fuck whenever and wherever she wished. And he would use the obsession to his advantage. He smiled at her even as her acidic body odor nearly knocked him to the planks upon the deck. “She has no hold on me, Crystal Blue. She was a woman who happened to be there when I had an itch to scratch.” He shrugged and then leaned his head down to nuzzle her neck. “You are so unlike her. She is most lovely to look at but her wiles in the bedchamber are something to be desired...if you get my meaning. You are seasoned and ready, ripe for the taking. I would love to fuck you, my sweet. But what about *your* friend. Will he not challenge me for the nectar that he himself craves?”

Crystal tossed her flame red hair over her shoulders as she tilted her head back to gaze into his eyes. Those succulent sapphire eyes. “Don't you worry any over Jason. I will take care of him.”

Blade nodded and watched as she left his side with a wink and sashayed her way over to Jacie. He nearly shivered at the disgusting thought of bedding that disease-ridden woman. Her reputation was known far and wide...and frankly, he would not touch the wench with a ten-foot pole. Not of his own free will anyway. He wanted to retch as her overpowering perfume clung to his skin. That and the scent of her unclean body. He did shiver then and prayed that his crew watched them closely. He even prayed for Grenadine to show his swarthy face soon.

Crystal smiled fiendishly at the woman before her. So, she was obviously not enough of a woman to keep a man like Pirate Blade content. Too bad for her. “Hello *Tigress*. You look like you have not slept in days. You look like hell, my dear.”

Jacie grinned back at the woman, forgoing her original plan to spit in her face. "Now how can I possibly sleep in that privy you call a hold? I always say that even though shit seems to float, it will eventually sink to the bottom with the rest of the muck. And it would seem that your time to sink is coming dangerously close."

Crystal laughed outright and shook her head. "Desperate words from a desperate woman...a woman who cannot seem to satisfy a man like Pirate Blade."

Jacie's smile faded somewhat as she cocked her head to the right. "Is that so?" She looked over to Blade and saw him give her a quick wink. She looked back to Crystal. "And I suppose he told you that?"

"Oh, aye, that he did. He told me how he had gained no satisfaction from the likes of you and that he needed a *real* woman to satisfy his true lusts. A woman like me."

"Ah. I see." Jacie's smile grew wicked as she leaned back against the railing. "But I am guessing that he left out an important factor."

Crystal's brows rose as she crossed her arms over her ample chest. "What important factor?"

"Oh, it is nothing major, really. But he does seem to have a *small* problem." She gave the woman an exaggerated wink. "And I do mean...*small*."

Crystal looked over to Blade sharply, eyeing his groin area with interest.

Jacie nearly burst out laughing. "Not only is that cock of his small, but he seems to...how do I put this gently...find interest in the...*male* gender."

Crystal's head snapped around to look at Jacie. "But his reputation-"

"Is to cover up where his true passions lie," Jacie interrupted. "Think about it. If you were a virile woman who was known to have bedded the rogue pirate, you would not tell a soul that he could not get his cock hard enough to enter you. That would dash away the thrill of having such a man, not only for you but for those who would like to find out what he is all about." Jacie looked at Blade and gave him a small smile as she leaned toward Crystal. "The reputation he has gained is from the mouths of the young servant boys who would suck his cock and take his length up their asses. In truth, it is they who glorify in the deed...*not* their mistresses." She leaned back against the railing once more and nodded her head once in Crystal's direction.

"I think you lie. You just want to have him all to yourself."

Jacie shrugged. "Suit yourself. I just hope you like the taste of shit, for that is what you will find when you suck upon that one's cock."

Crystal walked away, shaking her head and giving Blade a look of contempt.

Grenadine cursed as he lowered his spy glass. "They have the *Tigress* tethered to the rail...and the man with her is being tied to the mainmast."

Martease spit on the deck as she placed her hands upon her hips. "The bitch Crystal Blue will pay dearly for allowing disrespect to fall upon my Captain."

Grenadine tossed the spyglass to his first mate and shrugged out of the coat he had been wearing. Rolling up his sleeves, he headed for his cabin.

Martease followed close behind with a questioning look upon her face. "What are you going to do?"

Grenadine gave his sister a raised-brow look over his shoulder as he reached his cabin door and stepped inside. "I have a little surprise for Crystal's crew. They won't know what hit them."

Martease leaned against the closed door as she watched her brother look through some papers lying on the top of his desk.

When Grenadine found what he was looking for, he held the piece of parchment up and narrowed his eyes on the scribbled handwriting. "Ah. I believe we are in luck, dear sister." He dropped the piece of paper on the desk top as he sat down in his leather chair. He pushed the hair from his eyes and settled his gaze upon his sister across the cabin once again. "It would seem that Gideon is about these waters according to the missive I have received from his three weeks ago."

Martease's eyes widened. "Gideon? As in our long lost cousin?" A slow smile formed upon her lips.

Grenadine winked at her. "The very one and same." He crossed his arms over his chest as he placed his booted feet on his desktop. "I will send my carrier pigeon out with a message to him. He will be here before night sets, I would warrant saying. And by the end of this very night, I shall be holding the dear sweet *Tigress* within my arms once

again.”

“I don’t think that is a wise move, Grenadine. It all sounds like a plan until you got to the part of the *Tigress* in your arms. I believe I told you she has an interest in Pirate Blade.” Martease crossed her own arms across her chest then and gave her brother a solid look. “You will not interfere in this, Grenadine.”

He shrugged as he uncrossed his arms and opened the top right drawer to his desk, pulling out two glasses and a bottle of rum. As Grenadine poured the clear liquid into the glasses, he contemplated his sister’s words.

He had always loved the beautiful *Tigress*...for many years now. And he had dreamed of a day when he could finally hold her as his own. And not with a few stolen kisses and heavy petting as they had done in the past. She had been in his heart for a very long time and each day that passed, he knew he had to be getting closer to having her.

Grenadine slid the glass along the top of his desk and indicated that Martease should come and drink the contents.

She came toward him slowly, not able to make out what it was that he was thinking. Picking up the glass, she brought the rim to her lips and drank the rum in one swallow. She sat the glass back down and helped herself to more of the fiery liquid. “I hope you have no crazy ideas floating around in that head of yours. I told you where her heart lies.”

Grenadine shrugged and downed the rum his own glass held. He grinned over at his sister and shook his head. “I heard you the first time. But hearts can change. Look at her engagement to that bastard who now holds her captive.”

“She never loved him, Grenadine. Wedding Jason was her father’s idea. You know that.”

“True. But I still think she would come to love me...as I do her.”

Martease shook her head. “I know that you love her but she has known you all these years and has made no advances. She obviously is not attracted enough to you to make it a permanent relationship. Let it go, Grenadine.” She tried to make her words kind and she hoped that her brother would let this one issue rest.

Grenadine nodded his head once. “It does not matter at this point.” He stood

suddenly and put his smile back into place. "Right now, I need to pen a message to Gideon and send out my pigeon to find our pirate cousin."

Jacie watched in disgust as Crystal Blue blatantly flaunted herself before Blade that whole day. And she knew that he allowed it to steer the attentions of the woman all on him instead of her, but hell and fire, did he have to make his flirting so real? She leaned against the railing of the ship and hoped that Martease would soon show herself on the horizon for she grew tired of this little game. She wanted to wash her hands of the whole issue and be gone from here.

She closed her eyes and remembered how Blade had felt deep inside of her last eve, how he had promised to protect her from harm. Jacie almost moaned aloud with the teasing sensations that flitted across her body, the tingling arousal of heat's passion. She breathed deeply, trying to close out of her mind the sound of Crystal's ghoulish giggles as the woman's flirting continued. All she wanted to do was scratch the woman's eyes out.

Jacie tried to shut out the image as she turned her head to look over her shoulder. It was becoming dark very quickly and she wondered what would be coming her way this very eve. Would she need to fight off Crystal Blue or Jason? She sighed miserably, turning her attention to the sea.

Spotting a ship coming at them at full speed, she breathed in a great gulp of air hoping against hope that it would be someone she knew. As the thing drew closer, she could see it was a privateer ship but could not make out the name on the side. She looked around her quickly, thinking that someone on *The Sands of Time* might be putting out a warning about the possible oncoming danger, but she heard nothing.

Looking back over her right shoulder, Jacie grinned as a flag was raised above the crow's nest of the other ship. She flew a brilliant purple flag with a sword situated in the center. She closed her eyes as hope welled in her chest. Gideon! Ah, if the man stood before her right now, she would surly kiss him!

The crew aboard *The Sands of Time* became aware of the oncoming threat a little too late and even as shouts of alarm were sounded, it still did not allow the crew any time to prepare.

Amid shouts and a great deal of disturbing clanging going on about her, Jacie looked at the crew aboard the other ship, *Furious Tides*. Gideon stood at the wheel and gave her a smart salute with his cutlass before he shouted out another order for the grappling hooks to be brought out.

Rough hands grabbed her by the shoulders suddenly and Jacie felt a gag being stuffed in her mouth and her hands tied behind her back as she was forcibly drug across the deck and tossed down into the hold from where she had come earlier in the day. She was thankful that she did not land in the muck that covered the biggest part of the floor and as she got to her feet, wincing with the pain that shot across her shoulder blades, she calmly stepped up the stairs and pressed her eye against the small crack of the hold hatch.

Jacie could barely make out a thing with the increasing dusk settling around the ship. Even if she squinted, she still could make out nothing. There was a lot of commotion on the deck of the ship and she was able to make out bodies running back and forth. She heard raging shouts close by and in the distance as if the members on each of the ships were trying to out-shout the other.

The ship jerked sharply to the right then and Jacie wondered if another ship had come upon them from the other side. She saw the gleam of cutlass metal in the moon light and then heard the clashing scrapes as skirmishes began in earnest. They had been boarded by another crew! She closed her eyes and prayed that they were friend and not foe.

Blade felt the ropes that bound his hands loosen and turned to see Zach standing behind him with a wide grin across his face.

“Thought you could use a little help, Blade.”

Blade ducked suddenly as he saw the shining metal of a cutlass pass dangerously close to his head. He kicked out with his left foot and caught one of Crystal's crew members in the throat, sending the man flying backwards and flinging his cutlass into the air. Blade caught the handle with little effort and turned back to Zach.

“Indeed! But all I want to do now is find my lady and be gone from here.”

“Your ship awaits you not too far to the north. Go and get the *Tigress*. I have your back.”

Nodding, Blade made his way stealthily through the throngs of fighting men on the deck, being careful not to lose his footing. The wooden planks were fast becoming a blood river as wounded and dead men littered the entire lower deck. Finally reaching the hatch door, he bent down to open the thing when he was kicked backwards swiftly from a hard boot along his chin. Landing unceremoniously upon his behind with a thud, rage filled his eyes as he looked up into the snarling face of Jason.

"You will not be taking her, Blade! *She is mine.*" Jason braced his feet apart and held the cutlass tightly within his fist. His eyes narrowed as he watched Blade gain his feet.

Blade rushed forward at the man and caught him off guard as he tackled him around the waist, knocking him to the deck behind the hatch door. He heard the grunt of pain and then felt a sharp prick in his forearm as the cutlass blade Jason held sunk in deeply. He cursed loudly and got to his knees as he grasped the man around the neck and squeezed with all his might. The rage that now flowed through his veins ignored the other slices of the cutlass blade as Jason attempted in vain to slice him to ribbons. Blood poured from two deep wounds before Blade saw the man's eyes roll to the back of his head and then he collapsed suddenly.

Blade let go and got to his feet, breathing heavily. He turned his back to Jason and was heading for the hatch door once again when yet another man barred his way. This time it was Pesos.

Blade stood tall, ignoring the pain in his shoulder as a slight smile graced his lips. "Pesos, my friend!"

Pesos raised his brows as he placed one booted foot upon the hatch door. "Blade, now you know as well as I that there ain't no friendship between us."

Blade grinned then and nodded once. "Right you are. The fact is that we despise each other, right?"

"Aye...I do despise you Pirate Jack Blade." Pesos smiled, showing blackened teeth.

Blade's smile faded and he crossed his arms over his chest as he saw Zachary approach Pesos from behind. "And you will despise me even more when I am through

with you. Alas, I must ask you if you have seen your brother lately. I believe a family reunion is in order for you.” Although his words were quiet, he knew that Pesos got the clear meaning.

Pesos tipped his head back and began to laugh. “I owe you one, Blade. I in fact owe you several. Not even your demise will appease this hate I feel. And as for my brother, he can rot in hell as far as I am concerned. And when you are dead and lying at the bottom of the ocean floor, you will know that I will be the one fucking that little piece of ass you call your own. She will scream at my hand and know the pain of one hundred men when I am done with her.”

Blade gnashed his teeth and gripped his hands into fists. “The hell you say. I will not allow you to touch her, for you will die by my hands this very day!” Leaping forward, he stuck out his forearm and caught Pesos off guard as they both came crashing down upon the bloodied planks of the deck.

Zach was pushed backwards by the force and was embroiled within a fight between three other men. Trying to keep his own head intact, he swung his blade out furiously trying to get back to Blade and his demon brother Pesos.

Both Blade and Pesos rolled over one another with arms flailing and curses flying all about. Blood seemed to pour from the wound on Blade's arm as his aggression became fevered with a vengeance to kill the man under him. His fists punched into the other man's face as blood spurted from his nose, making his knuckles slide across Pesos' face every time he struck a blow.

Pesos howled in pain as the blood seeped into his eyes and clouded his vision. His nose felt broken and he knew that he had several cracked ribs. Not wanting to die by the man's hands, he gathered up what strength he had left in himself and heaved Blade over his head to land in a heap a few feet away. But Blade came back at him with a vengeance before he had a chance to pick himself up.

Seeing his cutlass that he had lost earlier, Blade grasped the handle and quickly brought it to the throat of Pesos, cleanly slicing the man's neck wide open. He stood and watched as the body twitched nervously and gurgling sounds came from the other man's mouth. Then, as if death claimed him all at once, he ceased his movements and lie still.

Breathing out a heavy breath, Blade turned toward the hatch door and flung the thing wide, smiling when he saw Jacie sitting on the third step down.

Jacie bounded up the steps and flung herself into Blade's arms, leaning her head upon his solid chest. She felt him untie the gag from around her neck and then pulled the ropes from her wrists.

Blade stood looking at her for a second as the men around them continued to fight. Reaching out, he pulled her into his chest and breathed in the scent of her hair. He smiled as he felt her arms go about his waist to give him a hug and then she set herself from him suddenly.

"We need to get out of here, Blade."

Blade nodded and took Jacie's hand, pulling her behind him as he stopped and scooped up the cutlass once again. They made their way to the railing without mishap and Blade turned to her with a smile.

Even in the darkness, she could make out his blue eyes as they intently studied her. She wished that she could see into his mind and find out what he was thinking, what he wanted in his life. But instead, she leaned slowly toward him and softly ran the tip of her tongue over his bottom lip, nibbling slightly.

"I hope you are prepared to getting loved soundly, for when I get you alone, I do not think I will ever stop."

"I look forward to it, Pirate, and will hold you to your word. But for now, let's get the hell off this ship."

Blade grinned and stepped around her, taking the lead. He slipped over the rail first and then grasped her around the waist as she went into his arms. They slid slowly down the anchor rope and finally hit the water silently, the chill surrounding them entirely.

"Ready, love?" Blade smiled at her and wondered if his heart had ever been so full. He knew it had not, nor would it ever be with anyone other than the woman he held in his arms.

"Ready, Pirate." Jacie grinned as she held her breath and ducked under the water, following his lead.

They swam under water for what seemed like an eternity before hitting the surface once again. Blade grasped her around the waist and pulled her to him, kissing her lips softly. He only wanted to hold her to him like this forever, if only he could find the courage to speak the words. He wanted her for his own so desperately, he was willing to do anything she commanded just to make it so. After the weeks they had been separated, he found her to be lovelier than anything he had ever seen in his life, more so than any angel in the heavens. He loved her so much that his heart nearly burst with the emotions that roared through him.

"I thought I had lost you, love. You put a scare into me that had me quivering in my boots." Blade leaned his forehead next to her own and closed his eyes, enjoying the feel of her next to his body. "Don't do that to me again. I will have your promise." He opened his eyes and tried to smile but could not. Desire washed over him and he felt a need to have her right that moment. She did not try to stop him as he tugged her britches over her hips trying to gain access to the heaven he knew he would find underneath. His own britches slid down around his knees as he pushed them away from his hardened cock, not wanting to wait any longer to feel her sweet caress.

He entered her smoothly, feeling the heat of her surround him in velvety softness. Blade groaned into her mouth as his lips captured her own, dipping his tongue into hers as he felt her hands grasp his ass and pull him into herself more fully. He felt her squeeze around him with a sensual tugging that had his mind swirling with his pleasure. Her hands slid up under his shirt and he felt her squeeze his shoulders as she pulled her mouth from his to lave her tongue over his jaw line and down to his neck.

Jacie felt the luscious feel of him penetrating her very core, welcoming his heat and his soft thrusts. This is all she had ever wanted from Blade, to feel his love so completely, to know that he cared for her. He throbbed inside of her and she moaned as she found his lips once again, meeting his hips in the gentle thrusts that continued to massage her to a greater height. His arms encircled her with his strength and she delved her tongue inside his mouth, laving his own softly as she gently sucked on the tip. She heard his moan of pleasure as his arms tightened around her and then felt the blazing fire of him as he pulsed and throbbed inside of her, finding his release. She tilted her head

back slightly as the rich warm feel of him invaded her center, bursting forth with her own shuddering discharge.

Blade felt her massage over his length, her white hot liquid fire warming him, squeezing and pulsing around him until he thought he would lose his mind. She felt so very good and as he continued to plunge into her, he did not want to stop, wanted it to go on and on until he could not go any further. He held her tightly and wanted to shout out his love but he wanted to wait for the right moment. But when would the right moment ever be?

Jacie watched as the emotions crossed Blade's face. She had never seen him look at her like that before and she thought that it must be the clouds playing upon her mind, making her see things that were not actually there. She doubted what she had seen on his face was real. He was a pirate and pirates do not love. Especially this one. It was more than likely wishful thinking on her part and she sighed as she laid her head upon his shoulder, hugging him tightly.

"I have never done this in the water before. I found it to be very nice."

Blade laughed into the quiet of the night as he held her closer to his body. "Of course you haven't, love. I have been the only pirate you have loved and now I will show you all the tricks up my sleeve. I promise you will not be disappointed."

Jacie leaned back and looked at him with raised brows. "You are right, Blade. You are the only pirate I have ever loved." She licked her lips and saw him smile at her.

"Ah, so you love me, do you?" Now why did he ask that? Did he really want to know that he had not heard those words? Did he want to be shot down in a blast of unsettled sadness when she winks at him and says she was only teasing? Jacie kissed him softly then and her whispered response sent a chill down his spine.

"I do. I never thought that I would have the craving to love a pirate like you. But I do." She smiled at him as her palm ran along his cheek.

Blade's heart leaped in his chest as the words sunk in. She loved him? Truly, she did? He felt as if he was in a dream, nothing making any sense, and nothing mattered but her words. She loved him! He needed to make sure he heard her right. She would not tease him, would she?

“Captain! Are you about?” Marlon whispered out over the water as he rowed slowly in the little dingy boat.

Not taking his eyes from Jacie, Blade called out a quiet word of acknowledgement and waited for his man to bring the boat over to them. He felt weak as a babe and knew that it was the words she had told him that made him feel this way. He would get to the bottom of this issue and it would be this very night.

As the boat found its way to their side, Blade gritted his teeth when he saw the pirate Grenadine loom over the edge. He was holding out a hand to Jacie, which she accepted with gratitude, he noticed. Of course the water was cold and the eve a tad bit cool so he did not blame her one whit for wanting to be out of the sea water. As Blade drug himself over the edge of the boat, he came into an upright position and finally met Jacie's eyes as she sat in the back of the boat. Grenadine was talking to her in hushed whispers, tugging a wool blanket around her shoulders. But she did not appear to be listening to what the man was saying. Her eyes were upon him and he felt the lust reach out to him from where he now sat. Blade grinned and wondered how he could have gotten so lucky to win her love.

Chapter Eight

Dry and warm once again, Jacie sat on the edge of Blade's bed and looked out the window that ran along one entire wall of his cabin. Much like her own cabin, she loved to look out at night and watch the moonlight as it filtered over the water, illuminating it with its gentle smile.

She had put on one of Blade's linen shirts enveloping her with the scent of him. It hung to her knees but she did not care as she stood and went over to look out over the water. Her thoughts turned to the roguish pirate once again as he filled her mind to overflowing. Blade was seductive, sensual, sexy and lusciously delicious in every way a man could possibly be.

And he had been gone for over an hour.

He had mumbled a comment about seeing to his crew before he could come to his cabin and bid her to go and find something of his to put on lest she get a cold. And now she waited for him to come to her, waited for him to step through the door so that she could look upon his handsome face again.

Jacie had missed him, missed him more than what she had ever thought possible, and now wondered if she had made a mistake by telling him that she loved him. Had she pushed him away with her words, scaring him off so that he would never come into her arms again? She hoped not, for that was not her intent. She had not meant to be so honest, sharing her feelings with him, when she knew damn well that he would never, *could* never, love her in return.

Blade watched her from the doorway of his cabin. She looked so beautiful standing in the moonlight as it filtered into his cabin, outlining her in a glow that made her appear to be an enchanted nymph. He stepped into the cabin and closed the door silently, leaning against the casing as he continued to watch her. His heart beat rapidly in his chest when he thought of what she had said to him earlier. He ached to touch her, to pull her into his arms and tell her that he loved her so much, that he has loved her for so long.

He watched as she bowed her head and folded her arms across her midsection. Her hair gleamed in the moonlight, like sparkling golden thread, and he wanted to bury

his face in the silken mass. Dare he make a move and confront her with his love? What if she had not really meant her words the way they had sounded? He closed his eyes and sighed.

Jacie turned at the sound and looked at him as he leaned against the doorway. He was so very handsome and sexy, her pirate, and she liked that he had shed his shirt and now stood bare chested for her enjoyment. His muscled bunched in his arms as he rubbed his eyes and she wanted to go to him and pull him into her arms. But it was as if her feet were nailed to the floor. She couldn't move, could only drink in his sensual form as he stood across the cabin. His hair hung to his waist in a thick braid and she wanted so much to unbraid his hair and have it flow around them as they made love.

Blade drew in his breath as he opened his eyes and met the emerald green of her own. His heart beat wildly and he felt as if her were a schoolboy ready to take his first woman. He tried to cover the emotions that were obvious on his face but he decided that he did not want to do that any more. He wanted her to know exactly how he felt. And he would jump in with both feet.

"Pirate." She took a step forward, not really seeing his face as it was cast in the shadows. "I have a dare for you."

"A dare?" He grinned as her sensual voice passed over him like a caress and crossed his arms over his chest. "What is your dare, love? Do you dare me to make love to you on my desk, in my chair or on my floor? Should we hop into the sea once again?"

Jacie shook her head and smiled. "None of those."

"Then what is your dare, love?"

She hesitated, taking a deep steady breath. "I dare you, Pirate Jack Blade, the most sensual, seductive, gorgeous rogue I know...to love me as I love you. I *dare* you to love only one woman from this moment on and I want that woman to be...me."

Blade was spellbound and totally speechless. Jacie *did* love him and as he felt his heart beat wildly in his chest. He felt almost relieved and...so very contented at long last. He wanted to rush into her arms and tell her he loved her too. But he needed to go slow. He took a deep breath and went on.

"And your love for me is real, like the '*I love you forever*' and '*my heart is all*

yours' along with 'I will never leave your side again because I love you so much that I could never possibly live without you', kind of love?" Blade held his breath and waited for her response.

"Aye, all of those. I love you, Jack Blade, and I *dare* you to love me back." Jacie closed her eyes and whispered to him, "*I dare you.*" She opened her eyes after a few moments but still could not see his face. So she waited for him to answer her or at least acknowledge that he wanted nothing like that from her at all. Finally his words broke the silence.

"You know, love, a dare is something that I *rarely* pass up...as you well know." His voice was soft, caressing, as he stepped from the shadows and came to stand before her. He did not touch her, just looked into her beautiful face, her intense emerald eyes. And he filled his head with her scent. "I love you Jacie Monroe. I have for a very long time; from the first moment I set eyes upon you. I wanted you for my own then and I want you even more now. I had hoped that you would come to love me as I love you. And you do. You do love me unless I am dreaming and when I wake I will be in such sorrow that I do not have you by my side."

Jacie's heart hammered in her chest at his sincere words. God above! Did he truly mean what he had said? "You love me? I mean to say...you, the womanizing pirate, loves *one* single woman?"

"I love only you, my *Tigress*." Blade did pull her into his arms then and held tightly onto her. "You have been all I have wanted for a very long time. And I have a confession to make to you. I was the one who ordered you brought to my ship. I was not taking you to another as I had told you I was. I was going to keep you for myself and hope that you would see me as the man I am and not the pirate I portray. I wanted you that badly." He kissed her then, a kiss of deep love and longing, the promise of a thousand tomorrows spent in his arms.

Jacie wrapped her arms around his neck and smiled up at him. "I was prepared to fight for you, Pirate. I would have taken on an army of wenches to keep you as mine. And I still would, be warned! The love I feel for you is not a passing thing for me. What I feel is real, unlike anything I have ever felt in my life. I will not share you-"

"Nor will I share you."

"-*nor* will I be separated from you for any extended periods of time."

"Agreed, love. Always by my side you shall remain."

"And..." Her words trailed off then as she hesitated.

"*And?*"

Jacie became somber then as she looked into his eyes once more and felt the deep welling desire for him fill her. "I love you, Pirate."

Blade grinned down at her. "And I love you. So much."

She grinned at him as she brushed back blonde curls from her forehead. "Ah, if I had known it was this enjoyable to love a pirate, I would have done so a long time ago."

"You haven't seen anything yet, love. The best is yet to come, I assure you." Blade's roguish grin was seductive, to say the least, and he knew he had her right where he wanted her: in his arms.

Chapter Nine

Blade paced back and forth in front of the fireplace, grinding his teeth in irritation. Jacie said she would meet him here this day and he had arrived late last night trying to make everything perfect for this little interlude they had planned.

He walked over to the large nine foot window and gazed out into the dark night. Not a twinkling of any lights did he see for miles and his brows furrowed. This was not like her to be this terribly late. He sighed and walked back over to the fireplace, staring down into the dying embers.

Jacie leaned against the door jamb and grinned. Blade posed a sensual picture from behind as he leaned one arm against the mantle of the fireplace and had his other hand upon his hip. He wore a white linen shirt that showed off his tan to perfection and tight black britches with the ever-present knee high black leather boots. His hair was left unbound and she drew in a deep breath to quell the stirrings of desire that seemed to envelope her body whenever he was near.

“Hello, Pirate.”

Blade turned at the sound of her voice and drank in her beauty from across the room. She was lovely this eve sporting a deep green velvet gown and white slippers on her feet that stuck out from under her gown's hem. Her hair was pulled back from her face and a white lace shawl draped over her shoulders. She had a spark of mischief in her eyes and he had to laugh.

“Hello, love. You had me worried there for a moment.”

“Worried? Whatever were you worried about?”

“That you would not come to me this eve.” Blade glanced at the clock on the mantle and then back at Jacie. “It is almost nine now.”

Jacie pushed herself from the door jamb and moved slowly toward him. “You told me that you had a very special dinner planned for us this night. I thought I would take some extra time to make myself presentable.”

Blade laughed softly as she stopped right in front of him. “Love, presentable to me would mean you walking through that door without a stitch of clothing on that lovely body of yours. Ah, now that would be *presentable* and a very welcomed greeting.”

Jacie raised her brows as she shrugged the shawl from her shoulders. "Really, Pirate?" She kicked her slippers off to the side, still smiling at him.

"Aye." Blade's smile deepened as he watched her pull the ribbon from her hair. The glossy mass flowed freely around her shoulders and down to her waist in an abundance of golden silk.

"Then I guess I should try to please you well since you have arranged this special meal for us both." Jacie slid one shoulder out of her gown and then the other, pulling the sleeves over her hands. She then licked her lips enticingly as she pushed the gown over her hips and allowed it to puddle at her feet. She felt the heat from his eyes warm her bare flesh and she wanted desperately to reach out and pull him into her arms. She had not seen him for eight days now and her need for him was reaching the boiling point.

Blade's mouth went dry as he gazed upon the shimmering skin that lay bare before him. She had always told him that she did not care to wear anything under her gowns as it seemed to restrict her movements. And now as she stood before him naked as the day she was born, he felt the love for her well up in his heart. He smiled as he reached out a hand to gently run his fingertips along her neck, between her breasts and over her belly slowly. He allowed his fingers to play softly over the mound of tight blonde curls that covered her center and he heard her quiet groan of desire.

Blade leaned down and placed his lips next to her own, feeling the softness of her lips, smelling the sweet scent that was hers alone. He dipped his tongue into her mouth as he grasped her around the waist and pulled her closer to his length. Her arms wound around his neck and he felt her slide a smooth palm down his back as the rumbling purrs of desire sounded softly in her chest.

Jacie ran her fingertips along the waste of Blade's britches and felt like ripping the things from his body. She was eager for this night, eager for the love she held within her heart for him that nearly burst from her chest. She ran her hand along the front of his britches and felt his throbbing need dance under her touch. His soft groan filled her ears and her mind with the luscious images of what was to come. She grasped his hardness firmly within her hand as she deepened the kiss, massaging him gently and then moved her hands back up his body with slow assurance.

Jacie smoothed her hands over his shoulders as her palms made contact with the soft cotton of the shirt he wore. Roaming her fingertips along his shirtfront, she slowly undid all the buttons one by one, running her fingertips softly over the exposed tanned flesh that was revealed. Finally reaching the button that was nearest the waist of his britches, she slowly began to pull the shirttail that lay hidden underneath. She felt the heat of the material where it had touched his skin only moments before. Once the shirt was fully pulled free, she continued to unbutton the three remaining buttons as she began a slow decent with her lips along his neck and chest.

Blade felt the softness of her lips over his neck as a fire sparked within his groin. Slowly her fingers played havoc along his flesh, burning a path of want and desire wherever she touched. He closed his eyes to more fully enjoy the wondrous feelings, allowing her to do with him what she may. He grinned to himself. He hoped that when she was done with him, he would not be able to walk for a week.

When her lips reached the edge of his waistband, Jacie grasped the material with her teeth and tugged gently to pull the buttons from their holes as she slid to her knees before him. Blade's engorged manhood sprung forward when she pushed the britches from his hips slowly, running her tongue along his waist as she did so. She gave a ravenous moan and took his hardness into her mouth, laving over the smooth flesh with her tongue. He felt hot and thick, pulsing slightly from the strokes her tongue played over his taunt flesh. She grasped the base of his cock and held it firmly within the palm of her hand as her tongue glided over him with acute tenderness, running from the top to the bottom over and over again, sucking softly.

Blade tasted too damn good and his scent of seawater and fresh air nearly drove Jacie to madness as she breathed in deeply before plunging her mouth over his length once again. She heard his moans of pleasure and she felt herself melt, her pussy becoming wet with her own longing. Desire washed over her body as she grasped his ass and squeezed gently, feeling his flesh tense suddenly as her mouth began to suck softly upon him. She pulled him forward slightly with her hands and moaned as his cock began to throb erratically, pulling the soft groans of pleasure from his lips.

She released him suddenly and pushed him onto the red velvet settee behind him,

settling herself over him as he lay in wait for her. She captured his eyes with her own and then slowly slid her wet pussy along his entire length, feeling his heat wrap around her. She rocked her hips back and forth for a few moments longer until his whispered pleas reached her ears. She smiled slightly as she raised herself up on her knees and then gently smoothed over him, encasing his hard cock within the velvety folds of her center.

Blade groaned aloud as Jacie moved over him with acute tenderness. She moved so slowly that he wanted to push her to the floor and make love to her with all the pent up passion he held so that her release would last for an eternity. He closed his eyes as his fingertips found her erect nipples and he grasped her heavy breasts tenderly within his hands. He heard her moan of pleasure and found that she had increased her pace ever so slightly. He drew in a deep breath as he raised his own hips and thrust forward suddenly.

Jacie tilted back her head and groaned out loud when the tantalizing thrust hit its mark deep inside of her. She felt as if a dam had been released, feeling herself pulse around his length as she wildly settled over him with deep elongated thrusts of her own. She gently raked her fingernails over the flesh of his chest and smiled when he began to jerk uncontrollably with his own release. She glorified in the feeling of his unrest, taking in his love as he so readily gave it to her. She continued to rotate her hips over his own, loving the sound of his voice as he whispered her name over and over. Slowly she came to a stop, taking in a deep breath of satisfied pleasure.

Jacie leaned down and took his lips with her own, running her tongue over his bottom lip slowly as she stared into the pale blue depths of his eyes.

"I have missed you, Pirate." She raised herself upon her elbows and looked down at him with a smile.

"Oh you have?" Blade grinned at her as he lazily looped one of her blonde curls around his finger. "I did not think you were coming, love. I saw no lights on the sea to tell me you were about."

"I came in on the south side of the island. I wanted to surprise you. That and the fact that I wanted to bathe and prepare myself for our dinner."

Blade laughed quietly. "I like you just the way you are, love."

"Unclothed and at your mercy?" She raised her brows at him. "I think I like you

the same way.”

Blade tightened his hold around her waist. “I can arrange that, you know.”

“I bet you can, rogue pirate that you are.” Jacie smacked playfully at his arm. Smiling at him over her shoulder as she got to her feet and went to gather up her discarded gown, her belly growled with hunger. “I am famished. When are we to eat? That is why we are here, right?”

Blade got to his feet as a quiet chuckle escaped his lips and slipped back on his britches before he went to help Jacie with her gown. He held back her hair as she slid herself back into the soft velvet. Leaning down, he kissed her neck as he whispered next to her ear, “Hungry are you? Well I can rectify that immediately. All should be ready now since we have had our *appetizer*.”

Jacie laughed softly and gave him a look of promise. She could not wait to show him exactly how much she missed him.

Giving her one last kiss on her neck, Blade took her hand with a smile and pulled her along behind him toward the kitchen area. But they did not stop in the dining room. Instead, he went to a side door and stepped out onto a stone veranda.

Jacie was in awe of the sight before her. The veranda was small and secluded but it had all sorts of huge clay pots with an array of beautiful flowers in each one. Smaller pots were spotted here and there but they were filled with a pale yellow wispy flower that she had never seen before. And in the center of it all sat a table with one single candle burning in the center. A white tablecloth draped over the edge of the tabletop and a single red rose sat in a vase beside the candle showing its brilliant color in the pale moonlight.

“Blade, this is absolutely lovely.” She walked over to the table and smiled up at him as he pulled her chair out for her.

Blade leaned down and kissed her cheek, inhaling the soft lilac fragrance that surrounded her. “I will get our dinner. Sit tight...and don't go anywhere.”

“I am not going anywhere.” Jacie followed him with her eyes as he disappeared into the house. She sighed contentedly as she looked about her in wonder, inhaling deeply of the sweet fragrance from the flowers. She knew that the island and the mansion

that sat upon it belonged to Blade's friend Zachary. It was truly lovely with all the trees and vegetation growing thickly everywhere. And the veranda was very peaceful and inviting, giving small glimpses of the ocean in between the trees. She leaned her head back and closed her eyes, breathing deeply of the warm night air.

"Here we are." Blade carried two plates piled with food out to the table, setting one in front of Jacie and one across the table where he would sit. "I will be right back." He leaned down and kissed her nose as he made his way back into the house.

"There is more?" She asked incredulously as she viewed the heaping plate in front of her.

Blade grinned from the doorway. "Only our drinks. I will be right back, love."

Jacie shook her head as she looked her meal over. He had prepared breaded chicken with carrots and potatoes along with white rice smothered in what appeared to be an array of herbs and a dab of butter. White gravy had been ladled over the chicken and two thick slices of bread completed the meal. It all smelled delicious and her mouth watered at the thought of tasting the dish.

Blade appeared on the veranda again carrying two crystal wine glasses and a bottle of fragrant wine. Setting the glasses down on the table, he smiled over at Jacie, pushing a filled wine glass in front of her plate. "Drink up, love. I know you have to be thirsty."

Jacie picked up her glass and took a sip. The wine was flavorful and tasted like wild berries on her tongue. It was sweet as well and she decided that she rather liked the taste, drinking down the whole glass in a couple of swallows.

As they began to eat, Jacie detected a small amount of reserve from Blade. He seemed nervous and fidgety, making her think of a small boy that could not wait to be dismissed from the dinner table so that he could go play outside. She smiled. He was a true wondering spirit, free and strong.

Turning her attention back to her lovely surroundings, Jacie took a slow sip of her wine and thought that sometimes she wished for a home like the one on Lost Heaven Island. But then she knew that she would rather take to the sea. She loved the adventure and she loved her ship and crew dearly but she loved Blade more than anything else in her

life. She would give up her own ship to be with him if she had to.

Jacie looked back to Blade and grinned. He was the most handsome man she had ever known and she still could not believe that she was lucky enough to have him. His brows furrowed slightly then and she became worried with the emotions that crossed over his face. She sat up straight in her chair.

"Blade, what is wrong? You have been somewhere else since we sat down to eat." She drew in a deep breath and wondered if he was having second thoughts about having a relationship with just one woman. With her.

Blade got to his feet and wondered over to the edge of the veranda and looked out over the sea. It was calm and beautiful this evening. The moonlight from above cast an inviting scene below and he wondered if he were doing the right thing. Being a pirate had its dangers, true, but he loved what he did. And he loved the sassy female privateer who had come to him this night to fulfill a dream he hoped would come true for him. Still, he had his reservations about the whole ordeal with her. She was beautiful, she came from a wealthy family and she could have any man she wanted. Yet she was here with him. Dare he hope that her love for him could be as deep as the love he held for her? He turned toward her and began to walk slowly her way trying to gather his bearings.

Jacie watched him approach her with hesitant steps and she wondered if this was going to be the end of her time with him. She had had this feeling for most of the day and could not determine if it was a good feeling...or a bad one. Obviously, it boded ill for her if the look on Blade's face was any indication. She raised her chin a notch and tried to prepare herself for the heartbreak that was to come. Would this be the end of what they had shared for all these months now? Had he tired of her?

Blade came to stand by her chair and got down on one knee beside her. He gathered her hands into both of his as he stared deeply into her eyes. He stared at her for the longest time before he finally spoke, trying to choose his words carefully. He took a deep breath.

"Jacie, love, I want you to be my wife." He cleared his throat nervously before he continued. "Will you marry me?"

Damn! That was not how he wanted to say the words. He wanted to tell her she

was the most beautiful woman he had ever known, how she was more precious to him than a ship full of gold booty...how he loved her more with each passing second. Blade released her hands and got to his feet looking down at her, embarrassed with the way his words had come out. He had not intended on flowery words of worship, but he did want them to be a little more romantic than what they had sounded. He wanted to kick himself!

Jacie blinked twice before his words finally registered in her mind. Dumbfounded, she could only stare at him with her mouth hanging open. Dear Lord above, had she heard right? Her heart began to beat wildly within her chest.

“Blade...are you serious? I mean, you want to *marry* me?”

Blade nodded his head once as he swallowed hard. “I do.”

Jacie shook her head and wondered if she were dreaming. Had she drank too much of the wine? Was this too handsome pirate lover of hers playing a game with her heart? She could not believe that he actually meant what he had said. But she had to make sure.

“You are serious?”

Throwing caution to the wind, Blade rushed in with his words, hoping that he would not make a fool of himself. “I couldn’t be more serious in all my life. I want you to be my wife, Jacie. I love you so much that I don’t want to spend another second of my life without you. I want you by my side forever and I will not rest until you agree to become my bride.”

Jacie felt tears well in her eyes at his whispered words that were full of emotion. They touched her heart in a way nothing else ever had. She smiled at him as she stood and wrapped her arms around his neck suddenly.

“You truly mean it? You want me as your wife?”

“Aye.” Blade closed his eyes and wrapped his arms solidly around her. He would refuse to let her go until she agreed to wed him.

Jacie’s mind was in a whirl. She could not believe her great fortune. To wed a man you loved was most often a woman’s life-long dream. But for her, it was to wed the seductive pirate she now held in her arms and fall more in love with him as each day

passed. Aye, that is what she wanted in her life. She wanted her pirate. She leaned back and looked at his handsome face. The pale blue of his eyes sparkled with love and the small smile that graced his lips was genuine and held a bit of the sensual rogue pirate trait that she loved so much. "I think you are teasing me, Pirate."

Blade laughed softly as he kissed her lips. "I tease you only in my bed, love. What I do now is let you know that I love you more than anything else in my life and I want you for my own."

Jacie grinned then, becoming mischievous. "Pirate, I think you have gained a fair bounty this time." She ran her fingertips along his brow, smoothing back his hair. "It would be an honor to be your wife."

Stunned, Blade stared down at her for a moment before he tilted his head back and gave a great shout of elation that echoed around them on the quiet island. He then kissed her with all the passion and delight he felt, knowing that she was his life and without her, he would never survive. "I love you, Jacie. Don't you ever forget that I love you. By the sea saints, if ever there were any such thing, you have made me the most happiest of men this night!"

Jacie wrapped her arms around his neck tighter and gave him the deepest, most sensual kiss she could muster, one that left her breathless and weak. She knew she had found the life she had always dreamed of. A life with a sensual, tantalizing pirate whose touch made her melt with lustful cravings. A man whose fingers brought great shouts of pleasure from her lips. A pirate that had given her the sweetest redemption she had ever known.

The End

