



# The Diary of Annalise

By

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May 10, 1870

I hate pirates. I hate them with my entire being, to the very depths of my soul. The irony is that I deal with pirates quite often since I own the tavern at Land's Beach called the Wicked Wench. Pirates never really bothered me too much, though, and I really didn't start to hate them until two days ago when a group of them decided to kidnap me. Four of them broke into my rooms over the tavern late at night and carried me away like a sack of flour taking me to the docks. Now, I find myself on a small ship at sea headed to only God knows where.

The night I was taken didn't start out unusual--same old thing, serving drinks, wiping the bar, and having Tom and Pat kick out patrons as they got too boisterous. I was cleaning up and mopping the already wet floor when the last customer was dragged out the door by Tom and Pat. When Old Jones was done washing the last tankard, the three men left, and I made my way upstairs to my living quarters above the tavern.

I went to my table and recounted the night's earnings, hoping I'd miscounted downstairs. The night's earnings were pitiful considering how much hard work we'd all done. I muttered my usual oath to my dead father who'd left me high, dry, and in debt, and peeled off my clothing. I washed the day's grime off at my basin and put on a fresh, clean nightgown, brushed out my long, brown hair and went to bed.

I was exhausted and thought about how in the morning I'd have to have Tom and Pat bring up new barrels of beer from the cellar, and that I would have to start cooking for dinner tonight by myself since I'd had to let the tavern cook go for lack of funds.

I was so tired of the same thing day after day with no end in sight, and it had only been five weeks since my father had passed on. He had done a fabulous job of hiding the tavern's debts from me. Since his passing, everything had landed squarely on my shoulders.

I was now down to a bare bone crew, keeping Old Jones since he had been friends with my father for as long as I could remember. Tom and Pat were huge, burly men who sat at the front door of the tavern. They enjoyed throwing patrons out on their asses much more than allowing them access inside the Wench.

It was a challenge every day to pay my last three employees. The past two weeks I didn't have enough money to pay all that I owed. My only plan was to pay what I could and keep getting by on credit as long as I could. There was certainly no way I could ever retire from the profits from the tavern. There were none. My future was bleak.

I lay in bed and thought about the week before and a blush crept into my cheeks as an intense heat overwhelmed my body. I felt my nipples grow erect under my nightgown. My pussy throbbed and when I moved my thighs I could feel the juices from my own arousal. In a rash move, I'd made love with a man whose name I didn't even know, but it was the most amazing experience of my life and I thought about it every day, reliving it in my mind over and over. My only regret about that evening was not finding out his name.

I fantasized about letting him touch me everywhere, and make love to me every way possible. I dreamed of him deep inside me, shooting his hot seed in me. I dreamed of his mouth licking my pussy, his tongue flicking my clit until all I could do was scream in pleasure. I pictured myself sucking his cock, taking it deep in my throat until I made him orgasm. He'd come so fiercely he'd growl like a wild, untamed beast. I just wish I knew the name of the man I wanted so badly, the man I was madly in love with.

More later. Someone is unlocking the cabin door.

Annalise

May 11, 1870

They tell me we'll be meeting the ship we set out to meet by tomorrow. I'm really looking forward to getting some answers about why I was kidnapped. The crew here is tight-lipped and won't offer a clue as to who they work for, but at least now I know we're meeting another ship. I don't know if they're uncommunicative out of respect of their captain, or from fear, but whoever is in charge has a tight reign on his men. I must admit, part of me is intrigued. I don't know anyone who would want me. Anyone who gets me also gets the tremendous debt that comes along with me like a monkey on my back.

The men here have treated me well, though, and the food has been edible. I do long for a nice, hot bath to soak in since I didn't bathe the night I was taken. That was two days ago. I was slightly surprised when they agreed to give me the supplies to write when I requested it.

I suppose tomorrow I'll have some answers. Until then, all I have is time to write in this book, which is better than staring at these four walls that for now are my prison.

So again I find myself thinking about the man. I still can't believe I let myself get so carried away with a total stranger or that I let myself fall in love with him. I was so desperate to feel close to someone, though, and that night he happened to come into my tavern, like fate walking through my door.

That day I had been dealing with creditors and was so tired of begging them off again. I knew they were just going to come back, and I'd still have nothing to pay them with. I was so miserable that night and just longed to escape, to have any other life. I didn't care where.

When the man came into the tavern, I spotted him immediately. There was something about him that made his presence known without saying a word. I would have had to have been passed out on the floor to not have noticed him.

He wore a white shirt that was open all the way to where it was tucked into the waist of his pants. His pants were black leather and he had boots that stopped below his knees. His long, black hair was pulled back in a queue. It was his eyes that struck me the most. They were a startling bright blue that was almost unnatural and were even more noticeable because of the man's deep tan. He had a deep bronzed glow that told me he spent many hours outdoors.

From just inside the front door, he looked around the tavern, taking it all in. I had never seen him there before. I was sure I would have remembered him because he was the type of man you could never forget. He looked at me and then walked straight towards me. All right, so I was behind the bar and he ordered a drink, but he went to me and not Old Jones who was tending bar with me down at the other end. When I handed him his drink, our hands brushed and I thought I felt sparks between us.

Watching the man just made me want to walk around the bar and wrap my legs around his hips and start rubbing against him. I wanted to touch his smooth, tanned chest and stroke him like a giant feline. He oozed sexuality without any effort and would leave

any conscious woman in a swoon. I looked at his face and he had a smirk as he looked at me, like he was used to women falling all over him. It made me hate his cockiness, but not stop wanting him.

As he stood at the bar drinking his drink, he continued staring at me. I started feeling uncomfortable with those intense eyes on me. I must have had a forlorn look on my face because he leaned towards me and said, "Things can't be that bad."

"Oh, believe me, they can be," I replied. Hours before, I had let the man who supplied our rum get a look down my bodice at my breasts as I bent to pick up a coin I'd dropped on purpose, just so he'd extend our credit for another pitiful two weeks. I didn't want to think about what I'd have to do in two weeks to put him off again. The man was overweight and filthy. The idea of letting him have sex with me nauseated me, but I was already considering it if it meant keeping the tavern open.

In my head, I damned my father, even though I was pretty sure he'd done a good job of doing that himself. I was fairly confident the flames of hell were lapping about his heels even now.

"Then let me buy you a drink," the stranger said as he placed a coin on the bar.

I pushed the coin back towards him. "I don't drink while I'm working," I told him. I had actually lied since I didn't drink at all. I could sell beer, rum, and wine by the barrel-full, but I wasn't very good at holding my liquor.

"One drink certainly can't hurt," he replied as he slid the coin back to me again.

I was tired of arguing, and I thought he might be right. One drink wasn't much. I took the coin and dropped it into the box behind the bar. I poured myself a small drink and swallowed it down, the amber liquid burning a fiery trail down my throat.

The man leaned towards me, making his shirt open wider, and I could see more of his bronzed chest in contrast to the crisp, white shirt. I saw a darkened nipple and thought of running my tongue over it. I swallowed hard as he got closer to me.

"See, I told you one drink couldn't hurt," he stated, those startling eyes probing mine.

I was ready to come back with my own witty retort when the drink I had taken hit me hard. My empty stomach started burning and all of a sudden I was sweltering. The room literally started to spin around me. I reached for the bar, but my hand slid along the edge, and I missed it completely.

As my knees turned to jelly, the man hopped the bar effortlessly to my side, and held me up firmly by the elbow. Old Jones looked over at us and came down the length of the bar. Tom and Pat, who were standing at the front door, made their way towards us, as well, when they saw him holding me.

"The lady isn't feeling well," the man explained to Jones while he held me up.

"She doesn't look very well," Jones admitted to the man as he motioned for Tom and Pat to go back to the front door. They both nodded and returned to their post to wait for their next opportunity at a brawl.

"I need to get out of here. Can you handle everything, Jones?" I asked fanning myself with my hand.

"Of course," he reassured me as he turned back to the bar and the waiting patrons.

The man held me firmer and I let myself sink against him, allowing him hold me

up. It was comforting to have such strong arms around me.

“Where do you live?” he asked me.

“Where do I live?” I repeated, distracted by his arms around me and the heat of his hands on my waist.

“Yes. Where do you live?” he asked again, this time with a small grin. I knew he found it amusing I couldn’t handle one small drink.

“I live upstairs,” I said as he let go of his hold on me and I tried to make my way to the back door of the tavern.

I opened the back door and stepped outside. The cool night air rushed over me, crisp in my lungs, and made me feel a little better. The man was behind me and closed the door to the tavern so we were by ourselves outside.

“I’m up there,” I told him as I pointed up the tall wooden staircase that led up to the second floor.

“Can you make it up all those stairs?” he asked, looking concerned.

I was looking up at them, trying to decide if I was up to it when he scooped me up into his arms. I guess you could say he decided for me.

“Put your arms around my neck,” he instructed me and I did.

Being that close to him, I was pretty much ready to do anything he told me to.

As he started to carry me up the stairs, I had the urge to apologize to this man for making him go through all this with me. He goes to a tavern for a drink and ends up with the woman barkeeper who couldn’t handle one measly drink.

“I’m so sorry,” I started. “I shouldn’t have taken you up on that drink offer. It’s just that I had such a terrible day today.”

We reached the top of the stairs and he opened the door to my rooms while he was still holding me. When we entered, I pointed to two chairs and he placed me down on one of them.

“Can you please close the door?” I asked him

He went back to close it.

“And can you light the lamps?” I asked and pointed to one on the table and two on the mantle. “And the lamps in the other rooms, too, please,” I requested.

He walked through my rooms lighting the lamps and then brought the other chair over to sit in front of me. “Give me your feet,” he commanded.

“What?” I asked.

“Give me your feet. Are you aware you ask a lot of questions?” he retorted as I placed my feet on top of his thighs. He started to unlace my boot as I continued talking.

“I know you don’t need to know my problems, but ever since my father died it has been so hard by myself,” I said.

The man looked up from my boot and gave me the strangest surprised look. “Your father is dead? I’m sorry,” he said before looking back at the boot he was unlacing.

“Yes. It’s been five weeks and I’ve been trying to keep the tavern open. The boys downstairs depend on me. Pat and Tom have wives and children. I don’t know what they’d do if they didn’t have their employment here.” I sighed and tears built up in my eyes.

The man placed my one boot on the floor and started unlacing the other with his nimble fingers. He had a genuine look of concern on his face, but I didn't understand why he would since he didn't even know me.

"Surely you have other family who could help you, or friends to turn to?" he suggested, looking up at me.

I shook my head at him. "My father was the only family I've ever known and I don't have any friends. Not one. No respectable woman wants to be friends with someone who works and lives over a tavern."

The man placed the other boot next to the first and then rubbed his face as if he were contemplating some deep thought.

"Look, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to ramble on all about my problems. I just haven't had anyone to talk to about any of this. I've just been doing this all by myself."

He finally looked back at me and started to stand up. "It's all right. Don't apologize. It seems to me you have an awful lot of responsibility piled on you that you didn't ask for. I'm sure everything will work out for you. I get the impression you are determined to make this all work. Now, I'm sure you could use some rest. Do you think you could walk to your bed, Annalise?" he asked as he held out his hand to help me up.

"How do you know my name?" I questioned him, pulling my hand away from his.

"Ah, how surprising. Another question. I'm shocked," he quipped. "I heard them say your name when we were downstairs," he replied to my question as he stuck his hand back out in front of me.

I tried to think back to everything that was said since he'd come in the tavern. Perhaps Old Jones had said my name when we were behind the bar, but I couldn't remember. Then again, my thoughts were still off because of that drink.

I took his hand and he pulled me to my feet. I swayed a bit, unsure on my feet, and started to walk to my bed, stumbling. Before I could fall, he grabbed me and scooped me up into his arms again. This man, whoever he was, moved fast and had reflexes like I'd never seen before. I instinctively wrapped my arms around his neck and put my head against his hard chest as he carried me to my bedroom. I thought I could definitely get used to him carrying me around in his strong arms.

He bent down as he placed me on the bed and, when he went to stand up, I kept hold of him around his neck. Our foreheads touched as we looked at each other eye to eye.

"What are you doing?" he asked me, trying to pull free of my vice-like grip.

"Don't go," I said to him, never loosening my hold. I didn't want him to leave me. I didn't want to be alone. I had courage from the drink in me I normally didn't possess.

"You're just upset. You don't know what you're doing," he answered.

He started to pull away from me again and I pulled at his neck again, then raised my head and kissed him squarely on the lips. He didn't respond to me and pulled away yet again.

Damn it, my lamp is almost out of oil. It just started flickering. I'll have to wait until morning to keep writing.

Until then—

Annalise





May 12, 1870

It's morning now and I just have to wait until tonight to finally get all my answers. I just finished breakfast and they brought me oil for the lamp I had asked for in case I'm still here when it gets dark.

So, where was I? Let me look back and see... I had kissed the man and he didn't respond to me.

"Don't leave me," I pleaded to him. "I don't want to be alone. Please."

Thinking back, I think it was that last plea to him that convinced him to stay. I had said it with a desperation I'd never experienced before. I slid my hands from behind his neck and held his face in my palms. He turned his head to the side and closed his eyes, inhaling deeply as if he were trying to breathe in my very essence. I found this single, simple movement arousing and I really wanted to kiss him again, but I wanted him to kiss me back.

As soon as he opened his eyes and turned back to look at me, I leaned in and kissed him again. It can never be said that I am a quitter, that is for sure. This time when I kissed him, I placed my tongue on his lips and was startled when he opened his mouth to me.

I hadn't kissed a man like this, so when my tongue touched his, the inner fire that consumed my entire body overwhelmed me. I wanted his hands over my body, to touch me everywhere, all of my skin. I felt his tongue start to move against mine. He pushed me back on the bed onto my back. He lay on top of me as we kissed, and I could feel his hardness on my thigh even through my skirts. The sensation both excited and terrified me.

I reached behind his head and pulled the cord that held his hair back and tossed it on the floor. I started to run my fingers through his beautiful, silky hair, loving how it flowed between my fingers.

He pulled back to look at me, and said, "We shouldn't be doing this. You don't even know who I am or why I'm here."

"Right now, I don't care who you are. Maybe it's selfish of me, but I only care about how I feel. And you make me feel better than I have in a long time," I explained.

I placed my hand inside his open shirt and touched the tanned skin of his chest, felt his muscles hard under my fingers. I reached down and pulled his shirt out from his pants. He sat up, straddling me, and peeled off the shirt, throwing it on the floor. I noticed his chest was muscular, his arms solid muscle.

I sat up and touched his chest, my fingers moving over his hardened nipples. I ran my hands over his sculpted abdomen, amazed at his carved muscles. I had never touched a man with a body like his, and it was unbelievable.

He reached for my blouse and started to unbutton it slowly. Once it was unbuttoned, he slid it off me. He then reached for my camisole and I raised my arms over my head so he could remove it easily. When it was removed I instinctively put my arms

across my chest to hide myself from him.

“No, my love,” he objected. “Let me see your beautiful breasts.”

I slowly lowered my arms as he stared at me with a look I’d never seen. I had never had my body so scrutinized by a man before. Heat washed over me and I became wet between my legs.

“They’re absolutely perfect,” he murmured as he reached to touch my breasts. His fingers touched my nipples and I felt them instantly harden. He pinched them and I felt the sweetest throb start deep inside of me, echoing through me.

“Lay back,” he said and I obeyed. He lay over me and leaned down to kiss my breasts, his long hair falling over my chest. It was like being caressed with silk. When he started sucking my hard nipples, the throb grew stronger between my legs and the wetness I noticed before started to escape me. I squeezed my legs together and there was a pulse that radiated heat between my legs. I knew that I wanted that hardness of his cock I’d felt earlier on my thigh buried deep inside of me.

The man stopped and sat up over me and undid my skirts. He crawled back to pull them off me, then my underclothes so I was now totally naked. He stood and looked at me as he untied his pants.

“You are more beautiful than I could have ever imagined, Annalise,” he told me. His pants undone, he turned and sat on the edge of my bed and removed his boots, then stood to remove the skin tight leather.

When he straightened and turned around to face me, my eyes grew round in shock at how large his maleness was. I knew I wanted him inside of me, but I wasn’t sure all of him would fit inside of my body. To say the man’s cock was huge is like saying the ocean is a little wet.

My facial expression must have betrayed my feelings because he looked down at his erection, then back at me.

“What’s wrong, Annalise?” he asked with a confused tone in his voice.

I wasn’t exactly sure what to say to him. It seemed quite awkward to me. “You are very ... large. I didn’t realize that you...,” I stammered, knowing I appeared foolish.

He climbed back on the bed, straddling me again, moving forward so I was once again on my back, his hardness pressing against me.

“Let me assure you, Annalise, there is no reason for you to be scared of me. I won’t hurt you. This is all about you and me and feeling pleasure. This is about both of us forgetting all our responsibilities for a short time,” he explained.

He leaned down and kissed me and I closed my eyes. My mouth slowly opened to his, a blossoming flower seeking the warm morning sun. Our tongues danced together and he lay over me, holding himself up on his forearms. He used his knee to part my legs and I opened them to him.

He started kissing my neck and it tickled. I couldn’t help but let a laugh escape me. His breath was hot against my neck as he laughed back at me and once again his mouth and hands found my breasts. I opened my eyes and watched him lick around the pink nipple of one breast. When his tongue started teasing the nipple with quick flicks, he opened his eyes to look right at me. My breath caught. I was surprised my body could get any more aroused than it was.

It was the most erotic thing, him looking into my eyes as he licked and sucked my hardened nipples. The brightness of his eyes had darkened. They were smoldering.

He stopped and smiled at me, melting my heart. He shifted back more and put kisses on my stomach and worked his way down to the curly hair between my legs. Then he slowly crawled back over me like a panther ready to spring on its prey.

My breathing sounded loud to me, maybe because I was so excited. He held himself over me and his hair tickled my face.

“I have never wanted to be inside a woman as badly as I want to be inside you, Annalise,” he told me before he kissed me again.

My body screamed for him to enter me, and at some point the ache for him had changed to pain. “I want you inside me so badly it hurts,” I confessed to him, then licked my dry lips. I raised my head to touch his lips to mine as he used his hand to guide his hard cock to my swollen, dripping wet sex. When he nudged against my opening, I shuddered in anticipation.

As he started to slide his erection into me, I wrapped my ankles around his waist and pulled him towards me.

He turned his head to bury his face into my hair and side of my neck. I was staring at the ceiling when he drew back and slid himself into me, all the way. There was a sharp pain of my body adjusting to a man inside me for the first time. My breath caught at the pain, of the tearing that happens the first time a woman makes love to a man.

All of a sudden, he jerked back to look at me, a total look of shock on his face and his eyes looked troubled and dark.

“You’re a virgin,” he muttered to me in amazement. “I had no idea. Why didn’t you tell me? I just assumed...” He paused as if overwhelmed with the knowledge.

“You assumed that because I live above a tavern that I’ve been around, or that I’m a whore? You wouldn’t have done any of this with me if you knew I was a virgin,” I confided to him.

“I’m sorry,” he said to me with concern in his eyes. He started to pull away from me, and I knew he was going to pull himself out of me. I didn’t want him to.

“Wait. I don’t want you to be sorry. I’m not. What I do want, though, is for you to finish what we started,” I stated as I touched the ends of his dark hair. “I wanted this, to just really be wanted, to feel loved even if it’s just for one night,” I confessed to this beautiful stranger sharing my bed.

“If I’d have known, I’d have been gentler, gone slower,” he explained as his index finger ran down my cheek to my neck, sending chills through me. “Tomorrow you will be sore. You may even hurt.”

“I hurt everyday,” I replied. “One hurt will just blend into the other and I’ll never know the difference.”

He gave me a strange look before he leaned down and kissed my neck and ran his tongue up my skin to the inside of my ear. My hips slowly rose up to his and I heard a moan low in his throat.

“Tell me if I hurt you again,” he whispered into my ear, giving me gooseflesh up and down my arms. I was relieved he wasn’t going to leave me.

“It doesn’t hurt anymore. It feels good, no, wonderful, amazing when you move

inside me. I want more of you, as far inside me as you can go. Does any of what I'm saying make sense to you?" I asked not sure if what he felt was the same as I.

He smiled at me with a sparkle in his eyes and said, "It makes perfect sense. I want you to take in all of me. I want to bury myself in your tight wetness as far as I can. I am going to make you feel pleasure like you could only dream of, Annalise."

He kissed my lips, as if sealing his promise of pleasure, and raised himself on his forearms over me again. He started moving in and out of me, slowly at first, then gradually increasing the speed of his thrusts.

"Close your eyes and feel my body inside of you," he murmured to me. I closed my eyes like he said and was overcome by how he made me feel. I discovered that by moving my hips with his, the sensations intensified. I soon found myself gasping for air, and I knew I was reaching my climax.

I might not have had sex before, but I certainly knew what happened when a man and woman made love. I work in a tavern for God's sake. I've heard many stories and had gotten quite the education overhearing some of the town whores talking their trade.

His penetration into me became deeper, harder, and faster and my first orgasm hit me like an explosion of a powder keg. I stopped breathing and just let it surge over my body, enjoying every exquisite spasm as my body trembled under him.

I looked up at the man and he looked back at me as he swore an oath and pulled out of me, spurting his warm seed onto my stomach. He was still panting as he climbed off me and went to the wash basin. He took the cloth and dipped it into the water before he came back to me and gently cleaned my stomach. Afterwards, he went to put the cloth back at the basin. It was a tender moment and made my heart ache.

He came back and climbed onto my bed and lay next to me, wrapping his muscular arms around me without speaking a word. I don't think I'd ever felt so content, so peaceful in my whole life. Even though I still didn't know his name and it made no sense, I actually felt loved by him. I knew it was temporary so I enjoyed it while it was there, reveling in it. The last thing I remember about that night was the man stroking my face with his strong fingers, whispering my name as he planted angel soft kisses in my hair and on my face.

When I woke up the next day he was gone, his side of the bed no longer warm. When I rolled over in bed, I noticed there was a piece of parchment next to me on the rumpled sheets. I took it in my trembling hand and held it up to read, trying to focus on the writing. It was from him, written in an unfamiliar masculine hand on my own paper.

The letter read:

*Dearest Annalise,*

*Thank you for your sweet gift last night. I hope you find the love you deserve. I know I will never forget the love you gave.*

*Your friend*

I remember tears welling in my eyes as I read the note he had left me. He didn't even sign his name. I had told him I didn't want to know who he was, and he had listened to me, honoring my wishes by not telling me. I got out of bed and went to the basin to wash, sorry to have to wash away his scent that covered me.

Since that night two weeks ago, I've lived it over and over in my mind. I can hear

his voice in my ear as if he is right beside me. I can feel his hair against my cheek, his body inside mine, completing me. I can also recall that amazing sense of complete security I'd experienced with him. Sometimes I really need those memories since every day is such a struggle for me, my future unknown.

Now it's almost night and from what I've overheard from the hallway, we've reached the ship we were meeting. I believe they'll be taking me there shortly.

Annalise

May 13, 1870 (technically the 13<sup>th</sup> since it's after midnight)

I am in a nightmare I can't wake from. It started last night when they came and collected me to take me to the other ship. When we got on deck it was dark out and I inhaled deeply since this was the first time I'd been outside in fresh air for days. The men helped me into the dingy and we were lowered into the water. They rowed us towards the other ship, which was much larger than the one we'd just left. As we got closer, I was able to make out the name painted on the side. Devil's Eyetooth. My stomach tightened and I thought I might vomit.

Everyone knows the Devil's Tooth is the most sought-after ship in all the seas. It belongs to Drake Conrad who is also known as the Pirate King. There is a price on his head larger than all the other pirates sailing put together. He is the most wanted man in the world.

My mind reeled as I asked myself why was I being brought to this ship. What would the Pirate King want with me? Clearly, there was some terrible mistake and I'd be sent home, I thought. I thought that perhaps I'd be able to get some coins out of this for all my inconvenience.

When we reached the ship, a rope ladder was thrown down and we all took turns climbing up. It was somewhat difficult to climb up the ladder, but I made it to the top without any assistance. On the deck, there was a little talking among the men, but not a clue given to why I was there.

A younger man with blonde hair came forward and introduced himself as Henry, First Mate on the Devil's Tooth. He called forward an older woman he named Linda and instructed her to take me below. I was obviously going to have to wait until later to be told why I was there.

I followed her and she explained to me she was taking me to a cabin to go to sleep. I was really relieved, exhausted from waiting all day to be moved to this ship. She brought me to this small cabin that just has a bed and a desk and a chair. I'm so tired. I don't think I can write another word.

Until morning.

Annalise

May 14, 1870

It is so amazing that so much can change in just one day. I think the only way I can keep it all straight in my head is to start at the beginning, how the events unfolded.

I spent a good part of the day just sitting, waiting for someone to come get me, tell me what I was there for. Lunch was brought to me by one of the tight-lipped seamen who would tell me nothing. Finally, when I could see the sun setting over the horizon, Linda came back to get me.

She told me she had a bath waiting for me. I was so thankful I wanted to hug her. I followed her out of the tiny cabin as she explained she also had a change of clothes waiting for me. When she told me that, I deduced that this whole abduction had been planned well in advance.

As we walked below deck, I tried to get some answers out of Linda, which proved not to be too easy.

“How did you know what clothing would fit me?” I asked her, curious.

“The Captain knew what would fit you, dear,” she answered matter-of-factly as she opened the door to a large cabin that was paneled in dark wood. It was magnificent with luxurious furniture, ruby red velvet curtained windows and a large, glorious tub filled with steaming water that sat in the middle of the floor.

“This is beautiful,” I said as I took it all in, realizing I must be in the captain’s cabin. I noticed a large bed with a pile of overstuffed pillows covered in red velvet with furs thrown over the top of it. There was the most gorgeous dress I’d ever seen lying there on the bed, and I walked over to look at it. Linda explained the dress was for me, and I was in shock.

The dress was the perfect shade of blue to compliment my eyes. I could see the stitching was flawless. I couldn’t even imagine wearing something so beautiful. I noticed there were new shoes also and, by looking at them, I guessed they’d fit me, too. My mind raced at why this was being done, why the Pirate King would kidnap me and then dress me as if I were royalty or someone special. There must be some mistake and he’d be terribly upset when he saw they’d taken the wrong woman.

“I’ll be back in a while, hon. I’m sure you want to soak,” Linda said as she left the room.

When the door was closed, I immediately stripped off the clothes I had on, glad to be rid of them. I wished I could toss them overboard.

I stepped into the tub and melted into the heated water, never having experienced a bath so utterly wonderful. The soap left out for me was the best I’d ever used. I knew it was expensive and loved its lavender scent. At least I would smell good when they realized their mistake and sent me home, I thought. I hoped they would let me keep the new dress. I didn’t want to think of putting my dirty one back on again.

I slid down into the water and washed my hair, scrubbing my scalp to get rid of all the grime I felt clinging to me.



When I was finished in the tub, I used the softest towel I'd ever felt to dry the water from my body and hair. I found a silver brush and slowly brushed my hair, working out a few days' worth of knots and tangles.

I walked to the bed and started to get dressed. The underclothes were exquisite and there were stockings that caressed my skin as I rolled them up my legs.

I stepped into the dress and pulled it up, inserting my arms through the holes. While I put it on I thought I would never be able to afford a dress like this in my life. When I looked at myself in the reflection of the windows, I was amazed. I had cleaned up rather well. Just then, there was a knock on the door and I recognized Linda's voice. I told her to come in.

Linda couldn't stop complimenting me on the dress and how stunning I looked as she closed all the buttons that ran down the back. She had brought some pins with her and asked if I wanted to put my hair up, and I did.

There was a knock on the cabin door and some men carrying trays of food entered. Linda took a white tablecloth from one of the men and covered the table.

"Captain Conrad left orders. If he wasn't back here in time for dinner, you were to start without him. He'll be here shortly, I'm sure. Good night, hon," Linda explained as she got ready to leave.

I wasn't sure if the prospect of meeting the Captain all by myself bothered me or not. Everything was happening in a whirl.

One of the men held out a chair for me and I sat down, my back now to the door of the cabin. Linda and the men filed out, closing the door and leaving me alone. I looked down at the plates of food and realized I was starving. I took a bite of the bread and decided to start with the soup. I prayed I wouldn't drop anything on the dress and ruin it.

I picked up my spoon and started eating. I had only taken a few mouthfuls when the cabin door quickly opened without warning. Before I had the chance to turn around, I heard the voice I thought I'd never hear again in my life. Yet deep in my heart I had hoped I would.

"Annalise, I'm so sorry I'm late. Business ashore took longer than I thought it would," the voice said in a hurry.

My spoon stopped midair. The soup still in my mouth went down the wrong way and I started to choke. I stood up so fast the chair I'd been sitting on fell backwards on the floor. As I spun around gasping for air, the man from the tavern that night rushed to me and started slapping me on the back.

I finally got my breath and grabbed him by the arms, looking at him. He was dressed in light tan pants with black boots to his knees. He wore a brown shirt that was buttoned to his neck and tucked into his pants. His hair was loose, falling free about his shoulders, just as beautiful as I'd remembered.

"What are you doing here? Do you know we are on the Devil's Tooth?" I asked him in a rush. I was ecstatic to see someone I knew, even if I didn't know his name.

"Still the same, I see--full of questions," he quipped as he looked me up and down in the dress. "I assume it was the shock of seeing me and not the cuisine that made you choke," he said with a twinkle in his eye. "By the way, that dress is absolutely incredible

on you.”

“I don’t understand why you’re concerned about how I’m dressed. We need to get off this ship. I was kidnapped, taken in the middle of the night. I need to get back to Land’s Beach, to the tavern.” I had started out whispering, but my voice grew louder as my anxiety grew.

“Annalise, we’re not going anywhere. I brought you here, and I apologize for all the dramatics. That I didn’t anticipate, I’ll admit,” he explained as he picked up the chair I’d knocked over.

I walked closer to him still confused. “But how did you bring me here? I saw the side of the ship. This is the Devil’s Eyetooth and Linda said the Captain had sent...” I stopped realizing what I was about to say. “For me. You—you are Drake Conrad?” I asked full of disbelief. Surely I had to be mistaken.

The bread and soup I’d managed to eat before he’d arrived churned in my stomach, threatening to come back up as he nodded in answer to my question.

“You’re Drake Conrad?” I asked again, dumbfounded. I couldn’t help myself. He could be him, I reasoned to myself. No one knew what Drake Conrad looked like exactly. The man had become a legend in his own time, the infamous Pirate King. I knew he was supposed to be a tremendous swordsman and a sure shot with a pistol. I remembered the man’s quick reflexes that night at the tavern. I’d heard he’d killed hundreds of men and had quite the reputation with women as an extraordinary lover. He could most certainly be Drake Conrad, I thought with a blush.

I tried to think of everything his being Drake Conrad meant. I’d made love to the Pirate King and he had me kidnapped.

Drake, as I now knew who he was, turned and sat at the table, pouring a glass of wine.

“Would you like some?” he asked me, holding up a full glass.

“No thanks. I don’t drink,” I answered and he gave me a raise of his eyebrow in response. “That night was a really bad night for me,” I said.

“Really? I thought it was perhaps the most enjoyable I’ve ever had,” he responded before taking a drink, making me blush at what he was referring to. He picked up his soup spoon and started to eat. “Please sit down and join me,” he said gesturing to the chair across from him.

“Why? Why did you do all this?” I asked him still standing, holding my ground.

He put down his soup spoon, realizing he wasn’t going to be able to eat until he explained himself. “I wanted to talk to you,” he answered, leaning back in his chair.

“Well, you could have come to Land’s Beach again. Why all the dramatics?” I asked.

He sighed heavily before he started. “I thought once we started the conversation I needed to have with you, you’d leave but if I brought you here...”

“I’d have nowhere to run?” I said, finishing the rest of his sentence for him. “So, what is it then? Until a few weeks ago, we’d never even met.” I blushed again thinking about that night, and how I’d do anything to have another with him, damn the consequences. Just from the short time he’d come into the cabin, I was aroused by him, wanting his naked skin against mine.

“You’re right. We’ve never met before. But I have met your father,” he told me, speaking slowly and looking somewhat cautious about my reaction.

My mind raced and I tried to figure out how much my father could have owed the Pirate King. I was doomed to be in debt forever, and this was the final nail in my coffin. Rest in peace, Annalise, I remember thinking to myself.

“So, let me guess. My father owed you money and you came to collect, and ended up with a little bonus, as well,” I said angrily. That’s what I deserved for throwing myself at him, not knowing who he was. And I damned my father again, too, just because all my troubles always came back to him.

“Hopefully, our night together was payment in full,” I spat at him and walked towards the door, stopping when I realized I had nowhere to go. He was absolutely correct, guessing that I’d try to leave this conversation. We’d only met one night and he knew how I’d respond. Damn.

“Actually, there’s no money owed to me. That’s not why I went to the tavern. I just wanted to see what it looked like since I own it,” he stated matter-of-factly.

“What do you mean you own it? My father never mentioned selling it,” I told him. In all honesty, though, I had a feeling Drake was telling me the truth. Now my father was reaching out from beyond the grave to bring me even more trouble. As if what he had done while alive wasn’t enough somehow.

Drake walked to his desk, picked up a sheet of parchment, and brought it to me. He held it out for me to take. I reached for it with a trembling hand and sat at the table to read it to myself. I skimmed the document and saw my father’s unique signature on the bottom. He had lost the tavern in a game of cards months ago and had never told me.

I was sure he figured Drake wouldn’t come to collect his winnings since he was out to sea all the time. But Drake had come to collect and not only was the tavern lost, but the place I’d known as home my whole life. Now I was not only penniless, but homeless, as well. Tears escaped my eyes as I stood to hand Drake the parchment with a shaking hand.

“Well, I suppose you’ll want me out of the tavern as soon as possible,” I started, wiping my tears. “I’d really appreciate it if you let Old Jones and Tom and Pat stay on. There isn’t anywhere else that would hire them, I’m afraid,” I explained to Drake. I would hate for them to lose their livelihood because of this mess.

I turned around and grasped the back of the chair in front of me until my knuckles were white. I’ve never considered myself to be weak, but I was scared at that moment that I might pass out.

Drake came behind me and placed his hands gently on my shoulders. Under any other circumstances, I would have melted back against him. I had dreamt of his touch since that night, but now things were different.

“No, Annalise,” he said as he leaned down to speak into my ear. His long hair brushed against my cheek and I couldn’t stop trembling. My senses were reeling. “You don’t understand. I didn’t go there that night to tell you to leave. I came there with a crazy idea, a business proposition for your father, but I didn’t know he had died. Then things kind of went in a different direction than I had intended...” He drifted off.

As if I needed him to remind me what happened that night. I had thought about it

every day since then, imagined his hands, his mouth, and his body touching mine. I couldn't stop trembling at his touch and had to move away from him.

"Annalise, listen to me, please," he begged as he turned me around to face him.

Looking at him was difficult, but I did. "What proposition did you have for my father?" I asked him.

"I wanted to know if he'd let me work at the Wicked Wench," he said, looking into my eyes.

"What?" I asked in disbelief. "You own it. Why would you need to talk to my father about it? You could do whatever you want." The Pirate King just told me he wanted to work in an ordinary tavern. To say I was confused was an understatement.

"You see, I'm done with being a pirate. No more fighting or killing or running from every government out there searching for me. I'm done with the sailing with no real home," he said as he started pacing in front of me. "I crave a real home on solid land. I had no intention to take your family's business, just work there and be normal and blend in and live a normal life. I'd still like to be able to do it, even now; go back to Land's Beach to live and work at the Wench," he finished, halting in front of me.

I stood looking at him, amazed that he wanted to work at the tavern. It seemed incredible to me that he wanted such an ordinary life when Drake was anything but ordinary. I was speechless for the first time in my life.

"But now my plans have changed and I'm not sure what is going to happen. My fate is now in someone else's hands," he said, his voice growing soft.

"Whose?" I asked innocently, wondering who could possibly have control over this man.

"Yours," he answered as he came to stand closer to me. He took my hands in his and I suddenly felt warm all over.

"Mine?" I asked in a whisper, not understanding him. I loved his hands covering mine.

"Annalise, when we met, I thought you were the most amazing woman. You fight to survive every day, and you really care about other people and put them before yourself. You are the most loving person I've ever met. And you're so beautiful. When you look at me, I just want to take you in my arms and not let you go. That night when we made love, it was incredible and leaving you was the hardest thing for me to do. I've been with many women, more than I'd like to admit, but I never felt so connected to anyone before, and I think you felt it, too. I haven't been able to stop thinking about you, about us," he finished, looking into my eyes, which were now full of tears.

"I've thought about you every day, too. I wished I knew your name and I told myself I was an idiot for not letting you tell me," I confessed to him. He pulled me into his arms, strong just as I remembered. He hugged me close to him, and I swayed in disbelief that this was real.

Drake let me go and took a step back, then got down on his knees in front of me. My heart skipped a beat, wondering what he was doing. He bent his head and his hair fell forward, covering his face.

"Drake?" I questioned as he looked up and took my hands in his again.

"Annalise," he said "I am the man they call the Pirate King, and I want you, my

love, to be my Queen. I want to spend the rest of my life with you, if you'd have me."

I didn't need much time to give him an answer. "Yes," I cried and pulled him up towards me, back onto his feet. I was crying and he was smiling as if he were the happiest man alive.

We kissed each other and Drake told me between kisses he'd never leave me again, and I believed him.

He lifted me into his arms and I held onto him as he walked me over to his bed. He put me down on my feet and had me turn around to unbutton my dress. As my back was to him, he spoke into my ear, "I had hoped I'd be unbuttoning this dress tonight. When I saw it, I knew it would be beautiful on you."

"I love it. Thank you," I said as the dress slid off me. I removed my underclothes and sat on the bed to remove the stockings.

"May I?" Drake asked and I lifted my leg for him. As he rolled down the first stocking, my stomach clenched. I wanted nothing more than to make love with Drake. By the time he removed the second stocking, I was fully aroused and dripping with wetness for him. I couldn't help myself.

I sat and watched him undress, amazed I wasn't going to have to dream of being with him and that we were really going to be together.

When he was naked, he turned to me and knelt in front of me on the floor. He was just as I remembered him, lean and sculpted. His hard erection strained against his stomach and I could see wetness glistening from the tip.

He had me move forward on the bed, so I was sitting just on the edge. He parted my knees with his hands, then sat back on his heels. He looked at me with such a passion it overwhelmed me.

"I'm going to touch you, Annalise, and feel how wet you are for me. You are wet, right?" he asked me, already knowing I was.

I nodded that I was, and I could feel the wetness oozing out of me, dampening the insides of my thighs. He reached towards me and touched my open sex with his fingers. I held my breath as he slid one single finger inside me. When he moved it inside of me, I closed my eyes and inhaled slowly. I realized there was so much more to making love than just the actual act, and looked forward to Drake teaching me everything he knew. I would be the most eager student. I opened my eyes again to find him staring at me.

"How do you like that?" he asked me.

I let out a moan before I told him that what he was doing was fantastic. He responded by sliding in a second finger, and I couldn't control the shudder that washed over me.

He started moving his fingers in and out of me and my hips mirrored his movements. Drake suddenly stopped and removed his fingers from me. I had no idea what he would do next. He moved closer and put his head between my legs, and started to kiss my swollen, aching sex. I felt his tongue enter me and I knew I couldn't take much more.

He must have sensed what I was feeling because he stopped and stood up.

"No, not yet, Annalise. Move to the middle of the bed," he said. I did as he said and he crawled up next to me. "Now lay down for me darling," he instructed.

I lay on my back as Drake moved to lay over me. I immediately opened my legs wider for him, yearning to feel him inside of me.

Drake took my hand in his and guided it to his erection, wrapping my fingers around him. I knew he enjoyed my touch because I felt his body tremble as my fingers closed around him.

“You do it. Put my cock inside you,” he directed with a fire in his eyes.

I held him, amazed how he could be so hard and soft at the same time. It was the first time I’d ever touched a man, held his throbbing sex in my hand. I stroked him once from his balls, down his silky smooth shaft, to the tip that left my hand damp. I guided him into me and Drake let out a sigh as he slid into me.

He started pumping into me, and I placed my hands on his back, feeling his muscles under my palms.

As his pumping got faster, I felt myself reach my release. I said his name as my body tightened its grip around him, during the highest throes of my passion. As my orgasm started to fade away from me, I still clung to him. He moaned as his own release washed over him, and this time he kept his body connected to mine, not pulling out of me like the last time we’d made love.

He collapsed on top of me and I didn’t mind his weight on me. Drake wrapped his arms around me, then rolled us so that I lay on top of him. I rested my chin on his chest as he smoothed down my hair and caressed my back. The secure sensation I had felt that first night returned to me, only this time it was different. That night when we met, I knew it was only temporary and that he was going to leave me.

Now, I knew the sensation was permanent because he had no plans on ever leaving. As he caressed my back, I reeled with the knowledge that he had been thinking of me as I had been thinking of him.

A small smile came to my lips as I thought how Old Jones and Tom and Pat would be shocked to find out I was with the Pirate King.

“What is it, Annalise?” Drake asked when he looked at me and noticed my smile.

“I was just thinking what the boys at the Wench would think of me with the Pirate King. You are very infamous you know,” I teased him.

“Unfortunately, I do and they can never know who I am, of course. As a matter of fact, later on today when we leave this ship, I won’t be the king anymore and the Devil’s Eyetooth will belong to Henry. I am giving him my ship and my identity. When we leave here, I’m just going to be an ordinary man,” he explained.

I shook my head at him. “No, you’re wrong because there is nothing ordinary about you. You’ll never be ordinary no matter how hard you try.”

I moved my head to kiss him on the chest as he explained how no one would ever realize that Drake Conrad was in fact two different men. When Drake had first offered his ship to Henry, he was more than happy to take over Drake’s identity. He was young and full of the desire for adventure. Since no one really knew what the legendary Pirate King looked like, Henry taking his place would be easy and the tight-lipped crew would never tell what they knew. No one would be the wiser.

“So if Henry is Drake Conrad, then who am I taking back with me to Land’s Beach?” I asked. Once again it seemed I didn’t know the name of the man I loved. It was

starting to become a habit for me.

“Well, I’ve been thinking about that. My middle name is Joseph, so I think I’ll go by that. And before my mother married my father, her last name was Mitchel. So I think I am Joseph Mitchel,” he said, trying out his new name.

“I think Joseph suits you,” I said as I leaned up to kiss him.

“And Annalise Mitchel, does that suit you?” he asked me with a gleam in his eye.

“I think Joseph and Annalise Mitchel sounds wonderful,” I replied with a soaring heart.

“Good then,” he said. “By the way, Annalise, so you know since you’ve been kidnapped, I’ve had all the debts taken care of for the Wench. I also gave something extra to your men. I thought that even if you refused me, you didn’t deserve to have all that debt hanging over you.”

“Thank you, Dra- Joseph,” I said, feeling the weight of the world leave my weary shoulders. “You have made me the happiest woman alive,” I confessed to him before we started making love again.

So now we are on another ship, smaller than the Devil’s Eyetooth, headed back to Land’s Beach. We were married by the captain who is a friend of Joseph’s so we’ll return to the Wench as Joseph and Annalise Mitchel. I know the boys will be surprised, to say the least, but I know they’ll love Joseph.

I can hear him now say my name, beckoning me back to him in our bed. We are newly weds, after all, and we are going to be on this ship for a few days before we return to Land’s Beach. I answer back to him that I’ll be there in a moment. I’m just finishing my last few sentences. These past few days have turned my life upside down, but I’ve never been so happy in my life. And you know something? I love pirates.

Annalise

The End