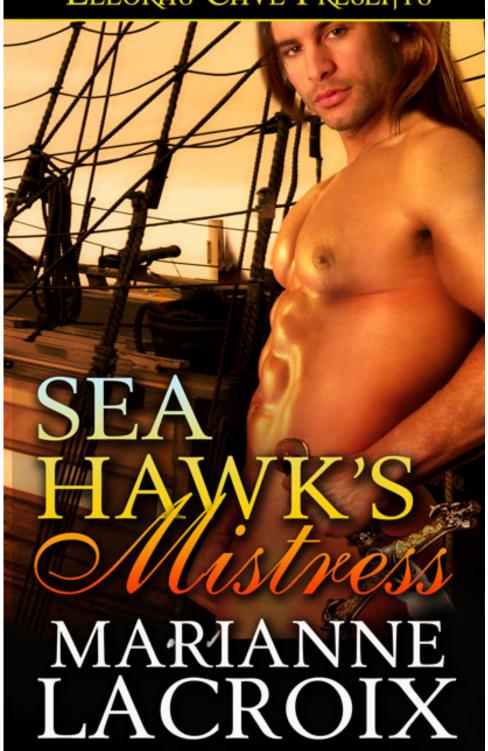
Ellora's Cave Presents



An Ellora's Cave Romantica Publication



Sea Hawk's Mistress

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SEA HAWK'S MISTRESS

Marianne LaCroix

In loving memory of Errol Flynn, the greatest buccaneer to grace the silver screen.

Author's Note

All my life I have been a huge fan of pirates in movies and literature. My all-time favorite was Errol Flynn, who romanced me at the tender age of five when I first watched *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Granted, the character of Robin Hood was not labeled "pirate", but his penchant for robbing from the rich was a piratical act. And I loved it. Later, as I watched *Captain Blood* and *The Sea Hawk*, I was completely hooked on the swashbuckling pirate hero—and Errol Flynn.

In this book, I dropped several hints throughout for pirate lovers. For example, the island of Virgen Magra is fictional, used originally in Raphael Sabatini's book, *Captain Blood*. And of course, Captain Flint's ship, the *Sea Hawk*, is in honor of the movie, as well as the man who crossed swords in my dreams.

Chapter One

"Okay folks, this is our moment of truth, the moment we've all worked for," Dr. Harvey Ford started as the search team geared up into their scuba suits. "If we're right, this will be the biggest discovery since the *Titanic*."

Nothing like the dramatic, Shelley thought while checking her oxygen tank's pressure gauge.

The *Santa Rosa* was lost at sea in 1622. It was part of a fleet of Spanish galleons that had left Havana heavy with cargo—gold, silver, indigo, copper and other treasures—and was thought to be destroyed by a violent hurricane near the Florida Keys shortly after setting sail.

Recently, thanks to radar and satellite imaging, the location of the sunken ship was discovered. Or at least, that's what they were out here to verify.

Shelley wasn't exactly part of the research team but her father, Dr. William Hanover, was head of the Maritime Society, and Shelley had been a regular on these dives ever since her junior year in high school, eight years ago. Now a graduate student at Florida State University, she'd come home for the summer and was taking advantage of the research dives. Of course, her specialization in oceanography helped secure her a slot on the dive for the entire summer. She planned on using the experience for a thesis.

Most of her friends were off visiting Hawaii or some other beach resort getaway this summer. Shelley opted to work. The thought of finding sunken treasure was too exciting to pass up.

Soon the boat came to a stop and they prepared for the dive.

"This is about where we believe the ship landed below. There is a dense reef system that could have been spawned by the sunken galleon. Be careful down there," Dr. Ford said just before diving in.

The water was a jewel-tone aquamarine—clear and clean. On the surface, it was perfection as far as the eye could see. The day was sunny and hot with a few clouds meandering in the sky above. With one last look at the boat and her watch, Shelley adjusted her scuba mask and submerged.

The current was gentle and fairly easy to swim through as she made her way deeper beneath the surface. The depths weren't too great in this area, and the reef rose from the bottom in a grand structure of coral, boulders and – the galleon.

There it was, rotted and grown over with oceanic vegetation. There was no mistaking the large ship's hull. It was on its side, supported by the rocks it landed on centuries before.

The most amazing sight was the beautiful ecosystem that spawned about the sunken ship. Yellowtail snappers, spiny lobsters, pink shrimp and King mackerel were using this underwater paradise as their home. Elkhorn coral, sea sponges, sea fans and brain coral flourished on and around the ship, practically hiding the vessel, which explained the difficulty in finding the treasure galleon.

As she neared, one of the other divers examined the coral and sea-grass-covered hull. A large hole could be seen below the ship's waterline—a circular hole? Could the ship have been sunken by a cannonball rather than a hurricane? The ships had been scattered across the Florida Keys, no central command keiping the ships together and organized when the fleet sailed from Havana. It was possible pirates picked off this straggler as easy prey.

Several of the team members entered the cargo hold and Shelley followed, anxious to see if they had indeed found the riches they all hoped for.

But the hold was empty.

As they examined the vast hull from within, it was now almost certain the ship had been victim to a sea attack, most likely pirates.

Shelley was disappointed but there was so much more this ship had to tell. The marine life that used the ship as its home was enough to keep any marine biologist in

research heaven for years. As she began to formulate her request to be part of the research team, her flashlight beam caught the glimmer of metal on the floor near an empty chest, one of many that littered the hold.

Shelley swam over to the curious piece partially hidden by rotten wood and vegetation. Waving her hand over the object, clearing some of the sediment, it was apparent this was a treasure left behind—a silver bangle, possibly Aztec. She reached down and grasped it.

A sudden sensation of nausea hit her as she examined the bracelet. Yes, the silver surface was etched with Aztec designs, such as she had seen before in other pieces carried by the galleons back to Spain.

She marveled over the pristine surface of the bangle, unmarred by its time sitting at the bottom of the ocean. She turned it over and a latch on the side popped with the slightest touch, opening for the first time in centuries.

And as it opened, the world about her twisted and turned. She began to panic as the water about her seemed to pull at her body. The hull of the ship disappeared—all she saw was blackness as she felt incredible pressure wrapping around her.

Air—she needed air. In the tremendous force of the ocean, a type of whirlpool pulled her downward and she couldn't breathe. Her air hose couldn't withstand the pressure and Shelley gasped for breath. She managed to dislodge her tanks, hoping their added weight would ease the hold upon her body.

The need for oxygen won out and Shelley fell into a sea of darkness.

* * * * *

Shelley awoke, her vision blurred and her head still spinning. She felt like she'd been on an all-night beer binge and was now paying the price with one hell of a hangover.

Blinking, she saw faint light from a nearby window. She tried to move to see better, but couldn't.

Marianne LaCroix

Dear God, I'm tied down!

Ropes secured her wrists to the small headboard and her feet were tied to the footboard. How the hell did she end up here...tied down...and *naked*?

She was *completely naked*. A thin sheet covered her—barely—and she was very aware of the linen brushing against her sensitive skin.

Glancing about the small, dim room, she noted it was sparsely furnished with a bed, a small table and two wood chairs, all stained in the same dark hue. In the slight breeze she could smell the ocean, the salty air mixing with the scent of well-oiled wood. If she didn't know better, this seemed to be a cabin in some ancient ship.

I must be dreaming. I've been reading too many books about sunken galleons and pirates bent on plundering.

When the room rocked with a gentle motion, she realized this *was* more than a dream. She was indeed on a ship.

In bed.

Tied down.

And naked.

What the f -

The only door in the room opened and in walked a very tall figure, powerful and muscular, judging from his shadowy silhouette.

"I see you're awake," he said in a clipped British accent.

He stepped into the small cabin and the walls seemed to close in about her with his mere presence. Shutting the door behind him, this hulk of a man stood at the foot of the bed, staring down at her.

"Where am I and why am I tied down to a bed?" Her voice shook as she watched him move to the table.

Without a word he reached for a lantern—an oil lamp?—and struck a match. He lit the lamp and the gloom of the room lifted a little.

What the hell happened? Last she remembered she was on the dive with the Maritime research team. How did she get to be in this situation?

And who was this hunk of a man who gazed at her with eyes of the darkest chocolate? His dark hair was pulled back into a hasty queue and his skin glowed with a healthy tan—the mark of a man who lived and worked in the sun.

He stood silent, staring. Again.

He obviously was not going to answer her questions.

"Excuse me, but could you please say something?"

Instead he reached over and snatched off the sheet, revealing her naked body to his dark, alluring eyes.

"Hey! Put that back!" she ordered, wriggling in her restraints.

"Yes, keep moving like that, luv. You have fine breasts that bounce and sway with you."

She instantly stilled, and he laughed.

The vibration of his laughter tickled her skin, like a shiver running across the surface and gathering at the apex of her thighs.

He turned and pulled over one of the chairs, then sat down next to the bed. He sat in silence as he examined her with his eyes. She felt his gaze roam slowly over her exposed body. Every inch was bare and she lay still, wishing he'd cover her again. The sheet wasn't much but at least it was a barrier to those eyes.

"What do you call that...thing you wore when we found you?"

She assumed he meant her diving suit. "It's a rubber skin suit."

He cocked his head. "Skin suit?"

"Yes."

His expression was hard and she trembled beneath his gaze. Her body was alive with desire, a tangible heat that seemed to pump throughout every cell. Why did she want him to touch her skin so much? The warmth from those steely eyes made her temperature rise — and her cunt ache with a need she couldn't explain.

"How did you get to be on the Santa Rosa?"

Her gaze snapped to his. "What do you mean? I was on a dive."

"Dive?"

"You know...a research dive."

He shook his head in confusion.

"I was part of a team studying the Santa Rosa."

"How come we didn't find you aboard before it sank?"

She paused. Before it sank? "What do you mean?"

"We boarded the *Santa Rosa* and took all the cargo in the hold and searched all the cabins before it sank. You weren't there, yet we found you floating in the wreckage that surfaced."

The small cabin closed in about her even more. It was then she noticed his clothes. He wore tan pants that buttoned in the front, and brown leather thigh-high boots. His white linen shirt was open at the collar and he wore a brown leather vest, unbuttoned and loose. Sexy and alluring—like a swashbuckling movie hero.

What the hell was going on?

"Who are you?" she croaked.

"I am Captain Jason Flint, and you are aboard my ship, the Sea Hawk."

Captain Flint? Dear God, he lived almost four hundred years ago! She remembered reading about him. He was one of the more curious buccaneers that sailed the seas—born into wealth, second son of a British lord, Flint turned to a life of piracy when his father died and his brother inherited the title and the estate. It was believed that bad blood between the brothers drove Flint out of England, and fate made him a pirate. He carved his legend into history by attacking ships bound from Mexico to Spain...

Wait. The *Santa Rosa* had distinct cannon damage. Pirates—Captain Flint—had sunk the *Santa Rosa*! Well, it certainly answered *that* mystery.

But the revelation paled to another very disturbing situation—she was supposedly talking to a dead pirate captain, in his cabin, on his *ship*, while she lay naked, bound and vulnerable. This wasn't happening.

But here she was, and he was sitting close, the scent of the sea and male swirling about him, wrapping her in his sensual appeal.

"Speak, woman." His voice cut into her thoughts.

"I don't understand this at all." How could she be here with Captain Flint? Was it possible—no, it can't be. This had to be a joke. It had to be. Didn't it?

"There's nothing to understand." At her questioning look, he said, "I found you and now you are my captive."

"What do you mean, I'm your captive?" the woman asked, her temper rising as her skin blushed becomingly.

Jason had to admit, this woman was the best find from his latest victory. Sinking the *Santa Rosa* was just another notch in his pirating career but this woman, whoever she was, had a quality about her. Even if she *had* worn strange clothes and spoke to him unlike any other woman of his acquaintance, she obviously had intelligence, as well as good grooming skills.

He attributed her excellent physical condition to the band of ownership she was found wearing. Her former master must have taken special care of this slave. Upon seeing her flawless skin and her shockingly perfect teeth, Jason was mesmerized. His cock had been rock-solid since he'd laid eyes on her. When the beauty opened her eyes, he was spellbound by their dark brown mystery. Who was she and how did she come to be floating in the open ocean?

Surely she will be missed. Her master would want her back. Jason could ransom her, but the thought of giving her over to another man was hard to swallow...

Since when did Captain Flint care if a woman shared her body with several men? It was a way of life on the high seas, and Jason had sampled many willing wenches in his travels. But this woman brought to the surface a forgotten sense of – dare he even think it? – honor.

When his crew had spotted her and dragged her aboard ship bedecked in that odd black skin, Jason felt the need to protect her. He couldn't let his crew have her, to use her body for their sexual release. No, she would only serve one master on this ship—him.

He reached out and placed a hand over the curved rise of one breast. Her little gasp was a jolt of awareness to his straining manhood. He squeezed and she closed her eyes, as though fighting the arousal his touch sparked within her.

"Stop that," she whispered.

"You're mine, luv. I can touch you."

Her body betrayed her as she arched upward, her breast thrust firmly into his palm. Her nipple was hard and pert and when he pinched at its stiffness, she whimpered.

"Please don't," she begged breathlessly.

Jason ignored her pleas, not convinced of her denials when her body reacted so deliciously to his caress. "What's your name?"

She opened her eyes and he was once again struck by their dark beauty. "Shelley."

He could easily see her atop a horse in Hyde Park, several suitors following her in hopes of a favorable glance. She brought to life a world he'd left behind. Years living by the speed of his sloop and the skill of his sword, and now he thought of rides in the park, stealing kisses in the moonlight and holidays filled with loving family. What was it about this woman that rekindled those memories from so long ago, from a life he'd rather forget?

"Please, until me." She struggled against the ropes. He wasn't even sure why he'd tied her down to his bed. Where could she escape to? It was more for her protection. He

desired her fiercely and he wanted to make sure none would sample her sweet flesh. He'd undressed her from that "skin" and took time to touch her soft curves while she lay resting in his bed. The ropes were to make sure she would stay out of trouble until he made sure she understood the rules.

"Stay here in this cabin." At her glare, he added, "My men would not think twice in ravishing you without mercy. You are safe as long as you follow my orders and stay here."

"But I can't stay in here forever."

"You can go topside, but only if I am with you. Do you understand?"

She seemed to consider her predicament and he hoped she'd be sensible. A pirate ship full of horny men was a dangerous place for any woman. However, his men would obey his command. The girl was not to be disturbed or touched or the pain of death would be their punishment. Pirates are ruthless and they will only follow a strong captain. If he claimed Shelley as his property, they would stay away...unless Jason met with the sharp side of a cutlass.

"I'll stay here. I won't try to run," she said in a low voice.

"There's nowhere to run but into the sea." He stood from his chair, pulled a dagger from his boot and sliced through the bonds on her wrists first, then the ones about her ankles.

Once free, she scurried for the sheet he'd pulled from her body and wrapped herself in it, hiding her creamy skin and inviting breasts.

"Know this—you are my slave. Whatever I want, whenever I order it..." His voice trailed off as he reached for her wrist bearing the silver slave bangle, then said, "You will obey my every command."

Chapter Two

"Hold on...a slave? I am *not* a slave." Shelley tried to appear tough in her sheet but it was a difficult thing to do, especially when the man staring at her had such lust in his eyes. That glimmer sent shivers down her spine, ending right in her cunt. His grasp about her forearm was firm yet gentle, and the contact of his bare skin against hers was electric, adding to the wetness gathering between her legs. *Traitorous body*.

"You *are* a slave. My pleasure slave — my *sex* slave."

"And what makes you think I'll go along with this?"

Flint lifted her wrist before her eyes, fingering the bracelet. "You were *someone's* sex slave. This bangle speaks of ownership. Now you belong to me. And rule number one," he started as he grasped the sheet and gave it a tug, pulling it forcefully from her body. "Never cover yourself in my presence."

Her first reaction was to press a hand over her breasts and her crotch, but he grabbed her wrists, pulling her off the bed to stand and crushing her body to his.

Her flesh pressed against his clothed body and she couldn't ignore his hard, masculine frame. The leather brushed along her sensitive skin and she bit her bottom lip to suppress a moan.

"You're a fine-looking woman. Not too skinny and soft in all the right places." He leaned into her a little more, backing her against the wall of the cabin. The smell of leather and man filled her senses. He was driving her wild with his domination over her body—and spirit. His calm strength rendered her speechless but part of her wanted to scream her denials.

She wasn't a slave, she'd *found* the bangle. But how could she get him to believe her when she was having a hard time believing herself?

His face was a mere inch away from hers. She had the overwhelming desire to kiss him, to taste this pirate—this man who was making her blood boil with his closeness.

He leaned into her, his mouth just beside her ear, breathing warm air over the surface and sending chills across her skin. "I won't hurt you if you follow my orders. You *will* fulfill my needs—and you will enjoy every moment."

Shelley melted. As simple as it was, no man had ever promised she'd enjoy sex with him. Generally she was momentarily satisfied after sex, but nothing so earth-shattering as she imagined sex with Captain Flint could be.

He released her and moved to the door. Her body instantly missed his heat, the feel of his hard frame pressed against her. "And if you do decide to get rebellious, I will march you naked on deck for the entire crew to admire. I think they'd love to each take a crack at paddling your ripe ass for disobeying their captain. Do I make myself clear, luv?"

Images of his threat flashed through her mind. Would he really do such a thing? She wasn't in the mood to find out. She'd bide her time and be smart about her next move. She wanted to find out more intimate details about this sexy pirate.

"Well?"

She nodded. "Yes, Captain."

With a crooked smile, he opened the door and left the cabin. She quickly latched the door closed behind him.

She heard him laugh from the other side. "No lock will keep me out, luv."

Sexy as sin, devilish to the core and infuriating as hell. Damn the man. She wanted to run but couldn't, not unless she wanted to test his threats. At this point, she wasn't willing to see how far she could push the captain.

She glanced at the bangle on her arm. She didn't even remember putting it on. It had opened by itself and then she woke up here. Wherever "here" was.

Or "when" may be a better question.

Stepping over to the small porthole, she looked out the opening to see mile upon mile of sea—aquamarine water everywhere. The ship rocked gently, the wood creaking with the current. It certainly looked like waters near the Florida Keys but she couldn't tell for sure.

Shelley touched the smooth surface of the bangle. A sex slave? So this had to be some sort of Aztec slave band—and she was lucky enough to find one that transported her back in time to 1622.

Lucky? Maybe that wasn't exactly the right word she'd use in finding the bangle.

Traveling back in time seemed more like something out of an H.G. Wells novel than a tangible possibility. Shelley had grown up around science, but a technical explanation was hard to determine. She didn't even know where to begin with a hypothesis. An electrical imbalance in the atmosphere? A chemical reaction in the ocean? A magnetic anomaly from the famed Bermuda Triangle?

Science could explain practically everything, but was it that complicated? She could be lying in a hospital somewhere in a coma and just dreaming of a six-foot-three pirate stud demanding sex.

She pinched her thigh and yelped at the pain. *Nope, not dreaming.* This was no dream.

Captain Flint was real.

Her heart thumped faster within her chest and a knot tightened in her stomach. A real sexy-as-sin pirate, her vision of masculine perfection, wanted her to pleasure him. So what's so bad about being a sex slave to such a man?

Nothing. In fact, this could be a fantasy come true.

She touched the bangle again. Perhaps this was exactly why she was thrust back in time—to meet Captain Flint. Granted, it was a remote possibility, but then this entire situation was hard to believe.

Having sex with Captain Flint would probably be the most pleasure she'd ever had. *Oh yeah.* Perhaps if she just made the best of it...she could end up having a scorching affair with the pirate! Just the memory of his body pressed against hers a few moments ago made her pussy clench with need for more. God, how would it feel when they were both naked, his skin burning against hers? She definitely wanted to find out.

However, some of his demands were hard to swallow. Staying in the cabin? She needed to get out into the fresh air at some point. The small cabin would get claustrophobic quickly if she remained here all the time.

First things first, she needed clothes. He surely didn't mean to keep her naked at all times, did he? And just because he made her body vibrate with sexual awareness didn't mean she had to let him have the upper hand in everything. She was a modern woman, and weakness was not an option. Although, she had to admit, when she'd been bound to his bed and he had caressed her breast, all thoughts fled her mind and she had willingly succumbed to his skilled touch.

Eying a sea chest at the foot of the bed, she walked over and tested the lid. Sure enough, it was locked tight. Crouching down, she looked under the bed for something to help her. The entire room was so bare. She didn't see anything that could possibly help her bust the lock. She prayed there was something kicked under the bed, forgotten yet useful. In the darkness she spotted a glimmer of silver—a small, dull table knife. She reached for it and pulled it out. Yes, it was at least something she could stick in the lock to try to jimmy it open.

It took Shelley fifteen minutes of work but she managed to get the lock open. Inside the chest she found the captain's clothes, including a large cream linen shirt and tan pants. She slipped on the garments and secured them with a piece of the rope he'd used earlier. Tied around her waist, the rope prevented the too-big clothes from gapping too much.

Digging deeper into the chest, she found a sword and scabbard, elegantly carved and polished. She gripped the handle and pulled the clean steel blade from its sheath,

marveling at the beauty of the piece. This was obviously an heirloom sword, and it meant something to the captain for him to hide it within his sea chest, buried at the bottom.

"Who are you really, Captain Flint?" she murmured to herself as she took the sword and set it on the small table by the lantern.

She examined the carvings on the blade, trying to decipher the design as some small piece to the puzzle of Captain Jason Flint.

* * * * *

Jason climbed the stairs to the deck. There he placed the dagger back into his boot and then reached for his cutlass and sheath and retied it to his waist. There was no way he was going down to see his female prisoner wearing his cutlass, so he had removed it and set it outside on deck. After picking up his pistol, he secured it to his belt then put on his overcoat and once again, he felt like the ruthless pirate captain.

When he strode out to the helm, his first mate, Thomas, announced, "Captain, we are in for a calm night tonight."

Calm wasn't what Jason felt. Anything but. He wanted to toss away his clothes and fuck his new captive.

Funny, she'd seemed completely surprised at being called a slave. Strange behavior. Perhaps she had hit her head and has forgotten her previous life. That must be the reason. Yet she was unlike any other pleasure slave he'd seen. Many were local women with darkly tanned skin and no knowledge of English. This woman spoke it fluently, even though she had an unusual accent, nothing like he'd ever heard before. A bump on the head might explain the bizarre words she used as well.

"She's a pretty one, Captain," Thomas said as he continued to hold the helm wheel steady.

"Indeed. But I still do not know how she came to be floating in that wreckage."

"We must have missed 'er when we searched the ship," Thomas said.

He was an intelligent lad. His father had taught him the fine points of sailing from the time he was a boy. Thomas had lost his left leg at twenty during service in the British Navy, and had fought a difficult battle to remain at sea. Jason met him in a small jail on Barbados. By then, Thomas had been discharged from the Navy and was wandering aimlessly about the Caribbean on merchant vessels. They busted free together and Jason took the young man on as his first mate, soon discovering Thomas was an excellent navigator.

"That doesn't explain..." What did she call it? A skin suit? When they fished her from the wreckage, at first they all thought the black material *was* her skin, but then it peeled away revealing her flawless flesh beneath. It was then Jason scooped her up and took her to his cabin. His men were not to be toyed with in the matter of females. Even he had been bewitched by her exposed curves and feminine allure.

"Is she awake, Captain?" Thomas asked, breaking into Jason's thoughts.

"Aye, she is." Awake and hot for his touch. It was going to be difficult to concentrate on anything else now that he'd felt her—and saw her body arch into his touch.

Women generally fell at his feet whenever he went to port. It was normal for them to fawn over him. He was rich, a powerful attraction for many of the bar wenches offering up a night of sex and companionship.

Companionship? Not really. Women never held much interest for Jason past that moment of intense need for release. Once he came, he was done with them. It sounded crueler than it really was, for those women never stayed in his bed long after their duties were fulfilled. He was a means of money, and nothing more.

The woman in his cabin was much more than a vessel for him to use to ease his sexual needs. Hell, he couldn't remember the last time he'd gazed upon a pussy so pink and perfect, giving him a rock-hard erection. It took all his strength not to release his cock and plunge deep into her seeping core. He wanted to feel her searing heat about

his length as he pumped into her. Having her tied to his bed had only added to his agony as she'd struggled against the bonds, fighting her own reactions to his touch.

No, what was he thinking? Women were nothing but trouble. It was a woman who drove him from his family, his home—a wicked woman with a taste for danger.

"Captain, yesterday when we were in port I heard that Captain Mendoza was still hunting for you. He's become obsessed in finding you—and killing you," Thomas said, concern edging his voice.

"Aye, I heard this as well. He's been hunting me for months without any luck."

"Yes, but one of these days he'll catch up with you."

Jason chuckled. "Perhaps. Mendoza is still angry for my stealing this sloop a year ago." Jason patted the helm wheel with his hand. "She's a good ship and she called to me. I couldn't ignore her call."

"Or was it the forty thousand pieces of gold on board that called to you?"

He laughed joyously. "Gold indeed calls to a pirate, 'tis our way of life."

"Aye, Captain, but now you have a dangerous man on your trail."

"He hasn't caught me yet."

It was true, Captain Lorenzo Mendoza was angered more than Jason had predicted. The Spaniard had a red-hot temper over the loss of his fortune and ship. Jason had used trickery to get the ship, attacking at night while the crew was ashore, drunk and wenching. Jason had even paid the barkeep to drug the rum served to the Spanish crew to ensure their inability to fight the bold move to capture their ship.

The *Sea Hawk* was the envy of many buccaneers sailing in these waters, and feared among merchants for its swift attack capability. Under Jason's command, the *Sea Hawk* was a true scourge of the seas. Captain Flint was feared as well as admired among his pirate brethren.

And a woman was not going to ruin his reputation. Finding this temptress was a wrinkle in his plans. He had to focus on his job, not on some alluring siren of the sea. A woman would never bring him down again.

Shelley—no, he mustn't think of her by name. The *slave* would cater to his needs then when he tired of her, he'd release her with a small bag of gold to start a new life. He'd forget her the moment she was set ashore. In the meantime, he would taste her delights to the fullest measure.

Minutes seemed to pass slowly as Jason thought of enjoying the slave in his cabin. Yet he stayed on deck at the helm, watching his crew secure the bounty from the *Santa Rosa* and get back to their regular business of caring for the ship.

Thomas tried to talk to him further of Mendoza and his latest conquests, but Jason had no interest in the other captain. If Mendoza accomplished half of the rumored conquests, he'd surely secured his slot on a pirate hunter's list as the number one menace on the sea. However, Jason suspected many of the rumors were false and spread to cause fear.

Jason wasn't afraid of Mendoza, nor any other pirate. He wasn't afraid of death, he welcomed it. Anything to ease the pain within his heart.

He had survived years in pirating, a feat in these times of death upon the sea from both rival pirates and pirate hunters. When Jason had left England for the sea, it was with a death wish. Many men died at sea and Jason figured he'd join their ranks. Alas, it was not his fate. Jason went from a common crewmember to first mate then to captain in the matter of two years. There were advantages in an education, even at sea. His former captain, Captain Stuart of the schooner the *Golden Viper*, recognized Jason's potential and quickly took him on. He later told Jason of his plans to retire from pirating and gave him the *Golden Viper*.

The schooner had served him well until they met a Spanish galleon with massive firepower. The *Golden Viper* sank to the bottom of the Caribbean Sea and Jason and his crew made for the port of Santiago. There Jason hatched his plot to steal Mendoza's

ship—and spawned a reputation for pirating against his own kind. To capture a fellow pirate's ship was unheard of in the pirate ranks.

Since when did a *pirate* play by rules? The dangerous act earned Jason a reputation for cunning strength and intelligence, and his crew depended on those qualities to line their pockets with gold.

When the sun dipped into the horizon, he went to the galley and had the cook make a tray for his little captive.

Jason thought about what he wanted her to do for him tonight, and ordered Thomas to bring a brass tub and hot water to his cabin that evening. She was going to bathe her master before he used her body for his needs.

He swore emotion would never come into play with this sweet slave. It was strictly sexual. Nothing more. After all, a pirate was not to be loved—he was to be feared.

Chapter Three

At some point during the afternoon, Shelley fell asleep on the small bed. She wasn't fully aware of how much time had passed until she heard the captain break the door lock. Despite disposing of the flimsy door latch with an effortless shove, he calmly entered the room. He placed a tray of food on the small table and pulled the entire table to the side as far as it could go. Then some men brought in a brass tub. The realization hit her as they toted in several buckets of heated water. The captain meant to take a bath!

The moment the men left, he turned on her, glaring. At the cock of his brow, she sat up in the bed.

"Rule number one, slave," he announced. "No clothes."

"You didn't expect me to stay in here naked all the time, did you?" Her ire rose.

"You either take off those clothes now or I will slice them off. Which is it, slave?"

With a loud sniff of anger, she stood and began to work the rope about her waist. "My name is Shelley, not *slave*."

"You are a slave and will be called as such." He paused then pulled the knife from his boot. "You take too long," he commented as he leaned in and sliced the rope from about her, flinging it across the room.

"Hey!" She grasped the clothes to her body but they were too big, the pants dropping to the floor. Only the loose shirt covered her, but not for long. His glare at her hands clasping the shirt about her was enough for her to succumb to his demand. It wasn't that she was weak. She could refuse. But with his powerful form and overwhelming strength, he was sure to win in the end. Besides, she wanted to see desire within his eyes—desire that she ignited.

She let the shirt fall open and it fell on top of the discarded pants.

Her body was on fire and the cool air was a welcome sensation against her warm skin. She stood straight, her breasts hardening under his heated stare. Cream gathered within her cunt as she waited for him to say something.

Peeking up at his face, she saw the raw lust sizzling in his dark brown eyes. His gaze traveled slowly over her body and she could almost feel the burn on her skin as he studied her every curve.

She fought the instant urge to cover herself as his eyes rested upon her apex. Having shaved her thatch just before the dive, she never dreamed anyone would actually *see* it.

"Tell me, did they shave you like that in the harem?" He stepped toward her and brushed his fingers over her sensitive skin. The warm touch of his fingertips across her shaven pubis made her gasp.

"No, I wasn't..." She closed her eyes and sank into the sensations he created. How could she concentrate when his fingers swirled over her apex like that? Her breathing quickened and she was lost in a world of sensual wonder.

Then he pulled away. She snapped open her eyes, questioning his absence. But there before her, he stripped out of his clothes and—

Oh, holy cow! Were there men built like that before steroids?

Muscles rippled and flexed beneath tanned skin, his chest was perfectly smooth and when he turned his back to her, she saw faint healed scars across his toned back from what she assumed was a lash. He was whipped? She gasped in spite of herself and he turned to face her for a moment.

"Life's tough on the seas."

"But it looks so—"

"It *was* painful, but according to the code, I deserved my punishment." He turned away from her once again and unbuckled his pants, allowing them to drop to the floor.

Shelley saw the most luscious male ass flex enticingly as he stepped into the brass tub. Damn, he was an impressive figure of a man. What was his cock like? Sadly she hadn't seen it before he lowered into the tub and sighed.

"What did you do to deserve getting whipped?"

He chuckled low. "I punched the second mate of the *Golden Viper*. I was but a mere seaman. The sentence for striking a crewmember is forty lashes but Captain Stuart had ordered only twenty. Later he told me the second mate was a no-good bastard who deserved a knock to the jaw. The captain took me under his wing after that, and I took over his command later. But it took me two months to fully recover from the lashing."

The water splashed gently as he moved in the tub.

Her heart ached for him. A man whipped –

"What are you waiting for? Bathe me now, slave."

Son of a bitch. He deserved to be whipped – *right now.* A full forty.

Then she had an evil idea. What if she could arouse him then deny him completion? She smiled as she stepped over to the tub and crouched down. Reaching for the washcloth and soap, she brushed her body against his wet skin. He inhaled sharply, and she knew he was much more affected by her than he wished to admit.

Oh yes, this could be fun.

"What do you wish for me to wash first...Captain?" She added the last to give the impression that she was aware of her status as a slave serving her captain. There was a hint of erotic excitement in the idea of having this sexy man be her master and commander.

"You may start with my back," he instructed, the smallest glimmer of passion edging his voice. "Then move down from there."

He leaned forward in the tub to allow her better access to his back and she was struck by the sheer beauty of the power that lay beneath the tanned skin and the lightercolored scars from the whip. Well-developed sinew moved in a fluid grace of strength, and she ached to touch him.

Shelley lathered the washcloth and at the first touch upon his back, her body reacted in acute awareness of his virile masculinity. She tried to gulp back her moans and concentrate on lathering his skin, washing away the grime and sweat, but the slippery consistency of the soap only added to the sensual seduction. He didn't have to actively try to arouse her, just looking at him made her juices gather between her legs. In her crouching position, naked and vulnerable, she was sure he could smell the scent of her excitement.

Did she actually think she could deny this man anything he asked? It seemed impossible, his affect upon her too keen. Her building desire to offer herself without a fight seemed the only course to find some sort of relief.

Her pussy swelled with need and her clit throbbed with a growing passion to be stroked into oblivion by the captain.

She set her cloth over the side of the tub and reached for a jug nearby filled with clean water. She picked it up and rinsed his back.

"Mmm, that feels good, slave."

That word made her body jolt up a notch in anticipation. Good God, how can the idea of being a slave to this man, any man, be so sexually appealing?

"I'm glad you approve, Captain."

He leaned back in the tub and closed his eyes with a sigh. "In the privacy of our cabin, you may call me Jason."

"Will you call me Shelley then, *Jason*?" She picked up the washcloth and lathered it again.

He cracked an eye at her. "We'll see."

Well, it was better than, "You are a slave and will be called as such".

She began to wash his chest and marveled over the male beauty of his form as she touched him through the cloth. The heat from his body seemed to call to her, beckoning to her.

He caught her wrist and when she turned her gaze to his, she gasped at the intense storm of emotions raging within their dark depths. "Touch me with your hands," he softly commanded.

Nodding absently, she dropped the cloth and placed a hand upon his upper chest. Sure enough, the heat seared her.

As she leaned toward him, her breasts hanging just above the water, he reached up with a gentle splash and caressed one hard peak. She closed her eyes and struggled to breathe as he ran a thumb across her tight nipple, sending shivers of delight down her spine. Her clit ached with need and she was tempted to ask him to help her.

She wanted him. More than anything, she needed him—his touch, his strength, his power over her.

"You're such a beauty, luv. So ripe and ready for the taking," he said, giving her nipple a slight pinch. "Tell me...was your former master good to you? Did he teach you the ways to seduce and please a man?"

Silence seemed to be her best answer. She couldn't bring herself to lie, knowing sooner or later he'd discover she had no master. She was a victim of magic, a time traveler, a woman discovering desire seemingly for the first time in her life. Besides, how would he react to her claim of being from the future? He'd probably think she was suffering from some tropical jungle fever and crazed delusions. It was entirely possible. However, the man beneath her palms was *very* real.

He watched her with those eyes, so aware of her every movement, every reaction. She slid her hand over his chest to his nipple and pinched the taut point. He inhaled sharply then chuckled. Grasping her wandering hand, he led it slowly beneath the bathwater, down his abdomen to the large shaft straining between his legs.

Instinctively she encircled her hand about its girth and squeezed slightly.

"Oh fuck," he murmured.

She began to move her hand up and down his cock. Heat pulsed from it, driving her to continue her slow, torturous seduction. Up, down, pause. Up. Down. Pause. Squeeze.

His breathing was ragged as he fought for control.

Power over this mountain of a man was drugging her sensibilities.

Just when she though she was the one with the upper hand, so to speak, he moved with a flash, pulling her into the water. Atop him, her body vibrated as it came into contact with his entire length.

The urge to kiss him was overpowering but he pulled her head down and nibbled at her neck. Whispering promises of ecstasy, he nudged her legs open, pulling her knees up to either side of his hips and slipping his cock right between her legs.

All conscious though fled her mind as her body took on a rhythm of rubbing against him. Water splashed out of the tub but she didn't care. The added slippery surface on his skin and hers only drove her further, her needs outweighing any concerns of how she came to the past or how she'd ever return to her own time.

All that mattered was Jason and the sensation of him pressed against her. His cock rubbed against her labia and she moaned as she positioned herself to take him into her.

Then the searing heat of his steel-like erection pushed into her. Shelley saw stars behind her eyelids as he filled her exquisitely to the hilt. Her body paused in its movements just to enjoy the sensation of him inside her.

"Sweetheart, come on, fuck me," he croaked, his hands upon her hips.

She leaned back, straightening her body while keeping him buried safely within her. He groaned and reached up to cup her breasts. She moved her hips slightly, the glorious thrill of his cock well within her pussy surging with each passing second.

Lifting her body up with her thighs, supporting her weight and direction with her hands upon the sides of the tub, she began to move with him inside her hungry cunt.

She found a tempo as she used him for her own pleasure. He thrust up into her each time she came down upon his cock, groaning his satisfaction.

Water continued to splash wildly out of the tub as she fucked the captain. There was going to be quite a mess to clean up afterward but he didn't seem to care. And neither did Shelley. She was having the ride of her life.

He stroking the pointed, aching tips of her nipples and she moaned as she lost herself in the moment.

The climax built within her, beginning at the point of their joining and radiating throughout her body, into every muscle, every nerve. Her clit slammed against his pelvis, driving her higher into ecstasy, out of her mind with complete rapture.

He grew larger within her as he approached his own breaking point. It was just enough to send her reeling over the edge. Her orgasm slammed into her like a cannon blast, every limb vibrating with the sheer force of pleasure. She cried out in her newfound euphoria, a place she'd never experienced before this. But now, tossed into the past and into the life of this pirate, Shelley came alive and screamed as her body shook with glorious spasms. From the top of her head to the tips of her toes, she rode out the elation of her climax as her pirate lover found his own completion and spilled his seed deep within her body.

As her spasms began to calm, her body still surfed upon the aftershocks of this amazing experience. She'd had lovers before, but none had ever brought her to such heights of bliss. The captain left all her past lovers in the dust.

Shelley relaxed against him, turning around to lie back against his hard chest. He wrapped his arms around her and breathed warmly against her ear. His chest moved with each breath as he found his natural rhythm once again.

The water was low and it cooled their skin. He played with a stray tendril of hair pasted against her neck. She breathed deeply, taking in the normalcy of the moment, of being so close to this man who showed her such pleasure.

"You are well trained, slave," he breathed against her neck before kissing the sensitive skin there.

It was like a bucket of ice water dumped over her.

She was still a slave to him. Nothing more.

And why the hell did that hurt so much? Why did she care?

"Slave," she whispered in disbelief, tears threatening to spill from her eyes.

He stilled. "My slave." He tightened his arms about her. "Mine."

Somehow his possessiveness was strangely comforting. She wasn't just any slave, he had claimed her.

"No man will ever have you again. You belong to me." His voice was unwavering, and a jolt of renewed desire shot through her veins.

She turned her head to him, one side of her face pressed lightly to his shoulder, and she sighed.

If she was to be a slave to any man, she wanted it to be her pirate captain.

He reached down between her legs and touched her clit with his fingertips. She moaned and opened her legs farther. His touch was hot and she was on fire once again. At one light stroke of his finger against her nubbin, she was ready for more.

Even now, just moments after they'd fucked, she felt his cock harden against her backside. Just this simple reaction to her made the juices flow from her cunt. She was hungry for him to be inside her again.

"Jason," she whispered as she arched into his touch.

"Yes, luv," he gasped as he continued his gentle assault. "I want to hear my little slave come again."

"Oh God," she cried, and bucked when he carefully pinched her clit between his finger and thumb.

Her mind was unable to think clearly. Not as he held her small organ so intimately. He tested its sensitivity as he teased her clit by moving it in small circles.

"Bet you love getting your pussy licked, don't you?" he asked with a groan.

Her only answer was a nod and a moan. She couldn't arch up high enough to encourage him to increase the pressure upon her clit. Just a little more, just a slight increase in his touch would send her shattering.

But he chuckled and refused to let her come. "Not yet." He pressed his free hand against her middle, easing her back down into the tub and against his hard body—a body she was going insane for in want of exploration.

She burned to map his body, to learn every line, every crease, every muscle. If only he'd stop this torment and let her find release.

And she knew what would send her over. She wanted that huge cock up her ass.

She shifted in the tub, rising again over his cock. When she felt he was properly positioned, she sat very slowly, taking him into her anus.

"Bloody hell," he croaked as she gave herself a moment to adjust to his size. Her anal muscles clenched about him, and she loved it as the pain ebbed and the ecstasy built once again.

She wiggled her ass with him inside her, and he steadied her with his hand upon her hips.

"Touch yourself," he commanded.

Oh yes.

She knew just what she needed.

In control over her clit, she thrummed it as he moved within her. She felt filled, stretched, and as she passed her fingers over the sensitive surface of her nubbin, she was lost in rising passion.

He grunted behind her as he pumped into her tight hole and she rubbed herself faster, her body moving in abandon as she climbed higher and higher.

She wanted to push herself further, to prolong the moments of sheer bliss. Just as her body seemed on the edge of climax, she paused to let her body calm for a few

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seconds before caressing her clit once again. Meanwhile Jason seemed lost within her, thrusting, groaning with each squeeze about his cock.

He grasped her breasts, one in each hand and squeezed them roughly. She loved it.

Shelley strummed her clit with a frenzied pace and brought herself to a mindblowing climax, and Jason wasn't far behind as he pumped into her, climaxing with a triumphant yell.

Chapter Four

Pirates are to be feared. He had no room in his life for love. However, he could take on this temptress as his personal slave—his mistress. She'd never know the touch of another man after tonight. He'd make sure of that. There was no chance of him letting her go as he'd planned just hours ago. That was before he'd tasted her skin, sampled her skills and reveled within her body.

But he'd never love her. No, love would be a curse. He'd never want her to suffer because of him. It was better to keep her as his mistress. Love would never become part of the equation.

Love had taken a toll upon his soul once already. He'd lost a brother because of love. He'd become an outlaw to his country because of love.

"Are you all right?" she asked, breaking the silence that had fallen over the room. Only a few moments ago their screams of ecstasy drowned out the gentle beat of the waves breaking against the wooden hull.

"I was just thinking of home."

"Would it help to talk about it?" She grasped his hand and pulled his arm about her, enclosing herself in his embrace.

He sighed. "I haven't been home in seven years."

"Why don't you go back?"

"I can't. I'd be arrested the moment I set foot on British soil."

"Why?" She paused as he chuckled softly behind her. "No, dumb question. You're a pirate. Of course you would be arrested."

"It is nice to know someone forgot I was a pirate, even if it was only for a moment. I wasn't always a pirate. I was a respectable man until..."

"Until?" she pressed.

"Until the day I killed my brother's wife."

She turned quickly, water splashing out of the tub at her movement. "You killed your brother's wife?"

He nodded solemnly, still unsure how much to tell her. Shelley was the first person in whom he felt the need to confide his story. But could he truly trust her? "I really don't-"

"Were you having an affair with her?" she guessed.

"Aye, I was. She was a beauty and I was young, impressionable. She lured me into her bed and I followed like a naïve schoolboy."

"How old were you?"

"Fifteen." He paused. "It was wrong and I knew it. But it was hard to deny myself the touch of her skin once I had her."

"And how long did it take your brother to find out?"

"About three months. He was in France for business during the affair. When he returned, he found us together in bed." He stopped, thinking back to the day when James burst through the bedroom door in a rage after obviously hearing the sounds of sex from the other side.

"Go on." She laid a comforting hand upon his arm and her genuine concern warmed him.

"He pulled out his sword and challenged me so he could defend his honor. As the new Earl of Essex, he demanded satisfaction. He was upset and very angry as he loved Claire immensely. I knew this and yet I was drawn in by her beauty and sexual prowess. She was a lonely creature, longing for her husband but choosing to find her satisfaction elsewhere when James failed to fulfill her needs.

"As James and I fought in the bedchambers, and eventually out into the vast hallway of the castle, Claire chose to announce to the entire household her husband's...difficulty in bed. I guess she was trying to help by taking the focus off me and onto herself. Only when I turned to her, James struck. My sword flew from my hand—and into Claire."

"Oh God," she murmured.

"Claire lay dying, proclaiming her love for James—and me. When she died, James banished me from the estate, claiming I was a murderer. He told me to leave England, never to return. I'm sure James reported Claire's death to the authorities as murder."

"But it was an accident!"

"No, I killed her."

"It was an accident, Jason. You couldn't have controlled where the sword would land."

"I killed her the moment I entered her bed." He touched her cheek and felt her cooling skin. "Come, let's get out of this cold water and into bed. We're not through for the night."

As Jason helped her from the tub and dried her cool skin, he felt a surge of tenderness. No one had ever heard his side of the tale that drove him from his home. And this mysterious woman seemed to ease his fears with the gentle curve of her lips. She listened to his horror without fainting or striking out at him with accusations of murder.

A strange feeling began to fill his heart toward this woman that appeared from nowhere into his life.

He carefully toweled her goose-bumpy skin, and at her small smile as he wrapped a towel about her body, an achy tug at his insides made him pause.

She stepped across the small room to the bed, her wet blonde hair stuck to her neck and upper shoulders. Cocooned in a pale, threadbare towel, Shelley was the portrait of a woman of class and distinction. This was not a peasant or a bar wench, she was much more. She may not be dressed in elegant gowns and her hair wasn't coiffed into the latest style, but she was the most beautiful female he had ever encountered.

And she belonged to him.

He smiled and approached her. "I want to sample you again, but in bed this time."

Her unmistakable desire flushed her cheeks in a becoming blush. She licked her lips, her tongue swiping over her top lip and he was caught mesmerized. This couldn't be anything more than fascination that made him want her. But having been inside her twice, it seemed to only whet his appetite for more.

He was serious when he'd said she belonged to him. No other man would ever have her. As he moved to the bed, he pulled the towel from her grasp in one slow, fluid tug. She let it fall away and he couldn't wait to taste her again.

"How do you feel about being my slave now, luv?" He reached out to run her hair between his fingertips, soft and smooth like fine silk from the Orient.

Without a word, she turned her head to his hand and took his index finger into her mouth. He nearly came unglued as she sucked upon his finger, her tongue swirling sweetly about its length.

The urge to kiss her overwhelmed him.

Then she leaned into him and the feel of her cooling skin against him drove him insane with need.

He captured her within his arms and lowered her to the bed.

"Jason," she moaned. It sounded like a plea.

He sank onto her, her softness a welcoming cushion for his harder body. A groan of longing passed his lips as he felt her hips thrust upward. But her satisfaction would not be met...not until he mapped her body with his hands and studied every peak and valley of her luscious flesh.

Starting at her neck, he licked the sensitive skin and felt her erratic pulse. She clung to his shoulders with her hands and wrapped one of her legs around his thigh. She wriggled beneath him and the smooth contact of skin against skin cranked his libido higher.

He took a hard nipple into his mouth and she cried out. She gripped the back of his head to her breast as he suckled her stiffened nipple deep into his mouth. She clawed his back but the slight pain only drove him onward to taste more of this little wildcat.

He released one nipple only to capture the other and suckle upon its delectable texture. Her nipples were like ripened raspberries sweetened by the sunshine, and he lost himself in feasting upon her delights.

She rubbed her leg along his thigh and he relished the silky texture of her. Such a beauty—a true treasure to be cherished. And Jason intended to lose himself in this greatest of treasures night after night.

He continued on, licking the sweet skin around the curve of a breast, down one side of her torso and to the center of her navel. When he dipped his tongue into her belly button, she whimpered. She ran her hands through his hair, pulling its length from the queue to fall loose about his shoulders. The sensation of his hair against her responsive flesh caused her to toss her head back.

"Open your eyes and look at me," he commanded.

She lay there lost in her own moaning.

"Shelley...look at me."

The use of her name shocked him, but it felt right—and it was just the thing to bring her back from her ecstasy. She lifted her head and looked down at him crouched over her navel.

Her eyes struck him to the core, the depth of her desire reflecting in the dark brown pools. Who was this woman and how did she get on the *Santa Rosa*? Her clothes were as strange as her accent, yet her passionate freedom with a stranger was the trademark of a well-trained sex slave. She'd taken him into her body with a yearning to please—again, typical of a trained slave. But it also seemed she wanted him for *her* pleasure. That was *not* his experience with a sex slave.

"Please, Jason," she pleaded as she opened her legs wider.

It was too much a temptation to ignore. He moved lower to gaze at the open folds of her sex and inhaled her natural feminine scent—one laced with desire as her cream dripped about the opening. Her pink, moist pussy called to him to feast upon its sweet nectar.

He touched the little bud that tempted him with a soft brush of his finger. She sighed, a throaty groan, as she grasped the sheet with her hands, and he watched her cunt turn a darker shade of pink. Another pass of his finger over her clit and she bucked her hips upward.

As he began to trace his finger through her folds, coating it with the thick cream of her sex, he watched her react to the increase and decrease of pressure, learning exactly what excited her further.

It filled his being with a sense of sexual gratification at every sound of passion he coaxed from her. And something else...pleasure within his *soul* to give her such moments of bliss with the merest touch of his fingers upon her body.

He was not a man who pleasured women for his own fulfillment. He was to be pleasured, not the other way around. What caused such a change with this strange woman? She was different from the others of his acquaintance...even Claire.

"Jason," Shelley moaned.

Her voice was heavy with desire and he could hold off tasting her no longer. He lowered his mouth to her clit and kissed the hot bud. It strained between his lips to a hard point. Her scent filled his nostrils as he flicked his tongue over her clit, and she cried out in blissful agony.

Trailing his tongue lazily over her throbbing nubbin, he dipped the tip of his forefinger into her slick passage.

"Oh...yes," she whimpered in abandon.

When he grazed his teeth against her clit she yelped, but not in pain. She grasped the sheet beneath her tighter as she kept a close rein on her excitement, prolonging fulfillment.

He slowly pushed two fingers deep into her cunt and sucked upon her clit. She climaxed, no longer able to hold back, and he moved his fingers within her, her muscles clenching down upon them in rhythmic contractions. She screamed in unison with her spasms and he increased the pressure of his mouth upon her nubbin.

In and out and in again, he worked her orgasm with his fingers, drawing out her pleasure. And when she began to come down from her euphoria, he pulled his fingers from her and drank the juices flowing from her pussy.

Sweet and delicious, it was a taste uniquely Shelley—like the finest French wine. He licked her like a man deprived of sustenance, her honeyed cream the elixir of his very existence. He rubbed her tender clit with his thumb as he continued to lap up her juices and she tumbled into a second climax. Sticking his tongue well into her channel, her cum flowed into his mouth with each squeeze of her muscles.

Cries of her joyful submission filled the room as Shelley rode out her orgasm.

Jason backed away from her wet, pink cunt and just gazed upon its feminine beauty—well loved and flushed with spent passion.

Her breathing was labored as she lie back trying to recover from her climactic spasms. But he wasn't through, not yet. His cock was rock-hard and aching to plunge into the depths of Shelley's cunt.

He knelt on the bed looking down upon her. Her hair was wild and splayed across the pillows, her chest rose and fell as her breathing began to calm and a light pink glow colored her skin as a sign of passionate exercise.

She opened her eyes and gazed up at him towering over her. "That was amazing."

A glimmer at her wrist caught his eye. The slave band.

Was she taught to compliment her partners in bed?

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The thought of her performing for another man enraged him. Could he wipe clean her memories of any past lovers with one night of sexual delights? He wanted her to think only of him, to want only *him* to fulfill her desires. Even if he had to keep her tied to his bed to get his way!

He reached for the ropes that had been left on the floor, and in a flash he bound one of her wrists to the bed frame.

"Wait! What's going on?" she asked in a confused frenzy as she fought against his grip.

"You're mine and I intend to make sure you remember that fact."

As he caught her free wrist to secure it to the bed, she struggled. "What do you hope to accomplish by tying me down again?"

"By keeping you here at my whim, I will make you depend on me for everything. Only through your surrender can I be sure you are my obedient slave."

She stilled. Her dark eyes filled with tears. "I thought what we just shared was special."

Jason leaned over her body, her breasts brushing along his chest. "It was special, luv. And now I am going to make you submit your body...and heart to me."

"How?"

"By making you beg me to fuck you. To take you and make you mine alone."

She gasped and he smiled down at her. He ran his gaze over her perfect body, soft and inviting, and he took hold of his cock and began to stroke its hardness.

She squirmed on the bed as she watched in amazement at his member growing before her eyes.

"You're cruel," she whimpered.

"Not cruel, just determined. I want all of you."

She stilled her struggles and relaxed. "But you have me as your captive slave."

He covered her body with his, gasping at the heat of their flesh touching—an inferno circling about them both at the contact. "Aye, I have your body, but I want much more than your flesh." He nudged open her legs and his cock ran along the slippery folds of her sex.

He glanced up at her hands holding onto the ropes with all her strength as he slowly entered her body. Her head tossed back on the pillow, her eyes closed and her breathing increased, and he felt her succumb to passion once again.

His cock moved deeper into her channel.

"Oh..." she breathed when he pushed in farther, his balls flush against her buttocks.

He paused, savoring the simple ecstasy of his cock buried within the wet core of her...his slave...his mistress. Emotion flooded his senses at the physical bliss of their connection. No port wench ever felt so good.

When he began to move within her sheath, she grasped her bonds tightly and thrust up her hips to encourage his pace to quicken. He was approaching his breaking point, finding it difficult to hold back his climax. As he pushed in and out of her, she wriggled and moaned in complete abandon and it was more than he could tolerate.

"Tell me, who is your master, luv?" he asked as he thrust into her cunt with an powerful expert's skill.

"You," she whispered.

"Shout the name of your master. Tell me who owns you...desires you." He retreated then thrust inside once again, more forceful and controlled.

"Jason...oh Jason!" she cried as her muscles began to clench about his cock, sucking his length deeply into her body.

He shouted with his release, his heated essence pouring in waves of ecstasy as he joined her in the heights of passion and desire in a shattering climax.

Grunting with each spasm, Jason emptied himself into his slave lover.

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As their bodies began to calm, Jason reached over, untied Shelley's wrists and lay down on the bed, gathering her close to his side. She wrapped her arms about him without hesitation. When she sighed in contentment, his heart ached.

Maybe a pirate needed more than to be feared. Perhaps a pirate needed to be loved after all.

Chapter Five

Shelley awoke alone the next morning. Her body ached but felt wonderful. Never had anyone loved her as completely as Jason. He must be the reason she'd been thrust into the past.

A knock at the door announced his entrance as he carried in a pitcher of water.

"I see you are awake, luv." He placed the pitcher on the table. "Thought you'd like to clean up and come topside today."

She sat up quickly, forgetting the sheet as it fell to her waist. "You mean it?"

He stood unmoving, his eyes raking over her breasts. "You'd best cover up, luv, or you will never see daylight this day." His voice was thick with desire and goose bumps rose on her arms under his intense gaze.

He grabbed a wash basin from under the bed and poured water into it. "But first I will leave you to wash and dress. Then I will take you on deck to meet my men." He opened the door and, with his hand upon the knob, turned to her. "On deck you will call me 'sir' out of respect. My men must know without doubt that you belong to me. Do you understand?"

"Aye, Captain, sir," she said with a low laugh.

A small smile curled his lips. "Perhaps you should call me 'sir' in bed as well."

She stood and let the sheet fall away from her body, exposing herself to her lover. "I am here for you to command, sir." She lifted her hands and cupped her breasts, teasing her nipples with a few pinches between her fingers.

She had no control over her wants as she offered herself to him once again. Her cream gathered between her legs, lubricating her passage.

Without a word he bolted the door and shed his vest. "Vixen," he whispered as he took her into his arms and kissed her neck. Shelley melted into his embrace and the roughness of his clothes excited her further as they brushed against her naked flesh.

He released her to shed his shirt. She moaned, wishing to prolong the moment but quickly realizing this was not going to be a slow mating as she ran her hands over the toned surface of his chest. She passed over his nipples with her fingertips and he ripped open his breeches, pulling out his powerful cock.

She instinctively wrapped her fingers about his length and shuddered at the heated strength within. He paused as she gripped his thickness, letting out a ragged breath while holding on to his last thread of control.

She was mesmerized by his organ and her mouth watered to taste its magnificence. "I want to please you," she said in a husky voice as she moved her hand slowly up and down his rod.

His answer was a groan. "You please me well."

She lowered to her knees and admired the masculine beauty of his sex. Full, purplish and shiny, the bulbous head of his cock was like a ripe plum, inviting her mouth to encircle it and take a savory taste of its sweet flesh. She licked the tip gently with one swipe.

He growled and splayed his fingers through her hair, silently guiding her to continue. But she pulled back slightly, wanting to admire his powerful cock further. It was thick and hard, and when she held it and squeezed, he moaned.

She felt a surge of feminine power over her lover, a man that commanded so much about him, but was rendered weak with a touch of her hand.

With her other hand, she tested the size and weight of his balls. He tightened his fingers in her hair, trying to control his urge to come a little longer.

She licked at a glistening bead that gathered on the tip of his cock and then closed her mouth about the head. Instinctual need and desire to please overtook her actions as she began to take his cock deeper into her mouth. She continued to hold his sac in one hand as she guided his length with the other. Closing her eyes, she gave Jason her heart by pleasuring him into orgasm.

Shelley needed to taste him upon her tongue. She wanted to drink him, know she brought about his surrender. The captain was a master of men, but she wanted to give him escape from his duties and experience freedom within sexual release.

Moving up and down his cock, she lost herself in blissful ecstasy. He had claimed her body as his last night, and now, Shelley claimed him. She knew why she'd come back in time. It was for Jason. He was the reason she was there. And she'd make sure she'd enjoy every moment. Who knew when—or if—she'd ever return to her time?

She hummed as she devoured him and he began to cry out as his balls tightened within her hand. Warm spurts of salty liquid filled her mouth as he came. His hands held her head to his groin, guiding her with each thrust of his cock and every burst of the essence of his climax.

As his orgasm calmed, she pulled her mouth from about his length then licked away any stray droplets from her lips.

His grip on her hair eased and he wavered on his feet.

She remained crouched on the floor. Sitting back on her heels, she waited for him to recover. He sat down on the bed and closed his eyes, his breathing beginning to calm.

"You please me *very* well, luv," he finally said breathlessly.

She giggled. "As I said, I'm here to please, am I not, Captain?"

"Aye, you perform your duties well."

She paused in silence. "I don't consider being with you a duty."

He peeked open an eye. "If you were not my slave, would you still wish to share my bed?"

"I am *not* your slave." She crawled closer to him and laid her hands upon his thighs. "I am your lover."

He reached for her face, tracing the curve of her cheek with his fingertips. "Do you give of yourself freely to me?"

She nodded. Her eyes searched his face and she saw the intensity of his thoughts racing through his mind. She was sure many women gave their bodies to him, but did any offer their heart?

He reached for her hand and laid it within his own. He fingered the slave bangle at her wrist for a few moments then said, "You must be anxious to get some fresh air. I will step out while you relieve yourself, bathe and dress. Just knock on the door when you are dressed and ready."

Their gazes locked and for a moment, she hoped he would kiss her. Instead he lifted her hand to his mouth and placed a kiss on the back.

As she remained crouched on the floor, watching him leave her alone in the cabin, a tear ran down her face.

He wanted her body but he didn't want her love. Or was he afraid to love?

Maybe it was for the best. She was heading into stormy seas tampering with the past. The captain disappeared from history, killed during a sea battle according to her research. If he was supposed to die in a sea attack, what significance would her presence have on his fate?

Shelley took a deep breath and exhaled slowly. Fate played a cruel part in this saga. Heartache and pain were sure to play a part in this eventually. She just had to remain strong and keep a stronger grip on her heartstrings.

However, she knew it was too late for that.

After relieving her bladder in a chamber pot, Shelly went about her toilette.

She splashed water on her face and cleaned her body as best she could in the bedside basin. The water was cold but refreshing. After drying off, she slipped on the pants she'd found in his chest along with the white linen shirt and secured the waist

with some rope. A small smile curled her lips as she thought of Jason using that rope to tie her to the bed, then showing her complete ecstasy in her surrender.

She combed her long hair with a brush from his chest and tried to plait the length to keep it from tangling. She tucked it into the back of her shirt and then donned a plain black tricorne hat. When she was done, she tapped on the door and Jason opened it.

"You look like a captain's wench, luv."

"I was trying for cabin boy." She smiled up into his face. With the sun at his back, his brown hair glowed with a hint of copper.

His eyes grazed her figure and lingered upon her loose breasts. "No, luv. No man in his right mind could ever mistake you for a boy."

Her cheeks heated and he laughed softly. He offered his hand and said, "Come, wench. You need some fresh air to fill your lungs."

She climbed the stairs and emerged on deck to sunshine and salty air. The crewmembers were busy at work tidying the rigging or scrubbing the wooden deck with brushes. Some paused in their duties to look up at her. Jason stood behind her and placed a hand upon her shoulder, and her tense muscles eased.

One man ordered the others who had stopped cleaning the deck. "Get back to work, ye mangy dogs!" The men jumped at his voice and hurried back to their task.

"Come." Jason gently directed Shelley to move aft and climb more stairs to the quarterdeck.

There above the main deck, Shelley took in the beauty of the ship at sea. The sails caught the breeze and powered the craft through the aquamarine waters. The sun's rays danced on the waves as the ship cut through the sea with an awe-inspiring power.

In an enchanted daze, she moved to the railing and gazed out over the jewel-toned waters, spotting a school of dolphins frolicking alongside the hull.

"Dolphins like to race the ship. Amazing, isn't it?" He stood behind her and she could feel the welcoming heat from his body wrap about her. He laid his hands on her shoulders, and she closed her eyes and sighed.

"Amazing isn't the right word," she said in a dreamy voice. Her heart began to thud faster within her chest. Tender emotions encircled her heart as his breath kissed her exposed neck, sending tingles of joy down her spine.

"How do you feel, luv?" His voice wavered.

"Happy."

He exhaled and gently squeezed her shoulders with his hands. "Good."

Their words were simple but the emotional turmoil beneath the surface was almost palpable. She leaned back into his chest and relaxed her body. He slipped a hand into her shirt and cupped a bare breast. The contact of his warm hand to her cool skin made her shiver with a renewed need. She couldn't get enough of his touch. It was like heady wine, addictive and enticing.

He removed her hat and pulled her blonde hair free from her shirt. She welcomed the refreshing breeze through her hair.

Should she be feeling such tenderness toward this man, a pirate who claimed her as his slave? She hated the term but somehow liked his possessiveness, his complete domination over her mind and body. It would be easy to fall in love with him. So easy.

"Shelley?"

"Yes?" she answered dreamily.

"I'm not entirely inexperienced with women. I've had more than I can remember. One was pretty much like the next. But you..."

She stood frozen, holding her breath, her heart hanging on his words.

"You are not like the others." He squeezed her breast tenderly and she shivered as she slowly exhaled. He ran his free hand through her hair and she closed her eyes, savoring his caress. They stood in silence as he continued to tantalize her with his loving touch. She melted into him, absorbed by his presence.

"Who are you? Are you a sea witch come to enchant me with your magic?"

"I'm not a witch," she whispered.

"But how did you get to be here?"

She turned toward him and he wrapped his arms around her waist. She laid her hands about his neck and gazed up into his face. "If I told you how I really came to be floating in the open ocean, you wouldn't believe me."

He touched her chin and tilted his head. "Tell me." His voice was commanding yet gentle.

"I_"

Chaos erupted below.

"All hands on deck! A ship to southern! A ship to southern!" The lookout called the warning to the ship's crew members.

"Shelley," he started as he grabbed her arm and pulled her along to the entrance to his cabin below deck. "Get below. Stay out of sight."

Then the lookout yelled, "'Tis the *Corazón Negro*. And it flies the skull and crossed swords—Captain Mendoza's flag!"

"Damn it," Jason muttered as he turned and raced to the quarterdeck. "He finally caught up with me."

Chapter Six

The *Corazón Negro*, the *Black Heart*. His nemesis, Captain Lorenzo Mendoza, had acquired the famed brigantine as his vessel for revenge. Jason was sure the Spaniard had customized the ship to its best advantage, which meant Jason's best defense was speed. He should try to avoid hand-to-hand combat as his crew would surely be outmanned by that of the bigger ship.

"There are about twelve cannon, Captain," Thomas announced as he peered through the spyglass.

"Mendoza wouldn't risk weighing her down with much more." The cannons were only meant to cripple the opponent, preparing for the swoop and slash pillaging of the pirate crew. "However, let's not take any chances in underestimating."

Thomas lowered the spyglass. "What shall we do? Attack?"

Jason studied Mendoza's new ship. She was sure to be loaded with swivel guns on the rails and the crew probably outnumbered his four to one. Trying to make a break for it seemed the most intelligent thing to do. It would be what Mendoza anticipated. However, he didn't want to run. He never backed down from a challenge. The Spaniard was hot for revenge and perhaps it was time to face his wrath.

Without a word, he took the spyglass from Thomas and lifted it to his eye. There he saw the activity buzzing on the *Corazón Negro*. They surely intended to board the *Sea Hawk*. Perhaps if he turned to fight, it would confuse not only Mendoza but his men as well.

"Well, Captain?" Thomas prodded. Nearby there stood more of his crew, all waiting with bated breath. A gaze at the hungry faces of his crew and Jason knew their hearts' desire.

"To arms, me lads!"

A cheer rang out over the deck as the men scrambled for their cutlasses and flintlocks.

"Avast ye dogs! Prepare for battle!" The quartermaster yelled out orders as the ship turned to meet with Mendoza and his *Corazón Negro*.

Just then, Shelley emerged on deck.

"Damn the woman!" Jason fumed as he began to stomp over to her, standing by the stairs to the cabin. Dressed in his pants and a white linen shirt, her hair wildly blowing in the sea wind, she was the most beautiful creature he'd ever seen. However, she was even lovelier when in complete surrender within his arms.

"Get below!" he bellowed, angry with his own brief fantasy of moments ago, the image of her panting with pleasure beneath his touch.

"No."

"Aboard ship is no place for a woman, let alone during a battle. Now do as I tell you and get below."

"No, I don't want to—"

He grasped her upper arm roughly. "Look here. What did I tell you about defying me? You want Mendoza to see your pretty blonde hair? I assure you, he'd want you. But he'd tire of you eventually and then sell you to a brothel in some remote pirate town. Do you want to have smelly seadogs between your legs?"

"I can't..." Her voice shook.

Gazing into her eyes, he realized his mistake. She wasn't defying him out of stubbornness. "You're scared." His voice softened.

She nodded. "Please, let me stay up here."

He wished he could but danger was now bearing down upon him. Having her so close affected his senses and his thoughts scattered for a brief moment.

"Come." He eased his hold on her arm and led her below, back inside the cabin.

"I can't stay in here with all this going on."

He closed the door behind him then caught her face between his hands. "Shelley, you have to stay here. And whatever you do, don't open the door for anyone but me. Bolt it, barricade it." At her fearful eyes he leaned into her. "There's a sword in my sea chest under the clothes. And under the floorboard beneath the bed, I have a set of pistols. Get them out and don't be afraid to use them if someone tries to come through the door."

Cannon fired in the distance. The battle had begun.

He kissed her forehead and turned away, opening the door. Before he closed it behind him, he said, "Shoot anyone who tries to get in."

As he headed topside, he cursed himself for growing soft toward a woman.

Then he cursed the day he ever stole from Captain Mendoza.

* * * * *

"Great." Shelley stood staring at the bolted door. That little lock wasn't going to keep anyone out. She definitely didn't feel safe here. Where the hell would she feel safe on a ship engaging in a sea battle with pirates?

The only place she felt secure was at Jason's side. That's where she wanted to be.

Cannon fire cracked again, this time closer. She stepped to the porthole and saw the brigantine bearing down on them. Noise of the crew running and working the rigging above echoed through the small cabin. It sounded like a war was raging already on deck.

Jason had the reputation of an intelligent pirate, a man who had sunk and plundered numerous ships in the Caribbean and Atlantic. Certainly he'd be able to outwit the other pirate. If this sloop could take down the gigantic *Santa Rosa*, a brigantine shouldn't be hard.

She hoped.

As cannon fire erupted from the *Sea Hawk*, she began moving the furniture in front of the cabin door.

"It's time to wake up, Shell. The sex was good...okay, better than good. It was earthshaking, but this is just *not* part of the fantasy." Cannons fired from both ships and she fell to the floor as the ship rocked to one side.

Were they hit?

A cheer rang out from the men but she wasn't sure why.

She shoved the chest against the bed that blocked the door. Taking out the sword she'd examined earlier, she still didn't feel safe. What good was a sword if you didn't know how to use it?

Next she tested the floorboards, and sure enough, they were loose where the bed used to sit. She pulled out a few shorter boards to uncover a polished box. She clicked open the silver latch to reveal two dueling flintlocks. They were exquisitely crafted of silver with deep, intricate engravings of vines around the barrels. The ivory handles also echoed the vine carvings on their smooth surfaces.

She had a little knowledge of this type of firearm, having a father who collected pistols as a personal hobby. He preferred Civil War weapons, but also had a set of dueling pistols said to have settled many disagreements before dawn.

The cannon fire stopped and the movement above stilled. She picked up one of the guns and went to the porthole.

They were about to come alongside the brigantine! The smell of gun powder and salt filled her nostrils as the entire scene outside seemed to move in slow motion. Then with a yell, grappling hooks were tossed over to the other ship. The crew pulled the ropes tight and heaved, bringing the ships closer.

Then all hell broke loose as gunfire erupted between the ships. Shelly ducked from the open porthole as the musket balls flew rampant.

Clutching the sword in one hand and a pistol in the other, she crouched in a corner, praying she'd live through this horror. Noise from above roared unlike anything she'd ever experienced. Men screaming, pistols firing at will and brutal hand-to-hand battles raged like an unrelenting thunderstorm upon the stormy sea.

She didn't want to risk looking out the porthole to see what was happening, she didn't even want to move from her corner.

She wanted out of this dream-turned-nightmare.

The bangle. Maybe if she worked the clasp, it would take her out of this place as fast as she got here. She hesitated for a moment, thinking of Jason, not wanting to leave him behind.

Despite his piratical ways, including his insistence that she was his sex slave, Shelley couldn't help but like Captain Flint.

Like? Maybe that word wasn't strong enough for how she felt. But she wasn't ready to admit much beyond that.

She was attracted to Jason and had experienced sex unlike any she'd ever had before. Past lovers couldn't compare to his sensual skills or invoke the instant burning desire that enflamed her body with his mere presence. Just a glance at his soft brown eyes filled with lust made her want to fall back on the bed, panting for his touch. She could easily spend hours—no, days—just letting him fuck her over and over.

In truth, being Captain Flint's sex slave was not a bad position to be in. She enjoyed it, in fact. He expected nothing more than her willingness to please him, and in turn, pleasured her in the process. There were no expectations beyond that. Perhaps it was her years of advanced schooling and hard studying that made her wish to throw responsibility to the wind in favor of stolen moments of pleasure within the pirate captain's bed. It wasn't torturous to be his sex slave in the least.

Yes, she *liked* him very much, and she was certain that he liked her too. Sex was fabulous and they seemed to possess compatible personalities—even if he was a roguish pirate.

Another crash of explosions sounded, pulling her thoughts back to the battle and shaking her to the core.

Boom! Boom! Ka-boom! The ship quaked violently around her with each discharge. How long would this go on?

Okay, great sex or no, she wanted *out*. She'd go back and live happily knowing she'd had the greatest sex of her life—with the sexiest man to ever walk the Earth.

She tried the clasp. It wouldn't budge. She tugged at it with all her might.

Nothing.

"Damn it."

Just then, the wall beside her was blown open by a cannonball that flew through the cabin. With her arms, she covered herself from the flying wood splinters, silently thankful it wasn't her head that had been blown away.

Tears began to spill from her eyes as she huddled in the corner. "Make it stop. Oh God, if you hear me, make it stop!" she cried.

The pounding in her ears was so loud, she couldn't think straight.

No. The pounding wasn't in her head.

She glanced up and saw the bed moving. They were at the door, forcing their way in.

She grasped the pistol tightly in her hand. Her heart beat wildly in her chest and she gulped down the fear. Her breath caught as she saw the lock break away from the door before a grimy-faced man leered at her.

"Aye, here she is," he called out.

He wasn't alone.

She lifted the pistol, taking her best aim at his face. "Get out of here or I'll blast you into Davy Jones' locker!"

He laughed along with the two other men she estimated were standing behind him. "Poppet, don't be cross. Cap'n Mendoza wants to meet you." He pushed against the door and the bed moved against the chest. It wasn't going to keep him or his friends out.

"I'm warning you one last time, you bloody pirate! Push that door again and you'll regret it." She cocked back the hammer and the man paused.

"You never shot a man before," he said.

"There's always a first time, asshole."

Another explosion rocked the ship and she found the strength to not waver from her stand. However, the bed and chest slipped a few inches away from the door. The men pushed hard with a loud yell.

Shelly squeezed the trigger and the moment took on an eerie slow motion as the grimy pirate fell to the floor in a heap. She sat amazed, staring at the pool of blood forming on the floor, and the remaining two pirates took advantage of her shock.

They grabbed her and cursed as they yanked her off the floor. She snapped back to the situation at hand but not fast enough to swing at her attackers before they strengthened their grips. The sword she held in her other hand clattered to the floor in the struggle.

One of the men, tall, blond and fair, looked like a Viking misplaced in time—and about as nasty as one of those brutal barbarians. He swung back one hand and slapped her across the face hard, startling her into stilling her fight. "Bitch, you'll pay for killin' Higgins."

"Yeah, hope the cap'n punishes her by givin' 'er to us for some fun," said the other pirate, a dark-haired man with a face brown and rough like old cracked leather.

"I'd kill myself first before letting one of you dirty pirates touch me!" She pulled her shoulders against their grip but they were much too strong.

The Viking leaned in and said, "Alive or dead, we won't care, poppet."

She gasped. Good God, how did she ever get into this mess?

They pulled her up the stairs. She tried to drag her feet but was rewarded with another slap across her cheek. It burned at the contact, the blood throbbing beneath her skin.

On deck, she got a full view of the battle. Maimed corpses lie at their feet, spilling deep red blood across the wooden planks. Pirates battled each other, cutlasses slicing the air with aimed purpose to cut down their foes. Blood spurted everywhere as blades sliced through flesh. Gunfire and battle cries filled the air along with the stench of burning wood and sulfuric discharges from the cannon gunpowder.

It was amid the carnage that she spotted Jason dueling with another man, a dark, tall man with a large navy blue hat and plume, a white linen shirt, navy breeches and long tail coat, and high black leather boots. He was the classic vision of a successful pirate captain and she recognized him immediately—Captain Mendoza.

She'd read of him in her volumes of text, but never thought she'd be kidnapped by his crew. Mendoza had a taste for gold—and women.

"Come on, wench," the Viking hissed.

At their pushing, she renewed her struggle. There was no way in hell she was going with them without a fight. She kicked at their shins and Leather-face screamed.

"Jason!" she cried out when the men changed tactics and lifted her off her feet. Viking took her shoulders and Leather-face took her feet, literally carrying her as she wiggled to get free. "Jason! Help!"

Tears burned her eyes as the thunderous noise of gunfire, men yelling and the clanging of swords clashed about her. Jason surely would never hear her calls.

They carried her across a makeshift plank onto the rival ship, where more fighting took place.

There was no holding back her flood of emotions as reality hit her full force. She was now the prisoner of a pirate—a man that wasn't Jason.

Chapter Seven

"You bastard," Jason yelled at Mendoza as he spotted Shelley being carried off the Sea Hawk.

"Ah, but *amigo*, when I saw her golden hair and your obvious attention to her, I knew she was a prize beyond all others." Mendoza laughed as he poised his sword in readiness.

Jason swung and Mendoza parried with expert skill. Jason was blind with rage at seeing her struggle with her captors. He had to get her back.

Mendoza attacked and Jason deflected his blade's sharp edge. The Spaniard was one of the most dangerous swordsmen in the Caribbean, and Jason found himself challenged by his expert skills.

Their blades struck and Jason threw his weight into the sword, tossing his body close to Mendoza's. Swords crossed, Mendoza chuckled, enjoying his triumphant attack upon the *Sea Hawk* and capture of Shelley.

"I won't let you keep her," Jason ground out between clenched teeth.

"You'll have to take her from me, amigo."

Jason pushed against the Spaniard and he stumbled backward. Instead of charging into the duel again, Mendoza laughed and turned, signaling to his crew with a wave.

Enraged, Jason charged—then fire burst into his shoulder, making him fall forward onto the deck. He glanced up and saw Mendoza holding his cutlass in one hand—and a smoking flintlock in the other.

"Forgive me but I have a hostage I am anxious to meet. I came to reclaim the *Sea Hawk*, but I think a beautiful blonde that has captured the attention of my enemy,

Captain Flint, is much more rewarding." Mendoza pushed the barrel of the flintlock into his belt and smiled. "Consider our debt paid."

Mendoza was a handsome rogue with exotic dark skin and jet black hair. He had a sensual air that seduced many willing—and unwilling—females.

Images of Shelley with Mendoza tortured Jason. He'd never let that Spanish bastard touch her creamy skin.

Jason tried to move but his shoulder burned with pain and he groaned in agony. Mendoza sauntered back to his ship and Jason lay in a puddle of his own blood, helpless to save...

What was she to him? A slave? He swore she'd become nothing more than that, a servant to his desires and passions. Somehow, that had changed. His heart ached as he watched Mendoza's men leave the *Sea Hawk*, cutting away the ropes.

"Captain, they got your woman." Thomas crouched next to him to examine the wound.

Your woman. The words struck true to the core. Shelley belonged to Jason. She was his slave, his property—his mistress.

"You're in love with her," Thomas said quietly, cutting into Jason's thoughts while trying to stanch the blood flow.

Jason looked up into his friend's face. The world was wavering and his strength was draining. The urge to close his eyes and fall into the welcoming darkness of oblivion was tempting.

"Is it possible?" he whispered. *Love*. He swore never to love another again. After the painful affair with Claire and losing not only her but his brother as well, could he risk his heart with Shelly?

"Possible? Captain... Jason... I've known you throughout all your pirating days. I've never seen you look at a woman like you have at her. I can see it in your face—and hers."

The will to live crept over his soul. "Aye, she's unlike any other woman I've ever met."

The ship's surgeon ran to his side and gave Jason a weak smile.

"Report, Doc? How many dead?"

"More injuries than deaths, but I estimate ten dead with fifteen or so severely wounded—including you," the older man said, his creased face smeared with blood and grime. He quickly washed his hands in some clean water and proceeded to remove the makeshift dressing.

Jason gave orders for them to weigh anchor to repair the ship and tend to the wounded. As the surgeon probed for the ball in Jason's shoulder, he ordered the captain to drink healthy doses of rum.

"He stole my woman," Jason said in a slurred voice as the surgeon pulled out the metal lodged in his flesh.

"Yes, Captain." Thomas nodded as he held a bowl of water for the surgeon.

"My mistress. He stole *my* mistress. I swear, if he harms her—no, if he so much as *touches* her, I'll carve out his heart and feed it to the sharks." Jason took another gulp of rum, letting it ease his pain.

Thomas stood silent.

"You think he'll try to seduce her?" Jason's words were more incoherent with each passing moment.

"Aye, Captain. I believe so."

"Fucking son of a bitch." He took another gulp. "I'll kill him. I'll hunt him down across the sea, across the world if...I...have...to..."

The surgeon pulled out the last of the debris in his captain's shoulder as Jason surrendered to unconsciousness.

"The cap'n means to chase down a girl?" asked the surgeon. He took the rum bottle from Jason's limp hand and poured some of the alcohol over the wound.

Thomas nodded. "Aye. Mendoza didn't just steal a girl—he stole Captain Flint's treasure."

* * * * *

Leather-face and Viking took her below deck. The brigantine was much larger and roomier compared to Jason's sloop. The captain's cabin was vast, decked out for a man of wealth and riches. Decorated in fine velvet and brocade, it gave the impression of a chamber fit for a successful pirate captain. The several chests about the room, each bursting with gold, proved that fact beyond any doubt.

"You wait here, poppet. The cap'n will be here as soon as he takes care of that filthy Flint." Viking laughed before bolting the door closed behind him.

Alone in the cabin, she sighed, rubbing her temples. The noise outside was thundering, yet more distant. The fight was primarily on the *Sea Hawk*.

She certainly wasn't going to just sit here and wait for Mendoza to come and rape her. She began to rummage through the chests for some sort of weapon, and soon enough found a jewel-encrusted dagger. She pulled the blade from the gold sheath, and it shone flawless in the sunlight filtering in from the large windows behind the captain's desk.

Stepping over to the grand windows, she saw burning wreckage and men falling overboard the *Sea Hawk*. Shelley felt the bile rise as the men floated unmoving within the water, and then a dorsal fin broke the surface—sharks. She gasped as the bodies were pulled under by the feasting sharks now circling the carnage.

Shelley turned away, squeezing her eyes shut. Blood and gore filled her mind as the fighting continued.

Another cannon blast shook the ship and Shelley ran to the captain's elaborately decorated bed—an oasis for seduction. She pulled her body into a ball and covered her ears from the horrors outside.

What will happen to her? Will she ever see Jason again? Would she live to see tomorrow's dawn?

A cheer rang out above on deck, yet she lay still, unwilling to move from the bed.

Then she was aware of the ship lurching in the water, pulling away from the *Sea Hawk*.

They were leaving. Was Jason dead? Would Mendoza leave without killing him first? Fear coursed through her as her heart raced. She gripped the dagger's handle for courage as she waited. The pirate was sure to check on his captive soon.

She remembered her reading of the infamous Captain Mendoza, a Spaniard with a taste for wine, women and gold, not unlike any other brigand of the sea. He knew no loyalty, attacking ships of all countries, plundering their goods for his own benefit. It was thought the captain started his career in piracy with the death of his wife. She'd been raped and murdered when a ship of pirates attacked the small island village in Jamaica where they resided. Mendoza, an officer of the Royal Spanish Navy, swore vengeance and carved his way into history as he hunted down the men responsible for killing his beloved wife. Once his thirst for revenge was quenched, Mendoza continued his pirating career, opting for high-seas adventure over law-abiding respectability.

Another cheer from above, followed by the sound of men running, filled the cabin. Shelley rose from the bed and hurried to the window. They were indeed pulling away from the *Sea Hawk*.

Just then, the door to the cabin opened and Shelley spun around to face her captor. The knife in her hand gave her the confidence to endure this unforeseen twist of events.

Captain Mendoza filled the doorway with confidence and power. His tanned skin shone dark against his smile. Midnight black waves fell about his head and down over his shoulders. His body was lean and strong, filling his tight breeches with toned muscle. Mendoza was the picture of a sexy pirate straight from a cliché "bodice ripper" romance novel from the 1980s.

He closed the door behind him with a click of the lock and then whipped off his dark navy coat, revealing a white linen shirt loosely fitting over a perfectly sculpted chest.

"Welcome to my ship, *senorita*," he said in a thick Spanish accent, a sound that caressed her skin and sent shivers down her arms. "You, no doubt, know who I am." His dark brown eyes were full of gleeful mischief as he raked his gaze up and down her form.

"I know who you are, Captain Mendoza. Your reputation precedes you."

"Excelente."

Her heart pounded in her chest but she refused to let her fear show to this pirate. "What of Captain Flint?"

Mendoza strode to a side table where a decanter of wine sat with several glasses. As he picked up a glass and poured the deep red wine, he replied, "He is on his ship."

"Is he dead?"

He turned and stepped toward her, reaching out to her wrist and the bangle. "What is your interest in *Capitán* Flint?"

"He...he is..."

"Your former master. You have a new master now, *querida*. You belong to me, payment for *Capitán* Flint stealing my ship."

"He gave me as payment for a ship?"

Mendoza smiled, a devilish curve of his sensuous lips. "Not exactly. I wanted the prize most cherished by Flint, so I stole you." He traced her jaw with a fingertip and Shelley stilled, unprepared for her reaction to this Spanish seducer. He leaned into her and whispered against her cheek, "However, I have not collected on my debt in full—yet."

That snapped her back to reality. Yes, Mendoza was handsome, alluring and seductive, but he was not Jason. Angered, she brought the point of her knife to his abdomen. "There will be no collecting from me, unless you have a death wish, *Capitán*."

With a laugh he stepped backward. "The sea witch has talons, I see."

"Best you mind my talons and keep your hands to yourself."

His answer was another laugh.

Her ire rose as he casually walked back to the decanter to refill his glass. "Now tell me. Is Captain Flint dead, pirate?"

He took a large swallow of his wine as he made her wait for his answer. The glass empty, he placed it upon the table.

"Well?"

"He lives still, *querida*. At least he was alive when I left him clutching his shoulder after I shot him."

"Bastard!" she yelled and charged at the Spaniard.

He anticipated her move and effortlessly knocked the blade from her hand. They struggled but the captain was stronger. He held her within his grasp, yet Shelley refused to surrender.

"Wildcat!" He swore in Spanish and maneuvered her to the bed.

She fell back upon the rich coverlet and before she could escape, Mendoza threw himself down upon her. His weight pressed her into the soft mattress, trapping her body. She was very aware of his hard body dominating the situation. He was aroused but she didn't feel excitement over the heated cock rubbing against her thigh. Not even his thick breeches could hide his erection.

Shelley couldn't think beyond Jason lying wounded on the deck of the *Sea Hawk*. Mendoza clasped her wrists with his hands, exerting control over her struggles. His power over her drained her strength as she caved into her fears.

Sea Hawk's Mistress

"Please don't," she pleaded as tears burned her eyes. *Is Jason dead?* The question repeated over and over in her mind.

"Dulce, I must taste you."

"No...please. Stop!"

He stopped and pulled back from her. "You best forget *Capitán* Flint, *querida*. You belong to me now."

"No—" He kissed her roughly, his mouth crushing hers. His tongue demanded entrance to her mouth, dominating her senses as well as her responses. Her mind raced. Was this her fate, to find love only to be ripped away and brutalized by another man?

He whispered endearments to her against her lips then plunged his tongue back into her mouth, forcing her to meet his kiss. He was an expert in driving a response from an unwilling lover—a man used to taking what he wanted regardless of the circumstances.

"Give yourself to me," he said in a husky voice.

"Never," she gasped.

"I want you willing."

She stilled. Could she ever be willing to surrender to the man who possibly killed Jason? Was he even alive? The question would haunt her forever. She realized regret and guilt would pain her if she were ever to give in to Mendoza without making sure Jason was alive and safe. She could surrender to Jason, but not to Mendoza—not to the man who had stolen her from the arms of her lover.

"I can't. I'll never give myself to you."

He drew back to gaze down upon her face. "I do not have to give you a choice, *querida*. You are mine to do with as I please."

"And you always take what you want."

"Precisely."

"You may force my body to surrender...but my heart belongs to Jason." She waited a moment as the dark embers of his eyes flared with rage. "I love him," she said quietly. "And he loves me."

Then he caressed her upper arms gently, a touch so loving, her heart skipped. "I can love you, *querida*," he said softly, vulnerability echoing in his voice. Mendoza was desperate for love, she realized—and wanted *her* to give him what he required.

She closed her eyes as tears now ran down her face and onto the pillow. She could never betray Jason. "No."

Instead of Mendoza retreating as she had hoped, the top she wore was ripped from her body. She screamed and tried to fight against him but he held her wrists securely. Then he dipped his head down to her chest and began to lave a nipple. She gasped as his skilled tongue circled the taut flesh, and then he gently grazed his teeth over the very tip, driving her body into a frenzied response beneath him.

Cream gathered between her legs as he took her nipple into his mouth and suckled.

Within her mind the man loving her wasn't the pirate Mendoza—it was Jason. And in her building excitement, she called out his name. "Jason!"

The name of Mendoza's enemy upon her lips in a moment of pleasure was like a wave of arctic water crashing over his libido. The Spaniard jumped off the bed in anger and Shelly scrambled to cover herself with the coverlet.

"Witch," he spat. "When you come to my bed, I will have you begging for me. And it will be *my* name upon your lips as you take my cock into your body."

"I will *never* give myself to you willingly," she declared angrily.

He grabbed his coat and shoved his arms through the sleeves. "We shall see about that."

And a moment later, he left the cabin with a slam of the door.

"No we won't, *Capitán*. I promise you to my last breath—you will never have my heart."

Chapter Eight

"You'll not take her as I live!" Mendoza yelled as Jason approached with sword in hand.

Behind Mendoza stood Shelley, held captive by two other pirates. His blood boiled as the men held her to their sides. Her blonde hair was loose and blowing in the sea winds like a carpet of spun gold. The scene angered him further as her eyes pleaded with him across the deck.

She loved him. He felt it as sure as if she had spoken the words aloud for all to hear.

"Then I'll take her when you're dead!" he called back to the captain.

Aboard the Corazón Negro, Jason moved with lightning speed and attacked the Spanish captain. He had chased the black-hearted pirate across the stormy Caribbean for this very moment. The most violent hurricane couldn't keep Jason from his revenge.

The blades clashed with a clang of metal against metal and Jason fought for the life of the woman he loved. No sacrifice was too great. No price too steep. He would give his life to protect her.

"Shelley!" the fevered captain cried out as he thrashed within his bed.

"How much longer will his body be able to withstand this?" Thomas asked the surgeon evaluating the unconscious Jason.

"The cap'n has a strong heart and a thirst for revenge. He'll survive this fever," Will Pitt, the surgeon, said as he spooned some water between Jason's lips.

"It's been two days since—"

"Don't ye worry, Thomas," the older man said as he stood at Jason's bedside. "Once the fever breaks, the cap'n will be at the helm leading us on a vendetta against Mendoza."

* * * * *

Shelley lay in Mendoza's cabin alone. While she slept, food and water appeared regularly on a bedside table, assumingly brought by the pirate captain. She hadn't spoken to him since he stormed out two days ago. She took advantage of his angry avoidance to rest. So much had happened in the several days since she'd been whisked back in time. She still wondered if it was all a dream. However, being kidnapped by a rival sea captain was not part of any fantasy.

She sighed and sank into the lavish luxury of Mendoza's bed. At least the pirate had rich tastes for comfort. The bed was heavenly and she welcomed the soft warmth.

Then the bed mattress dipped to her side and a warm body slipped in under the covers. His hands upon her body, she sighed again. He reached around her and cupped a breast in his palm and moved closer to her naked body. She felt the hot, searing heat from his hard cock pressing against her backside and the hypnotizing sensation of his toned body along her back.

He squeezed a nipple and she moaned his name.

"Jason."

"I'm here, Shelley," he whispered into her ear. His warm breath against her skin created goose bumps along her arms and she shivered.

She turned toward him, welcoming his heated body slipping along hers. "Is this a dream?" she asked drowsily.

His answer was a kiss, and Shelley lost all sense of her surroundings as his lips mastered hers with skill and passion. She threaded her fingers through his long hair and drank in his closeness, letting her desire reign over her body. His tongue darted in and out of her mouth, tasting her with each pass, and she moaned.

"I was so afraid you were dead," she panted against his mouth.

"You gave me the will to live, luv," he declared breathlessly.

"But...he said he shot you."

"Mendoza is a terrible marksman. Now shut up, wench, and let me love you."

His body, muscled and powerful, seemed to engulf her as he kissed her deeply. He moved atop her and his weight was a welcome sensation as he pressed her down into the luxurious bed. His hand in her hair, his kisses turned frenzied and hungry, devouring her very being. She held onto his broad shoulders, losing herself in the moment.

Her breathing came quick and uncontrolled when he spread her legs and slipped his cock into her channel. She was slick and ready, and the entry was a delightful ecstasy. She came immediately as his size filled and stretched her walls.

It was pure need driving them. Shelley needed to have Jason within her. She'd thought he was dead, but here he was in her bed, making love to her. Hot passion unlike anything she'd ever experienced threatened to consume her as his body molded to hers in a perfect fit.

Her breasts flattened against his chest and her tight nipples strained against his body in painful points. As he moved, they rubbed along his sweat-slicked body, and she arched farther into him, wanting more. It was an unconscious reaction, and she willingly gave herself over to instinct and lust.

Jason pumped in and out of her body, his cock growing within her with each thrust. Shelley wept as she gave herself to him. It was not out of physical need but out of the love within her heart. She cried out with each push of his length deep into her body, like the perfect puzzle piece to her life. He grunted above her as his pace quickened and she floated on sexual euphoria when he spilled his seed into her.

Colors bust behind her eyes as another orgasm crashed over her body. Her muscles clenched and released about his cock, sucking his essence into her. Every nerve exploded in a climactic blast of passion, need, lust and love. From her toes to the roots of her hair, she felt the completion of her sexual bonding with the pirate of her heart, her sea hawk.

"I love you, Jason." Shelley wept as her body convulsed and her control deserted her. Nothing could have held back the words upon her lips—and in her heart.

"My love, my treasure." He kissed her face with heated lips. "I could never lose you."

A crack in the distance startled her, and it took Shelley a moment to realize the waves crashing about her were more than ecstasy.

Her eyes snapped open and Shelley scooted back in the bed in a startled fright. About her the chests of gold and jewels swayed with the rise and fall of the ocean, and chairs fell over and slid back and forth across the floor.

Mendoza slammed open and closed the door behind him. He stood for a moment then went about the cabin securing the chests.

"Prepare for a rough night. A hurricane is coming in fast upon us."

She sat silent, clutching a blanket against her chest. She had dreamed of Jason. She made love to Jason in a dream. It was only a dream! Tears burned her eyes as reality hit her like a slash of icy water.

"Do not fear, querida. I have taken this ship through many a storm here in the Caribbean."

She shook her head, wishing this adventure was at an end. Crying seemed the only outlet for her frustration and heartache.

Mendoza sat down on the bed and took her into his arms. She welcomed his comfort despite her anger with the Spaniard.

Jason is alive. She knew it in her heart. He was alive.

"It will be over soon. And once we clear this hurricane, I will take you ashore to a nearby island. My men will make repairs and...we can get better acquainted. How does that sound?"

She was numb as he held her. He read her silence as agreement and he dipped his head, kissing her.

His kiss was warm and tender and not completely unwelcome. She was shocked at the change in his manner from strength and control to gentle lover. Shelley found herself kissing him back with a shy flick of her tongue along his.

"Sweet sea witch," he murmured against her lips.

The storm raged closer with each moment outside—yet the one within her was much more dangerous as she clutched Mendoza and kissed him. His kisses were like spiced rum—exotic and intoxicating. Her hands grasped at his coat, pulling him closer. Pain, loneliness and heartache flooded her, and she gave in to the sexy Spanish captain for a few moments of human contact and tenderness.

He moaned into their kiss. "Querida, I must leave you. My men need me to command the ship through the storm."

She released his coat and let her hands fall to her lap.

"Stay here and rest. Don't wander out of the cabin. I do not want you to be washed overboard in the storm."

She nodded absently, confused at her neediness for his company. Was it only two days ago she swore to never let him melt her icy heart? Yet, after two days of solitude on Mendoza's ship, her resolve wavered.

She lay back in the bed and wept. Her dream of Jason loving her with such urgency and Mendoza's sweet tenderness confused her. She loved Jason, yearned for his presence, ached for his touch to ease her fears and torments, yet it was her new captor's voice that soothed her. He whispered to her in Spanish, words she didn't know, but his meaning was clear with his soft tones—he wished to comfort and reassure.

His voice wrapped about her in a loving caress amid the growing danger threatening outside. The room's rocking increased and she squeezed her eyes shut.

"It is best you shut out the swells. In case you feel ill, there is a pot for you to vomit into on the floor."

"Swell," she croaked.

A bang on the door and a crewman yelled in heated Spanish through the door for the captain. Mendoza answered and then turned back to her. "Querida, I must go. Stay safe, and I will be back when it is over." He leaned over and kissed her forehead.

She opened her eyes and peered up at his face. "Thank you, Captain Mendoza."

"Please, call me Lorenzo."

She smiled weakly. "Thank you...Lorenzo."

"And what is the name of my beautiful hostage?" he asked with a light tone. The remark was teasing and she smiled.

"Shelley."

He rose and buttoned his coat to face the hurricane that tossed the ship. For a man responsible for the lives of the hundred men aboard, Lorenzo appeared serene and unworried.

"Shelley..." he started. "I shall return during the night to make sure you are faring well."

He opened the door and for an instant, the wind and rain poured into the room. With a slam of the door behind him, Shelley was alone once again.

She lay in the bed and closed her eyes tightly, as though the simple act would protect her from the storm outside—and the one raging within her heart.

The dream gave her hope. He was out there, calling for her. She felt the tug within her soul to seek out her true love. He loved her, she was sure of that. He had never spoken of love, but her heart knew the truth.

And what of her attraction to Lorenzo? He was the man who had injured Jason, yet she wanted him to caress her, comfort her. He'd fought Jason out of revenge and she was his prize. However, kidnapping her from Jason was a beneficial twist of fate, saving the crew of the *Sea Hawk*. The battle was shortened and had not ended in the sinking of the *Sea Hawk*. Fewer lives were lost because she was kidnapped, and Shelley latched onto that small piece of information to find solace in her current situation.

The room swayed and Shelley realized this must be the hurricane thought to have sunk the *Santa Rosa*. Instead pirates—Captain Jason Flint—had sunk the *Santa Rosa* days before the storm.

She tried to think about her reading on Captain Mendoza. The attack on the *Sea Hawk* probably happened regardless of her traveling back in time. However, the battle's outcome was altered with her kidnapping. What had changed? Should the *Sea Hawk* have been lost? Was Jason supposed to be dead?

She couldn't remember the fate of Mendoza. Perhaps it was for the best. She hated the idea of affecting history – disturbing the natural course of time – with her time hop.

Clasping the silver bangle at her wrist, she took comfort in its presence. Putting it on brought her here—and to Jason. And somehow she would find her way back to him.

* * * * *

The hurricane hit the *Sea Hawk* with a vengeance, and the crew secured the rigging and managed to survive the worst of the storm. The seas began to calm and the winds died down as the injured Captain Flint's fever broke.

"Where are we?" he demanded, rising from his bed. "Have we spotted Mendoza's ship?"

"We lost the *Corazón Negro* three days ago, Captain. Right after he kidnapped your woman."

"Damn it, three days?" Jason bellowed. "I've been out for three days?"

"Fever. You were out of your head," Thomas said as he stood by the bed. "You passed out after Will removed the musket ball."

Jason nodded. "He has three days' head start on us."

"I believe I know where he is heading."

Jason cocked a brow. "To the island of Virgen Magra?"

"He will put in to make repairs from the storm, if they sustained any. It is the closest island to make such repairs and take on provisions," Thomas reasoned.

His arm in a sling, Jason pulled his coat over his good arm and draped the other side to hide his injury – his sword arm. "Set a course for the island of Virgen Magra."

He opened the door and slowly climbed the stairs to the deck.

"Captain, are you well enough to move about?" Thomas asked from behind him.

Jason peered out over the sea to the horizon. "I must be ready. I must regain my strength."

Out there in the Caribbean, Shelley was the hostage of his nemesis. Mendoza had kidnapped his woman, and for that, Jason intended to seek revenge.

During his illness Jason dreamed of Shelley. Her warm body wrapped about him, her heart welcoming him with a love that shone brightly within her eyes and the tenderness of her touch. He made love to her, his body demanding to join with hers, a union of souls and bodies.

But it had only been a dream.

He reached for the spyglass and gazed out into the distance. The sun began its decent into the horizon, gold and red colored the waves, casting an ethereal aura across the surface.

"Shelley," he whispered into the wind. "My love, my treasure."

* * * * *

In two days the *Sea Hawk* sailed into sight of Virgen Magra. The small island stood alone with a fine sand beach surrounding the rich, thick vegetation within. The *Corazón Negro* sat at anchor in the inlet on the eastern side.

"Sail about the island and set us on the western beach. I will take a landing party to meet Mendoza on the eastern inlet."

Jason stood ready on deck. He'd removed his sling the day before to work his sore muscles in preparation for his encounter with Mendoza. His shoulder ached but the wound was healing well. However, Jason knew it severely put him at a disadvantage.

"You will have to fight Mendoza with intelligence rather than might," Thomas said at his side.

"Aye, I do not believe my arm will hold out for long against him in a duel."

"Mendoza will not give her up willingly," Thomas said in a low voice. "She is his prize."

"She is *mine*, and I will do whatever it takes to get her back." Anger roared through his veins at the thought of Mendoza sullying his woman. "And if that black-hearted Spanish bastard even touched her, I will make sure he pays with his life."

Thomas sighed. "Captain, you have to think clearly. If she is alive—"

Jason suddenly turned on his first mate. "She *is* alive," he broke in. There was no doubt in Jason's mind, she was alive. He could almost feel the connection between them strengthen with every mile he sailed closer to her, and knew she felt his pain and longing.

"Concentrate on getting her back. Anger makes even the most seasoned fighter grow careless." Thomas laid a reassuring hand upon his friend's good shoulder. "Forget revenge. Save the life of the woman you love."

Chapter Nine

The *Sea Hawk* anchored at the small island of Virgen Magra in the dark hours of the morning. As they approached, Jason could make out the main mast of the *Corazón Negro* as it floated in the small inlet. He hoped the element of surprise would fool Mendoza and his crew and give Jason the advantage.

At dawn, Jason led a small landing party ashore. Anchored on the other side of the island, he left little to chance.

The party happened upon one of Mendoza's scouts—asleep with a rum bottle in hand. They secured the drunken man to a nearby tree so as not to give away the surprise too soon.

When they arrived just outside the pirate's camp on the beach, Jason's nerves were on edge. He scanned the tents but saw no evidence of Shelley anywhere.

Then from one tent, Jason spotted Mendoza emerging, stretching his arms, his shirt rumpled and unkempt. Since when did the properly dressed captain sport such wrinkled clothes?

Then from the same tent, Shelley stepped outside. She appeared sleepy and when Mendoza spoke to her, Jason spotted tenderness between them. Had the Spanish scoundrel seduced her into his bed?

Jason's blood boiled as he watched his nemesis and his mistress exchange smiles and pleasantries.

"Fickle wench," Jason muttered.

"Looks can be deceiving, Captain," Thomas said in a low voice. "I see sadness in her smile."

Jason answered with a grunt. He looked closer at her face. Was she truly unhappy? He noticed the dark smudges under her eyes and the downward curve of her lips when Mendoza walked away. Was her smile merely an act for her captor?

She stood outside the tent and gazed at the thick jungle foliage inland. When her eyes paused over the area where he sat and observed, his heart leapt. Upon her face was the hope and longing he felt within his heart.

"See, Captain – she awaits you."

Jason smiled as he handed his looking glass to Thomas. "I think it is time we pay Captain Mendoza and his crew a morning visit."

* * * * *

Last evening Mendoza's *Corazón Negro* anchored in the inlet of a small island. According to Shelley's estimation, they were amid the Bahaman islands.

Mendoza set about a seduction that night. Shelley was tempted to give in to his strong body and alluring voice. A man speaking words of sexual promise in a Spanish accent was extremely hard to resist, however, she held to her heart. A few kisses were all she shared with the captain, along with a few gentle hours lying in his arms. He remained a gentleman to her wishes—wanting her to accept him of her own free will. It was hardly what she expected from him, or any pirate for that matter, but Captain Lorenzo Mendoza was a man longing for love—more than he was willing to admit.

As Shelley emerged from the tent where she slept with Lorenzo, she had the feeling of being watched. She scanned the trees just off the beach but saw nothing. Perhaps it was wishful thinking that Jason had found her so quickly.

Would he even come after her? She prayed he would. But how would he know where Lorenzo would set ashore to make necessary repairs to the *Corazón Negro*? This island seemed much like any other—uninhabited and desolate.

"Would you care for a cup of tea, querida?" Lorenzo asked her.

"Oh yes, that would be lovely."

"I may be a pirate, but I do have a taste for the civilized." He laughed. It was a sound that made her smile. The woman who truly held his heart one day would be a lucky woman indeed.

Then a commotion by the trees drew her attention.

Out of the green foliage walked a group of men—led by Jason!

His face was hard, his mouth drawn in a grim line. His eyes were like stone and he walked past her without a glimmer of recognition.

"Mendoza, I believe you have something of mine," Jason said commandingly.

Lorenzo laughed and waved Jason to come and sit outside his tent, where there sat a few chairs and a small table set for morning refreshments.

"I do not recall having anything belonging to you, *Capitán*," Lorenzo said as he sat.

"You had stolen my ship and I collected on that debt. We are even."

Jason refused to sit and stood glaring at the Spaniard. "We are *not* even."

Lorenzo thought for a moment. "Yes, perhaps it was not an even trade. She is worth much more to me than any ship."

"The girl is mine. I'm here to take her back."

Lorenzo clucked his tongue. "No, *Capitán*, she is mine. You have a fine ship and I have a beautiful woman. My hunt for revenge is over. Now leave this island before I grow angry and teach you another lesson."

Shelley stood stunned, watching the exchange. Jason acted as though she was invisible, yet he demanded her return. A shiver of anticipation skittered down her spine at the thought of his naked body sliding along hers. She almost moaned at the mental image of being tied to his bed, ass in the air, ripe for a paddling. Cream gathered between her legs and her cunt clenched in want for his touch.

Her reaction to Jason was so much deeper than that to Mendoza. She was attracted to Lorenzo, but she was *in love* with Jason. Her pirate lover awakened the woman inside who yearned to emerge and experience sexual pleasure—and love.

"Careful, Captain, I am not feeling forgiving this morning."

Lorenzo leaned forward in his chair. "Don't threaten me, *Capitán*. The *senorita* remains as my lovely hostage."

Jason laid a hand upon the hilt of his sword. "She comes with me. The woman is my slave, and as such, she is my property." He drew his sword and pointed the tip at Lorenzo. Jason's command faltered for a split second before he fought down the outward sign of weakness.

Shelley took note of the painful wince upon Jason's face. She wanted to go to his side and help him. But his countenance was firm—his heart was ice. He wouldn't even spare a glance in her direction.

"I fear you take your life into your own hands. You are not well enough to face my blade."

"Afraid to find out, Mendoza?"

Lorenzo's face turned angry. "You are a fool, *Capitán*." He stood and pulled his blade from the sheath at his side. "You see her as only a slave. I see her as my future wife. I will fight for what I claim as mine."

Wife? Shelley glanced from Lorenzo to Jason as they stripped away their side arms and began to circle each other on the beach.

Lorenzo wanted to marry her. Jason wanted to possess her. What did she want?

When Jason pealed away his coat, the strips of a bandage shone beneath his white linen shirt. Her breath caught as the men faced each other—anger, resentment and revenge filling the air with a thick aura of negativity.

Someone was not going to walk away from this confrontation. Someone was going to die. Could she live with the consequences of this battle?

It was like watching a scene from a movie as the two powerful men faced off with their sword skills as their only defense. "Perhaps we should end this feud today," Lorenzo quipped as he slashed his sword through the air. "To the winner go the lady and the ship."

Shelley's heart beat wildly as Jason swung his sword at his foe.

"So be it!" The crash of metal against metal filled the air as the two pirate captains battled upon the beach—fighting for their very lives.

Her chest tightened as her breath came quicker, anxiety pumping through her veins with each beat of her heart. How could she stand here watching Jason and Lorenzo fight over her like wild beasts over a mate? To the winner go her body—and all the rights of a male over his woman.

Lorenzo cut and slashed and Jason parried each attack. However, strain etched Jason's face with each cut of his sword. His prior wound was draining his strength quickly and Lorenzo used it to his advantage. Instinctively, she moved forward when Jason fell backward onto the sand. She was promptly grabbed by Jason's first mate, held back from interfering in the battle.

"It is between them now," he whispered.

Lorenzo motioned to Jason to rise before continuing the fight.

"This is insane!" She pulled her arm from the man's grasp. "Jason is injured. He can't last much longer against Lorenzo."

"He knew that before he even challenged Mendoza." He paused then said as they watched Jason attack Mendoza once again with his sword, "He loves you more than his own life."

"What good will that do me if he gets himself killed?" She turned to the pirate and pleaded with him. "Let me go. I must stop this."

"Do you love him?"

Tears streaked down her face as her heart's longing ate at her soul. "More than anything."

They turned back to the men fighting for the right to own her, and when Mendoza slashed open a wound on Jason's right arm, Shelley screamed.

She broke away from her captor and ran across the soft sand, yelling, "Stop!"

Jason grabbed at the wound with his left hand, pausing a moment to stanch the blood. Lorenzo lowered his sword at her approach. She ran to Jason's side and threw herself at him. She clung to his body crying and he wrapped his right forearm about her waist weakly.

"Jason...please stop. I can't take anymore," she wept.

"Shh, luv." Jason nuzzled her hair and her tears flowed harder.

From behind her, Lorenzo breathed heavily. "Go. Take her. And the Sea Hawk."

She turned in Jason's arms. "You're letting me go?"

He closed the distance between them. Touching her face with gentle fingertips, he said in a low voice, "I stole a few moments with you, *querdia*. You will always carry with you a part of my heart...but I see your heart belongs to him." He looked up and gazed at Jason. "Gold and jewels buy a warm companion for your bed, but there is no treasure as precious as the love and devotion of a true lady."

She reached up and touched his tanned face. "Thank you, Lorenzo. You are a true gentleman."

He leaned in and whispered, "Do not say that too loudly. I don't want to ruin my reputation as a bloodthirsty pirate."

"You will find your true love, Lorenzo. She's out there waiting for you."

He straightened and sheathed his sword at his side. "Perhaps. Until then, I carry the image of you within my heart." He bowed gallantly, turned toward his ship, waved to his crew to prepare for their departure and in a few strides, he was gone.

"He is a good man," she whispered.

Jason smirked. "He is a pirate."

* * * * *

Mendoza's crew had broke camp on the island, but Mendoza ordered the main tent be left behind for Jason to recover from his wound. Shelley helped Jason to the tent to bandage his arm.

"I thought I had lost you," Jason said as she helped him lay back on the pillows piled on the rug-covered sand floor of the tent.

Shelley had been swept into a dream. In slow motion, she began bandaging Jason's wound. Luckily the cut was superficial and had merely oozed a small amount of blood, which was staunched fairy quickly.

"You could never lose me, Jason." Her fingers worked to secure some cloth about his arm and her body hummed with awareness at his closeness.

He reached for her hand. His skin was warm and inviting. "When I saw them take you, I wanted to chase them but—"

"I know," she reassured. "You came as soon as you could. I know that."

"I dreamed of you. Crazed musings from a mind riddled with fever and a heart struggling with feelings I have never known before."

She gazed into his eyes and was struck by their intensity. She gingerly touched his face. "I love you, Jason. I don't know how I came to be here, but I do know you are the reason."

Confusion wrinkled his brow. "What do you mean?"

"I can't explain it without sounding completely insane." A tear fell down her cheek as the tender love for this man overwhelmed her. "I just want to love you for as long as I can," she sobbed. Her tears tasted salty against her tongue as she licked away the wetness upon her lips.

He reached for her, burying his face into the length of her hair. She loved his command over her senses—his needs demanding her body's compliance. She wanted to give him everything she had to offer.

"I need to make love to you," he whispered against her ear. He tucked her body beneath his and began to touch her. He reacquainted his hands with her curves, covering a breast with his hand and testing its reaction to his skill. He pinched her nipple through the fabric of her dress and she whimpered in response. Between her legs, cream gathered and the ache for his touch intensified. Her cunt quivered in its emptiness, demanding to be filled.

He pulled up the hem of her dress and the warm air kissed her sex. She couldn't find her voice as his fingertips grazed over the sensitive skin of her thigh. She shivered despite the tropical heat within the tent. A fine sheen of sweat covered her skin and Jason seemed determined to taste every slick inch of her body. He moved down her body, his hands mastering her responses and his mouth testing her submission. Not even the fabric of her dress could mask the hot demands of his lips.

He spread her legs farther as he lowered his body between her legs. He brushed his thumbs slowly over the smooth skin framing her labia, and she shuddered as the lips parted and her juices seeped from the opening.

"Ah, luv, you are so perfect," he said. He continued to trace her nether lips with the pads of his thumbs, driving her anticipation higher.

He parted the wet folds and her clit seemed to vibrate with excitement as his warm breath caressed its sensitive surface.

When he tentatively passed the tip of his tongue over the straining nubbin she cried out, her body overwhelmed with the building sensations caused by the rhythm he set with his licks.

Shelley panted and rode the path to climax quickly. She arched her body as Jason continued to tempt the small nub with his talented tongue. She reached down and spread her fingers through the thick length of his hair, holding his head to her crotch. She cried out with every pass of his tongue over her clit, and when she could no longer take the sensual assault, she came.

Marianne LaCroix

When her orgasm crashed over her senses, it was as though every cell within her exploded into ecstasy. Heated joy washed over her with each squeeze of her muscles, but the emptiness of her sheath left her whimpering with unfulfilled need. She needed Jason's cock inside her, pumping to the beat of her body's sexual rhythm.

Her body sang in the euphoria of the moment. Brought to the pinnacle by the man she loved—it was worth more than any pirate's gold coins or gem-encrusted treasure.

Chapter Ten

Breathing rapidly after her trip to paradise, Shelley reclined upon the lavish pillows, trying to recover from Jason's mastery over her body. As she relaxed and calmed, Jason removed the dress she wore, given to her by Lorenzo. Unbuttoning her bodice was much too time-consuming, apparently. Jason opted for the knife, cutting the fabric away with swift strokes.

"Rule number one, luv," he said at her askance expression.

She simply smiled. "No clothes."

He disposed of the dress, throwing the tattered fabric aside. "It is good you remember that, because I intend to keep you naked as much as possible."

"I think I'm going to enjoy that, Captain."

"My mistress of the sea shall wear only the finest dresses obtained by me."

"Mistress?" Her joy was damped. Was that all he wanted from her, to be his mistress?

"Would you rather I refer to you as my sex slave?" he asked with laughter in his voice as he playfully nipped her earlobe.

She couldn't help but join in his sexy playfulness. "Ah, but being *your* sex slave is not such a bad position to be in. I've never had so much pleasure until I was captured by you, Captain."

He stilled. "How many masters pleasured you?"

She met his gaze. "No man mastered my body, or my heart, until you."

For a second she thought he'd kiss her, something she longed for him to do. She'd sampled his body but he'd never given her the simplest gesture of love—a kiss.

Instead he murmured against her skin, "You shall have no other."

Her eyes rolled back as Jason kissed a trail from her ear to her breasts, his hands molding her body to his.

Jason lavished attention upon one breast and then the other. As he suckled upon her aching nipples, he whispered, "Touch yourself. Show me how much you love me."

She reached down to her sex and dipped her fingers through her wet folds. With one pass of her fingers over the sensitive tip of her clit, she moaned loudly.

"Jason," she whispered.

"You are so beautiful, Shelley," he said in a low, husky voice.

She stretched and moaned as he traced his hands over her body. She felt cherished, worshipped and loved.

She wrapped an arm about Jason's head and groaned. He nuzzled her breasts, his face buried between the two mounds. He licked and kissed them as he gently squeezed them together with his hands.

Her body moved against him, urging him on.

"Tell me how you want me. Tell me you want to fuck me," he said as he reached between her legs to her clit, juices sluicing over his fingers. She guided his fingers with her own to show him the spot that drove her wild.

"I want you, Jason. I want you inside me. I want to fuck you long and hard."

"Mount me...ride me, luv."

They rolled on the pillows and then Shelley straddled his hips. As she placed her legs about Jason, her labia gaped open and she became overly aware of how empty she felt. There within a few inches was Jason's cock, thickly veined and hard.

He placed his hands on her knees, moving his palms slowly to her waist before grasping his cock and sliding it through the slick cream of her pussy. "Fuck me, Shelley. Now."

She lifted herself with her thighs, slowly guiding her hips over his length. As his size filled her, she moaned in joy. Pleasure wrapped about her as she moved slowly down onto his cock.

She slid her body up and down on Jason's cock, lost in the sensations building within her. His hands lay upon her hips, guiding her, slowing her pace. She fought his control but he cooed to her soft commands and promises of unending passion.

Jason mapped her torso with his hands, studying her curves with each thrust. His fingertips were warm and hungry. When he cupped her breasts, she gasped at the heat of his skin against her sensitive flesh. Her nipples ripened at his touch and her cunt quivered when he gently pinched her taut nipples. She thought she'd climax just then, but more was to come. Every inch of him coursed through her body with each beat of her heart.

She relished the leisurely skill with which he made love to her. When he reached for her clit and circled his thumb over the surface, euphoria hit her. A powerful orgasm pulsed through her like an explosion, igniting every cell in her body.

Jason! Oh how I love you! She managed to peek at him as she came and his intense need to please her was written upon his face. She wanted to scream out her heart's truth to him again, but instead bit her lip.

She was a woman here by strange magic, a twist of fate that couldn't be explained. How could she have let her heart be touched by a man who lived as a pirate—in 1622!

She moved her hips slightly, gaining a moan from her pirate lover from the past. She smiled when her body jolted and her heart skipped a beat as another climax washed over her.

Jason became more insistent in his thrusts and she felt stretched to the brink, and loved it. But she wanted more. She needed his confession of love.

"Jason," she whispered breathlessly. "Tell me you love me."

Marianne LaCroix

At that instant he came, wrapping his arm about her, bringing her face close to his. His warm seed pumped into her and he kissed her hair. He confessed in a husky voice, "I love you. Only you...forever...my love."

It was too much. Shelley came a third time as her lover awaited her on the summit of mutual sexual ecstasy. Her spasms vibrated throughout her body as Jason's cock pulsed inside her.

Held on the precipice of sexual paradise, Shelley was overcome by sensation and staying awake became difficult. She relaxed into Jason and whispered, "Forever." Then darkness swirled about her senses, and Shelley eased into a content unconsciousness.

When Shelley came to, she was lying on her side with Jason kissing her face.

"Are you all right, luv?" Jason asked anxiously.

"Yes, I'm okay. Just blacked out there for a few moments."

Jason brushed her hair and kissed her temple. "I love you so much. I do not think I could stand losing you ever again."

She gazed into his eyes. "I love you more than anything, Jason." But how could she ever say she'd never leave him? She was a time traveler, a woman living in a place she didn't belong.

"What is it? You seem troubled." He paused then asked, "Is it Mendoza?"

She cocked a brow. "Nothing happened between Captain Mendoza and me. I couldn't give him what he wanted."

"Why?"

She giggled. "There's room for only one pirate in my heart."

"Anyone I know?" His voice was lighter, but sleepy.

"Aye. I believe so, Captain." She lightly kissed his cheek. "You."

"Good, otherwise I would have had my rival shot in the morning."

"I thought punishment was to walk the plank?"

He laughed. "If you don't be quiet and let me get some sleep for a few hours, I will make *you* walk the plank."

She snuggled into his arms, cherishing the welcoming warmth of his body next to hers. "Pirate."

* * * * *

Shelley and Jason didn't leave the tent the rest of the day or evening. As the sun rose in the sky the next morning, the couple walked on the beach together, the waves lapping along the shoreline in a rhythmic dance while seagulls swooped out over the water for their early morning meal.

"I have something I want to talk to you about." Jason's voice broke into her thoughts.

"Yes?"

He appeared troubled, or possibly unsure. "I want to quit pirating."

She stopped and looked at him in surprise. "Quit? But how?"

He turned to her and placed his hands upon her shoulders. "I actually thought to give back the *Sea Hawk* to Mendoza. He can pass the command on to someone he feels worthy."

"But what would you do?"

He folded her hands within his. The gesture was tender and her heart skipped a beat. "Get married and build a mansion for my beloved wife and have lots of children."

Could she even hope he meant to marry her? "I thought you said you wanted me as your mistress."

"I want to build a new life for myself, and I want a wife by my side, not a mistress."

"But-"

"Do not worry about your slave band. I grant you your freedom. I will make sure it is removed."

Her breath caught. What about her life in the future? If the band was removed, what would happen?

He dropped to one knee. "Would you marry me, Shelley?"

"I..." She wanted, more than anything, to say yes. But she was from another time, brought back across the centuries by an unknown magic. To agree without thought would be so easy. But she couldn't honestly agree to a marriage. Not without knowing if she would stay. Not without telling him her story. "Jason, I have to tell you something."

He stood up. "What is it? Are you already married? I thought you were only a—"

She placed a finger over his lips. "Please. Just let me talk. It's going to be hard to believe. I'm not sure *I* even believe it."

Questions and confusion reflected in his eyes, but she pressed on. "I'm not really a slave. I am not even from this time. I was on a research dive for the newly discovered galleon, the *Santa Rosa*, thought to be sunk by a hurricane in 1622. However, by examining the hull, it was apparent the galleon sank during a sea battle—probably pirates."

He dropped her hands and gazed at her face with dawning fear.

"As I swam through the wreckage, I came across a trinket left behind—this bangle." Shelley lifted her arm and fingered the silver band. "When I picked it up, the latch unhooked and I was sucked through some sort of time vortex. I can't really explain it beyond that it was unlike anything I've ever experienced. When I woke up, I was in your cabin on the *Sea Hawk*." She paused and reached for him. "I'm from the future, Jason. I was brought here by magic...and I don't know if I will remain here or one day suddenly get pulled back to my own time."

She stepped closer and laid her head against his chest. "But I met *you*, and now I never want to go back. If you remove this band, I don't know what will happen."

He reached for her arm and touched the bangle that had brought her across time. "Can it be true?"

She nodded, her tears wetting his linen shirt. She sank into his embrace, his body heat welcoming and soothing to her fears.

"I knew you were different, luv. But this is...quite unbelievable."

She backed away from him and saw the skepticism written on his face. "You think I'd make up something like this?"

"I think you have been at sea for a long time and the sun may have gotten to your mind," he said gently. "We can stay here for a few days until you get to feeling better before moving on to Tortuga."

He thought she was nuts. "I am *not* making this up. You have to believe me! I'm not crazy."

He stepped toward her but she backed out of his reach.

"Do you believe me?" she asked in painful sorrow.

"Shelley —"

He reached for her but she pulled away, shaking her head as she continued backing away, putting more distance between them. "No. Don't touch me," she said, tears falling freely. She grasped the bangle and tugged at the clasp. "I've been through too much—traveling back in time, falling in love with a pirate, getting kidnapped...I can't take any more. I just want to go home and end this."

The bangle opened and fell from her wrist onto the sand.

She stared at the silver band glittering in the sand for a brief moment then looked up at Jason, who ran toward her—then faded into nothingness.

The sunny island darkened before her eyes and the ground shifted beneath her feet. She fell to the sand and water ran over her legs. She shivered and closed her eyes to the bright flashes blinding her, sending her mind reeling in confusion. Dizziness engulfed her and when she finally felt the warm rays of the sun upon her skin, she blinked away the disorientation.

She was alone on the beach.

Marianne LaCroix

What happened? The bangle! Her eyes searched the tropical forest just beyond the beach—and realized the foliage was much more overgrown than she remembered.

She rose to her feet and staggered off in the direction of the tent. But it was nowhere to be found.

With sadness in her heart, she fell to the sand and tears burst from her eyes as she sobbed.

Her time in the past was over.

Chapter Eleven

Shelley sat staring out at the sea at her father's beach house. That's where she'd stayed for the entire summer, each day looking out over the ocean—pining for her pirate lover.

Had it really been two months ago since she'd been aboard the *Sea Hawk*? Two months since she had been blasted into the past and into the arms of a sexy pirate? And oh, how she wished that's where she was today.

However, the moment she removed the bangle from her wrist, Shelley had been thrust back to the future and he was out of her life forever. How could the fates be so cruel as to let her find love and passion only to rip it away?

As the waves crashed against the Florida beach, Shelley sighed. A tear ran down her cheek as she let sadness eat at her soul.

"Honey, are you okay?" she heard her father ask as he stepped out onto the deck.

She couldn't answer.

"You haven't been the same since...since the accident." He took a seat next her in a lounge chair.

That was what the dive had become known as, "the accident". According to the divers, she literally disappeared that day during the expedition. Vanished into the depths of the ocean. Search parties combed the area for her, but to no avail. A week later, she had been found alone and crying by the Coast Guard, hundreds of miles away on a small uninhabited island in the Bahamas.

She couldn't bring herself to tell them the truth. Who would believe that she'd traveled back in time? She didn't even tell her father, fearing he would think she was insane. So, when everyone asked what had happened, she claimed amnesia. Considering the circumstances, no one questioned her further about "the accident".

"I think it's time you talk to me about what happened out there two months ago," he said in a solemn voice. "Enough is enough. I can't stand seeing you like this."

"Dad, you wouldn't believe it if I told you." She was sure he'd ship her off to a mental hospital the instant she told him. As a scientist, he'd never believe it. Or would he?

"So there *is* something. I knew it. Now...out with it. Time to reveal your secrets, honey. It's the only way you can find peace."

She turned on him. "I don't want to find peace, I want Jason!"

His face crinkled with confusion. "Jason? Who's Jason?"

"Captain Jason Flint."

Shelley spent the next hour spilling the events that haunted her heart. Of course, she skipped over the sexual escapades she'd shared with Jason. No sense in telling her father that she had liked it when Jason tied her to his bed.

When she was through, he sat silent for a few moments, digesting her tale. It was hard to believe, even to her.

"Time travel." He sat staring out over the water, shock written upon his face.

"Yes. If I didn't actually experience it, I would say it was a load of bullshit."

His gaze slid to her face. "Well, it is very hard to digest, honey."

"Then why I am sitting here without a clue as to how to move on with my life? I feel like I left my life back in 1622 with Jason."

"If it was anyone else, I'd say it was impossible. Time travel is fiction, an H.G. Wells novel, not something that actually happens."

"But I'm telling you, it *did* happen. I'm not crazy. This is not some story I made up. I went back in time and fell in love with a pirate captain. I lived through a sea battle, was kidnapped by a rival captain only to be a prize in a duel. It all happened. I swear." Shelley's heart hammered in her chest. He *had* to believe her.

Sea Hawk's Mistress

"You say a bangle was the key to this whole strange adventure?"

"Yes. I found it in the wreckage on the dive."

"Honey, it wasn't with you when they found you on the island."

She sighed. "I know. It was left behind, back in time."

"The questions that remain are, what happened to the bangle after it came off, and where is it now?"

"I don't know. I assume Jason has it."

She turned to stare back out at the ocean.

"Maybe we ought to do our own treasure hunt, Shelley."

Turning her gaze to his, she asked, "What do you mean?"

"I mean, if this happened as you say, wouldn't your captain have left the bangle somewhere for you to find on that island, the last place he was with his love?"

She shook her head. "Dad, you don't believe me, so why pretend otherwise. I told you that you wouldn't believe it."

"You believe you went back in time. I don't know what to think about it." Then he sighed and added, "However, if it is true..."

"What?" Her heart pounded harder.

"If it truly happened, your captain would certainly try to reach you."

"And?"

He hesitated then said, "Maybe your captain buried the bangle on the island, hoping you'd find it in the future."

Could it be possible? "To return to him in the past?"

He reached over and squeezed her hand. "It's entirely possible."

For the first time in months, Shelley had hope. "When can we go to the island?"

Marianne LaCroix

"Tomorrow. We'll take the Marine Society's boat. On the way to the docks, we can pick up a couple metal detectors and supplies. Right now, let's go download a map of the island and see if we can pinpoint where to look first."

She gave him a crooked smile. "You don't really believe that Jason left the bangle there on the island for me to find, do you?"

He sighed. "Not really. But I'll help you no matter what I think. I just love you and hate seeing you in pain. Maybe you can find peace if we look for any sign of your pirate captain."

"Thanks, Dad."

* * * * *

The next day on the island, Shelley and her father searched, but with no luck. In fact, all they found was a rummaged hole in the floor of the tropical forest. Someone had been there just recently and cleaned out whatever had been hidden there. Shelley realized other pirates had probably anchored on the island, just as Jason and Mendoza had. Could it have been treasure left behind?

"Look, a piece of eight," her father said as he picked up a silver coin from the sand. "There was definitely *something* buried here. Whoever dug this up probably made off with a fortune," he said, eying the size of the hole. He scanned the area around it, lined with wood and dried leaves. "And they knew exactly where to look too. I didn't find signs of a search anywhere else."

"Maybe they were using metal detectors," she said as she sat on a small pile of sand.

Her father stood silent, gazing out toward the beach.

"Dad? Did you hear me?"

He just stood there, shock written on his face.

Shelley dropped her metal detector and ran to his side. "Dad, are you okay?"

He pointed toward the beach. "I don't think he needed to use metal detectors."

"He? Who's *he*?" she asked as she turned her head toward the beach.

"The captain."

She gasped at the vision. Surely it was something brought on by the heat. Or island fever.

No, it was him.

"Jason," she whispered.

Her father stuttered in disbelief.

Jason strode up from the beach toward them. She sank to the sand, her legs giving out beneath her. Stunned, she was unable to believe her own eyes.

He stopped and stood before her. He was dressed in modern clothes—khaki shorts, a light green T-shirt with "Key Largo" silk-screened across the front and dark sunglasses. As different as he appeared, she recognized him by the confident stride, the span of his shoulders and the sexy-as-sin smile.

"Captain Jason Flint. As I live and breathe," her father said in awe.

Jason reached out to her and offered his hand—and she noticed the bangle about his wrist! He'd used it to find her!

She placed her hand in his, comforted by the gentle warmth of his skin. She rose from the sand and leaned into him. His hard body was welcoming as he wrapped his arms about her.

Broken from his daze, her father cleared his throat. "Well, you two seem to need some time to, er...talk. I'm going back to the ship, Shelley. See you back there in a while. I have a bottle of whiskey I need to open." Her father made a hasty exit and left them alone on the beach.

"You're here," was all she could say before Jason captured her lips with his.

Nothing needed to be said. His kiss expressed the longing — and the love.

His lips were commanding and firm. She melted into his kiss as he urged open her mouth with a swipe of his tongue. She moaned against him and he deepened his kiss. His tongue danced against hers as his hand splayed across her back. One hand cupped the back of her head, holding her steady as he increased the pressure against her mouth. It was raw and primal, and she loved it. She answered his desire with a fire of her own. Her pussy creamed and her clit ached for his touch—for him to claim it as his own once again.

Jason continued his assault upon her mouth. Like a pirate deprived of his most cherished treasure, he plundered her lips with hungry kisses. He demanded from her, and she answered. There was nothing she'd hold back from him—she wanted to give him everything.

Her hips moved against his thigh in an instinctive motion. He grasped her thigh and lifted it, and she curled her leg about him, holding onto him for balance. He lifted the hem of her skirt and pushed aside the moist crotch of her panties. Her labia gaped open in a wet invitation and Jason moaned when his hand found her ready for him. As his thumb passed over her clit, she whimpered in sheer delight.

"Shelley," he breathed against her lips as he continued to tease her nubbin.

"Jason. I missed you!" She began to cry tears of joy as her climax built quickly throughout her.

"I went insane when you left, Shelley. I needed you. I didn't want to be without you." He whispered close to her ear and his warm breath sparked the rise of goose bumps across her skin.

"You believe me now?"

"Without a doubt."

She sighed in relaxed ecstasy. He lowered her to the warm sand and pulled her T-shirt over her head, then removed her skirt and panties before pulling off his own shirt and shorts.

"I have to make love to you. I need you," he whispered.

Her heart beat wildly as his hands glided over her body. He squeezed her nipples to tight buds, ripe for suckling. As his mouth enclosed over one straining crest, she whimpered.

He reached down with one hand and gently massaged her clit, fingers gliding thorough her slick juices. She moaned and opened her legs wider, inviting him to touch her further.

When he slid one finger into her channel, she gasped and came. He continued to suck upon her breast as he pumped his finger in and out of her body.

Her muscles clenched about his finger and she was gloriously aware of the man covering her body with his own. She dug her fingernails into his muscular shoulders as she rode out the waves of her climax.

Her hips increased their rhythm in time with his gentle thrusting as he dipped two fingers into her seeping cunt. She cried out as another orgasm crashed over her body. Convulsions ravaged her senses as she succumbed to the expert touch of her pirate lover.

And just when she thought she'd die of pleasure, he adjusted his hips over her sex and entered her.

"Oh Jason!" she yelled when yet another wave of orgasm hit her.

He filled her, stretched her vaginal walls to capacity. A woman deprived, she bucked wildly against his hips, wanting to take him deeper. When he came within her, he grunted and yelled in surrender to the ecstasy.

"I love you! I love you," he said over and over as he pumped his warm seed into her.

She grasped his hair and pulled his lips down to hers forcibly. Before she kissed him, she breathed against his lips, "My pirate love."

* * * * *

"But I don't understand. How did you come to be dressed this way?" she asked later as they walked together, the sun setting over the ocean, painting the sky bright orange and red hues an artist would envy.

"When you disappeared, I was lost. It took me weeks to think clearly." He paused and then cleared his throat. "I admit I turned to rum to help with the pain."

"Of course," she said understandingly. She had been tempted to drown her sorrow as well when she returned to the future.

"Once the haze ebbed, I had a plan. I buried most of my treasure here. Then I gave back the *Sea Hawk* to Mendoza, along with forty thousand pieces of gold."

She trembled at the memory of the dark, alluring captain. "What was his reaction?"

"I think he understood my sorrow. I asked him to leave me here on the island." Jason paused and added, "Eventually, I tried on the band, more as a way to be close to you than anything else."

"You left your time for me," she mused aloud.

"The life of a pirate is short, my sweet. I had nothing left there." He reached for her cheek and stroked her skin delicately. "My future is with you, no matter where—or when."

"But how did you know it would take you to my time?"

"I didn't. I thought perhaps you'd come back to the past, though I didn't know how. Then I put on the band and things got *really* strange—as though I'd been drinking spiced rum all night in Barbados and my mind couldn't think a single thought clearly. When the feeling eased, I knew *something* had happened. I realized time had passed judging from the overgrown plants on the island. I took some coins and hoped to find a ride to the nearest port." He stopped and turned her in his arms. "The Coast Guard found me and took me to Key Largo. There I sold the coins, and used the money to buy some clothes and a boat."

"Then you returned to the island for the rest of the treasure," she concluded.

"Well, yes. But not before looking for you in Key Largo. No one seemed to know anything. I kind of got lost a few times. So many strange things! It's a lot to take in for a man from the past."

"But how come you came back to the island *today*?"

He smiled. "I've been living on the boat I bought on the other side of the island. I saw your boat come in and the fastest way I could get here was to go around. I had to row because the water is too shallow here to bring my ship."

"Your ship?"

"I bought a ship and named her the *Sea Hawk's Mistress*. I can't stay away from the sea. She has been my only love for so long—until you came into my life. I hope you don't mind."

"Of course not, but what about...I mean, won't you be missed in the past?"

He shook his head. "There was nothing left for me there. I will have simply vanished—like I fell into the sea, never to be seen again."

She looked down at his right wrist, at the bangle shining in the setting sunlight. She reached out to touch it gingerly...

It popped open.

Nothing happened. No vortex. No disappearing act.

"I don't understand it," she said as she examined the bangle in her hand. "Why didn't you disappear?"

"I don't know." He reached for the bracelet and tentatively secured it on her left wrist, where it had been the day he met her.

Still, nothing happened.

"Perhaps it is fate, Shelley."

"You think love was the key to its power?"

He nodded. "Like a curse broken with a kiss."

Love's first kiss. With all they had done together—on the ship in his cabin, on the beach—Jason had never kissed her lips! Until today.

"I promise, luv, that I will kiss you every morning and every night, until the day I die." He got down on one knee and held her hand in his. His eyes, so full of love, looked upon her with genuine tenderness. "Marry me."

She tugged on his arm and he rose from the sand. "Yes! Yes!"

He took her into his arms and she began to cry.

"Now, now, luv, this is no time for tears. We have our whole lives ahead of us," he said as he brushed away the moisture from her face.

"So...what will a transplanted pirate from the 1600s do in the twenty-first century?"

"Well, I certainly can't sail the Caribbean Sea attacking ships, can I?" He smirked down at her.

"Certainly not," she laughed.

He held her tightly, tucking her head beneath his chin. "Then I'll have to settle for sailing around the world in my yacht with my beautiful and feisty wife."

"You know," she laughed as she hugged him, "nothing sounds lovelier than a life on the sea." She soaked in his presence, cherishing the simple closeness of his body. Never again would she shed a tear in heartache for her lost pirate love. He had come for her, and he was there to stay.

He pulled away from her, his mouth grim. "I must warn you. The rules will still apply aboard ship here as they did back in my time."

Confused by the sudden loss of light humor, she wrinkled her eyebrows. "What do you mean?"

"You are my sex slave, and rule number one -"

"No clothes," she interrupted with a chuckle.

He laughed, breaking the mock seriousness of his mood. "Think you'll be able to sail under the command of a pirate?"

Sea Hawk's Mistress

"Only if you promise to have your wicked way with me night after night."

"Aye, luv. Of that you can be sure." $\,$

About the Author

Multi-published author Marianne LaCroix lives in the American south in the land of cotton and mint juleps. She's an active member of the RWA in the ESPAN, GothRom, Passionate Ink, and First Coast Romance Writers chapters. She's had several recognitions for her writing including a Romantic Times BOOKClub Reviewer Choice nomination. Her tastes run to the alpha male with a dark streak in the form of a vampire, shape-shifter or other tortured-soul type. When not writing, Mari can be found with her twin toddler girls and her husband of eleven and half years.

Marianne welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

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