



# A Rogue's Redemption

Jennifer  
Colgan

A Rogue's Redemption  
*by Jennifer Colgan*

**Amber Quill Press**

[www.amberquill.com](http://www.amberquill.com)

Copyright ©2008 by Jennifer Colgan

NOTICE: This eBook is licensed to the original purchaser only. Duplication or distribution to any person via email, floppy disk, network, print out, or any other means is a violation of International copyright law and subjects the violator to severe fines and/or imprisonment. This notice overrides the Adobe Reader permissions which are erroneous. This eBook cannot be legally lent or given to others.

This eBook is displayed using 100% recycled electrons.

## **CONTENTS**

[Also By Jennifer Colgan](#)

[CHAPTER 1](#)

[CHAPTER 2](#)

[CHAPTER 3](#)

[CHAPTER 4](#)

[CHAPTER 5](#)

[CHAPTER 6](#)

[CHAPTER 7](#)

[CHAPTER 8](#)

[CHAPTER 9](#)

[CHAPTER 10](#)

[CHAPTER 11](#)

[CHAPTER 12](#)

[CHAPTER 13](#)

[CHAPTER 14](#)

[CHAPTER 15](#)

[CHAPTER 16](#)

[Jennifer Colgan](#)

[Amber Quill's Rewards Program](#)

\* \* \* \*

A Rogue's Redemption  
*by Jennifer Colgan*

A ROGUE'S REDEMPTION

By

JENNIFER COLGAN

\* \* \* \*

Amber Quill Press, LLC

[www.amberquill.com](http://www.amberquill.com)

A Rogue's Redemption  
*by Jennifer Colgan*

**Also By Jennifer Colgan**

Conjured In Flames

The Demon Of Pelican Bluff

Ravenstar's Bride

A Rogue's Reward

Unleashed

Wolfsbane: Aspect Of The Wolf

Wolfsbane 2: Leader Of The Pack

Writing As Bernadette Gardner

The Adventures of Molten Man

Forbidden World: Ambrax

Infinite Worlds

Ken'Ja

More Than A Fantasy

A Rogue's Redemption  
*by Jennifer Colgan*

Renna's Sacrifice

Thieves In Paradise

U-4EA

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## CHAPTER 1

*South Atlantic Ocean*

*Mid-Winter, 1709*

The acrid smell of smoke invaded Fallon's dream like a thief, stealing her brief, pleasant moment of solitude. She'd been floating on a calm sea. White sails hung flaccid above her from the towering mizzen of a ship far larger and better-appointed than her beloved *Gabrielle*. While she drifted, though, the warm, salty breeze turned hazy, and the taste of it on her tongue became sharp. The details of the dream faded swiftly from the edges inward until she saw nothing but the backs of her eyelids.

In a split second she returned to reality and bolted upright in her bed. One thought pushed all others from her consciousness.

*Fire.*

Grateful she always slept in leggings and a thin tunic, Fallon flung herself out of bed and jammed her feet into the ankle-high leather boots that sat beside her bed. She didn't bother with the overcoat that hung on the back of her door. This close to the equator, the weather was sweltering while more civilized parts of the world experienced winter.

When she burst from her cabin onto *Gabby's* forecastle deck, two things struck her now fully alert senses immediately. First, the strong scent of smoke, thick and oily, made her cough. She lifted a hand to cover her mouth and nose before bounding down the short flight of stairs to the

main deck. The second realization chilled her blood even more than the prospect of watching her ship burn. Fighting panic, she pulled herself up short before the main mast and scanned the ship.

Silence.

No one had sounded the alarm bell. None of her crew stood on deck. No shouts, no curses, no bellowed orders from Ette, her second-in-command, floated on the hot night air. Fallon's breath caught as she surveyed the empty decks stretching toward *Gabrielle's* stern.

Her crew was gone.

Or worse, all dead in their bunks, suffocated by the black smoke that wafted among the limp sails and seemed to have no point of origin. What was burning?

She shook away the horrible image of dead women sprawled in their cabins and with it swept her heavy curls away from her face. *Think, dammit. Use your head.*

A single, calming breath led her to wonder, could she still be dreaming?

That made more sense than anything. *Smoke with no fire, sharp-eyed Tessa gone from her night watch post without a whimper? Impossible.*

*It's a dream.*

Fallon turned slowly back toward the forecastle where the door to her cabin stood closed, though she was certain in her haste she'd left it open.

Darkness swept over her, swift and complete, accompanied by the stale aroma of burlap and onions. Panicked, she clawed at the sack that had been thrown over



her head from behind. Before she could grip the rough cloth, strong hands circled her wrists and drew her arms behind her back.

A knee slammed into the back of her thigh, and she plunged to the deck. Boots scraped around her, and one distinct set of hands held her shoulders, while another secured her hands behind her back with deceptively soft cords, tied quick and tight.

"What have you done with my crew?" She managed to croak out a question without breathing too deeply of the musty air in the sack.

"They're safe." The words were rough, full of anger, but the voice was cultured. This was no lowborn pirate who stood before her. Nor was his accomplice, who answered next, after tugging on her bonds hard enough to make her wince.

"They've been escorted from the ship and will be left with rations on a safe shore." This voice resembled the first in all but its more neutral tone.

"Why? Who?" Fallon despised the weakness in her own voice. How could she have become so complacent as to let this happen? In years past she'd been more vigilant. Not so much as a fly could have landed on her ship without her knowledge, and now this, just as she took her first peaceful sleep in weeks.

The one behind her jerked her to her feet. She stumbled back against a broad chest before a firm hand gripped her shoulder to guide her forward toward the stairs. "You'll learn why and who in time, milady, but for now you'll have to curb

your curiosity until we've sailed far enough from populated waters that your screams won't be heard by passing ships."

Fallon bristled at the threat. These two—if two is all there were—had no idea who they were dealing with. For now she might be at a disadvantage, but that wouldn't last for long. "If you plan to kill me, at least let me see your faces. Only cowards kill anonymously."

The rougher voice responded as steady hands pushed her toward her cabin. "If we'd wanted you dead, my fair Captain Robard, we could have killed you and every member of your crew while you slept. It's not your death we seek, but your repentance."

Fallon managed a laugh, though swift wings beat beneath her heart. She'd dealt with marauding pirates before, and though cruel to the last, they'd always been after something tangible—treasure, supplies, even sex—but these men wanted something she wasn't prepared to give them.

"I've done nothing in my life that I regret enough to apologize for, so you might as well kill me and save us all a lot of bother."

The only response at first was the sound of furniture scraping across the floor. A chair, likely her fine Baroque, was thrust against the backs of her legs, forcing her to sit.

From beneath her, as he removed her boots and lashed her ankles to the legs of the chair, the second man spoke. "You may not be sorry now, but once we're through with you..." The glide of more soft cords against her bare skin was almost sensual, the bite of the strong knots, less so.

"Oh, please, threaten me, and perhaps I'll repent right now. What will you do to me? Beat me? Starve me? Make me beg for my freedom, or perhaps your cocks? If it's true my crew is all safely off the ship, there's nothing you can do to me—*nothing*—that will get you want you want."

The first man brushed her hair away from her nape with nimble fingers and bent to whisper in her ear as he secured her bound hands to the chair as well. "I'm sure you've some weakness we can exploit, my lady."

"There's nothing. I've been tortured before..." The memories of that still gave her chills and made her stomach lurch, so she pushed them aside. "I've given myself to all manner of men, not one of whom I'd have chosen for my own pleasure. Do what you will, and I'll endure it."

"Well, then." The first clapped his hands once, and the sharp report caused Fallon to jump. Silently she cursed her girlish reaction to the innocuous sound. "This may be more fun than I'd anticipated."

Tilting her head as they moved around her, Fallon attempted to map their paths through the room by the sounds they made. The familiar creak of a loose board near the door told her they were leaving her for now. She heard her greatcoat swish against the back of the door as it opened and counted their steps as they both paced out onto the narrow forecastle deck.

"Wait! Aren't you going to tell me what it is you want me to repent so I can consider if it's worth lying about?"

Though receding footsteps told her one walked away, the other remained. The rattle of the brass door handle preceded

his response. "Murder's not a joke, milady. There's blood on your hands for which you owe a debt."

Fallon wriggled her fingers experimentally and tilted her head back, hoping for a brief glimpse of her captor through the broad weave of the burlap. "I've been guilty of many crimes in my life, but I've never killed a soul. I'll admit to injuring a few brigands now and then, but I doubt a man of your station would care one way or the other on that."

"Oh, you didn't take a hand to them, but you killed them nonetheless. Perhaps you recall leaving my brother, Sheppard, and your poor conscript, Rhea Galant, on a deserted archipelago a day before a storm swept through?"

Another harsh laugh died in Fallon's throat. Six long months had passed since that day, and she'd spent countless hours staring out to sea wondering if Rhea had found the life she truly wanted. She'd made sure the two had everything they needed to survive and even ordered a member of her crew to hide a boat on the deserted island where she'd abandoned the young lord and her ingenuous charge. "They couldn't have died there..."

"No." Now this voice roughened, too, and Fallon realized, when tempered with such raw emotion, his was indistinguishable from the other man's. "They survived the storm. We found them there alive and seemingly unharmed, but Rhea, as you well know, had been severely beaten by your second-in-command. Her wounds festered, despite the best efforts of several doctors in Tremont. She died two weeks after we brought her to the manor house, and in his grief, Sheppard drank himself stone cold in a pub the night

following her death. A band of brigands dragged him into an alley and slit his throat."

Fallon swallowed and her body went cold by degrees. She'd expected better from the kidnapped Lord York. She held her curses and summoned up the rage that had begun to boil in her gut. "And you blame me for a murder someone else committed? Mad men try my patience. Why not blame the one who wielded the knife?"

"Because he's already dead, but you still wander the seas free of blame. My brother and I have chosen to punish *you* for your role in this tragedy, so I suggest you prepare to suffer as you made my bother suffer."

The door of her cabin slammed, and in the silence that followed, Fallon struggled not with her bonds, but to control the tears that threatened to choke her.

She thought of Ette, her navigator, who'd delivered ten blows from a studded strap to Rhea's back as punishment for her dalliance with their ransomed captive. She should have blamed Ette, but she couldn't. Fallon knew where the ultimate guilt lay, as it always did, on her own shoulders.

Perhaps it was time she began to pay for her mistakes. Perhaps it was time she finally got what she deserved.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## CHAPTER 2

The remnants of the smoke from their torches stung his tired eyes, but Jacob York kept his gaze on the northern horizon until the black dot of the sailing ship, *Melissa*, finally winked out of existence. He'd paid the merchant ship's captain a tidy sum to see to the safe removal of *Gabrielle's* crew, but now that the ten women were gone, he'd begun to wonder if keeping a few on board might have helped in his plans for Fallon.

He hadn't expected the beautiful pirate's first concern to be her crew. After what she'd done to poor Rhea, he'd expected the heartless bitch to care only for herself. A hostage or two would have made his revenge sweeter ... but no matter. That deed was done, the service paid for. There was still plenty more to accomplish.

"I'm not so convincing a liar as you are, Jacob."

His brother's weary sigh intruded on Jacob's distant thoughts. Jon joined him at the ship's port rail, braced his forearms on the polished wood and leaned out to stare into the dark waves that frothed beneath the hull.

Jacob eyed him sidelong. "We agreed to tell her Sheppard and Rhea were dead as part of her punishment for her own lies. I hope you didn't slip up."

"No. I gave her the story we rehearsed. With that sack over her head, I couldn't gauge her reaction, but I think she was unpleasantly surprised."

"Good. Let her stew in it for a while. In the meantime, help me with the mains'l. I want to put more distance between us and dry land."

"Aren't we far enough from civilization as it is?"

"I want her to understand the futility of escape and to prevent the hardier members of her crew from finding her should they manage to escape the *Melissa*."

Jon shook his head and pushed off the rail. He spun around and leaned his back against the wood, then tilted his head up to stare at *Gabrielle's* main mast. His silence weighed on Jacob. "What? You're not having second thoughts again."

"Revenge should be swift and cold. So much time has passed, and even Sheppard bears no ill will toward Fallon. How much should she suffer, really?"

Jacob squared his stance and faced his younger brother. Light hazel eyes, identical to his own, stared back at him, more curious than defiant. "She should suffer as Sheppard did, each discomfort he faced, plus the pain she put poor Rhea through. The girl is part of our family now, and she deserves vindication. I want Captain Fallon to understand what consequences her games of life and death had on others, and I won't stop until she begs for my forgiveness."

Jon held Jacob's stare for a long moment. Since birth he'd been able to turn his elder twin's mood with a well-timed grin, diffusing their many arguments with ease. But this time he didn't smile. Instead he set his lips in a hard line. "I hope in the end all this will be worth it. Somehow, I'm not sure breaking Fallon will be as satisfying as you anticipate." Jon

didn't wait for a response. He strode off across the creaking deck and set to the task of hoisting the mains'l.

Jacob followed to assist his brother, and the wind took his muttered reply. "No. I'm sure it will be far more so."

\* \* \* \*

Two thoughts warred in Fallon's mind during the many hours her captors left her alone. Her first concern, of course, was for her crew. For them, she needed to escape and find a way to bring them all safely home, but part of her, a small, submissive part she despised, relished the loss of control.

At this moment she felt freer than she had at any time since she'd taken to the sea in her own ship. Bound hand and foot to her favorite chair, she was for the first time, absolved of responsibility for anything beyond her own well-being. She had to keep breathing. She had to master her hunger and thirst and the need to relieve herself, but beyond that, she could do nothing ... and nothing was expected of her.

With a curse, she stamped out that sniveling voice that bade her to stop working at the knotted cords around her wrists and simply await her promised punishment. She was no scullery maid cowed by the wrath of a capricious master for some minor infraction of the manor house rules. She was Fallon Robard, captain of the *Gabrielle*, mistress of her own fate since the day she'd left dry land behind and set foot aboard her own twin-masted ship.

No man would ever own her or ever command her heart, far less take her to task for any of her misdeeds. She owed



nothing to anyone, save her crew. To them she owed her loyalty, as they to her.

For them she had to free herself. Her misguided desire for punishment would have to wait.

Despite the oppressive darkness under the burlap hood, she'd worked out her relative position in the room. They'd set the chair at the foot of the bed facing the door, which put her dressing table to her immediate right. Amid her perfumes and oils—silly indulgences she'd allowed herself during the times when *Gabrielle's* profit exceeded her own good sense—lay a few priceless artifacts. Her silver hand mirror hid a small dagger in its handle, and tucked into what looked like a simple powder pot was a miniature pistol, a work of art that could put a tiny though piercingly sharp bullet into a man's brain if aimed directly at his eye.

If she could knock into the table and dislodge the items arranged on top, she might not only free herself but be able to dispatch at least one of the York brothers before she retook possession of her ship.

After a deep breath, Fallon concentrated all her remaining energy into a full body movement that jerked the chair a hairsbreadth to the right. Her bindings cut into her wrists and ankles, but the pain only served to remind her of her crew.

The next violent hop moved her farther than the first. The rattle of bottles and jars on the dressing table confirmed she was heading in the right direction. Another hop and something toppled and rolled from the table. Fallon waited for the crack of impact and guessed by the resulting aroma of

lavender and musk that she'd broken a flask of her favorite perfume.

She sighed and hopped again, throwing all her might into the movement.

The chair skidded and lurched. For one heart-stopping moment Fallon pictured herself tumbling over, left crippled by her bindings and beyond the reach of anything that might help her escape. She sucked in a breath and righted herself with a quick tilt to the left, then sat panting in the moist heat of her own expelled air trapped in the sack.

*Careful. Careful. There's no need to wreck the place.*

Once again she mapped out her position in her mind and decided one more jump to the right would put her within reach of the tabletop. If she then slammed the chair against it, she could eventually dislodge the hand mirror into her waiting fingers.

One, two...

On the third breath, she threw herself sideways again, but rather than scuttle along the worn planks of her cabin floor, one leg of the chair dipped into the knothole that lay just in front of the dressing table. Damn, she'd forgotten about that minute flaw in the wood.

The old Baroque tipped, and this time Fallon couldn't compensate. The chair went down against the table, the impact catching her just at the tip of her shoulder, then her jaw.

Stunned by the pain, Fallon reared back, cursing as she landed on her side. A cascade of bottles and jars from above

hit her—*plunk, plunk, plunk*—showering her with rosewater, ylang ylang oil from the Orient, and thick talc dusting powder.

She sneezed and coughed, then moaned from the renewed pain those spasms caused. Her only consolation was that none of her crew could see her this way, doused in cosmetics and humbled by her own reckless ambitions.

When the door opened a few minutes later, her heart thudded, causing all her newly acquired injuries to throb. Deep laughter filled the room, and Fallon recognized her first captor. This must be Jacob York, she reasoned, judging by the disdain in his voice. Strong male hands gripped her arm and the back of the chair, and he righted her as if she weighed nothing. "Well, well. You've made a terrible mess, haven't you? And you smell like a brothel."

Fallon had to agree, though she made no comment. The combined aromas of lavender and ylang ylang made her eyes water. Her captor sneezed, too, and beneath the sheltering burlap, she grinned.

"Hmm. This won't do." The whisper of a blade being drawn from a sheath wiped the faint smile from her lips. What would her punishment be? A swift death or slow torture?

That infernal voice in her head rose up, and before she could bite her own tongue to silence herself, she whimpered a plea. "Don't hurt me."

Shame washed over her at such a display of weakness. She'd likely sealed her fate now. How many men had she met over the years who enjoyed inflicting pain on those who begged for mercy?

After a moment of disconcerting silence, during which she feared the worst, he tore the sack from her head. Fallon blinked and gulped her first breath in hours that wasn't tainted with the musty scent of old vegetables. Pale yellow light filtered through the porthole behind her bed, drawing her bleary gaze away from his face.

"I'm not going to hurt you yet, my dear captain." He cupped her chin in one hand and commanded her gaze. Eyes the color of late autumn grass bore into hers, and above one, a razor sharp white scar bisected a sandy brow.

Yes. This was Jacob York, eldest son of the bastard Norman, Lord Governor of Tremont.

"Right now, I'm going to clean you of this awful stench. Once I've stripped you and sluiced you off, then *maybe* ... I'll hurt you."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## CHAPTER 3

Jon woke to a litany of screams and vile curses coming from above deck. He blinked away sleep and scrambled from the narrow bunk he'd appropriated in the largest of the crew cabins.

Though he understood the full depth of Jacob's anger at the lady pirate who'd kidnapped their younger brother, held him hostage, then abandoned him on the sun-bleached beaches of some remote atoll, he still hadn't expected true violence to be part of this plan for revenge.

Jon raced up the ladder and came up short in the middle of the main deck. His jaw dropped at the spectacle taking place.

Captain Robard hung from the fore boom by her bound hands. She was naked, soaking wet and hissing like a bobtailed cat. Her yellow curls were flattened against her back and her chest. Darkened by the water, dun-colored ringlets rode over the swells of her breasts and down as far as the sumptuous globes of her derriere.

With her arms drawn up above her and her back arched, she resembled the goddess statues he'd seen on display in the art museums in Paris—all smooth, pale skin and lush curves of hip, thigh and buttocks.

The triangle of curls between her legs was a shade darker than the hair on her head and still dripping from the bucket of rainwater Jacob had apparently thrown on her.

Unbidden, or perhaps very justly bidden, Jon's cock rose, pressing against the tight seam of his breeches.

"I will kill you for this!" The lady captain's voice cracked with her rage, and in response, Jacob only grinned and dipped the empty bucket in the nearby rain barrel again. Jon cringed when the water splashed over her taut body. She screamed again, loud enough to cause the membranes in his ears to ache.

"How dare—" she sputtered, but a third bucketful interrupted her threat.

"Jacob?"

"Good morning, Jon. I trust you slept well." Jacob's eyes had darkened to a mossy green, a sure sign he was enjoying himself immensely.

"Until a moment ago, yes. What exactly..." Water torture hadn't been part of their plan.

Jacob dropped the bucket next to the barrel and tossed a dry cloth at Jon. "The lady will explain. I could use some sleep myself. Perhaps you could dry her off and see she has clothing that doesn't smell. There's a mess in her cabin that needs airing out, so we should probably store her in the brig for a few hours."

Jon fisted his hand in the cloth and followed Jacob's determined strides as his brother crossed the deck. A hundred questions died unspoken when Jacob disappeared below deck without another word to either of them.

"I will kill you *both*," the naked wildcat murmured. "I swear it." Her sea green eyes blazed and, having lost the true target of her rage, locked on Jon. He allowed himself a slow perusal of her body. Glistening with drops from her unceremonious dousing, she looked slippery and polished like

a bone-china doll. Her nipples were tight as spring buds. Anger tinted her cheeks pink.

Jon let out a slow breath and bunched the cloth in his hands as he approached. He wondered if his brother had given him a gift or a thankless challenge in this task. After another moment's contemplation, he decided on the former. A journey over Fallon's luscious curves would be something to savor.

He moved toward her with the cloth, but before he took a second step, her bare foot shot out toward his groin. A vicious curse accompanied her attack. He jumped back just in time to spare his growing erection from a killing blow.

"Now, Captain, it seems you have a choice here. You can kick me, or you can let me dry you off and dress you. Wouldn't you prefer that to hanging from the boom all day?"

"Go to hell, Lord York, and take your bastard brother with you."

Jon reared back, a smile forcing its way past the stern expression he preferred to adopt. "I assure you, none of the governor's sons are bastards. I suggest you watch your tongue, or you might get *that* washed as well."

She spat at his boots.

Intrigued and more aroused than angry at her display, he circled her writhing body. "So how exactly did you end up in this unfortunate position?" He bit his lower lip at the sight of her swaying bottom. Full and round, it beckoned a man's commanding touch. How he'd enjoy running his hands over those perfect globes of flesh.

"I tried to escape. Can you blame me?" With a flick of her head, she sent ropes of wet hair flying, splattering his shirt and breeches with chilling drops.

"No more than you could blame my brother for his attempts."

Surprisingly, his mention of Sheppard seemed to cool her fire far more quickly than the tepid water. The fight drained from her, and, for a moment, she hung nearly limp from her bonds. "I didn't punish him for trying to escape."

"No. Instead you punished Rhea, and she suffered horribly for it."

Dark lashes dropped to hide her eyes, and she shifted to brace her feet on the slippery deck. "How much did she suffer?"

Jon swallowed his instinctive response. Clearly she regretted her actions, but would she ever admit it? Would Jacob truly be satisfied if she did? Jon longed to tell her the truth, but he'd agreed with his brother that the infamous Captain Robard had too many lessons to learn for them to pardon her crimes just because Sheppard and his beautiful young bride had done so.

He showed her the cloth and raised a questioning brow. "Allow me to dry you, and I'll answer any questions you wish."

\* \* \* \*

Fallon closed her eyes to block out the vision of Jon York's handsome face as he approached her. Though from afar anyone might mistake him for his twin, she'd realized quickly



enough there were many differences between the two besides Jacob's telltale scar.

Jon's eyes seemed marginally lighter, along with his hair and the stubble on his chin, though he wore both in a style identical to his brother's. He carried himself differently than Jacob, less stiff and formal, and his voice was smoother, while Jacob's tended to rasp.

Nevertheless, on first glance they looked the same, and Fallon didn't trust her rage at Jacob not to erupt against Jon, so she refused to look at him.

He spoke quietly while he swiped the dampness from her back and her shoulders, and lifted her sopping hair to dab at her nape.

"She ... Rhea seemed well enough when we found her, though the pain of her wounds made her weak. Nothing the doctors in Tremont did for her relieved her agony."

Fallon choked on a curse. *Damn Ette*. No, damn herself. How could she have allowed this to happen? She bent her knees while Jon worked the cloth down each leg, reveling in the increased tension in her arms and wrists. The discomfort seemed to make up for her own cruelty in sending Rhea away from the ship in such a condition.

She deserved the pain.

"In the end, aided by laudanum, she drifted off into an endless sleep with my brother weeping at her bedside."

*Laudanum*. Fallon would have gladly downed a bottle of the sleep-inducing potion if it would bring Rhea back to life. Despair consumed her at the thought of her former charge suffering needlessly.

Finally she sought Jon's gaze and found he wouldn't look back at her. Shame tightened the muscles in her belly and made her shiver despite the rising heat of the southern sun. At least she hoped it was shame and not the brush of the now-damp cloth over her skin.

"Spread your legs."

Jon's command left her knees weak. Shakily she obeyed, and he ran the bunched cloth up almost to her mound. She drew a stilted breath. "I'm wet there still."

His hand stopped, faltered, then he pressed the cloth up between her legs. The flesh there was already full and thick. Her clit tingled when the cotton cloth touched it, and once again, Fallon closed her eyes. "I took the lash once," she murmured, wishing he would finish his task quickly, and wishing he wouldn't. She spread wider for him, and he delved deeper at the unspoken invitation, rubbing at her intimate places until her body began to shake.

"I see no scars." Now his voice sounded more like Jacob's.

"No. I was lucky. I took five lashes on my ... backside, but an apothecary gave me baths in a healing salve afterward, and the marks healed."

"Hmm. Fortunate for you there was such a compassionate individual on hand after your punishment." Jon finished drying her sex, leaving her aching and wishing for another dousing to cool her heightened desires. "What had you done to deserve such a beating?"

She managed a high pitched laugh and hoped he wouldn't look up and see the color heating her cheeks. "I let the miller's son touch my breasts. We were caught behind the

barn, his hand in my tunic and mine in his trousers. He got six lashes." The memory of that first illicit encounter made her pussy throb.

"The extra stroke was for compromising your virtue as well as his own, I imagine." Jon chuckled. The warm sound rode over Fallon's tingling skin, leaving her trembling.

"No. For dallying with a whore. He paid me, you see. That was the first time I'd taken money to let someone touch me. It wasn't the last."

\* \* \* \*

Jacob lay in his borrowed bunk, forcing himself to think of anything but Fallon. He'd enjoyed it too much this morning, stripping off her perfume- and powder-drenched clothes, lashing her to the boom and dousing her with water.

He'd loved watching her nipples harden when the first cool wave hit her breasts. He'd loved seeing her sun-kissed curls fly when she shook her head to clear droplets from her eyes. He'd wanted so badly to run his hands over her supple body with the drying cloth, but he'd already been so hard for her he could barely walk when Jon appeared on deck. Hurrying away to a quiet corner of the crew deck, he'd eased his own discomfort with a few pumps of his trembling fist, all the while thinking how it might have been to cut the fair wench down, lay her on the deck and take her.

He hated himself for those thoughts. It had never been his plan to ravage her, just to teach her the consequences of her actions. Clearly she had no regard for the pain of others, and she needed to understand the depth of misery a careless act

could cause. That's all he wanted from her—to bring her to an understanding that she had no right to play with the lives of others. Unfortunately since the moment he cut her tunic and leggings from her body, he could think of nothing but bringing her to orgasm.

So, in self-defense, he'd left her to Jon for the time being.

Sleep eluded him, as it often did. So he rose and stretched. After releasing the kinks in his neck and lower back, he headed for the galley where members of *Melissa's* crew had stored some rations to augment *Gabrielle's* supplies.

He found Jon there, stirring a pot of broth. The aroma reminded him of home, painfully so. "Were you able to put her back together, or is she still hanging from the boom?" he asked, dipping a ladle, while Jon rummaged through a spice rack.

"She's in the brig now, shackled just the way Shep had been."

"Clothed?"

Jon spared him a disparaging look and, after adding a pinch of what appeared to be fennel, filled a bowl of his own from the bubbling pot. "Of course." They carried their bowls to one of the scarred tables and sat across from each other, mirror images, their movements practically synchronized for a time.

"I think she's had a difficult life," Jon said finally. He reached for a tub of salt and added some to his meal.

"Is that what she told you? I warned you, Jon. She'll play on your sympathetic nature. Don't let her lovely blue eyes

sway you. There are things I want from Captain Robard, and I won't stop until I get them."

"Her eyes are green, by the way, and nevertheless—"

"Nevertheless, she's been hardened by her circumstances. She's a thief, a liar and many other less noble things. I won't feel remorse for her until she can feel it herself."

Jon nodded, his only reply a grunt between spoonfuls of broth.

Jacob finished his bowl and rose to pour another. Jon eyed him. "Is it that good? Here I feared anything I cooked would be inedible."

"This is for our guest. It won't do to have her swooning from hunger while I'm torturing her." Jacob's evil smirk was lost on Jon, who remained staring into his nearly empty bowl.

"You'll get what you want from her. I know you will. Just leave her some dignity when you're done, or you'll take her shame on yourself."

Jacob balanced the half-full bowl on a wooden tray and palmed a hard biscuit on his way out of the galley. "How can I leave her with something she already lacks?"

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## CHAPTER 4

Fallon crouched in the shadows of the cell, the freshly oiled links of the shackle chain clutched in her hand. She hadn't bothered struggling after Jon York locked her up. She knew the friction of the iron cuffs would only damage her wrists and leave her less able to defend herself, so she'd remained as still as possible for hours, contemplating her next move and wondering what flaw in her character had led her to wish, even for a fleeting moment, that Jon might have fucked her when he had the chance.

That, at least, she could relate to. If they'd tied her up and taken turns, or even just *threatened* to use her to sate their base male urges, she'd have understood their motives. But these strange games, binding her here, shackling her there, telling her things that caused her pain rather than simply hurting her physically—none of that made sense.

Of course, she had to wonder why it even mattered to her what the elder York brothers wanted from her. They'd get nothing that they didn't take by force.

She held the chain tighter and strained to hear their footsteps. For a while they'd been above her in the infirmary, and she wondered if they'd found the knothole through which the crew often observed prisoners. They could watch her if they wanted to, but they'd still gain nothing.

Now one of them approached. The lock on the cell door rattled, and she allowed herself to hope it was Jon. His soft, sensual touch with the drying cloth had given her some hope

he might be more easily manipulated. Being one step away from his father's seat as governor, Jacob had apparently already lost his ability to feel compassion. Jon, at least, still obviously possessed a soul.

She knew instantly it was Jacob when the door swung wide. It wasn't the scar that gave him away, but the flinty quality of his stare. The shadows behind his piercing gaze made her heart beat faster with an emotion she couldn't name. When he looked at her, she felt as naked as she'd been this morning on the deck.

Fortunately, the savory aroma of soup chased away all thoughts of attacking him with the coiled up chain. She tore her gaze from his and followed the path of the food tray, which he set before her on the floor.

"I don't need to ask if you're hungry. I can tell by the look in your eyes."

She ignored him and concentrated on not licking her lips. A fresh biscuit accompanied the soup, and her stomach rumbled at the sight of it.

"Come here if you want to eat."

Fallon considered refusing, but how long would she last if she starved herself? Glaring at him, she dropped the chain and shuffled over to the tray.

"Sit." He didn't wait for her response, just lowered himself to a cross-legged position before the still-steaming food. He then burrowed one hand into the pocket of his dark trousers and pulled out a length of black silk. She recognized the sash from her wardrobe. Woven by a blind artisan in Port Royal, it

bore threads of silver and gold that lent a sparkle to the cloth in any light.

Jacob held it up in both hands. "This is for you."

"It's an expensive napkin, milord. I'd rather wipe my mouth on my sleeve than ruin a fine piece of work like that."

He hesitated a moment, then laughed. "I'm not so jaded that I would use silk as a lapcloth. This is a blindfold." His smile faded on the last word, and Fallon shivered. Her quizzical expression prompted his further explanation. "Sheppard told me at first he was not allowed to remove his shackles while he ate. Rhea fed him. So I will feed you."

"And I can't watch?"

"No. You'll need to rely on me ... to trust me."

Again Fallon considered refusing, but her traitorous stomach protested loud enough this time for Jacob to hear. His flawed eyebrow twitched, and Fallon felt herself blush. "Fine."

He leaned forward and fastened the sash across her eyes with quick, efficient movements. This was a man familiar with tying knots, or at least accustomed to blindfolding women.

His masculine scent rode over the aroma of the soup for a moment, and beneath the cloth, Fallon closed her eyes. She recognized clove and wild mint, a fragrance popular among gentlemen of the aristocracy.

When he finished his task and pulled back, she tried to follow his movements and gauge his position, imagining how he looked and how he might be looking at her.



"Are you ready?" His seductive whisper left her lightheaded, or perhaps that was hunger. Fallon had to wonder just what he wanted her ready for.

"Yes."

She listened to the blunt scrape of metal spoon on wooden bowl and waited.

"Open." The word struck her like an arrow. Her heart thudded, and her clit throbbed when she considered what else she might open upon his command besides her mouth. Something deep inside her forced her to obey. The edge of the spoon caressed her lower lip, and a trickle of warm, flavorful soup washed across her tongue. She swallowed convulsively, afraid for a moment that he might attempt to choke her with it. She coughed once, and he took the spoon away.

"Easy. You're too anxious."

"I'm hungry and not in the mood for these games." In response to her complaint the spoon clanked against the tray. Judging by the sound of Jacob's voice, he'd leaned back after setting the utensil down.

"My fair captain, this is no more a game now than it was for my brother."

"I didn't blindfold him."

"No, but you rendered him helpless, and it's time you understood how that feels."

Fallon scoffed. "You think I've never been helpless, milord? I've been too weak with fever to feed myself, and had no one to do it for me. I've been alone in a strange land where no one understood my language. I've been cast out of a safe

haven for being what I am and—" She cut herself off before confessing the worst of her memories. That, she realized, was exactly what he wanted. Jacob York would have to work a lot harder to humble her.

Silence descended in the cell, and she imagined him staring at her, sizing her up. She would have loved to do the same. Finally she sensed him lean forward, and again heard the scrape of the spoon along the bottom of the bowl.

"Open."

Once again, she obeyed.

For the next few minutes he worked diligently at tipping spoonfuls of the hearty broth into her mouth. Then he brought a piece of biscuit to her lips. Though dry, the richer flavor of the bread was satisfying. She savored each bite he popped into her mouth and finally, when he announced she'd finished everything, she licked her lips.

Jacob made a low sound, almost like a growl, and Fallon grinned. She hadn't met a man yet who could resist the allure of a woman's tongue. She pursed her lips and stuck the tip out in between them, allowing it to caress her upper lip for a moment.

The spoon plunked down on the tray then, followed by the rough scrabble of his boots along the floor.

"Are you leaving me, Lord York?" Fallon hadn't feigned innocence in years. Her tone rang hollow and served, just as she'd anticipated, to anger him. He yanked the blindfold away, and she blinked at him, her vision blurry in the dimness.

"You've learned nothing, have you?"

"What is it you want me to learn, milord? Obedience to you? I opened my mouth on your command, *swallowed* on your command. Should I have awaited your permission to lick my lips as well?"

"Yes." He leaned over and tangled one hand in her hair. She gasped when he drew her head back, expecting a slap or maybe a blade to flash at his fingertips and slit her throat. Instead he pulled her toward him and captured her mouth in a savage kiss. His tongue thrust past her still-parted lips to battle with hers. He tasted like he smelled—wild mint and a hint of clove, plus a mixture of spices Fallon recognized from the soup.

He was in her now, both his scent and his flavor. A longing she hadn't felt since girlhood filled her chest and clogged her throat. She struggled away from him, suddenly afraid of losing too much of herself, of giving him her very breath instead of just her mouth.

He released her slowly, his chest heaving beneath his linen shirt. His eyes were hard as mossy granite, but his lips ... Fallon couldn't look away from his mouth.

"If you want to be reunited with your crew, you will cooperate."

Fallon shrugged. "Fine. I'm sorry, terribly sorry for kidnapping your brother." She stopped short of mentioning Rhea. The remorse she felt for the girl's fate was too real to make light of it.

Jacob gathered the tray and reached for the door. "You didn't even feign sincerity, Captain. I'm disappointed. And no, that's not all I want from you."

Fallon's stomach tightened. She was a breath away from offering her body, from begging him to take her because that was, after all, what men wanted most. "So tell me what you really want then, milord, and let's strike our bargain so I can get my crew back."

"Two things, in addition to watching you learn humility. I want to know who Rhea Galant really is to you, and I want to know what you did with the fifty thousand crown my father paid you."

\* \* \* \*

"Did she confess?" Jon asked when his brother lumbered across the deck just after moonset.

The evening wind had died and now, with the sails furled and the anchor dropped, *Gabrielle* sat stock-still on the water. The sea stretched like glass in every direction, and the air hung heavy over the York men.

"Did you expect she would?" Jacob leaned against the rail, steeping his fingers in front of him.

"I think she might give us the truth about Rhea, but I doubt she'll give up the location of the money. After all, if her crew finds out she received the ransom and lied to them about it, they'll mutiny."

"Hmm." The corners of Jacob's lips turned up in a feral grin. "I may reserve that threat for later, though I'm sure she knows I'd tell them."

"What would make her keep the money and lie to Sheppard and Rhea about it?"

Jacob tilted his head back to survey the stars, out in brilliant force tonight, now that the full moon had set. "Greed, obviously. It's clear she's a shrewd woman who knows she won't be young and healthy enough to sail forever. With no prospects for proper betrothal, one day she'll need to settle somewhere, and fifty thousand crown will set her up nicely. Her crew be damned, if any of them are still alive by then."

Jon shrugged. "I don't know. If it were that, she could've asked for twice as much and gotten it."

Jacob didn't comment. By the look in his eyes, Jon figured he'd drifted away on his own thoughts. For a time they listened to the silence, then he asked, "What's your next plan?"

"I'm in no hurry. I'll be searching her cabin. Bring her fresh clothes tomorrow, then bring her to me. We'll see how she takes to having her treasures picked over."

Jon sighed, but didn't argue. He'd go along with Jacob's plan a little longer, if only to retrieve the money Fallon had extorted from their father. Once they got that out of her, he'd put an end to Jacob's game and set the lady pirate free.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## CHAPTER 5

Before Jacob ransacked her quarters, Jon went through Fallon's wardrobe and found a soft gown of watered silk in a color that matched her eyes. A beautiful woman belonged in flowing, feminine clothing, not men's trousers and heavy linen shirts. He'd enjoy seeing Fallon in the gown, and maybe she would enjoy wearing it.

He found her dozing in the brig. She rose immediately when he entered the cell and squinted at him as if trying to determine which twin he was.

"Jon," he offered. "Some people find our similarities frustrating."

"And others must find your differences refreshing."

He laughed. How often had he been told no identical twins were less alike than he and Jacob? "So you can tell us apart then?"

"Of course. How did Jacob get that scar, anyway?" She took a casual stance despite the shackles, and John had to admire her aplomb. If the situations were reversed, he'd have been lunging for his captor's throat.

Shrewd, he reminded himself, holding the dress out to her. "It was a gift from me on the occasion of our sixteenth birthday. He challenged me to a duel by swords, and he lost."

"I prefer trousers and shirts," she told him, though she smoothed the aqua silk against her body to judge the fit.

Jon permitted himself to admire the way the rich fabric flowed over her curves. He imagined the effect of it actually

skimming her naked flesh would be breathtaking, and his cock responded to the wicked image in his mind's eye. "My brother has requested the pleasure of your company in your cabin. If you'd care to choose something else to wear, you can do so once you've arrived."

"And how do you plan to get me there? Once these shackles are off, don't you think I'll try to escape?"

Jon crossed his arms over his chest and smirked. The mere fact that she'd asked meant she wouldn't try it. Not yet, at least. "I believe my brother explained that if you want to find your crew again, you'll cooperate. If you flee this ship, you may never get it back."

"Cooperation. I've heard that word far too often lately. I was raised to understand cooperation meant mutual benefit. What do I get from this bargain besides what already belongs to me?"

Jon raised a brow and reached for the door. "If you prefer to stay in the brig—"

She sighed, a loud, weary sound that reminded him of the matron when he and Jacob got into some trouble or other that resulted in more work for her and the household staff.

"Fine. Anything to get out of this pit." She shook the dress out to its full length and appraised him over the plunging neckline. "Well?"

"Well what?"

"The shackles for one thing."

"Oh." Jon unlocked the heavy iron cuffs. Then he stood back.

She stared.

He shrugged.

"I suppose I'm to strip in front of you."

"Nothing could convince me to turn my back on you, fair Captain."

Her eyes hardened, but she let the dress slip to the floor and began to unlace the shirt he'd given her after her impromptu shower on deck that morning. In order to control his physical response, he tried to imagine it was the matron undressing before him, but nothing could block out the image of the lovely Captain Robard stripping to the skin. Jon had seen plenty of beautiful women disrobe before, most for his pleasure specifically, but none that he could recall aroused this much anticipation.

He'd dreamed of her naked form during the fitful hours of sleep he'd stolen early this morning. Wet flesh, pebbled nipples, golden hair streaming down her back. Despite his best efforts—well, his mediocre efforts—his cock rose at the sight of her hands slipping beneath white linen, and the muscles in his groin went tight.

The feral expression in her eyes told him here was a woman with no shame.

\* \* \* \*

Fallon had already decided Jon York would become her unwitting ally in this little game. She just hadn't expected an opportunity would come along so soon for her to exploit both his more forgiving nature and his obvious attraction to her.

Both men wanted her. She'd tasted Jacob's desire in his kiss and now used that sensual memory to her advantage.



Her nipples were already hard when she shrugged out of her shirt and let it drop to the floor. Jon's lust was less subtle than his brother's. His guileless eyes hid nothing. Nor did his tight breeches, which bulged already in front with an impressive erection.

Fallon smiled and flicked her curious gaze over Jon's share of the York family jewels. Naked to the waist now, she turned her back and flung her hair over her shoulder, knowing it would hide her upper body like a gilded curtain.

With sinuous movements she slid her trousers down her legs and daintily stepped out of them. Oddly enough, the sound Jon made was identical to Jacob's primal growl. Pleased with his reaction, she retrieved the dress without turning around and put it on, careful to keep her movements slow. When she finally faced him, his heavy-lidded gaze traveled up from her bare toes to her breasts like an illicit caress.

"I haven't worn this in years. I'd forgotten how good it feels on my skin."

"Hmm. Turn around again."

"Ah. You like the rear view better?" She gave him a jaunty wink and complied. Her skin tingled, and beneath the flowing silk her naked sex grew damp. Would he touch her? She'd already decided either man could have her. She'd certainly bedded worse specimens of the male species. Fucking Jacob or Jon York would be far less unpleasant than most, especially if it would earn her freedom.

Her knees grew weak when she felt the heat of him at her back. His breath stirred her hair, sending goose bumps down her spine from her nape to her tailbone.

Her anus clenched and her clit pulsed. *Do it. Bend me over and take me. You know you want to, and you know you're only playing at being a highborn gentleman.*

As if he'd heard her silent plea, he put his hands on her shoulders, and she stifled a moan. Warm fingers slid down her arms to her wrists, and just when she thought he might twine his fingers with hers, he yanked her arms behind her back. Familiar silken cords wound around her wrists, and he pulled them tight.

"Just so you don't attempt to throw yourself overboard," he whispered as he pulled her around to face him.

Fallon rolled her eyes. Part of her had fully expected to be bound. It was the part that actually felt relieved that she detested. How could she find pleasure in this? Knowing there was nothing she could do but obey the commands of her two dubious masters should have made her furious. Instead, it aroused her.

She trembled with indignation, and Jon noticed. He brushed a stray curl from her brow and smiled. "Don't worry. I've made Jacob promise not to hurt you, *if* you tell him what he wants to know."

Fallon jerked away from Jon's gentle touch and blew out a heated breath. "I supposed he'll have to hurt me then, because I'll die before I give him what he wants."

\* \* \* \*

When Jon guided her through the door of her cabin, Fallon's expression cycled through a satisfying collection of emotions. Shock at finding her clothes and personal items

strewn about, every drawer in her wardrobe flung open and all of her treasures dumped haphazardly on the bed or on the floor, morphed into unbridled anger. Dismay followed when Jon unbound her hands and bowed out of the room.

She rushed forward first to rifle through the tangle of jewelry Jacob had spread on the bed, then to the collection of silks and satin dressing gowns he'd dumped on the floor.

To her credit she wasted little time with tears or feminine pouting. He'd destroyed nothing, merely rummaged through it all, every nook and cranny, every secret box and hidden cabinet—and she had quite a few of those. Once she realized this, she straightened her spine and raised her blazing eyes to his.

"I hope you found what you were looking for." Her voice had a steel edge, and he liked that almost as much as he liked the way the dress Jon had chosen for her hugged the swell of her hips and revealed the upturned points of her nipples.

"No, but I did find something I hadn't expected." He stepped aside to reveal the eclectic collection of objects he'd assembled on her dressing table. In addition to the studded leather strap, he'd found a wooden paddle, a nine-tailed whip, an assortment of thin but sturdy silver chains and several riding crops. "I've been over every inch of this ship and nowhere have I seen a beast of burden, so I'm guessing these implements aren't for your horse."

Her pale skin bronzed so quickly with a florid blush he worried she might faint. Though her eyes never left his, he knew she stared right through him.

"You enjoy punishment, milady? Is that why you have these toys hidden in your quarters? Or is your crew especially naughty? Paddles? Whips? Those poor women."

"They're not for my crew."

"This one was." Jacob lifted the studded strap. He'd seen the scars on Rhea's back when the medic tended her aboard the *Melissa*. This was no toy as the others obviously were.

"Ette took that without my permission to use on Rhea."

"I gather this has never been used on *you*, fair Captain."

She looked away, but her silence told him all he needed to know.

He longed to continue this teasing and watch her dignity dissolve by degrees, but he had more pressing matters at the moment.

"This isn't all I found." Next he produced the folded square of parchment he'd discovered fastened with a lump of wax to the back of a small drawer in the top of her dressing table.

"As much as I'd love to discuss the various uses of a riding crop, I'd rather start our conversation with this."

She snatched the age-yellowed paper from him. "It's meaningless."

"Really?" He leaned back against the dressing table. "A missive dated twenty years ago, addressed to a woman named Francesca regarding the birth of a red-headed daughter..."

Fallon tried to stare him down, but some emotion, shame perhaps, made her gaze waver, and she looked away.

"Sheppard told me you denied giving birth to Rhea ... and having seen you both up close, I can believe it's true. You

certainly don't look old enough to be her mother. So why then would you have this seemingly indisputable record of her birth hidden in your room?" Since he didn't expect a response, he didn't wait for one. "And why would she have been raised in a sequestered abbey under a false surname?"

Crumbling the paper in one hand, she bent to retrieve the scattered clothing from the floor with the other. "What does it matter since she's dead?"

Jacob watched her for a moment. Her movements had become quick and imprecise. She lifted a crimson satin gown, then dropped it again in favor of an ivory shift. Dashing that garment on the bed, she ran her hands again over the spilled jewelry, plucking at tiny strings of lavender pearls and a circlet of beaten gold that would fit perfectly above the plunging neckline of her gown.

Seized by a sudden bout of pique, he lunged forward and swept the baubles off the coverlet. They scattered on the floor, sounding like rain against the planks. "It matters to me. My brother wanted to wed this girl, and she felt she was unworthy, having been, as she believed, a nameless lowborn orphan. This letter is signed by the Duke of Richmond, an acknowledgement of the child's paternity and a promise to finance her upbringing. But who is Francesca, I wonder, if not an alias for Fallon?"

"A servant." The words slipped out, a rough whisper. She dropped the wrinkled parchment on the bed. "But one beloved enough to have earned the young earl's undying devotion, as well as his promise of financial security."

"And you came across this missive how?"

"At great personal expense."

Jacob backed away from her, pulled up the Baroque chair and straddled it. "And that was why she was raised in an abbey? To hide her from the duke? To erase her noble father's shame in having 'gat a half-blooded whelp on a servant?"

Spots of color stained her cheeks, and she looked away. "No, that's actually not what happened. The truth was, as his first issue, and one conceived in the blush of reckless young love, her father wanted her raised as his legitimate offspring—but the mother knew her child would never be accepted by the peerage. To retain his title, the duke would have to marry within his station, and any proper duchess would have no love for an illegitimate child, especially if she were to bear no sons to fill the role of heir. Francesca couldn't bear the shame, so she stole the birth record and the child and left her at Carnatta anonymously."

"And since you're clearly not the mother, who are you?"

"Again, why does it matter?"

"You cared enough to track her down and steal her from the abbey. Another ransom game?" Jacob smiled. That made sense. "You could sell the duke back his missing daughter for ten times what my father paid for Sheppard."

Fallon tossed her hair, and those magnificent eyes of hers flashed. "Yes, milord. That's it. You've found me out. Now, may I go?" She made a swift move toward the door, but Jacob was on her instantly. He vaulted over the chair, toppling it as he moved, and pinned her between his body and the door. She braced her hands on his chest and shoved

him back, but he outweighed her by enough that her efforts to move him were fruitless.

"I want the truth, Fallon. There's so much more behind your eyes. If it wasn't ransom, then what was it?"

She arched her hips against him, perhaps thinking that would put him off balance. Instead it served only to thrust her silk-covered mound against his cock. Her eyes widened and her lips pursed seductively. "Why would you *not* believe it was ransom? You see me as nothing more than a greedy whore. What other motive could someone like me possibly have?"

"I don't know, but I'll find out."

"How will you do that? I'll resist any torture you can dream up."

"There's a challenge I may have to accept." Jacob dipped his head and took in the enticing scent of her. Her hair still smelled faintly of perfume, and feminine musk clung to her skin. He thought of their kiss in the brig, but a repeat now would cost him. With his arousal straining his trousers and her secret toys arranged just an arm's reach behind him, he couldn't trust himself not to make good use of her.

"Do your worst." Her breasts heaved against him. "I'll never tell you why I kidnapped Rhea or where I hid your father's money."

"Then you'll never leave this room."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## CHAPTER 6

Fallon woke in her own bed, a thick haze of sleep keeping her pleasantly immobile for a time while her brain wandered through patchy details of the past day. It wasn't until she tried to move that she began to remember what had happened earlier with Jacob.

They'd been struggling by the door, and he'd put a hand behind her neck, as if to pull her face toward him for another searing kiss. Instead she'd blacked out, the scent of sweet vitriol in her nostrils. Now she understood how her crew had been dispatched without a cry. She'd come across the aromatic tincture in the black markets of the Orient, packed in small, easily breakable vials of glass. Apparently while she'd been asleep Jacob had bound her wrists by soft silken cords to the bed frame. Her ankles as well.

After that, what he'd done with her was anyone's guess. She still wore the aqua gown, and though the flowing skirt of it was bunched around her waist, she felt no discomfort between her thighs. He hadn't forced himself on her, or left her in any state other than one of frustrated embarrassment.

After a calming breath, she tested her bonds. Except for the cord fastening her left wrist, they were tight. That one gave a fraction of an inch when she tugged, so she concentrated her efforts there. If she could just get one hand free...



An hour's work, however, left her no closer to loosening the knot. Finally, seized by the futility of her labor, she shrieked at the top of her lungs.

"Damn you, Jacob York! Damn you." She screamed until her throat burned and she'd exhausted every creative epithet she knew. Finally, utterly spent from her outburst, she gave in to the tears that had built to a stinging pressure behind her eyes.

Fallon wept until she could barely catch her breath, until she'd cried out all the grief she felt for Rhea and all the fear she harbored for the well-being of her crew. She prayed they would all stay together and protect each other.

Ette would try to govern them, but it would be a thankless task. Tessa would rebel—she always did during hard times. Dorrie would be useless. Ever since her rescue from the ruthless crew of the *Esmeralda*, she'd feared all men. She never went ashore any more, preferring the safety of *Gabrielle's* all female community. Ava would be fine; she'd find work right away because she couldn't stand to be idle. Kate would go back to whoring because deep down she felt she was worth no more than what someone else would pay for her.

That thought renewed Fallon's grief. She'd taken Kate on because they were so much alike. Beaten by circumstances and left with nothing to cling to, the girl from Florence reminded Fallon of herself. It had taken years to assemble her crew, years to gain the trust of ten women who had learned over the course of their lives to trust no one.

And now, thanks to Fallon's own carelessness, her women were on their own, cast back to the unforgiving world that had set them all hopelessly adrift in the first place.

Shame replaced her anger as quickly as night replaced day, and she gave up the struggle to free herself. Here in the growing darkness, immobilized and alone, but still in familiar surroundings, Fallon realized she felt safe. Faced with no choices but those her captors offered, she had no responsibilities.

Rather than resume her struggles, she fell still. Her tears subsided, and she redirected what energy she had left to controlling her shuddering breaths. In and out, she concentrated on the flow of air through her mouth and nose and the rise and fall of her chest. By degrees her body relaxed until she felt like she was floating on a calm sea, disconnected from reality, from the emotional scars she tried so hard to hide, and from all of her fears.

She remained that way, lost in the pure sensation of her own breathing until the door of her cabin opened and Jon let himself inside with a tray of food and a flask of watered wine. She roused herself at his approach and focused on the food he'd brought. Dried breadfruit, broken into small pieces, and honey biscuits on a flat clay plate joined thin strips of a cured meat she didn't recognize from Ava's last inventory of *Gabrielle's* supplies.

Fallon wondered if Jon would blindfold her as Jacob had. She'd grown accustomed to taking her meals in darkness.

Jon pulled up the Baroque chair and set the tray on the bed. His glittering gaze swept over her, lingering on the tops of her thighs, exposed by the position of her gown.

"Your brother drugged me with sweet vitriol, coward that he is. He couldn't face me in a fair fight, hand to hand, I suppose."

Jon sighed. "I think more so he was afraid you would injure yourself if left unattended."

Fallon tossed her head and yanked on the soft ropes. "He fears nothing. Certainly not my wrath, which I promise you he'll taste once I'm free."

A half smile curved his upper lip. "Which is why you're not. On his orders, I'm not to untie you, but if you promise to—"

"Don't say *cooperate*. I'll do no such thing."

Now he laughed, and Fallon hated herself for liking the sound. Jon York was a handsome man, no more so than his brother physically, but his manner made it much easier to bear his presence. "Then you'll have to stay as you are while you eat."

"I'm not hungry."

"I saw you eyeing the food when I walked in."

"I won't eat the meat. It could be drugged."

"Ah, like Sheppard's ale. How did you manage that anyway? You must have offered the tavern-keeper quite a few crown."

Now it was Fallon's turn to laugh. "I could have gotten such a service for a kind word and a smile. The peasants of Tremont had their greed starved out of them long ago, and most would do anything to cause hardship to the governor."

For less than I paid to have a drop of laudanum slipped into his drink, I could have had his throat..." Fallon held her tongue. Sheppard's throat *had* been slit, likely for no payment at all. At least Rhea had been spared the knowledge of her lover's tragic death.

If Jon noticed her faux pas, he didn't let on. Instead he offered her a piece of breadfruit. Resigned, she nibbled it from his fingers. Bite by bite, he fed her half the biscuit and all of the fruit, but left the meat untouched. Fallon trusted that it hadn't been tampered with, but she couldn't very well ask to eat it now.

"How long will you let this go on?" he asked after offering her a sip of the wine.

She swallowed and chased an errant drop of the sweet liquid down her chin with her tongue. "I suppose until you agree to untie me and I can feed myself."

"You know what I mean. Jacob won't free you until you tell him where the ransom money is, and I for one, don't want to spend the rest of my life stranded at sea." He tempered his words with a hopeful smile, which Fallon did her best to ignore.

"I have some knowledge of the state of Tremont's treasury and the success of your father's plantations. Fifty thousand crown should mean nothing to Norman, and you and your bother will enjoy a life of comfort and luxury, whether you earn your own wages or not."

With a contemplative tilt of his head, Jon rearranged the plate and wine before responding. "True. But nevertheless, the money was procured dishonestly, and it's on that principle

Jacob wants it back. I understand you had to tell Sheppard the ransom hadn't been paid in order to hide the loot from your crew, but the belief our father had forsaken him was devastating."

"I never intended to deceive my crew."

"So then they know where the money is?"

That simple question banished Fallon's lethargy. She strained at her bonds and met Jon's curious gaze. "No! None of them know I received the money from Norman's solicitor as instructed in the ransom demand. Please believe that, Jon. My crew can tell you nothing because they know nothing."

"All right. I believe you." He swept a mass of curls away from her face and brushed the rough pad of his thumb along her jaw. She shivered at the strangely intimate gesture. "But tell me why the deception, if you planned to share the money with your crew?"

"It wasn't to be shared. The full sum was payment I owed on ... an old debt. It's been settled now, and I'm free of it, so you won't get the money back unless you plan to steal it from the man to whom I paid it."

Jon stared into Fallon's eyes, clearly weighing whether or not her story was true. She trembled under his scrutiny, not in fear for herself, but that he might instruct Jacob to retrieve her crew and interrogate them.

"I won't tell you anything more about the money or about Rhea, so you'd best decide how long you want to remain stranded at sea with an uncooperative prisoner."

"Jacob is more stubborn than you, milady. He can last at this a long time."

"So can I."

Jon cast a furtive glance at the dressing table where Jacob had left most of her secret collection on display. Fallon's clit responded, tingling and tightening beneath its hood of flesh at the illicit thought that Jon might use one of these implements on her. It had been months since she'd paid a man in Cape Town to bind and blindfold her, and in that time she'd spent many lonely nights in her cabin dreaming of the sting of a riding crop across her bottom. She wondered how well a man like Jon would wield the polished paddle if he were to give her a spanking, and that consideration brought moisture to the juncture of her thighs. She squirmed to ease the pressure on her sex, and when Jon turned his gaze back to her, his expression had softened.

"In all our twenty-eight years, I'd never seen my brother in such a state as he was while Sheppard was your prisoner. He'd never known such rage and frustration, and in his anger, he vowed terrible punishments for the person he held responsible for such turmoil in our family. Even I don't know how far he's capable of going, Fallon, but for your own sake, please don't tempt him to the point where he could do you permanent damage."

Fallon swallowed Jon's sober plea. Nothing could make her divulge her secrets, even the threat of death at Jacob's hands. "Let me go then, Jon. You can spare me Jacob's wrath."

Jon held her gaze for so long Fallon feared he'd become paralyzed. Finally he set the tray aside and leaned over her. His lips collided with hers in a furious kiss that threatened to

steal the breath from her lungs. Drawing his tongue into her mouth, Fallon suckled hungrily. He placed a hand on her throat, capturing the thundering pulse below her jaw, and she moaned. Bound like this, legs spread, her skirt doing little to conceal her sex, Fallon's arousal took over. She raised her hips, begging him to do something, anything that would bond them, that would give her leverage in this power play of Jacob's. If she could entice Jon to fuck her, she would have all the power she needed over him.

When he finally broke the kiss, Fallon whimpered. She flicked her gaze to the riding crops, but Jon missed her cue. Gently, and with palpable regret, he pushed himself away from her. "I'll face my brother's wrath for this, but I can't let him become a slave to his need for vengeance. Your crew has been taken to St. Helena. Besides this, that's all the help I can give you."

A flash of silver blade set free Fallon's left wrist. She didn't see from where Jon produced the weapon or what he did after slitting the one silken cord, but she couldn't waste time wondering.

She raised her curious gaze to his, still hoping he might accept payment for this favor in the form of another stolen kiss. Instead, he quirked his upper lip and cocked a brow at her.

"Don't make me sorry I did it, milady." He slipped out the door without another word. She waited for the rattling of the brass lock, but it never came. He'd made it easy for her. Too easy. Perhaps this was a ruse, but she had to take the chance.

While fighting to keep her breathing steady, she loosened the knots at her other wrist and her ankles and rubbed the stiffened joints. She slithered off the bed, ears trained to pick up the slightest sound from the forecastle. With brutal efficiency she rummaged among the objects Jacob had arrayed on her dressing table. A crop or paddle would do her no good, and the miniature pistol was gone from its hiding place, but thankfully he hadn't discovered the dagger in the handle of her silver mirror.

She spared a longing glance for the pile of her clothes strewn about the floor and wished for time to dress herself properly, but no doubt Jacob would be back soon to continue his twisted game of vengeance.

On her way to the door, Fallon paused only to snatch a leather belt from her disparate collection. A concealed slit on the inner surface would hide the dagger, and later if she secured herself a firearm she could tuck it at her hip to free her hands.

Quickly, she donned a pair of shearling boots and bent to listen at the door.

Silence.

In a moment, she was tiptoeing across the forecastle, her goal the aft deck where she could lower the fishing boat and hopefully drift far enough on the calm sea that the sound of her paddle striking the surface wouldn't carry back to the *Gabrielle*.

Halfway past the mizzen, Jon's earlier words echoed in her head. *If you flee this ship, you may never get it back.*



A Rogue's Redemption  
*by Jennifer Colgan*

Without her navigational instruments, she had little hope of reaching St. Helena before hunger, thirst, or the elements claimed her. She'd likely die at sea, leaving her crew to languish, never knowing she'd tried to reach them.

Only one option remained. She had to wrest control of her ship from Jacob. Perhaps, banking on Jon's compassion, she could do just that.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## CHAPTER 7

In Jacob's dream, warm feminine flesh rode over his. The tempting scent of Fallon's skin filled his lungs, and the rush of illicit arousal tightened his loins.

He'd been so close to taking her when she lay limp beneath him on her bed. Straddling her slender waist while he bound her delicate wrists, the rake in him had considered it, but the gentleman he'd been bred to be refused.

If he made love to her—*when*—she'd be awake, aware and at least partially willing ... or *he'd* be blissfully asleep as he must certainly be now. He imagined her sliding the sea green silk above her thighs, swinging one shapely leg over his body and climbing atop him while he lay in his borrowed bunk.

Separated from her feminine heat by no more than his thin under breeches, his cock responded as any man's would, but his rapid pulse skipped a beat when the cool hiss of a blade being drawn against leather filled his ears. His dream ended with Fallon Robard's soft chuckle as she bore down on his chest.

A dagger glinted in the moonlight, and the sharp tip found a tender spot below his jaw. She shifted her hips, bringing her naked sex against his straining erection. The blade pressed deeper into his skin and pierced his flesh. He felt a bead of warm blood break and trickle down to the hollow of his throat.

"Good evening, milord. Pardon me for disturbing your sleep, but I've a favor to ask."

"At the moment, I don't think I'm in any position to deny you, Captain."

The press of the blade let up a fraction, allowing the minute cut she'd made to flow freely. "My request's a simple one, Lord York. You and your brother will climb into the fishing boat and paddle away, and our paths will never cross again."

"As you wish, milady. With haste." Jacob shifted his legs and managed to arch his back a bit.

Her weapon still poised, Fallon rode him, a wicked smile curving her luscious lips. "You can humor me, but note the ease with which I ended up above you. I could have slid my blade between your ribs while you slept, then moved on to dispatch your brother."

"True, but I suspect you'd rather I slid my *blade* between your legs, wouldn't you, Fallon?" Jacob bucked, a subtle movement, but one that left no doubt of his intentions. In response, she tightened her thighs around his waist, and a swift breath drew her pebbled nipples tight against the pale silk of her gown.

Her golden brows knit and she cursed. "You can fancy yourself of interest to me, but I'd sooner watch you bleed than watch you come. Your game has ended. This time I'm granting you mercy just as I did for Sheppard, but should we ever meet again, I promise you, dear Jacob, I'll take great pleasure in your demise."

Jacob smirked. His right thumb brushed Fallon's knee, and she flinched. "Tell me the truth. You could have killed me, or you could have fled. Instead you're here in my bed, your

breasts heaving, cheeks flushed. Only a thin layer of cloth separates our intimate flesh, and I'd wager you'd be just as eager as I to have it removed."

She threw her head back and gave a sharp laugh. "Wouldn't we all like a good fuck, milord? I'll get mine from a man in Cape Town I pay a handsome sum to follow my instructions. I imagine you'll get yours for a shilling or two from the first willing bar wench to greet you when you return to Tremont. All I want from you, Lord York, is your absence."

"Hmm. Very well. You have me at a disadvantage. I'll go and take my traitorous brother with me. I gather he was involved in your escape."

She leaned back, still brandishing the skinny dagger. Jacob had no doubt she'd deal a fatal cut if provoked. "Of course Jon helped me. Isn't it clear to you he finds your plot for revenge abhorrent? You can't trust your own blood. You'd best keep that in mind the next time you place faith in the loyalty of your twin."

"I will." In a carefully executed move, Jacob dislodged her from her perch. He slapped her wrist, sending the dagger skittering across the floor. Armed now only with her rage, she lunged for his throat. She'd have throttled him, but his arms were slightly longer, his muscles stronger than hers. They wrestled off the narrow bunk and hit the floor, Jacob on top.

Fallon's breath left her in a whoosh, and she lay stunned beneath him, momentarily dazed by the impact of her skull against the planks. Jacob wrapped a hand around the back of her neck and lifted her as he rose.

She fought him, kicking and biting as he spun her to face away from him, dragged her arms behind her and tucked her hands into the wide leather belt that canted across her hips. Effectively bound now, she cursed viciously when he pushed her onto the bunk.

"Tell me exactly what it is you want now, Captain Fallon," Jacob demanded through clenched teeth. With one hand he held her flat against the mattress, and with the other he lifted her skirt, exposing her backside. He caressed the smooth skin of her cheeks, which, though clenched tight, still left the folds of her femininity exposed between them.

His cock pulsed at the sight and his balls tightened as he raised a hand to deliver exactly what the lovely lady pirate needed.

\* \* \* \*

The first sharp slap of Jacob's open palm against her buttocks silenced Fallon's scream of protest. How dare he ask her what she wanted?

Her body stiffened with the sting of the blow, but her sex tingled. *No*. She wouldn't give him the satisfaction. "I want your blood on my hands, York, and I'll get it."

"You may, but not before I'm done with you." His hand came down again, harder on her exposed flesh.

Fallon gasped. Her body shuddered, first with unbridled rage, then the barest flicker of pleasure.

She groaned.

"I'm sorry I've no riding crop on hand. I suspect you'd like that more." Again, he struck her bottom, and again she

moaned. The pain engulfed her. Her thighs, braced on the bed and helping to lift her ass toward his punishment, trembled. She breathed in Jacob's scent from the mattress and arousal soaked her inner flesh.

"You'll pay for each blow," Fallon promised, even as her struggles lost their fervor. Her heart thundered and her back arched, unbidden, raising her bottom for his next stroke.

This time the sting of his open-handed slap against her flesh left her panting. She fought the rising tide of sensation in her sex. If she climaxed, he'd know. She couldn't hide her sensual reactions to his domination.

"I look forward to it, Captain." He caressed each sore cheek, then ran a finger down the crease between them before delivering another strike.

Fallon's every muscle clenched, and she let out a frustrated groan. She had to make him stop before her shivering body betrayed her. "Jacob—"

"Oh, now, now, Captain, I'm sure you know this game quite well." He punctuated his words by pinching her upper thigh. The pain lanced through her and her hidden bud tightened at the rush of excitement spiraling toward her womb. She tensed.

"In this position, shouldn't you be calling me *Master*? If you want something from me, you must ask properly."

"I will not—ah!"

He spanked her again, sharp and well-timed. She cursed, but at the same time readied herself for the next blow. The pain freed her, and she craved more.

Rather than continue, though, Jacob reared back. Cool air, stirred by his movements, caressed the throbbing skin of her backside. "Tell me about the money, Fallon. Where did the ransom go? The truth, and I'll give you what you truly want, what you desire. I can finish you so easily. Your body begs for it. Let me help you achieve release."

"I don't care what you do to me. I'll tell you nothing."

"You know giving voice to your secret would be almost as liberating as an orgasm right now. All this tension in your muscles, your labored breathing, the pulse of heat between your lovely thighs. I can relieve it all, and we can end this battle here and now."

"You might as well slit my throat with my own dagger. I'll tell you nothing, bastard ... I mean *Master*."

Jacob's sharp laugh startled her. She harbored no fear that's he'd cut her, but what he did was worse. He brought his hand down hard across her thighs, low so the edge of his palm brushed her dampened sex. The sudden pain and mild pressure set her off, and her body convulsed. Moisture flowed down her legs. Her belly clenched as a wave of illicit sensation left her writhing, moaning and drenched in sweat.

Jacob slid his hand between her legs, just deep enough to part her contracting inner lips. Fallon cried out as another wave crashed over her battered senses.

"So this is what you crave? A firm hand, tight bonds ... maybe a paddle or crop, and you're reduced to this." His voice roughened, and his movements morphed from slow and determined to swift and feral. He pushed her onto her side, rolled her to her back and stared down at her.

Gasping as her body rocked with the sweet shame of her surrender, Fallon let her legs fall open, exposing herself to Jacob's dark scrutiny. She'd have reached for him except her arms were still trapped against her sides with the leather belt. "You may have given me release, milord, but you didn't wring a confession from me."

Jacob raised a shaking hand and scraped it through his hair. His own naked chest heaved and his erection stretched the rough fabric of his under breeches.

Fallon centered her gaze on his hidden manhood and licked her lips. One brother or the other, it didn't matter, as long as she secured some measure of power.

"Are you extending an invitation, Captain?" He leaned over her, sweat glistening on his well-sculpted muscles and beading on his upper lip.

She watched his mouth, eager for an opportunity to turn an enemy into a slave by any means available. She raised her hips slightly, beckoning. "Do you need one?"

Jacob shed his under breeches in a brusque, impatient move. "No more than you've already given me."

He climbed onto the bunk, straddling her. Dark red and tipped with a drop of clear moisture, his shaft reached toward his flat stomach.

A swift yank released the belt that bound her arms and another tore the delicate silk away from her breasts. Fallon wrapped her legs around Jacob's waist, and he fell upon her, plundering in one sure stroke.

She pulled in a shocked gasp as he filled her, and her sheath contracted hard around his cock. Digging her fingers



into the taut muscles of his shoulders, Fallon drew Jacob against her naked body.

"This ... is what I wanted all along, milord." She matched the cadence of her breathless words to the rhythm of his frenzied thrusts. "Haven't you thought ... from the moment you first stripped me and tied me to the boom, that I belonged beneath you?"

He held her questioning gaze for an instant, and something in his eyes told her it pained him to answer truthfully. She smiled, and he looked away. On his next fevered thrust he bore down deep, his thighs abrading hers, his hands anchoring her hips.

Another orgasm swept up from Fallon's womb, tightening her aching nipples as they rubbed Jacob's smooth chest. She dug her blunt nails into his back and crooned into his ears as he labored above her toward his own release. "Enjoy this, milord. Take your fill of my body, because I plan to be the last woman you ever see."

With a strangled grunt, Jacob came. The hot rush of his seed filled Fallon, and his muscles rippled beneath her gripping hands. He dipped his head, caught a nipple in his mouth and suckled so hard she cried out.

When he released the tip of her breast and trailed his burning lips across her chest, she shuddered for the intimacy of it. Plenty of men had used her thus, some had even claimed to love her, but in Jacob York's tender kiss at the hollow of her throat, she felt something she'd never imagined she could.

Fallon clenched her eyes shut tight, braced her hands on his chest and shoved him back. "Enough. You've shot your seed. I've no time for pretense and pretty words while you soften inside me."

Jacob straightened and sat back, drawing his still-firm cock from her body. For a moment, Fallon thought he might utter an apology. She held her breath and rested her hands on her thighs, where the evidence of his release glistened in the wan moonlight filtering through the small porthole.

He said nothing, though, merely rose from the bunk, snatched his breeches and shirt from a peg near the door and vacated the room.

Unbound and undone, Fallon lay staring at the dark rectangle of the open door. She could have made her escape, but her sated body refused to move. Her arms ached for the feel of his strong muscles straining against her, and her sex pulsed intermittently, reminding her a skillful man had taken her. With a sigh, she closed her eyes and wallowed in her shame.

A moment later, Jon burst into the room. Anger heightened the color of his cheeks, and his breath rasped. He flew toward the bunk and knelt beside the bed.

"What did he do to you? Fallon, did he—"

She raised her arms to him and whispered a desperate command. "Make love to me, Jon. I need you now."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## CHAPTER 8

Rage at his brother battled with desire for the woman spread before him. After slitting one of the silken ropes binding Fallon to her own bed, Jon had gone off to watch the sea and make sure she escaped safely before Jacob took notice of her absence.

When she didn't appear, he came looking for her.

He'd heard the sounds, the muffled threats coupled with his brother's groan of release, and for a moment he'd considered doing Jacob harm. How could he have crossed that line and turned Fallon from his prisoner to his whore?

He clenched his jaw, balled his fists and reached for Fallon's delicate wrists. "Did he hurt you?" He shook her, and instantly regretted the violence in his action and his tone.

She rose halfway from the sweat damp mattress, making no effort to gather the torn remains of her gown around her naked body. "Yes." Her seductive smile belied her words. "He took his hand to me, then his cock. Now it's your turn, milord."

Jon released his grip and drew in a breath that burned his lungs. He'd kill Jacob for this. His twin had become a common brigand.

Sinuous as a serpent and likely just as deadly, Fallon rose on her knees. She put her hands on Jon's chest, over his pounding heart, then bent her head to kiss the hollow of his throat. Already rock hard, his cock stirred, pressing tight against his breeches.

"He punished me," she murmured, trailing kisses toward one nipple. When her lips grazed the puckered oval of flesh there, he moaned.

Instinct drew one of hands along a lazy path up her arm. He reached behind her neck and tangled his fingers in her hair. "Fallon—"

"I was bound. Helpless. He held me down." Her hot tongue touched his flesh, leaving him as weak-kneed as a school boy. "I came for him, so hard, milord. Now let me come for you."

Her purring tone, coupled with her feather light touch along the tight muscles of his abdomen, left him blind with both passion and fury. He drew her head back and met her heavy-lidded gaze. "Why didn't you leave the ship when you had the chance?"

"I couldn't abandon *Gabrielle*." Her skilled fingers fluttered down to catch in the fastenings of his breeches. "I came in here to kill him."

That admission neither shocked nor angered Jon as it should have. Jacob had brought Fallon's wrath upon himself, yet somehow he'd ended up inside her.

Equally handsome, the York brothers had never been jealous of each other, until now.

A dark emotion boiled in the pit of Jon's stomach at the thought of his brother mounting Fallon while she lay bound at his mercy. He had no right to touch her thus, no matter what sins she'd committed.

Undaunted, she opened his breeches and slid her hand inside. The moment her searching fingers made contact with his cock, he was lost. He cupped the back of her head and

plundered her mouth, suckling until she moaned into him. Pushing aside the fact that Jacob's scent still clung to her skin and the taste of her mouth had to be combined with that of his brother, Jon pushed her back down onto the bed.

He tore his shirt and breeches off, slid the cotton undergarment down and poised his taut body over hers. Her hands explored him, gliding along the planes of his back, molding the muscles of his arms and finally clasping his buttocks. Recklessly she drew him down to her, seating his cock deep in her willing heat.

"Since he finished with me, I thought of nothing but having you, milord. One York brother is not enough."

Rather than infuriate him, her breathless words had him reaching for his climax. His balls ached with the need for release. Desire, sharp as daggers in his gut, drove him to thrust frantically into her supple flesh.

Undaunted by his fervor, Fallon kept pace with his movements. She breathed wicked encouragement in his ear and guided his mouth to her breast to tease and suckle one distended nipple. She shuddered beneath him, wrapped her legs around his back and crooned her satisfaction. Her orgasm left her panting his name and shivering in his arms.

Her trembling brought him to the very edge of reason and allowed him to topple over the precipice, releasing all the desire he'd held pent up since the moment he first brushed water from her pebbled skin after Jacob had doused her on the deck.

Jon gathered her slender form in his arms and succumbed to his own release. Fallon clung to him, a low hum vibrating her throat. She held him tight until his raging body cooled.

"Milord, you've done me in," she whispered, a smile in her voice.

Shame gripped Jon in the wake of such piquant satisfaction. He let out a slow breath to calm his still ragged nerves. "No, fair Captain, I think it's you who've done *me* in."

\* \* \* \*

Jacob paced the galley, unable to still neither his legs nor his racing thoughts. Each time he permitted himself to think how he'd lost control with Fallon, guilt choked him. It had never been his intent to ravage her, to take his hand to her or, by God, to enjoy it.

Each time he'd delivered a blow to her backside, his cock had grown harder, his need for release more urgent. When her body convulsed in orgasm, induced by his punishment, he nearly came himself. He could not have refused her wanton invitation to fuck her for all the gold in his father's overflowing coffers, but what shamed him most was the thought that he might not have waited for such an invitation.

He'd have taken her even if she'd protested, and the prospect made him ill. What had the infamous Captain Robard done to him? Had she transformed him from well-bred aristocrat to slaving lowborn beast? Or had she merely freed his true nature?

Certainly he'd played at spanking games with a willing wench now and then, but he'd never taken pleasure in inflicting pain.

When he'd had Fallon beneath him, each time his hand came down on her naked flesh, when he'd pinched her thighs, or tugged taut the leather belt holding her wrists, he'd felt invincible.

His heart still raced from the exertion, and he sought a bottle of rum from the highest shelf to calm it.

He would not touch her again, he decided, pulling the cork with his teeth. He spit it on the floor—surely there would be nothing left to seal up in the bottle when he was done. He'd drink to forget his deplorable actions, and at first light he and Jon would take their leave, the game a draw. Fallon would be free, and Jacob would be forever a slave to his own depravities.

He'd gulped half the bottle, relishing the sweet burn of the Caribbean-made spirits, when Jon flew down the stairs into the galley. Shirtless and sweating, he bore familiar scratches on his shoulders and his back. Before Jacob could voice his shock and outrage, his brother had him pinned to the long plank table in the center of the room.

"You rutting bastard." Jon's accusation came through clenched teeth.

Jacob released the rum bottle, which spilled its remaining contents across the table, then tumbled to the floor. He curled his fingers around Jon's wrists in an attempt to ease the pressure on his throat.

"Me? You smell of her yourself, brother. Apparently I'm not the only one beguiled."

Above him, Jon seethed. "I had her permission. Did you?"

He had. After all, she'd presented herself to him. With her body still trembling from one orgasm, she'd begged him for another.

Jon's grip on his windpipe tightened, preventing him from nodding, but Jacob managed to croak his response. "Yes, and look what she's brought us to. We've never fought over a woman in our lives."

Jon released Jacob with just as much violence as he'd grabbed him. He turned his back and paced away. "This isn't about dueling with you over her affections. I've no doubt she hates us both equally. This is about you taking liberties with her virtue."

"What virtue?" The words slipped out as Jacob rubbed his throat.

In response, Jon's fist came around sharply, connecting with Jacob's upper jaw and sending him reeling backward.

"You've no right to judge her! She may be a brigand, but she's still a woman and deserving of some respect for that alone. What you did to her was—"

"Enjoyed by all involved. You've seen the implements in her quarters. The lady has certain unusual tastes. I did nothing to her she hasn't paid men to do in the exotic ports she visits."

Jon glared. Certainly he understood the implications. Fallon enjoyed submission, which was why she'd been able to endure Jacob's punishments. Binding and blindfolding would



have left any other woman—pirate rogue or not—broken and begging for mercy. Instead, Fallon thrived on it. He'd never draw from her the truths or the penance he sought, not by holding her prisoner, anyway.

Jon stepped up to Jacob, his eyes blazing. "You won't touch her again. This game is over as of this moment."

Jacob lowered his head. "Agreed. I'd already decided to leave at first light. I'm done with her." God, would he ever be truly done? He'd feel her forever in his dreams. Already the scent of her arousal plagued him, the memory of her orgasm squeezing his aching cock to completion left him hard and wanting her again.

The idea that his own brother had enjoyed the same bliss left him cold. "And what about you? Can you keep yourself away from her as well?"

Jon looked away. "I won't bed her again. But I will tell her the truth. It's time she knows that Rhea and Sheppard are both alive and well."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## CHAPTER 9

On shaky legs, Fallon made her way back to her quarters, stopping in Ette's room on the way to ferret out her navigator's hidden pistol.

Though Jon had bade her to wait for him in his own bunk and left her with a lingering kiss that made her heart stutter, she couldn't bring herself to lie still while her body throbbed for want of two men.

She'd shocked herself tonight, not by her illicit enjoyment of Jacob's domination, or of his surprisingly tender lovemaking, but by her insatiable desire for Jon after having lain with his brother.

Though Jacob's long, thick cock had certainly satisfied her, she'd felt strangely incomplete until Jon had taken her to bed as well. They were like two halves of one man: one the dominant she craved, the other driven by pure emotions—lust, vengeance and protectiveness. In Jacob's arms she'd been completely free. At his mercy she could relinquish her inner turmoil and let slip her burdens for a while. In Jon's embrace ... she *felt*. She gave. He *made love* to her, furious and fast but with his heart in control at all times.

Jacob had fucked her—with great expertise—and fed the creature inside her that craved unbridled sex.

She closed the door of her quarters and leaned her naked back against it, sighing. She pressed a hand to her belly to ease the fluttering of nerves that accompanied thoughts of her captors—her two masters.

Had she met the elder York brothers under other circumstances, she might have fancied herself in love. As a set, they were, after all, everything she'd longed to find in *one* man.

Girlish fantasies of twin lovers aside, she still had a mission. Rescue and reunite her crew, keep Rhea's secret safe until her dying day, and put as much distance as she could between herself, Jacob, and Jon.

Again she dressed quickly, paying no heed to the disarray of her room. Leather boots, a soft chamois jerkin, and trousers with deep pockets to hold a bit of coin and some tradable jewels left her feeling almost herself. A thin belt and holster slung low on her hips would hold her gun.

Armed now and with some semblance of her dignity restored, she headed across the deck, bent on hoisting the sails and setting course for St. Helena.

The sound of an argument reached her before as she approached the galley hatch. It amazed her that in a few short days she'd learned to distinguish one man's voice from the other.

Jacob's, the slightly deeper of the two, rose above his brother's. "What purpose would telling her the truth now serve?"

Fallon stilled. Light spilled from the galley below, and the shadows of two angry men played in the golden beam. She held her breath and listened for Jon's response.

"Clearly Fallon cares for Rhea. Haven't we done her disservice enough? I think we owe her the balm of knowing the two are happily wed and that they could benefit from a

dowry of fifty thousand crown since Father will not acknowledge their union. Perhaps..." The rest of Jon's words blurred together, muffled by the buzz of anger rising in Fallon's ears.

So there was more to this charade than two greedy aristocrats come searching for vengeance and pilfered gold.

Jacob might have left her bottom smarting from his blows, but this news left a far greater sting. The wound Jon had opened in her heart with the tale he'd spun of Rhea's tragic end had bled. That pain brought her no illicit pleasure the way a masterful spanking did.

Involuntarily, Fallon clutched the handle of Ette's pistol. Vengeance for the younger couple's untimely deaths she could have borne, even convinced herself she deserved to suffer for her role in their misfortune, but this betrayal she could not abide.

She drew the pistol and flew down the stairs into the galley, determined to spill York blood before daylight.

\* \* \* \*

The first resounding crack of a pistol shot rendered Jacob and his brother simultaneously mute. The second galvanized them into action.

Jon rushed forward, hands outstretched to wrest the weapon from the blonde Medusa who flew screaming and cursing into the galley.

Her cheeks aflame, eyes hard, Fallon danced out of his grip and took aim at his chest. Jacob threw himself in front of his brother, and a third bullet grazed his side, leaving a tear in

his shirt but not touching the flesh beneath. It was a deliberate miss.

"Fallon! You needn't kill us. I've told you we would leave," he said, hoping his cajoling tone might calm her.

She brandished the pistol, her breath coming in great, heaving gasps while she fought for composure. "You told me many things while fucking me, milord. Don't flatter yourself to think I believed any of them."

*Bang!* Another shot ricocheted around the small room. A copper pot clanked, and Jon ducked.

With stunning efficiency, Fallon reloaded and took aim again, this time at Jacob's head. "The truth now, milord. All of it. Rhea and Sheppard are alive?"

Jacob met Jon's gaze sidelong. "Yes."

"And they are well?"

"Well and wed," Jon answered. "They're off to Carnatta to visit the nuns who raised her."

The crimson of Fallon's cheeks darkened. She sputtered and waved the gun haphazardly. "No. Not there."

"Why?" Jacob surged forward boldly, certain she would not shoot to kill. "What secret lies in Carnatta?"

"My blackmailer. The Mother Superior of Carnatta Abbey is the recipient of Norman's money."

Jon spared only a moment to be shocked by that news. Even if he cared about reclaiming his father's lost gold, there would be no retrieving it once the church had possession. He raised his hands in what he hoped was a calming gesture. Perhaps fearing another of her ill-aimed shots might hit the mark, Jacob lunged forward to push him out of the way.

Startled by his movement, Fallon fired again. Fortunately neither brother stood in the bullet's path, though it pinged against something metal—a pot or hanging utensil—causing a blue spark to fly. A second later the rum-soaked floor ignited.

Flames raced across the galley toward the cook stove and leapt up, setting the equally sodden table ablaze.

Jacob stumbled back, the loose sleeve of his shirt barely missing the flame. Fallon screamed, likely more in anger than fear. She dropped the pistol and raced toward the half-empty water barrel in the corner of the room. A bucketful across the table left the wooden planks steaming, but by now the flames had licked upward, igniting hanging herbs and the rope that stretched across the galley ceiling.

In seconds the crossbeams had begun to smolder.

Jacob leapt for Fallon, tore the bucket from her hands and shoved her toward the stairs. Jon followed, already choking on the smoke-thickened air. Wrapped now in Jacob's arms, Fallon struggled and cursed.

"We've got to put the fire out. The barrel ... hurry!"

Without heed to her instructions, Jacob and Jon forced Fallon up the stairs. "It's spreading too fast. One water barrel isn't enough," Jon said. He hauled Fallon up to the deck where smoke had already begun seeping through narrow cracks in the planks.

Jacob grabbed her shoulders. "There's not a powder keg stored in the galley, is there?"

"What kind of fool do you think I am? The powder keg is in the hold."

*Thank God for that.* Relief made Jon lightheaded. They still had a chance to put out the fire before the flames reached anything explosive. He ran to the nearest rain barrel. "Jacob, help me."

Together he and his brother dumped the barrel over, spilling its contents across the deck. Hopefully the water would seep through the planks, putting out the flames and wetting the old wood enough to stop it from burning.

Steam rose and more smoke with it. Now thick and black, it billowed up through the hatch above the galley. Fallon threw her legs over the side, prepared to leap back into the flames, but Jon hooked his arms under hers and dragged her away from danger.

A shower of sparks flew up through the hatch a second later. Jon covered Fallon's face, shielding her hair from the flying embers. "The stairs collapsed. One side of the room is still burning. What's next to the galley?"

"The infirmary, and that side runs under the forecastle and my quarters." Fallon struggled from his grip and lurched to her feet. "There's another rain barrel on the aft deck."

Jacob caught her as she hurried past him and pulled her around roughly to face him. "There's no time for that, and it will do no good. We have to abandon ship before the long boat catches fire."

"No!" She swung a punch at him that stunned him more than his brother's had. Pain exploded through his jaw, but even though his eyes watered he managed to keep his grip on her arm. "I won't leave now. This ship is my home. I'll go down with her."

"Fallon, your crew..." Jon captured her heaving shoulders in his hands and pulled her against his chest. "Who'll reunite them if you're dead?"

Though her response was aimed at Jon, she glared at Jacob. "This ship is all I have. Without it, I have nothing to offer them. I might as well be dead because the sea is the only place I'm worth anything."

Her pointed words cut Jacob as surely as a blade, but with the forecandle deck beginning to crackle with the rising flames from below, there was no time to form a response. He glanced at Jon. "You take her. I'll untie the long boat."

"No!" Fallon struggled, likely pushing the limits of Jon's strength and his resolve. She kicked his shins and shrieked, but he held fast and walked her toward the port rail. He kept her writhing body trapped against him while Jacob untied the long boat and lowered it to the water.

"I will not leave my ship to burn." Fallon kicked at the rail, using every wily trick to avoid being hoisted over the side.

Exasperated by her efforts to thwart their rescue attempt, Jacob took her face in his hands. "Just because you're no longer bound doesn't mean you're not still my prisoner. You'll go where I take you until I'm through with you, and I refuse to leave you here to die."

She stilled for a moment, and fear filled her eyes. Behind Jon, flames leapt free on the main deck as the crossbeams above the galley collapsed.

The light left Fallon's eyes, and she deflated. No one could argue *Gabrielle* was too far gone to salvage.



Without assistance or coercion, the lady pirate climbed over the rail and lowered herself into the long boat. Jon caught Jacob's eye as he moved to follow her. "Has she finally found redemption in your eyes?"

Jacob offered the smoldering deck a final glance before joining his brother at the rail. "You were right. Now it's my own I seek, not hers."

They sailed away from the burning ship, Fallon cold and silent, though she rested in Jon's arms. Jacob wished he could give her comfort as well, but he had to row the boat, and she never lowered her gaze to his, only stared at the column of dark smoke rising in the brightening sky. He doubted she'd ever look at him again.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## CHAPTER 10

*Three days later*

Jon stood on the widow's walk of the governor's home, gazing at the rocky shore of Tristan da Cunha and the long, uneven dock stretching out into the gray sea. Dressed in a poplin gown borrowed from the island governor's wife, Fallon paced the length of the dock, her movements restless as she waited for the ship that would come to take the three back to Tremont in two weeks' time.

Fishermen from the miniscule island had found the long boat less than a day after they'd cast off from the remains of *Gabrielle* and offered generous assistance. Now the three had little to do but hope word sent out with fishing boats from these remote shores would reach Fallon's crew in St. Helena as well as Sheppard and Rhea as they passed through London on their way to Carnatta.

He and Jon had finally learned from Fallon why she feared the Duke of Richmond would discover Rhea was his daughter. It was not the duke himself who posed a threat, but his lady wife. Rumors abounded that she'd arranged the deaths of several children thought to be her husband's illegitimate offspring. For him to suddenly have a full grown heir, who might possess enough of his heart to win an inheritance, would put Rhea in terrible danger from the duchess's powerful family and her connections with those less scrupulous who would do her bidding.

Consumed with worry for her former charge, the lady captain spent her days haunting the small pier, an inch away, Jon surmised, from throwing herself into the sea and swimming off to find her crew. He and Jacob still had not learned how Fallon became involved in Rhea's plight. They might never know for sure, since Fallon spoke little to either of them or to anyone in the rough-hewn fishing village that was England's most far flung possession.

Jon stiffened when his brother joined him on the windy walk. Tension had run high between them as well, and he wondered if their shared desire for Fallon had erected an unbreachable barrier between them. Every private conversation they'd shared since their arrival on Tristan da Cunha had ended in an argument about the captain.

"Is she *still* out there?" Jacob's voice held more annoyance than concern, and that bristled Jon.

"Where else would she be? She can't abide either of us, and the few women on the island shun her since neither of us have claimed her as a wife. She's a wanton creature in their eyes, and they fear her."

Jacob drew a slow and noisy breath and placed his hands on the weathered wooden rail. "The air smells of rain. A storm will delay our trip."

"And that will make her more agitated."

"There's little I can do about the weather."

Jon offered no comment. He wanted his brother to do something to ease Fallon's unrest, but besides buying her a new schooner, which they had both offered to do, he could think of nothing that might appease her, except perhaps to

see them both fall to their deaths from the widow's walk.

"Perhaps not, but I don't doubt you can find a way to soothe her turmoil. It should be you, after all, since you were the cause of it."

"Do we have to go through this again, Jon? Aside from offering her money, there's little I can give Fallon except..."

"Your penance?" Jon raised a brow. He offered Jacob a quick glance, but would not meet his eyes.

"No, not even that would be enough, but perhaps something else." Jacob turned from the rail. "I've an errand. Please make my excuses to the governor's wife if I'm late for dinner."

Jon might have refused the favor, but if Jacob had a plan to help Fallon, he could not begrudge his brother the time. "I will, but hurry. If she remains like that much longer, I fear she'll cast herself into the sea."

\* \* \* \*

As per his polite request, Fallon appeared at the door of Jacob's room in the governor's home late that evening. She'd taken dinner in her own room, leaving the brothers to field an awkward silence at the table in the small dining room.

He'd hoped the folded note card he'd slipped under her door would not go unheeded, but now, as he stepped back to let her into the room, his heart raced with apprehension.

"Thank you for coming."

"Your note said it was urgent that you speak with me. I imagine you're going to tell me there will be a delay in the arrival of the *Lizabet*." Her eyes seemed to have darkened in

the few days they'd been on land, reflecting the storm within. In her borrowed gown, with her hair gathered in unruly curls atop her head, she looked innocent and sweet. Only the tilt of her mouth gave away her wicked nature, and Jacob focused on that as he bent to retrieve an object wrapped in oilcloth from the table beside his bed.

"I'm sure the change in weather will have an effect, but not a significant one. The captain of the *Lizabet* is well-skilled, and his crew is exceptional. They will keep their schedule."

"Then I can't imagine what—"

"Perhaps this will serve to ease your ... discomfort." His fingers shook as he unwrapped the item he'd procured that day. With few horses on the rocky island, riding crops were in short supply. He'd had a difficult time convincing the governor's stable hand that the workmanship of this one in particular was so impressive as to warrant the promise of five crown in payment for it.

He placed the implement across his palms and watched the lady captain's eyes.

Her body stiffened instantly, whether in anger or arousal he couldn't tell at first. With Fallon, the two emotions were closely linked.

"You need this, don't you? As much as I do."

The sudden rush of color to her cheeks and the widening of her pupils told him her answer. She bit her lower lip.

"The house is empty now. The governor and his family have gone visiting the miller. The servants are drinking in the yard, and Jon is ... avoiding me. I should imagine he won't return until after he believes I've gone to sleep."

Her breath caught at the mention of his brother's name. Did she prefer his twin after all?

"Jon is at the wharf," she said, reaching out to run a gentle finger over the taut leather. "I should like to see him later, if you permit."

Jacob's cock hardened at the implication. She wanted them both. The thought should have angered him, but at the moment, anticipation of their sensual exploits drowned out all else. "Of course," he whispered, his throat dry as sand.

Fallon turned her back on him and bowed her head. "Command me, milord." Her voice shook.

Heart thundering, Jacob stepped up behind her. She shivered when he placed his hands on the fastenings of her dress and began to open them. In a moment she stood before him wearing only a thin shift, the poplin rustling to the floor at her feet. Her body trembled.

"Unfortunately I've nothing suitable to bind you with, so for now I will need your word that you will remain still."

"You have that, milord."

"Good. Lie down on my bed, on your stomach."

She moaned softly as she moved to obey, and the sound left Jacob's cock thrumming. He'd have dispensed with the formalities and simply mounted her, but implicit in his commands had been the promise of her own release. He owed her what she craved, and he would take his own pleasure afterward.

He opened his shirt, sloughed it off, then took the crop in one hand. "You never did receive a proper punishment for kidnapping Sheppard," he said.

Fallon nodded into the pillows. She raised onto her knees, presenting her backside and thighs for his use. "I am sorry, milord."

Jacob brandished the crop. "You'll receive one blow for each day of his captivity. You will not come until you have endured your entire punishment. Am I clear?"

"Yes, Master." She shuddered, and Jacob permitted himself a smile. "If you disobey me, I will not allow Jon to fuck you when I'm finished."

"Yes, Master."

Jacob circled the bed, planning his next move. His first blow struck her across her thighs, and she gasped. The second landed slightly higher, just grazing the rounded flesh of her buttocks.

"You're wet already, Fallon. How will you last for eight more blows?"

"I will, milord. I promise."

Jacob ran a hand down Fallon's spine. He lifted the hem of her shift, exposing her bottom and the plump folds of her sex. Her scent reached him, taunting him. He caressed her creamy flesh for a moment, then struck two more blows in rapid succession, one to each cheek. Her body convulsed, but she accepted the punishment, and a secretive smile curved the corner of her mouth, visible when she turned her head to rest it on the pillows.

"Six more," Jacob warned, running the crop between her thighs. She groaned, and he drew in rasping breaths in the warm room, desperate to calm his own arousal. "Are you

close? Will you suffer *le petite morte* before I'm through with you?"

"No, Master. I will obey you," came her strangled reply.

He struck again, and she whimpered, not in pain, he gathered, but frustration. How would she resist the need to surrender to her release if this was the very thing that brought it on?

"Do you understand why I must punish you, Fallon? Do you realize how wicked you've been?"

"Yes, milord."

The next blow landed, and Jacob's cock pulsed. He wouldn't last. He set the crop aside and removed his breeches in preparation for the moment he would allow himself to take her. Fallon clenched her buttocks in anticipation of the four remaining strokes.

"This may not be enough to redeem you fully. Your crimes are many."

"I know, Master."

One more blow landed on her thighs and she cried out.

"Master, hurry, please!"

"I can't, Fallon. You need to learn discipline and obedience. Now you'll wait for the rest of your punishment." To torment her, he ran the crop between her legs again, teasing her sex, applying just enough pressure with the soft tip to make her squirm. "Don't surrender yet, my dear, or I will not allow Jon to have you later."

She seemed to swallow a groan. He rubbed the crop harder, pressing up between her legs. Then he cheated at the



game by pinching her thigh. She gave a small, truncated scream and her body went rigid.

"Hold on, Fallon. I'm almost finished with you."

"I can't, milord."

"You must, if you want Jon as well as me. I know he offers you something I don't, a tenderness I don't possess." He struck twice more and waited while she groaned and panted into the pillows, trying to control her body's reaction. The final blows would be swift as well because he could stand no more. Moisture glistened on the tip of his cock, and his balls ached. He'd never needed a woman as badly as he needed Fallon Robard.

"I've changed my mind, Fallon. I've decided you cannot come until I'm inside you. Can you do that? Can you control yourself that long?"

She whimpered sweetly, seductively. "No, milord..."

"But you must." He struck the final blow with his hand rather than the crop, then tossed the implement on the floor. Fallon drew in a sharp breath and held it, her muscles taut, forcing her body to stave off its natural reaction.

He could play her longer, but he couldn't last himself. With brusque movements he knelt behind her on the bed and caressed the faint red streaks that crossed the delicate skin of her backside. He spread her knees with his own. "There, Fallon. Almost there. You've done well for this first time."

She writhed, pressing her bottom toward him. Unable to maintain his air of superiority any longer, he guided his erection inside her.

With a deep moan, Fallon came. Her body bucked against his, and her sex convulsed around his cock so rapidly his own climax barreled up from his balls.

He growled and thrust deep, shuddering with her until every last drop of his seed had spilled. Panting, he eased her to lie flat on her stomach with her head turned to one side, brushed her hair from her eyes and kissed her shoulder with all the reverence she deserved.

"Am I forgiven, milord?" she mumbled through that same, sweet, wicked smile.

Jacob bowed his head and rubbed the luscious curve at the small of her back. "Of course, my lovely captain. But the question is, am I?"

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## CHAPTER 11

Fallon had no response to Jacob's parting question. He left the room too quickly afterward for her to reply, not that she possessed a coherent answer anyway.

She lay quietly now, warm under the woolen blanket, her body still humming from her climax. Did she forgive him for all he'd done and for the dismal turn her capricious existence had taken?

Her crew was gone. The chance of reuniting them all was slim, for certainly some of the more restless ones would have wandered off in search of gainful employment elsewhere. Her ship ... the memory of *Gabrielle's* demise brought sharp tears to her eyes, yet the contempt she'd felt for both Jacob and Jon in those first unbearable hours at sea had faded to something she couldn't quite identify.

She didn't hate the York brothers, even though she should have. Certainly Jacob angered her, challenged her, left her trembling with a host of emotions she'd never felt before. But she didn't hate him. Jon had earned a small measure of her empathy in these last few days ... his gentler manner, and the longing way in which she'd caught him looking at her now and then softened her resolve and in rare moments made her want to comfort *him*.

If she dared admit the truth to herself, she'd come to ally herself with her captors, who now seemed to feel responsible for her well-being. She might have been content with that,

except after this sinful interlude with Jacob, she felt something more than contentment.

A soft knock on the door startled her from her troubling thoughts. She called out, and a moment later, a familiar silhouette appeared in the scone light from the hallway beyond. Jon slipped into the room and closed the door.

"He said you asked for me."

Fallon held her arms out to him, and her heart thundered while he hesitated. "Please, Jon."

"Is this how it will be? First Jacob, then me?"

"Only if you wish it, milord."

He crossed the room, removing his shirt and loosening his breeches as he moved. "I liked it better when you called me Jon."

"Then I shall call you Jon."

His familiar gaze raked over her. He pulled the blanket from her body and growled. "Has he left you aching again?"

She hid her smile. "Yes. I need you to soothe me."

He sloughed his boots and breeches and joined her in the bed, sliding warm skin and familiar masculine muscles over her. Wrapped in his arms, she melted, became pliant rather than taut as she was for Jacob. She molded herself to him, wrapped her legs around his waist and helped to guide his growing erection toward her sheath.

Jon bent his head to nuzzle her neck, to lick the soft skin beneath her ear. He buried one hand in her hair and tilted her head back so she could accept his desperate kiss. She moaned into his mouth and suckled his tongue. He tasted of

sweet wine coupled with the heady flavor she'd come to recognize as male desire.

Reverently, he trailed a hand down her throat, cupped her breast and squeezed her nipple. She sighed. She might have liked him to pinch it or leave a trail of stinging bites along her skin, but that wasn't Jon's way. He was a balm.

He caressed her where the riding crop had left her flesh tender. His warmth eased the ache inside her as well. Deep and deliberate, he entered her in one smooth stroke and began to move.

He took her still-smarting backside in his hands, a barrier between her sore skin and the rough bedclothes, and he rocked gently, slowly in and out, leaving her panting to the rhythm of his movements.

She arched her back, pushing her breasts against his chest and wrapped her hands around his back. The first time he'd made love to her, she'd left deep scratches on his shoulders in her urgency. This time she reined in her desire to tear at him. She let herself be loved by him, and she reveled in it.

"Jon ... Jon."

"Fallon, I don't care what you and Jacob do together. When I'm with you, you exist only for me. Is that clear?"

"Yes ... of course." She drew in a gasp on his next thrust. He was nearing his release—she could tell by the look in his eyes, his rapid breathing and the sudden tension in his thighs.

She smiled at him. "When we are together, I'm yours alone. You're my reward for obedience to Jacob."

He stiffened, and she thought for a moment that perhaps she'd said the wrong thing, but the rush of his climax followed his low groan. The warm river of his seed invaded her, heating her, and her inner muscles drew tight.

She rose up, curling around him and surrendered to her own keening release, breathing his name on a sigh.

They lay still for a time, idly caressing one another, breathing deeply of their own comingled scents. When Jon slipped from her intimate grasp, she shivered. "Could I go with you, back to your room, Jon?"

He rolled aside and settled her head on his chest above his racing heartbeat. "Will Jacob allow that?"

"He's through with me for tonight. My choices are my own."

"Then, yes. I should like to have you in my bed this evening." He kissed her forehead but did not meet her gaze.

"Give me a few moments to make myself presentable, and I'll meet you there."

He nodded, kissed her again and slid from beneath the blanket. "You're presentable as you are, but I will await your pleasure, milady."

Just as quickly and quietly as he'd appeared, Jon let himself out of the room. Fallon lay still for a moment before swiping at a single tear that had gathered at the corner of her eye. Her true pleasure would have been to find some miraculous way to merge the brothers York into one man. How could she ever choose between them? And worse, what made her think she had a right to either man, since their station was so far above hers?

She rose and gathered the blanket around her, enjoying the feel of the rough-spun wool on her skin. She breathed deep to control her rising emotions and reached for her discarded shift and dress. There might never come a time again when all of her needs were met by any man, so in truth, she'd best enjoy this while she could and anticipate the day when the York brothers transferred their affections to a more suitable lady.

\* \* \* \*

*Two weeks later*

Jacob sat in his quarters aboard the *Lizabet*, pouring over the letters he'd spent the last few days writing. Though the odds were Rhea and Sheppard would reach Carnatta before any written warning could make its way to northern England, he'd made sure to call due any favors he could from the aristocracy.

He glanced up impatiently when Jon let himself into the small room without knocking. Though over the past fortnight tension between them had eased, Jacob found himself loathe to be disturbed during the early evenings when he retired to his quarters to read and to plan. "I've a few more pages to write, Jon. Can this wait until later?"

"I think it's waited long enough." Jon raked his fingers through his hair, reminding Jacob they were both in need of a trimming. Their father would scarcely recognize his elder sons after all this time away from civilization.

"Is this about Fallon ... again?" She seemed to be the only subject they discussed since boarding the ship bound for Tremont.

"Yes."

"What more is there to say? We will finance the purchase of her new ship and the retrieval of her crew."

"And then what, Jacob?" Jon paced, his movements brisk and unfocused. "Do we allow her to sail away never to be heard from again?"

"Is there another option? I doubt she would agree to work for us or any legitimate sailing venture, even if she could. She's not a member of the peerage. There's no family awaiting her return to civilized shores, and her spirit is such that truly taming her would be akin to murder. What do you propose we do?"

Jon scrubbed a hand over the light beard he'd grown since leaving Tristan da Cunha. "I don't know, but there must be something. I don't think I can let her go, Jacob. I'm in love with her."

Jacob stiffened. He'd feared this would happen. Over the years Jon had fancied himself in love quite often. Unfortunately never with a proper young lady, and both Jacob and Norman had always been grateful nothing had come from those heady liaisons. This time, however, Jacob recognized in his brother's eyes a look he knew too well.

"Spending nights in her bed is not the same as love," he said.

"Nor are nightly punishments with crops and paddles."



Jon's hasty reply stung. Jacob had never before shared a woman with his brother, and yet this arrangement of theirs, begun on Tristan da Cunha and carried on for these past weeks aboard *Lizabet*, had become his life blood.

Each night when he bound the beautiful captain to her bunk, brought her to shuddering release with his skillfully administered spankings, then fucked her with a desperation that left him still whispering her name hours later, he never thought of Jon. He knew that once he left Fallon's bed, his brother arrived shortly after to caress her reddened backside and aching thighs, to spill his seed in her. Jon then often remained wrapped in her embrace until morning, but when Jacob had her, he thought only of how the following night he would have her again.

This strange liaison could not last forever, of course. It had no future, but like his brother, Jacob had come to realize he could not imagine a time before his heart and soul belonged to Fallon Robard.

"I think it's clear neither of us can truly possess her. She has no desire to be a proper wife, and I certainly could never be a proper husband to her. I think our only course is to set her free, Jon."

His brother's eyes softened. "How can I? How can you? I think of nothing else but possessing her."

"We could offer ourselves as part of her crew, but I doubt we meet the physical requirements to serve as *lady* pirates." Jacob offered a faint smile. "She won't have either of us on a permanent basis. I believe we both have to accept that when this journey ends, we'll lose her."

\* \* \* \*

After another blissful night with her twin lovers, Fallon woke sated and sore. She stretched beneath the soft coverlet and wantonly ran her hands from the tips of her breasts down her naked body.

She smiled ruefully when her fingers passed over tender spots on her backside. Jacob had delivered a sound punishment last night, along with his usual expert fucking, and Jon had taken her to glorious heights with his skillful hands and tireless lovemaking.

She thought of them both, so different in temperament, so alike in shape and size. In the dark she knew them by the cadence of their breath and the way they ran their hands over her body. In daylight she could distinguish them even from a great distance, by the way they walked and stood.

"Mmph."

She winced. Her breasts were sore today and her thighs a bit shaky when she cast off the blankets and stood. Jacob had been hard on her last night ... and *in* her. Heavens, she wished she could call them both to her quarters now in broad daylight and have them use her well as they had by moonlight, but the crew of *Lizabet* would no doubt find it unseemly. One rule they'd agreed upon in Tristan da Cunha was that each man had his time alone with Fallon. The three could never share a bed and risk the ugly rumors that might stem from a hapless servant stumbling upon two brothers and one woman locked in a sensual embrace. That didn't mean she couldn't fantasize, though.

Purring her satisfaction with her own lascivious thoughts, she bent to retrieve a dressing gown from where Jon had dropped it. The world spun cruelly around her, and she had to catch herself on the bedpost to keep from falling.

Nausea rose swiftly and Fallon scrambled for the chamber pot. Having eaten nothing since dinner last night, she had little to lose, but her stomach protested violently anyway. After a moment of dry heaving, she sat back on her knees and swiped a shaking hand over her face.

"Oh, no."

She'd been bedding both Jacob and Jon for more than six weeks now, but surely after so many barren years, regardless of what exotic precautions she took or failed to take, she could not have fallen pregnant, could she?

With a sense of dread she curled a protective arm around her belly. What would she do with a child at sea? How could she subject a babe to the vagabond life she preferred to live? And how could she tell the two men she'd fallen in love with that one of them would be a father, when they could never know which one?

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## CHAPTER 12

### *Tremont*

It seemed a lifetime had passed since Jon walked the familiar, narrow streets of his home province. The sights and scents of the busy wharf normally fascinated him, but this evening his focus remained on his mission. He saw nothing except the mass of golden curls belonging to the woman he followed through the twilight alleyways toward the east end of town.

Since their arrival home, Fallon had remained aloof from both he and his brother. Having ended their sensual exploits with a curt note delivered by the owner of the inn at which Jacob had procured her accommodations, she'd declined all further invitations to meet with them. At first he imagined she'd feared an encounter with Norman, but less than a week after their return, the elder York had set off for London, called to parliament on government business.

It pained Jon that his father's absence pleased him, but he'd hoped nothing would stand in his way of spending time with Fallon. After days of silence on her part, he now planned to use Jacob as an excuse to see her. The final preparations had been completed for the transfer of ownership for another schooner, this one named *Constance*. The ship and a small, stout crew would be ready for the arduous journey to St. Helena in less than a fortnight, and Jon decided that bit of good news should be delivered in person.

Rather than hail Fallon when he saw her slip out the side door of the inn dressed in austere riding clothes and a dark cape, he chose to remain silent and follow her. At first, he feared she might be meeting Jacob in secret, even though his brother claimed not to have seen her in weeks.

Her pace, as she flew through the winding lanes, would have left a pack horse winded. He had to hurry to keep her in sight, while at the same time holding back in case she chanced to look behind her. It amazed him that he'd been reduced to skulking in shadows and worrying she might be angry if she caught him. How had he become enslaved to the woman he'd once imprisoned?

Another troubling thought occurred to him when she turned into a narrow, gated garden and let herself inside a tiny cottage where the windows were all dark. Could she have found a man in Tremont to replace Jacob as her sensual master? Would she use the stipend he and his brother gave her as additional recompense for the loss of her ship in order to pay for the submissive treatment Jacob offered for free?

That thought nearly sent Jon back to the estate, but his curiosity and concern for the woman who consumed his thoughts day and night kept him rooted to a hidden spot where he could observe the cottage door.

When she reappeared he'd confront her and demand ... what exactly from a pirate rogue who owed him nothing and who belonged to no one but herself? Perhaps he'd merely beg her to join him in bed, one last time before she sailed away forever.

\* \* \* \*

Fallon studied her hands which had become pale and soft during the weeks spent on *Lizabet* acting the part of a nearly proper lady. During that time she'd longed to take the wheel of the ship, hoist the sails herself and reclaim some of the power she'd lost when *Gabrielle* met her end, but instead she'd played the coquette, sequestered in her cabin most of the time to keep from raising suspicions of the male crew, awaiting the attentions of her lovers.

These limp things lying in her lap belonged to someone else ... the weak creature who hid beneath her confident exterior, longing for a life Fallon Robard could never hope to lead.

"Would you care for tea before you go?" The woman she'd come to see placed a cup and saucer on the small wooden table between them. She smiled in a motherly fashion at her guest.

"No, thank you. I've trouble keeping anything down. I prefer to go to sleep with nothing in my stomach to prevent losing it when I wake up."

"Therein lies part of your problem, my dear. You're not eating enough. You're quite thin and too pale. You need plenty of food and rest if you're to bring a child into this world."

Fallon nodded. The midwife had confirmed her fears. An early pregnancy, but one that would surely take its toll on her health.

The nausea and dizziness often left her lying abed half the day, praying neither Jacob nor Jon would burst into her room

demanding an explanation as to why she'd refused their attentions since returning to Tremont.

Now she'd have to find a way to hide her condition and care for herself until the birth ... which would come in early summer if the midwife's predictions were correct.

Even if she set sail this instant for St. Helena, she could not retrieve her crew and find a discreet, comfortable place to give birth in that time. With early spring storms rising off the Cape and Fallon barely able to keep herself steady and upright on solid ground, she had little hope of reclaiming the life she'd lost before next autumn, if ever.

She pinched the bridge of her nose and drew herself up from her chair. "I will do my best. Thank you again for agreeing to see me." Fallon placed a coin on the table next to the empty tea cup.

"I take it a wealthy man keeps you?" The woman's question might have been considered crass, but there was no guile in her tone, only concern.

"I'm sure he will, once I tell him."

"When your time comes, you may return, if you've no place else to lie in. Otherwise send for me, and I will come to you."

Fallon considered her offer. The small cottage smelled of flowers and dried herbs, tea and bread—a comforting place to pass the time, she imagined. "Thank you. I will consider it."

She let herself back out into the midwife's garden and slipped through the cramped alley that would afford her discreet passage back to the inn.

She supposed both Jon and Jacob would provide funds to raise the child, but neither could make an offer for her hand and risk the scandal of taking a blackmailing pirate as a wife. Not that she wanted a husband anyway, but nevertheless she longed for the comfort of Jon's arms and the freedom Jacob offered her when he acted as her master. Unfortunately she dared not indulge in foolish fantasies of ensnaring two men anymore. She had only one concern now, beyond reuniting her crew, and that was to see her child raised in a world that would not punish him for having a lowborn pirate wench as a mother.

Lost in her own tumultuous thoughts, she hurried back toward the inn, turning only when she'd nearly reached safety to investigate heavy footfalls from behind her.

A figure emerged from the alley behind a small tavern, and a familiar face caught the feeble light spilling from a half open window. "Your audacity astounds me, Captain Robard. How could you show your face in Tremont after what you did to the governor's son?"

Fallon's blood chilled. The man called himself Baucheré and claimed to be a representative of the Mother Superior of Carnatta. The last time she'd seen him, she'd turned over Sheppard York's ransom, and then silently wished the extortionist a slow and painful death.

He should have been in England living comfortably off his share of the ill-gotten funds.

"It was not my choice to return, and I'll be gone soon enough. You needn't concern yourself." Her fingers sought the small, silver dagger she concealed beneath her cloak.



Baucheré shifted from one foot to the other and scanned the encroaching shadows. He hadn't seemed to notice her cautious movement toward her weapon. "How much would it be worth to you to make sure the esteemed governor does not learn of your return?"

Fallon sneered at her tormentor. "Nothing. I'm well aware he's left the province and I'll be long gone before he returns."

"But his gentlemen sons remain here, both eager, I imagine, to learn the fate of the ransom you collected for their brother."

"Ha!" Fallon could barely contain her mirth. "Please, tell them I'm here. I'm sure you'll find their reaction to such news to be entertaining."

Baucheré scowled. Clearly he'd expected her to cower at the thought. "I don't jest, Captain. I will turn you over to the authorities."

"Which would serve you how? There will be no more money from me if I'm carted off to prison." She loomed closer to Baucheré, inspected the evil glint in his eye and prepared to strike once, quick and true with her blade. He'd get nothing more from her except a clear view of his own innards before he died.

She should have jumped ship before *Lizabet* docked in Tremont, but her own greed kept her aboard, lured to the lion's den by the promises Jon and Jacob made to replace her ship.

"You know as well as I, I'm served best by keeping the coffers full at Carnatta, and finding you back on these shores gives me another opportunity to please the Mother Superior."

"Oh, so you're asking for more?" Regret laced Fallon's response. Her fear for Rhea's safety had made her careless in the past, so eager to spare the girl the duchess's wrath she'd agreed to Baucheré's demands too quickly.

"There are two more brothers. If the youngest could fetch fifty thousand crown, I imagine the eldest and the favorite, Jacob, might command twice as much."

Fallon laughed at the absurd notion of Jacob as *her* captive the way young Sheppard had been. Much as she'd dreamed of having Jacob at her mercy in the past, now she could not imagine such a circumstance. She stepped up close to Baucheré and brought her blade up. It glinted golden in the reflected light from the tavern. "I met your demands once, but not again. You've the choice now to walk away unharmed and forget you saw me here, or meet your end in this alley. Pick wisely. You will not get a second chance."

Baucheré tilted his head away from the blade that grazed his throat. He drew back parched lips and laughed in Fallon's face.

His sudden lunge caught her momentarily off guard, and she thrust forward. He lurched away from the blade, and a small explosion between them sent her backing up a single step.

It wasn't until Baucheré raised a smoking pistol that Fallon realized what he'd done.

Through the layers of her day gown she felt the sting—no more painful at first than a stitch from running too fast. She put her hand to her side and brought bloody fingers up into the golden light from the window.

A sharp voice echoed through the alley. "Bring the lady in for supper, sir—"

Fallon stumbled, and the bar wench screamed. A dark form rushed past her and slammed Baucheré into the tavern wall.

She heard the dull thud of a fist hitting flesh and Baucheré's eyes went wide. He slid to the ground with a grunt of pain followed by the sickening crack of bone breaking. Next, Jon's face loomed in front of her.

"He shot you..."

"Yes." It seemed like such a natural statement, warranting a polite response. "He did."

Fallon swayed. She expected horrific pain, but she felt nothing except Jon's warm fingers on her face, brushing her hair from her eyes. From a great distance he pleaded with her not to leave him, but both his voice and his face faded away as the moments passed.

Her final thought was that she might leave her baby with him, and perhaps the matron of the York estate, of whom he'd spoken so fondly, might raise the child. Unfortunately, before she could give voice to her request, darkness closed over her and she sank away beneath the icy waves of a midnight sea.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## CHAPTER 13

"The man who shot her?" Jacob paced the sconce-lit corridor outside his bedroom. Fallon lay inside, the hastily summoned surgeon and two stalwart servants at her side, while he and Jon argued in the hall.

"Dispatched." Jon peered over Jacob's shoulder into the room beyond. His shirt and his hands bore dark bloodstains that Jacob couldn't bear to look at.

"Dead, you mean?"

"Likely. I wrenched his neck, but didn't stop to check his breathing. Fallon was my first concern."

"We'll never know why he accosted her."

"It makes no difference. All that matters is she will live. She *will* live." Jon's voice bore such conviction Jacob almost believed him. The surgeon hadn't seemed as hopeful when he'd gotten a look at her wound.

The small lead pellet had grazed her hip. Slowed by layers of clothing, it hadn't penetrated deeply, but the doctor feared she would not have the strength to recover. He'd pronounced her frail—absurd!—and undernourished.

Jon cursed himself for not coming to her aid sooner.

"You could not have known the man had a pistol, or that he would use it on a woman." Jacob tried to reassure his brother, but he wondered nevertheless if Jon could have done more to prevent this crisis.

"I should have confronted her earlier rather than trailing behind her, cowed by my own insecurities."

Jacob raised a brow. He'd never known his brother to be insecure.

Jon waved a hand at the bedroom door. "At first I thought she might be sneaking out to meet with you. I was jealous."

"I told you she's refused to see me since we docked."

"And I didn't believe you."

Jacob took that information in stride. He'd doubted Jon's sincerity, too, on the matter of Fallon and secretly believed his beautiful wench had chosen the gentler, more besotted lover. Her need for discipline had waned so quickly he'd come to wonder if he'd been too harsh with her during their last encounter when he'd tied her tightly to her bed and spanked her repeatedly with a smooth wooden paddle. She'd thanked him for his generous attentions and promised, as she always did, to behave as he instructed, then agreed to wait patiently for Jon's arrival.

She hadn't invited him to her bed since, and he'd grown restless with wanting her.

Now she lay where he'd fantasized of finding her one day, in his bed ... yet he could take no pleasure from the circumstance.

The surgeon appeared in the doorway, his sallow face drawn. Jon met his tired gaze. "Have you removed the bullet?"

"Yes, and I've closed the wound. She should remain quiet and warm until it heals."

"But it *will* heal? She will recover?"

Jacob put a hand on Jon's shoulder. He ached for Fallon as well, but clearly his brother felt responsible for her plight.

The doctor didn't rush to answer. He glanced back at the servants who were piling bloodstained linens in a basket at the side of the bed before responding. "Should she begin to bleed again, I hold out little hope. She's far too weak. I predict she will not come to term, so be prepared for that."

Jacob and Jon shared a questioning glance, and the doctor paled.

"You were not aware she's with child?"

Jon wobbled on his feet, and cold realization drained along Jacob's spine, filling him with a cruel mixture of dread and elation. *A child.*

"How far along?" Jon's voice rasped.

"Not far ... a blessing perhaps. Losing it will be less painful now than later. The blood loss and her general weakness bode ill for both of them."

While the doctor gathered his cloak and bag, Jon raked his fingers through his hair. They bade him good night, and the matron showed him to the door, then bustled into the room to tend to her newest charge.

"Which one of us do you suppose..." Jon voiced the question tormenting Jacob.

He shook his head. "I suppose you were with her last, and more often. By default ... the child is yours." He said it not to abdicate his claim, but because he truly believed Jon's devotion to Fallon deserved a child as a reward. His own dalliance with her was something less pure. While just as sensual, what they did together did not deserve the validation of producing a new life.

Jon seemed satisfied with Jacob's response. He straightened his spine and filled his lungs with a deep, determined breath. "I'll marry her immediately. The child will be born in holy wedlock."

Under other circumstances Jacob might have protested another man claiming the woman he loved, the woman who might bear him an heir, but he wasn't worthy of claiming her. Jon would make a good husband to her and a doting father, but Jacob could offer something else.

"I will pray for them both while I'm gone. Take care of your family, Jon." He squeezed his brother's shoulder, and Jon regarded him with wide eyes.

"What are you on about?"

"I'll take *Constance* to St. Helena and retrieve Fallon's crew. You can tell her when she wakes, they will all be safe under my care."

Jon sputtered a bit. "You would see her leave Tremont once she recovers?"

"Marry her, Jon. Do what you must to keep her safe and happy, and I will do what I can to repair the damage I've done. She should have the choice when she recovers to do as she pleases."

Jon bowed his head. Love had blinded him to Fallon's true nature. Her spirit would not be content unless she made the choice herself, and Jacob wanted that for her. It was the least he could do.

"Tell her I was here at her side and that I will return as quickly as I can."

Jon grasped his brother's arm. They held for a moment, mirror images, two minds with one thought. "And tell her I love her."

"I will," Jon said softly as Jacob walked away.

\* \* \* \*

Dreams buoyed Fallon like waves in a storm. First she stood on *Gabrielle's* smoldering deck while frigid sheets of rain pummeled her. She called for her crew, but no one answered.

What seemed like hours later, she sat upon a warm rock sunning herself by the water's edge. The wooden dock of Tristan da Cunha stretched out into the blue-gray water, farther than any levee she'd ever seen. She wondered if she might walk its length and reach St. Helena, but she didn't have the strength to stand. Beneath her hands, the granite grew too warm, then burning hot, and she screamed. A stern voice bid her to be silent and to rest.

A candle flared bright as the sun, then faded away. She smelled flowers, then wood smoke. A pillar of ash rose in the sky above the corpse of her beloved ship, and she wept for her loss.

Between each dream she woke to semi-darkness and always there was a voice telling her to go back to sleep. This was the longest night she'd ever endured. When would morning come?

At one point she looked up into a familiar pair of moss green eyes.

"I request your hand in marriage," Jon said.



She laughed and told him yes, then faded back to sleep.

Someone pushed a spoon of broth between her lips, and the flavor gave her strength. "Air out this room," a woman's voice commanded, and light flooded through her dream world, leaving her blinking and confused.

She woke next to the scent of lavender and fresh linen. Finally able to focus, she settled her questioning gaze on two figures at the far end of the room. Jon wore black breeches and a loose silk shirt. His hair was short again. He stood with a stout older woman who shook her finger at him as though he were an unruly boy.

"Too much light will keep her awake. She must rest at all times."

"Yes, yes. But it's been seven days. How will she know it's time to wake up if she never sees sunlight?"

"Master Jon, please—"

"I'm awake," Fallon forced the words out through dry lips.

Both turned to look at her, and Jon rushed across the room.

"You've been gone some time. How was your journey?" The hint of amusement in his voice could not hide his concern. He took her hand, brought it to his whiskered jaw and rubbed her knuckles over his lips.

"I've been to St. Helena?" Had she? She remembered being at sea for what seemed like weeks, the churning waves, scorching midday sun and howling wind had left her wrung out and terribly weary.

"No, I'm sorry. You've never left this room, but you've been away just the same. Are you in pain?"

*The child.* She wrenched her hand from Jon's grasp and searched beneath the heavy blankets that practically bound her to the bed. Beside a layer of thick bandages, she felt the firm swell of her belly. "Still here," she whispered.

Jon met her gaze. "Where he ... or she belongs."

"Jacob?" His name slipped out unbidden, and Fallon held her breath, fearing Jon would think it an affirmation of the child's parentage. He only smiled.

"Gone to St. Helena in your stead. You were too weak to travel, and you will remain here, safe under your husband's protection until my brother returns."

"My husband?" Snippets of that dream came back to her. A sapphire ring, placed there by Jon, glinted on her left hand.

"No one marries a woman sick with fever. The boy is daft." The matron bustled toward the bed, then fluffed the goose down pillows behind Fallon's head and gently, but with indisputable authority, slid Fallon's hands back beneath the blankets. "I told him any woman would protest, but he insisted. Lady York, we're to call you."

Fallon stared at the woman, uncomprehending. She recalled agreeing to a wedding in her dream. The silly girl she'd been a decade past had finally gotten her wish to have a strapping husband, but the pirate rogue was incensed. She tried to sit up, but four hands pushed her down into the voluminous bedding.

"The surgeon forbade us to move you. This is Jacob's bed," Jon said. "But as soon as you are well enough, we have a room prepared for you and one for the child."

Fallon gaped. Jacob had sanctioned this? Then conveniently fled. She'd reconsider Baucheré's suggestion of locking him up.

"The man who..."

"Dead. In a brawl outside a tavern. He'll not bother you again."

Something in Jon's tone told her not to pursue the subject. If Baucheré was dead, her fears for Rhea were put to rest for the time being. Relief made her weak, and she closed her eyes.

She woke next to a familiar face, porcelain skin beneath a delicately styled coiffure of wavy red hair. Her tired heart leapt, and she raised one heavy hand to touch the lovely apparition, praying this was not a dream.

Rhea closed a hand over Fallon's and squeezed. "I'm here, Captain. I've come to care for you and your baby."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## CHAPTER 14

Sunset after a bracing spring rain colored the Tremont evening sky in dueling shades of orange and purple. Bathed in lamplight and nursing glasses of burgundy from Norman York's private collection, Jon and Sheppard sat on the south-facing veranda and watched the stars appear.

If not for Jacob's absence, the moment might have been sublime.

Jon raised his glass and studied the amber liquid within. "I've never felt quite like this," he said, eyeing the rising moon over the rim of his glass. "One moment elated at the prospect of a son ... or daughter of my own, and the next terrified of losing both the child and the mother."

Months of blissful marriage to his own saucy pirate rogue had left young Sheppard circumspect and far too wise for his own good. His indulgent smile both rankled and amused his older brother.

"Rhea's not yet with child, but I understand your plight. I've never been so happy, or so concerned. She'll take good care of Fallon. There's a bond there much deeper than that of captain and crewmate. I worry for Rhea, though. Are you certain this man who attacked Fallon did not have any accomplices?"

Jon sat forward in his chair and rolled his glass between his palms to warm the rich liquor. "She claims he acted alone on orders from the Mother Superior. I can't imagine what

might have happened if you and Rhea had made it all the way to Carnatta."

Sheppard sighed. "I'd have blundered ahead, bringing her right into danger. Only her concern for her captain brought us back. The moment we received word that the *Gabrielle* had foundered, she wished to locate Fallon. It was our good fortune to have been delayed so long in Cape Town by the Dutch bureaucracy."

"Will you tell Rhea of her lineage?" Jon asked after draining his glass. "Despite the danger posed by the duchess, I think she should know."

Sheppard breathed deep and straightened his spine. It amazed Jon how much older his brother seemed after barely half a year's absence. He'd shed the last trappings of impetuous youth and become sage and centered.

"I will tell her if Fallon does not. I agree she should know, but I fear there is quite a bit more your new wife hasn't shared with you about the subject."

Jon set his empty glass on the low table between their chairs and considered Sheppard's words. Fallon had many secrets—most of which he'd probably never learn, even if she gave up her wandering ways and stayed with him forever. "She may not tell us, but eventually she will tell Rhea. I'm certain of that."

"Then Rhea will tell me. We share everything."

Jon gave his brother a rueful smile. "Then you're a lucky man. I doubt I could ever say the same about my bride."

He'd wanted to explain Jacob's role in his relationship with Fallon, but he couldn't find the words. Shep would never

understand how two men, brothers no less, could find contentment in taking the same woman to bed. He could never admit that the child he would welcome into the world might have been fathered by Jacob as easily as by himself.

Sheppard rose and dropped a hand on Jon's shoulder. "In time it will come. The lady captain is a puzzle as well as a grand adventure. You'll enjoy uncovering her secrets one by one over the years to come."

Jon breathed the damp night air, ripe with the promise of a hot, heavy summer. "I hope you're right, little brother. I hope you're right."

\* \* \* \*

After so many days in bed, it seemed strange to sit up in a chair. Fallon gripped the rounded armrests, still wary that she might only be dreaming of having gotten out of bed.

Contrary to the matron's orders, Rhea had insisted Fallon sit up, breathe some of the night air and take a biscuit and some tea rather than the tasteless broth she'd been sipping for days.

Already she felt stronger. Her savior sat across from her now, studying her with the worldly gaze of a much older woman.

"Now look at you, my foundling, a married lady in a satin gown, your hair curled and your feet in dainty slippers. What happened to the waif I taught to shoot a pistol and to swear?"

Rhea laughed, a rich sound borne of true happiness. "She's still here, Captain, and still grateful to you for liberating her from the abbey."

At the mention of Carnatta, Fallon bowed her head and studied her hands again. White now against the dark wool of a lap blanket, they seemed even more foreign to her. "I've done what I could for you, Rhea. I just fear it's not enough. I imagine your husband has told you of the danger I've been trying to shield you from."

Rhea's amber eyes darkened. "He has ... and I'm not sure I believe the tale. How could there be noble blood in my veins?" She splayed a hand on her satin-bound décolletage. "What proof is a letter, really? Especially one now lying on the bottom of the sea?"

Fallon leaned forward slightly, mindful of the slowly healing wound in her hip. "There's more than just a parchment and a seal. Take my word, you are the duke's daughter, his first issue."

Rhea narrowed her eyes. "And how would you know, milady? Sheppard insists you're too young to be my mother, and I agree. You could be more than ten years older than me."

Fallon took one of Rhea's hands in hers and marveled again at the change in the girl. The difference extended from her carefully styled hair, all the way down to her fingertips, now clean and sporting shapely nails. A wedding band sparkled on her left hand and a delicate pearl ring adorned her right. Her new husband had been generous, and it gladdened Fallon's heart to see her charge so well cared for.

"You're right. I'm not your mother, but I knew her quite well and I was present at your birth. She had no one else to trust with the knowledge of your parentage, and she begged

me to keep the secret. Later, when she chose to hide you at Carnatta, she charged me with seeing that you remained there, safe and anonymous. All was well until I received word from the Mother Superior that my pirating life displeased her. She demanded my penance in the form of shares in my earnings in order to keep your secret from the duchess."

Rhea's lips parted. Clearly learning the Mother Superior placed money above her safety came as a shock. Fallon squeezed her hand. "That's when I came to see you. I attempted to negotiate, but she wanted more than I was willing to give. I thought if I stole you, she might relent, since she wouldn't know where I'd taken you."

"How did she find out?" Rhea's eyes glittered in the lamplight.

"She has a vast network of spies, apparently. When we docked in Cape Town last, a man named Baucheré approached me with her escalating demands. That's when I hatched the plan to kidnap Sheppard. I knew of Norman York's treacheries and the peasant unrest in Tremont." Fallon lowered her voice. Though the matron seemed fiercely loyal to the family, she had her doubts about the lesser servants.

"I regret causing Sheppard such discomfort, but I was desperate to put the Mother Superior's threats behind us. I paid Baucheré the money I received from Norman."

Rhea yanked her hand from Fallon's grasp and stifled a gasp with her fingertips. "He believed his father had forsaken him. He always imagined himself the least favorite of the brothers, but that ... crushed him."



Fallon closed her eyes. She couldn't bear the look on Rhea's lovely face. "I regret that. Jon and Jacob exacted their revenge for my misdeeds, and while I cannot say for certain I've paid in full, I confess that I will not soon forget the hurt I caused."

Fallon listened for a moment to the hiss of satin and crinoline as Rhea shifted in her seat. When she opened her eyes, the girl seemed to have collected herself. All traces of shock or disappointment had left her expression.

"You've suffered, too, but now is the time to start again. A husband, a baby, and Jacob off to find the crew and bring them back in a new ship. You will have a new life, just as I do."

Fallon battled with a constriction in her throat. The proud captain could not shed a tear in front of someone who had once been her servant. "I'm not sure of that, Rhea, but regardless, I ask your forgiveness for any pain I've caused you and your husband. If I could take away the scars Ette left on your body, I would wear them myself."

Rhea smiled, and a glistening drop spilled down her cheek. "Of course I can, milady. But I have one question that still needs an answer."

Fallon didn't need to ask, but she waited for Rhea to form the words. "Now that I know who I really am, I must know, who are *you*?"

Fallon reached out to brush an errant curl from Rhea's forehead and steeled herself for the girl's reaction. This was something she should have told her charge a year ago but

could not bring herself to acknowledge it. After a deep sigh, she confessed.

"I'm your sister."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## CHAPTER 15

Two months passed, during which Fallon moved into the rooms Jon had prepared for her. He came to her at night, tentative at first, wary of causing her discomfort, but as her health improved, thanks to Rhea's constant vigilance, he grew more bold.

Fallon welcomed his attention and found she had missed waking up in his arms. She'd begun, however foolishly, to consider the advantages of accepting a permanent station as one of the Ladies York when a cruel reminder of her past arrived in the form of a missive from Norman. He planned to set sail from London the week after the date of the letter, which meant his arrival back in Tremont was imminent.

A pall descended over the dinner table when Jon finished reading, and Fallon shared a glance with Rhea.

"It might be wise if we move to the inn," Rhea said, clasping Sheppard's hand.

Fallon wondered if perhaps moving to the dark continent itself might not be far enough. Both Jon and Sheppard seemed perplexed by the agitation of their wives.

"This is our home, and you are both welcome here," Jon said.

Fallon scoffed at her husband—it still seemed strange to think of him as such. "Perhaps your father will grow fond of Rhea in time, but I cannot imagine him ever tolerating me in his presence, or his province for that matter."

Jon could not have argued the sentiment. No fool would expect the Governor Lord York to accept a blackmailing pirate wench as his daughter. Jon likely faced expulsion from the family for his hasty decision to marry Fallon, and Sheppard had already tempted his father's wrath by bringing home a lowborn wench, even one who had saved his life.

"We will find another residence then," he said, crumpling the letter.

"That may not stop Norman from demanding my neck in a noose for my crimes."

Jon's eyes darkened, and for a moment he looked exactly like Jacob, save for the scar above his brow. Fallon's heart ached for the men she loved, and she would have given anything to have both of them here with her tonight. "With my child in your belly, he won't touch you."

"And one day, I'll give birth. Then what? The stocks in town square are always full, Jon. One day it will be my lot to kneel before the boards or climb the steps to the gallows, and I'll not have my child witness that."

Shaking now, she rose from the table. Rhea moved to comfort her, but she jerked her hand away. "I've been a fool to think I could play lady of the manor. This is not my station in life. Rhea and I were born to a kitchen wench, and while *Rhea's* led a virtuous life, I have not. You cannot pretend I'm a lady, Jon, or pass me off as someone of character when so many people know differently."

Jon's jaw tightened on a response, but no words escaped his ashen lips. With a flounce of her skirts that would have

made any highborn woman proud, Fallon fled the room, cursing under her breath.

On the veranda, Jon caught up with her. He spun her into his arms and forced her angry gaze to meet his. "You are my wife," he said with such conviction her heart contracted.

"You married a woman delirious with fever. I said yes in a dream."

He broke into a dark smile. "I doubt you'd have agreed any other way. Am I correct?"

Fallon refused to nod, though he was right. She'd come to adore him, but the fact remained she never would have married him had she not been semi-conscious. Had she been able, all those weeks ago, she'd have fled Tremont at the first opportunity and likely never seen Jon or his brother again.

"Fallon, if you don't want me, then I will let you go, but not before the child is born. I knew when I put this ring on your finger I might never convince you to stay with me. I knew my father would not accept you, and I knew you held at least as much feeling in your heart for my brother as you do for me. None of that matters." He cupped her face in his hands and kissed her lips with heartbreaking tenderness. "I love you."

She sank against him, accepting his kiss and the warmth of his embrace. "I love you, too, but how can you promise your father will not have me arrested as soon as he returns?"

Jon smirked and smoothed her hair. "I have a plan, but it involves sharing Rhea's origins with him."

Fallon stiffened. With one threat to her sister's safety gone, she didn't have the strength to brook another. "No."

"Trust me, Captain Robard. Your charge will be safe. My father reveres the duke and will consider the news of a ... bastard child to be tragic. A missive, signed in his hand, proclaiming Rhea's parentage would be worth his silence to prevent it from becoming public and embarrassing the duke."

Fallon raised a brow. She'd married a clever and devious man. "You would blackmail your own father?"

"Never!" He laughed. "But I would blackmail the Governor of Tremont." He hugged her and placed a gentle hand on the swell of flesh and satin at her waist. "After all, it does run in the family."

\* \* \* \*

"Breathtaking," Jacob murmured as he stepped off the *Constance's* gangplank onto the dock at Tremont harbor. It wasn't the sight of the busy wharf on which he commented, though, or the brilliant blue of the early summer sky, but the quartet of familiar faces that greeted him.

Jon and Sheppard, beardless to combat the relentless heat, looked younger than when he'd seen them each last. Rhea was dazzling in a summer frock, her red hair glinting like copper in the afternoon light. Beside her, though, stood the true object of his devotion.

Fallon had always been beautiful, but now with her golden hair pinned in flowing waves and her rounded belly barely hidden by her shimmering day gown, she left him speechless.

Her eyes shone with an emotion he'd only dreamed of seeing there. He'd have swept her up in a fierce hug, but

wondered if showing too much affection for his brother's wife would lead to gossip. Instead he took her hand and kissed it.

"You are stunning, milady, but should you be out in this heat?"

Jon growled and moved to hug his brother. "She insisted on meeting the ship. I agreed only because Rhea has promised me Fallon is strong enough to weather an hour in the sun."

"I'm fine," she assured him, laying her hand on his bare forearm. Her touch still electrified him. Even after months at sea surrounded by the women of *Gabrielle's* crew, only Fallon stirred his desires. How he would deal with his lust for her, he hadn't decided yet. "For the past week, I've felt wonderful. Rhea says that means I'm to deliver soon."

Jacob longed to put a hand on her belly, but he held his desire in check. He'd convinced himself during his long absence that she bore Jon's child, not his.

A shout from the deck above drew his attention and silenced any comment he might have made. A moment later, heads all along the wharf turned as half a dozen women, those who had still remained in St. Helena when he arrived, charged down the gangplank to greet their captain.

"We've a new ship, Cap'n! Come, see." Ava tugged at Fallon's hand, causing her wedding ring to glint in the sun. The brilliant sparkle arrowed to Jacob's heart, but he made no comment.

"She shouldn't be climbing that skinny plank," Jon said, but the women overruled him and guided their leader toward the ship. Once Rhea had promised to act as her nurse, Jon

permitted his wife a tour. None seemed surprised by her condition, even though he'd kept that detail to himself during the voyage.

Ava clapped Jacob on the back as she passed him and offered a tilted smile. "Sorry to see you go, Captain Jake. I'd grown used to you."

He offered her a half-grin in response. None of Fallon's original crew had much cared to have him in charge, but they'd tolerated his command well enough.

"Where's Ette?" Fallon asked as she grasped one of the swaying ropes to steady herself.

Tessa jumped in, her normally abrasive tone soft. "Gone, Captain. Set off on another ship a week before Captain Jake arrived. She said to wish you well."

Fallon's shoulders slumped a bit. "Ah. I'm not surprised. She could never stand to watch the sea from land for long. Smooth sailing to her."

Jacob turned to watch Fallon's progress up the plank. His heart sank low, leaving an empty feeling in his chest. The truth was, Ette had refused to join his command. She'd countered his offer to become navigator on the *Constance* with a blade to his throat and done her best to lure several other crewmembers to her cause. One day he might tell Fallon, but not now when news of her friend's desertion might impact her delicate condition.

"You look as though life at sea agrees with you," Jon said once the entourage had left the dock.

"I've come to enjoy the freedom more than I ever thought I would. And life at the manor seems to agree with you both."



Jon and Sheppard exchanged a glance. "Neither of us live on the estate," Sheppard said. "Fallon preferred to avoid Father, and Rhea prefers to be where Fallon is. I imagine he'll be glad to see you back, though. His trip home from England was tedious and left him in ill health and bad temper."

The thought of retiring to the manor house when Fallon wouldn't be there left Jacob cold, but to slight his father by taking a room at the inn would be unwise.

"I'll see him this evening, then I'll come to visit you in your new homes. Are you ready, Jon, for the new arrival?" The question nearly choked him. All the way around the Cape, he'd prayed to reach Tremont before Fallon gave birth, and now the prospect of seeing her child handed into Jon's arms left him speechless.

"You're always welcome under our roof, Jacob," Jon said, clasping his brother's shoulder. "Fallon's missed you."

Jacob couldn't respond. He merely nodded, and a commotion on the ship spared him having to come up with a suitable reply. At first it sounded as if the women were laughing, but Rhea's voice rose above the others, and panic gripped Jacob's gut at her words when she leaned far over the rail to call to the men.

"Summon the midwife, Jon! Fallon's waters have broken, and she can't be moved. She'll give birth in the ship's infirmary."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## CHAPTER 16

*Two months later*

They called it a renewal of vows, since Father Quince, who had conducted their first ceremony, remembered it well. He'd come to the manor house on the advice of the surgeon to administer last rites while Fallon lay bleeding, and he'd ended up marrying her to Jon.

Fallon recalled it as a dream, but to Jon it had been a moment of such perfect clarity, it might as well have been a painting, captured forever in a permanent medium, every detail unfading and pristine.

For his wife's sake, he'd arranged the second ceremony, this one held in Tremont's tiny church. For his wife's sake, and that of his infant son.

Standing beside Fallon, Jacob held the child. Newly christened, Victor Augustus York lay sleeping in the arms of the man he would come to know as his uncle.

"I pronounce you man and wife," Father Quince said, his deep voice echoing in the transept.

Fallon smiled at Jon. Since the day she'd brought Victor, screaming and red-faced, into the world, she'd held herself with a singular dignity, as though, in her mind, she'd risen above her base origins by having given birth to an heir with noble blood.

She loved their son with a fierceness that made Jon proud, but she feared for his future as well. Jon hoped this second

ceremony would allay her concerns that anyone might consider Victor illegitimate.

He kissed his bride, and Jacob handed the baby to Rhea. Great with Sheppard's first child herself, Fallon's red-headed sister looked nearly as radiant as the bride.

"Lovely," she said. "We will gladly take Victor for the night, so the ... two of you can celebrate."

With a nod to his brother's wife, Jon took Fallon's hand, draped it over his arm and led her from the church. There was much to celebrate beyond their official joining, and he didn't plan to waste a minute of this, their last evening in Tremont. Tomorrow he and his young family would set sail on *Constance* and undertake the first of what he hoped to be many voyages to St. Helena.

Fallon squeezed his hand and pulled slightly away. "If I may, Jon, before we go home, I'd like a word with Jacob."

Jon eyed his brother. "Of course."

So much had changed among the three of them since Victor's birth, there'd been no time for private discussions.

Fallon and Jacob moved away from the small group and took a turn down a winding path leading toward the northern end of the estate. With Norman in residence at the manor house, neither Jon nor Fallon would set foot inside, but many evenings Jacob invited them for long walks on the plantation lands.

Rhea offered him an understanding smile. "She will always love you both."

"I know." He bore no jealousy for his brother. How could he when Fallon wore his ring, slept in his bed and nursed the child he named as his son?

Nevertheless, he wondered about what might pass between his elder twin and his wife before they returned to their respective homes.

"We'll both always love her, too," he replied, kissed his sleeping son on the forehead and strolled away.

\* \* \* \*

As soon as she and Jacob had ventured deep enough into the York plantation to be invisible to any townspeople, Fallon reached up and pulled the pins and ribbons from her hair.

She'd played the lady long enough. Tomorrow she would be Captain Robard again—no, Captain York—sailing *Constance* on the maiden supply run to St. Helena, Tristan da Cunha and then back around the Cape to Tremont. She'd wear her hair long and her corset loose and trade her satin gown for boots, breeches and a linen tunic.

She'd grappled with the decision to take Victor along, but no force on earth would convince her to abandon her child, even to Rhea's capable hands. He would grow up at sea, she and Jon agreed to this, with both his parents at his side and a sturdy deck beneath his feet.

Jacob would manage the operations of their newly formed trading company and hopefully, in time, command a small, dedicated fleet to service the distant, often neglected ports in the vast, nearly empty expanse of the south Atlantic.

Miles of ocean would separate them for months at a time, and that knowledge weighed heavily on Fallon's heart. "I want to thank you, Jacob, again for all you've done for me." Her voice seemed small, and she struggled to restore some of the authority with which she once spoke. "I never thought the day would come when I'd offer you my gratitude."

He laughed. "Nor I. I'd more so expected a blade to the gut."

"If you'd never sought to avenge Sheppard..." Well, too many things would be different. After having looked into the angelic face of her son, she could not imagine life any other way.

Jacob stopped and turned to face her. Months at sea had left him ruggedly tan, his hair bleached by the sun and unruly. His scar stood out, pale white, against his darkened skin, and Fallon's heart stuttered at the intensity of his gaze. "I do still regret my actions, though I know had we met any other way, we would have never come to this."

Fallon bowed her head and studied the dusty soil of the lane. "I've wanted you many times since I arrived in Tremont—"

He hushed her with a wave. "Don't. It's best we not discuss it. You are Jon's wife now, which is as it should be. He loves you, and I..."

She glanced up, the question caught in her throat.

"I love you, too, but not in the way he does."

Fallon nodded. That much was clear. Jacob had offered her something she craved, but Jon offered her his life. She put

her hand on Jacob's arm and leaned forward to brush her lips over his jaw.

"Thank you, Master," she said. "I hope someday you find someone who will capture your heart."

"I may fall in love ... again, but I can't foresee ever finding a woman who will give as you did. That is something I'll cherish always."

They walked in silence for a time, following the crossing path back toward town. Along the way Fallon tied her hair up again so as not to arouse the suspicion of the town gossips. Once they'd reached the square, where Jon, Rhea and Sheppard waited for them, Jacob offered his arm and escorted Fallon back to her husband.

"I give her to you," he told his brother, presenting her arm for him. "She is yours entirely. Care for her properly and see that she is ... obedient." A smirk lifted the corners of his mouth on the last word, provoking a similar expression from Jon.

"I will."

Fallon sensed his relief. Though he'd always agreed to share her with Jacob if that was her ultimate choice, she had no doubt her husband preferred to be the only man she took to bed.

"When we return from the first voyage, I suspect Victor will be walking. We'll have him eager to meet his uncles." She turned to Rhea. "And his new cousin."

"When you return, I may not be in Tremont," Jacob cautioned, and Fallon cast him a questioning glance. "I've

business in Cape Town that should ease our way for trade stops along the coast."

Jon nodded, but Fallon saw something deeper in Jacob's moss-colored eyes. "I hope you find what you're looking for," she said, offering him a knowing smile.

"I've always heard that redemption is there for those who seek it. I have no doubt I will find mine along the way."

Fallon squeezed his hand, then looped her hand again around her husband's arm. "If this rogue pirate could find it, you certainly will, Lord York. You certainly will, too."

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## Jennifer Colgan

Drawn to spicy tales of adventure from an early age, Jennifer Colgan (who also writes as Bernadette Gardner) made the leap from writing hard science fiction to writing erotic romance in 2005 and has never looked back.

Now multi-published, Jennifer also writes paranormal, fantasy and contemporary titles as well as science fiction erotica (under the name Bernadette Gardner). When not exploring distant galaxies or alternate universes, Jennifer can be found at home with her husband of fifteen years, two children and one slightly neurotic Dalmatian. She spends her spare time reading, quilting and haunting the local craft stores and looks forward to bringing steamy stories to her fans for decades to come.

You can visit her websites to learn about her works in progress at [www.bernadettegardner.com](http://www.bernadettegardner.com) and [www.jennifercolgan.com](http://www.jennifercolgan.com).

\* \* \* \*

Don't miss *If Looks Could Kill*, by Caitlyn Willows,  
available soon at [AmberHeat.com](http://AmberHeat.com)!

*Caz Tristan and Brooke Hansen have made no secret of the fact they rub each other the wrong way. All the world knows that, if looks could kill, they would have done each other in years ago. Unfortunately for Caz, his brothers have out-voted*



*him in their bid to hire Brooke as the new manager for Mesquite. Now, forced to work together, Caz admits he lacks control where Brooke is concerned, and if there's one thing Caz prides himself on, it's his control.*

*As a power player in a man's world, Brooke learned long ago she had to have "bigger brass ones" than the big boys with whom she was forced to play ball. Control was never more important, and she's taken the motto "Never Let Them See You Sweat" to heart in the boardroom. But in the bedroom it's a completely different matter. Behind closed doors, Brooke would love nothing more than to give complete control over to a trusted lover. Never did she realize the one man who could do all that and more for her is the very man she's shared daggers with over the years.*

*Yes, if looks could kill. But then again, looks can be deceiving...*

\* \* \* \*

Don't miss Orientation, by Rick R. Reed,

available at [AmberAllure.com](http://AmberAllure.com)!

*Robert and Jess may just be the world's most unlikely couple—a gay man and a lesbian. But there is something more complex going on here: Jess may be the reincarnation of the lover Robert lost to AIDS more than two decades ago.*

*Can they transcend sexual orientation and find true love ... again?*

*But before this question can be answered, both must confront a deadly peril just waiting to pounce...*

\* \* \* \*

Don't miss *Dressed For Dying* by Janet Quinn,

available at [AmberQuill.com](http://AmberQuill.com)!

*In 1892, reporter Sean Madigan is pitted against the New York police when he's assigned his first high-profile murder story, the slaying of the wealthy Marshal Haversham, clothing industry mogul and sweatshop owner. While Sean hunts for the killer in order to prove his worth to his newspaper editor, the madman goes on a violent spree, burning down Haversham's warehouses and sweatshops and killing young women who work within them. Each victim is found dressed in a fancy ball gown that was secretly made within the sweatshops themselves.*

*When Madigan's sweetheart, Bridget, becomes the killer's next target, Sean determines he will find the man and his connection to the ball gowns. But the murderer has other designs, and it soon becomes a race against time and the police to discover the fiend's identity before he silences Sean or Bridget ... permanently...*

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

## **Amber Quill's Rewards Program**

For every ten books bought, receive one free!

Visit all three of Amber Quill's web sites

for our very latest releases!!

\* \* \* \*

### **AMBER HEAT EROTICA**

Gimme Fever!!

Steamy, sensual genre fiction...

[www.AmberHeat.com](http://www.AmberHeat.com)

\* \* \* \*

### **AMBER ALLURE**

Where love is blind to gender...

[www.AmberAllure.com](http://www.AmberAllure.com)

\* \* \* \*

A Rogue's Redemption  
*by Jennifer Colgan*

AMBER QUILL PRESS, LLC

Quality Books, Print And Electronic

Genre fiction at its best!

[www.AmberQuill.com](http://www.AmberQuill.com)

---