



Pirates  
Do It With  
Passion  
MIMI RISER

## PIRATES DO IT WITH PASSION

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Rico was as bisexual as Richard had been, and even less comfortable with it. Unfortunately for Annie, she was. Her darling had never indulged his gay side and swore he never would. If that ever changed, though—like when hell froze over—would she be willing to share him with another man?

*God, yes.*

But only if she could join in. Frankly, the idea of three-way sex turned her on big time. Especially now. Blame Nate Hawkins and her dream. That fantasy taste of forbidden fruit had whetted her appetite for the real thing. Too bad she wasn't going to get it. On the other hand, Rico gave her plenty all by himself. Annie knew she had no reason to want more. So why did she?

A groan escaped her. "I'm a wicked, wicked woman." *Even for a tavern wench.* "I oughta be horsewhipped."

Rico paused on an inward thrust and pushed up on his forearms to shoot her an evil grin. "Is that a request?"

Without waiting for an answer, he climbed off her, out of bed, and padded across the floor toward their suitcase. Seconds later he returned with a leather belt draped over one shoulder and dark determination in his eyes. His right hand held a ball-gag and black scarf, while from his left dangled a pair of fur-lined handcuffs. They'd packed well for this weekend...

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# PIRATES DO IT WITH PASSION

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BY

MIMI RISER

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PIRATES DO IT WITH PASSION  
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*To the memory of colonial adventurer William Augustus Bowles,  
a class-act pirate if ever there was one. Described as tall,  
handsome and charismatic, with a daring nature and deliciously  
devilish attitude, he helped inspire the character of  
Nate Hawkins. Though they fought on opposite sides during the  
Revolutionary War—the real life William being a  
Loyalist at the time, and the fictional Nate a Yankee privateer—I  
like to think they'd have gotten on well together if they'd  
ever chanced to meet (and perhaps someday, in the land of Imagi-  
Nation, where all things are possible, they will).*

# PIRATES DO IT WITH PASSION

Seth Barrow had never sucked a pirate before. He knew he wasn't sucking one now, despite crazy claims to the contrary, but he saw no reason to argue the point. The man Seth had recently picked up on the beach near the Jolly Roger Inn did rather resemble a pirate.

With long dark hair, chiseled features, and a predatory stare, the man looked a lot like the portrait of a colonial privateer that hung in the inn's lobby. The infamous Captain Nathaniel Hawkins, whose ghost was rumored to haunt the inn that had once been Hawkins's seaside mansion. Naturally, Seth had commented on the resemblance. Who wouldn't?

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“Are you a descendant of Captain Hawkins?” he had asked as he and his latest conquest sat sipping icy beers and ogling each other in the inn’s beachfront bar.

“No,” came the answer, underscored by a strange laugh. “You’ll probably think I’m mad for admitting this, but I like you, lad, and want things honest between us, so I’ll tell you the truth, impossible as it seems. I *am* Nate Hawkins. The original. Born in 1753, drowned 1785... And resurrected from the dead last night. Still want to fuck me?”

Didn’t mince words, did he? Seth appreciated that. It meant the drug he had slipped into Nate’s brew was working, loosening his tongue—and his mind, too, obviously—making him easy prey, pliable, open to kinky suggestions. Of which Seth had many. He’d responded with his sexiest smile, a real *killer grin* some called it.

“Just try and stop me,” he had said. And they’d finished their beers and retired to Seth’s room, where the action fast hit the bed they occupied now.

*“Resurrected,” my ass.*

The man was a liar, a lunatic, or both. Seth didn’t care. He was a liar himself, and playing a dangerous game in which seduction was only a part. Lucky for him it was a part he enjoyed. Especially when the prize—whoever the hell he was—looked and tasted this good. A full juicy meal for a greedy carnivorous appetite. Grade A prime man-steak with all the trimmings.

Including wealth. Why Nate was carrying around such a stash boggled the brain—seemed another sign he was cuckoo—but his pockets were loaded with bright shiny loot. Seth knew, having searched him while stripping him. A guy had to earn a living, after all.

However, in Seth’s profession business always mixed with



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pleasure. He loved his work, traveling from resort to resort, consorting with the jaded jet set. He felt like Robin Hood, robbing the rich to give to the poor—himself. Seth was the real pirate, in fact, but no one ever discovered that until it was too late. And if he took, he gave red-hot sex in return.

He fisted the base of a thick shaft and squeezed, pulling a muted groan out of his captive lover. Pearly drops beaded on a swollen mushroom head. Seth licked them off, savoring creamy pre-cum while his own shaft hardened in anticipation. With his free hand, he explored a muscular torso and thighs, raked nails over smooth skin dusted with downy curls—solid and warm and ripped to kill.

Also bound and gagged for decadent delights.

Seth pushed up to admire his handiwork. He'd positioned Nate with shoulder blades braced against the bed's headboard, wrists cuffed behind his neck, and knees lashed to his elbows with red and blue silk scarves. A glittery green plastic sphere muffled his mouth. Very festive. Provocative and practical. The pose gave Seth easy access to cock, balls, and anus. The mere thought of all he could and would do shot fiery darts into his groin.

He stroked his left forefinger through a well oiled ass crack and probed a tight opening, felt satin heat and inner muscles clench in reflexive response. The rod in his right hand jerked.

*Impatient, weren't we?*

Seth studied Nate's reaction while firming his grip on the man's erection and pumping his finger in and out of that tempting, tight hole.

A throaty growl sounded. A stormy gaze met his—eyes like thunderclouds, the pupils dilated by narcotics and traitorous need. Nate was trying to resist, but his body betrayed him.

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Seth chuckled. “Hey, you can’t escape, so you may as well relax and enjoy it. The fun’s just starting.”

A long, luscious afternoon stretched ahead of them. They had hours to play before Seth ended the game with the ultimate orgasm. The intense thrill that always struck when he claimed another’s life. Oh yeah, Nate would die, but Seth would make it good for him, suck him dry and fuck him blind first. Nate would die with an expression of ecstasy on his face.

And Seth would disappear with a fortune in stolen jewels, leaving behind another corpse to mystify the authorities. They’d caught him once, but never again, because he was too clever, too strong.

Also fireproof, able to change his shape at will, make himself invisible, and fly!

No, he’d never put any of those powers to the test, but Seth knew he could do them if he tried. Just as he knew the doctors who’d labeled him “paranoid schizophrenic with psychotic delusions” all had their heads up their butts. If they were so fucking smart why did they let him escape their shitty hospital for the incurably insane, huh?

Because he didn’t belong there, that’s why—and had proved it by seducing and strangling an idiot orderly, then walking out wearing the jerk’s clothes and ID badge. Nate might be nuts, but Seth wasn’t. Seth was a...a... He paused to listen to the whispers in his head.

*Say what? Oh, right.*

“I’m a devil!” he declared. *A demon straight out of the bowels of hell*, his voices said. “Which means I have to do stuff like this. So there.”

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\* \* \*

*So nothing, matey.*

The poor bastard had bats in his belfry.

Nate knew he was dazed by something besides beer, but not so muddled he couldn't read Seth's gaze. He peered into glassy hazel eyes and saw madness and murder. A pity he hadn't seen it sooner. But he'd had much on his mind and been looking for a diversion when Seth appeared and offered one.

The lovers Nate really wanted had seemed so out of reach at the time, while Seth had seemed such an attractive young fellow, so willing to ease a lonely man's aching heart with an afternoon of lusty play. Nate hated to think he might have to kill him in self-defense, yet he could and would if necessary—even drunk, even trussed up like a Christmas goose. Nate had thrashed tougher foes under worse conditions. Not for a couple of centuries, 'twas true, but you never forgot how to fight.

Hell's bells, all he had to do was raise his knees an extra inch, lower his chin, and his manacled hands could slip right over his head and around Seth's throat. Only not now with his cock in Seth's mouth. If the madman bit down in shock or retaliation...

Nate shuddered at the mental image. Then shuddered more as the oral stimulation increased. Flames licked him along with Seth's tongue. A burning pressure built in his gut, rising heat that roasted him from the inside out—the savage scorch of carnal hunger, unthinking and unwanted but inescapable. His body didn't care that Seth was insane.

Aye, drunkenness might be heightening arousal, but Nate didn't care about that either. Rampant physical need threw reason overboard. *Splash*. His cock had suffered enough and demanded

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release.

*Now, damn it.*

Battling his bonds, Nate slid down the headboard, pushing his pelvis upward, straining to shove himself farther into the hot, moist cavern of a mad but talented mouth. Seth stopped instantly, the evil swine.

“Naughty, naughty.” He wagged a finger under Nate’s nose. “No coming until I say so.”

That did it. Nate had been thinking of killing him, anyway. Seth’s smirk decided the matter. Before the crazy bastard knew what hit him, a pair of hands arched up and forward. Two heavy fists connected by a short chain slammed into Seth’s face, sending him sailing. With a dull thud the young man landed on the floor in a crumpled heap.

Which left Nate on the bed, still drunk, still bound in an awkward position—not much more mobile than he’d been a moment ago, actually—and still hard as a rock.

How bloody embarrassing.

Groaning, he wriggled his spine back up the headboard to better survey his surroundings and contemplate his predicament. At least his hands were in front now so he could remove his gag. He did, then considered calling for help. But only briefly. He’d die of shame to be found in these sorry straights. And having died once before, Nate had no desire to repeat the experience any time soon.

Instead, he writhed and strained and managed to slip the bonds at his elbows and knees down to his wrists and ankles. From there it took added tricky work to wrestle his feet out of the silken loops, but finally his legs were free. Thank God his current body was as strong and limber as his original. For all intents and purposes it

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was his original, recreated in temporary form by a bit of spectral magic last night, then firmed into permanence by something far greater.

The power of love, dare he hope?

A miracle. Most extraordinary, and very unexpected. But Nate refused to look a gift horse in the mouth. He'd hated being a ghost, damn it. Bloody boring it had been, stuck in one place for over two hundred years as naught but a vaporous mass of memories and longing. If divine mercy had granted him another chance at life, Nate intended to enjoy it.

Just as soon as he decided how.

Getting out of here seemed the first order of business. He swung his legs over the side of the bed and stood up, wobbly and wincing at the pins-and-needles sting of returning circulation. His head swam with dizzy, drunken thoughts while the rest of him still ached for physical release. Damned inconvenient. His stiff cock jutted forth from the base of his belly like a divining rod seeking water, the right spot to dig a well hole. Aye, and he'd be happy to fill a hole, too, if a hot, tight one were available.

Nate slanted a look at Seth, lying unconscious a short step away.

*Hmm...*

But no. He wasn't *that* desperate. Mind you, Seth deserved a taste of his own medicine. The bastard ought to be woken, then pinned to the floor while Nate gave him a good solid pounding, first with fists, then his cock.

But Nate had never taken anyone by force. Gold and jewels, yes. People, no. He was quite a romantic, really, but had always hidden it under a rakish exterior. When he mated, he did so to pleasure, not punish. Why else bother? Fucking felt so much better

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with someone you liked—and best of all with one you loved. Or two?

*Ouch.*

His divining rod jerked, pointing upward like an arrow. Nate's gaze shifted to the ceiling. This inn had once been his house, built with pirated gold, so he knew its design and which chamber lay above him.

More to the point, he knew the man and woman who lay in it, but they didn't know he stood below—or that he stood anywhere. They had no idea he was alive again, that they were the cause, that he'd spent two terrible, heartsick centuries waiting for their return. If they remembered any of last night's miracle they'd think it a dream, no doubt.

Hell, they didn't even know who they were...or, rather, who they had been. And Nate, for uncertain reasons, hesitated to enlighten them. He wasn't sure he had the right, or maybe he was simply afraid. In any case, he'd decided earlier, shortly before he met Seth, that if he should reveal himself to his lost loves, fate would tell him the proper time to do it.

However, his cock said the time was now.

And his mind was drunk enough to listen.

But not without his treasure in tow. He hadn't guarded it as a ghost only to give it up as a man. He glanced about the room. Where the devil had Seth put the jewels? Here?

With tipsy fervor, Nate bent over to search through a clump of clothes on a chair by the bed. The short pants he'd pilfered from the inn's laundry that morning lay on top, and the pockets still bulged with sparkling loot. Seth hadn't removed it. What wonderful luck.

Or not.

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The chair crashed over, and Nate with it, as a snarling maniac landed on his back, all teeth and nails, as though changed from “devil” to wolf. Seth had revived suddenly and with a vengeance. Nate might have to kill him after all. Literally.

*Hell's bells...*

\* \* \*

“What the fuck was that?” Naked, on his knees in the uppermost room of the Jolly Roger Inn, Enrico Verdi froze. Minutes earlier he’d pried up a floorboard to look beneath it—and found nothing, of course. He’d just pounded the board back into place when a crash sounded from the room below.

“Shit, sometimes I don’t know my own strength.” He rose to his feet, muscles rippling, a sheepish grin on his handsome face. “I hope I didn’t collapse part of the ceiling down there.”

Ann Hart Verdi half hoped he had. She adored her hot hunk of a husband, but his timing sucked. One moment they’d been kissing and cuddling in bed while Annie described an amazing dream she’d had the previous night, and what she thought it meant. And the next, she’d been left high and dry in a tumble of satin sheets while Rico rooted around under the floor like a pig searching for truffles.

Except he wasn’t a pig, just pigheaded. Annie and Rico had grown up together and known each other for what felt like forever, but been married only a year. They were supposed to be celebrating their anniversary with a weekend of wild sex, not arguing, damn it.

She propped up on an elbow to frown at him as he walked toward her. “It would serve you right if you did break something,

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and the inn bills us for damages. I told you to leave well enough alone.”

“You also told me there was a fortune in pirated jewels hidden under that board.”

“With the emphasis on *was*.” The jewels had been hidden in 1785 by another young wife, Amalie MacDonnell—shortly before she hanged herself at the news of her darling’s death. Annie suppressed a shiver. “I said they couldn’t possibly still be here. Someone must have found them ages ago.”

“*If* they were ever here in the first place.”

The mattress dipped as Rico climbed back into bed and stretched out beside her, staring up at the ceiling, his dark brows knitted together in thought.

“I gotta admit, babe, I think it’s more likely your dream was prompted by the power of suggestion. I mean, here we are in a place that was once a buccaneer’s home. And we were drunk on champagne and playing our own game of pirates last night. It’s a wonder I didn’t dream about Nate Hawkins, too.”

Rico’s chest vibrated with what sounded like a forced laugh to Annie. She knew him so well. He had, in fact, dreamed *something*, but insisted he couldn’t recall what. Or simply refused to. Whatever the reason, he’d awoken at dawn with a huge hard-on, way beyond his usual morning erection. They’d made good use of it, yet beneath the heat, Annie had sensed a ripple of unease. Rico’s dream, remembered or not, might have aroused, but it had also unnerved him.

“Seriously, I’m trying to be open-minded about this,” he said, “but you know I’ve never believed in any of that weirdo stuff like reincarnation.”

Neither had Annie. Until today. But she’d read a few articles



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on the subject and found it an interesting, if weird, possibility to ponder. Then last night she'd experienced something so vivid it had seemed more a journey into the past than a dream. Something far more powerful than champagne or *suggestion*. A fantasy, perhaps, but one that triggered a sudden soul-deep awareness of an existence that was once very real. Since waking, her mind had been crowded with two separate sets of memories, her own and...

Well, hell, the others were hers, too. Just not from this lifetime.

With a sigh, she snuggled up against Rico's side and rested her head on his shoulder. "Look, I know it sounds crazy, and I'll probably never be able to prove it, but somehow I also know you and I have lived before."

*Loved before. Been married before.*

"As Richard and Amalie MacDonnell?" Rico's sigh echoed hers. "A pirate and his ex-hooker wife?"

"Yep, you were the first mate of the schooner *Mermaid*, under Captain Nathaniel Hawkins, and I was a tavern wench you rescued from a life of sin on the wharves. And we were young and in love."

*Like now.*

They'd also both had the hots for Nate, who'd been one of those guys who was just incorrigibly charismatic and damned hard to resist—not to mention bisexual. However, Amalie, in her zeal to turn over a new leaf and be a faithful spouse, had never acted on those feelings.

Richard had. Before marriage he'd been Nate's lover. Afterward, the two had remained friends, but Richard ended the sexual part of their relationship. He'd been uncomfortable with his gay side and never known Amalie might have been amenable to a ménage. It was sad the three never got it together. Then again, that was a matter of lust, not love, right? Nate hadn't been the sort to

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make lasting commitments. “Any port in a storm” was his motto.

Annie wondered where he was now and if he was happy. Rumor had it his spirit haunted this inn, but she didn’t want to believe that. Ideally, Nate had reincarnated, too, somewhere, sometime, and finally found a true love of his own. She hoped so, because he deserved it. But all Annie knew at the moment was she had hers.

*Focus on the positive.*

Only the stupid and ungrateful regretted a long gone past when the present held so much promise, and Annie considered herself neither. Rico should be more than enough for her.

*Oh hell, he is!*

She cuddled in closer. “We died too soon and tragically. You and Nate drowned at sea, and I killed myself in remorse. But the story has a happy ending.”

“How?” Rico sounded dubious at best. He was missing the whole message.

“Because we’re together again, sweetie, with a brand new chance to love each other. That’s beautiful, don’t you think?” Annie did. She nuzzled his neck, inhaling his sexy scent, planting tiny kisses on him between her words. “From what I’ve read, the main reason for remembering a past life is to learn from the experience. If we screwed up back then, we’ll make things right now.”

“Such as me staying off pirate ships, and you staying out of dockside bars?”

“Very funny. I have an incredible, mystical revelation that shows we must be soul mates, and all you can do is joke about it? You’ll pay for that, smart-ass.”

“Hey, babe, I don’t need any revelations to remind me how

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much I love you.”

*Good answer.*

But not quite good enough.

Bent on evil, Annie raked fingers through the hair on his chest, then let her hand drift down over washboard abs to explore the nest of curls at the juncture of his thighs. Talk about hidden jewels. Even soft he was a handful. Rico’s breath hitched as she teased him erect with feathery strokes that promised much—then retreated without delivering. He moaned in frustration. Music to Annie’s ears.

“You’re being punished for mocking me,” she purred. “Never taunt a tavern wench. We’re way wicked.”

“Like pirates aren’t?”

*Uh-oh.*

An arm whipped around Annie’s waist, and Rico rolled, trapping her between the mattress and hard, heavy man. A hungry mouth landed on hers. A silky, wet tongue probed deep. The kiss sucked the air out of her lungs, turned her mind to mush and her insides to a quivering mass of hot, gooey need.

While she lay limp and gasping, Rico dug his knees between hers, shoved apart her thighs, and rammed his cock up to her tonsils, then started pounding her into a breathless pulp. The bedsprings creaked and squeaked in raucous rhythm to his thrusts—motion that mimicked a rolling deck, the rise and fall of waves hitting a hull, a storm at sea. A storm in Annie as well. She had no choice but to wrap legs around his middle, clutch his shoulders, and hang on for the ride.

Okay, he’d proved his point. Nobody did *bad* like Rico.

Except, maybe, Nate Hawkins.

A guilty thought. But titillating. In reality, Annie knew she’d

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never fucked Nate in any incarnation. Dreams, however, were another matter, and last night's dream was a lulu. It had triggered her past-life memories, yet been separate from them.

Where the memories told her what actually happened, the dream showed her what might have. In it, Amalie, Richard and Nate had finally enjoyed the ménage they'd never experienced in life. *Why*, Annie wasn't sure, unless it was something her subconscious cooked up to give her closure, to lay the past to rest and let her move on, emotionally unencumbered, into the future.

If so, it hadn't worked. There was nothing restful in her current predicament, making torrid bump-and-grind love with one man while envisioning two. She wondered if Rico might be suffering the same confusion. Annie loved her husband, no doubt about it, but they both harbored dirty little secrets—inherited from Richard and Amalie, perhaps. People died, but not their desires, it seemed. When souls entered new bodies, old longings went with them.

Rico was as bisexual as Richard had been, and even less comfortable with it. Unfortunately for Annie, she was. Her darling had never indulged his gay side and swore he never would. If that ever changed, though—like when hell froze over—would she be willing to share him with another man?

*God, yes.*

But only if she could join in. Frankly, the idea of three-way sex turned her on big time. Especially now. Blame Nate Hawkins and her dream. That fantasy taste of forbidden fruit had whetted her appetite for the real thing. Too bad she wasn't going to get it. On the other hand, Rico gave her plenty all by himself. Annie knew she had no reason to want more.

So why did she?

A groan escaped her. "I'm a wicked, wicked woman." *Even for*

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*a tavern wench.* “I oughta be horsewhipped.”

Rico paused on an inward thrust and pushed up on his forearms to shoot her an evil grin. “Is that a request?”

*Um...*

Without waiting for an answer, he climbed off her, out of bed, and padded across the floor toward their suitcase. Seconds later he returned with a leather belt draped over one shoulder and dark determination in his eyes. His right hand held a ball-gag and black scarf, while from his left dangled a pair of fur-lined handcuffs. They’d packed well for this weekend.

Annie’s pulse, already speeding, rocketed into overdrive. She and Rico had played light bondage games before, but never anything that involved pain. The belt was a new addition. Not necessarily an unwelcome one, though. She did like being dominated; they both knew that. And she was fucked to a fever pitch and feeling as guilty as she was horny. Some sexy pain might be just what she needed to distract her from naughty thoughts of Nate.

She swallowed, hard, as Rico dropped the cuffs and scarf onto the mattress and stared down at her, his hot gaze like a tangible touch. A giddy rush swept her from head to heels—electric shivers. Rico in Master-mode made her toes curl.

“Last chance to beg out of what’s coming,” he warned.

*Coming...*

Interesting word choice.

Annie hesitated, tempted but still not sure if she wanted to agree or refuse. Before she could do either, Rico’s hands flashed forward and stuffed the ball-gag into her mouth. Some chance.

“Mmph,” she complained.

“You snooze, you lose,” he answered.

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*Very funny.*

All business, he flipped her onto her belly and cuffed her hands behind her back, then started to tie the scarf around her eyes. “When one sense is cut off, the others seem sharper, I’m told.”

He had that right. Suddenly, she was all ears—along with the whole inn, probably. What the hell was happening below?

“Eeeeeaaaggggh...”

A maniacal shriek sliced through the floorboards.

“Help! He’s crazy!” someone screeched. “He wants to drain my force, destroy me!”

“No, matey, I’ll just make you wish you were dead,” a baritone voice boomed. “A fine one you are to be calling *me* mad. Hell’s bells!”

“Holy fuck...” Rico dropped the scarf and rolled Annie over to face him. He looked as stricken as she felt, looked like he’d seen a ghost.

Or heard one.

“Mmph-umph!” she protested, which meant “don’t you dare leave me alone,” because she knew he was. He sprinted back to their suitcase to pull on shorts and a tank top, then snatched his keys off the dresser and stuffed them into his pocket. *Why?*

“Wait here,” he ordered. “I’ll be as fast as I can.”

Like she could go anywhere naked, handcuffed, and gagged? Annie narrowed her eyes into a razor-edged glare.

Rico ignored it.

*Bang!*

The door slammed shut behind him.

“Umph,” Annie said.

Translation: Shit.

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\* \* \*

*Shit, shit, shit...*

What was that they said about fools rushing in where angels feared to go?

Rico had never been an angel—which told him what he was now. The realization didn't slow him. He raced past the inn's elevator and tore down the fire escape stairs, his heart pounding as fast as his feet. An empty hallway greeted him on the floor below his. Good.

There shouldn't be many people up here this time of day. Most would be on the beach or in the bar, which gave him time to reach the room he sought before the commotion coming from it drew anyone else. To be first on the scene seemed very important somehow. He wasn't sure who he'd find, but he knew who it sounded like—knew he had to help. He felt it deep down inside with a ferocity that twisted his gut. Old training died hard.

So did old emotions—love, lust, loyalty. And old anger. What spurred Rico forward was older than his flesh, something he'd carried with him since before birth, stamped on his soul. Something that expanded the concept of *undying devotion* to scary new dimensions, inexplicable but undeniable.

Annie was right about their past lives. Damn it. Rico had experienced the same sultry, surrealistic dream she had—just hadn't wanted to admit it, not to her and especially not to himself. The implications were too nerve-racking to consider—raised questions with insane answers. He'd gone to great lengths today, pulled out all the sexual stops trying to keep his mind off the impossible. But he couldn't play ostrich forever, hiding his head in the gritty sands of denial. It was time to quit fucking around and

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discover the truth.

Something way weird had happened last night. The mere fact they'd dreamed the same thing suggested it *wasn't* a dream. What they'd done during it defied description. If he was correct in his suspicions, they had a hell of a lot more than memories to deal with.

They had a fucking pirate on their hands.

He skidded to a stop near the door to his destination, mentally bracing himself for whatever lay hidden behind it. He should have braced himself physically as well. Before he could make another move—or even decide his next move—the door flew open and a naked young man burst forth, eyes bugged out in hysterics, and babbling about bloodthirsty ghosts trying to suck his life-force.

“No fair! That’s *my* game.” A high-pitched cackle punctuated the cry. “I should’ve believed him when he said who he was—he looks just like his picture for chrissakes!”

*What the...*

Rico leapt to the side to avoid being flattened as Mr. Maniac streaked past.

“I’m outta here! Watch me *flyyyyyy...*” Arms flailing, the guy crashed headfirst through a window at the end of the hall.

But not before Rico recognized him. Seth Barrow looked like his picture, too, which had been featured on the news recently as the target of an east coast manhunt.

Fuck, there was an escaped psychopath at the Jolly Roger, and no one else had recognized him? Then again, Seth had that generic beach-beefcake look that blended in so seamlessly at seaside resorts.

Rico shook his head. They’d probably recognize Seth now—once they scraped up the pieces, and the police ran an ID. You had



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to figure his fingerprints would still be intact even if the rest of him wasn't. From the angle of Seth's exit, he'd probably landed on his face and snapped his neck.

*Ouch.*

Shouts and calls filtered through the broken glass of the window. It sounded like the shit had hit the fan already down there, but Rico had problems of his own up here.

"Hell's bells," a voice grumbled from inside the room Seth had fled.

Nate's voice.

Followed by Nate's form filling the doorway—and nothing ghostly about him. He stood tall, solid and muscular. Unmistakable. But unaware of Rico who hovered nearby, studying him in aching silence.

A naked Nate with his hands cuffed in front and holding a pair of khaki shorts—his dark hair loose and wild about his shoulders and the sheen of sweat on his skin, a fierce but dazed gleam in his eyes. He swayed slightly. *Drunk? Drugged?* What the fuck had he and Seth been doing? Besides trying to kill each other...

Rico's gut knotted. He wasn't sure he wanted to know, and hadn't time to ask, anyway. Very likely this place would be crawling with cops soon, who'd probably want to question everyone on the premises. How did you explain a resurrected eighteenth century buccaneer?

With a ton of trouble, or not at all.

Rico chose the latter.

He fought back a firestorm of feelings as Nate stared at the broken window down the hall.

"God, poor bastard was mad as a hatter," Nate muttered to himself while climbing into his shorts.

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“So are you,” Rico gritted out through clenched teeth. *And me.* “Come on, we gotta make tracks while we can.” *Load Nate in the car, then come back for Annie...*

Without waiting for a response, he pulled Nate through the doorway and started pushing him toward the stairs. Nate pushed back, forcing them both to a halt.

“Richard?” His voice cracked on the name.

Rico winced. “Not anymore. The name’s Rico now. Enrico Verdi.”

“One and the same, lad.” Slowly, Nate turned, bringing them face to face, a strained smile on his lips and the longing of ages in his eyes. “What are you doing here?”

“Saving your ass.”

Though the desire to kick it burned almost as strong. Desire burned, period. They stood so close...too close...almost in kissing distance. A dangerous thought. Rico sensed Nate’s body heat drawing him closer, like a magnet. He stepped back a pace to put needed space between them, to give himself room to think.

“Surprised?” he asked. *Bullshit.* “You knew damn well I was here at the inn. After last night’s *dream*, you had to.”

“Aye, but I didn’t expect you to remember it or me. I didn’t expect to be here now, like this, myself. ’Twas but a vision I conjured last night—a bit of ghostly fun, I thought. I didn’t recognize you at first, you see, so I’d no way of guessing things would turn out as they did.”

Nate shrugged—a helpless gesture—and raised his cuffed hands palms up as though hoping some easy answer would drop into them. When none did, his smile softened into wry resignation. “If I’m alive again, ’tis your doing more than mine. You brought me back, lad. You breathed your own energy into me.”

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Unfortunately, he might be correct. What Nate said was what Rico had sensed during the vision, what he'd been worrying about since. He remembered, all right—but without comprehension—remembered kissing cold lips, willing heat into Nate, melting the ice of death...

Shit, sometimes he *really* didn't know his own strength. The knot in his stomach tightened. This whole thing was nuts, impossible. Yet the results stood before him, indisputable. Nate was here, pulsing with life, whatever the rhyme or reason.

And the police were on the way. Rico heard sirens in the distance. Double shit.

"Okay, okay, we'll discuss it later. Now move!" He grabbed Nate's shoulders, spun him around and steered him down the stairs and out the inn's north side door to the parking lot, supporting him the entire way, as Nate—definitely drugged—was none too steady on his feet.

Neither was Rico with Nate's warm body leaning against him. Long dormant memories flared to life. Sensual memories of the flesh—hot, sticky, and distracting. With every step his dick twitched and the crotch seam of his shorts chafed his balls, making movement a genuine pain in the pants.

He heaved a sigh of relief when they reached his white Mercedes without anyone stopping them. Few even noticed them. The action was on the inn's opposite side, where Seth landed. Quite a crowd had gathered over there, gauging by the noise.

"Bloody vultures," Nate muttered.

"Yeah, but don't feel too bad about it. That guy was wanted for killing a hospital worker and two other people before that." Always seducing and drugging his victims first, according to the news reports. "You could have been number four."

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Nate snorted. “Not bloody likely. I’m no easy target. Don’t forget we killed more than a few in our time, Rich.”

“Never if we could avoid it—and only in fair fights, open battles where everyone had the same chance. Not the way he did it for sick thrills.”

They’d been soldier-sailors more than pirates up until their last voyage, Yankee privateers who preyed on British ships during the Revolutionary War—and then attacked one more ship after the war. Their big mistake.

“We still died for it.” Nate chuckled.

Rico didn’t. “And whose fault was that?”

When the *Mermaid* broke apart under British cannon, they could have escaped in her longboat, if Nate hadn’t insisted a good captain went down with his ship. They’d drowned while arguing the point. And Rico was still pissed about it. Was that ridiculous, or what?

He paused in the act of fishing keys out of his pocket. “Hell, *I* have never killed anyone. I’m Rico—not Richard, not Rich. *Rico*. Get it through your thick head.”

A crooked grin met his scowl.

“I will if you will, lad. If you’re not Richard, why blame me for his death, eh? I told you to take the goddamned longboat and go, didn’t I? You didn’t *have* to drown with me.”

No, but Nate had that kind of effect on him—made him do treacherous, troublesome things. Like now. He yanked out his keys, opened the car door, and shoved Nate onto the rear seat.

“Just shut up and sit there until I get back. Don’t move, don’t talk to anyone, don’t touch anything. You think you can manage that, *Captain*?”

Nate’s grin narrowed to a tight line. “I’ll do my best, matey.”

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“Good.” Rico locked eyeballs with him, leaned into the Mercedes, and lowered his voice to a hiss. “Because this isn’t over yet, not by a long shot. I know what happened last night”—*a ghost became a man*—“but not how or why. Which means you have a fucking lot of explaining to do later.”

“How about right now?” A pair of hands shot up and fisted in Rico’s shirt. “You want to know how and why I’m alive, do you? The first I’ve already answered—’twas your doing—and the second you just answered yourself. Because *nothing is over*, that’s why. We’ve unfinished business, you and I. And I think we both know what it is, don’t we?” The fisted hands tightened their grip. “So let’s forget the explanations and jump straight to the fucking.”

With the growled words, Nate fell backward, lengthwise on the seat, dragging Rico on top of him, nose to nose, belly to belly. He undulated his hips, rubbing their groins together through the fabric of their shorts. He might just as well have touched live wires together, or a match to a fuse. Electricity crackled—sudden sparks, spontaneous combustion. Two bodies quivered with instant arousal. Two cocks stiffened to attention.

Rico groaned. If old passions were hard to ignore so were old pains. “Yeah, this is your *answer* to everything, isn’t it? You’re always fucking—anyone, anytime.” Richard hadn’t been able to tolerate Nate’s infidelities, and Rico didn’t want to try. He’d inherited a lot from his previous persona, including a deep sense of honor and commitment. “I’m a married man, damn it, *very* in love with my wife.”

“So am I, but I love you, too, lad. *It is* possible to want two at once—God knows I’ve done it for centuries. However, you’re the only one here at the moment, so I’m taking what I can get.”

Rico groaned again. “Lucky me.”

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“Very.” Nate chuckled, a low throaty sound laced with sinful purpose. The sound of passion, impatient and unabashed.

And meaningless because it came from a man who was drunk as a skunk, flying high on the wings of drugged fancy, thanks to Seth. Without warning, as swift as he’d struck, Nate passed out, sank limp into the leather upholstered seat, eyes closed, mouth open, and snoring.

*Good fucking grief...*

Rico collapsed against him, unsure whether to laugh or cry and doing a bit of both while he scraped his wits back together and waited for his pulse to slow.

*Just don’t wait too long, his muddled mind warned. You have stuff to do. This ain’t over.*

“So I keep hearing,” he muttered aloud.

The wail of sirens and screech of brakes snapped him alert. Three patrol cars skidded into the lot.

*Shit!*

Diving out of his car before the police exited theirs, Rico raced back to the inn to collect luggage and wife and hightail it home. Annie, who had no idea what had happened, must be fit to be tied by now.

Luckily for Rico, she already was. A smart man would leave her that way until they reached the house. But he wasn’t smart, of course. He had Richard MacDonnell’s memories in his head, Nate Hawkins in his car, and a throbbing boner in his shorts—and no clear idea what to do about any of it.

He was in deep shit was what he was.

\* \* \*

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“Well, you’re not going to solve anything by brooding,” a woman’s voice said.

*Amalie?*

No, Ann was her name now. Annie. A nice name for a lass, pretty and sweet. It suited her. So did the voice, soft and throaty, like the brush of crushed velvet on your ear, soothing and stimulating in the same breath.

“We don’t have to figure it all out tonight,” she added. “It’s late. You’re tired. Why don’t you just go to bed? You’ll feel better after a good sleep.”

“How can I sleep knowing *Long John Silver* is in our back bedroom?” Richard answered—or Rico, as he’d insisted.

Except Rico was enough like Richard to make “Long John’s” chest constrict as though a fist squeezed his heart. Nate wasn’t in the back room. He’d roused several minutes ago, unsure where he was or how he’d arrived there, and fumbled his way to the front of the house—bumping into a few walls en route, because he’d forgotten at first he wasn’t a ghost anymore and kept trying to walk through them.

He remembered now, of course—everything—was suddenly wide awake. But still invisible as a ghost, it seemed. Unnoticed, he stood in the doorway of a large, homey kitchen, watching the couple within...listening...waiting... For what? A hopeful word?

They’d brought him home with them, obviously, but why? *Where do we go from here?* That’s what they were discussing, and had been for some time, judging by the tense tone of the talk. Things didn’t look promising. Nate’s heart sank.

Rico sat hunched forward, his elbows on the table and head in his hands. Annie stood nearby, leaning back against a counter, arms crossed over her chest. Both wore short britches and

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sleeveless shirts, what would have been scandalous, unheard of apparel in Nate's day, but he wasn't complaining.

As a ghost, he'd seen fashions come and go. Strange, magical devices, too. Electric lights, automobiles, television... He didn't fully understand all these new things, but he was familiar with them. He'd always been an open-minded sort, ahead of his time, perhaps. Forward motion kept the world fresh. Where some might resist change, Nate embraced it. Lord knew he wanted to embrace the changes he viewed now.

His gaze raked over Rico. The Scottish-born Richard had sported fiery red hair with a temper to match, whereas Rico was devil-dark—but equally hot blooded and muscular. Equally appealing, and even more stubborn. Like a banked fire he carried the embers of old passion within him, but would resist any attempt to fan them into new flames. Nate knew, having tried once already while drunk. Now sober he wasn't sure he had the right to try again.

His attention shifted to Annie. She was taller than Amalie had been, with more bosom and hips, but just as blond and blue-eyed as her former self, just as beautiful to Nate's eyes. Only in a different way. A doll-like creature Amalie had been, strong inside but delicate in appearance, a perfect dainty morsel to nibble and savor. Her present body was a feast by comparison, all lush, ripe womanly curves.

God help him, but Nate hungered for her, too. His cock swelled at the mere thought of taking her and Rico together. These people weren't exactly the two he'd lost long ago, yet in some ways he desired them more.

"What else could we do?" Annie said in response to Rico's last comment. "Leave him drugged-out in the car? You're the one who



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carried him to bed and broke the handcuffs off him.”

“Only because you made me,” Rico grumbled. “I wanted to hold him under a cold shower until he sobered up.”

“Why? So he could explain what we already know?”

“Which is?” Rico looked up to give her a glare. “Annie, we don’t *know* anything for sure.”

“Maybe not, but we have enough clues to deduce the rest. Care to hear what I think?”

“Do I have a choice, *Sherlock*?”

Her expression, as she pulled out a chair and sat beside him, clearly stated *no*. Rico’s chest heaved with a sigh.

“Okay, but wait a minute. I want to catch the eleven o’clock report and see if there’s any news about Barrow.” He reached and turned on a small television that sat on the end of the table.

Nate couldn’t see the screen from his vantage point, but he heard a crisp tenor announcing the “suicide of Seth Barrow”—complete with all the gory details of his fatal leap, bolstered by a few eyewitness accounts from those who’d seen him hit the pavement. Although none displayed any knowledge of what had occurred prior, which was good. It meant no one would be looking for Nate or Rico to question them. No one even questioned the suicide. Madmen did things like that, apparently.

“Yuck,” Annie said. “They don’t have to sound so chipper about it. I’m not making excuses for him, but the guy was severely psychotic. He wasn’t responsible for his actions.”

“Shh,” Rico hushed her. “Listen.”

“Barrow died almost instantly, according to the coroner’s report,” the announcer finished. “Police are ruling it a closed case.”

End of story.

“Not quite,” a voice whispered in Nate’s ear.

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Or was the voice in his head just imagination? He seemed to be the only one who heard it. An eerie prickle stiffened his spine—the kind of prickle he used to give people when he was a ghost.

*What the devil?*

“Nope, not any longer. I’m an angel now, Cap’n.”

Nate gripped the doorframe to steady himself.

*No, it can’t be...*

Heedless of any danger, Rico switched off the TV. “Well, that’s over at least.”

“Good, because nothing else is.” Annie flashed him a wan smile.

He parried it with a frown. “I wish everyone would stop saying that.”

“Truth hurts, huh?”

“Hey, babe, you’re supposed to be on *my* side.”

“I am. But it would make things easier if you’d admit what’s *really* bothering you.”

“You mean besides the fact we’ve brought a man back from the dead?” Rico scrubbed his hands over his face. “The legalities alone are a fucking mess. How can he function in today’s world without ID, have you considered that? Do you think the government will issue a social security number to a man born in 1753?”

“We can ask. There must be some way to work it. Maybe a lawyer could help, or a congressman?”

“And maybe they’ll lock us all in a nuthouse.” A dull thud sounded as Rico collapsed forward and his forehead hit the table. “Congress? Shit, it’ll take an act of heaven to *work* this.”

“Exactly why I’m here.” The ghostly voice giggled. “Consider yourself blessed.”

*Be gone! Your kind of blessing we don’t need, matey.*

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“Too bad, ’cause you’re gonna get it, Nate. Look at it this way—just your being here is a blessed miracle. Now you get another one to fix the problems created by the first. You can’t escape fate, so you may as well relax and enjoy it.”

*Aye, I’ve heard that before. Go to hell.*

“Sorry, been there. They kicked me out. Seems psychosis doesn’t qualify as genuine evil. Besides, all the vacancies down there have already been filled by congressmen.”

*Hell’s bells...*

Annie leaned over from her seat and started massaging a pair of massive, tense shoulders. “Rico, we can’t undo what’s been done. It’s wild, it’s weird, it’s friggin’ unbelievable—and, yes, the legalities will probably be a nightmare. But it *did* happen, so there must be a reason for it.”

“And you think you know what the reason is.” Rico sighed.

“No, sweetie, I think we both know.”

“So do I. It’s all about love, kiddies,” the voice Nate had been hearing said.

Except now everyone heard it. Heads snapped up and jaws dropped. Eyes widened as a man’s form materialized, sitting cross-legged on the table.

Nate braced for action—fight since he’d ne’er been one for flight. No bloody ghost would toy with Annie and Rico while Nathaniel Hawkins lived. Never mind that he’d toyed with them himself when he was dead. That was a whole different kettle of fish, mateys.

“You think? You were a very horny ghost, weren’t you, Nate? But you’re right, actually.” The apparition winked at him, then shifted attention to Rico. “You want explanations? Tough shit, man, ’cause you really don’t need to know *how* things happened.

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Chalk it up to a combo of magic and miracle. I'll tell you this much, though:

"Nate was horny because he was pining for two people he'd loved and lost. The irony is he didn't recognize you as the reincarnations of those two when he first saw you and Annie at the inn. All he saw was a couple of tempting, hot bodies, a little relief for his pain. He was lonely, hurting, and just wanted to *pretend* you were Richard and Amalie for a night—but not scare you in the process. So he lulled you to sleep and transported you into a vision created from his memories. Only then did he realize the truth, but too late to stop things.

"The problem was he'd also conjured a temporary body for himself, using your body heat as the power source. Naturally, that form weakened as it began to cool. But what 'Richard and Amalie' saw at that point was Nate inexplicably shivering, dying before their eyes—never guessing he was already dead, that it was only the ending of a vision.

"You were desperate, weren't you? You hated to lose him—which is the crux of all this. Not knowing what else to do, you tried to warm him with more body heat that rolled you straight into a steamy ménage. You warmed him so well, in fact, you basically *baked* him back to life, made his temporary form permanent—like firing clay in a kiln makes it hard. But it took more than sex, kids. It was the *love* you poured into Nate with your physical heat that resurrected him.

"Love," the garrulous creature repeated. "The real message here is that you three were fated to be together back in colonial times, but things didn't pan out then, so you get another shot at it now. I suggest you quit farting around and make the most of it." He glanced at Annie. "Is that what you were going to say?"

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She gulped. “Um...yeah...sort of.”

“*Seth?*” Rico’s chair skidded backward and he leapt to his feet, hauling Annie with him. “What the hell is going on?”

“Uh-uh, hell has nothing to do with this.” Seth—it was him all right—chuckled. He wore a silvery white robe—and *wings*, for godssake. Golden light haloed his head.

“Told you I was an angel.” He smirked at Nate.

That did it, of course.

“*Arrrgh...*” Without thinking, Nate lunged at him.

At the same instant, Rico charged from the opposite side.

They collided on the table and tumbled onto the floor in a jumble of arms and legs, clutching each other instead of Seth, who’d vanished in the blink of an eye, not surprisingly.

“Blast,” Nate grunted.

“Fuck,” Rico cursed.

“Not yet, but you’re on the right track.” Giggling, Seth reappeared, hovering horizontally above them, wings spread and vibrating the air, like a giant hummingbird. “First, I gotta give Nate his ID.”

He reached into his robe, pulled out a large envelope, and tossed it on the table. “You’ll find everything he needs in there, including birth certificate and driver’s license—all thanks to a little *heavenly intervention*, and all issued to the name of Nathaniel Hawkins, but with his birth date listed as thirty-two years ago. Because, let’s face it, 1753 wasn’t gonna work even with a miracle.” He winked at Rico. “Just don’t let him use the license till you teach him how to drive.”

“I can hardly wait.” Rico groaned, but Nate noticed he made no move to extricate himself from their tangle. *Stunned?* Or dare one hope Rico enjoyed the close contact?

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Nate did—which might be very dangerous under the circumstances. He knew from his own spectral experience that disembodied spirits could draw power from the heat of the living. The more heat, the stronger a ghost became.

“Yeah, but I’m not exactly a ghost,” Seth answered the thought. “My power comes from a higher source. I don’t need to suck it out of people.”

“A pity you didn’t think that way sooner, matey.”

“Tell me about it.” Sighing, Seth righted to a vertical position, folded his wings and perched, seated, on the counter. “I’m paying the price for my crimes now.”

“By helping us?” Annie, brave lass, moved to stand before him.

Seth met her gaze with a steadiness that showed no trace of malice or madness, just incredible sorrow and deep remorse. “You and a gazillion more—anywhere and everywhere—from now till the end of time. I can’t undo the wrongs I’ve done, but I’ll right countless others. That’s my fate, and I’m committed to it. I *want* to help.”

Amazingly, Nate believed him. He finally understood. Seth’s crimes were the result of a diseased brain, not an evil soul. His illness had died with his body, leaving his spirit clean. It made no sense to condemn him to eternal damnation when he might otherwise do so much good. Divine justice was smarter than that.

Tears glimmered in Annie’s eyes. “I think you’re going to be a fine angel, Seth. Very dedicated.”

He blinked back tears of his own. “I sure hope so, because God knows I was a really fucked up man.”

“Ahem...” Nate coughed to dislodge a sudden lump in his throat. “Aye, lad, but God’s given you the chance to be something better.”

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“You, too, Nate.” Seth’s lips twitched with the hint of a grin. “No more pirating, okay? It got you sunk the last time.”

It also got me a grand stash of loot, Nate couldn’t help thinking. And since the people he’d plundered it from were long gone, it wasn’t like he could return it.

“No, but you can share it with those who need it more,” Seth said, reading Nate’s mind. Again. “Spread it around, donate to charity, turn something bad into something good. I’ve made that easy for you, by the way.” He pointed to the envelope. “In there you’ll also find a checkbook with the ledger listing a current balance of about three million dollars, give or take a few thousand. I took the liberty of converting your treasure into a bank account for you—because, frankly, it was nuts the way you were carrying it in your pockets.”

“Treasure?” Rico sat up. “Our treasure? The gems we captured together as privateers?” He scowled at Nate.

Nate scowled back. “What do you mean *ours*? You’re not Richard anymore, remember? Or so you keep telling me. That makes it mine. I’m the one who’s been guarding it.”

“Not very well if you stuffed a fortune in antique jewels in your *pockets*.” Rico rolled his eyes.

“I’d nowhere else to put them,” Nate defended himself.

“Rico, you’d have found them yourself if you’d searched his shorts,” Seth pointed out.

“I didn’t want to look in his shorts,” Rico grumbled.

Seth chuckled. “It bothers you being bisexual, doesn’t it? You gotta get past that, man. Love knows no boundaries—and loving one doesn’t mean you can’t love another. The more love, the better. Take it from an angel. We know these things.” He wagged his brows. “We also know people sometimes need a little nudge to

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start them in the right direction.”

On that note, he vanished from view.

A split second later, the kitchen disappeared, too. *What?* Nate felt a soft mattress and smooth sheets under his back, felt Rico’s body pressed against his left side, and saw Annie by Rico’s left.

“Wow...” Her breath blew out in a low whistle. “He transported us to the bedroom.”

But left their clothes behind. They were stark naked, all three of them.

“Son of a bitch!” Rico squirmed. “He cuffed my hands behind my back.”

“Really?” Annie braced up on an elbow. “Well, you handcuffed me this afternoon.”

“And I spent half the day in manacles,” Nate added.

They glanced at each other, then at Rico.

A deliciously sinful grin curled Annie’s lips. “It seems to be your turn, sweetie.”

“Fuck,” Rico cursed.

“Is that a request?” she asked him.

“I’ll take it as one.” Nate’s heart began battering his ribs. Desire coiled inside him like a spring about to pop.

“You’ll take anything you can get your hands on.” Rico’s eyes blazed black fire. He struggled to sit up, determined to be difficult, stubborn as a mule. Some things never changed. “I’ve known tomcats more constant than you.”

“Ah, so it’s not just loving a man that bothers you, but loving me in particular? Then *know* this.” Nate pushed him flat again and held him down, hand to chest. A furious thumping pounded his palm. Rico’s heart hammered as hard as Nate’s own. Rico’s gaze bore into him like a drill. Tension crackled the air between them.



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Much would be decided in these next moments. Nate prayed for the right words to fall out of his mouth—just one more miracle, *please*—but he'd ne'er been good at pretty speeches, so the unvarnished truth would have to serve.

"I was 'constant' enough to wait over twenty decades for you—long, cold, lonely years. Aye, I guarded the jewels hidden in the chamber I haunted, but I treasured the memory of two precious spirits more. Something told me you'd both return one day. I knew I had to stay until you did."

"And then?" Rico demanded. "What about this morning at the inn? We woke up not knowing what to think, figuring last night was the product of too much champagne. Because *you* left while we slept, didn't you? Just walked out without a word. *Why?*"

A fair question. Unfortunately. Nate wished he had a reasonable reply. Guilt gripped him along with his desire, mixed pain with the passion.

"I'd no idea what to say," was all he could answer. "It's damned strange to suddenly find yourself solid again. I was confused. Afraid. I knew I still loved you, but not if you'd love me once you regained your senses. I wasn't sure I had the right to intrude on your new lives."

Hell, he'd hesitated to intrude on their old. Bold as brass, Nate had barged into battle, but always tread too warily in matters of the heart. It seemed safer to leave people before they left him. His mistake then and now.

*I was a bastard, actually.*

Or an emotional coward, which was worse.

Nate heaved a deep sigh, refilled his lungs, and did something he'd rarely done before—if, indeed, he'd ever done it.

He apologized.

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Well, hell's bells, if Seth Barrow could become an angel, the least Nathaniel Hawkins could do was try to be an honorable man from this time forth.

"I'm sorry, me darlings." The words came out hoarse with emotion. Nate swallowed to clear his throat, blinked away the embarrassing sting of tears as he glanced from Rico to Annie and back. "I should have proved to you long before now how much I care. If you'll forgive me, I'll do all I can to make amends. Never again will you need doubt my love."

'Twas the best he could muster and he meant it. But was it enough? Silence hung heavy over the bed, so thick you could cut it with a cutlass, no sound but the rasp of their breathing.

Annie stared at Rico, her brows raised in question.

Rico glared back, as though saying *no* to whatever she asked.

In agony, Nate waited while tense seconds ticked past.

"Oh hell," Annie finally said. "You can't fight fate."

"Meaning?" Rico's glare darkened. "Just what do you think you're going to do?"

"What Amalie *should* have done, what else?" Blue eyes ablaze with excitement, Annie scrambled over Rico and dove onto Nate, body-slamming him into the mattress, knocking the wind out of him, blistering his lips.

Not that he minded. He tasted warm welcome and acceptance in her kiss—sweet as paradise, hotter than Hades. His pulse rate speeded and his cock went stiff as a board.

"Ow, you nearly kneed me in the nuts." Beside them, Rico vibrated with temper, making the big bed quiver beneath them. "Amalie was a *loyal* wife. She *loved* her husband. You'd never have caught her pulling crap like this."

"Too bad for Richard she didn't," Annie mumbled against

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Nate's mouth.

"Aye, 'twas a damned pity for me, too," he rasped when she broke off the kiss and angled her head to meet Rico's glower with a look of sultry challenge.

"Sweetie, think about it. If I wanted to be disloyal, I'd screw him behind your back. The fact I'm going to let you watch ought to tell you something."

"That you're a sadist?" Rico gritted his teeth.

Annie's eyes narrowed to smoky slits. "Gets you hot, huh."

A statement, not a question. She knew what she did, clever lass—and so did Nate. A wicked tease she'd crafted to melt the obstinate ice of Rico's anger and pride.

She was melting Nate, that was sure, with her plump breasts mashed against his chest, her belly molded to his, and her legs spread, straddling his hips. His balls nudged the moist crevice between her thighs while his cock dug lengthwise into the soft flesh of her abdomen. Like a cat she rubbed against him, adding friction to the contact, stirring a fire in his loins that flared out through his limbs, turned the blood in his veins to molten lava. He almost erupted as she wriggled down his front, nipped the head of his cock, then licked it from stem to stern.

No wonder Rico writhed. As divine as Annie's actions felt, they must be holy hell to witness. Nate sympathized, but not enough to end the torture. Rico could end it himself if he'd stop being so stubborn. Besides, the thought of Rico's arousal increased Nate's own. He looked to the side and saw Rico sitting up, arm and chest muscles bulging with effort. Trying to break the manacles?

*Good luck, lad.*

Rico was powerfully built, as Richard had been, but Nate knew the latter couldn't have managed such a task and doubted the

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former could. His gaze slid lower to see something else bulging as well—a thick, meaty rod, rigid as a rock—which made his mouth water.

Annie's eyes slanted to the same spot. "Mmm, it seems a shame to waste that, doesn't it?"

She fluttered her lashes at Rico, all mock innocence, pure coquette. "You're welcome to join us. Lie back and relax. You might find you enjoy being handcuffed."

"*Wench*," Rico snarled. "I should've whipped your tail off when I had the chance."

Annie puckered her lips and blew him a kiss. "Be a good boy, and maybe I'll give you another crack at it."

With the word, a genuine *crack* sounded, and Rico's arms stretched wide, displaying naught but a metal bracelet at each wrist. Damn. There must have been a few weak links in the connecting chain.

"They just don't make cuffs like they used to," Rico said, flexing his muscles.

*Obviously.*

"Mr. Macho." Annie sniffed. "He's been pumping iron for years," she told Nate—whatever *pumping iron* meant. "You gonna rip a phonebook in half for your next trick?" she asked Rico.

"No, I'm going to tan your sweet ass for you," he threatened.

"You can try." Annie shot him a rebellious stare. Still belly down, straddling Nate's legs, she wiggled her rosy rump in the air. "Promises, promises—"

*Whack!*

Rico's hand came down heavy on her upturned rear.

*Whack-whack-whack!*

He hit her thrice more, harder.

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“Ow!” She scrambled to the side, shaking the mattress, as he aimed another blow.

“Whoa—I’m not finished yet.” Rico grabbed for her, lost his balance on the rocking bed, and crashed forward.

Onto Nate.

Who wasn’t finished either. Hell, he’d barely begun.

“Whoa, yourself.” Before Rico could roll free, Nate trapped him in a rib-crunching bear hug that crushed their torsos together. Immovable object met irresistible force. “I’ve never much approved of men striking women. Care to try your *iron* against someone your own size, matey?”

Rico’s nostrils flared like an angry bull’s. He snorted steam like a dragon. “I’ll take you on any day, *Captain*. With pleasure.”

Aye, one could only hope.

Nate grinned. “How about now?”

That fast the bed became a battleground.

With a roar, Rico heaved to the side, dragging Nate with him. Nate heaved back, reversing their direction. Limbs tangled and muscles strained. Back and forth they rolled, skin to skin, sweating and grunting, making a mess of the sheets—both vying for dominance, neither proving anything except wrestling was hot work.

Bonfire hot.

Waves of heat poured off them. Steam rose from the bedding. The air seemed to cloud with smoke.

Somewhere in the middle of it, anger blazed into passion. Somehow Nate ended up on top, a pair of powerful legs wrapped around his waist and his cock blissfully buried in Rico’s tight ass. *Good God, how did that happen?* Quick and slick. All reflex and no thought. Their sweat must have greased his way in.

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“Fuck,” Rico groaned.

Nate could hardly speak for panting. “I think we already are, lad.”

But without Rico’s consent. Which meant retreat was the only option—and a damned difficult one, too. ’Twas bloody excruciating to trim your sails when every fiber of your being shouted “full speed ahead!” But it had to be done.

Sex was, perhaps, the only thing Nate had never plundered. He’d resisted the drunken urge to force himself on Seth this afternoon, right? And he hadn’t even liked Seth at the time. He’d castrate himself with a dull blade before ravaging someone he truly loved. Wincing with pain, emotional and physical, he flattened his palms on the mattress, pushed up slightly, and started to withdraw.

The legs at his waist tightened. Hands gripped his shoulders and yanked him back in place. A guttural growl rumbled out.

“I said *fuck*, damn it.” With the command, Rico contracted inner muscles, holding Nate’s cock in a hot satin vise. “Finish what you started—*now*—or I’ll break your neck and turn you back into a ghost.”

*Hell’s bells.*

Nate’s heart stuttered. “You’re serious? You want me?”

“Was there ever any doubt?” Rico’s mouth twisted into a wry sliver of a grin.

Nose to nose, locked in a carnal embrace, they searched each other’s eyes. Black fire still burned in Rico’s, but fueled now by desire rather than rage. Hungry need. Aye, and love, too. Nate saw it as sure as he sensed it. His own eyes blurred with a sudden salty mist.

“No,” he whispered. “I just didn’t think you’d ever admit it. Richard never did. If he had, maybe I’d have been less inclined to

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stray.”

“I know. And I have a lot of him in me, but I’m not Richard anymore. That’s the point. I’ve finally realized I *don’t* want to make his mistakes. If you’re willing to change, I’ll meet you halfway. We can try again and do things right this time.”

The words spilled out in a fevered rush. With them, Rico rocked his hips, urging Nate to thrust, to begin an equally fevered motion. His hands, warm and firm, rubbed Nate’s shoulders and back.

“The problem before was more cultural than anything. You were always a rebel, Nate, but Richard was a product of his time, which made him hate being bisexual. He wanted you regardless, but thought it was a sin. I don’t. I never understood that side of myself, so, yes, it bothered me. But I never thought it was evil. It’s a freer world today. Times are changing and I’m ready to change with them. What Richard couldn’t say, I will.”

Rico clamped his calves over Nate’s ass, halting the action for a breathless moment. “I love you, Nathaniel Hawkins.”

In imagination, a whoosh of arctic air sounded. Had hell frozen over?

In reality, an impassioned sigh heaved out.

“Wow...that was worth waiting two centuries to hear.”

Annie—bless her—voicing Nate’s exact thought. Perhaps because she guessed emotion constricted his throat and the power of speech had deserted him. A wondrous woman she was, so willing to share her lad with another, so crystal clear in her intentions. She wanted Rico happy, whatever it took. Was there any truer sign of love?

Mind you, she seemed just as eager to share herself.

Looking flushed and wanton, she crawled toward Nate and

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Rico and knelt by their heads, sitting back on her heels and spreading her thighs to give them an eyeful of ripe, juicy cunt. A nose full, too. Her lush female fragrance merged with the musky scent of masculine arousal, an intoxicating perfume that made senses reel.

“So, is this a private party?” Her gaze raked them from top to toe. “Or can anyone join in?”

Rico answered with a nonverbal, lusty growl.

“I hope that means yes,” Annie said while grazing fingers over her breasts and teasing her nipples into hard nubs. Teasing, period. The fingers roved lower, dipped into her pink slit and came out dripping.

*Lord have mercy...*

Desire pulled Nate in two directions. If only he could fuck her and Rico at the same time. What a pity a man had but one cock.

On the other hand, he had a mouth to go with it.

*Oh, what an idea.*

Awash with wicked inspiration, Nate shoved inward, wrapped Rico in a hug and rolled to reverse their positions, then pushed Rico up so the man straddled him. Quite an improvement, actually.

Rico’s own weight drove the rod he sat on deeper into his ass, as deep as it would go—deep as Hades and far hotter. With another growl, he rose a few inches and dropped down hard, then repeated the action again—and again—his eyes full of hunger. He liked the control this pose gave him.

Aye, but it aided Nate’s plans, too. And, as an added benefit, the upright posture displayed Rico’s stiff rod to full advantage, easily accessible for separate attention.

“Mmm...” Annie moistened her lips as she stared at it. “I want.”



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“So do I,” Nate said, except he stared at her.

Attack loomed imminent.

As she leaned over—intent on her own mischief, unsuspecting his—Nate gripped her hips, dragged her onto his upper body, and hauled her backward.

“Ack!” Annie squawked in surprise when he seated her on his face, with her front toward Rico—then she melted in his mouth as Nate devoured her cunt, licked and sucked and savored her, nibbled and probed...

*Delicious.*

Shudders racked through her. “Ooooooh,” she moaned.

Nate’s feelings exactly. Slowly, carefully, he explored silken folds, lapped up her cream. Merciless, he impaled her on his tongue, ate her to the edge of ecstasy and held her there suspended between impending eruption and release.

While Rico, impaled on something else, got to watch—but as an avid participant now instead of angry spectator. As such, he seemed to relish the scenery as much as the ride.

Hell, the scenery was part of the ride. Nate couldn’t see much from his vantage point, but he’d planted Rico and Annie face to face so they could, and for good reason. To increase their pleasure, which increased his. He felt their excitement as intensely as his own—tremors of passion—heard their gasps and groans, sensed them eyeing and fondling each other.

And through it all, with cock and tongue, Nate fucked them both. That was the best part, of course.

A woman and a man, fore and aft, soft body and hard, but both locked to his in an intricate triangular dance—all of them undulating in a synchronized rhythm of give and take. All three clutching and caressing, touching, tasting...loving...

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And finally exploding in harmonized rapture.

Panting, they collapsed into a single, sated heap, tangled so close you couldn't tell whose limbs belonged to whom.

No one moved. No one spoke.

Nate doubted any of them had the energy to. He didn't. Limp as a squeezed rag, in a half daze he lay, musing on the past and pondering the future. Where, exactly, they went from here, he still wasn't sure, but it looked like they'd be going together. The only certainty was things weren't over yet.

Hell's bells, they were just beginning!

## MIMI RISER

Mimi Riser has been an actress, model, clown, belly-dancer, jewelry designer, editor and publisher, but her first and foremost love is writing. She specializes in offbeat tales where laughter reigns and good always triumphs—but she makes her characters really work for their happy endings. Her books have been said to read like a snowball rolling downhill, gathering size and speed as it goes. But if you think her stories are crazy, you should see her life. Once devout city people, she and her husband exchanged the hustle and bustle of Philadelphia a lifetime or two ago for the natural, rugged splendor of the rural southwest. They were looking for a simpler way of life. They got it. It ended up being so “natural and rugged,” they spent their first six and a half years there in a hand-built house with dirt floors, no electricity and no plumbing. This has proved helpful for her historicals as she can now write about the “olden days” from personal experience. They have since rejoined the 21st century and enjoy life on the open range with a house full of eccentric cats and a large, wacky dog who thinks she’s a cat, too. Mimi has had five novels published to date along with numerous articles and short stories. Her historical romance, *I Do*, was a “Top Ten Finisher” in the mammoth Preditors & Editors Readers Poll of 2003, and her contemporary comedy, *Every Jack Needs His Jil*, won the poll the following year for the “Best Mainstream Novel of 2004.” *Samantha White and The Seven*

*Dwarves* is her first erotic-romance and was one of the winners in Amber Quill's 2007 Heat Wave contest.

To learn more about Mimi and her writing, please visit her website:

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

\* \* \*

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