

THE PIRATE'S TREASURE
COLLECTION



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A PIRATE'S TREASURE



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CHAPTER 1



ATLANTIC OCEAN, ONBOARD THE VENTURA, 1711

Juliette felt restless. She rolled over in bed and tugged the rough, woolen blanket to her, wrapping it closely against her body like a shield against the constant groaning of the ship's hull and bulkheads. Normally, this sound was a comfort to her, a lullaby that would dispatch her into a blissful world of sleep, but tonight it conveyed nothing less than a relentless din.

She gave an exasperated sigh and pursed her lips with frustration, wondering why, this night her mind was in such turmoil. She opened her eyes to stare at the moonlit ceiling and admitted that she knew full well why; she was only a few days away from her destination and her new life. That was the crux of the matter.

The pillow beneath her head felt like a massive boulder rather than the soft, feather pillow it was supposed to be. She plumped it up to make it more comfortable and closed her

eyes, trying once more to sleep, but the state of slumber simply evaded her. She was far too keyed up.

She kicked the covers off and sat up, her eyes wandering around the moonlit cabin. There was a small trundle next to her bed, where her maid, Ellie, was fast asleep. Other than that, the cabin was quite sparse, holding only a small dresser, one wooden chair and a little wooden bedside cabinet. She was sure that her father could have procured her passage on a more luxurious ship than this one.

There had been a last minute change of ship, though, as the larger one her father had booked passage on, the *Illustrious*, had suffered substantial damage coming into dock; rumour had it that the captain was drunk at the helm but nothing had been confirmed. Even so, rather than wait two weeks for a similar transport, Sir Thomas Colbourne had procured passage aboard the *Ventura*, a small British merchant vessel, leaving that very day for Carolina. He'd been assured of his daughter's safety, and after paying a tidy sum, he'd kissed his daughter on the cheek and bade her farewell.

Despite her protestations, Juliette had found herself swiftly ensconced in this tiny cabin with Ellie, her maid, wide-eyed with fear and trepidation.

They'd been at sea now for weeks and Juliette was getting restless. Apart from a few hours every day spent looking over the railings at the foaming sea beneath, plus an evening dinner in the company of Captain Peters, she'd spent most of her time in her cabin with Ellie, either reading a book or simply napping.

She suddenly felt an urge to breathe some fresh sea air. Sighing quietly under her breath, she slid her legs from the bed and quickly donned her dress, pulling a cape around her shoulders to ward off the cooler night air. Ellie didn't stir.

Out on deck, Juliette gripped the ship's railing as she gazed at the moonlit horizon. England was nowhere to be seen, they

were much too far away. Her home, the land she had been raised in. Now she was on her way to America, to marry a man she had never met, Lord William Van de Sarr.

She'd craved adventure ever since she was old enough to read. Now that she had it, though, she wasn't at all sure that it was the right thing for her. What if this Lord turned out to be the most boring man on earth? What if he was fat? He could be ugly, hideous even; why, he could be cross-eyed for all she knew. She was twenty-three years old and her intended husband was thirty-seven. Goodness, he was nearly forty. Her father had assured her of his good lineage at the same time that he'd informed her that she had no choice in the matter and the marriage would take place regardless of any imposition on her part.

Her father was a terrible gambler, and had been for as long as she could remember. Unfortunately, this time he had gambled too far, nearly losing the family home. If Lord Van de Sarr hadn't offered to pay off his debts for her hand in marriage, they would now be asking for charity from her hated Aunt, Lady Winfield of Durham. She shuddered at the thought. At least by marrying Lord William Van de Sarr, her sisters would remain in the family home. She just hoped her father would learn by this lesson.

Juliette huffed under her breath and took in a lung full of air to calm herself. Why, just because she was the eldest of three daughters, should she be the one to have to marry this man! Why couldn't it be Saffy, the younger of her two siblings? Saffy wouldn't have minded whom she married, as long as she was kept in the manner she was accustomed to. Why, she'd marry the ugliest man in Christendom, as long as he bought her finery. Juliette pursed her lips. She was paying for her father's errant ways and it was unfair. Totally unfair! Who was this elusive Lord, anyway?

She raised her chin and straightened her back as she looked

out to sea. Well, she may have to marry him for propriety's sake, but she wouldn't make his life easy, and as for giving him children, well, she would delay that as long as she possibly could. Her nose wrinkled with distaste as her thoughts turned to the marriage bed. She shuddered and tried to rid her mind of such a thing.

Once married, the debts would be paid and she could do as she liked. Fie on him, if he tried to tame her rebellious spirit.

Another few days and she'd be meeting him for the first time; hence the reason for her disturbed sleep. The first days at sea had been almost exciting, but boredom had soon settled in its place and now, apprehension. She twisted her hands together nervously.

She'd only been abroad once before, and that was to Normandy, in France, a lovely place. Her future husband, however, lived in Charlestown, Carolina. A place she'd never seen. Would she like it? Would the people be friendly? Only time would tell.

Her thoughts were interrupted by one of the crew shouting down from the crow's nest, a note of urgency in his voice. "Sail ho!"

His voice echoed to the Captain below, who called back, "What does she look like?"

"A large ship, sir, standing towards us."

Most of the crew on duty was assembling below the crow's nest, straining their eyes to see the identity and size of the ship approaching them. Their voices grew in volume.

"Keep silence, fore and aft!" shouted the Captain before hailing the lookout once more. "What flag does she fly?"

"East India Trading Company, sir."

The Captain quickly raised his spyglass to his left eye. The ship was swiftly bearing down on them. Without further ado he commanded, "All hands clear the ship for action! We shall beat to quarters. Ahoy!"

Suddenly, the ship came alive as the drum and fife sounded the alarm. Within seconds, men began to run to and fro as they took their posts. Sails were hoisted and moved, cannons aligned and commands shouted out. Juliette felt the hairs on the back of her neck stand up as she bore witness to their actions. Something was wrong, very wrong. Feeling a tug on her sleeve, she turned around.

“Get back down below please, Miss Colbourne.”

She found Commodore Jones at her side. He began pulling her away from the railing.

“Why must I go below? What’s happening?” she asked urgently, trying to extricate her arm. Any bit of excitement was worth staying for, rather than going back to the stuffy cabin.

He firmly pushed her towards the stairwell, brooking no argument. “I don’t want to worry you, miss, but there’s a large ship heading straight for us. She flies the British East India Company flag, but until we get nearer, we have to be careful. Best you go below whilst we ascertain they are who they say they are.”

He opened the wooden door and pushed her forward. “Your cabin will be the safest place to be.”

Juliette heard the urgency in his tone and wisely decided to heed his advice. Quickly, her small heels descended the narrow, wooden steps to the deck below. She sought out her cabin and closed the door firmly behind her.

Her young maid, Ellie, stirred and stretched, blinking rapidly as her eyes focused on her mistress.

“Oh, milady, did I oversleep?” She sat up in bed and frowned, realising it was still dark.

“No, Ellie, not at all! I couldn’t sleep, so I went out on deck for a breath of fresh sea air.”

Ellie frowned as she heard the commotion above. “What’s all that noise?”

“I think you’d better get dressed, Ellie. Trouble’s afoot!”

“Trouble, milady?” Ellie’s eyes widened in fear as Juliette tried to reassure her.

“It may be nothing, but Commodore Jones told us to stay here in our cabin. Another ship approaches!”

“Is it pirates, milady?” Ellie whispered. She quickly began to dress whilst listening to the movements and cries above deck.

“No, no. I’m sure it isn’t. The Captain said they’re flying a British flag. Worry not, Ellie. We shall be fine.” Juliette peered out of the porthole but it only overlooked the sea. The ship approaching the Ventura was on the port side, and they were situated on the starboard side. Frustrated, she turned her back to the small window and nibbled on her bottom lip nervously.

Even though she tried to put a brave face on their situation, for her maid’s sake, she was filled with trepidation, her inner voice telling her that something bad was about to happen.

William Van de Sarr, known only to his crew by the name of Captain Bill Corbin, waited in the shadows of the ship’s sails as his large vessel swiftly moved towards the Ventura, a ship he’d always wanted to plunder. She was well known for carrying large quantities of gold and it was perfect luck that they’d chanced upon her.

His own ship, the Avarice, was flying the British East India flag. As it came within a hundred feet, William stepped out into the moonlight, wearing a black mask. His eyes glittered with devilment.

“Take her a prize!” his voice boomed out.

“Aye, aye, Cap’n!” roared the crew in unison.

The British East India flag was quickly lowered and the Black Jolly Roger put in its stead.

Captain Peters, looking across the divide, immediately saw the flag and adrenalin coursed through his body as he ordered his crew to prime the cannons.

Captain Bill was in his element. He loved the excitement,

the heady wave of power as he seized control of another ship, and of course, the booty involved!

His men were well trained and responded like a well oiled machine to his every word and command. The *Avarice* swiftly moved broadside.

"Fire!" he bellowed.

Two warning shots were fired straight at the *Ventura*, splintering the top railing at the stern. Ships were valuable commodities and the least damage procured through battle, the better! Most captains, once they realised who they were dealing with, gave up their goods rather than their lives.

The *Ventura*, however, returned fire, her guns flashing like miniature balls of lightning as they heralded her oncoming thunder.

"Down." Bill cried to his men, the tone of his voice alone enough to convey the message that their lives were in clear and present danger, his basic instinct for survival over-riding that old, adrenaline-fuelled adversary of fear and alarm, as he tumbled to the deck.

The cannon fire rumbled ominously like the beginning of a terrible storm, filling the night air with its promise of death and destruction. The first volleys hit their intended targets as they crashed into the *Avarice's* rigging, tearing the halyards from their sails, snapping the aft mizzenmast like a mere twig and sending thick clouds of dead wooden debris throughout the entire deck. As his head began to clear, Bill heard the very words every seaman dreaded.

"We're taking on water! Amidships, larboard side, third deck," cried a fearful voice from below.

Bill scrambled to his feet, cursing his bad fortune. To take a hit below water at this early stage of the battle was disheartening to say the least, let alone devastating. *"Damn fine gunnery,"* he cursed grudgingly, *"Or damn fine luck."*

Bill's carpenters and every available man were on the scene instantly, ready to help, come what may, to repair the gaping hole torn in the side of the ship.

Bill ordered his men to fire. "Get 'em on the up-roll, lads, and make every one of 'em count."

The shot whizzed past the heads of the Ventura's crew, taking out a large section of taffrail on their upper deck, nearly maiming several of its crew. Bill's men cheered raucously, their loud taunts echoing across to the Ventura.

Captain Bill decided to bring the fight under control, lest his ship was blown to smithereens; the Ventura's Captain was not as easy a target as he would have liked. With lightning speed, the Avarice moved as close as she could to the Ventura. Grappling hooks flew through the air and then the pirates clambered aboard.



JULIETTE AND HER MAID, Ellie, listened in abject horror to the booming cannons, shouts of anger, screams of rage, and finally, swords clashing as the men fought above decks.

"What shall we do, milady?" asked Ellie, clinging onto Juliette's arm.

"I know not, Ellie." Juliette glanced to the small porthole; there was no escaping through that. The only thing they could do was lock the door, which she did. Then she drew the single cabin chair up to the door handle.

"Help me with the bed, Ellie. Quickly!"

Suddenly, the vessel was hit with a cannonball, throwing both girls to the floor as the ship rocked with the impact.

Ellie screamed and curled into a ball. "Milady, we're going to die."

"Ellie! Stop it at once. Calm yourself." Juliette scrambled to

her feet and moved towards the bed. "Help me with this. We must protect ourselves!"

Between them, they manoeuvred the bed up against the chair. At least now they had some form of resistance to whoever decided to break in. Juliette swallowed fearfully as her mind conjured up images of filthy, evil, mercenary pirates and what they could do to two females if they found them at their mercy. And what if the ship sank? How would they get out and reach the top deck before the swirling dark waters engulfed their cabin? She gulped and clasped a hand to her chest as the awful thoughts filled her mind.

They had no weapons to speak of, she bemoaned silently. Then her eyes lit up as she remembered that she did have one. Her letter opener. Not much of a weapon, but better than nothing. Quickly, she went to her valise and found the knife. It wasn't sharp, but she thought it would deter a pirate long enough for her to possibly escape from him. She slipped it into the top of her stocking.

Suddenly, they heard a loud cheer from above. Ellie gripped Juliette's arm and bit on her lower lip nervously.

"Milady, did Captain Peters win? Do you think he defeated the pirates?"

"Shh! Be quiet. I know not, but we must remain calm until we find out." She pulled Ellie down onto the floor with her and crouched next to the bed. "If the pirates have won, then we'll have to fight them."

Ellie began to whimper and hid her face in her hands.

Placing an arm around her shoulders, Juliette whispered in her ear, "The quieter we are, Ellie, the less chance of being discovered. Perhaps they won't look in here at all. After all, they'll surely only want the goods in the hold. They won't bother with the cabins."

Ellie went silent and listened to the ship creaking loudly as

it moved upon the vast ocean, the heavy wooden slats protesting their age. A few shouts of laughter drifted down, and then a thud and a scream were heard. A door banged along the corridor, making them both jump.

"They're coming this way, milady. What shall we do?" whispered Ellie desperately, clutching onto Juliette's sleeve.

"Shh!" Juliette urged. "If they try to open the door, you must push with all your might. We must stop them gaining entrance. Our very lives may depend on it."

Ellie nodded, her eyes like saucers. They could hear heavy tread in the corridor and then the door opposite theirs was opened.

"Captain's room, there'll be plenty to plunder 'ere," boomed a deep, gravelly voice.

"Aye, Clegg. 'Tis certain there'll be gold in 'ere. Don't touch anythin' though; ye know Cap'n Bill's rules."

"Aye, that I do, Bart, that I do. Try the opposite door whilst I 'ave a scout 'round 'ere."

The door to Juliette's cabin rattled and Bart called out, "It's locked. There must be something valuable inside."

After a bit of scuffling, they heard Clegg's voice again. "Stand back!"

Juliette whispered to Ellie. "Push with all your might, Ellie. Now's the time."

Both girls pushed all their weight into the bed against the door as Clegg threw himself at the locked door. The door creaked under the pressure, but didn't open.

"Damn 'n blast! Bloody thing's made of iron," complained Clegg, rubbing his shoulder from the impact.

"Let me do it. Out of me way," Bart ordered, pushing past him to position himself in front of the small door. Holding onto the frame, he kicked with full force and the lock finally gave way, the wood surrounding it splintering off in all direc-

tions. The door, however, didn't swing inward as expected. Instead, it opened but an inch. He pushed harder and the door scraped open another few inches.

"There's a bed in the way; I can see it." Bart craned his neck, trying to peer into the room. It was then that he saw Juliette, a determined look upon her face. She pushed again and glared at him.

"My ... what a prize! Come 'ere, me beauty, we won't 'arm ye."

"Who's in there? Let me see." Clegg shoved Bart away, and put his eye to the gap. He gave a low whistle. "Where'd ye come from?"

"Go away. Leave us be," cried Juliette. The door began to close, but the little bed and two young women's minute strength was no match against two burly pirates. After a few more thrusts, the bed gave way. Juliette and Ellie quickly dove beneath the bed, their chests heaving with fear.

The two pirates entered the small cabin, making the space seem no bigger than a matchbox.

"So, what a prize for our Captain, eh, Clegg?" declared Bart, grinning at his fellow pirate.

"Sure is, Bart." Clegg leered at the shapely ankle showing beneath the bed. "Shall we go get 'im or shall we 'ave a little fun ourselves?"

"No need. I'm here!" drawled a deep, cultured voice.

Juliette's heart slammed against her ribs, and she almost fainted with terror as the pirates stepped aside, allowing the Captain to enter the cabin. She peeked out from behind a bedpost.

He was a large man, standing well over six feet tall and powerfully built. Dressed entirely in black from head to toe, he was an imposing figure. She couldn't see his face as he was wearing a black mask, leaving only a neatly trimmed black

beard visible. His coal black hair was tied back at the nape of his neck.

“So, what have we here? Two damsels in distress?” He looked around the room, noticing the displaced bed and upended chair. “Perhaps not. It seems they have spirit.” He looked directly at Juliette, who gasped in surprise as she peeked out from under the bed. “Who are you?” His voice was refined and spoke of an educated man, not like the two uncouth lackeys standing behind him, still leering at Juliette and her maid.

Even though Juliette’s heart was racing, she decided not to give him her proper name. It was none of his business. She remained silent.



BILL’S EYES NARROWED. As captain of his ship, he was used to being obeyed at all times; the girl beneath the bed certainly wasn’t complying with his demand. Angry at her disobedience, Bill leaned down on his haunches and stared straight into her face.

Juliette stared back at him and tried to scramble backwards, her heart thumping in her chest with terror.

Bill’s hand immediately snaked out and grabbed one of her wrists, quickly pulling her reluctant form from beneath the bed and standing her up in front of him. She squirmed and tried to free herself, but Bill was too strong for her.

“Unhand me!” she snarled, trying to break free and bashing him with her free hand.

Bill ignored her and spoke to Bart, her small hand making little impact on his muscular form. “Bart, get the other girl.”

Juliette continued to hit him until he finally lost patience. In a lightning-quick move, he had both her hands pinned behind

her back. She struggled but it was no use, his grip was like an iron vice.

Bill kept his eyes fixed on Juliette and studied her for a moment. She was stunning. Gorgeous, long, golden-blond hair framed a face with a perfect complexion. Her lips, with their little cupid's bow, were set in a stubborn moue. She was small, petite, but perfect. He felt a stirring in his loins.

"Your name, milady!" he demanded. He was used to being obeyed, but he could tell this girl was determined to do the exact opposite. Her eyes flashed angrily at him.

Bart pulled Ellie up and held her hands by her sides as she struggled to break free.

"Take that one up on deck, Bart." Bill looked at Ellie and then cast his steely gaze back to Juliette. "Perhaps out of each other's company, you'll speak."

Juliette predictably cried out, "Leave her. My name's ... Juliette. Juliette Colbourne."

Bill faltered, his jaw almost falling open in surprise. Juliette Colbourne! It couldn't be. His expression carefully hidden, he chose his next words carefully.

"From where do you hail, Juliette Colbourne?"

"Suffolk. Not that it's any business of yours," she replied, defiantly tilting her little chin up again.

She couldn't have been more wrong, Bill thought wryly. But she didn't know that he was presently in disguise, and she had never met her future husband, William Van de Sarr. Juliette Colbourne was none other than his bride-to-be. What the devil was she doing on this ship? She was supposed to be travelling on the *Illustrious*, not this unfortunate vessel.

He rubbed a hand over his chin as he tried to conceal his shock. He couldn't reveal his identity to her; even his crew didn't know that. His role as Captain Bill was a closely guarded secret, known to only one other, his best friend and partner in business, Adrian Chauvelin.

He cleared his throat. "I take it this is your maid?"

Ellie gulped before answering. "Yes, sir, my name's Ellie."

"Well, Ellie, rest assured, no harm will come to your person. As long as you adhere to the ship's rules, you'll be fine. I want you to go with Bart. He'll be sure to keep you safe, won't you, Bart?"

"Oh, aye, Cap'n." Bart was his first mate and the one man he trusted above all others on board his ship. Clegg, on the other hand, was newly employed, which was why Bill had placed him under Bart's tuition.

"Clegg, can you go with Bart? See to it that Ellie is placed in the cabin next to mine," he whispered to the other man.

"What ye gonna do with that one, Cap'n?" enquired Bart.

"She'll stay in my cabin."

Juliette stiffened. "I will not, sir!"

"You will, or ..." he paused for effect, "you can stay in the hold below decks. I hear the rats are not particular about whom they feast upon. The choice is yours, milady."

Bart smirked and started to lead Ellie out of the cabin. The maid pulled her arm back and looked imploringly at Juliette.

"Wait!" Juliette cried, "Promise no harm will come to her." She looked at the Captain.

He answered, his deep voice filling the small cabin, "As long as she behaves, then I promise no harm will befall her."

Juliette studied his eyes through the mask. They were an intense blue, and sudden shivers went down her spine. He sounded sincere, but he was a pirate. Pirates were notorious for their wicked ways, and why would this one be any different? Realising that neither she nor Ellie had any choice but to comply, she tried to reassure her young maid. There was no point in putting the fear of God into her.

"Go, Ellie. I'll be fine, and so will you," she said confidently.

Captain Bill nodded at Bart to take his leave. The sailor

pulled Ellie with him out of the cabin, Clegg following, a grin upon his ugly, weather-beaten face.

Silently, Juliette fumed. How dare the Captain treat her like this?



BILL WATCHED as she struggled with her emotions. This was a good way of finding out what his future wife was truly like. In fact, perhaps this was turning out to be a stroke of luck. Now he would see her true character, rather than have a fiancée simpering to his every need because her father needed his money to pay off his gambling debts. One who, once married, would most likely turn into a shrew.

He freed her hands and watched her intently. "So, the hold it is, then?"

Juliette rubbed her wrists ruefully and glared back at him. "No, it most certainly isn't. How dare you treat me like this, expecting me to share your cabin. You're certainly not a man of honour!"

"No, Miss Colbourne, I'm a pirate, or did that escape your notice?" he mocked, a wry smile forming on his face. "Captain Bill Corbin, at your service." He bowed eloquently.



JULIETTE SEETHED, wishing she had something to wipe the smile off his face. Then she remembered her knife. Quickly, she lifted her skirts, giving him a flash of a perfect, stocking-clad leg, and pulled out her little paper knife. She waved it in front of her and snarled, "I'm armed, sir, don't come near me."

William chuckled. "Armed, milady? I think not."

Before Juliette had time to realise what was happening, she was disarmed as easily as a mother taking a rattle from a baby.

She screeched in anger as his arms clamped around both of hers, disabling her.

“You-you ... knave! Let go of me, unhand me at once!” she spat with venom in her tone.

Captain Bill merely laughed a deep rumble that sent shivers up her spine. “Fear not, pretty wench, I’ve no desire to taste your wares. I merely want you aboard my ship. You could be worth a guinea or two!”

Juliette struggled, but his huge arms seemed to be made of iron as they budged not one inch.

“You blackguard! When my fiancé finds out, he’ll hang you from the highest tree.”

“You have a fiancé? I pity the poor fellow.”

Juliette was jostled out of the cabin and up the wooden stairs, onto the Ventura’s deck. She suddenly found herself flying through the air as Captain Bill grabbed a rope and hoisted them both aboard his ship with ease. He landed adeptly on both feet, not a hair out of place. Juliette found herself clinging to him for fear of falling. Disgusted, she tried to break free.

“Trying to leave so soon, milady?” He chuckled.

“You fool!” She narrowed her eyes and threw him a look of contempt.

“Such profanities from such sweet lips. Your fiancé would be charmed, I’m sure.” He pulled her none too gently as he strode across the deck.

Juliette tried to drag her heels. “My fiancé would have you begging for mercy. You wouldn’t be so sure of yourself then.”

“Oh, I quiver with fear. My very bones tremble with terror.” He laughed mockingly. “Come see your new cabin. You’ll be most comfortable.”

“I don’t wish to see the cabin. You have designs on my virtue. If you defile me, you’ll rue the day.”

Captain Bill shook his head, fast beginning to lose patience.

"You'll rue the day, milady, if you don't do as you're bid. Now, move!"

Juliette once again found herself dragged along next to the huge bear of a man, across the main deck. He strode in front of her towards a large, wooden door. She gritted her teeth angrily and looked down at his arm. Bare flesh protruded from a battle-worn, black shirt. Unable to resist, she bent over and clamped her small, white teeth deep into his forearm.

"Ow! You vixen!" he shouted, pulling his arm away to rub at the sudden pain. Quick as a flash, Juliette began to run across the deck.

"Oh, no, you don't!" He was on her in a thrice, grabbing her around the waist and hoisting her over one huge thigh.

Before Juliette could fathom his intention, his hand descended in a spate of large smacks across her upended bottom. She shrieked in outrage as pain flooded her senses. She hadn't been spanked since she was a small child and that was only once, by a nursemaid that was far too overbearing, in her opinion.

"How dare you!" Juliette shrieked. Her bottom felt like it was on fire.

Bill heeded her not, though, and the rain of hard swats continued, as she struggled to evade the pain. "I dare," he bellowed. "You will *obey* me."

Smack. "And you will *not* bite!" *Smack. Smack. Smack.*

Then he pulled her up and firmly grabbed her arm, shaking her. "You'll learn, aboard this ship, milady, that I'm the Captain and I will be obeyed at all times. Now, *move!*"

Juliette stumbled towards his cabin, tears of outrage and fear slipping down her cheeks.

Never had she felt so humiliated. As if capturing her wasn't bad enough, he'd then shown what a true brute he was, by spanking her, a woman half his size. Tyrant! She pressed her lips together angrily and tried to ignore the stinging pain in her

backside but she couldn't. It hurt too much. She just hoped his arm was hurting equally as much, from the pain she'd inflicted with her teeth.

Her thoughts turned from anger to despair. What if he did have designs on her virtue? She wouldn't be able to fight him; he was too strong. He'd just proven that. Her fiancé would never accept her once she'd been defiled by a pirate.

She would be sent home in shame. Oh, why did this have to happen to her?