## A Pirate's Stowaway

A Pirate's Treasure, Book Two

By

Maryse Dawson

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## Chapter One

Juliette Van de Sarr leant her forehead against a glass pane in the parlour's bay window and surveyed the surrounding countryside. The seemingly endless green hills rolled before her, as the sun shone brilliantly from a cloudless sky, a beautiful day making a mockery of her inner gloom.

She hadn't felt this low for ages, with a malady for which there seemed no cure. There was only one name for the cause of her emotional disorder, and that name was William.

William, her husband, was away on business, having left a few days ago. He wouldn't be back for another three or four weeks. A whole month she would be without him! She pursed her lips angrily and kicked the skirting board with her slippered foot. She'd begged him to take her with him, but he'd refused her point blank, even threatening to spank her bottom if she carried on whining at him.

She'd ignored his warning and had continued on in the same vein. She was a newlywed and should be with her husband, she'd argued. That had earned her a swift bracket of smacks on her upturned bottom as he had thrown her across his lap. She'd stubbornly refused to speak to him after that for a full five minutes – five minutes that he'd found highly amusing until he'd coaxed her foul mood out of her by kissing her soundly.

Now he'd gone, and she was missing him badly. They'd been married for four months and she'd enjoyed every minute of it, apart from a severe spanking he'd given her the day before he'd left for his trip. She still had faint bruises from that episode.

She'd thrown a tantrum when he'd refused to let her ride the big stallion he'd recently purchased, saying he wasn't broken in properly and would be dangerous for her to ride. She'd kept on and on until he'd lost patience and had applied a hideous strap to her backside. She was lectured on how she should never question his authority again. When he said no, he meant no.

Juliette huffed aloud as she remembered how the lick of the strap had felt against her tender flesh. How it had hurt! Begging had not worked, and neither had crying. William had continued to spank her until he was sure she was thoroughly sorry. Later that night, they had

made love with her bent over the end of the bed, his body pounding into hers, whilst his large hands kneaded her tortured bottom. The sensations that had rocked through her were amazing: both pain and pleasure with such a thin thread between them.

Now she was to be without him for a month. 'Twas too long! At least Geraldine had promised to ride around to see her; she would create a welcome diversion from this never-ending boredom.

She turned around as Mocquet entered the parlour after knocking discreetly.

"Miss Geraldine Van de Sarr, milady."

Geraldine came straight in, her arms outstretched in greeting. Juliette stepped forward, but not before her sister-in-law had noticed the frown marring her delicate features.

"Juliette, whatever is the matter?"

"Oh 'tis nothing. I'm just missing William, but it's so lovely to see you, Geraldine."

"As it is to see you. Now, I've decided to take you to town for the day. We'll dine at a small inn I know, and shop to our hearts' content. Did William leave you an allowance?" Geraldine looked at her enquiringly.

Juliette frowned. "I'm not sure. I've never had the need for money since I arrived. Mrs. Honeyman has made my dresses and I presume William took care of her bill. Other than that, I haven't been given any allowance. Should I have?"

"Why, of course! What bank does William use?"

Juliette looked blankly back at her sister-in-law. "I'm afraid I'm not privy to his finances."

Geraldine thought quickly. "We'll have to look in his study. He's bound to have something in there. Father uses Wilson & Styles, but I think William banks with another. Come, let us take a look."

Juliette worried her bottom lip. William had never spoken of finances to her. Something in hindsight, perhaps she should have asked him but never having had any need for money, she'd never thought to question him. She voiced her concerns to Geraldine.

"Do you think it proper that we rifle through his documents, Geraldine?"

"Of course!" Geraldine snorted. "You're his wife. You have the right to know and the right to withdraw funds when needed, and today it is needed."

She pulled a rather reluctant Juliette with her toward the door and out into the hallway. William's study was at the far end of the wide hall, but neither of them had been in there. When William was in the study, he was never to be disturbed.

They walked up to the door, and Geraldine tried to open it. "Blast it, it's locked!" she complained, rattling the doorknob violently.

"He must have taken the key with him. You see, 'tis not fitting that we enter. He would be cross if he knew what we were doing," Juliette voiced her fears aloud.

"Oh, piffle, Juliette! A man should have no secrets from his wife." Geraldine paused a moment, a wicked look on her face. "And yet, a wife *should* keep little secrets from her husband."

Juliette shook her head. "Honestly, Geraldine. You're incorrigible." She thought hard. Perhaps Geraldine did have a point. Why was her husband's study locked? Did he have something to hide? "Let me try the door."

She rattled the doorknob herself to make sure it was definitely locked and not just stuck, but it didn't budge. She laid her forehead against the wood. "Oh, 'tis unfair. I would have liked to visit the shops, but with no coins 'tis pointless," she bemoaned.

"Mocquet! I bet he has a key!" exclaimed Geraldine.

"Milady?"

Mocquet appeared like a ghost in the night behind them, and both girls jumped back from the door, startled.

"Goodness, Mocquet, you frightened us," gasped Juliette, clutching a hand to her breast. Her heart felt as though it was going to jump out of her chest, it was beating so loudly. The man must have second sight!

His face remained passive, devoid of emotion. "You wanted me, milady?"

Juliette gulped and thrust her chin out. "I need the key to my husband's study. Do you know where he keeps it?"

"Indeed I do, milady, but I'm not sure as to whether Lord Van de Sarr would approve."

Juliette raised an eyebrow at his superior tone and spoke firmly. "My husband isn't here and as head of the household, I order you to open this door!"

"As you wish, milady." Mocquet gave her a reproachful look before pulling a large set of keys from his waistcoat pocket. He fingered through them, until he came to a heavy gold one.

With one last plainly disapproving look, he placed the key in the lock and turned it until an audible click was heard.

"Thank you, Mocquet. That'll be all." Juliette's voice held a note of authority.

Mocquet, realising he was no longer needed, bowed politely and moved away, down the hallway, sniffing disdainfully.

"Nicely done," Geraldine whispered in her ear. "You can't let that old codger think he owns the place."

Juliette giggled. "Geraldine! Don't call Mocquet that. Where on earth did you learn such crass language?"

"What? Codger?" she asked.

Juliette nodded.

"I overheard two of the gardeners talking. It suits him though, doesn't it?"

Juliette shook her head, rolling her eyes at her sister-in-law's comment and then slowly opened the study door. They both walked in, their eyes wide with curiosity.

"Does he have a safe?" Geraldine asked, walking toward the big oak desk. "That'd be the best place to put legal documents." She fingered one of the desk drawers. "Although, he may have something of import in here."

"I'm not sure where he'd keep any of the documents. He's never spoken of it." Juliette walked toward the wall. Where would a safe be kept hidden? She glanced up at the several large portraits adorning the far end of the room. It could be behind one of them.

Her eyes fell on a portrait of William, posing with a greyhound at his feet, a rifle under one arm; the epitome of the English country lord. His brooding eyes seemed to look straight at her. In fact, his eyes reminded her of someone else. She peered closer.

"Juliette! I have it!" Geraldine interrupted her perusal of her husband's portrait and she turned to find her sister-in-law waving a piece of paper in her hand.

"Tis a letter from the bank. I was right; he uses a different bank than father. He banks with Stubbs on Western Street, near the dockside. We'll get the carriage to take us there first, you can withdraw some money, and then we'll go to Madame Boudray's. She has the best gowns in town and such treasures as you've never seen before. Come, make haste!"

Juliette felt her own excitement begin to build as she listened to Geraldine's enthusiastic tones. This would take away from her boredom. She would only take a little money, nothing her husband need worry about.

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"I think you should withdraw no less than eighty pounds," Geraldine suggested, as she took a seat next to Geraldine. They had been shown to a private room at the back of the bank.

"Eighty pounds! Geraldine, 'tis too much!" Juliette exclaimed.

Mr. Stubbs, bank manager of Stubbs & Company, took a seat opposite them and looked from one to the other, his face impassive.

Geraldine leaned nearer to Juliette, glancing furtively at Mr. Stubbs. "Eighty pounds is but a spit in the ocean to my brother. Honestly, he wouldn't deny you such a small amount."

Juliette worried her bottom lip again and looked away, apparently missing the mischievous gleam that lit up Geraldine's eyes.

It was true, William did seem to have endless funds, but eighty pounds was far too much money for a wife's allowance. Juliette, being naïve to such things, wouldn't know that. Geraldine would hopefully be able to get a new dress out of this. After all, she had helped her new sister acquire the money in the first place!

Juliette came to a decision. "Although eighty pounds is rather a handsome amount, I do agree with you that I cannot see William denying it to me. After all, he'll be gone for three weeks and we may have the need to shop again."

Geraldine nodded, agreeing wholeheartedly. "You cannot be without funds, dearest." Juliette looked at Mr. Stubbs. "I shall withdraw eighty pounds. Where do I sign?"

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Mr. Stubbs wrote down the figure and held out a form for her to sign. She signed it as Juliette Van de Sarr and handed it back to him. The name sounded odd as this was only about the third time she had written her name in her married form.

Mr. Stubbs opened a drawer, pulled out several bank notes and began counting them out on the desk. "Sixty, seventy ... eighty pounds, Lady Van de Sarr."

Juliette quickly folded the notes and put them in her purse.

"May I be of further assistance?" Mr. Stubbs asked.

"No, no thank you," Juliette responded. Both women arose and shook his hand, leaving his offices eighty pounds richer.

The carriage waited for them outside and whisked them straight off to Madame Boudray's boutique. Several hours later, both with bags hanging off their arms, Juliette and Geraldine climbed back into the coach.

"Oh, Geraldine, what a lovely day we've had." Juliette's face was a picture of happiness. The eighty pounds had slipped through her fingers as quickly as it had come. Her purse now contained the lowly sum of seven pounds, fifteen shillings. But Juliette cared not. The day had been a wonderful experience.

Geraldine eyed her bag containing a beautiful dress, gloves and the latest fashion in stockings. She agreed. "Twas a wonderful day, Juliette. Thank you for my dress, 'tis truly beautiful. We shall be the envy of all women when next they see us." She frowned. "Why, come to think of it, there's a ball at Lady Margaret's tonight. Did you receive an invite?"

Juliette sighed. "Yes, I had one delivered only two days ago. I shall not attend, however." Geraldine's face fell. "Why ever not?"

"If you've failed to notice, Geraldine, my husband isn't at home and I'd rather not attend a ball without him. 'Twould not be seemly."

"Oh, piffle! Of course it would be seemly. You're young, vibrant, alive! William wouldn't want you to stay at home on your own. Anyway, I'll be there to accompany you. Please say you'll come." She tapped her sister-in-law on the arm with her fan. "If you don't attend, wherever will you wear your new gown?"

Juliette laughed. "You speak words to sway me, Geraldine, but I do wonder if your brother will see things in the same light."

"He will. I'm sure of it. Your enjoyment is of his utmost concern. We'll travel in the same carriage and, therefore, you'll not feel out of place. Father can travel with grandmother on their own, without me. You and I will stun them all with our new attire."

Juliette shook her head. "Geraldine, I'm sure you're too naughty for words."

Her sister-in-law gave her a smug smile and looked out the window. "Can we go past the port? I've a fancy to see the sea."

Juliette tapped the carriage roof and one of the drivers popped his head down. "Yes, milady?"

"We should like to go home via the port."

"Certainly, milady." She heard him speak to his fellow driver, giving him their new instructions.

As they approached the docks, Juliette lowered the coach window and stuck her head out. The smell of fresh sea air assailed her nostrils and she breathed deeply, filling her lungs with the intoxicating aroma. Geraldine leaned forward and craned her neck to see the ships.

"Ah, I love the sea, Juliette."

Juliette looked out at the busy harbour. Several large vessels were in port, men clambering about unloading and loading supplies. It was a hive of activity. Suddenly, she gasped, her hand clutching her chest.

"What? What is it, Juliette?"

Geraldine's eyes followed Juliette's, as she stared transfixed at a figure, dressed completely in black, standing amongst a crowd of men at the quayside. He was a head taller than most of the others and cut an imposing figure, especially as his features were concealed beneath a black mask. His eyes fastened on Juliette.

"Who is he, Juliette? Is he the pirate that held you captive?"

"Yes," whispered Juliette, unable to draw her eyes away. She'd thought never to see Captain Bill again. Seeing him now sent shivers of fear and excitement up her spine, as memories invaded her mind. She paled and pulled her head back into the carriage.

"Let's leave at once, Geraldine! I don't wish to stay here any longer!"

Geraldine saw the distress on her sister-in-law's face and quickly tapped on the carriage roof. "Take us via another route. Make haste!"

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Captain Bill stared after the carriage as it swiftly departed up a side road, his face troubled. What was his wife doing by the docks? 'Twas a dangerous place to be for anyone, let alone his petite wife and his sister. As if to confirm his thoughts, a drunken sailor reeled past, almost knocking into him. He stepped back, cursing under his breath. He had only been gone a few days, and already his wife was giving him reasons for concern about leaving her alone so early on in their marriage. He ran a hand over his beard, as he thought about what he should do. His sister was a minx, and he'd bet his last gold guinea that she was behind this.

As fate had deemed it, he wouldn't have seen them, had it not been for some last minute business with his partner, Adrian Chauvelin, delaying him from sailing on last night's tide. William always stayed at Adrian's house, inconspicuously situated down the back streets of Charlestown, whilst he waited for his beard to grow before setting sail. A couple of days' growth and wearing his mask, he was easily transformed into the notorious pirate, Captain Bill, in no way recognisable as Lord Van de Sarr.

As it now appeared, he was glad events had turned out as they had. Seeing his wife taking unnecessary risks had made him rethink his plans. His jaw set grimly. Words would be had when he arrived home, of that he was certain. Only when he was assured of her obedience in all things would he set sail again on the Avarice. For now, Bart would have to captain the ship on its next voyage to Cape Verdes. He'd done so plenty of times before, so this time would be no exception.

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Adrian Chauvelin peered at the latest bank statement just hand-delivered by Stubbs and Company. A large sum of eighty pounds had been withdrawn from William's bank account that very morning. He knew it wouldn't have been William that took the money, as they'd been to the bank together the day before to sort out finances, and he wouldn't have needed to see Mr. Stubbs again. William was now on board the Avarice, getting ready to sail. Before he'd left, he hadn't mentioned anything to him about needing extra money. No, something was amiss.

His brow furrowed as he puzzled over who would've taken the money. Surely, William's new wife wouldn't have drawn out such a large sum, would she?

Adrian looked after all the finances whilst William was on his travels. This needed further investigation. Taking his hat off the coat stand, he decided to pay Mr. Stubbs a visit. Hopefully, he'd be able to enlighten him on the whereabouts of the missing money. 'Twas an awful lot of cash.

Mr. Stubbs laced his fingers together and stared at Adrian over his spectacles as he sat before him in the bank.

"Twas Lady Van de Sarr that withdrew the money, milord. She was accompanied by Mistress Van de Sarr."

"Ah. I see." Adrian tapped his gloves on his lap. "Did she say why she needed such a vast sum of money?"

"No, milord, and it's not my business to ask such a thing," Mr. Stubbs replied, his voice humbled.

"Quite. Quite." Adrian nodded, completely understanding Mr. Stubbs's position. "Well, thank you for letting me know. I'll take my leave. Good day to you, sir."

Mr. Stubbs bowed his head ever so slightly. Adrian left his office and headed off for home. He would have speak to William on his return. He was due back in four weeks' time and as long as no further monies were withdrawn from the account, then the problem could wait until then. The question running through his mind was, why had William's wife drawn out money, when she had been left an allowance of twenty pounds a month? Something wasn't quite right, but until William came back, nothing could be done.

On board the Avarice, Captain Bill was giving over full command to Bart, assuring him that whatever happened, he would meet him back at port in three weeks.

With his ship safely in Bart's hands, Captain Bill made his way back to Adrian's house. His intention was to bathe, dine and shave himself of his facial hair, thus transforming himself once again into Lord Van de Sarr before setting off for home. His wife had some questions to answer.

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Juliette twirled before the mirror and admired her new dress: midnight blue with abundant ribbons and lace. The bodice was quite low, showing off rather more bosom than she would normally like, but Geraldine had assured her it was all the rage. She had thrown caution to the wind and bought the dress, much to Madame Boudray's delight.

Ellie had fixed her hair, sweeping it up into a mass of ringlets adorned with tiny flowers. She felt very feminine. If only William was here at her side, then she could truly enjoy tonight's festivities. At least Geraldine would be there with her. Together, they could have a bit of fun.

"The carriage has arrived, milady." Ellie appeared at the doorway and smiled at her mistress.

"Thank you, Ellie. I'm quite ready. Oh, where's my cloak?"

"Here, milady." Ellie placed the short cloak around her shoulders and smiled at her in the mirror. "You look ever so lovely."

Juliette smiled at her maid. "Thank you, Ellie."

She left the room and headed toward the stairs. Geraldine was waiting for her inside the carriage.

"Oh, Juliette, you look divine. I told you that dress suited you."

"You look wonderful, too, Geraldine. The colour does you justice." Geraldine was wearing an aqua green taffeta gown that suited her to perfection, matching her eyes as they twinkled merrily at her sister-in-law.

As the carriage rumbled away from the house, the two girls began to talk excitedly about the night ahead. Lady Margaret threw a ball at least six times a year, inviting as many people as she could fit into her large house. This would be Juliette's first attendance.

The grand house was prettily lit up with lamps, and already there were several people inside, their laughter and the clink of glasses reaching the two girls' ears from the open carriage window. Juliette looked nervously at Geraldine. "Stay by my side, Geraldine. Don't leave me; I'm far too nervous."

Geraldine laughed. "Of course I'll stay with you. Come, let's find my father and assure him of our safe arrival." They stepped from the carriage and walked up the steps, entering into the throng of people. Her father was in deep conversation with another couple and nodded in Geraldine's direction as she waved at him.

Lady Margaret was quick to spot the girls and quickly rushed up, her fan fluttering wildly.

"My dears! I'm so glad you are come. Where is your husband, dear girl?" she asked Juliette.

"Away on business, unfortunately."

"Oh, such a shame! Well, we shall just have to see that you have a wonderful evening. Let me introduce you to several eminent people about town that I think you simply must meet." She hooked her arms through the girls' and led them over to a group of men.

"Gentlemen, let me introduce you to Lady Juliette Van de Sarr and her sister-in-law, Miss Geraldine Van de Sarr."

The men took it in turn to kiss the hands of both women. One man in particular let his lips rest just a little too long on Juliette's hand. She shifted uncomfortably.

Lady Margaret tapped him on the shoulder with her fan. "Now, now, Jeremy, put the poor girl down!"

"Ah, but when a man meets a woman so beautiful 'tis hard to let her go, Lady Margaret." His blue-grey eyes twinkled with devilment as he kept his gaze fixed on Juliette. She blushed alluringly.

"There – shame on you, Jeremy, you've made the poor girl blush," admonished Lady Margaret. "Come away, ladies, before he lures you into his web."

Geraldine giggled and gently tugged her sister-in-law away from Jeremy's tight grip. He reluctantly let her go. "Until later, madam."

Juliette allowed herself to be led away by Geraldine, glad of her sister-in-law's intervention. The man had held her spellbound for a moment. He had an air about him, not just a little menacing.

"Oh, Lord, Juliette, I cannot believe he's taken a liking to you. He's a notorious womanizer and you'd better keep away from him," Geraldine warned.

Juliette was affronted. "Geraldine, I'm a married woman! Whether he is a womanizer or not, it takes two people to make a couple," she pointed out heatedly.

Geraldine apologized. "I truly am sorry, Juliette, but he has a way with women. Some of the most virtuous women have been misled by his wicked ways. I don't want you to be one of them."

"I shall not – you've no need to worry."

Lady Margaret had been listening to their conversation. "Jeremy is harmless, dear girl. He merely likes to play the scene." She spoke to Geraldine in hushed tones. "The women he dallies with know exactly what they're doing."

Geraldine raised an eyebrow. That wasn't what she'd heard, but Lady Margaret was a happy soul and only saw the good in people. Far be it for her to enlighten her otherwise.

A waiter came toward them with a tray of punch. Lady Margaret indicated the girls should each take a glass. "This is an old family recipe that goes back generations. Try it."

Juliette sipped on the cold drink and licked her lips appreciatively. "'Tis delicious, Lady Margaret. What do you put in it?"

Lady Margaret gave a secretive smile. "Now that'd be telling. I'll leave you two girls to enjoy the music. I really must mingle." With a whirl of her skirts, Lady Margaret disappeared into the crowd, leaving them alone together sipping the heady punch.

"Tis quite strong, Geraldine, is it not?"

"Mmm, but delicious, though." She drained her glass. "Come, let's take another."

Juliette drank the last mouthful and followed suit as Geraldine took another glass of punch from a waiter.

"Shall we have a look around? You've not seen her house before, have you? You'll be amazed at her furnishings. Some come straight from Paris, I've been told." Geraldine led the way toward another room, Juliette quickly following behind.

The house was remarkable: true splendour in every shape and form filled each room. Juliette accepted another drink and followed Geraldine as she walked into the main hall. The orchestra was situated at one end, and several couples were gliding gracefully around the room. It had been a while since Juliette had danced, and she watched avidly as the women were twirled around by their partners.

Geraldine was approached by a rather handsome young man who asked her to dance, his face flushing slightly with nerves. She immediately agreed, winking at Juliette as he whisked her off.

Juliette made a small moue with her mouth. If only William were here. She could join in, also. She stared wistfully and swayed in time to the music.

"You like dancing, madam?" Startled, she turned to find Jeremy at her side.

"Yes, I do. And you, sir?"

"Only with a beautiful partner." His eyes dropped to her cleavage, his meaning clear. "May I have the next dance?"

Should she pair up with him? The spirits she had consumed put caution to the wind and after a little hesitation, she agreed. After all, what William didn't see, William wouldn't worry about.

When the orchestra began the next piece of music, Jeremy gave her a toothy grin and quickly swept her over to the dance floor. Placing one hand on her waist, his other hand entwined in hers, he began to lead her in a waltz. Juliette laughed gaily as he twirled her around the floor, deciding that coming to this ball was just what she'd needed.