



KT GRANT

THE
PRINCESS'S
BRIDE

ra^venous
romance

The Princess's Bride

A Ravenous Romance™ Original Publication

KT Grant

A Ravenous Romance™ Original Publication
www.ravenousromance.com

Copyright © 2010 by KT Grant

Ravenous Romance™
100 Cummings Center
Suite 123A
Beverly, MA 01915

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission from the publisher, except by reviewers who may quote brief excerpts in connection with a review.

ISBN-13: 978-1-60777-356-6

This book is a work of fiction, and any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely coincidental.

Prologue

Once, in the far off, distant land of Flaundia, there lived an exiled king on a humble property. The former king had two children: a son Thomas, and a daughter Daisy. The king, now known only as Conrad de Fleurre, was a simple gentleman of means. He loved his children and only wanted the best for them. One day Thomas would run his estate while Daisy would take charge of the household until she married a fine gentleman and had her own offspring. At the moment, though, Daisy was barely a woman. She had just turned eighteen, and she preferred spending her days sitting under a tree and reading a book. Many times Daisy's father accused her of having her head in the clouds. Daisy did not refute her father, for she dreamed of exotic lands and exciting people based on the stories she had read. Thomas assumed Daisy waited for a handsome man to sweep her off her feet. Part of what Thomas believed was correct. But Daisy did not long for a man; rather, she hid her growing feelings for a young servant girl named Chelsey.

Chelsey was the de Fleurre cook's daughter. She and her mother had started working for the exiled king's family a few months after they had arrived in Flaundia. Chelsey was only a girl herself when she'd first met Conrad and his two small children. Thomas didn't appeal to Chelsey at all, but the young Daisy, with her shiny blonde curls and beautifully shy smile, made Chelsey's stomach twist and turn in ways she couldn't explain. While her mother Wilda welcomed their good fortune for finding stable employment, Chelsey tried to seek out Daisy's company. She watched the other girl closely and longed to be her friend. And as the years went by, Chelsey's

feelings for her employer's daughter changed from that of friendship to companionship, and finally something much deeper that nestled inside her heart. Those feelings... that *need*, had turned not only into love, but also into passion and desire.

Chelsey craved for Daisy much like a man and woman wanted one another. But she knew this could never be. Her love was a forbidden one. So, Chelsey hid her feelings from the unaware Daisy, silently yearning for the young girl who was slowly becoming a woman before Chelsey's eyes.

One cloudy spring morning, Chelsey had just come back from an errand her mother had sent her on. There were no eggs left for Wilda to make a quiche for luncheon. Chelsey volunteered to go into town to purchase these ingredients, for she enjoyed being out in the open and away from her normal, mundane chores. As she walked down the lane that would lead her back home, Chelsey whistled a bawdy tune. She had learned it from one of the serving wenches at the local pub she liked to go to most nights. She glanced up at the sky and noticed that storm clouds were rolling in. There would surely be a downpour to follow. She hurried along, not wanting to be caught out in the rain.

As Chelsey walked past the stable, a woman's voice rang out.

"Chelsey! Please come here this instant. I need your help."

Chelsey stopped and took a deep breath. She tugged on her braid, tightening the black ribbon that pulled her hair away from her face. Lately, Daisy had been acting shyer around her than usual. Many times Daisy's stuttering grew worse whenever Chelsey was in the same room. This confounded her in so many ways.

"Hurry, Chelsey!" Daisy cried out again, sounding more agitated than before.

"Coming, Miss Daisy!" Chelsey called out and walked into the stable.

It was very dark inside the shelter, for the sun had completely disappeared behind the clouds. There was no stablehand in sight, only the petite Daisy wearing a light green riding outfit and holding a riding crop.

Chelsey stared at Daisy, who was turned away, standing on her toes as she reached for a saddle lying on the shelf. Chelsey smiled as Daisy grunted and hopped on one foot. She set down the basket of eggs and went over to her mistress.

As Chelsey's boots made a scraping sound across the sawdust-covered ground, Daisy turned and pressed a palm against her chest.

Chelsey almost licked her lips at the sight. Daisy's hand was covering a part of her body that Chelsey would have loved to place a kiss upon.

"Chel-chelsey. Finally." Daisy's eyes went wide for a moment.

"Yes, Miss Daisy? What can I help you with?"

"Um... I want to go for a ride and I need my horse saddled. I would like you to help me do that."

Chelsey crossed her arms and raised an eyebrow. "Well, princess, shouldn't that be one of the stablehands' jobs?"

Daisy's mouth dropped open at Chelsey's brash tone. Chelsey held back a snicker, grabbed the end of her braid, and swiped it back and forth under her nose.

Daisy dipped her head down and kicked a piece of hay with the toe of her boot. When she snuck a peek back at Chelsey, her face had become flushed.

Oh no. Maybe I went a little too far with the teasing... The last thing Chelsey wanted to do was hurt Daisy. She took another step forward.

Daisy lifted up her hand, but then dropped it to her side. "You... you shouldn't question m-me that way. After all, you are my servant, are you not?"

Chelsey kept from rolling her eyes. Ever since Daisy had turned eighteen, her attitude had changed in a way she didn't like at all. If Daisy had been any other woman, Chelsey would have called her a bitch. But the Daisy she knew and loved was kind and gentle. She would excuse Daisy's snobbish words as growing pains. Chelsey'd had her own "growing pains" three years ago when she was Daisy's age. That was when she had come to realize that her feelings for Daisy were deeper and stronger, and that she would never look to another man for pleasure. Daisy was the one and only for her.

"Miss Daisy, I will do whatever you desire, but you may want to rethink about going riding just now."

"And why is that, Chel-chelsey?" Daisy lightly slapped the riding crop against her leg.

"From the looks of the clouds in the sky, I would say it's likely to rain at any moment." In a moment of daring, Chelsey took another step forward and placed her face close against Daisy's ear. She held back from taking a deep sniff where Daisy's shoulder and neck met. "And we wouldn't want you to get all wet now, would we?"

Daisy stared up into Chelsey's face. The tip of her tongue slid out, wetting her bottom lip. "Ah...I didn't take that into consideration."

Chelsey stepped back. It took everything she had to stop from swiping her tongue across Daisy's mouth and sucking gently on her virginal lips.

"It's a good thing I passed by when I did, then," Daisy responded. She went over to Daisy's mare and rubbed her side. The horse neighed in delight.

"Well then, I would like you to brush down Melon for me."

"Whatever you desire, your highness."

"Chelsey, for the umpteenth time, I'm Daisy or Miss Daisy, not 'your highness' or 'princess.'"

Chelsey glanced back at Daisy, who had crossed her arms. She snorted and pressed her face against Melon's neck. "But you are *my* princess," she whispered.

Daisy walked over to Chelsey. "Wh-what did you say? I missed—"

A loud boom of thunder ripped through the air, and a flash a lightening lit up the sky. Daisy squeaked and grabbed hold of Chelsey's hand.

Chelsey swallowed a moan. She was in absolute heaven right now as Daisy clenched her hand in a tight grip. Chelsey began to turn her hand over to link their fingers together when she noticed how pale Daisy's face had become.

"Prin-Miss Daisy, are you all right?" All thoughts of seduction were forgotten as Chelsey rubbed her hands up and down Daisy's arms.

"Qu-quite alright. I... um, don't care for storms like this with the loud thunder. Sometimes it frightens me." Daisy looked down and scuffed her boot across the ground. "You must think I'm a ninny, acting this way. Papa would say that—"

"Shh." Chelsey placed her finger over Daisy's mouth. "There's nothing to be afraid of, Miss Daisy. Sometime storms scare me."

"They do?" Daisy asked, tilting her head back.

Another boom of thunder came right over their heads and the wind picked up, making Daisy and Chelsey's hair fly all around. Both women stared at one another until they broke apart as the rain pounded on top of the roof.

Chelsey released Daisy and backed away. She turned, facing the entrance, and rubbed her palm over the back of her hair. The action loosened her braid, but she didn't care. She needed to leave before she did something very stupid, like ask Daisy to wait out the storm with her in the hay loft. They would sit together and chat, watching the rain. Chelsey would hold Daisy close, and as Daisy snuggled in for protection, Chelsey would lift Daisy's face up, press her lips against her mouth, and ever so slowly slip her hand inside Daisy's bodice to cup—

Chelsey was startled as Daisy lightly touched her hand. "What if we wait out the storm together—"

"No!" Daisy said loudly. She turned around and swallowed deeply. Daisy stood there looking startled and... wounded.

"Forgive me, my lady, but I have other chores to finish. My mum will be wondering where I am. We still need to make lunch and I have the eggs for the meal." Chelsey knew she was rambling. Her mind was all jumbled as she tried to ignore the throbbing in between her legs and her swollen breasts, which ached to be fondled.

"Oh my, we can't have you get in trouble. You should go now. I think I'll read for a short while until the storm passes. If only you..."

"If only what?" Chelsey asked in a low whisper.

Daisy blinked and shook her head. She gave Chelsey a look that made her stomach clench. "N-nothing. I'm just thinking out loud. If you have t-time after you've finished with your chores and making lunch, would you still m-mind rubbing down Melon? I would, but you do have this wonderful w-way with your... hands."

"Whatever you desire, my Daisy... I mean, Miss Daisy! Now excuse me." For the first time in her life, Chelsey was flabbergasted. She spun on her heel, grabbed her basket, and ran out into the rain as if the devil was on her backside.

She almost stopped and turned to look back at Daisy, but she kept going until she was safely inside the house. As she stood panting against a wall in the doorway, she wiped away a few raindrops that were falling down her face. As she pulled her hair back, she cursed silently. Her favorite ribbon was missing.

Damn. Must have fallen out in the stable. Maybe I should go back... Chelsey snuck a peek back outside and looked over at the stable. As she reclaimed her breath and her heartbeat calmed down, she placed her forehead against the side of the window and examined her hand; the same one Daisy had grabbed during the storm.

If she had a choice, she would never wash that hand again. For a small moment in time, her one true desire had handed over her trust without question. She would never forget that moment as long as she lived.

Her heart now belonged to Daisy ever more.

Chapter One

The sound of Tuck, the rooster, crowing interrupted Daisy from her reading. She had reached the much-anticipated point in the story where the villainous Lord Ramsey had begun ravishing the simple-minded dairy milkmaid.

Daisy looked down at the page and found her place once more, but the annoying bird let out another ear-splitting cackle. She sighed loudly and fell back onto the bed, her white cotton nightgown pillowing under her as she looked out her bedroom window at the acres of land her father owned. She would have to finish later; Wilda would be calling her down to breakfast soon.

“There’s no reason for a rooster to go on as if the sun had only just risen,” Daisy muttered and stretched as she got ready to start the day.

She yawned and covered her mouth with the back of her hand, longing to catch a few more hours of sleep. Her exhaustion was entirely her own fault; she had stayed awake late into the night reading from *The Masterful Villainy of Lord Ramsey*, a novella series she enjoyed. She would have to wait until after breakfast to continue. Then she’d be able to sit under her favorite tree near the lake and read without interruption.

Her father was expecting her to help their housekeeper oversee the chores today, but as long as he or her brother Thomas couldn’t find her, she would be free to spend the day however she chose.

And to think her father had once been the honored king of the small Isle of Ilgeria. There, she and her brother had had enough servants at their disposal to do such mundane tasks as

keeping house. But that had been over a decade ago. After the revolution that had forced her family into exile, her father was now one of the many dethroned noblemen who owned a modest estate in a neighboring county.

The young exiled princess yawned again and walked over to her vanity to fix her hair. She sat and grabbed her brush, spotting a black, wet-stained velvet ribbon that lay on top of her journal. She smiled and picked it up, rubbing the smooth fabric under her nose. She closed her eyes and inhaled deeply. A faint peppery scent drifted up into her nostrils. The fabric smelled exactly like Chelsey, her cook's twenty-year-old daughter. Daisy had found the ribbon on the stable floor after she'd asked Chelsey to help her saddle her horse for a ride. Though the rain storm had ruined her plans, it was well worth it for the short time she was in Chelsey's company. After Chelsey had left to go finish her chores, Daisy swung around in circles, giddy that she had gained the courage to speak to her. This was daring on her part. More often than not, Daisy could barely look Chelsey in the eye, let alone talk to her.

Unfortunately, though, this was one girlish infatuation that could never be acted on. If her father found out, she'd be in a world of trouble. He would send her away on the next carriage to a nunnery for her unnatural attraction to the dark-haired, soulful-looking older woman. A woman of Daisy's rank – a princess by blood and birth – would dare not commit an act that the church considered to be an abomination.

Daisy smiled sadly and caressed the ribbon one final time before deciding to return it to its rightful owner. This would give her the perfect excuse to engage in conversation with her servant, as long as she didn't end up blushing and stammering like some immature twit.

She sat up straighter and pushed her shoulders back, thrusting out her less than impressive chest. Daisy glared at her reflection and stuck her tongue out at the sight of her

rounded, babyish face. Her head was crowned with lackluster dirty blonde curls that refused to lie flat, especially when the weather was humid. She glanced over at a discarded corset lying on the floor; not even that piece of clothing could increase her bosom to her liking. But it did make her look much slimmer and hid the overabundant hips that had plagued her for years.

Daisy doubted that a corset, regardless of how tight it was pulled, would impress Chelsey. What would a mature woman, with a wonderful-looking bosom, want with a girl whose father often patted her on the head before telling her to run along and play house?

Daisy ignored those discouraging thoughts and, instead, opted to fantasize about handing over Chelsey's ribbon and asking for a kiss as her reward. Her nipples grew into points, and dew coated between her legs when a voice called up to her.

"Miss Daisy! Breakfast is served."

Daisy blinked and shook her head as she came back down to reality.

Imagine if she had drifted off in public! How would she ever explain her body's reaction to those thoughts of forbidden desire?

Daisy placed the ribbon on top of her journal and stood to get dressed before starting her day.

Daisy slipped the precious ribbon into her hand as she walked down the stairs. She had already memorized what she would say to Chelsey when she found her. Because she was looking down and mumbling under her breath without paying attention to where she was going, she turned a corner and bumped into someone.

"Oh, forgive me!" she apologized and looked up.

Her heart flew up into her throat.

Chelsey grasped her arms and stared down at her with the dark, hooded look that Daisy loved. Chelsey tilted her head, exposing full, rose-pink lips, and then released her.

“I should be the one asking your pardon, your highness,” Chelsey said, pushing her sable-colored hair back over her shoulder.

Daisy’s eyes lit up at Chelsey’s remark. Chelsey was the only one who continued to call her by her title. It sounded oddly seductive, such that hearing it gave her a funny feeling deep in her stomach. She swallowed and looked away, suddenly convinced that her mind was playing tricks on her. She could have sworn Chelsey had snuck a peek down at her bodice. It was a much lower-cut style than what she usually wore. She had wanted to wear something light and airy to match the weather and was determined not to act ashamed, although the tightness of her bodice did nothing to improve her lackluster cleavage.

“Here.” Daisy looked down at her ivory velvet slippers and held out Chelsey’s ribbon.

“What is this, Princess Daisy?” She smiled coyly. “A present from you?”

Daisy could feel a blush rising up from her neck to her face. “A-ah no. Th-this is your r-ribbon. Re-remember when were in the s-stable a few weeks ago during the rain storm? Your r-ribbon fell out of your hair. I found it and held onto it for safe keeping.” She cringed inwardly, resenting her stutter, and looked around the room at anything besides Chelsey’s face.

Chelsey snorted. “Thank you for keeping my ribbon safe. It’s my favorite one.”

Daisy beamed, overjoyed that she could put Chelsey at ease by taking care of something close to her heart, even if it was only a piece of fabric.

When Chelsey grabbed the ribbon from Daisy's hand, her thumb pressed gently against the inside of the princess's palm. Daisy held her other hand over her churning stomach, her inner thighs clenched, and her woman's dew formed a moist pocket once again.

"I thank you kindly, princess," Chelsey spoke in a soft whisper and moved closer. Her breath grazed Daisy's forehead, and Daisy held back a sigh of longing.

"Y-you are v-very welcome, Chel-lsey. Um, I best be going now," Daisy muttered and looked up at the other woman, who stood at least five inches taller than her. The dark-haired beauty stood so close that if Daisy rose onto her tiptoes, she would be able to touch those precious lips.

"Whatever you desire, your ladyship." Chelsey's voice came out as a purr.

Daisy's eyes grew wide, and she nodded again before rushing away, cursing silently for making a fool of herself once again.

A glance over her shoulder confirmed that Chelsey had remained standing there, rubbing her ribbon over her mouth. This time Daisy did not blame her fanciful imagination when Chelsey winked at her.

"Thank you, Wilda, for another lovely meal." Thomas complimented the cook as she took the breakfast plates away.

"The pleasure is all mine, Master Thomas." Wilda flashed him a bright smile, and another one to Daisy, which was returned in kind. Daisy preferred to eat in the kitchen rather than in the dining room. Then, not only could she be near Chelsey, but she could also listen to Wilda as she told her the most interesting stories.

“Yes, Wilda. Another well-cooked meal. Glad to have you here.” Daisy’s father, Conrad, burped and patted his full stomach.

Daisy and Thomas shared a look and grinned. Their father enjoyed Wilda’s cooking too much, and his stomach bulged slightly over his breeches.

Wilda nodded and left with the empty plates. Daisy’s eyes followed her, hoping to catch sight of Chelsey through the open door. She glanced back at her father, who was looking at her expectantly.

“I’m sorry Papa. Did you say something to me?”

“Daisy, you must pay closer attention. You are no longer a little girl, but a young woman of noble birth.” He took a sip of his coffee and sat back, folding his hands over his protruding stomach. “Next week is Lord Humphrey’s annual summer celebration ball. I expect you to allow his lordship to have two dances with you, one of them a waltz.”

“Oh, Papa, you know I don’t care very much for balls. They are too stuffy and overheated. I can barely breathe because of the lack of hygiene our neighbors have.”

Thomas stifled a laugh and looked down at his coffee when his father gave him a pointed stare.

Conrad scratched his graying beard. “Young lady, a woman of your breeding does not make mention of a person’s bathing habits. Nevertheless, you will attend, and, if Humphrey gives you his permission, you will engage his attentions.”

“But—”

He held up his hand. “Enough. It is about time you think about marriage and giving me grandchildren. Your mother, god rest her soul, was eighteen when we married. I thank the Lord every single day for our fifteen wonderful years together, ruling in harmony, before she

succumbed to the fever.” Her father paused before adding: “Humphrey is worthy of your consideration and quite the catch! He is twenty-seven and a much-respected naval captain with his own shipping company. You need to stop your silly daydreaming and this nonsense of always having your nose in some book.”

Daisy stared down at her lap, fighting the urge to run from the room in tears. She knew that, if she acted out, her father might punish her and take away her precious books.

“Oh, my child,” Conrad sighed and dropped a hand on her shoulder. “I only want the best for you and Thomas. You do realize this, don’t you?” He swallowed hard. “Ever since your mother left us to go to the great beyond, I have tried to be a good parent, but it hasn’t been easy without a mother to guide you.”

Daisy gave her father a small smile. She knew he had done his best with a daughter who had lost her mother when she was so young. Not to mention dealing with the anxiety of exile and the task of setting up residence in a strange country. “Papa, you have done quite well with Thomas and I. I didn’t mean to sound ungrateful. Please forgive me.”

Daisy’s father smiled and kissed her on the cheek. “That’s a good girl. Thomas, let us go into my study and work on those ledgers we have been neglecting.”

Thomas rolled his eyes, and Daisy smothered a laugh. All three stood up from the table and walked out into the hall.

“Daisy, I expect you to help Martha today. She mentioned something about airing the bed sheets.” He shuddered. “Since that is women’s work, I know you will be more than willing to help. Thomas, come.”

Daisy’s father walked away, and Thomas gave Daisy a look of exasperation before following him. She waved back. She did feel sorry for her brother. For the next few hours, he

would be stuck inside a small room going over numbers while she would be outside reading on this beautiful day.

“Miss Daisy?” Martha called from above the steps, and Daisy moaned.

“Coming, Martha!” she yelled as she walked up the stairs.

She would spend a few hours in the morning doing 'women's work,' and then she would get to enjoy the rest of the afternoon. She would read and dream about living on a deserted island where she could sleep as late as she wanted and sit under shady trees eating coconuts.

“Oh, Lord Ramsey. You evil, nasty man,” Daisy muttered as she reached the final scene where he would fight against the hero to the death.

“Who is Lord Ramsey?”

Daisy sat up and pressed a hand over her rapidly beating heart. “Dear heavens, you gave me a fright.”

Daisy looked up. Chelsey stood at the edge of the blanket, watching her. Her head blocked the rays of the sun, creating a halo around her face.

“He's a character f-from my book. But why would you care? I have never seen you read,” Daisy said without thinking and covered her mouth. “That was very rude of me. I apologize.”

Chelsey crossed her arms, and Daisy couldn't help but stare at the well-rounded bodice. Chelsey's dress was laced up in the front, but Daisy appreciated it for more than just the style.

“No need. I can see why you may think I'm uneducated, princess, given that I dust your woodwork, muck your stalls and clean out your chamber pots.”

Daisy's lip trembled, and she looked down at her book in shame. "Again, my prejudice is showing. Please, w-won't you join me?"

She glanced up at Chelsey, and a thrill coursed through her at seeing the black ribbon tying her hair back. Chelsey knelt down and sighed as she sat back against the tree. Her arm brushed Daisy's, and she closed her eyes for a moment to savor the feeling.

"It is very nice out here." Chelsey crossed her arms and gazed out at the lake.

Daisy nodded in agreement. This forest wonderland was her favorite spot to escape to. Here, she could read or nap the afternoon away without being caught.

"I spend most of my time here. I suppose that will all have to end soon."

Chelsey turned and frowned. "Why? You have an incredible life of luxury."

"Oh Ch-chelsey, you must think I'm a terrible snob. Yes, I have a wonderful life, even after everything that occurred on Ilgeria. But right now my father's plans for my future are not the ones I want for myself."

"What plans?"

Daisy sighed and rubbed a finger lovingly across the spine of her book. "He wants me to get married, as girls of my station must, and give him grandchildren." She sniffed and tapped her book.

"And you don't want that, your highness?" She moved closer until her lips brushed Daisy's ear.

Daisy inhaled softly, enjoying the aroma of herbs and cloves that she recognized from the kitchen. When Chelsey placed a hand on top of her own, Daisy almost leaped up from the blanket. This was one of the few times she had ever been this close to the older woman.

“Y-you can call me D-Daisy. Every time you c-call me 'princess' or 'your h-highness', it makes me uncomfortable.”

“Whatever you desire... prin- Daisy,” Chelsey whispered and blew into Daisy’s ear.

Daisy closed her eyes and smiled when Chelsey squeezed her fingers.

“Go on,” Chelsey prompted her.

Daisy opened her eyes and gave Chelsey a confused look. “Wha – oh! Well, Papa wants me to dance at the ball with Lord Humphrey, this very handsome and rich gentleman. I’ve met him a few times, and he seems nice and proper, but...I just don’t think he is the one for me.”

“And who is the one for you, Daisy?”

Daisy turned her head, and her nose brushed against Chelsey’s. She looked deeply into Chelsey's eyes and was overcome with need.

Her feelings increased tenfold when she noticed the intense look in Chelsey’s eyes. Without warning, more dew covered her womanly core.

“Um... no one.” She swallowed hard to cover the lie.

“Be truthful, Daisy”

You! It is you, Daisy wanted to say but didn’t. “I have my head in the clouds, and dream of someone I can never have.”

Daisy moved her face in closer, but Chelsey pulled away. Suddenly, Daisy was embarrassed once more. She moved her hand out from under Chelsey’s and placed her palms against her flushed cheeks.

“Oh my, it is a bit warm out here. I should go—”

“—have you ever tried to find animals in the clouds?” Chelsey reached up and pushed a loose curl behind Daisy's ear.

Daisy clapped her hands in excitement. “Yes! I have. But only by myself. It’s considered to be a child’s game.”

Chelsey lay down, put her hands behind her head and looked up at the sky. “Let’s act like children for a short time and see if we can spot some animals. What do you say?”

Daisy glanced up at the sky; it was the perfect day to play this game. The sky was a glorious, clear blue canvas covered with puffy white clouds floating near the horizon. She set her book off to the side and lay down, shoulder to shoulder, with Chelsey and enjoyed the shade of a nearby tree. She rested her hand on her stomach, ignoring the corset's whalebone that poked her in her side, and stared up. The sun’s rays forced her to cover her brow with her other hand and squint so that she could make out the clouds.

“I see a cow,” Daisy said and looked over at Chelsey when she heard her laugh. It was a husky sounding chuckle, very different from Daisy’s own high-pitched giggles.

“I don’t see it. But I do see a horse.”

Daisy tilted her head. “Where? I don’t.”

“There.” Chelsey pointed up in the sky and indicated a grouping of clouds.

“Ah, I think I see it,” Daisy responded.

Chelsey grasped her hand again and twined their fingers together.

Minutes passed, and Daisy grew drowsy. She felt a shadow over her face and opened her eyes. She was expecting to see a large cloud above, but instead she found Chelsey leaning over her.

“I noticed you ceased your stuttering a while ago. Why do you only stutter with me?”

Daisy pursed her lips together and tried to think of a plausible reason. Chelsey gave her a wide smile and shook her head as if she found something amusing.

Meanwhile, Daisy grew nervous under Chelsey's gaze. Was this cheeky woman enjoying her unease? "I would rather not talk about it," Daisy finally said. "Why don't we continue to look at the clouds?"

"Daisy." Chelsey let go of Daisy's hand and gently cupped her cheek. Daisy opened her mouth, but then closed it, as Chelsey pressed her lips against hers.

Daisy lay there, trembling, as Chelsey slowly brushed her mouth over her never-been-kissed lips. After what felt like an eternity of bliss, Chelsey lifted her mouth away, breaking the kiss, and licked her lips. She looked down at Daisy in a way that made her hot with wanting and eager to undo the top of her dress.

How lovely it would be to feel the cool air upon her naked skin and sense Chelsey's hot gaze upon her breasts. Heat rushed between her legs at the idea. *But did Chelsey mean it? What was her purpose in kissing...?* "Why did you kiss me?" Daisy asked softly.

Chelsey placed her thumb across Daisy's lips. "I have wanted to do that for so long. I dreamt of you at night, wondering what it would be like to slip my tongue inside your mouth... and taste other parts of your body."

Daisy felt the heat building again at Chelsey's intense look. "Oth-other parts of my b-body?" Her voice came out in a squeak, and she closed her eyes, releasing a pant as Chelsey pressed her mouth down again, this time against Daisy's flushed throat.

"And I think you feel the same way, Daisy," Chelsey breathed between delicate kisses. "Please tell me it's true."

This time, Chelsey grabbed Daisy's arms, and the kiss she delivered was far more powerful than the last. Daisy opened her mouth, but when Chelsey slipped her tongue inside, Daisy pulled away and placed her arm over her forehead, overcome with heat.

“Daisy?” Chelsey whispered. “Please don’t be frightened. I just want to show you how much you mean to me.”

Daisy peeked over her arm. “And what do I mean to you?”

Chelsey pushed Daisy’s arm away from her face. She cupped her cheek again, rubbing her thumbs across Daisy’s dimples.

“You are very special to me. You have been, ever since my mum and I came to work here. I would love to show you how much.”

Daisy swallowed a yelp as Chelsey kissed her again. These kisses were much longer and deeper and had her squirming. She grew warm all over.

“H-have you kissed many women before?” she asked as Chelsey lifted her mouth and, with one hand, unbuttoned the front of Daisy’s dress.

“I’ve kissed men, but never a woman before. You are my first. *We* are each other’s first. But know this: for me there will be no other.”

Daisy bit down on her knuckles in fear and anticipation as she watched Chelsey pull open the front of her dress. The fabric fell down to her wait. She looked back up at the sky, closed her eyes and bit her lip in a mixture of embarrassment and desire. When Chelsey brushed her knuckles over Daisy’s chemise-covered breasts, it sent a rush of molten liquid to her inner core.

Daisy let out a whimper as Chelsey kissed the top of one of her breasts. She pulled apart her chemise and unlaced the front of the blue frilly corset Daisy's hated wearing.

Chelsey spread open the restricting garment and squeezed one globe. Daisy swallowed a squeak.

“You won’t do anything I don’t want you to do, will you, Chelsey?” Daisy asked meekly.

Chelsey laid her palm on Daisy's stomach and kissed her again with such longing that Daisy could feel it down to the tips of her toes. "I will do whatever you desire, my innocent little Daisy."

Daisy gave Chelsey a small frown. "I-I'm not that innocent!" she exclaimed. Chelsey snickered. "Oh really?" She lifted an eyebrow and moved her arm down until she reached the hem of Daisy's dress and slipped her hand underneath. Daisy swallowed a moan as Chelsey groped under her skirt.

Chelsey gave her a surprised look. "Why Daisy, only two petticoats? Whatever would your father say?"

Daisy giggled, and Chelsey joined in. The tension that had been growing steadily between them now evaporated into joyous yearning. She sighed in delight as Chelsey's hand gently squeezed her knee.

Gazing up at Daisy, Chelsey gave her a wicked-looking grin. "That's the spirit, princess!"

Daisy smiled and opened her mouth to respond, but she lost all powers of speech as Chelsey moved up to caress her inner thighs. And then, with a gentle press, she reached up to touch her needy core.

"P-please don't be disgusted, but I have a tendency to make too much dew."

Chelsey halted her movement. She dropped her face down on Daisy's chest and let out a deep laugh. Daisy wanted to stroke Chelsey's thick locks, but held back as shame filled her. She looked off to the side.

"Dew?" Chelsey looked up, and Daisy nodded and blushed.

"That is what I call it when I... you know." She shrugged and glanced away.

Chelsey rose up on her elbow and put her chin in her palm. She snickered again. “I suppose late at night when you’re in bed you have touched yourself, making ‘dew?’”

“I have never done that!” Daisy’s cheeks grew an even darker shade of red. Chelsey gave her a look that implied she knew a lie when she heard one. “Well, maybe once or twice, but only when I was dreaming of you.”

Daisy covered her mouth, shy over her admission. Chelsey stopped smiling and, before Daisy could respond, Chelsey moved her hand up higher and trailed her fingers along Daisy’s mound through the layers of fabric.

“Uh.” Daisy moaned and tilted back her head as Chelsey circled her fingers over Daisy’s moist center.

“Do you like that, my Daisy?” Chelsey asked as bent down to kiss her again.

Daisy nodded as she bravely slipped her tongue into Chelsey’s mouth. Their tongues moved against one another. This time Chelsey moaned.

Daisy followed the way Chelsey kissed her and wrapped her arms around her shoulders, fisting her hands into the lapels of Chelsey’s dress as desire flooded her. Chelsey rested her torso against Daisy’s hip and pushed her hand inside the open slit in Daisy’s drawers. She cupped Daisy’s nether curls and inserted two fingers slowly into her moist center.

“Oh...” Daisy exhaled loudly and lifted her face away from Chelsey’s in shock. Chelsey feathered kisses across Daisy’s cheeks, chin and neck as her fingers rubbed over Daisy’s inner lips. And when she pressed against a spongy spot Daisy had only found once before, Daisy sobbed with excitement and bit down on her arm to suppress a loud, passionate scream. She shifted against Chelsey’s hand and panted hard as Chelsey pushed a third finger in.

“How about this?” Chelsey asked as she tugged Daisy’s bodice open further, loosening her chemise and pulling it down to where one of Daisy’s dark, rosy colored nipples stood in a point. She swallowed the breast with her mouth before Daisy could answer.

Bright spots appeared in front of Daisy's eyes, and the sky above her seemed to spin.

“Oh, Chelsey.” Daisy wrapped her legs around Chelsey’s waist and gyrated in time with her fingers as they spread her musky need up and around her clit.

Chelsey’s other hand went under her dress and searched between Daisy’s legs until she cupped her ass. Daisy opened her mouth wide and let out a wail of delight.

Chelsey released Daisy’s breast and went to work on the other one, flicking Daisy’s nipple with her tongue. The sight of Chelsey loving her bosom was proving to be almost too much for her.

Daisy's eyes rolled back as Chelsey forced her thumb in deep against the inside of Daisy's buttocks. She thrust her other hand against Daisy's virginal entrance.

Daisy shuddered and released a gush of dew in true bliss.

Tears fell down her cheeks from the incredible pleasure of finally experiencing her heart and body’s desire. Chelsey gave her long, deep and tender kisses, licking and nipping at Daisy’s lips as Daisy’s body let out one last shudder of gratification. She hid her face in Chelsey’s neck and burst into tears.

“Shh, Daisy, all will be well. Was I too rough?”

Daisy heard concern in Chelsey’s voice and rubbed her legs together against Chelsey’s hand that lay still against her now very damp, swollen pussy. “No. You were wonderful, Chelsey.” Daisy wiped her eyes and kissed Chelsey's cheek.

Chelsey pushed away a few of the limp curls that lined Daisy forehead. She gave her another deep kiss and pulled her hand out from under her skirt.

Daisy wiggled her nose as her womanly fluid slid down her legs. Chelsey looked longingly at her fingers before sniffing them, which made Daisy turn away in embarrassment. Chelsey wiped her hand on the blanket and wrapped her arms around Daisy in a tight embrace.

“Thank you for spending the afternoon with me,” Daisy said, pressing her forehead against Chelsey’s.

Chelsey smiled and gave Daisy a tender kiss. “No matter what happens, I will always remember this day forever.”

“Truly?” Daisy’s eyes drooped as the sudden need for a nap claimed her.

“Yes. This was the day I made you mine,” Chelsey said, leaving no room for argument.

“It was so very lovely,” Daisy said in a very sleepy voice and yawned. She snuggled in closer as Chelsey wrapped an arm around her new, not so innocent lover.

Daisy sighed, enjoying the feel of Chelsey’s hand cupping her breast in a protective grip. She drifted off to sleep as Chelsey hummed a soft, playful tune in her ear.

Daisy was now a woman in the truest sense, having been introduced to the delights of love.

Chapter Two

Daisy stood in the water closet, smiling and feeling giddy as she held the note that had just been slipped under her bedroom door. She lifted it up to her mouth and placed a kiss on the ivory paper. She knew it was a piece of her father's stationery; a monogram with the letter "C" lay at the top of the page.

"Oh, Chelsey, how daring you are." She giggled, very amused that Chelsey had been brave enough to enter her father's most sacred domain to have snatched this piece of very expensive stationery.

She walked over to the window and sat on the ledge to read the words Chelsey had penned, for what seemed to be the fiftieth time.

Your Highness,

I request the honor of your presence at the old barn near the lakeside at quarter past three this afternoon. Bring only yourself and one of those naughty serials you enjoy reading. We can act out the next scene together.

Yours,

Chelsey

"Oh my," Daisy whispered, turned to look out the window and up at the sky. This day was much like the one a few weeks ago, when Chelsey had introduced her to the astonishing

affection two women could share together. The past three weeks had been a dream come true for her, and she couldn't wait to show Chelsey how much she had learned under her tutelage. No longer would she lie back and enjoy Chelsey's touch on her dewy mound and swollen titties. She was ready to touch Chelsey in the same way, although Chelsey was always the one who took control.

The last few times she'd tried to roll on top of Chelsey while they lay out by the lake, Chelsey would growl and climb back on top of her, holding down her wrists and lowering her face down to her throbbing...

The door knob jiggled, and someone pounded loudly on the locked door. Daisy stood and kissed the note one last time before hiding it in her dress pocket. She took a deep breath to steady her nerves and stepped forward to open the door. Her father stood on the other side, frowning.

"Daughter, I have been searching high and low for you. You are needed in the kitchen. Wilda has been slaving all morning long making those strawberry tarts you so enjoy eating. Not once have you asked to help her. It's bad enough her daughter is nowhere to be found."

"Papa, I'm sorry. I had to... you know, a woman's time and all." Daisy lowered her voice and held back a laugh as her father's face grew pale.

"Uh... rightly so. If you have taken care of that matter, please go downstairs and see if Wilda needs anything."

Daisy gave him a small curtsy. "Of course, Papa. Perhaps I can see if Chelsey needs help with any other household chores afterwards. To make up for my carelessness with Wilda," Daisy added. As she was about to pass him, he reached out and placed a hand on her arm.

"Daisy, dear, I have noticed that you and that girl have become much closer over the past few weeks. Please remember that you are royalty, and she is only a servant. We must keep

boundaries between the help, and that also includes Wilda and her daughter." Conrad gave Daisy's arm a light squeeze. "You should be making friends with the other young girls in town and those ladies who can procure invitations to various society function and balls."

"I understand, Papa." But Daisy really didn't understand. One moment her Papa wanted her to help with the chores and work alongside with the servants; the next he wanted her to keep her distance from them. Why couldn't he make up his mind? Rather than saying what was on her mind, Daisy opted to appease her father instead. "I am trying to make new friends. Why do you think I went into town with Thomas when he met with your banker? I knew Lord Humphrey would be at the shipping yard. Thomas and I stopped in and had tea with him."

Daisy crossed her fingers behind her back at the blatant lie she had just told her father. She would have to talk to Thomas later to make him aware of her fib and support her story.

Conrad scratched his beard and crossed his arms. "Good girl. As long as Chelsey knows her place, and you know yours, I think it is perfectly fine for the two of you to be on friendly terms. But anything more is simply not acceptable."

Daisy pressed her fingers over her lips to stop a laugh from erupting. God help them both if her father ever found out how 'friendly' she and Chelsey really were. She couldn't help but think of how Chelsey had come into her bedroom just last night, while everyone was abed, and kissed her until she was breathless and her sheets were damp with release.

"Yes, Papa." Daisy gave her father a kiss on his cheek and skipped away.

As she ran down the stairs, she didn't notice the note that fell out of her skirt and landed on the floor near an end table.

"I hope Chelsey is not too upset at my tardiness." Daisy muttered and walked down the dirt path, past the lake, and over to the rotted barn. The old building hadn't been in use since her family had first arrived in Flaundia. She swung her picnic basket to and fro while she whistled to herself. Not only had she brought one of her books, as Chelsey had requested, but also a few more tangible treats for them to eat. She always grew famished after she and Chelsey kept company together.

Daisy blushed, wondering if she would be brave enough this time to force Chelsey to lie underneath her while she placed kisses all over her bosom, and perhaps in between her legs. She was fond of the way Chelsey had touched and licked away her dew last night. This time she wanted to taste Chelsey's dew, or come, as Chelsey had called it.

As Daisy turned the corner around the bend, Chelsey stood there, leaning against the barn door. Daisy ran up to her and gave her a loud smack on the mouth. Chelsey wrapped her hands around Daisy's neck and kissed her back in return. She moaned when Chelsey squeezed her breast and hid her face into the crook of her neck.

Daisy sighed as Chelsey slid an arm around her waist. Chelsey's other hand slipped inside Daisy's bodice and rubbed her fingers over a nipple.

"Hmm... princess, you smell like strawberries and cream." Daisy giggled and stepped back as Chelsey's tongue lapped behind her ear.

Daisy took in deep breaths, trying to calm her fast-beating heart.

"I see you're not wearing your corset, either, like I had asked," Chelsey said as Daisy took deep breaths. "And you better only have one petticoat under that frock of yours."

Daisy swallowed at her forceful tone. Whenever Chelsey gave her an order, her core grew slick and her nipples even harder. She looked down at her bosom and held back a gasp. Since she wasn't wearing a corset; her nipples poked out for anyone to see.

"Oh dear." Daisy placed her palm across her chest and looked over her shoulder.

Chelsey grabbed her by the arm. "Let's go in before you expire from embarrassment or frustration."

"Fr-frustration?" Daisy asked and groaned. Chelsey always seemed to enjoy teasing her.

"We'll take care of that in a few minutes." Chelsey winked and gave her arm a caress, then took her hand and pushed the barn door open.

Daisy scrunched up her nose at the smell of musty hay and rotting wood. She remembered the times she and Thomas had come to this barn to play hide and go seek as children. She looked up at part of the caved in roof and spotted a large amount of cobwebs covering the railings. Two birds' nests were sitting up high in the rafters, and she smiled as a few baby birds chirped, most likely hungry for nourishment from their mother.

"You don't think one of those momma birds will attack us?" Daisy pointed up at the ceiling as Chelsey led her deeper into the back of the barn and into a corner stall.

"You ask the silliest of things," Chelsey reprimanded Daisy softly, but gave her a smile and a wink.

Daisy ducked her head and kicked away some of the hay she had walked on. "I don't mean to," she whispered before turning her attention to the floor in front of her. "Why, this hay looks fresh."

Chelsey held out her arm for Daisy to precede her into the stall. "I mucked out this stall yesterday so we could be comfortable and not worry about any creatures bothering us."

"Cr-creatures?" Daisy swallowed, glancing around nervously. But she covered her mouth in delight as she walked in. Fresh hay covered the floor and in the middle of the small room lay a brown wool blanket and a bottle of wine. There was also a bouquet of white daisies lying off to the side.

"This is lovely, Chelsey!" Daisy set the basket down on the blanket and wrapped her arms around her lover. She gave Chelsey a kiss, this time pressing her tongue against Chelsey's lips, just as she had been taught.

Chelsey bit down on her bottom lip. "You're happy with my present?"

"Oh yes. It's wonderful. I hope you will like mine, too."

Chelsey lifted her head and pressed her forehead against Daisy's. "You have given me so much already. I don't need anything other than your body and your..."

"And my what?" Daisy asked in a hushed voice. Her stomach tightened as she waited for Chelsey to speak.

"And your books and those strawberry tarts you helped my mother make."

Daisy put her hands on her hips and frowned up at Chelsey. "How do you know I have strawberry tarts with me?"

Chelsey pulled her in close, placed her nose in between Daisy's breasts and inhaled. "I can smell them on you. It's driving me mad. Also, the scent from the basket is strong. Remember: nothing gets past me, princess."

Daisy wrapped her arms around Chelsey's neck and played with the soft hair covering her nape. "I wish you would stop calling me princess. I am simply Daisy."

Chelsey lifted her face and looked deeply into Daisy's eyes. "Whatever you desire."

The warm feeling in Daisy's stomach drifted down to her clenching pussy, thanks to the heated stare Chelsey was giving her.

Chelsey licked her lips and made a show of sniffing around. "I smell something sweet and warm. Could it be dew?"

Daisy blushed and pushed Chelsey away as she leaned in to kiss her. "You are horrid!"

"Yes, I most certainly am and will not make any apologies." Chelsey tapped her chin with a finger and gave Daisy a haughty look. "I think you should be punished for not being able to control your urges." She began tickling Daisy under her arms and Daisy screamed, trying to grab Chelsey's hands.

"Stop it!" Daisy spluttered amid her laughter as she backed away, almost stumbling onto the blanket. Chelsey caught her and gave her another deep, wet kiss. She knelt down with Daisy in her arms.

Chelsey laid her mouth over Daisy's pulse, running her nose up and down her silky skin. "W-why do you love to kiss my neck so much?" Daisy tilted her head back and stopped a moan from escaping.

Chelsey nipped Daisy's chin. "I love how you taste and smell there. It's soft, much like the inside of your legs. Lie down and open them for me."

Daisy opened her mouth to argue, but Chelsey pressed a finger against her mouth and pushed her backward. Daisy rose up on her elbows once she met the ground, then fell down in a heap, causing her skirt to fly up over her face.

She clenched her fists when she felt Chelsey's lips on her knee.

"Ch-chelsey, what are you doing?" Daisy pulled down the hem of her dress until she saw a prone Chelsey lying between her legs.

"Do you remember what I did last night?" She waited to continue until Daisy nodded "I want to taste more of your honey."

"D-don't you want to eat a tart first?" Daisy loved the feel of Chelsey's mouth and tongue near her mound. But that first time had occurred in the dark and not during the day, when every part of her body was exposed.

Chelsey sat up and looked down at her. "I can feel you shaking. I thought you enjoyed what we did together?"

Daisy pushed down her skirt and sat up. She felt horrible.

"Oh Chelsey, forgive me. I love the way you touch me with your hands and your mouth. "She rubbed her fingers softly across Chelsey lips. "I'm not comfortable yet with being so open with you during the day. You must think I'm a goose!"

Chelsey cupped her cheek. "I forget that you and I are very different. Showing a lover your naked body is only natural."

Daisy leaned into Chelsey's hand. "I love hearing you call me your lover."

Chelsey closed her eyes and sighed. "I enjoy calling you that... because you are." She gave Daisy an eager kiss, and as Daisy responded, she pushed her back down until she was lying on top of her.

Daisy's dress was wrapped high around her hips and, as she and Chelsey shared hungry kisses, she pushed it down. Chelsey placed a hand on her knee, and when her lover's hands squeezed her inner thigh, Daisy sighed into her mouth.

"May I touch you, Daisy? I'll make sure you are covered so only I will see."

Daisy nodded, licking Chelsey's lips. Chelsey gave her another kiss, and as she gazed into Daisy's eyes, she cupped her mound. Daisy hissed and her eyes grew wide.

"You're always so wet and ready for me, my Daisy." Chelsey slipped two of her fingers through the slit in Daisy's cream-colored drawers and wiggled around, watching Daisy's reaction.

Daisy wiped away the sweat forming on her upper lip. "I want to touch you as you are touching me."

"Touch me where, Daisy? Say it." Chelsey twisted her fingers and pushed them deeper into Daisy's core.

Daisy's hips tilted up. "Your p-pussy. Can I? Please?"

"After I make you find your pleasure, you can do whatever you want to me. But first, we need to fix this little problem of yours."

Daisy pressed the back of her hand over her mouth and opened her legs wider. She closed her eyes as Chelsey found the *spot*... which made even more honey gush from her pussy.

"Open your eyes and look at me while I fuck you with my hand."

Daisy flinched from the harsh word she had only ever heard Chelsey say. She opened her eyes and watched Chelsey's face as she grinded her hips in time with Chelsey's hand.

"There now... that's a good princess." Chelsey blew on Daisy's cheek. She turned her face to the side and latched onto Chelsey's mouth with her own. Chelsey rotated her hand in such a way that Daisy shuddered and came apart.

Daisy pressed her hands over her stomach, letting out a few pants against Chelsey's mouth, and then went still.

"That was incredible." She looked up at Chelsey in a daze and fanned her face. She was covered in sweat and suddenly felt the need to disrobe.

Chelsey sat up and pulled her fingers out of Daisy. She licked them with a wistful smile. Daisy lay there watching, licking her own lips.

"Tastes just like strawberries." Chelsey smoothed her damp fingers against Daisy's lips. The tip of her tongue came out and swiped one of Chelsey's fingers. She tasted salt and a something much like the cow's milk she drank in the mornings.

"Lovely." Daisy beamed at Chelsey and wiped off a drop of sweat from her cheek. "Lordy, this heat is horrible."

Chelsey took off her stockings and shoes and did the same for Daisy. She pushed them away and then grabbed the bottle of wine. She gave Daisy another kiss and uncorked it, taking a deep swallow. "It certainly is." She wiped her mouth and handed the bottle over to Daisy.

Daisy only drank wine during the holidays and other special occasions. But being with Chelsey in this way was a special occasion indeed. She tilted up the bottle and took deep swigs. Because her hands were shaking, some of the wine fell down the front of her baby blue dress.

Chelsey snickered and took the bottle back. "Daisy, you should take off your dress now that it's all stained. What if you spill more wine or drop a strawberry or two from one of these tarts we will be eating shortly?"

Daisy bit her bottom lip in consideration. "You may have a point there. But this isn't your way of getting me naked?"

Chelsey knelt and crossed her heart with her finger. "I promise my intentions are pure. How about I undress also? We can keep our chemises on." She unlaced the front of her bodice and tugged down her dress.

Chelsey stood, and with one last tug, her dress dropped to the floor. She turned her back, peeking over her shoulder at Daisy. "Can you unlace my corset?"

Daisy stood and untied the well-worn ribbons in the back. When it was loosened, she opened the contraption and kissed Chelsey's back, smoothing her hands up and down her arms.

She watched as Chelsey let go of her corset before turning around to face her. It was as if Chelsey knew Daisy had to look at her, for she stood there, her arms at her sides, as Daisy simply watched. Her lover's chemise barely covered the top of her thighs, and it allowed Daisy to see that Chelsey wasn't wearing any drawers. As she followed the silky expanse of smooth skin down, she noticed that a few of Chelsey's dark pussy curls peeked out from under the hem.

When Daisy glanced back up, she watched, transfixed, as Chelsey's arm strap slid down, slowly uncovering her right nipple. Daisy circled the dark nub with her middle finger and watched it become hard. Chelsey remained silent as Daisy pushed down her other strap so that both her breasts were exposed.

"Chelsey, your bosom is beautiful." She glanced up for permission, and when Chelsey nodded, she cupped her hands around Chelsey's breasts and squeezed, tugging and pulling gently. She stopped when Chelsey's hands came over hers.

"I think we should get you out of your dress before you faint from the heat. You are very flushed."

Daisy almost corrected her. She was flushed, not because of the heat, but because of the ardor she felt. She ached to touch and kiss Chelsey, and to have Chelsey do the same to her. But she remained silent and turned around, allowing Chelsey to undo the back of her dress. As she reached the last section, Daisy pulled her arms out, and her dress fell on the hay-covered floor.

Chelsey placed a kiss in between Daisy's shoulders and tugged the hem of her chemise upward.

"What are you doing?" Daisy moaned and leaned back as Chelsey untied her drawers. They fell in a puddle at her feet.

"I want to make sure you aren't overheated in any other areas." Chelsey pressed her mouth against Daisy's ear and bit down on her side of the neck. She trembled as Chelsey combed through her pussy curls that now lay revealed.

She peeked down at Chelsey's hand, sifting through her glistening hair, and moved her hand to join with hers. She stood in Chelsey's intimate embrace, allowing her to pet that very special and secret place no other person had ever touched.

"Let's sit down on the blanket." Chelsey placed another kiss on Daisy's shoulder and sat. Daisy followed and pulled her legs under her, making certain her lap was covered. Chelsey didn't seem to mind, and as she rooted through the basket, she spread her legs out. Daisy could see Chelsey's enlarged nether lips. She was overcome with need to place her mouth upon them.

"I see we have a few strawberry tarts made fresh this morning and one of those naughty little books you do love to read." Chelsey lifted out two tarts wrapped in wax paper and laid them down on the blanket. She also brought out the book, lifted an eyebrow in Daisy's direction and set it off to the side.

Daisy grabbed one of the tarts, and as Chelsey went for hers, Daisy pulled it away.

"I believe you should lie down and allow me to feed you." Daisy held up the tart and smiled.

Chelsey rested on her elbows and spread her legs apart. Daisy swallowed very noticeably, and Chelsey's head fell back as she burst into laughter.

"Chelsey—"

"Fine, princess. We will do it your way. But when you are done feeding me, I will feed you."

Daisy beamed again and tapped Chelsey's foot with her finger. "Please lay back and close your eyes."

Chelsey lifted an eyebrow, but she did what Daisy had requested. She folded her hands on her stomach, crossed her ankles and waited.

When the flaky crust touched her lips, she opened her mouth and Daisy slid in the juicy, dripping dessert.

Chelsey chewed slowly and licked her lips. "So tasty."

Daisy watched her lover's lips move, but as she bent to give Chelsey another piece, she placed her own lips there instead. Daisy licked Chelsey's lips and moaned at the pungent smell of strawberries.

Chelsey opened her eyes and held Daisy by her chin. She nibbled over her lips and moved her hand down until she reached Daisy's ass and squeezed. Daisy gasped and released Chelsey's mouth. She watched Chelsey's face and moaned as her ass cheeks were fondled. When Chelsey laid her palm against her cheek, Daisy fed her another piece of the tart and kissed her.

Daisy continued to feed Chelsey the tart while Chelsey flicked her fingers around Daisy's dripping clit.

"That feels so good." Daisy moaned loudly and accidentally crumbled the half eaten tart in her hand.

"Daisy, you—"

Daisy pulled down the front of Chelsey's chemise and suckled on a nipple, pulling it taunt with her teeth. Chelsey exhaled and hid her face in the strands of Daisy's hair that had fallen out of the pins.

"Daisy, suck harder," Chelsey ordered and gave Daisy a light slap on her ass.

Daisy released Chelsey's nipple and licked one breast, then the other. She wiped her tart-covered hand over Chelsey's breasts and ate off the crumbled sweet.

"Do you like this?" Daisy asked, lifting her head. She reached under Chelsey's chemise and dug her thumbs into the outer edge of Chelsey's cunt lips.

"You know I do." Chelsey panted and looked at her in lust. "But I want to pleasure you."

"Oh no, Chelsey. This is my turn to show you how much you mean to me." Daisy lifted Chelsey's chemise up until it covered her face. Chelsey panted against the fabric.

"Kiss my cunt, Daisy, like you did with my breasts."

Daisy rested her hand on Chelsey's stomach. Chelsey opened her legs as wide as they could go until she felt Daisy's hot breath fanning over her nether lips.

"Yes, dearest Chelsey, I would love nothing more. I want to drink the strawberries covered in your cream."

Chelsey yelped when she felt the warm, crumbling tart on top of her mound. She peered over her chemise and looked on in disbelief as Daisy slowly nudged the dessert into her entrance.

"Daisy, I lo—"

"WHAT IN ALL THAT IS HOLY IS GOING ON HERE?"

Daisy sat up and covered her mouth in shock. Her father stood in the front of the stall tapping a riding crop against his leg. His face was beet red and his mouth was gaping wide at the sight of them.

"Papa!" Daisy stood on trembling legs and crossed her arms over her chest.

Conrad stomped into the stall. His whole body shook and Daisy took a step back in fear.

"Father—"

"You slut!" He shouted, and the back of his hand slapped her across her cheek. Daisy cried out and stumbled to the floor. She laid her palm over her stinging cheek, staring up at her father in shock. Her lips trembled, and tears filled her eyes.

"Get dressed now!" Spittle covered his mouth and dripped down his chin as he pointed at her.

He turned to Chelsey, who took her time dressing. She stood and pulled on her dress, moving to comfort Daisy, but he blocked her.

"I knew something unhealthy was going on between you and my daughter. And then I found this disgusting note." Conrad pulled out the wrinkled paper from his jacket and threw it on the floor. "Don't think I haven't noticed the lustful looks you have been giving her!" He jabbed her in the chest with his riding crop.

Daisy covered her mouth and grabbed her dress, searching for the note she thought she had hidden well in her pocket.

Chelsey gave Daisy a frightened glance and slowly backed away. "You don't understand, my lord—"

"Silence, you temptress! How dare you stand here before me, making excuses. Have you no shame, you jezebel? What type of person are you that you would corrupt my innocent daughter with your unnatural urges?"

"Papa no! Please, I can explain." Daisy strode over to her father and grabbed him by his arm. Conrad lifted his hand to hit her again when Chelsey pushed him hard in the chest.

"Stop it!" Chelsey shouted.

Conrad pushed Daisy back with his elbow and slapped Chelsey across the face. She stumbled to her knees, and Daisy cried out as Conrad hit Chelsey across the face with his crop.

"Whore. Devil's bride!" he spit at Chelsey as she covered her face and rolled into a ball, sobbing silently.

"Father, you're hurting her." Daisy ran over to Chelsey. Conrad grabbed Daisy by her hair and pulled her back.

Chelsey lay there, crying, as Daisy fought against her father's tight grip on her hair.

"You will never see my daughter ever again. You and your mother are finished here. She is just as responsible and should be punished for creating a spawn from hell like you." Conrad went to kick her with his boot. She moved away until she was backed into a corner. She wrapped her arms around her knees, and her hair covered her bleeding face.

"Chelsey! Papa, let me go!" Daisy pleaded as Conrad pulled her out by her hair in only her chemise.

"No daughter of mine will engage in such perverted fornication." Conrad dug his fingers into her arm. As she struggled, he lifted her up and slung her entire body over his shoulder.

"Chelsey!" Daisy held out her arms as her father carried her away. Her screams echoed out of the barn as she called for her lover, who sat bleeding in the corner of the stall, where only a few moments ago both had been so happy.

"Daisy," Chelsey moaned and wiped away the tears from her stinging face, pierced with a deep cut from the riding crop. She looked at her bloody palms and licked her split lip. Her hands trembled, and when she stood, she fell back down in a heap onto the hay.

"Daisy... Daisy." She watched the wine slowly drip out of the overturned bottle.

A fly buzzed over one of the ruined tarts that lay crushed on the blanket. As the scent of strawberries drifted over to Chelsey, she gagged and vomited on her hands and knees, sick over losing Daisy and afraid of her unknown future.

Chapter Three

Daisy's bedroom window rattled from the wind as she lay sobbing on her bed, smothering her cries with a pillow. It was after midnight, and the entire household was asleep.

"Chelsey," she moaned and bit down on the side of her hand. Earlier in the evening, after her father had locked her in her room, he had heard her crying. He pounded on the door, threatening to give her a beating if she didn't stop.

Now she lay in misery, suffering from a bruised cheek and arm, as well as a stinging head from where her father had pulled her hair. She had watched from her bedroom window as her father forced Wilda to leave. Chelsey had never come back to the house. A few stable hands and fieldworkers stood watch outside and had been told to use firearms if she dared to set foot on the property.

She shook in fear. *How dare they treat Chelsey as if she was a criminal! She could be shot and killed.* "This is all my fault." Daisy wiped her face and rolled onto her back, watching the shadows from a nearby tree played across her ceiling. If only she had been more careful with the note Chelsey had written her. Then she would not be in this horrible situation and their relationship would still be a secret.

But now it was all for naught. Chelsey was gone... forever.

Daisy rolled to her side and cried in earnest again, when she heard a slight tapping on her window. She looked up and wiped her swollen eyes. Chelsey stood on the outside ledge, hitting the window with her fist.

Daisy gasped, climbed out her bed and unlatched her window. It swung open from the force of the wind. She took hold of Chelsey's arm as she held onto the trellis leading up the side of the house.

"How were you able to climb up here without my father's men seeing you?" Daisy enquired as she helped her climb into the room.

"Easy. They are all sleeping," Chelsey responded and hopped inside. Daisy shut the window and grabbed Chelsey by the arms.

Chelsey wrapped her hands in Daisy's hair and gave her a wild kiss.

Both women kissed with tongues and teeth. They only separated when they needed air.

"Chelsey..." Daisy lifted a trembling hand up to Chelsey's face. The side of her face had a deep gash and her bottom lip was cut.

Chelsey wrapped her arms around Daisy and rocked her as she cried into the crook of her neck. "Shh, Daisy. It will be fine. Hush, you will make yourself sick."

Daisy sniffed and looked back up at Chelsey. "Your poor face. Does it hurt much?"

Chelsey smiled, but then flinched and poked her lip. "Only a little. It's much worse than it looks. I made sure it was clean. It should heal soon.

"Where have you been? I've been sick with worry." Daisy reached out to touch Chelsey's sore cheek.

"I went to stay with a friend of my mum's in town." Chelsey took hold of Daisy's hand and kissed her palm. "She cleaned me up a bit and gave me something to ease the pain. Mum and I are staying there for the night."

"How is Wilda? I watched while she left. I wish I could have done something, b-but father locked me in my room." A tear fell from the corner of her eye.

Chelsey gritted her teeth and wiped away the tear. "Mum cried herself to sleep."

Daisy's mouth trembled. "You must hate me." She wrapped her arms around her waist and looked down at the floor, still reeling at the turn of events that had occurred over past few hours.

"Not at all, princess. It is your father I despise," Chelsey spat out.

"I hate him!" Daisy said vehemently.

Chelsey lifted Daisy's chin. "'Hate' is such a strong word. He is your papa and is only doing what he thinks is best."

"But—" Chelsey pressed her lips to Daisy's before she could finish that statement.

Still kissing, Chelsey backed her up onto the bed. She lay upon the mattress and Chelsey joined her, wrapping an arm around her waist, and hugged her close.

"You should know—"

"Shh." Chelsey placed her finger over Daisy's mouth to quiet her. "I don't have much time. Mum sent my Uncle Wallace a message. We will be taking a coach an hour after sunrise to meet him. He lives a few hours west from here. Until we can decide what to do next, we will stay with him. He is a great sea captain and even owns his own shipping vessel. Everything will be grand."

Daisy did not find anything “grand” about the entire situation, but after this emotional day, she could barely make sense of anything. "Chelsey, does this mean you are leaving me forever? Please don't tell me that is so. I want to come with you!"

Chelsey pressed a finger across Daisy's lips. "You must be quiet, princess. We wouldn't want your father to come in here and find us together. He would surely kill me then."

Tears fell from Daisy's eyes. "How can you act as if you don't care? Do I not mean anything to you?"

"You know you do. How can you ask that?" Chelsey positioned her face over Daisy's chest and pushed her leg in between Daisy's own soft, supple thighs.

"Please forgive me. My mind is fuzzy." Daisy sighed.

"There's no reason for you to apologize for anything." Her fingers drifted across Daisy's cheek. "Does this pain you?" She propped herself up on an elbow and frowned as she lightly touched the dark purple bruise.

"A little. But that doesn't matter. You must be in horrible pain. My father was in such a rage, and you were covered in blood and crying..." Daisy's mouth trembled, and she covered her face as more tears fell down her cheeks.

"Daisy, dear. Stop your tears. I can't stand to see you cry." Chelsey grabbed onto Daisy's hands and kissed the tops of each. "You must be strong. It is not as bad as it seems to be. I can promise you we will be together again. I have a plan. I will ask my Uncle Wallace for employment on one of his ships. Then I will save every penny I can and when I have enough, I will come back for you and we will be together forever."

"Truly? B-but that could be years. How will I ever make it through the days without seeing you for so long?"

Chelsey caressed the side of Daisy's face and neck and gave her a sweet kiss. "I will make sure to write every day to tell you where I am. You shall see. It won't feel like that long. Time will fly by."

Daisy turned on her side and placed a kiss over Chelsey's ragged cheek "It's not fair. I will die without you."

Chelsey chuckled softly. She shifted her hand under Daisy's nightgown and grabbed her by the ass. "Hmm... I love how you are not wearing any undergarments. Much easier for what I have planned."

"P-planned? How can you think of doing *that*?" Daisy grumbled even as her pussy grew slick. She wrapped her leg around Chelsey's hip.

"Miss Daisy, I do think the only reason you want me to stay around is because you like the way I fuck you."

Daisy opened her mouth, outraged. Chelsey snickered and eased her fingers in between Daisy's legs and gave her a passionate kiss. Daisy moaned against Chelsey's mouth and returned the kiss, devouring her lips.

Daisy's nightgown was pulled off of her and thrown onto the floor. Chelsey's dress followed it to the bottom of the bed. She only wore her chemise as she lay on top of Daisy, sucking and licking her breasts.

Daisy brushed her fingers in between Chelsey's legs and swirled the dew that dripped down the inside of her legs. She sobbed and licked her fingers, enjoying the taste of Chelsey's tangy musk.

Chelsey lifted her head and gave Daisy a deep, tongue-licking kiss. "Do you like how I taste?"

Daisy nodded and arched her back as Chelsey licked a line from the center of her chest to her stomach. She pressed kisses across Daisy's navel and wrapped her arms around her to keep her still.

"I want to eat you, Daisy. Will you let me again, like I did a few nights ago?"

Daisy closed her eyes and nodded. She bit her lip and turned her head.

Chelsey blew on Daisy's curls and sifted her fingers through the damp locks. Chelsey stuck a finger in between her lover's swollen, slippery lips, and Daisy's tight entrance swallowed the digit with ease.

"P-please Chelsey, eat me." Daisy covered her face with her arm and bit down on the inside of her elbow to stop from screaming too loudly.

"I can only imagine how my tongue will be swallowed by your greedy, plump darling lips." Chelsey lifted Daisy's right leg over her shoulder, spread open her pussy and stuck her tongue straight into her creamy center.

"*Urgh.*" Daisy bit down on her arm as Chelsey's tongue lapped around her steaming cunt. She was drenched, dripping down Chelsey's throat as she pulsed and grinded her core against Chelsey's face.

Chelsey bobbed her head as she pushed her mouth in further, using her whole tongue to mimic the sex act Daisy never had experienced before. She pressed in her nose, deeply inhaling her milky fluid. She wanted her entire face to be surrounded by Daisy's essence, to always remember this night, so that she could take a small part of her sweet lady with her when she left.

Daisy pounded her foot against the mattress, overcome with such incredible pleasure. Her breath stopped as Chelsey lifted her head and the moonlight hit her face. She trembled with desire at seeing Chelsey's face glistening with her satisfaction.

Chelsey bit down hard on the inside of Daisy's leg, causing her to moan.

"Yes, mark me," Daisy whimpered, and Chelsey bit down again. She sucked hard, and Daisy pulled her legs up. Chelsey took in a deep breath and dropped her head back down to eat at Daisy's pussy.

Daisy grabbed onto Chelsey's hair. "I want... want to taste you also."

Chelsey looked up and pushed her thumb against Daisy's clit. The sudden force of pleasure made Daisy cry out and grab a pillow. She covered her face and screamed. She came so hard that every single part of her body shook, and her heart jumped up into her throat.

She lay there, recovering, when Chelsey lifted the pillow away from her head and gave her a deep kiss. She pressed her fingers into Daisy's mouth along with her tongue.

"Taste me, Daisy. My fingers are covered with my own release."

Daisy licked the coated fingers and reached down in between Chelsey's legs for more. Chelsey grabbed hold of the bottom of the wooden headboard as Daisy moved her head down and rubbed her nose in between her curls.

Daisy kissed Chelsey's core and tugged hard at her mound with her teeth, causing Chelsey to flinch. Daisy looked up in a daze.

"Sorry," she mumbled, petting Chelsey's mound in apology.

"Come here." Chelsey held her arms open and Daisy climbed into them.

"I want to give you such wonderful pleasures... like you have given me." Daisy whispered and laid her head on Chelsey's bosom. She flicked one of Chelsey's large, extended nipples and leaned over to lap at it with her tongue.

Chelsey rubbed her hands up and down Daisy's back. She let out a loud yawn. "That feels lovely. Don't worry about it. We can always practice some more."

Daisy continued to lick at Chelsey's nipples. "I love how your nipples taste. I do wish I had more time to practice with you. But how can that be?"

When Chelsey didn't respond, Daisy glanced up. Chelsey had fallen asleep. Her mouth was open, and she was snoring lightly.

Daisy drummed her fingers over Chelsey's stomach and thought about waking her up by sticking her tongue into her pussy. But since she'd already caused Chelsey some discomfort, she gave up on that idea.

She grabbed her blanket and drew it over them both. Daisy laid her head on Chelsey's shoulder and watched over the woman who meant so much to her. Tears came to her eyes again, knowing that Chelsey would have to leave soon and there was nothing she could do to stop her.

Her eyelids began to droop. She snapped them open; she didn't want to fall asleep. She needed to stay awake and watch Chelsey. If she succumbed to her slumber, their time together would be shortened.

Daisy lost the fight after a few minutes. She looked at Chelsey's face and lightly touched her scabbing cut, where some scarring would surely occur. She snuggled closer against her wonderful, darling and saucy lover, and closed her eyes, falling into slumber.

A light caress across her cheek made Daisy open her eyes. She covered a yawn, stretched and blinked, bringing her room back in focus. The muted early morning shadows crossed over her bed, and she turned to look at Chelsey.

Chelsey lay awake on her side and placed her palm over Daisy's bruised cheek. She leaned in and kissed her softly across the lips.

"Why are you crying?" Daisy asked and touched her thumb over the corner of Chelsey's eye. Chelsey blinked as a tear fell down her cheek. She didn't say a word and kissed Daisy again.

Daisy rolled onto her back, and the sheet dipped low, exposing her naked breasts. Chelsey's eyes grew bright, and she placed kisses over Daisy's nipples. She pushed her hand down and in between Daisy's legs, making her squirm as two fingers slid into her core.

"Chelsey," she moaned. Her eyes flickered shut.

"Hush now, Daisy. Let me love you one last time before I leave."

Chelsey suckled on one of Daisy's breasts while she circled Daisy's pussy lips and pinched her clit. Daisy let out a sob, and Chelsey kissed her way up Daisy's throat, lapping away at the salt on her skin.

Daisy held Chelsey tightly and, when she started to come, Chelsey pushed in a third finger and pressed her forehead against Daisy's. They both stared at one another intently until, with a final shudder, Daisy fell apart in Chelsey's arms.

They shared deep, tongue-licking kisses until the first morning rays began to lighten up the room.

Sometime later, Chelsey sat up. Daisy grabbed hold of her neck. "Please don't leave me, Chelsey. I can't go on without you!"

Chelsey let out a light snort and tapped her finger on Daisy's chin. "Life will go on for you, princess. No need for dramatics now. Before you can blink, I will be back to take you away."

"You promise?" Daisy leaned up and kissed Chelsey again, trying to pull her back down.

"Daisy, I must go." Chelsey gave her one last peck on her lips. "If I stay much longer, I will be caught and possibly thrown into prison."

Daisy wiped her cheeks. Her tears continued to fall steadily.

Chelsey stood and held out her hand. "Come. Let us go over to your window. You can say good-bye and watch me climb down."

Daisy rose naked from her bed without a care and grabbed onto Chelsey's hand. They walked over to her window. Chelsey unlocked the latch and opened it. She closed her eyes and breathed in the humid morning air.

"It feels like it may be another warm one." She sat on the ledge and swung her leg over the sill.

Daisy held Chelsey's hand close against her breast. "You must promise to write me every day. Please, *please* do not forget me."

Chelsey brushed back on a strand of Daisy's hair from her shoulder. "Whatever you desire, my Daisy." She grabbed Daisy by the back of her head and nipped at her lips.

Daisy moaned and kissed Chelsey hard. Chelsey's teeth nicked her lip, causing it to bleed.

Chelsey lifted her head and pressed a finger over her bottom lip. Her finger came away with Daisy's blood.

"I have marked you," Daisy said in a low voice and held out a hand to touch Chelsey's face again. But at the last moment she backed away and wrapped her arms around her waist.

Chelsey licked her finger and lips. "Take care, princess. Always remember me."

"But of course I will remember you! Why would you say such a thing? We will see each other soon."

Chelsey gave Daisy a playful grin and swung her other leg over the side. She took hold of the wooden trellis and climbed her way down the side of the house.

Tuck let out a low cry. Daisy moved to the side and watched Chelsey's descent. When she reached the bottom safely, Daisy released a gust of air she had been holding and covered her mouth with a shaking hand as Chelsey glanced around. With one final wave up at Daisy's bedroom window, she sprinted across the field and down the dirt path. She never turned back. Daisy kept watch until Chelsey vanished from sight.

Daisy slid down the wall and pressed her face against her folded knees. Deep sobs overtook her as she wept. When all her tears were spent, she lay on the cool, dusty floor, breathing deeply.

She eventually wiped her face and stood as the bright sun rose in the sky.

Daisy looked out over the vast fields and valleys. "I love you so much, Chelsey," she whispered.

She waited by the window the rest of the morning and late into the evening. When her father finally unlocked her bedroom door, she was still standing vigil.

Day after day, week after week, Daisy waited for word from Chelsey. It never came.

A year to the day after Chelsey's departure, after all four seasons had passed, Daisy still waited.

When her father passed away from a stroke more than five years later, Daisy still waited.

And there was never any letter sent. Or any message. And most importantly, no Chelsey.

Chapter Four

Eight years later...

The cherry blossom tree standing in the middle of the garden was in full bloom. Bees buzzed around the sunflowers, and through the ankle-high grass, cicadas sang to one another in a symphony. Daisy sat on a bench behind the house, reading from one of her gardening books. She glanced up, taking in a deep breath, and lifted her face up to the shining sun on this spring day. In a few hours she would have to play hostess, but for now she had a moment to herself, away from all the chores that she was responsible for as the lady of the house.

Soon enough she would be in charge of another household altogether, and that caused her stomach to tighten. To think at twenty-five she would finally be leaving her childhood home and running her own, one that was much larger and quite daunting.

"Daisy?" Thomas called out as he walked across the patio and out onto the lawn.

Daisy closed her book and placed it on her lap as her brother sat down next to her.

"Taking a break?" she asked, giving him a small smile.

Thomas pushed back his shaggy blond hair that was in need of a trim. "I finally finished the billing." He stretched his arms and covered a yawn. "Excuse me. I've been spending too many late nights in father's office."

She patted his knee. "It's your office now."

"Funny, it has been almost six years since father has passed, but I still think of that stuffy room as his."

Daisy smiled fondly. "Papa would be so proud at you. He left the estate in good hands. I don't know of any other man at twenty-eight who could run a property as well as you do."

Thomas pushed back his gray suit coat and crossed a leg over his knee. "There is only one I can think of who can do a much better job than I can. Your Lord Humphrey has a skill with numbers and supervising his workers."

Daisy looked down at her lap. Out of the corner of her eye, she spotted one squirrel running after another near the far corner of the lawn. "I guess he is mine now, isn't he?"

Thomas laid a hand on her arm and squeezed. "He will be soon enough. In a week's time everyone in Flaundia will know that you are engaged to a naval hero."

"Much has been on my mind. I can't believe I will be leaving your household to run my very own. It is somewhat intimidating. I-I... oh ignore me. I'm just being fanciful."

"Daisy, Humphrey is a good man. He will be more than happy to show you how to run a household. I have seen the adoration in his eyes when he watches you. It is much like the way Father would look at Mother. Father would be so proud. He always wanted you and Humphrey to be man and wife."

Daisy twiddled her thumbs and nodded. "Yes, you are right. It's just my nerves getting the best of me."

"Good. I was worried—"

"Worried?" Daisy frowned. "Whatever for?"

"Ah... you were in a horrible depression for such a long time – wouldn't eat, hardly spoke, all because of that—"

"Master Thomas?"

Both Daisy and Thomas turned when their housekeeper Martha stepped out and walked over to them.

"Lord Humphrey is here. I put him in the salon."

"But he isn't set to arrive for another two hours. Oh dear." Daisy stood and placed her book on the bench seat.

"Calm down, Daisy, dear. I will play host to Humphrey while you freshen up." Thomas glanced down at his pocket watch. "It is almost time for tea. Perhaps something else came up and that is why Humphrey has come earlier than expected."

"If you don't mind me sayin', the lordship is all smiles and very anxious. He was pacin' the room when I left." Martha leaned in to whisper. "And he has two boxes, a long velvet one and another smaller one that looks to me like it might have a ring inside."

"Martha!" Daisy admonished.

Martha winked in response and curtsied. She walked back inside, humming softly under her breath.

Daisy and Thomas looked at one another for a moment. Then he grabbed her arm and wrapped it around his own. They walked back inside the house.

"Why don't you run upstairs to refresh yourself and I will tell the cook to bring us tea and those tarts you love so much?"

Daisy almost tripped and steadied herself. She held onto Thomas tighter. "T-tarts? What kind of tarts?"

"Strawberry of course! You must be too excited to see your betrothed if you can't remember that simple thing. By the by, I can't think of the last time you have eaten a dessert tart.

I do remember our old cook Wilda making the most incredible ones. And her daughter... what was her name?"

Daisy swallowed and her lips trembled as she mouthed the name he inquired about. Distant memories rushed over her as she reflected back to a certain time in her girlhood when she had enjoyed a few strawberry tarts with the one person she thought she would be with forever.

She tried to shake off the memories that always made her chest hurt. "Thomas, I'm suddenly not feeling too—"

"There she is! My beautiful blushing bride."

Thomas and Daisy turned to see Lord Humphrey standing in the doorway of their salon. A huge smile broke over his face, and he rushed forward and took Daisy's hands in his own.

"You are beyond lovely, my dear." He kissed her knuckles and placed her arm in the crook of his. "You are also looking very well, Thomas."

Thomas crossed his hands behind his back, rocked on his feet and nodded. "Thank you, my Lord. I am very well. And you?"

"Pish, we are to be family soon. Please call me by my Christian name, Draco." Humphrey looked down at Daisy and gave her another wide grin, showing off his blinding white teeth.

"And that means you also, Daisy."

Thomas held out his arm for Humphrey and Daisy to follow him into the room. Daisy glanced up at Humphrey in surprise. "But my lord, it would not be proper to call you by your given name. I would rather wait until we announce our engagement."

Humphrey pursed his lips together and led Daisy over to the settee. He sat down next to her and took hold of her hand. Daisy held back a grimace. She wished he wouldn't display such affection in front of her brother.

Thomas didn't seem to mind, however, as he stood and folded his hands in front of his waist. "I am in agreement with his lordship. What would be the harm? No one else would know. It can be our secret."

Humphrey looked at Daisy in anticipation and she held back a giggle. He reminded her of a little boy who wanted a sweet. She stopped from rolling her eyes and nodded.

"Very well... Draco."

Humphrey squeezed her hand and sat more comfortably. He smoothed a palm against the side of his head and exhaled. Daisy found this nervous habit endearing. Even though her future husband was a decade older than she, he had many outstanding qualities. Combined with his good looks and well-rounded business sense, he was very much the catch of all the single Flaundian misses. Daisy was lucky indeed to have "caught" him.

Daisy's musings were interrupted when Thomas snapped his fingers. "Excuse me for a moment. I forgot I have to mention something of importance to my foreman."

Before Daisy could call out to him, he left. She sighed, shaking her head, and looked at Humphrey.

"You must forgive Thomas. He has so much on his mind and sometimes he forgets things."

"It's perfectly understandable." Humphrey slid in closer to Daisy and glanced over at the entrance of the room where the door had been left halfway open.

"Lord... um Draco," Daisy whispered and shifted further into the corner.

Humphrey acted unaware of Daisy's discomfort and took her hands in his again, placing kisses over her palms. "You have made me the happiest of men when you accepted my proposal last week. I know we were sadly interrupted by your brother, and you did not receive a kiss as most women would expect when they are newly engaged."

"There is no reason—"

Humphrey pressed his mouth against hers, and she gasped. As she opened her mouth, he stuck the tip of his tongue across the bottom of her teeth. Daisy tried to remove her hands from his, but he wrapped an arm around her shoulders, bringing her in closer.

"Urmph." Daisy voice was muffled against his mouth, and she moved her face away. Humphrey placed his mouth against her cheek and inhaled deeply. When he moved his thigh against hers, Daisy gasped again. Something hard dug into her hip, and it wasn't his leg.

Daisy was ready to kick her fiancé's shin to force him to release her, but then she heard the sound of a cart moving down the hall. Humphrey gave her one last kiss on the cheek and slid a few inches over. As he spread out his coat, Daisy looked down at his lap and lifted a shaking hand to her mouth. She could see his arousal tenting his tan breeches.

She laid a hand over her heart and, when she met his eyes, he winked!

Daisy was speechless. A million possible things she should have said crossed her mind, but she kept silent.

The moment was lost as Martha wheeled in the tea and a few plates filled with biscuits and crumpets. There was not one strawberry tart among the bunch. Daisy exhaled.

"Please forgive my excitement." Humphrey spoke out of the side of his mouth and took hold of Daisy's hand again. Martha took no notice. Daisy wanted to jump up and excuse herself, but then Thomas walked back in.

"Sorry about that. Ah, thank you Martha. These smell incredible." Thomas grabbed one of the biscuits and took a huge bite. He smiled at Daisy, and she gave him an unhappy stare. He ignored her and sat down, taking one of the tea cups from Martha.

Daisy released a soft sigh when Humphrey let go of her hand to take his own cup. She reached over to grab a plate when Humphrey suddenly stood.

"Before we partake in tea, I must give you your betrothal gift, my love."

Daisy held back a cringe at the endearment, watching closely as he put down his cup and saucer and walked over to the side table where the two boxes Martha had described before were sitting.

Martha stood behind Thomas, who finished eating his biscuit. Daisy sat up straight when Humphrey came back over. He sat down next to her at a more respectful distance and handed her the long box.

"Lord Humphrey, you shouldn't have," Daisy said and rubbed her thumb over the top of the box.

"Draco, my dear," Humphrey said in a slightly forceful tone.

When Daisy looked up at him, she noticed the strained lines around his mouth. She nodded and knew the way she was acting was childish. She should be more than grateful of Lord Humphrey's generosity.

"Forgive me. I'm still becoming accustomed to our close relationship."

Humphrey nodded and glanced down quickly at Daisy's chest, then back up to her face. "I understand, Daisy. More than you could ever know."

Daisy frowned and licked her lips, unsure what he meant by that statement.

Thomas slapped his hands on his knees and sat forward. "Don't keep us in suspense, Daisy. Open your present."

She took off the top and lifted away the wrapping inside. A gasp escaped from her mouth. A necklace of sparking diamonds was lying in the box.

"Oh my!" Daisy exclaimed and could only stare as Humphrey slid his hand under the necklace and held it up against her neck.

"These were my great-grandmother's. Every Humphrey bride-to-be is given this very special and priceless necklace to be worn on their wedding day. I'm jumping the gun, so to speak, but I would love nothing more if you would wear these at my charity ball next week when we announce our engagement."

Daisy nodded and covered her mouth, speechless at receiving such a gift. She touched the glittering diamonds and giggled when they sparkled on the far wall.

Humphrey placed the necklace back in its box, reached into his jacket pocket and took out a small velvet box. "Before I forget. Your engagement ring, my lady."

Daisy's eyes grew wide as Humphrey flipped open the box. Inside lay a perfectly cut diamond carat.

"Oh Draco, it is wonderful." Daisy finally said his first name without censor.

He knelt down to the floor on one knee, taking Daisy's hand in his. "Princess Daisy, formerly of the Isle of Ileria, daughter of King Conrad de Fleurre, brother of Prince Thomas, would you do me the honor of becoming my wife?"

"Yes," Daisy said softly. Her hand trembled as she watched Humphrey slide the ring on. He squeezed her knuckles. She held up her hand, admiring the ring that belonged to her now.

"Oh, Miss Daisy!" Martha cried into her handkerchief.

"Well done!" Thomas walked over to Humphrey and shook his hand. Daisy stood and hugged her brother and then Martha. All four shared congratulations and good cheer.

Martha left the room to spread the word, and Thomas led Humphrey over to the side bar to share a glass of brandy together. As both men talked, Daisy stood in awe of her ring. She glanced out the window, and her eye caught a stray cloud floating by that reminded her of a cat. Suddenly her stomach cramped and she sat down, lost in her memories for a moment.

"Daisy?"

Humphrey stood before her. He smiled and held out his hand. "Your brother has given me permission to walk with you around the garden. Since it is such a beautiful day, why don't we enjoy the weather?"

Daisy placed a palm over her chest. Somehow she knew if she "walked" with Humphrey alone, he would want to share a few intimacies that most engaged couples enjoyed together. Resigned to this fact and justifiably curious to see how more of his kisses would make her feel, she stood again and wrapped her arm in his.

Before they could leave the room, a young boy around the age of thirteen walked in behind Martha. He held his cap and a square piece of paper in his hands.

"Scuse me, Lord Humphrey, but an important message came for you. I was told to bring it to you right away," the lad said and held out the folded note.

Humphrey opened the paper and scanned the words. He finished reading and slapped it against his hip.

"Is everything well, Humphrey?" Thomas asked and took a drink of his brandy.

Humphrey exhaled. "Nothing to worry about. Something has come up at the shipping yard, and my secretary needs my assistance." Humphrey walked over to Daisy and placed his

hands on top of her shoulders. "Forgive me, my dear. We will have to reschedule our walk and dinner." He shifted down and kissed her on the cheek.

"I'm so sorry to hear that." Daisy folded her hands in front of her waist and, when Humphrey turned his head slightly to the side, she lifted up on her toes and gave him a small peck on the mouth.

"Thank you, my dear. The press of your lips against my own will carry me home." Humphrey looked down into Daisy's face and cupped her cheek in his hand. His thumb brushed across her chin.

"Ahem." Thomas cleared his throat. Humphrey blinked and backed away.

"Well, then, I will be off. Please take care of the necklace. I assume you have a safe, Thomas?"

Thomas nodded, and Daisy lifted the box off the settee and held it close.

"Have a safe journey, Lord Humphrey," Daisy said and sat back down. "Knowing you care for my welfare is enough, my Daisy." Humphrey said her name in a near purr and, with one final farewell to Thomas, he and his messenger boy left.

Daisy ran a finger over the top of the box that held her betrothal gift. Thomas sat in a chair enjoying his spirits.

"Daisy, I know this is all new to you, but you should try a bit harder in giving your affections to your fiancé. I noticed the look on his face when you failed to say his given name again. He was devastated."

"I will try harder, Thomas." Daisy smiled and glanced down at her ring.

"Good girl. It would be a shame to let the tea and these wonderful desserts go to waste. Afterwards, I will be your escort for a walk around the garden. What do you say?"

Daisy smiled at her brother. He grabbed a biscuit and moaned as he took a bite. She laughed at her brother's hearty appetite. He joined in, and they spent the next hour enjoying their tea.

Stephens turned when his employer stomped into the office. He didn't even raise an eyebrow when Humphrey threw his hat across the floor and walked over to the large bay window to look below at his workers.

"I take it that pirate bitch took down another one of my ships?" Humphrey growled and wiped a palm over his mouth.

Stephens stood up from his desk and held out the latest report. Humphrey turned, grabbed the papers and sat down, propping his legs up on his desk. He opened a drawer and lit one of his cigars.

Stephens coughed, took off his glasses and pinched his nose. Even though Humphrey knew about his breathing problems, he continued to smoke those foul-smelling cigars, regardless of the health concerns of his loyal assistant.

"Yes sir. Dread came upon the *St. Cicero*, rammed it and climbed aboard with her crew. She stole all the crates of silks and barrels of rum."

"Fuck me!" Humphrey stabbed out his cigar and tore it apart. He spewed curses under his breath and jumped up, pacing the length of the room.

Stephen folded his hands behind his back and waited for his employer's tantrum to end.

"Why me? I should have known things were too good to be true when Dread went quiet for three months."

"On the bright side, your future engagement is now a reality," Stephens pointed out.

Humphrey spun on his heels and rubbed his palms together. "Yes. Everything is set. The little princess Daisy will soon be mine. I can't wait to ride that sweet, never-been-touched quim of hers. The look on her face was priceless when I kissed her. I do believe the chit has a crush on me. She will be so easy to mold and do whatever I want with once we are married. Her ass of a brother never lets us have a moment to ourselves." He snarled. "That prig ruined it. I was so close to being alone with her in the garden when your message came. All I needed to do was whisper a few more loving words in her ear, drop a few kisses and touches in all the right places and I would have had my todger in her cunt before she could have said, '*Oh my!*'" Humphrey let out a booming laugh and went to light another one of his cigars. "Her brother and the servants would have found us *in flagrante delicto*. Then there would have been no choice but to move the wedding forward."

"Did your future wife and brother-in-law have any idea about the authenticity of the necklace or ring?"

"Those two? No clue. Thomas is totally oblivious, and Daisy is like most women. They see sparkling jewels and are entranced." Humphrey shrugged. "Who knew cut glass could work as well as the real thing?"

"Well, sir." Stephen coughed and rolled a pen in between his hands. "I do hope you have an expedient wedding. If you don't have access to a large amount of funds in the next few months, your creditors will be breaking down the door and *The Humphrey Shipping Company* will be finished."

"You don't think I know that? I have it all worked out. The night of my charity ball, the one for those pathetic orphans, is where I will ask my innocent fiancée to take a walk with me to

show her my massive book collection. She's so in love with novels that she won't refuse me.

What she doesn't know is that I plan to show her a more massive collection altogether."

Humphrey cupped himself and curled his lip. "Before she can even blink, I will have her bent over my desk and pounding into her. That is when you, her brother and whomever else you can round up will find us together. This will be the quickest engagement on record in Flaundia. Not only will I have the sweetest ass in all of this godforsaken country, but I will have the biggest purse as well."

"You are certain Miss de Fleurre has a large enough inheritance to save the business?"

"You can rest assured, Stephens." Humphrey puffed on his cigar and cracked his knuckles. "Before Conrad keeled over, he gave me his blessing to marry his daughter. To sweeten the deal, he told me all about Daisy's vast inheritance. For what she lacks in tits and ass, she makes up in other areas."

Stephens held back a grimace as Humphrey expounded crudely on his lady's wonderful virtues. He pitied the poor Daisy because she had no idea how drastically her life would change as the wife of Lord Humphrey. During the several times he and Humphrey had visited the brothels, he had witnessed his employer's sexual finesse. By the end of the night, the majority of the women Humphrey had been with couldn't walk, and a few extra coins would have to be presented to the Madame to ensure her silence.

"Once I have my bride's money, I can build the ultimate ship... no, an armada to chase down Dread and sink that ship of hers. Once I have that whore in my hands, I'm going to hang her crew and keep her to myself for a few months. Let's see how she likes being rammed for a change." Humphrey let loose a chilling laugh and Stephens shivered.

He pitied both the lady pirate and Daisy. They had no idea that, when a man like Humphrey was crossed, the wrath he would unleash upon them was the sort Stephens would not even wish on his own worst enemy.

Chapter Five

Fifty miles off the coast of Flaundia, near a group of close to inhabitable islands, was a place called Pirate's Cove. The worst type of degenerates who sailed the seas came there to hide and dock their ships without fear of being found.

The Lady Desire, commandeered by the feared lady pirate captain, C.W. Dread and her crew of sixty sailors, had set anchor at the Cove's docks to sell their illegal wares, as well as to get rid of some trash. This “trash” was of the human kind: two once-trusted members of Dread's crew. The James siblings, a twin sister and brother duo who had been with Dread ever since she became the captain of her own vessel, had been caught planning a mutiny.

Unfortunately the James' siblings had never been the brightest of individuals. Their major fault was that they couldn't keep their mouths shut and ended up mentioning their plans to almost every crew member on *The Lady Desire*. Dread had found out about their plan fairly quickly and she, along with her trusty first mate, Mister Martin, put a stop to it.

Dread stood on the deck with her arms crossed and most of her crew shouting behind her. They wanted the blood spilled of the two scallywags who dared to take down their beloved captain after all she had done for them.

"Captain?" Mister Martin stood next to Dread, mimicking her pose, and snarling at the shameless duo who stood with their arms bound by thick ropes.

Dread held up a black gloved hand, and her crew grew quiet. She pulled out a curved, single-edged sabre and shoved it under James' chin. Her hazel eyes sparkled under her black eye

mask as she gave him a cunning grin. James trembled before his former captain and swallowed loudly as he looked at the bright red scar that covered the length of her right cheek down to her chin. She was an intimidating sight, dressed in black, from her long-sleeved billowing shirt to her tight breeches and Hessian boots.

"What do you have to say for yourself?" Dread asked, pressing the point of her sabre into the brother's neck, causing him to bleed.

"It weren't me, Cap! Judie made me do it."

"Jimmy, shut yer trap!" Judie growled under her breath. She gave her brother a sulky stare.

Dread rolled her eyes. These two had almost driven her crazy with their non-stop bickering. To top it off, though, the initials of their first and last names were the letter 'J'. Coincidence? Dread thought otherwise.

"Why am I not surprised? I wouldn't put it past your sister to have planned this whole thing." Dread placed her sabre under Judie's chin. "Any last words to save your hides?"

Judie lifted her face proudly. "You better believe I came up with the whole plan! Do your worst. I'm not scared of the likes of you. If you want to take me down to your cabin and tan my hide, there's nuthin' I can do to stop you." She smiled and flicked out her tongue.

Dread stepped away, repulsed. She felt like hitting her forehead with her fist. She would never live down that night she and Judie had gotten drunk on whiskey. They'd ended up having a night together that she still regretted to this day. She swore she still had scars from Judie's nails from when the other woman had clawed her back and legs during their hours of hot, dirty fucking.

Dread turned away and glanced at Mister Martin. He held back a grin and cracked his knuckles. His bulging biceps flexed, and the siblings cowered as he walked toward them.

"Any last words?" he asked as he towered over them and grabbed them both by the scruff of their necks.

"Fuck off, you chump! Yer jealous I never licked your bum like I did the Captain's!" Judie squealed.

Dread lifted her face up to the clear blue sky and mouthed, "*Why me?*"

Mister Martin pulled them to the front of the ship, and the crew cheered as they followed on his heels. He lifted the scrawny siblings over the side and dropped them overboard. They screamed as they landed in the murky water below.

Dread and her boys leaned over the side and watched the siblings pop up out of the water. A small dinghy floated by them, and one of the men stopped rowing to pull them in.

"Bring them to shore and leave them there," Dread shouted down and pointed at the two waterlogged fools. "I better not see you again. If I do, I can promise you that my sabre will meet the inside of your stomach."

Judie spat out water and gave Dread the finger. Her brother sat with his head down. Dread walked down to the hold while the rest of the crew taunted the exiled duo as they were rowed to shore.

Mister Martin followed behind Dread, combing through his dark black goatee with blunt fingers. "Your uncle would be proud of you if he were still alive."

Dread turned to appraise him as she walked down the hall and into her cabin. She opened her door, walked across the multi-colored woven rug that covered more than half the floor and rested her sabre on her desk. She then pulled off her gloves, throwing them on top of her desk,

and took off her mask as she cracked her jaw. "Those two have been a pain in my side ever since I became captain of this ship. It would have been much easier to slit their throats and feed them to the sharks, but we're surrounded by enough bloodshed as it is. At least my uncle never went as far as killing people, including those who tried to stab him in the back."

Mister Martin sat back against the desk and scratched his bald head. "God rest his soul. And of course your mother's."

Dread nodded and walked over to the vanity. She grabbed a bar of tea tree soap and began washing her hands. "I need a stiff drink. What do you say we give the boys the night off and let them enjoy a bit of wenching and carousing?"

Mister Martin looked at Dread in surprise. "Didn't know you were up for a little slap and tickle, Captain."

Dread wiped a damp towel over her chest and neck. She curled her lip at her reflection in the small oval mirror and traced the towel over her scar. "None for me. You and I will find a nice corner table at one of the Cove's pubs and talk."

Martin's brow knitted and he scratched the top of his head. "Sure thing, Captain."

"You look nervous," Dread said as she glanced at Martin in the mirror.

"Me, nervous? Fiddle-faddle. I have some concerns, but that's not the same thing."

"Good. We don't have time for that. We have more important business to discuss."

"And what does this business entail?"

Dread spun around and threw the damp towel on the floor. She gave him a wide smile. "Revenge, my man. Sweet revenge."

Pickled Pete's Pub was filled with many hearty sailors who had a deep thirst for a few pints of ale, a game of dice or cards and an hour or two with the house wenches, if they still had enough coins left in their pockets. The loud buzz of conversation and a few drunken, bawdy tunes were being sung around a piano.

The crowd enjoyed themselves as the sun started to set. In a few short hours, many would either end up passed out in a dirty alley, or they would climb aboard their ships to sleep off their excesses.

Captain Dread and Mister Martin sipped from the metal mugs their serving wench had just set down on the scarred table. Dread took a deep gulp as the wench whispered something into Martin's ear. She yawned as one of the girl's nipples popped out from her sagging bodice. Mister Martin shook his head no and gave her a coin, which she bit down on and slid into the gaping front of her tight dress. She walked away with a swing in her hips, looking for her next paying customer.

"Sorry 'bout that, Captain. I just can't help that I'm so irresistible to the ladies." Mister Martin apologized, held up his mug and tapped it with Dread's. He laid his arm on the table and turned to the side to stare around the room. Dread copied his movements.

"It's a shame that the 'ladies' don't have a chance with you," Dread said, giving Mister Martin a light punch on his arm.

"Um... such a shame it is," Martin grumbled and coughed into his hand. "I take it we will set sail for Flaundia in the morning?"

Dread nodded. "By daybreak. I want to make sure we arrive with enough time to spare so we can plan our attack." Dread reached under the table and produced a bag. She opened it and pulled out a month-old newspaper clipping, sliding it across the table to Mister Martin.

He picked it up and began reading. After a minute he looked up at Dread and scratched his chin. "All it says here is that Humphrey is holding his annual charity ball for one of the Flaundian orphanages."

"Read further down. The article goes on to say rumors keep persisting that Humphrey will announce his engagement during the ball."

Mister Martin took another drink from his mug and covered a burp. "Who's the unfortunate lady?"

Dread crossed her arms and shrugged. "The article never mentioned the woman by name. Most likely some rich society brat. Knowing Humphrey, he would only go for some loaded beauty he can line his pockets with, since he is close to going bankrupt because of us."

"Captain, are you certain you want to go to such lengths? It is one thing to steal Humphrey's livelihood, but to kidnap an innocent woman, regardless of whether she's spoiled or not, and hold her ransom is something different all together. This is somewhat uncharted territory for us both," he cautioned.

Dread slapped her palms on top of the table in anger. "Anyone who sides with Humphrey, including his future bride, is also my enemy. That bastard deserves to suffer for what he has done to me. If not for him, Uncle Wallace and my mum would still be alive. Humphrey is the one who started this all. He must pay for killing my family." She hit her fist into her palm and gave Martin a tense smile. "I will hit him where it hurts: in his bank account. And when his friends and admirers find out he can't pay the ransom, he will be ruined. My revenge will be complete."

"As long as only Humphrey is ruined. I wouldn't want a young, innocent miss, even if it is Humphrey's fiancée, to get hurt."

"Martin." Dread gave him a hard pat on the back. "Are you turning soft on me?"

"Hell no, Captain!" he exclaimed and finished up his ale.

"There is no reason to worry about some virginal debutante. Look at it this way. She'll have stories to tell her children and grandchildren, if she still wants to marry Humphrey after all of this."

"Speaking of our soon-to-be hostage, how will we know who she is? We can't just walk in wearing our Sunday best and ask for the future Lady Humphrey."

Dread laughed out loud, and a few patrons turned her way to give her a glare. She lifted up her mug into the air, and those around her did the same and started to cheer. After a moment they quieted down. "Can you imagine me walking in like this?" Dread tugged on her mask and pointed to her facial scar. "Right you are, Mister Martin. Again, I have everything planned out. As we speak, I have a spy acting as a servant in Humphrey's house. She'll be able to tell me what his fiancée looks like and what she'll be wearing."

"Your spy is a *she*, Captain?" Mister Martin waggled his eyebrows.

Dread smiled in return. "What can I say? I have a way with the ladies."

A loud noise interrupted them, and both glanced around the room. A fight had just broken out between two men in the corner. One man flashed a knife, while another man and his friends began throwing empty bottles at the bartender.

"Well, lass, I'm not liking this group of delinquents. I think we should get back to the ship."

"Glad to know you have my back, Martin." Dread finished her drink, stood, grabbed her bag and cocked her gun. Martin did the same with his gun and walked out into the humid night air.

Mister Martin and Dread assumed no one was brave enough to have eavesdropped on their conversation. But two individuals did just that. The James siblings had been sitting on the staircase right above Martin and Dread the entire time.

They looked at one another in mirth.

"Did ya hear that, Jimmy? We're gonna be rich!" Judie tugged the hood off the cape she'd used to cover her face and slurped from her mug as she swung her legs in between the wooden railings.

Her brother pulled down his hooded cloak and looked up at his sister, who sat one step above him. "But sis, the Cap won't let us on her ship. How can we join in on the kidnapping?"

"Fool!" Judie bopped her brother on the head and rolled her eyes. "We ain't getting back on the ship or joinin' the Captain in on her plan. We're gonna find our own way to Flaundia and kidnap the lady bitch ourselves and hold her for ransom. Dread won't even know we're comin'. We'll stick it to her and that hoity toity Lord whatnot and laugh all the way to the bank."

"Bank? When did you open an account?"

"Arg!" Judie pushed Jimmy hard, and he rolled down the few steps to the bottom of the stairs. She stood, fluffed her black curls, and pulled down her bodice, hoping to catch the eye of a sea captain who was sailing to Flaundia. She noticed a few men who could help her. She licked her lips as she walked down the stairs.

"Stay here and outta trouble. Since you're an idiot and I have to do everything myself, I will gain us passage." Judie bent down and shook her finger in front of her brother's face. "But remember, I get more then half of the ransom money."

"Why's that?" Jimmy sat up and held his pounding head.

"'Cause I'm the one who came up with the idea and did all the work. Unless you want to be the one lying down with your heels up in the air for the next few days on a ship? I betcha a few of these men wouldn't mind stickin' their pricks in your mouth."

Jimmy's face went pale and he shooed his sister away with his hand. She blew him a kiss and sauntered over to one of the patrons who wore a big blue hat with a long white feather. Jimmy sighed and wiped his nose, watching as his sister shopped her wares.

"You are ravishing Daisy," Thomas said as he helped Daisy out of their carriage. She smiled at her brother and squeezed his hand as she stepped down.

"You too," she responded and patted her intricately arranged hair. It had taken her trusted maid over an hour to create her coif.

Thomas let out a deep chuckle and placed her hand on his arm. "Daisy, I know you are the woman of the hour and you must be nervous, but forgive me if I poke fun at you for a moment. A man can't look ravishing."

Daisy covered her mouth and blushed. "I simply must work on thinking before I speak."

Thomas turned and held out Daisy's arms. "You, my dear, are a bright shining star. No one here tonight will care what comes out of your mouth. They will be too stunned by your beauty."

Daisy tucked in her chin. Her brother's somewhat over-the-top praise did not help steady her nerves. She tugged on her diamond necklace and brushed at the skirt of her long, emerald-colored ball gown that sparkled along with her necklace in the moonlight. She glanced back up at

her brother and gave him a kiss on the cheek. "Let me rephrase that then. You look dashing, Thomas."

And she certainly thought so, for Thomas wore tight black breeches and a matching jacket close to the same shade as her dress.

Thomas was the one to blush this time as they began walking up the long driveway. "It is a good thing Humphrey will claim you tonight. Otherwise I would have to stand guard as the men all vie for your hand."

Daisy squeezed his arm and held up her skirt as they walked up the marble steps and into the foyer. "I may have to do the same with you tonight. The eligible ladies won't allow you a moment's rest."

Thomas pulled at his snow-white cravat and swallowed. "Um... In that case, I hope to find the billiard room and remain there most of the night."

Daisy giggled. She wanted to continue teasing her brother, but then she spotted Humphrey walking down the long staircase to meet them. He nodded at a few guests as he passed them, but he kept his eyes on Daisy's face the entire time.

Humphrey pressed a moist kiss on Daisy's bare knuckles. He lifted up her hand to admire her engagement ring. "I am so happy you have worn the jewelry I gave you."

Daisy ignored the way Humphrey stared at her gleaming bosom where his necklace lay. "This is your special night, and you did request that I wear your gift.

"This is *our* special night, my lovely Daisy." Humphrey gave her another kiss on the top of her hand. "You look simply ravishing."

"Why, I just said the exact thing a moment ago." Thomas slapped Humphrey on his back and glanced around the room in wide-eyed wonder.

Daisy noticed Humphrey's smile didn't reach his eyes. He also wouldn't release her hand when she tried to tug it away. "My lor- Draco, are you well?" she inquired.

Humphrey blinked and coughed in to his hand. "Forgive me, my dear. Planning the charity ball this year, like most years in the past, has had me working many a late night. But it is all for a good cause." He pressed his hand over his heart, and this time his smile reached his eyes. "Shall we go meet our guests, my lady?"

Daisy nodded and gave Humphrey a bright smile. She thought he looked very handsome dressed all in black. But she had no feelings of desire. She wished she felt some deep attraction for him, or some sort of a twinge in between her legs. But alas, that never had occurred.

The only time she'd felt something down below was late at night when she spread her dew over her throbbing woman's button and fantasized of a love that never came to pass...

Daisy internally shook these disheartening thoughts away and followed her future husband into the growing crowd.

Daisy had become very overwhelmed during the last few hours. The ballroom was filled to capacity. Countless bodies were squeezed into every corner of the room. Most of the guests were wearing strong perfume, if only to cover up their strong body odors. The combination of smells made her feel faint. She was waiting anxiously for Lord Humphrey to announce their engagement, but she longed to take a walk outside in the garden for some fresh air.

Sweat trickled down her back and she wiggled her nose as her brother waltzed her around the room. The smell of rotting onions drifted around them as they danced by a very large woman accompanied by her equally large, rotund husband.

Both brother and sister gagged at the same time.

"I do hope this set ends soon." Daisy tilted her head up to whisper into his ear.

"This room is stifling with all these... people. I would not be the least surprised if they admitted to never using soap and water before this night. I need a cool glass of water and some fresh air."

"I agree." Thomas sniffed and grimaced. "I wouldn't mind taking a walk around the balcony, since it is a marvelous night."

Daisy patted Thomas's shoulder. "Oh? I assumed you would be rushing into the billiard room."

Thomas spun her around one last time as the music came to an end. "I would love nothing more, but the amount of men and cigar smoke in that room is bound to make me nauseous. Can you imagine if I passed out? Egad, the gossip mongers would be vicious."

Daisy coughed, covering her laughter. Sometimes the words that came out his mouth brought on uncontrollable hysterics.

Thomas pulled her off the dance floor as the band played a much slower tune. Humphrey met them both as they reached the French doors that would lead them out to the balcony and away from the heat.

"Ah, Daisy! I have been searching for you everywhere. Will you do me the honor of a dance before we make our announcement?"

Thomas nodded and stepped back, holding out Daisy's hand. Humphrey barely gave Thomas a glance before he grabbed hold of her hand and pulled her out onto the middle of the floor. The other dancing couples made room and watched in wonder as Humphrey held Daisy in his arms.

A crick in Daisy's neck grew as she tilted her head up to stare up at Humphrey.

Why is he so tall? He should be more considerate and bend down to suit my needs.

Daisy wrinkled her forehead as a bead of sweat splashed down in between her cleavage. She looked straight at Humphrey's chest where more than a few sweat stains had developed. She sneezed at the overpowering stench of grease and cologne wafting up from his chest.

"Excuse me, my lord," she apologized and held back another sneeze.

He moved his head in closer until his mouth met her ear. "That is what I love most about you, Daisy. You are so considerate about my needs. I can't wait until you are my wife in truth. You are probably unaware, but there is another type of dance a husband longs to introduce his wife to."

Daisy licked her lips and tried to step away, but Humphrey held her in an inescapable grip. His knee went in between her legs, and she let out a gasp.

"Lord Humphrey!"

Humphrey chuckled, and in a quick maneuver, brushed his knee up against her mound. "My dear, I long to show you the sort of intimacies you have been denying yourself for so long. Well, I do know that a woman likes to give herself a tickle now and again as she lies in bed late in night under the cover of darkness. But that is no longer your concern. I'm here now to lend a hand... and a mouth, if need be."

Daisy tried to stomp on his foot, but he twirled them around the floor and pressed her face against his fetid chest. As he swayed them both to the music, he nudged his crotch into her hip and rubbed his hard arousal against her.

"Please stop." Daisy pushed her head away from his chest and moved back a step. The lusty look in his eyes frightened her, and she searched the room for help.

"You must be feeling overheated. Why don't we get a glass of lemonade? I also have a surprise waiting for you in my study." Humphrey winked and went to kiss her.

Daisy was finally able to step away as a couple jostled them. He mouthed a word she didn't catch, and when he turned, holding up a clenched fist at the couple, he was met with a hug.

"Oh my boy, this is such a lovely party!" The woman wore enough jewels to feed the entire nation of Flaundia. She was wearing a shockingly bright pink ball gown, and she had wrapped her arms around Humphrey's waist. The man behind her, who was wearing an equally garish, bright magenta frock coat, slapped Humphrey on the arm.

Daisy began to back away as the mayor and his wife made a circle around Humphrey. Daisy was swallowed up into the crowd and peeked over her shoulder to make sure her over-amicable beau didn't follow her. She saw that he had lifted his head, much like a dog sniffing out a fox. He was still being embraced by the woman who had so rudely interrupted them.

"Thank goodness for small favors," Daisy mumbled happily and grabbed a glass of lemonade from a passing waiter. She walked as fast as she could on her slippers out the French doors and onto the balcony for some much-needed air.

She nodded to some small groups of people who stood drinking from flutes and glasses and talking to one another. Daisy was very glad no one went out of their way to bother her. She walked along the long marble balcony, sipping her drink. She lifted her face up to the night's sky, enjoying the cool breeze as it drifted over her flushed skin. Her diamond ring glistened as the moon and the light from the lit torches surrounded her. Daisy massaged the nape of her neck and grimaced. She still felt very warm.

"Lord Humphrey!"

Daisy stepped into a far corner of the balcony as someone near the entrance called out for him.

"Damn." Daisy let out the un-ladylike curse, placed her empty glass on the ground, and looked around for a means of escape. She only wanted a few more minutes alone until she had to put back on a smile and welcome the congratulations that would surely follow once her engagement was publicized. She stared out into the darkness of the garden and found some marble steps that led down to a paved path.

Freedom! With one last glance over her shoulder, she stepped down and rushed away.

The tall bushes and trees lining the path covered her flight. She would find a bench to sit upon, and then, with a clearer head, would return, resigned to her future.

Daisy walked deeper into the garden and turned a corner, when she was met by a wonderful sight. Off to her left was a tall white gazebo standing near a small lake with lily pads floating on the surface. She walked to the edge of the pond and almost jumped as an owl let out a long hoot.

A light breeze floated along her hair, and she brushed a curl behind her ear. Looking up, Daisy enjoyed the sight of the bright stars above. A few clusters of clouds also floated in the distance.

Her eyes grew damp and her bottom lip trembled. It had been so long since she'd spent time sitting under tree without a care, trying to spot animals in the clouds. The last time she had done so was when she was seventeen. Since then she'd lost all joy in doing such things.

A tear dripped down her cheek and she wiped it away. She folded her hands against her chest and stared up at the sky again, noticing a bright star twinkling at her. She couldn't help but

wonder if Chelsey was also standing somewhere as tranquil, overcome with loneliness as she viewed the stars and clouds high above her head.

"Chelsey, oh my Chelsey... goodbye forever." Her voice broke the silence. She had said that name in such longing before, only daring to say it out loud late at night when she was in her bed, dreaming of her lost love.

A few more tears rolled down her cheeks, and with one final sob, she wiped them and turned to go. As she spun around, a hand grabbed her arm and something musty and scratchy was pushed against her face.

Daisy screamed and struggled, trying to pull the horrible-smelling material away as firm hands pulled her by her waist. She released a muffled scream and heard a low growl. Before she could kick and punch her assailant, something hard hit the side of the cheek and then the back of her head.

Daisy exhaled and passed out.

"Fins on a fish, Captain! Someone beat us to it," Mister Martin said softly as he and Dread watched across the pond as their booty was dragged away.

"Shit." Dread cursed and flinched when the young woman fell to the ground after her attacker punched her in the face. She held up her gun, but she didn't have a clear shot since the mystery man had wrapped the unconscious woman in a burlap sack and thrown her over his shoulder. He ran away and deeper into the woods.

"What do we do now, Captain? Do we rescue her? What if that isn't Humphrey's fiancée? I can't see jack shite in the dark." Mister Martin squinted and snuck out from behind the leaves to follow their prey.

"It has to be her. Did you see the amount of diamonds sparkling on her neck and the rock on her finger? Those have to be the Humphrey family jewels." Dread looked around, treading softly alongside Mister Martin.

"But that doesn't necessarily mean anything. She could be any rich lady wearin' fancy bobs."

Dread and Martin hid behind a tree as they spotted two horses. A person wearing a dark cloak stood by them.

"It's 'bout time, you lummo."

Dread shared a look with Martin when she recognized the voice. "How in the hell did those two know about this?" she whispered.

Martin just shrugged.

Jimmy rushed over to his sister with Daisy slung over his shoulder. He huffed loudly and pulled her off. "Sorry, sis, but I had to wait until the gel was alone. Walked right into my hands, she did." He smiled, pleased at his results.

Judie pulled off her hood and stood there with her hands on her hips, tapping her foot. "Take off the sack. We need to make sure she's Humphrey's chicky."

Jimmy pulled off the sack and Daisy's head lolled. Judie pulled Daisy up by her hair and stared down into her face. "Did yah have to hit her so hard? We need her breathing."

"She was yellin' something fierce. I only gave her a light tap on the cheek and back of the head, I did."

His sister shook her head. She took off Daisy's ring and grabbed hold of her necklace. She pulled it off and held it up to her face. "Cor, would yah get a load of this sparkle. Oh wee!" She dropped the necklace and ring into her skirt pocket and took hold of the horse's reigns. "Hurry up and get on yer horse. We better leave before Humphrey figures out his bride has gone missin'."

Jimmy nodded and threw Daisy face-first over the horse while he climbed into the saddle. When he was settled, he pulled her up and held her in a tight grip. "This one sure is purty. Can I play with her a little when we get to the shore cabin?"

Judie climbed onto her horse. "There are important things we got to do first. We need to settle in and write the ransom note. After that, you can taste some of that fresh virgin putang. Maybe I'll give her a few nibbles myself. Come, we ride." She clicked her heels against her horse's flank. Jimmy did the same, and they galloped away to their hideout.

Dread and Martin stepped out from behind the tree. "Do you think they're going to Old Man Sal's shack near the sand dunes?" Martin asked.

"I wouldn't put it past those two. Let's get our horses and follow them at a distance. They are completely oblivious. We should have no problem taking back what's ours."

"Right on it." Martin began to turn but then stopped. "Captain, will we be stormin' the shack? It's been a while since we stormed a building."

Dread tapped her fingers on her belt. "That would be fun, wouldn't it? But alas, it's not worth it. There wouldn't be any need to storm a hovel. We'll have to make do with scaring the shit out of those idiots instead."

"Now you're talking." Martin ran to go get the horses that were tied near a cluster of trees only a few yards away.

Dread cracked her knuckles, itching for a fight. "Some blood will be shed tonight. And it won't be mine." A cold smile passed her lips.

Martin let out a low whistle, and she ran over to her horse. Once they'd both mounted, they headed to the shore.

"Place her on the pallet by the fireplace." Judie pointed to the very bare, small one-room shack. She held open the door while Jimmy walked in, holding a still-unconscious Daisy.

He laid her down on the old pallet and started to pull off the sack when his sister stopped him.

"Don't take it off, idiot. What if she wakes up? She'll be able to make out our faces then." Judie sat her satchel on the table and opened it. She pulled out a foot of rope and threw it at her brother. "Here, tie her arms behind her back. We don't want her escapin'."

Jimmy did what his sister ordered while she lit a lantern. Soon the room had enough of a glow for them to see. Jimmy tied up Daisy and lifted her skirt up until the hem of the puffy ball gown reached the tops of her thighs. He pulled her legs apart, shoved his face in between them and took a sniff.

"Hey, sis, does rich puss smell different from poor puss? Cause she does smell sweet. Can't wait to eat me some of this." Jimmy gave Daisy's right breast a squeeze.

Judie rolled her eyes and pulled out a pencil and a few sheets of paper. "First we have to write this ransom note, and then we can have some fun. Since this here was all my plannin', I get to have a go at her first."

"I wanna watch." He snorted, spitting out a large glob of phlegm on the floor, and sat down next to his sister.

"These blasted jewels are causing me to chafe somethin' fierce." Judie took out the necklace and ring and threw them in the middle of the table.

"They sure is pretty-like." Jimmy went to grab them when his sister smacked him across the back of his head.

"Pay attention! Now this is what we're gonna do. I'll recite and you write, since you 'ave better handwriting than I do."

Jimmy licked the tip of the pencil and reached in the satchel for his black-rimmed glasses. He pulled them on, cracked his knuckles and rotated his neck. With one hand on the paper and his other in the air, he waited for instruction.

"You are such a nob sometimes." Judie took a quick glance at Daisy when she let out a moan. "We got to hurry before the twit wakes up. Don't want her to hear our voices."

"Rightly so, sis." Jimmy set the tip of the pencil down on the paper and cocked an ear.

Judie cleared her throat. "Lord Humphrey—"

"Shouldn't it be 'Dear, Lord Humphrey?'" Jimmy interrupted.

"Shut yer trap." Judie hit him upside the head again. "This ain't no invite to a tea party or a love letter. This here is serious. Now pay attention and write, 'Lord Humphrey, we have your fiancée.'" "

"Lord Humphrey, we have yer fiancée." Jimmy parroted.

"No! You're spelled 'yer' wrong. It needs to be your. Y-O-U-R, not Y-E-R. What would our dear departed momma say if she knew all her teachin' us our letters and writin' did nuthin'?"

Jimmy wiped a finger under his eye. "Poor momma, dead ten years now. Why, I remember when—" "

Judie stood up from her chair and banged on the table. "Jaysus! Stop with the boo-hooing. We need to get this done by tonight so Humphrey will have it by tomorrow. I don't want to stay in this god-forsaken hole in the wall any longer than I have to."

Jimmy opened his mouth to respond when the door slammed open. Dread and Martin stood there with their guns and sabres raised in the air.

"Drop your weapons!" Dread walked through the open doorway with her gun trained on the siblings. Jimmy dropped his pencil and lifted his hands while his sister flapped her arms out to her sides and stamped her foot.

"How did you find us?" she asked, crossing her arms and moping.

Dread had always thought Judie had a pretty pout, and had fallen for it one time too many, but this time she wouldn't. "You really thought you could outwit me, my dear? I'm C.W. Dread, the fierce lady pirate and scourge of the high seas. You should know by now you can't trick me."

"She got you there, sis." Jimmy nodded.

"Shut up you ass!" His sister kicked him hard in the leg, and Jimmy bent over in pain.

Dread held back a groan. "You two need to—"

Jimmy grabbed a long hunting knife out of his satchel and threw it straight at Dread's head. She ducked as it flew by, then pulled the trigger on her pistol and shot Jimmy in the knee. He fell to the floor, screaming in pain and clutching his leg.

"My leg! You cunt!" he yelled, rocking.

"Bitch!" Judie rushed toward Dread, but Martin grabbed her by the waist and dug his pistol into the back of her head.

"I would love nothing more than to shoot you in the brains, missy, so don't give me any reason to." Martin cocked his trigger and Judie stopped struggling.

Dread nodded at Martin, pulling out a chair. "Help your brother up and into this chair." She motioned for Martin to release her. Judie rubbed her arms as if she were in pain.

"Mister Martin, please check and see if our bounty is still breathing. I wouldn't put it past these two to have smothered her to death. Also untie her."

"On it, Captain." Martin backed up with his gun still trained on the table as he knelt down to feel the woman's pulse. He moved his hand up over her mouth to check for her breath.

"She's breathing pretty well, Captain." Martin turned Daisy to the side and untied the knotted rope.

Dread smiled and motioned with her gun at Judie, who stood there brooding while her brother continued to moan in pain. "What are you waiting for? Help your brother into the chair."

Judie mumbled curses as she pulled him up under his arms. Jimmy didn't say a word, just wiped his brow as sweat poured down his face. He sat down heavily on the chair that creaked under his weight.

"Captain, I ain't doin' so well. I need a doctor," Jimmy whined.

Dread rolled her eyes. "You should be glad I didn't shoot you in the face." Dread grabbed the satchel and rooted through it. She found some extra rope and threw it on the table. "Now, Judie. I want you to tie your brother to the chair. Tightly. I will be checking the knots."

Judie grabbed the rope and sneered at Dread. She wrapped it around Jimmy's waist and arms and tied him to the back of the chair. When she was done, she wiped her hands and stood twirling her hair.

Dread checked the knots and nodded. "You were always good at tying knots, Judie." Dread rammed her pistol into the center of her chest. "Now sit down next to Jimmy."

Judie opened her mouth to complain, but before she could get one word out, Dread had placed the pistol into her mouth and cocked the trigger. She raised an eyebrow and held up both her hands and quickly sat down. Jimmy sat there, sobbing and babbling under his breath.

"Mister Martin, please pick up the lady and ride ahead to the ship. I will finish here."

Martin nodded and carefully picked up Daisy. "You are certain you can handle these two?"

Dread pulled out her sabre and pointed it at the siblings. Their eyes went wide, and the Judie chewed on a thumbnail.

"If you are not on the ship in two hours, I'm coming back here," Martin promised.

Dread patted him on the shoulder and went to pull the sack off the woman, but stopped at the last moment. "Make sure to take this burlap off her head so she can breathe easily as you ride. You can put her in my cabin and check her over for any other bruises or abuse she may have suffered at the hands of these nincompoops."

"Hey now! We ain't touched one hair on her head. Right, Jimmy?" Judie poked her brother and he nodded.

"Right she is, Captain! We..." Jimmy's eyes rolled backward and his head dropped over his chest. A moment later his snores filled the room.

Martin gave Judie a hard look as he walked out the room. He pulled the sack off the young lady's head and dropped it in the doorway. He walked out, glancing down at the delicate and petite woman in his arms. She had gone through so much already, but she still had much more to endure.

Dread picked up the jeweled necklace, giving it hard look.

"Hey! That's mine!" Judie complained loudly.

"Judie. Shut the fuck up." Dread rubbed one of the diamonds and frowned. She picked up the ring and bit down on it. "We both have been fooled. These are nothing but cheap glass."

"Wot?" Judie's mouth made an 'O,' and she reached over to grab the faux gems from Dread.

Dread stepped out of her reach and put them in the satchel. She walked over to the pallet and picked up the rope, pulling it taut. She walked behind Judie and whispered into her ear.

"Now that we have that bit of business out of the way, you must be punished. Did you forget what I said I would do if I ever saw you again? I can see you're shaking. Afraid of what I'm going to do you?"

Judie turned her head and stuck out her tongue. "Do your worst, Dread. Ravish and plunder me for all I care!"

Dread walked away, pacing the room as she played with the rope. When she stopped again and turned, she was stunned to see that Judie had lifted her legs up on the table and spread them out, with her skirt tucked up to her stomach. She wasn't wearing any undergarments and the smell of her arousal was pungent and bitter.

Dread wiggled her nose and frowned. She still couldn't believe she had once enjoyed this woman's body and tasted the slippery folds that were now on crude display.

"Whatcha gonna do, Captain?" Judie licked her lips and dipped her hands in between her legs, releasing a loud moan.

"God give me strength." Dread muttered and lifted up her sabre again, cutting Judie's bodice open from her neck to her navel. "Strip and lay down on the bed," she ordered and gave her a smile that didn't reach her eyes.

Chapter Six

With the full moon shining brightly in the sky, Dread galloped to *The Lady Desire* in under the two hour deadline Martin had given her. With her head hanging low over her horse's neck, she flew down the coastline to where her ship was anchored behind the jagged cliffs.

She spotted *The Lady Desire* and waved a white handkerchief in the air. Three members of her crew stood up from the row boat lying near the shore and waved back at her. She jumped off her horse and walked over to the small craft.

Dread climbed into the small boat, and when all three of her men were ready, they pulled out onto the water and rowed toward her ship. Dread stood at the front of the helm with her arms crossed, gazing upon her home on the water with great pride. The huge fifty-foot-long sloop was one of the fastest ships on the sea. With her crew of sixty, she could swiftly outrun and attack enemies. In spite of *The Lady Desire* weighing close to one-hundred tons, it could maneuver very well in shallow water. It was the only vessel of its kind that had a specialty made cast iron hull, per her directions, four cannons on each side and seven sailing masts. The ship was both admired and feared.

The Lady Desire had been willed to her five years ago, when her uncle had been murdered in his bed in retaliation from escaping Humphrey after a fierce sea battle. Her brow puckered at the thought of Humphrey, and she wished she could see his face once he found out his precious bride-to-be had been kidnapped by his worst enemy.

The sea was pretty tame, with barely a ripple on the surface. The dinghy reached the side of *The Lady Desire* in no time and a rope ladder was thrown over the side. Dread climbed up with ease. Martin grabbed hold of her arm to pull her aboard.

She clapped Martin on the back and took stock of her crew, who were busy readying the ship to sail.

"How long until we're off?" Dread asked as she pulled off her leather gloves and walked down the stairs, into the belly of the ship.

"Less than twenty minutes, Captain."

"Excellent. I take it you had no obstacles on your ride here?"

Martin walked alongside her. "None at all. The lass is still unconscious. She has a knot on the back of her head and a nasty bruise on her cheek, as well as some slight scratches on her neck and arms, but other than that she is no worse for wear. I don't think she has been harmed in any other way... if you catch my meaning."

"She better not be. It's one thing to hold a hostage against their will, but another thing entirely to abuse them," Dread snarled, not pleased by the idea that her lady prisoner could have been mistreated in such a way. She reached her cabin. "She is an innocent in all of this and already has been through a great deal from those two bumbling asses."

"Speakin' of jackasses. What did you do to the James' siblings?"

Dread opened her door and leaned back against the wall. "I left the brother there to bleed and made Judie strip and tied her to the bed. She actually expected me to 'have my wicked way with her and to teach her a lesson'. I taught her a lesson, all right. I grabbed all her clothes and the satchel and left her there hurling curses at me. I threw everything into the ocean. They can both rot, for all I care."

Martin let out a few booming laughs and rubbed a finger across his mustache. "I would've loved to have seen that. Oh, and what about the precious Humphrey jewelry?"

"You won't believe this. Humphrey must be worst off than we first thought. The necklace and ring are fakes, just pretty glass and nothing more. I threw them into the ocean as well."

Martin scratched his chin thoughtfully. "I wouldn't want to be in your cabin when the lady awakes and finds out that her neck and finger are bare. Are you going to tell her that her engagement gifts were worthless?"

"Perhaps she will be too busy to notice or even care." Dread wiggled her eyebrows and winked.

"I'm not even going to ask how you intend to spend the next few hours." Martin yawned deeply. "Other than that small hiccup, I take it there shouldn't be any more problems?"

Dread raised an eyebrow. "For now. Next step is getting the ransom money from Humphrey and making certain he doesn't find us before we can get to him first."

"You know we are playing a dangerous game here, C.W. Humphrey is going to come after us with everything he has."

"I can't hardly wait." Dread grinned and patted Martin on the cheek. "Go get some rest. I will handle the lady when she awakens."

"I trust you can. But keep in mind she is a wee little thing and will probably be scared out of her mind."

"Will do." Dread nodded and saluted. She walked into her cabin, closed her door and left her gloves on the desk. She stretched her arms above her head and yawned. Two lamps were lit near her king-sized bed that lay under a large porthole, giving her a wonderful view of the ocean.

Dread looked over at the prone figure lying in the center of her bed. She unfastened the top buttons of her shirt and untied her black eye mask. She cracked her neck from side to side and poked the sides of her temples with her fingers, releasing the tension there. When she stood at the bottom of her bed, she looked down at the petite young woman wearing a smudged, wrinkled ball gown. Her hostage's face was covered by wavy blonde locks that reached down to her waist.

She felt a pang near her heart and rubbed her chest. For some reason this woman seemed familiar to her...

Dread walked over and sat down on the side of the bed. Her hand shook as she pushed away the woman's soft hair that smelled of fresh cut flowers. Once the light from the moon hit her unconscious face, Dread let out a gasp.

"Daisy!" Dread practically shouted in astonishment.

Daisy moaned, turning her face away, and let out a deep breath.

Dread covered her mouth with both hands and sat there, stunned. She reached out again and cupped Daisy's head, turning her face back to get a better look. Dread licked her lips and touched her own scarred cheek. The same scar Daisy's father had given her almost eight years ago when he'd found them together in the dilapidated barn.

"Oh Daisy... how can it be you?" Captain Dread, known also as C.W., and Chelsey to her most intimate friends, gazed down at the girl she had once loved and had never forgotten. Disbelief filled her very soul as she stared at the shockingly attractive woman who was planning to marry her worst enemy.

The rocking of the ship and the sounds of seagulls calling to one another woke Daisy from her slumber. She blinked her eyes and turned to her side as her stomach churned in such a way that made her gag. She took deep breaths to stop from vomiting all over herself and the comfortable bed she was laying on... satin sheets so soft against her face...

Daisy sat up and the room spun. She dropped her head into her palms and swallowed as her stomach rebelled once again. Her cheek throbbed and her head felt as if it was going to burst open. She moaned and gingerly touched the back of her head. There was a small lump, about size of an egg that stung when she poked it.

"Where am I?" Daisy whispered, lifting her head again. She blinked a few more times to bring the room into focus, and when she could see clearly again, she looked around in wide-eyed fear. This was not her bedroom.

Her mouth was dry and her lips chapped. No amount of licking them would give her the relief she needed. She was saddened by the sight of her beautiful ball gown all torn and encrusted with grime and other unrecognizable stains. Her hands were also smudged with dirt and a few of her nails were broken.

Daisy let out a gasp when she noticed her diamond engagement ring and necklace were missing. She searched the bed in a wild manner, praying that her jewelry had fallen off and was hiding under the sheets. After a few minutes, her search became a fruitless one. All she found for her troubles was a few pieces of lint and long, dark hairs.

She groaned loudly, tunneling her fingers through her hair, and scrunched her nose as the scent of horseflesh rose up from her dress. Before she could stop herself, a yawn escaped. As she opened her mouth wide, the right side of her face burned, including a stinging lip.

Daisy pressed a finger to her mouth and it came away with blood. She sat there, stunned. She crawled slowly across the large bed that was covered with many multi-colored pillows and coverlets. She had just set her foot on the floor when she heard the sounds of a door being rattled.

Violent shivers flowed up and down her arms and legs as the door opened. She backed away and landed on the bed and up against the iron headboard as she waited to see who would walk in.

Daisy pulled her knees into her chest as a tall person dressed in all black came in holding a tray filled with fruit and bread. Daisy didn't say a word as she watched closely. She covered her mouth to hold back a squeak when the person turned around, placed the tray down on an empty space on the desk and looked at her.

"Ah, I see you have finally awakened." The masked woman smiled, taking a step toward the bed.

Daisy held up a hand and lifted her face bravely, speaking the first thing that came into her mind. "You... you have stolen my precious jewels!"

The woman shrugged with indifference. "Perhaps I have. So what?"

Daisy's mouth dropped in dismay. "Do you realize how expensive- oh, what is wrong with me! Of course you don't care one bit what I think. You enjoy pillaging priceless jewelry and other trinkets for your own selfish gains. I am just one of your many victims."

The masked woman with the smirk took another step forward.

"S-stop right there, you scoundrel!" Daisy screeched.

"And what if I don't?"

Daisy's finger shook as she pointed. "I will scream."

Daisy flinched as the woman let out a husky laugh. "Go ahead, princess. We are miles out at sea, as you can tell. It's only me and my boys here. And they are used to hearing a woman's screaming coming from my cabin."

Daisy pressed a palm against her chest and frowned. "You apparently know me."

She gave Daisy a wide smile. "Oh yes, Princess Daisy. I know you *very*, very well."

"But how..." Daisy's eyes roamed over the woman standing only a few feet away from her, taking in her dark boots, the tight fit of her breeches and the jagged scar and black mask covering her eyes and head.

And suddenly Daisy knew who stood before her.

"You're her... the nasty lady pirate Dread all the papers talk about." Daisy sat up on her knees and looked at Dread in both awe and trepidation.

"Nasty?" Dread asked, unconcerned. "You could say that. What else do the gossip rags say about me?" Dread took another step closer.

"How you destroy other ships and terrorize innocent people, including my fi-fiancé Lord Humphrey."

Dread spit on the floor. "I can't believe you are going to marry that jackass."

Daisy finally stood up from the bed and caught hold of the edge of the headboard. She closed her eyes for a moment as she became woozy, failing to notice the concerned look crossing Chelsey's face.

As she stepped closer, Daisy opened her eyes and backed away into the corner.

"Stay away! Please." Daisy held out her hands, as if that would stop her.

Chelsey hated seeing the fear and loathing on Daisy's face. She wanted to pull her into her arms and tell her everything would be all right. But she had a role to play and, until she could trust her, she would stay in character.

"Now, Daisy, calm down. If you do everything I say, you won't get hurt." Chelsey held up her hands and took another step toward her.

"You... you have no right to call me by my name, you murderer. My future husband will hunt you down and hang you like the dog you are!"

Chelsey took in a deep breath. She was ready to lose her temper. Her jealousy rose every time Daisy mentioned Humphrey.

"That milk sop only cares about his own hide. I wouldn't be surprised if he doesn't pay your ransom."

Daisy's jaw dropped. "That is a lie! Draco will save me. H-he'll throw you in prison and hang you."

Chelsey was only a few steps away from her. "Draco? You call him by his given name?" she snarled, reaching out for Daisy's arm.

Daisy smothered a yelp and climbed onto the bed to flee. Chelsey grabbed her ankle and Daisy kicked at her. "Don't touch me, you bi-bitch."

Chelsey gave a harsh laugh and grabbed Daisy by both her ankles, pulling her across the bed. Daisy screamed and grabbed onto the sheet, but it was useless. She was yanked very easily due to Chelsey's superior strength. Daisy went to kick Chelsey in the stomach, but Chelsey dropped a knee on the bed, grabbed Daisy by the waist and turned her over. Daisy pounded on Chelsey's arms and yelled out curses she never would have dared to say before.

"Stop fighting me, princess. You'll only hurt yourself." Chelsey grabbed Daisy's wrists and pulled them up and over her head as she continued to struggle. Chelsey pressed down hard until Daisy couldn't move. Daisy sucked her breath in, about to spit into Chelsey's face, when a palm was slapped over her mouth, and both her wrists were held together in a tight grip.

"Listen, you spoiled brat. You are pissin' me off. If you don't stop your wiggling, I will tie you to my bed... and gag you as an extra punishment."

Daisy's eyes went wide and she stopped struggling. Chelsey slowly scanned over her face. She frowned as she spotted Daisy's bruised cheek and swollen, bloody lip. She couldn't help herself and pushed away a stray curl that had fallen across Daisy's mouth.

Daisy huffed loudly from her exertions and turned her face to the side to escape the pirate's touch. Chelsey snickered and looked down. Her bodice was torn and her chest was heaving. She enjoyed how Daisy's breasts had grown a bit rounder since the last time she'd seen her. She smacked her lips together in appreciation.

Daisy did not look pleased at the indecent looks her pirate kidnapper was giving her. "How dare you gaze upon my body like that! Only one person is allowed to look at me in such a way." Daisy clenched her fists and shook them, trying to break free of Chelsey's hold.

Chelsey tightened her grip and snarled in Daisy's face. "And who would that be? Draco 'the fink' Humphrey?"

"That is the man I love, you pirate whore!" Daisy screamed into her face.

Chelsey flinched as if she had been struck. Daisy watched as the pirate's face became red. She had gone too far.

"No," she whispered and struggled again.

Chelsey straddled Daisy, not caring if she was too heavy. Daisy pushed and pulled, trying to get out from under her, but before she could blink, Chelsey reached behind her back pocket and pulled out a long white, silk scarf.

"Now you have asked for it, princess," Chelsey growled and took both of Daisy's wrists and tied them to the headboard behind her.

"Stop this. Stop!" Daisy fought.

Chelsey was too fast and strong. She tied Daisy's wrists in an unbreakable knot.

"Shut your trap, your highness," Chelsey spat out and pulled out another silk scarf, this time a black one, and tied it over Daisy's eyes.

Daisy couldn't understand why she was so aroused. Not only was she confused by hearing Dread call her by an endearment only her past love had ever called her, but she was frightened, yet... strangely excited in some way. Her nipples had become hard and her woman's entrance was slick with need.

"Why have you covered my eyes?" Daisy asked and swallowed. She bit her lip and listened closely. All she could hear was loud breathing above her.

Chelsey took off her mask and threw it down. "Didn't I say you are not allowed to speak? Now that you have disobeyed my orders, you must be disciplined."

"Dis-disciplined—"

Daisy was grabbed by her face and given a hard kiss. She lay there, stunned, as her kidnapper jabbed her tongue into her mouth, searching for her own.

"*Nooo*," Daisy mumbled and turned her face away to escape Chelsey's marauding mouth.

Chelsey pulled Daisy's face back around and gave her deep, pressing kisses that Daisy couldn't help but respond to.

When Daisy sighed and joined in, Chelsey's kisses grew softer. She moved her lips down across her throat.

"Ah... why do your lips feel so right against mine?" Daisy asked in a low moan and bit her lip when Chelsey pushed her tongue in between her cleavage.

"Maybe because we are meant to be," she responded softly. She ripped open Daisy's bodice, causing her breasts to fall out.

"Ack!" Daisy yelped when Chelsey took hold of her nipple in her mouth, sucking vigorously. She nipped and licked while she pinched the other nipple with two fingers. Daisy let out a few sobs and cried as her arousal grew to the point that it dripped down the inside of her legs.

Chelsey's lifted her head and sniffed. "Hmm... I would say you are enjoying the lovemaking techniques from this nasty pirate."

Daisy's head rolled from side to side as she tried to dislodge the blindfold. "This will be rape, Captain Dread! My fiancé will—"

Chelsey bit down hard on Daisy's breast. Daisy moaned. As she panted, Chelsey gave her another harsh kiss, which caused Daisy's lip to bleed. Chelsey lapped at the blood and reached up, licking Daisy's chin. She grabbed her by the back of her hair, making certain not to put too much pressure on her bump. "You disobeyed me yet again, princess. Now you will pay."

Chelsey tugged up Daisy's skirt and threw it over her head. Daisy kicked out at Chelsey, screaming obscenities under her voluminous skirt and petticoats. Chelsey ripped open Daisy's satin drawers and stared right down at her bushy mound. Her curls were dripping with her need. Chelsey said a silent "thank you" to a higher power that Daisy was excited.

"Please don't, Captain. I will not say another word," Daisy said in a hushed voice.

Chelsey pulled Daisy's legs farther apart. "Too late, princess." She laid her long tongue against Daisy's pussy and stuck it in deep. Daisy sat up partway and the hem of her skirt fell down, freeing her mouth. She squeaked and grabbed hold of the iron bar behind her, grinding her hips up against her ravisher's mouth. It was as though her body had a will of her own and she couldn't control it.

Chelsey held down Daisy's knees in a hard grip, making certain she would not be kicked in the head. She slurped and nibbled over Daisy's nether lips and pussy curls. They reminded her of the taste of cinnamon. She couldn't get enough and dug her mouth in deep, licking and kissing Daisy's cunt as if it was a mouth. She found Daisy's nub of pleasure and flicked it, causing more of Daisy's dew to come flooding out.

"Good lord, you are a gusher." Chelsey mumbled against the inside of Daisy's leg and drank all of the tangy cum down. She wanted more. She released Daisy's knee and reached under to rub her fingers in between Daisy's legs closer to her ass.

"Dread!" Daisy shouted and lifted her leg up. Chelsey knelt and, with a rough twist, turned Daisy onto her stomach. Daisy sobbed into one of the pillows as Chelsey lapped her tongue across her cheeks. Daisy held her ass higher in the air for Chelsey to taste.

"More, I want more!" Daisy shouted in a hoarse, garbled voice. Chelsey pulled her knees under Daisy's legs and gave her what she wanted.

"Whatever you desire, my Daisy," Chelsey said as she placed a kiss on her captive's lower back and sighed. It had been so long since she had tasted such innocence. And now that Daisy had returned back in her life, she would have many more nights such as this and never let her go!

"Wh-what did you just s-say?" Daisy twisted her head to the side.

Chelsey didn't answer. Instead, she pushed her hand in between Daisy's legs, flicking her clit while placing open-mouthed kisses across her very round, smooth ass cheeks. Chelsey stuck in three of her fingers into Daisy's swollen core. Daisy let out one final throaty yell and fell to the bed, trembling.

Chelsey kept her hand at rest while Daisy's vaginal wall pulsed around her fingers as she continued to find her release. She laid her cheek on Daisy's ass, enjoying the feel of goose bumps that rose there.

Chelsey grabbed her mask and tied it back on before she turned Daisy over to face her.

Daisy had no concept of time, but as her heartbeat slowed down, the blindfold was untied and taken away. As she blinked, her arms were released from their bindings. She looked up at the ceiling, feeling a tug on her leg, and rolled to the side. Her pirate captor held her in an embrace, rubbing her hand up and over her hair and whispering in her ear.

"It is all right now, dearest. Everything will be for the best," she said against Daisy's forehead.

Daisy glanced up at the masked woman. "The last time I had such pleasure was..."

"Was when, Daisy? With whom?" *Say my name, my true name...* Chelsey prayed silently, waiting anxiously for Daisy's response.

But Daisy yanked out of her arms and slid off the bed, pointing at her. "You evil woman! You had your wicked way and ravished me... no, raped me!"

Chelsey let out a groan and sat up, patting the bed. "Why don't you lie down, dear—"

"Don't 'dear me' you fiend! I am a good, decent woman, and what you did was bad and evil!"

Chelsey gritted her teeth and rolled off the bed on the opposite side, crossing her arms. She gave Daisy a salacious grin. "From the way you're standing there with your tits hangin' out and your honey drying on your skirt, I can say you are just as much as a fiend as I am, 'cause you got off on it, especially when I had my tongue in your coochie and near your rosebud." Chelsey smacked her lips for emphasis and held back a laugh at Daisy's scandalized face.

"You... you..."

"Glad to know I can make a woman speechless with need." Chelsey winked and stuck her tongue out.

Daisy's lips trembled and she turned away, making loud sniffing noises. "I want to go home."

Chelsey walked over to her. The need to hold her in her arms was overpowering. "Come now, princess. Don't cry."

Daisy turned around, causing Chelsey to stop, shocked by the tears falling down her cheeks.

"You have no r-right to call me 'princess'. Only one person is allowed to call me that, and she... just leave me alone, you horrid woman!" Daisy fell on the bed, sobbing against the sheets.

Chelsey stood there dumbfounded. Daisy's sobs tore at her heart, and she knew from the way she was shaking that she was really crying.

"Daisy—"

Daisy looked up, clutching her torn bodice, and slid across the large expanse of the bed.

"Haven't you gotten what you wanted from me already? Are you happy that you made my body accept you? Do you want to force yourself on me again?" Daisy lay down on the bed, spreading out her arms and legs. "Here, take me again if you must. My body may respond to you

and your talented tongue and hands, but you will never own my heart and soul. That belongs to another, my one true love!"

Chelsey was speechless. She looked down at her hands and hid them behind her back as they shook, much like Daisy had only a few moments ago. Now Daisy was still, only her chest moving up and down. Chelsey could barely see her silent tears.

"Well then. You have made it perfectly clear how you feel about me, prin... my lady. I will remove myself from your presence since I disgust you so. We can't have you becoming ill now. You won't do us any good being sick."

Daisy's only response was to turn away on her side. Chelsey stared at her back as a few more sniffs escaped from Daisy's mouth. Chelsey rubbed her chest where it hurt. She stood there for a few minutes, but Daisy didn't move or acknowledge her.

With a soft sigh, Chelsey walked out of her cabin and shut the door quietly behind her.

She pressed a palm against the door on the other side. She didn't hear any movement. She stood in pensive silence and peeked up and down the hall. Seeing no one lurking in the shadows, she slid down against the door, pulling her knees up against her chest and pressing her head down in between them.

"Daisy," she moaned softly, covered her head and rocked.

Daisy remained still until she heard the door lock. She turned her head and rolled to her side after noticing Dread had left. Her tears fell down in earnest and she hid her face into her arm as deep sobs overtook her body.

"Chelsey..." Daisy mouthed, closing her eyes in distress.

Chapter Seven

Lord Humphrey stood in front of the window in his library holding a handwritten note on cheap paper. He had memorized the words. After reading the note for what must have been the twentieth time, he crumbled the paper into a ball and crushed it in his fist.

Dawn was breaking over the horizon, and Humphrey hadn't been to sleep as of yet. Neither had Stephens or any of his staff as they searched the property for his missing fiancée. He ground his teeth over the kidnapping of his lady. He'd found no relief in his cock due to missing the fuck he had planned for last night. And with all the drama and running around, he didn't have time to take care of matters by his own hand or even find a few moments of peace for one of the maids to service him.

"Humphrey." Thomas rushed in with Stephens at his heels.

Humphrey turned and raised an eyebrow. He was pleased to see from the dark circles under his eyes and rumpled jacket and shirt that Thomas hadn't gotten any rest either.

"Thomas, my man, you look as if you didn't sleep at all last night." Humphrey made his hand tremble as he ran his fingers through his hair. He dropped into a chair and looked down at the rug, pressing his fingers into his forehead, acting as stricken as he could over the taking of Daisy.

Thomas sat down next to him while Stephens went over to the bar, where a pot of coffee had been laid out.

"Don't despair, Lord Humphrey. We will get Daisy back." Thomas squeezed Humphrey's shoulder in sympathy.

Humphrey stood and paced across the room. "That pirate bitch stole the most precious thing in my life! I... if anything happens to Daisy..." Humphrey turned his back to Thomas and trembled to show how emotional he was. He gave Stephens a quick look and titled his head. Stephens nodded and came forward with the coffee.

"Sir, you must take care of yourself. Her ladyship would want you to remain strong." Stephens handed the coffee to Humphrey and then walked over to where Thomas sat. "Don't you agree, Mister de Fleurre?"

Stephens went to hand a cup over, but Thomas waved him away and stood. "Stephens is right. We must remain calm. The note said Daisy wouldn't be harmed as long as we give them the ransom."

Humphrey threw his half-filled coffee cup against the fireplace, making both Thomas and Stephens flinch. "Them? There is no *them*! Only a deranged, diabolical woman who has some vendetta against me for no reason I can think of."

Unwrapping the note, he walked over to Thomas, shaking it in front of his face. "The price she is asking for is impossible to meet. She wants ten million pounds in three days."

Thomas took the note and scanned it. "I have enough at my disposal to meet half of this. I can meet with my banker today and give you the funds."

Humphrey tapped his fingers on his belt buckle and turned to Stephens. "I assume we have another five million?"

Stephens swallowed and looked at Thomas, who turned to sit down. Humphrey grabbed him by his shoulder and quickly whispered in his ear: "Go along with everything I say."

Thomas looked up. "What did you say?"

"I told Stephens to send a note to my banker. We'll take out five million to match your own."

Thomas's whole face brightened and he exhaled. "Well then. See, everything will be fine. We have the full amount needed. After we send it to the drop-off location, Daisy will return to us, safe and sound."

Humphrey held back from rolling his eyes and cracked his knuckles. He couldn't believe he would have this idiot as a brother-in-law. "Thomas." He took a deep breath to stop from rushing over and shaking him by the lapels of his jacket. "I think you are missing something very big here. Dread has been my nemesis for years and enjoys making me suffer. She has killed countless of my men and many others, including women and children. She has kidnapped Daisy as her final evil deed against me. I have no doubt in my mind that she will order her men to rape Daisy, or kill her, even if we do give her the money. Now, do you understand the situation?"

Thomas's face went white, and his hand shook as he covered his mouth. "But... Daisy is an innocent!"

Humphrey walked over to his desk and pressed his palms down on top. "Yes, sweet Daisy is the innocent in all of this, but Dread doesn't care. I love..." He broke off and Stephens came over to press a hand against his back.

"I'm fine, Stephens, thank you." Humphrey shook him off, pounding the desk as he turned, walking back out in front and leaning against it. "Please excuse my emotional outburst. The idea that our Daisy could be suffering at the hands of these villains makes me sick to my stomach. My love for her holds no bounds, and that is why I have a plan to get her back before she can come to any harm."

"What do you mean? If what you say is true about my sister being ill-treated, we may have lost her already!" Thomas stood and walked over to the window.

Humphrey covered a yawn and scratched his crotch. "No matter what happens, even if your sister has been brutally raped and her mind becomes damaged because of it, I will still marry her. She is my soul mate. That is why we will act as if we are playing by Dread's rules. We'll make everyone believe we are going to pay the ransom. In actuality, though, we will sail out in secret in one of my strongest and deadliest ships and search for Dread. I have no doubt she is sticking close to the Flaundia coast. I will command the *Master in Arms*, the only brigantine ship with fifteen cannons and enough firepower to blast Dread's pathetic ship out of the water. We will take it down, storm it and rescue Daisy. And then we will have Dread at our mercy. She'll watch as I gut her crew and make her walk her own plank to drown in the shark-infested waters."

Humphrey rubbed his hands together, mentally enjoying that soon-to-be real fantasy. Of course he didn't mention the part of the plan in which he would rape Dread before he fed her to the sharks.

Thomas turned back around. "I know you are angry, my lord, but what will our government officials say to this sea battle and possible bloodshed? Yes, Dread is a criminal, but with our laws, she still has a right to a fair trial by jury."

Humphrey walked over and placed his hands on Thomas's shoulder. "Thom, the reason I'm so happy to have you as a part of my family is your idealism and simple nature. You're much like your sister. But this is a special case. Do you think Dread is thinking of what is right and wrong as one of her men force themselves on Daisy and tear open her virgin flesh?"

Thomas gulped. Humphrey stepped away, not wanting Thomas to vomit all over the very expensive boots he had bought last week.

"We are at war with these pirates. Due to my bravery and heroism as a much-respected naval captain for His Majesty's naval fleet, I can assure you I would be given the go-ahead to finish off Dread. Our country and its waters will be safe once again."

"You are right, Lord Humphrey. I will do whatever you say in this manner. Anything in our power to save Daisy and to finish off this bi... erm, ghastly woman must be done." Thomas hit his fist into his palm and nodded.

"Glad to have you on our side. Now, while you go to the bank to get your five million, I will get my ship and round up my men. Stephens will take care of other matters. We'll set sail by tomorrow morning." Thomas nodded again.

"Oh and Thomas, be very aware of your surroundings. Don't mention our plans to anyone, even those you think you can trust. I believe Dread has spies all around us. That was how she stole Daisy during the ball and had a messenger bring me the ransom note a few mere hours after she was taken."

"Yes, I will watch my back." Thomas gave Humphrey a small bow and walked out of the library.

"Sir—"

"One moment, Stephens." Humphrey held up a hand. He poured himself a new cup of coffee, walked behind his desk and sat down. He took out a box of cigars and opened the top. Taking one out, he sniffed it and put it in his mouth. "Take a seat." He motioned for Stephens to sit and lit his cigar, taking in a few puffs and relaxing in his chair.

"We don't have that large amount of money," Stephens said and shook his head no when Humphrey offered him one of his smokes.

"You and I know that. But that idiot Thomas doesn't. We'll pretend we have our half. Thomas will bring his. As long as Dread thinks we are pulling together the ransom for Daisy, she will have no clue that we are coming after her."

"You can rest assured, sir, that the *Master in Arms* will be ready to sail."

Humphrey took a long pull on his cigar. "I know. I was going to commandeer the *Arms* after I was given consent from the King to find Dread and take her down by any means necessary. I may even be given another medal for this and perhaps some monetary restitution." He exhaled deeply. "I wonder if they will hold a parade in my honor?"

"Ahem." Stephens cleared his throat and blinked as the cigar smoke drifted up toward his face. "I'm surprised you are allowing de Fleurre to come with you. He is a civilian, and this rescue is bound to be dangerous."

"Ah, Stephens, I have another plan for our foolish Thomas. The battle will most likely be a fierce one, and many lives will be lost. I can say that Thomas will be one of the unfortunate casualties. Such a shame that the poor man will have his throat slit by one of Dread's pirates. De Fleurre simply is collateral damage. With him out of the way, I will have his five million, on top of his property and his half of the inheritance given to Daisy after his death."

Stephens blinked again and leaned forward. "Sir, what about Miss de Fleurre? You cannot be thinking of letting her have a mishap like her brother?"

Humphrey let out a long sigh and folded his hands on the top of his desk. "You disappoint me. Pay closer attention. How will I ever get Daisy's fortune then? She needs to be alive and marry me. She will be overcome with horror and despair because of the violent rapes

she was forced to endure, including the loss of her brother. She will be very much all alone in the world as a fallen woman. She will fall into my open arms, bereft and heartbroken. I will be there to help her recover and to be a shoulder to cry on because I love and adore her. We will marry as soon as she attends her brother's funeral and recovers from her misfortune." Humphrey clapped in delight. "Then I will have her and all her money at my mercy."

Stephens stared down at his lap. "I do hope the poor miss's mind isn't broken from her ordeal." He visibly shuddered. "Those pirates are lusty, sexual deviants."

Humphrey took a gulp of his coffee and stretched his arms above his head. "All the better for me. Daisy will have no choice but to do what I want and when I want it. My own perfect little doll to mold and use in whatever way I see fit."

"I should go to the bank now and play the part." Stephens stood, fixing his glass that had fallen down his nose.

"Good. I will stop by the shipping yard, check over the *Arms* and round up the crew. You should get some rest." Humphrey stood and let out a large yawn.

"You should also, sir." Stephens bowed and started to walk out of the room when Humphrey stopped him.

"Before you go, have that new maid... what's her name? Ada... Aileen... the one with the big tits and very bright red hair... have her come in here to clean up this mess." Humphrey waved at the fireplace where the broken coffee cup still lay.

Stephens glanced over his shoulder. Humphrey poured a glass of brandy and sat down low in the chair with his legs spread. He unfastened the top of his breeches, and his front was tented where his arousal thrust up, rising to be free. There was also a small damp spot growing on his lap.

"Yes sir," Stephen said in a resigned voice. "I assume you will take the next few hours for sleep?"

Humphrey unbuttoned his shirt until it reached down to his waist. "I have other ways to relax than sleep." He gave Stephens a cruel smile and sipped his brandy. "Hurry along now and bring me the girl."

Stephens didn't say another word. He just walked down to the hall to fetch the young Abigail, who he'd just wished a happy fourteenth birthday to last week.

Chelsey stood at the bow of the ship as the mid-morning sun rose high in the sky. The horizon was clear and a few dolphins swam alongside the ship as it sped over the water. This was her favorite time of day, when she could enjoy her morning coffee and have time to herself before she had to handle the duties of the day.

But this morning was so very different, all because of the young woman still lying abed in her cabin who hated her. Chelsey's heart was a heavy one. For the first time in a very long time, she was at a loss over what to do in a situation she had no real control over. If she took off her disguise and told Daisy who she was, she couldn't even imagine how Daisy would react. What if Daisy did really hate her then, for abandoning her all those years ago by no choice of her own? God help her if Daisy really did love Humphrey.

"Bollocks." Chelsey grumbled and sighed.

Matters of the heart were a tricky thing indeed.

She scowled down into her coffee mug and took another sip of the bitter brew.

"Captain?"

Chelsey turned. Mister Martin stood holding his own mug. A towel lay around his neck from his morning ablutions.

"You have a spot of shaving cream on your face." Chelsey pointed to her own chin and shifted back against the mast.

Martin wiped his chin with the towel and came over to stand beside her. Both were silent for a moment as they enjoyed their coffee.

"If you won't mind me saying lassie, you look like shite. Did you get any sleep last night?"

Chelsey touched her cheek. Her scar felt more pronounced. The phantom pain did nothing for her mood. She shrugged. "I slept a few hours. I found an empty hammock in the crews' quarters."

"And why didn't you sleep in your very large and comfortable bed?"

Chelsey squinted up, concentrating on a large seagull flying by. "Our guest was not too pleased with me. She threw me out."

Mister Martin let out a booming laugh and slapped his knee. "You, the feared pirate Captain, C.W. Dread, were thrown out of her bed by a mere slip of a girl?"

"I am so happy you find this funny. I don't."

"Sorry, lass. I'm confused. I would have thought you'd be enjoying the wench's sweet, succulent flesh."

"Her name is Daisy," Chelsey whispered longingly.

Martin raised an eyebrow at the unfamiliar tone in Chelsey's voice. "You know her name? Did she tell you in the throes of passion? The boys and I heard her screams from one of the open portholes."

Chelsey didn't blush or act offended. It wasn't the first time her crew had heard the cries of a woman's pleasure coming from her cabin.

"She didn't have to tell me her name because she is someone from my past. Our hostage is the daughter of that exiled king my mum and I used to work for. Now, how is that for an unfortunate coincidence?"

Martin frowned. His eyes went wide and his mouth dropped open. "Are you telling me that Humphrey's fiancée is the same girl you once worked for?"

Chelsey nodded and pushed her fingers under her mask, rubbing her eyes and yawning. "Not only that, but we were lovers for a short time, about eight years ago. Her father found us in the barn together and blamed me for engaging his innocent daughter in unholy pleasures of lust." She caressed her scar. "He gave me this for my trouble and threw mum and me away as if we were horse dung. That was why we came to live with Uncle Wallace."

"And does she know who you are?" Martin crossed his arms and scratched his cheek.

"She has no idea... but her body certainly knows. Those screams were definitely of passion and not of fear. I wish..."

"Wish what?"

Chelsey fixed her mask and fiddled with her belt. "I want to tell Daisy who I am, but if I do, she may hate me even more. She told me she loves Humphrey." She frowned and clenched her fist. "All I have ever wanted was to be with her, to go away where we can be together and not have to worry about people judging us or afraid that we may be persecuted because of our passion for one another."

"Chelsey." Martin placed an arm around her shoulder. "Much has changed in the eight years since you last saw one another. You are very different women and no longer young girls.

She is a rich, entitled lady destined to marry a man who is revered and admired. You, on the other hand, have the reputation of being a bloodthirsty killer. I hate to say it, but there is no possible way for you two to run off and have a future together. At least you have these next few days to enjoy yourself until we get the ransom."

Chelsey laid her head in the crook of Martin's shoulder and closed her eyes. "I'm so tired, Martin. Tired of being Dread and tired of always being on my guard. After we finish this with Humphrey, I'm retiring. Pirate Dread will disappear and only her memory will remain."

Martin placed a soft kiss on top of her head. "I will support you in whatever you feel is best. But for now I think some breakfast is in order. Cook made some of his homemade biscuits and gravy."

Chelsey let out another yawn and stretched. "Why don't you go down and enjoy the eats? I should go check on our hostage and make sure she is comfortable." Chelsey gave Martin a loud smack on top of his head and walked away.

Martin finished his coffee and watched his Captain walk down into the depths of the ship. He took one last look out on the horizon and, as a breeze drifted around him, he couldn't help but shiver. He had a feeling that a storm was brewing, and Mother Nature wasn't the one responsible, but Lord Humphrey.

Chelsey stood over a snoozing, lightly snoring Daisy. Chelsey found this quirk adorable and would have loved nothing more than to lie down and hold the sleeping princess in her arms, feeling her breath against her face as they slept side by side in an embrace.

But that was impossible, for the sweet Daisy hated her deeply.

Chelsey released a loud sigh. Daisy smacked her lips, wiping her nose with her hand and pulling her knees up to her chest as she lay on her side. Chelsey couldn't help but pick up a stray curl lying over Daisy's hands as they were tucked under her chin. She released that precious lock and gently drifted the back of her knuckles over Daisy's cheek. Daisy muttered something and moved her hand away. Chelsey stood there staring down at her as she moaned and turned onto her other side, facing away.

"Oh, princess," Chelsey said in yearning as she covered a yawn. She walked over to her desk and looked down at the tray that hadn't been touched. She frowned and tapped her foot, wondering if Daisy would starve herself until she was rescued.

A mirage of images played through her mind of Daisy running into Humphrey's arms, kissing him... lying in bed under him as he sucked on her bountiful breasts and feasted in between her thighs. She clenched her fists, stomping back over to awaken her sleeping beauty, when the room spun and went fuzzy. She almost stumbled and righted herself as she stood by the end of the bed.

The sudden rage Chelsey had felt gradually lessened, and exhaustion overcame her. She yawned again and stretched.

"Perhaps a short nap is in order..." Chelsey murmured around another yawn as she walked over to her dark green fainting chair and sat down heavily. She watched Daisy's back moving up and down as she slept on, taking in deep breaths.

The urge to lie down and spoon Daisy made her arms ache. Instead of doing what she longed to, she lay down folded her hands over her stomach and released another sigh.

She would rest for an hour or so. If Daisy was still sleeping, she would wake her from her slumber in her own special way. Damn the consequences.

Daisy opened her eyes and blinked. She pressed her face deep into the satin sheets that smelled faintly of sand and musk and rolled onto her back. She felt the lump behind her head, pleased it wasn't as tender and pronounced as yesterday. Except for a slight throbbing, her bruised cheek didn't pain her either.

"Oh." Daisy sat up, ignoring the growling in her stomach. She couldn't remember the last time she had eaten. She refused to consume anything these villains had for food. She rubbed her eyes and blinked again. She longed to splash cool water over her face... actually, a warm bubble bath would be ideal.

She wrinkled her nose. She wouldn't be surprised if the pirates didn't care for modesty and took care of their toilet out in the open, where all could see...

"Oh my," Daisy whispered again when she glanced over to her left, spotting her kidnapper.

She shook her head over the way her nipples hardened and blamed the ocean breeze coming from the open window for the way her body was reacting. Her bosom had never been so exposed as it was now, although she would never admit that the lack of a high neck bodice or dress front was actually refreshing in the balmy heat.

Daisy shook her head to erase these silly musings of hers when Dread let out a loud snore. She crawled off the bed and stood there, shaking out her mess of a ball gown. There really was no need for her to do so. With the amount of filth and rips, the dress couldn't be salvaged. She tugged on her hair and wished for a mirror to look into so that she could see the damage to her body, mainly of her face and hair.

Dread mumbled in her sleep. Daisy tapped her mouth with her finger. She found it very strange that this pirate captain was sleeping in the same clothes from yesterday, as well as in her eye mask. She pondered over the idea of what a female pirate would possibly wear to sleep. Most definitely not a long white sleeping gown like she usually wore. The odds were that Dread had many dark colored nightgowns, mainly black because of her reputation of always dressing in that color.

I would not be surprised if she wore nothing at all... the satin sheets wrapped around her naked arms and legs as she moved... as she placed her hand over her thighs, rubbing slowly across her tender skin there....

She shook away the wicked thoughts that caused a deep twinge in between her legs. For some odd reason, she found herself standing over the sleeping Dread. A soft smile rose from her lips as she looked down at the woman who didn't seem as pushy and powerful while she slept. And that mask could not be that comfortable, seeing as she probably wore it most of the day.

Daisy's hand seemed to have a life of its own as she leaned over and ever so carefully grabbed the edge of Dread's mask. She pulled it up, and as she uncovered the pirate captain's face, Dread's eyes popped open and she swiftly sat up.

Daisy yelped and tore the entire black silk fabric away, doing a double take when she finally recognized the face. She stumbled back and tripped, falling to the floor and crawling backward until she met the edge of the bed. A ghost from her past stood before her.

"Chelsey?" Daisy asked in disbelief, staring up at her former lover who stood there with her arms crossed.

Chelsey gave her a fierce frown. "How dare you... why did you do that?" She grimaced and turned away, sitting back down on her makeshift bed.

"I-I don't understand. How can it be you? I thought you were dead!" Daisy pulled her knees to her chest and rubbed her forehead against them. "I'm so very confused."

"Dead? Why did you think I was dead?"

Daisy's head shot up, her mouth dropping open. She sat there staring at Chelsey and held out her hands. "You promised to write me! You said you would return to me when you made your fortune. And you never did. The only conclusion I came to was that you had died. I guess I've been made into a fool. The joke is on me. Here you are, playing pirate with a bunch of burly men, kidnapping and ravishing innocent maidens!"

Chelsey dropped her head back against the arm of her chair and laughed. "She says I'm playing pirate!" Chelsey spoke up at the ceiling. "That is a real hoot, princess."

Daisy climbed to her feet and walked over to Chelsey, wagging her finger. "Do not laugh at me, and do not call me 'princess.' You have no right."

Chelsey stared up at Daisy who stood in between her legs. She placed her arms behind her head and laughed again. "Oh really? And what are you going to do, your highness? You are not the ruler of this domain. I am."

Daisy's closed her hand into a fist. "You... you..."

"That must be your favorite word, or maybe you just can't get past that stuttering problem you still have."

"You bitch!" Daisy screamed, flying at Chelsey and reaching for her throat.

Even with her lack of sleep, Chelsey still had fast reflexes, and when Daisy came at her, she grabbed her by her wrists and tumbled her onto the couch. Both women pushed and pulled until Chelsey had Daisy under her. She held the other woman's wrists high above her head with one hand while she grabbed Daisy by her chin in a hard grip in the other.

"You liar! Release me this instant!" Daisy struggled, kicking at Chelsey's legs.

"Daisy darling, cease this. You will hurt yourself." Chelsey let out a whoosh when Daisy almost kneed her in the stomach.

"Oh... you... evil woman," Daisy snarled and arched her back, trying to escape Chelsey's hold.

"What's this, princess?" Chelsey glanced down at Daisy's bodice where her nipples poked out into little points. She licked her lips. "Perhaps you aren't as angry as you want me to believe."

"Stop staring at me that way! It's indecent"

"Indecent? After what we've done... ah, fuck this." She smashed her lips against Daisy's, kissing her hard and pushing her tongue in deep.

Daisy bit down on Chelsey's lip. Chelsey released her mouth and snarled. "So you want to play it that way, my lady?" She grabbed hold of Daisy's face in her hands and sucked firmly on her mouth, using her tongue and teeth until Daisy stopped slapping her on the back and joined in.

Daisy took hold of Chelsey's face and gave her long, wet kisses, nipping and licking at Chelsey's lips as though she were her favorite sweet she had been denied for so long. When Chelsey pressed her deeper into the cushions, Daisy wrapped her arms around her and pushed up, latching more onto Chelsey's lips, whimpering when Chelsey cupped her half-naked breasts in her palms and gave them a squeeze.

Daisy lay back, gasping for air. "Chelsey, I've missed you so!"

Chelsey nipped at Daisy's chin, taking in deep breaths. She moved her face down and gathered up Daisy's breast and swallowed her nipple whole.

"Hmm," Chelsey said against Daisy's oversensitive flesh and cupped her other breast as Daisy panted loudly over her head.

Chelsey released Daisy's breast, and with one last nip over her nipple, she cupped Daisy by the face again and gave her wet pecks across her mouth.

"You... are... mine... forever."

Daisy wrapped her arms tighter around the woman she had always adored. She turned her face away as Chelsey bit down lightly on her shoulder.

"Humphrey can't make you feel the way I do." Chelsey reached up under Daisy's dress and slid her hand around her ankle.

Daisy shook her head, leaning up on her elbows." What did you just say?"

Chelsey pulled Daisy's ruined stocking off her foot and threw it behind her. She was busy taking the other stocking off, when Daisy sat up and pushed her away. Chelsey fell back and looked at Daisy through hooded eyes.

"Does the princess want to be on top this time?" she asked, unfastening her shirt.

"Is sex all you can think about?" Daisy pulled up her bodice and pushed back her hair. She rolled off of the couch and looked down at Chelsey, who had already opened her black silk shirt and was in the process of unlacing her chemise. Daisy swallowed as Chelsey's chemise gaped, and one of her hardened nipples stood up at attention for her to taste. She licked her lips.

Chelsey pulled at her nipples and moaned. "Come here, my beauty." She opened her legs wide and slowly unfastened her breeches.

Daisy almost reached out, but stopped. "Chelsey, we must talk."

"Why?" Chelsey sat up, placing her arms over her head and wagging her eyebrows.

"Why? You can't be that obtuse. Have you forgotten that you have been missing for eight years? And not only are you some feared pirate who has caused such havoc for my people, but you've kidnapped me because of some silly vendetta you have for my fi—"

"Do not —" Chelsey bolted off from the couch, grabbing hold of Daisy's arms and giving her a light shake, "call him your fiancé. He does not deserve you. You will never be his if I have any say in the matter."

"Oh, and he does not? And why do you have a right to say who I should or should not belong to?"

"You belong to me!" Chelsey pulled Daisy up hard against her chest and reached down to give her another kiss. Daisy turned her face away.

"You are certainly living up to your name, Pirate Dread. You think you can take whatever tickles your fancy. Well, I refuse to be tickled, thank you very much." Daisy pulled out of Chelsey's embrace and backed away, walking behind the desk.

"Oh I see. You are still upset with me for not writing you." Chelsey sat down on the edge of her bed and tapped her scarred cheek.

"You think the only reason I'm upset is because you never wrote me? Have you forgotten what you did to me last night?" Daisy held up a piece of her torn bodice for Chelsey to inspect.

"I can assure you if we fight about that, you will not win." Chelsey pressed her fingers into the sides of her head and cracked her neck.

Daisy's anger for her former lover was very strong, but as she watched Chelsey sit, looking tired and dejected, she wanted nothing more than to hold her close and spend the day in her arms and in bed.

She sat down in a chair and folded her hands on her lap. "Yes, I'm very upset. You promised you would write and... come back for me." Daisy's voice broke, but she cleared her throat and continued. "That first year you were gone was very hard for me. I stood by my bedroom window practically day and night, waiting for you to come walking down the path, to sneak into my bedroom and carry me away. But you never did. I waited and waited. And when papa died from a stroke, I still waited, thinking there was no one else who could stop us from being together. But days and then months went by and you never returned. I... decided you either had forgotten me or found another to lo- take pleasure in, or you were dead. Silly me. Here you are very much alive and whole, playing with your swords and guns as if you haven't a worry in the world."

Chelsey folded her arms over her knees and stared off in the distance, as if she was lost in a memory. "Daisy, my plan was to come back to you. And I meant to write, but everything happened so fast. The morning I left you, mother and I traveled all day to my uncle, where he took us straight away on his ship. We sailed away soon after. I was away at sea for almost three months, and during that time I found out a shocking thing about my Uncle Wallace. He was a pirate."

Daisy didn't respond but, when Chelsey glanced at her, she motioned for her to continue.

"He'd kept his lifestyle a secret from even my mum. We had no other options and joined him on his travels. I learned how to run a ship from top to bottom while mum cooked for the crew. I found the open sea was in my blood and thought it was a perfect way to make my fortune, even if by begotten means. The reason I became a pirate was for you, Daisy." Chelsey looked down at her lap and peeked through her eyelashes. Daisy sat there in silence, looking at her coldly. "I knew it wasn't right, but Uncle Wallace made sure no one was hurt from our

pillaging. Most of the ships we captured were only filled with rich foods and silks and no passengers. Most of the time, we tied up the crew and left them without hurting a hair on their heads. But then the papers got hold of the story, and people started talking, spreading rumors and telling lies."

"I assume you will get to the point of why you have been targeting Lord Humphrey."

Chelsey stood and walked over to the desk. She sat on the edge. Daisy pushed the chair back, glancing at the closed door.

"Do you wish for me to finish with my story? If you think you can make it to the door and leave this room before I can catch you, go ahead. I can promise you, I will have my arms wrapped around you and you'll be naked in my bed before you can blink. And there will be no talking, because our mouths will be otherwise engaged."

Daisy laid her hands on the arms of the chair. She nodded. "Very well Captain, continue."

Chelsey gave Daisy a small grin, but it went unreturned. Daisy sat more comfortably, crossing her arms.

"Where was I? Oh yes, about your Lord Humphrey. Things were fine and dandy, and I finally managed to save enough to leave my uncle's care." Chelsey lifted her palm up when Daisy opened her mouth. "I know I should have sent word, but time flew by and then it was almost three years later. I swear to you I was going to come back to Flaundia and take you with me. Uncle Wallace wanted me to join him on one last run. What he didn't know was that it was all a setup. He thought we would be attacking another ship carrying some expensive alcohol and exotic spices. As we were about to shoot upon the ship, it hit us with so many cannons, the likes of which I've never seen before. We were ambushed by Humphrey, who was still in the King's navy at the time. We couldn't compete with a ship that size, filled with such massive weapons.

We were fired upon and almost taken over. But then a sudden sea squall came out of nowhere and we made our escape. Uncle Wallace was able to take us to safety, to a secret place called Pirate's Cove that is only known among..."

"Pirates?" Daisy lifted an eyebrow.

Chelsey leered and winked. "I knew you were a smart one, princess."

Daisy was not amused by the reaction on her face. "Lord Humphrey attacked your ship, but you were able to get away. You are still holding a grudge after all this time? He was only doing what was good and right since you and your family were breaking the law."

"Daisy." Chelsey tapped her fingers on her knee. "I'm holding a grudge, not because Humphrey was keeping law and order, but because that man didn't just stop at attacking our ship. You don't understand what he is capable of. He made sure we would pay for outwitting him. A month or so afterwards, while we repaired the ship, an assassin came on board in the middle of the night and slit my uncle's throat while he was resting in his cabin. The assassin didn't stop there, though. He went into the galley, where my mother was, and..." Chelsey coughed into her hand. "Instead of leaving her be, he ended up raping her and finished her off the same way he killed my uncle."

Daisy sat up straight in her chair. "Wilda? But why... what about the crew? Where were you?"

"I was asleep in my bed and awakened by a loud scream. It was my mum. I grabbed my sabre and rushed out of my room. I found the bastard on top of her. He had just... finished and was wiping his knife. I didn't stop to think and stabbed him in the back. A few of the crew came running in and found me trying to strangle the life out of him. They pulled me away so they could find out who sent him. It wasn't pretty, princess, but we kept him alive until morning and

made him tell us what he knew. I will leave out those sordid details, but he told us Humphrey had sent him to finish the job, to kill my uncle. My mum was..." Chelsey broke off and walked over to one of the portholes, looking out at the vast ocean. "I can't bear to see the hate in your eyes if you knew what I did to that scum-sucking bastard's life. I-I ended up killing him. An eye for an eye."

She didn't turn around when Daisy rose up from the chair and walked across the floor to stand behind her. Daisy laid a palm on Chelsey's back.

Chelsey moved away and sat down on the bed, folding her hands on her lap. "Killing my uncle was one thing, but raping and killing my mother was something I couldn't allow to go unpunished. My uncle owned a bit of land, so we buried him and my mother there on the cliffs overlooking the ocean, as he had requested. He willed me two ships: the one where he and my mother had been murdered and the one we are on now, *The Lady Desire*. I burned the other ship... couldn't stand to be on it with all that death. I took another year to fix this ship up and brought my uncle's old crew on board. We sailed out, and I became the legend you know now, the scourge of the high seas, the only lady pirate in existence, Captain C.W. Dread. 'C' for Chelsey, 'W' in honor of my Uncle Wallace and my mother Wilda. From then on, my goal was to make Humphrey suffer and hit him where it hurts. I attacked only his ships, stealing his expensive stock, hoping he would lose everything like I did."

"But Chelsey, you haven't lost everything." Daisy walked over to her until she stood in front of her. "Yes, you lost your uncle and your mother in a horrid way, but don't you see this revenge and hatred you have for Humphrey will destroy you? How have you lived with yourself for these past five years?"

"Princess, you don't understand. You never will." Chelsey stood up from the bed and cupped Daisy's cheek. Daisy tilted her head into Chelsey's palm and didn't push her away.

"And what does my kidnapping have to do with your revenge?"

Chelsey swallowed and rubbed a thumb across Daisy's mouth. "I had no idea you were Humphrey's fiancée. I thought he was marrying some rich, privileged debutante. By stealing his woman and ransoming her off for a large amount of money he probably couldn't pay, I would make him look like a fool and show all his fancy peers of the realm that he doesn't even have a pot to piss in."

Daisy cringed, backing away. "How much am I worth?"

"Ten million pounds."

"Oh. Well, it is nice to know that I'm worth that much. I should be honored." Daisy turned away, but Chelsey's grabbed hold of her arm.

"Princess—"

Daisy tore her arm out of Chelsey's grip. "Stop calling me that! I can't stand to hear that endearment coming from your deceitful mouth. What if you had known all along I was Humphrey's fiancée? Then what? Would you still have stolen me? Locked me in this room and forced my body to respond to your sexual expertise? Kept your identity a secret and left me guessing?"

Chelsey held up shaking fists. "You just don't understand."

"I see I have hit a sore spot. I recognize that look all too well, even without your mask on to disguise you. Go ahead!" Daisy did something very unlike her and pushed Chelsey, hard.

Chelsey stepped back and her mouth dropped in shock. "You think that if you kiss me into

submission and throw me on your bed and have your wicked way with me, I'll lose all reason. You are welcome to try, but it will be force and most definitely rape this time."

Chelsey lifted a hand to her brow. "Gads, my head feels like it's going to explode. I don't know what you want me to say, Daisy. I will not apologize for what I have become and what I plan to do. I wish things had turned out differently. If only your father—"

"If only my father, what? If he hadn't found us that day in the barn?" Daisy walked right up to Chelsey and ran a finger down her scar. Chelsey closed her eyes for a moment, savoring Daisy's touch upon her cheek.

"Yes," Chelsey whispered and pressed her mouth to Daisy's.

Daisy stepped back, and when Chelsey opened her eyes, she swallowed hard. Daisy wiped her mouth with the back of her hand, giving her a disgusted look. Chelsey dropped her head down, her arms lying at her side. "We knew our time together, that summer long ago, was bound to end. There was no way for two women, one of privilege, the other of the servant class, to have any future. Fate was against it. And this certainly proves that it was never meant to be."

She ignored the burning in her eyes and refused to wipe them in front of Daisy. Taking in a deep breath, she lifted her head again, standing proud. "I see your point Prin- my lady." She sniffed, laced back up her chemise and refastened her shirt.

Daisy stood there, twisting her hands as she watched. "Please—" She held out a hand, but Chelsey batted it away.

"No. I think you have said enough. I have spent too much time down below humoring you when I should be up top giving out orders. You can rest assured I will not force my suit on you any longer." Chelsey straightened her shirt and walked over to the fainting couch where her

back eye mask lay. She pulled it over her head and the top half of her face, tying it in a tight knot.

"I will have another tray sent to you that I hope you will partake from. You haven't eaten anything since we came aboard my ship."

"Chelsey, please don't be angry at me. You say you can't apologize for the way you are. Well, you shouldn't be disappointed in what I have said or expect me to apologize for the way I think. You must understand." Daisy moved forward, but she was pushed aside as Chelsey walked over to her desk and grabbed the tray of uneaten bread, cheese and fruit.

Chelsey walked to the door and looked over her shoulder. "Whatever you desire. Now if you'll excuse me, I will leave you to your solitude." She opened the door and walked out without another word. The door closed with a soft click

Daisy stood in the middle of the cabin, holding back tears. When she heard a muffled feminine yell in the hallway and the crash of dishes and a loud bang, she walked over to a porthole and watched the waves crash up against the side of the ship as her tears fell down her cheeks, unchecked.

Not once did she whisper Chelsey's name.

Chapter Eight

Daisy watched the sun dip below the horizon of the peaceful sea with a heavy heart. Nothing would relieve her gloomy mood. Not even the small feast delivered by a young teenage boy, barely old enough to shave, gave her respite. Neither did the bucket of freshly scented mint water he also carried in and placed behind the bathing screen where she could sponge away the grime and sweat from her skin. Her full stomach and clean body did nothing to put her heart at ease.

She knew there was no reason for her to feel so miserable over the way Chelsey had left. But this sense of loss, only equal to the time Chelsey had climbed down her bedroom window when she was seventeen and never returned, caused her to pace back and forth across the cabin. The swaying of the ship should have soothed her tender nerves, but it caused her stomach to tighten instead.

"What to do... what to do?" Daisy mumbled and chewed on her thumbnail as she thought back to the argument she and Chelsey'd had together. She couldn't get past the sad and lonely look on Chelsey's face as she left her alone in the room.

Daisy walked over and grabbed the doorknob. The young pirate sailor had failed to lock it after he had left. She wasn't certain if it was intentional or not, but regardless, she turned the handle and pushed the door open. She poked her head out, glancing up and down the hallway. No one stood guard. The wall across from her had a dark red stain covering it. An empty metal

mug lay on its side on the floor. Its liquid had made a congealed puddle. A few slices of bread and chunks of fruit had also splattered on the ground.

She knew the mess had to be from her original untouched tray. The loud yelling and banging noise she had heard earlier must have come from Chelsey. Daisy walked out of the cabin and stood there for a moment, deciding which way to turn, when she glanced down at her chest and remembered that she was half naked for the whole world to see.

"I simply cannot be seen in public like this," she muttered.

There was no possible way she could search around a ship filled with lonely men and escape being ravished. Feeling discouraged, she walked back into the cabin and shut the door. She spotted another door near the screen in the corner and walked over to it.

She jiggled the knob and pulled open the door. Inside were three shelves covered with folded garments. Lined up on the floor were various knee high boots, mainly in black and brown. Among the lot were silk shirts and a few dark breeches. Daisy also spotted a very long and deadly looking sabre standing in the corner behind Chelsey's footwear. The sight of such a long, deadly weapon gave her a chill. She peeled her eyes away from the offensive sword and focused on the clothing.

She scratched her head. "Why would Chelsey only have such dull clothes in her wardrobe? She really should add brighter colors to her closet." She shrugged, pushing the thought away, and took out a long-sleeved white silk shirt that would be adequate enough to cover her upper half.

Daisy pulled on the shirt, buttoned up the front, and rolled up the sleeves. The shirt fell to mid thigh, and if she had a mirror to admire herself in, she could only imagine what she looked like, wearing a shirt too large for her frame and a nest full of curls that needed to be tamed. She

pushed back her hair away from her face and walked over to a small dresser to locate some pins or a ribbon to keep it back.

Her search was almost a fruitless one, when she pulled open a drawer full of ribbons. They were all black in color, and when Daisy pulled one out of the pile, the slight scent of pepper drifted up to her nose. She closed her eyes for a moment, rubbing the ribbon across her top lip, smiling over the feel of the smooth material against her skin.

So nice... She stopped her mind from wandering and tied back her hair without the aid of a brush.

Daisy inhaled deeply. She walked back over to the door and opened it, not bothering to take a peek out this time, and walked into the hall. The hallway was in near darkness since no one had come to light the candles that lined the walls. She stood there for a moment, listening for any footsteps or conversation, but all she heard was the creaking of the ship and a small rodent squeaking behind her.

The mouse gave her the push she needed to move, and as she pursed her lips together, she turned and walked to her left. The hallway was large enough for two people to walk side by side, and she held onto one side of the wall as the ship dipped. Her stomach turned and she stopped for a moment to catch a few breaths. It was either the ship's movements or her unsettled nerves that were taking a toll on her body. Quite possibly a combination of both. But she carried on until she reached a staircase made of cherry wood with a matching rail and climbed up one step at a time, unsure where it would lead.

The climb wasn't too steep and, when she mounted the final step, she reached the ship's deck. Daisy looked up and smiled as she watched the full moon rise to meet its children, the stars that twinkled so brightly in the darkened sky. She walked further out on deck, and without any

concern for her well-being or who could be watching, she wandered over to the side. Her arm was grabbed in a tight hold right before she could lay her hand down on the smooth wood.

Daisy spun on her heel and lifted her bare foot to kick the person holding her prisoner. She looked up at a very tall and handsome bald-headed man with a short beard. Daisy suddenly thought of her brother, Thomas, and how many a times he had tried to grow his whiskers in just that way as this pirate sailor had.

"Sir, I would ask you to unhand me." She lifted her chin, speaking proudly. Her legs started shaking, though, from the pointed look this man gave her with his very naked bulging arms on display. He only wore fawn-colored breeches and dark brown boots, much like the ones Chelsey wore.

If she had been any other woman, she would have taken a moment to appreciate this man's rock-hard chest. But thoughts of Chelsey intruded on her mind.

The handsome man released her arm and gave her a bow. "Pardon me, my lady. I wouldn't want you to slip and tumble off the ship. This here is shark-infested waters, and the moment your body hits the ocean below, you would be pulled apart and never see the light of day ever again."

Daisy pressed her hand against her stomach at the description of the gruesome prospect. "Why... thank you for making me aware and for being concerned. I must say you are a polite fellow for being a nasty, cold-blooded pirate."

The pirate gentleman slapped his hands on his knees and bent over laughing. Daisy stood there biting her lip, unsure what to do, and waited until the man finished his laughing fit. When he did, he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and combed through his short black and gray beard.

"Well miss, my momma did teach me manners, God rest her soul." He smiled and held out a hand. "I was also taught that when in the presence of a lady, introductions are in order. People call me Mister Martin, but you can call me Martin."

Daisy held out her hand and Martin gasped it in a gentle hold, pumping it once. She watched his paw-like hand consume hers and gave him a small smile.

"No one would believe me if I told them I was making pleasantries with a polite yet bloodthirsty pirate. They would think I made up a story, much like those lurid gothic novels I loved to read when I was younger."

"And no one would believe me if I told my mates that my Captain's hostage stood before me not cowering in fear." Martin gave Daisy a good stare, which made her blush, but otherwise she didn't fidget or gasp in fright.

"Perhaps I'm bolder than your Captain realizes. Speaking of, where can I locate Chelsey?"

Martin lifted an eyebrow and walked over to the side to look down below. Daisy followed suit and glanced over the edge. The moonlight cast a glow on the water. She spotted a few fins bobbing up and down in the waves. She began to make a comment about the sharks when Martin looked back at her.

"So she told you who she was. I guess it was bound to happen with you being in such closer quarters and all." Martin made no mention of Daisy's passionate screams and moans that had come from Chelsey's cabin the night before.

Daisy blushed, looked down at her bare feet and wiggled her toes. "Yes she did. Um... she fell asleep and was less than pleased that I took off her mask."

Martin snorted, rubbing the back of his neck. "This is quite the kettle of tea we have here, my lady."

Daisy released a giggle and Martin lifted an eyebrow. "Please excuse me, but you have the strangest accent that I simply can't place. You do say the most darling things."

"Darling?" Martin frowned, tapping his boot.

Daisy folded her hands in front of her and came to some interesting conclusions about this pirate, who was not what he first seemed to be. When she placed a hand on his bicep, he gave her a blank stare.

"Chelsey told me most of what had happened after she left my father's employment, how she became the legendary C.W. Dread, and my fian- Lord Humphrey's role in her uncle and mother's death. I'm not sure what to think about the recent turn of events, since I seem to be a victim in all of this." Daisy bit her lip and glanced up at the sky. "Chelsey left before we could finish our conversation. I would very much like to be taken to her. If you will allow me the honor, that is."

Martin wiggled his nose and pulled away from Daisy. He tapped his fingers on his belt and scratched his very bronzed and smooth chest. Daisy stood there admiring his chest with no shame. She had seen many of her father's field workers go without a shirt while they worked in the hot sun...

"My lady?" Martin waved a hand in front of Daisy's face. She blinked and gave him a sheepish smile.

"Forgive me. I was lost in my thoughts for a moment."

Martin nodded. Daisy was certain he was unaware she had been ogling him.

He held out his arm for her to take. "Follow me and I will take you to the Captain. But beware. She is not in the most agreeable of moods."

Daisy took hold of Martin's arm and looked up at the towering male who stood a good foot above her. "Perhaps while we make our way to her, you can tell me what to expect so I don't fall into vapors."

Martin let out a loud, booming laugh as he led Daisy across the ship and down into the galley where the dining room was located. A few of the crew watched in silence as their Captain's first mate acted as if he were anywhere but on a pirate ship; rather, he acted as if he were taking a leisurely stroll alongside a true lady, who listened intently to everything he had to say.

Chelsey didn't turn around when she heard the door swing open. She was slouched down in one of the dining room chairs with her legs spread open on the table, drinking deeply from a bottle of rum. She was a quarter of her way through the bottle and still felt far too sober for the occasion. Before the hour was through, she would swallow down another quarter and hope that was good enough to get her stinking drunk and passed out until morning.

She took another swig and released the two top buttons of her shirt. She waited for someone to speak, but no one did.

"Whadja want?" she purposely slurred, taking another swig.

"Chelsey." Daisy's voice rang out from behind her.

Chelsey dropped her feet to the floor. She squeezed the bottle in a tight grip and rolled her head across her shoulders.

"Imbibing in alcohol is not the answer." Daisy walked around and stood off to the side.

Chelsey glanced up at Daisy, took another gulp and then said in a high pitched voice.

"She says imbibing is not the answer. Heh."

"There is no need to be mean to me."

Chelsey pushed her chair back and stumbled, steadying herself on the edge of the table.

Daisy held out her arms to catch her, but Chelsey swayed and snickered. "Aw princess, am I being a mean, old nasty pirate? I'll show yah mean. Lie down face first across the table and lift up your skirts so I can spank your ass and diddle you while I make you come. Now that is what I call a nasty pirate." Chelsey let out a hoot and climbed on top of the table, swinging her legs back and forth.

Daisy shook her head, pulled out the chair Chelsey had been sitting on and took her place. "And, there is no reason for you to be disgusting. I have been thinking..."

Chelsey rolled her eyes and saluted Daisy with her bottle. "Well, la dee dah, Miss Daisy. So you are able to think. Congratulations. You are better off then most of your like."

Daisy stood and kicked the chair back with her foot. It flew and fell over to its side. She stared at Chelsey, panting with unchecked anger.

Chelsey clapped loudly. "Well done, princess! Good to known you have a backbone. For the life of me, I never thought you did... *hey!*"

Daisy had grabbed the bottle of rum out of Chelsey's hand and smashed it against the wall. Chelsey didn't flinch or show any emotion as she watched the precious liquid drip down to the floor.

"I may not be a nasty pirate, but you think I can't have a snit like you? I surely can, I promise you that." Daisy stamped her foot, pointing her chin out.

Chelsey's shoulders drooped and she wiped her mouth with the back of her arm. "Why can't you leave me in peace? You haunt me wherever I go."

"I haunt you?" Daisy moved forward, grabbed the front of Chelsey's shirt and pulled her in close. "How dare you say I haunt you! How soon we forget that you left me. Night after night, I lay in my bed craving your kisses, your touch, your lo..."

Chelsey wrenched her hands into the front of Daisy's shirt, pulling her so close that their noses almost touched. "Go on. Finish what you're going to say. You crave my kisses, my touch, my..."

Daisy wrapped her hands around Chelsey's hands and looked her straight in the eye, although her lips trembled. "Your love. There. Are you happy now? I longed for your love. But I was such a silly girl. You never loved me, not at all. You only wanted to quench your desire with my pure, innocent flesh."

Chelsey rolled her eyes. "Your speech is a bit on the flowery side, princess."

A tear fell down Daisy's cheek. "Why how dare you make fun of me—"

Chelsey took hold of Daisy's face and placed her forehead against hers. She let out a deep sigh, the fumes of the rum covering their faces, and didn't say a word. Daisy's mouth trembled but she remained silent.

Finally Chelsey lifted her face away and tapped her thumbs over Daisy's cheeks. "How can you think I didn't love you? I'd told you countless times."

"When? You never said the words, 'I love you.'"

"Daisy... my dearest Daisy." Chelsey caressed Daisy's face and swept away the tears that were falling down her cheeks and throat. Chelsey's own eyes started to water. Later on she would

blame the rum for her loss of emotion. "Every time I said, 'whatever you desire,' I was really saying 'I love you.'"

Chelsey expected Daisy to fall into her arms, but she did something much more unexpected. She whacked Chelsey hard in the arm with her fist.

"Ow! What was that for?" Chelsey grumbled, massaging her abused limb.

"You... you. How was I to know that meant you loved me? Normal people tell one another, 'I love you.' Not some statement that has a hidden meaning." Daisy flapped her arms and started to turn away when Chelsey grabbed her from behind and wrapped her arms around her stomach, placing her mouth under her ear.

"Daisy, I do love you so much. I loved you from the moment I first met you when my mum and I came to work for your father. Every time I helped you saddle your horse, I loved you. I loved you under the tree near the lake when I kissed you for the first time. I loved you countless times since then and still do." Chelsey closed her eyes and sighed when Daisy placed her hands on top of hers and leaned back.

Both women stood there, swaying together slowly.

Daisy turned in Chelsey's arms and smiled brightly. "There is nothing more I want in this world than to be with you. That is all I have ever wanted."

"I know, Daisy." Chelsey wanted to hear those three special words from Daisy's mouth, but instead she covered her lips with her own and gave her a sweet kiss.

Daisy sighed and wrapped her arms around Chelsey. She slipped her tongue into Chelsey's mouth.

When she was close to breathless, they pulled apart. Chelsey took Daisy's hand and kissed her palm. Daisy closed her hand around the kiss and cupped Chelsey's cheek.

"Oh, princess, I want you so badly. Please come back to my cabin so I can show you how much."

"Will you tie me to your bed, blindfold me, and plunder my body?" Daisy asked in a cheeky tone, caressing her fingers over Chelsey's collarbone.

Chelsey pulled Daisy up by her ass and gave her another hot and needy kiss. "Only if you want to, my lady."

Daisy placed her palms over Chelsey's breasts and gave them a light squeeze. Chelsey moaned and cuddled Daisy's ass in return.

"I want nothing more than to go back with you to your cabin and let you have your wicked way with me." Daisy reached up to kiss her again, but Chelsey placed her finger over her lips.

"This time it will be a seduction. I can promise you that."

"We can seduce each other." Daisy grabbed Chelsey behind the head and kissed her with great enthusiasm.

The walk back to Chelsey's cabin was a quiet one. Her crew didn't call out or stop them as they walked across the deck. Martin stood near the main mast, and when Chelsey walked past with an arm wrapped around Daisy's waist, he tilted his head and gave her a wink. Chelsey winked back and, as she reached the stairs leading down into the ship, she grabbed Daisy's hand and they ran down, holding back giggles.

When they entered the cabin, Chelsey pulled Daisy into her arms, slammed the door shut with her palm and pushed her against it. She kissed her with a deep passion and didn't even stop to think about the consequences of ripping apart the shirt Daisy wore.

"Oh Captain Dread, you naughty girl." Daisy sighed and tilted her head as Chelsey's placed kisses along the curve of her throat.

"Yes, I'm a very naughty girl. And soon you will be, too. You have worn that dress long enough. Take it off," Chelsey said gruffly as she pulled the shirt off of Daisy and threw it to the floor. She stepped back, took off her own shirt and walked over to the bed. She took off her mask and threw it over her shoulder. Then she sat down to take off her boots.

Daisy walked into the center of the room and watched as Chelsey undressed. Chelsey made quick work of her garments and, without a care for modesty, sat before Daisy naked.

"Princess, I'm waiting." Chelsey fell back on her elbows and crossed her legs. She licked her lips and looked at Daisy as if she wanted to devour her.

The last time Daisy had been naked with another person was with Chelsey when she'd had a much younger body. She was amazed by how perfect Chelsey was in the flesh. Her breasts were high and full, with a flat stomach, hips that were curved precisely so, and arms and legs that did not seem to have an ounce of fat on them. Daisy, on the other hand, had a slightly rounded stomach and her underarm flesh was not as tight as she wished it to be.

"Daisy?" Chelsey asked in concern as she sat up and walked over to her. She squeezed Daisy's shoulders. "If you rather we lie down for a while and hold one another—"

"No. I don't want to just hold you. I want to lie in your arms and kiss you all over with nothing between us. I-I am just not that comfortable as you are with your nakedness. I admit it, I'm shy. You must think I'm being childish."

"Look at me." Chelsey tilted Daisy's chin up and gave her a light kiss. "You are not acting like a child at all. I should be the one apologizing for acting randy and not thinking. If you prefer, you can get undressed under the covers."

Daisy's eyes roamed over Chelsey's face. Even though she saw understanding there, she couldn't help but wonder if Chelsey was disappointed in her overly proper nature. She took a quick glance at Chelsey's naked breasts and held back a moan as she admired her distended nipples pointing up in perfect little points, waiting to be sucked and fondled. She pulled back her shoulders and came to an important decision.

She kissed Chelsey so hard that she stumbled back. Daisy took hold of Chelsey's nipples in her fingers and tugged at them. She pushed Chelsey into the bed until Chelsey fell back with her on top. Chelsey growled, and as Daisy pressed in closer, she rolled on top of her.

"This has to come off now. I want to wrap myself around you." She rose up and tore Daisy's bodice apart even further.

Daisy gasped. The front of her dress and chemise were ruined. Her corset was also loosened and the laces frayed. She lay there as Chelsey muttered under her breath, pulling and tugging her dress off. As Chelsey finally made haste of the one final obstruction between them, Daisy covered her mouth and snickered.

"Glad you are finding humor in this." Chelsey knelt, and with a grunt, pulled off Daisy's gown. She threw it on the floor. As she went to do the same to Daisy's chemise, her eyes widened in surprise to see that Daisy had taken care of that chore herself.

Daisy wiggled her hips, and off went the chemise. She threw it off to the side and squeezed her breasts together, moaning.

"Not so shy and timid now?" Chelsey moved in between Daisy's legs, pressing her pussy over Daisy's moist center.

Daisy licked her lips and gave Chelsey a small smile. "After everything that has happened between us, why should I be worried if my body isn't pleasing to you?"

"Oh, you please me very well, princess." Chelsey laid her palms on either side of Daisy's head, looking her up and down. She blew on Daisy's chest and flicked her nipple with her tongue.

Daisy moaned again and rubbed her foot up and down the inside of Chelsey's calf.

"You are perfect to me," Chelsey whispered, lying prone over her. She placed a kiss over Daisy's heart and, with a finger, traced the words 'I love you' across Daisy's stomach. When she finished, Daisy pressed her palm over Chelsey's scarred cheek.

Tears filled Daisy eyes as she looked at her with such tenderness. "I love you so, Chelsey." Her lips quivered and she slid down until her face was next to Chelsey's. She kissed Chelsey's forehead, as well as the tip of her nose, and licked over her scar. Chelsey moaned and rolled to the side, taking Daisy with her. Daisy wrapped an arm around Chelsey and swallowed her right breast in her mouth. As she sucked, Chelsey slid her hand over Daisy's ass and reached in between her legs, tenderly stroking Daisy's silky pussy.

Daisy sucked on Chelsey's breasts while Chelsey played with the womanly core that dripped all over her fingers. Daisy moaned and released a nipple with a soft pop. She moved up for more delicious kissing.

Chelsey licked and nipped at Daisy's mouth, alternating between slow and long, wet, all-consuming kisses. Sweat soon covered their bodies and their legs as they entwined together in a passionate embrace.

"Daisy?" Chelsey nipped at Daisy's mouth and moved her face back slightly.

Daisy's eyes drooped and she moved her knee in between Chelsey's legs, scraping her nails over the prickly curls there.

"Yes?" Daisy took Chelsey's hand and kissed her knuckles. And when she took Chelsey's middle finger into her mouth and sucked down hard, Chelsey snarled and moved to straddle her. Daisy lay back and bit down on one of her fingers as Chelsey flicked her nipples and swiveled her hips where her mound moved across Daisy's.

"I want to love you with my mouth." Chelsey pressed her thumb into Daisy's cunt and found her spongy sweet spot.

"Yesssss... oh yes." Daisy rose her hips up in time with Chelsey's thumb.

Chelsey pressed in two more fingers and Daisy sobbed, lifted her hips up as Chelsey's hand made her body shudder from the intense pleasure.

"But I want you to do the same to me. There is a way we can love each other at the same time."

"How can we, Chelsey?" Daisy asked, wrinkles appearing on her forehead.

Chelsey snickered and gave her a deep kiss. "You are adorable. It is simple, really. I will lie on top of you with my head down near your cunt while my cunt is near your mouth. Are you game, love?"

A tremor went through Daisy's body at the blunt words Chelsey used to explain an intimate act she would have never thought possible on her own.

"Have I shocked you, dearest?" Chelsey removed her hand from Daisy's moist core and licked her fingers clean.

Daisy was shocked, but also very interested. She closed her mouth that had fallen open. Chelsey moved down, spread Daisy's legs wider and waggled her eyebrows.

"What do you want me to do?" Daisy asked.

Chelsey placed her damp hand on Daisy's knee and patted it. "Nothing at this moment. I want to you enjoy yourself." She moved off to the side, pushing her hair over her shoulder and placing her mouth over Daisy's mound.

"*Sooo good*," Daisy panted as Chelsey rooted her tongue through her delicate lips. She tilted her head back. The pleasure was too much for her to endure. She clenched the sheets while Chelsey licked her until she was dripping wet. The moment Chelsey flicked her clit with her tongue, she climaxed.

"*Chelsey!*" Daisy bellowed.

"I do love to hear you scream." Chelsey wiped her mouth and moved until she was laying face first over Daisy's front. She wiggled up higher until her ass met Daisy's chin.

Chelsey glanced over her shoulder, and Daisy grabbed hold of her thighs, pulled her legs apart and feasted.

"You undo me!" Chelsey groaned, laying her cheek against Daisy thigh as Daisy's mouth not only enclosed her pussy, but used her tongue up around the outer edge of her cunt and near her anus.

Daisy moved her head away and inhaled deeply. "Am I doing this correctly?"

"Yes, it feels marvelous. Stick your tongue in my ass." Chelsey lifted her head and pushed her ass harder against Daisy's face. Daisy's loud slurping and tongue lapping in her core and ass crack were almost too much for her to handle.

While Daisy caressed one of Chelsey's ass cheeks, she moved her mouth closer to where Chelsey's clitoris lay. The spicy scent of her pirate lover's arousal hit her face, and she pushed her nose against the crack of Chelsey's ass. She moved her mouth away when Chelsey's tongue lapped over her pulsating pussy.

As Daisy nibbled and sucked over one of Chelsey's cunt lips, Chelsey's stuck her face in deep and licked away. She dug her fingers into Daisy's hips in a way that would surely leave bruises. Daisy didn't seem to mind as she came a second time.

Chelsey smiled, and with one last lick in and up around Daisy's navel, she let out a shudder and also came.

Daisy looked up at the spinning ceiling as Chelsey moved off of her. Chelsey turned around and leaned over, giving open mouth kisses to Daisy's stomach, chest and finally her mouth.

Their tongues licked and played together as their combined musky juices filled their mouths.

"Hmm. That tastes lovely." Daisy sighed and turned onto her side, placing a leg over Chelsey's thigh.

"That is the taste of our love for one another, my lady desire." Chelsey placed a kiss over Daisy's sweaty brow.

Daisy stopped playing with Chelsey's breast and tilted her face up. "Lady desire? I must say it sounds strange to hear you call me that. You are not comparing me to a ship, are you?"

Chelsey swallowed a snort. "Why do you think I named my ship *The Lady Desire*? I named my vessel after you, my love, my one true desire... the lady of my heart."

Daisy snuggled deeper into Chelsey's embrace and smiled. "You are my one true desire. I love you so much, Chelsey."

"And I love you, my dear princess." Chelsey placed one last kiss on top of Daisy's forehead, listening carefully to her love's deep breathing. She held her until Daisy drifted off to sleep. She was about to do that very same thing when she spotted one of her black ribbons in Daisy's hair.

She smiled, and ever so gently petted the ribbon, as well as a few strands of Daisy's hair that were wrapped around it. Perhaps tomorrow she would tell her sweet love about how she had kept a very special eight year-old black ribbon hidden away in a box under a floorboard in her cabin.

Chapter Nine

"Is the water warm enough for you?"

"It is more than perfect." Daisy sat back in the small hip bath. It was a tight fit, but as long as she folded her legs close to her chest, she was comfortable enough. She had no complaints over the way Chelsey used a soft sponge in smooth strokes to wash her chest and legs. It made her bathing experience all the more enjoyable.

Chelsey sat on a short stool wearing only her chemise as she bathed her lovely Daisy. She had surprised her with this gift after they'd finished a few more hours of loving between them.

Daisy lifted her leg high in the air as the scented bathwater splashed over the rim and onto the floor. She giggled and shared a kiss with Chelsey while she moved the sponge in circular motions across Daisy's nipples.

"I want to join you," Chelsey said against Daisy's lips, covering a yelp when Daisy grabbed her around the neck and pulled her on top of her.

"Please do. The water is still warm." Daisy licked Chelsey's cheek and snickered when Chelsey landed half in, half out of the bath.

"*Umph.*" Chelsey grabbed onto the top of the bath to keep steady. Daisy sucked in one of Chelsey's breasts through her wet chemise. Chelsey moaned.

"If you wanted me wet, all you had to do was this." Chelsey grabbed Daisy's hand and pushed it down against her pussy. Daisy cupped her there, and Chelsey rocked back and forth.

Both their moans rang out, and when Daisy reached up to suckle Chelsey's breast again, there was a loud tap on the door. Muffled yells could be heard on the other side.

Daisy released a small shriek, dipping low in the water as Mister Martin opened the door without permission. Chelsey stood. She glanced past Martin and noticed a few of her men running down the hall. Their footsteps stomped away in loud beats.

"What is amiss, Mister Martin?" Chelsey walked past him with no concern for her nudity and grabbed a big, fluffy white towel and wrapped her body in it. She grabbed another one for a blushing Daisy.

Martin gave Chelsey his full attention, barely looking at Daisy. "Captain, we may have a problem. There is a ship bearing down on us, and from the looks of it, they are heavily armed."

Chelsey walked back to Daisy and handed over the towel. She cupped Daisy's cheek and smiled down at her. "When you say heavily armed, how 'heavy' do you mean?"

"I saw eight cannons on each side and fore-aft sails much larger than our own. The last time I saw such a ship was when—"

Chelsey spun on her heels, clenching her fists at her side. "*Humphrey*."

Daisy stood up from the bath, wrapping the towel around her. She laid a hand on Chelsey's arm in concern. "Chelsey, what is it?"

She snatched her hand back when Chelsey looked at her with her lip curling. "Your Lord Humphrey has decided to attack us." She gave Daisy her back and gave brisk orders to her first mate. "Martin, have the men get to their stations and arm themselves. If he thinks he can trick me, he has another thing coming to him." Chelsey slapped her hands together and smiled in glee.

"Yes ma'am." Martin saluted Chelsey and walked swiftly from the room.

Daisy stepped out of the bath shivering, watching Chelsey pull on her clothes. She was suddenly very afraid.

"What does this mean?" *For us?* Daisy asked internally, standing there, unsure what else to say or do.

As Chelsey fastened her shirt, she walked back over to Daisy and gave her a hard kiss. "This means Humphrey's days are numbered. I'm going to blast him with everything I have. He'll finally get what's coming to him."

"But he has more weapons than you do. Perhaps he is only meeting you to drop off the ransom and doesn't want a fight?"

Chelsey rolled her eyes.

Daisy stepped back, her face pale.

"Listen to me, dearest," Chelsey said. "Humphrey wants to make me suffer. He is not going to hand over the ransom all nice-like and leave. He is expecting a fight, and a fight is what we will give him." Chelsey leaned down to give her another kiss.

Daisy pressed a palm over Chelsey's mouth. "And where do I come into this? What if Humphrey has come in peace and only wants to give you the ransom? Will you take your blood money and hand me over to him?"

"You are missing the point—" A loud boom shook the boat violently, making Chelsey and Daisy stumble.

"Shit! You need to get dressed now and remain in my cabin." Chelsey grabbed hold of Daisy's hand and rushed her down the hall into her room. Chelsey pulled Daisy in, and without another thought, pulled on her boots, tied her mask on her face and grabbed her sabre and a pistol.

"I'm not going to wait here like some scared little girl. I'm coming up above with you."

As Daisy looked around for something to wear, Chelsey took hold of her arms again.

"No you are not, princess. I can't have you in harm's way. You will remain here as I have told you to do."

Daisy opened her mouth to complain when the ship rocked to the side.

"Enough of this. I need to go now." Chelsey pushed Daisy back toward the bed. Daisy struggled, but she fell onto the crumpled sheets where only a short time ago her body had come alive with pleasure.

Chelsey cupped her face and gave her a hard, wet kiss. She released Daisy and left her shaking in her loosened towel.

"Remember, I will always love you. Nothing can ever change that." Chelsey gave Daisy a wink over her shoulder and walked out of the room.

Daisy sat up and covered her face as the sounds of the sea battle surrounded her. She refused to sit there and do what she was told. She was sick and tired of obeying and doing what was expected of her.

This time she was going to do what she wanted!

She went over to the closet to grab some clothes since her gown was ruined. As she pulled out one of Chelsey's black shirts, she spotted a sabre with a silver handle. She leaned down and grabbed hold of it, testing the weight in her hands. She did a quick jab forward and backward and, with a huge grin, let out a loud shout.

This was her fight as much as it was Chelsey's. She would stand side by side with her lover or die fighting.

"Hit that bitch with everything we have!" Humphrey shouted to his men as he stood high atop the main deck as cannons went off around him. The stench of gunpowder was thick in the air, and the cries of his fearless crew made his ears ring. He was so close to slamming a ball right into the helm of Dread's ship that would eventually lead to it capsizing. And then as *The Lady Desire* sank to the depths of the ocean and the sharks tore apart the pirates' flesh, he would swoop in, save Daisy, and put Dread in chains for his own keeping.

"Humphrey!" Thomas ran out from his cabin, stumbling across the deck as the ship rocked from another round of cannon launches from Dread.

"Fire!" Humphrey shouted again to his crew below, raising his sabre high in the air. The loud booms from the cannons went off, and a big cloud of black smoke surrounded the ship. Soon their visibility would be at risk by the amount of dark soot that covered their ship and Dread's.

Thomas climbed up to the perch where Humphrey stood and grabbed his arm. "When are you going to take over Dread's ship? And what if Daisy is hurt during this?"

Humphrey pushed Thomas to the side and took out of his telescope to see if the pirate sloop had sustained any substantial damage. "Can't you see that I'm busy here? I don't have time for your harping. Fuck!" Humphrey walked over to the edge and screamed down to his head officer. "Their sails are still standing and I don't see them taking on water. Hit them again with all that we have, and then we'll go in for the kill." Humphrey let out a wild laugh.

Thomas stood there with his hands behind his back, worried beyond belief for his poor, innocent sister who must be cowering in a corner somewhere in the pits of Dread's ship.

"Hang on, Daisy. We'll save you," Thomas whispered as he covered his ears from the loud sound of the guns.

Dread lifted up her spyglass. She could barely see Humphrey's ship. She held onto the railing as it rocked and a large wave splashed on deck, soaking her and the crew. Another cannon fire from Humphrey would surely do them in. The time to act was now.

"Mister Martin!" Chelsey shouted up at where Martin stood near the steering wheel. She waved at him and he cupped his palm around his ear to hear her over the sounds of the crew screaming to one another and the gunfire that continued to go off around them.

"Ho, Captain!" Martin bellowed.

Chelsey cupped her hands around her mouth. "Bring her around and we'll hit her in the back. Humphrey will never see us coming with all this smoke." Chelsey turned and called out to her crew. "Hit him hard, boys. We end this now!"

Her crew gave a cheer and, after a few more cannon fires, *The Lady Desire* sailed forward.

"Chelsey!" Daisy ran over wearing an almost identical black shirt and baggy breeches. She had rolled up the pants and was still barefoot unlike Chelsey, who wore black boots.

"Daisy." Chelsey walked over and grabbed her by her arms, shaking her none too lightly. "What the hell are you wearing, and why are you up here when I specifically told you to stay down below?" Chelsey's mouth dropped when she saw Daisy holding one of her sabres. "Give me that. You'll hurt yourself."

Daisy stepped back as Chelsey tried to take her weapon away. "I want to be up here and next to the woman I love." She swung the sabre around and almost jabbed Chelsey in the arm.

"Stop this." Chelsey grabbed Daisy by the wrist and pulled her away to a nearby corner. Both women almost tumbled to the floor as another cannon ball hit close to the ship.

Chelsey turned and squinted, trying to make out Humphrey's ship. "He almost got us there. You need to go back down to my cabin. It is safer there." Chelsey tugged Daisy over to the stairs.

Daisy dragged her heels. "I'm sick and tired of you telling me what to do. I want to fight."

"Daisy—" Chelsey broke off as a harsh whistling sound flew over their heads, "Take cover!" Chelsey shouted, pulling Daisy to the ground. Chelsey landed on top of her as a cannon ball tore through the main top sail. Loud cries filled the air as the sail and part of the top mast came down around them.

Chelsey knelt and pushed Daisy back against the side of the ship. She looked over Daisy's face and swallowed a curse after seeing a shallow cut bleeding on her cheek.

"This is why I need you to stay down below. I can't worry about your welfare." Chelsey stood and pulled Daisy up by the lapel of her shirt. Daisy appeared to be in shock as she wiped her cheek and glanced up at the ruined sail.

"Shit... stay here." Chelsey pushed her under the quarter deck. Without another word to her lover, she climbed the ladder and rushed over to Martin, who was busy steering the ship above.

Martin swung the wheel in a tight grip, gritting his teeth. Chelsey looked out as the smoke lessened and saw the back of Humphrey's ship.

"Full speed ahead. We'll fire the last cannon and then ram him hard, and god willing, we will be able to storm the ship and take it over before he can do the same to us."

"Aye, Captain," Martin said.

Chelsey ran over to the side to yell directions down to the crew.

Another loud boom and a puff of smoke went off as one of *The Lady Desire's* cannon balls hit the back of *The Master in Arms*. A moment later her hull slammed into the back of Humphrey's wooden one and released an ear-numbing screech. Without waiting for word from their Captain, more than half of her crew rushed past and jumped or ran onto Humphrey's ship. The rest swung high above from ropes.

Chelsey pulled out her sabre and cocked her gun. Martin did the same thing, and they nodded to one another, making their way down the ladder and onto the main deck. While her crew rounding up the enemy, a few men remaining on *The Lady Desire* began pulling out a specialized wooden plank with rope railings. Chelsey and Martin would then walk across safely from her ship and onto Humphrey's.

Chelsey climbed down the ladder. "Daisy?" she shouted, trying to locate her as she moved the black soot away from her face. Daisy was not where she had left her. She kept calling her name until she walked over to the railing and noticed Daisy, her long blonde hair swaying down her back, walking across the plank that had finally been set up.

"Come back here!" Chelsey shouted. A deep-rooted fear traveled from her head to her toes as Daisy waved and shouted something she couldn't catch.

"That woman will be the death of me." Chelsey ran over to the plank with Martin dashing behind her. They ran across and jumped on board. Her crew had rounded up Humphrey's men, tied them together, and left them sitting in the middle of the deck.

Chelsey looked around for Daisy and spotted her near the fore sail, holding an unconscious man with a head wound in her lap. She started to go over to her when Martin came up next to her.

"Humphrey is hidin' somewhere. No one can find him."

"Shit," Chelsey swore, tapping her sabre against her leg. "The bastard couldn't have gotten far. I'll take a few of the boys and search the ship from top to bottom. Keep watch over Daisy and find out who that chump is lying in her lap. I will take care of her after we find Humphrey."

"Sure thing, lass." Martin nodded.

Chelsey went over to a group of her men to give them the orders when Daisy let out a bloodcurdling scream.

Chelsey's heart jumped into her throat and she spun on her heels. Humphrey had an arm wrapped around Daisy's waist and a gun held under her chin.

"Put down the gun, Humphrey. You're outnumbered." Chelsey cocked the trigger of her own pistol and pointed her sabre at him. Martin also pointed his pistol at Humphrey, while forty of her men surrounded him and held up various other types of weapons.

"Stay back or I will blow her brains out." Humphrey dug the barrel of his gun further under Daisy's chin. She whimpered. He stepped back until he was against the wall of his cabin. Daisy mouthed Chelsey's name as she struggled in Humphrey's arms.

"Hush, my precious. I knew you have been horribly abused by this woman. Trust me, I will save you." Humphrey pressed the side of his face against Daisy's. She tried to kick him.

"Let me go. I don't want you. I love Chelsey!" she shouted.

Humphrey grabbed her arm and twisted the limb behind her back.

"Stop it. You're hurting her!" Chelsey walked forward, trying not to tremble in both anger and fear as Daisy suffered at the hands of this monster.

Humphrey pulled Daisy in closer. She sobbed quietly. He continued to press unruly kisses against her cheek and whisper softly into her ear, words Chelsey couldn't catch.

"I said, put down your weapon. Your ship has been destroyed, your crew captured and you have been made a fool once again."

"You better say your prayers, you pirate cunt. His majesty has another one of his naval vessels coming this way. You really think I would come alone without a backup plan? I knew you would use underhanded means to get what you wanted."

Chelsey snarled and Humphrey cocked the trigger on his gun. "That's right, Dread, come closer. I won't kill Daisy, but I may just shoot in her a way where she won't be able to walk again. After I'm done with you, she will have no other choice but to marry me. I bet you are so very proud you have soiled her forever. I suppose I should thank you. Now her inheritance will be mine, and I will be the richest and most powerful man in all of Flaundia!" Humphrey let out a shrill laugh and grabbed Daisy's breast, giving it a rough squeeze.

"You b-bastard." Daisy jabbed her elbow into his stomach. In return Humphrey kicked her hard behind her knee, and she went down. He grabbed her by the hair and drove his gun into her stomach.

"You are delusional. Let Daisy go. She has nothing to do with us. This is between us and no one else." Chelsey took another step toward him and shook her head at her crew, who were thirsty for the man's blood. She didn't trust the crazed look in Humphrey's eyes.

"You forced her to be involved when you kidnapped her and most likely raped her in ways no normal woman could stand. I have heard all the rumors about your abnormal lust for

women. Now put down your weapon and then maybe I will go easy on you after I have you down below, chained up in my hold. If not..." Humphrey pushed his gun in between Daisy's legs.

Chelsey glanced at Martin, who shook his head. She had a quick decision to make; both she and Humphrey were at a standstill. She was a crack shot, but she just couldn't take the chance in harming Daisy.

"If I put down my weapons, you will release Daisy?"

Humphrey moved forward and turned in a circle, keeping an eye on all the weapons pointed in his direction. He turned to look back at Chelsey and snarled at her. "You will drop your weapons, release my men and have your crew stand down. If you do this, I will make certain Daisy is not harmed."

"Don't believe him, Chelsey!" Daisy yelled and let out a cry when Humphrey grabbed her by her throat and tightened his hand over her windpipe.

"Shut up, you spoiled twit. Do you really think I'm not going to get a taste of you after all this trouble? Just wait until I'm through with your pirate lover. As I pound into your virgin ass, she will watch—" Humphrey stumbled and released Daisy as Thomas jumped on his back and started strangling him.

"Threaten my sister, will you?" Thomas grabbed the gun away from Humphrey and pulled him down to the deck, punching him hard in the face. Humphrey kneed Thomas in the stomach and was able to get free. He stood and held up his hands as Chelsey's crew cocked their guns and held out their swords, waiting for the order to run him through.

Chelsey held Daisy in a tight hug and they both kissed desperately until Mister Martin cleared his throat. Chelsey smiled at Daisy and caressed a few fingers across Daisy's throat where Humphrey had bruised her tender flesh.

Her eyes grew hard, and she handed Daisy over to Mister Martin's care. She sauntered over to Humphrey, intent on murdering him.

"Chelsey, come back." Daisy struggled in Mister Martin's arms, trying to get to Chelsey, but she stopped when he whispered in her ear.

Chelsey held up a hand to silence her bloodthirsty crew. "Ah... now the tables have been turned, Humphrey." Chelsey spat right in his face. He reached out to hit her, but then he stopped when he felt a sabre pressed into the back of his neck.

"I would proceed with caution if I were you, Humphrey." Thomas threw a large satchel at Humphrey's feet. He glanced at Chelsey. "That is my half of the ransom. Humphrey never had his half."

"Shut up, you fool." Humphrey hissed and clenched his fists at his side as Thomas dug the pointed end of his sabre into his neck.

"You think I will stand by while you lie, cheat and steal? I'm not as dim as you may believe me to be. You were so busy with thoughts of revenge that your secretary and I had an interesting conversation about your plans for my sister and me before we left. I, too, can be very persuasive when need be, especially with a man like Stephens, who is very lonely and treated like cattle." Thomas smiled at Chelsey, took back the satchel of money, and walked around until he stood next to her.

"Thomas?" Daisy called out to her brother. He backed away and pulled her into his arms. The siblings embraced and watched as Chelsey cocked her gun and pointed it straight at Humphrey's forehead.

"Now the main question is, what do we do with you?" Chelsey rubbed her scar and walked around Humphrey, who stood there arrogantly.

"Do what you must, you pirate bitch. But if you kill me, you will have the country of Flaundia as your enemy. His majesty won't rest until my murder is avenged. You will be chased to the ends of the earth."

"That may be so." Chelsey took the sabre from Thomas, gave Daisy a tender smile and turned back around. She pulled off her mask and a gasp rose among her men. Humphrey stood there heaving in anger.

"My fencing is a tad rusty. Let's have some fun, shall we?" Chelsey threw a sabre at Humphrey. He caught it in surprise. Chelsey held up her sabre and pulled her arm behind her back.

"What is she doing? She could be killed." Daisy asked in concern, watching as Humphrey swung his sabre in circles.

Martin patted her arm. "She is going to have a bit of fun with him before he meets his maker. Watch and see what happens." Martin pulled out his silver dagger and walked among the crew that had made a circle around their Captain and Humphrey.

Chelsey and Humphrey came at one another, slashing swords and jabbing, trying their best to stab one other. The crowd remained silent as they watched a fight that was bound to become legendary.

"That's all you got, Humphrey? I've seen better swordplay from a four year-old." She swung her sabre in an arc and almost skewered Humphrey in the stomach. At the last moment he jumped back and blocked her sabre with his own.

"You forget I have been schooled for years in the art of fencing. A mere girl like you can't defeat me. Especially one who should have been drowned at birth for her perverted urges."

"*Ha!*" Chelsey shouted and parried forward until Humphrey's back was against the mast. As her men talked among themselves, she glanced from the corner of her eye to give Martin the signal.

"Daisy will never be happy with a crude, lonely and pathetic woman who should have had her throat slashed just like her uncle and mother." Humphrey sliced through Chelsey's left shoulder.

Daisy screamed and covered her eyes. Thomas held her close, whispering comforting words in her ear.

Chelsey ignored her lover's cries. She directed her rage at Humphrey and rammed her sword toward his face. But again, Humphrey ducked and blocked her move.

"Don't you dare mention my mother." Chelsey wiped the sweat from her forehead and huffed as exhaustion set in. She was ready to finish the fight, when Humphrey grabbed her by the hair, pressing the tip of his sabre against her scarred cheek.

"You have just proven why women are weaker than men and would never win in a fight. You are through, Dread. Just wait until I have you at my mercy. I can't wait to shove the edge of my cat-o-nine tails up your disease-ridden cunt, after I whip you until you bleed to death. Now surrender!"

"You wish to surrender to me? Very well, I accept." Chelsey simply smiled and snapped her fingers. Humphrey looked confused for a moment and moved to take down Chelsey, when Mister Martin threw her the knife. She caught it with her left hand and slit Humphrey's throat. Chelsey quickly ducked away from the spray of blood as Humphrey gagged and held his throat. He stumbled, holding his hand out for help, but no one gave him aid.

Thomas turned Daisy around so as not to witness the ghastly sight, even though she struggled to see.

Chelsey crossed her arms and walked slowly along as Humphrey moved backward near the side of the ship. The men moved out of his way, and no one cheered or clapped. As he met the edge of the ship, one of Dread's crew members pushed him over and down to the cold ocean below.

Humphrey's weak screams floated up. Chelsey, Martin and some of the men looked down as three sharks feasted on Humphrey's body. As his head was ripped apart from his neck, his blood sprayed the sharks as they tore apart his limbs and chewed on his organs.

The crew finally cheered and Martin pulled Chelsey into a tight embrace.

"It's over now, lassie," Martin whispered in her ear.

"Is it really?" she responded and looked over at Daisy, who sobbed into the front of her brother's shirt. Thomas held her close, pushing her hair away from her face. He gave Chelsey a blank stare.

"Daisy..." Chelsey whispered her name.

Daisy's head moved up. She stepped out of his embrace and stood there with her arms at her side, glancing at Chelsey from the tip of her boots to the top of her head.

Chelsey held out her hand and Daisy ran over to her. She held Chelsey by the back of her head and pressed kisses across her face.

"I love you... I love you... I love you. Don't scare me like that ever again." Daisy hid her face into the crook of Chelsey's neck as deep sobs shook her body.

"I will never scare you like that ever again," Chelsey responded, pressing her cheek on top of Daisy's head.

"You... you...pr-promise?" Daisy stammered and wrapped her arms tightly around Chelsey.

"Whatever you desire, my princess. And this time, that is one promise I intend to keep." Chelsey lifted Daisy's face up and gave her a kiss that held more than just that.

She titled her back in her arms, ignoring the catcalls of the men and the overwhelming smell of spilled blood and gunpowder. She didn't notice any of that, for when she held Daisy in her arms, she smelled the fresh ocean breeze and the slight scent of strawberries.

Chapter Ten

"I must say, I would never have believed pirate food could be so delicious," Thomas stated as he grabbed the platter of venison and stabbed a few slices on his plate.

"Thomas, your manners!" Daisy reprimanded him and gave Chelsey an apologetic look.

Chelsey linked her fingers through Daisy's and gave her a kiss on the cheek. "Let your brother enjoy his meal. My cook will be pleased to hear how much you have enjoyed your dinner."

Thomas waved his fork at Chelsey. "Much obliged, Captain." He dug into his meal with gusto and gave Daisy a sneaky smile. She in turn threw her napkin at his head and laughed.

Chelsey sat back, drinking from her wine goblet, watching Thomas over the table as he filled his stomach. She glanced at Mister Martin, who gave Thomas covert glances as he finished his own meal. Daisy would look up from her plate and every so often tickle her toes up and down Chelsey's calf. Chelsey had decided that she and Daisy would have their dessert in her cabin, rather in the company of the two men.

A bright smile filled her face as she thought of the many different ways she could feed Daisy chocolate mousse and slices of fruit.

Thomas spoke, interrupting her daydreaming.

"Daisy, we must come up with a story about your kidnapping and Humphrey's demise. There is bound to be an investigation in the matter, and even with my view of the events, the crown will certainly want Captain Dread's head."

Daisy glanced at Chelsey, gave her hand a squeeze and looked at her brother. His head wound had been stitched up quite well by Mister Martin, but a small scar close to his forehead would remain. "Thomas, I'm not coming home with you. I'm staying with Chelsey."

"Daisy, it is too dangerous for you to be gallivanting across the ocean with pirates." Thomas gave Chelsey a sheepish look. "No offense, Captain, but you have to understand my sister's well being is of the utmost importance."

Chelsey finished her wine. She released Daisy's hand and caressed her knuckles across Daisy's cheek. She stopped when she noted Thomas's frown as he watched the exchange. "I think we are in agreement. That is why this will be my last voyage. I'm retiring."

She pulled off the eye mask she had worn for so many years and threw it over to Martin, who caught it in surprise. "Lassie—"

"Mister Martin, I think it is high time you commandeered your own ship. I'm handing over *The Lady Desire* to your care. You may do with it what you will. Pirate Captain C.W. Dread will disappear and go down in the history books."

Thomas tapped his fingers on the table and glanced back and forth between Chelsey and Martin. He stood and walked over to a set of windows that had a perfect view of the vast ocean. Then he folded his hands behind his back and stared off in the distance, as though he was deep in thought.

Daisy gave Chelsey a kiss and walked over to her brother. She wrapped an arm around his waist. "Thomas, I know you only want the best for me. But I almost died when father sent Chelsey away. I am the happiest when I'm in Chelsey's arms. Now, if you can't accept that I love a woman—"

"It is not that at all, sister dear." Thomas turned and pulled Daisy into a hug. He looked over at Chelsey and took in a deep breath. "I can see how happy Chelsey makes you. I watched, not being able to do anything, while you barely moved from your bed and walked around as if your soul was missing. I couldn't stand to see you that way, but I dared not disobey father. I really thought Humphrey would be the one person to make you happy. How wrong father and I were. That is why I want to make amends for all those years you and Chelsey have been separated."

Thomas gave Daisy a kiss on her forehead and walked back over to the table. He stood behind his chair and looked at Chelsey. "I must have your promise that you will give up your pirating ways, become a private citizen and never talk about your past."

Chelsey stood up from her chair. "It seems I'm making many promises this day. Mister de Fleurre, I can assure you that all I want is to make Daisy happy so that she may live without fear. I even have a place in mind where we can be together and no one would be the wiser."

Thomas looked back at his sister, who held her folded hands up underneath her chin. He then turned at Martin, who gave him a wink. He sighed and rubbed the back of his neck. "Well then, I'm willing to not only give you the half of the ransom, but also sign over Daisy's part of our inheritance left by our father."

"Thomas!" Daisy squealed and ran over, giving him a big hug.

He chuckled and wrapped her in his embrace. "Does she truly make you happy?" he whispered in her ear.

"Yes. I love her above all else," she responded softly and gave him a smack on the mouth.

"I say this calls for a celebration." Martin lifted his glass high in the air.

Chelsey poured more wine into her glass, and when Daisy came back over to her, she gave her a kiss.

Thomas and Martin both watched the affection with big grins on their faces.

When the two women broke apart, Chelsey lifted her glass. "To love, happiness and the retirement of Captain Dread. May she rest in peace!"

"Cheers!" Daisy, Thomas and Martin responded, drinking deeply from their cups.

Chelsey finished her drink as one of her men brought in a tray with brandy, coffee, cigars and some cake and fruit. "Mister de Fleurre. Mister Martin. It has been a long day. Daisy and I will leave you to your cigars and after-dinner drinks."

Martin walked over to Thomas and gave him a heavy slap on the back. "I think the de Fleurre and I can keep ourselves occupied. What do you say, lad? In the mood for a card game or two?"

Thomas nodded, picked up a cigar and sniffed it. "As long as I shuffle the deck. I'm not certain if I can trust you."

Martin pretended to be offended. Chelsey snorted. Daisy gave her brother a look, and Thomas shrugged and patted Martin's back gently. "Forgive me, sir. I must work on my delivery."

"I can help you with that... as well as some other things." Martin waggled his eyebrows.

Thomas turned away, hiding a blush that rose up from his neck to his face.

"On that note, gentlemen, I bid you goodnight." Chelsey took Daisy's hand and led her out of the dining room.

Daisy waved at Thomas, who stared down at Martin's hand lying on his bicep.

"Mister Martin is going to eat your brother alive," Chelsey said as she walked around her cabin lighting candles.

"Whatever do you mean?" Daisy asked and sat down on the bed, massaging her foot.

"Are you telling me you didn't notice the way Martin stared at Thomas like he wanted to eat him for dessert?"

"I wouldn't say... ouch." Daisy moaned and pressed her fingers into the arch of her foot.

Chelsey walked over to her. "Have you hurt yourself?"

"Yes. I'm not used to walking around barefoot."

Chelsey sat down beside Daisy and patted her knee. "Put your foot here, my lady."

Daisy moved to the side and placed her aching foot into Chelsey's hands. As Chelsey manipulated her toes and massaged her ankle and heel, Daisy let out a moan and sighed. "That feels wonderful."

"You won't need slippers or shoes where we are going." Chelsey continued to work on Daisy's foot. She enjoyed the purrs of pleasure coming from her beloved's mouth.

"And where are we headed to, Captain?"

Chelsey lifted Daisy's foot and kissed the top of it. With one last deep press of her thumbs, she knelt on the bed and slowly unbuttoned Daisy's shirt. "I'm plain old Chelsey now, princess."

"And I'm just Daisy. You keep forgetting that." Daisy placed a kiss on Chelsey's cheek.

"Yes, you are *my* Daisy." Chelsey gave Daisy a wet kiss as her shirt fell open.

Daisy leaned back and pushed her hand inside Chelsey's shirt, feeling the bandage covering the top of her left arm. "When Humphrey slashed you, I—"

"Shush." Chelsey placed a finger over Daisy's mouth. "He no longer matters." She cupped Daisy's face and gave her a kiss that initially started out as tender but quickly became more intense.

Daisy thrust her fingers through Chelsey's hair and arched her back. She then lay back in the middle of the bed and held out her arms to her lover. "You are all mine. Come be with me, my Chelsey."

Chelsey crawled over and rested her head against Daisy's breast. She slipped her hand inside Daisy's chemise and circled her nipple. "Remember when told you how I buried my uncle and mother under a tree overlooking the cliffs? He left me a small island a few hundred miles west of here. He built a small cottage surrounded by many coconut and mango trees, where the ocean is right at our doorstep." Chelsey lifted her head up and gave Daisy a gentle kiss. "I want to build a home with you there by my side, where we can be free to love without any worries."

"And eat coconuts and mangoes all day as we read under the trees?"

"Princess, I can assure you we won't be reading under any trees while we are there." Chelsey pulled down Daisy's chemise, sprinkling kisses over her swollen breasts.

Daisy sighed and pushed her hand down into the front Chelsey's breeches, cupping her mound. She combed her fingers through Chelsey's curls. "Oh... you are so warm here." She licked her lips and pressed one of her fingers into Chelsey's moist entrance. "Can we walk on the beach and swim naked for hours on end?"

Chelsey released Daisy's breast with a soft pop and straddled her hips. "We can do all that and more, my lady." She leaned down and kissed Daisy until she panted. "Anything you want will be yours. From now on, we are in charge of our own destinies. We will live like queens on our own island paradise, like we always have wanted to do. How does that sound?"

Daisy nodded, cupping Chelsey's scarred cheek. She placed a kiss there. Her eyes grew wet and she sniffed. "Whatever you desire, my dearest Chelsey."

"Oh the things you say, my love...my only desire." Chelsey grabbed Daisy by her face and kissed her over and over.

Both women undressed each other slowly, stopping only to touch and savor one another's salty, yet sweet tasting skin.

Late into the night, moans and sighs filled the cabin room as the lady and her ex-pirate loved one another under a clear, starry night's sky, covered with a few puffy clouds that drifted over the horizon to where their new future together lay.

THE END.