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# 1

## PORT ROYAL, 1663

A ruby twilight thick with youthful promise bled into the paler sky above the miles of sugar cane stretching toward the lush Blue Mountain range of Jamaica. Emerald Harwick, sixteen, stood tensely in the narrow wagon road, staring ahead.

The tropical sun had saturated the brown earth of the Foxemoore sugar estate with the heat of the breathless day, and now the trade wind came as it did each evening, bringing sweet relief.

She heard the wind rushing through the stalks, saw their green leafy heads bend as though doing homage to the king of all the universe, and her eyes moistened as her heart joined the reverence, and she pleaded, "Please, Jesus, grant me the courage to face Mr. Pitt."

As she peered ahead, her young face was spirited and displayed a winning loveliness, yet its lines of tenderness and candor reflected a far deeper beauty than mere outward appearance. She lifted a hand to shade her eyes, listening above the sighing green waves for the dread sound of Mr. Pitt's horse trotting down the dirt road.

The tropical breeze was heady with the smell of the Caribbean and brushed her skin like cooling fingers. Today, however, she could find no pleasure in the familiar sights and smells surrounding her on this estate to which she'd been brought as a small child from the notorious pirate stronghold of Tortuga.

For Emerald, a storm was blowing across her soul, and its cruel blasts threatened to destroy those dearest to her.

Her thick dark tresses tossed in the gusts rippling against her, and she tied the faded calico ribbon on her hat beneath her chin to keep it from being carried away across the field. She turned from the road then and glanced toward an upper

window in the tall, box-shaped wooden house where she lived with her fifteen-year-old half-French and half-African cousin, Minette.

Minette was staring through the window, her finely featured face—the color of amber honey—pressed against the pane. Her reflection faded into the evening shadows that fell ominously across the glass, obscuring her tear-stained cheeks.

Then Emerald sped down the road to meet Foxemoore's vile overseer, Mr. Pitt. The evening shadows grew long and began to speckle the miles of acreage. She rushed on toward the cutoff at the end of the narrow road, which brought her to the main carriageway, lined with fringed palm trees.

The wind lifted the hem of her full black cotton skirt, which was looped upward over a blue petticoat, reaching to just above her bare ankles and black slippers. Her blouse was white, full-sleeved to the elbow, and she wore, according to fashion, a tight-laced black stomacher around her slim waist.

Catching her breath, she stepped out onto the carriage-way and gazed up to the planter's Great House. It stood a quarter mile ahead with white walls and red tile roof, looking serenely down upon her with the superiority of aristocracy. As always, its magnificence awed her and shut her out.

Foxemoore belonged to the Harwicks and the Buckingtons, who had intermarried since before the days of Oliver Cromwell. During England's Civil War, the Harwicks fled to the West Indies, where they built a sugar estate. The titled Buckingtons followed the exiled King Charles into France and then returned with him to reclaim the Buckingham earldom. The family lived now in London under the dominion of Earl Nigel Buckington, who was often called to dine with King Charles at Whitechapel.

Emerald, however, was considered the illegitimate offspring of a daughter of a French pirate on Tortuga and was rejected by both wings of the family.

The vermilion twilight lingered long across the sky as she stood to the side of the carriageway, waiting, her eyes riveted ahead. Not far away a crow cackled at her and then flew from a wooden post, becoming a dark illusive shadow that swept low over the cane field.

The crow seemed to mock her with its freedom to escape while she could not, and words from the Psalms winged their way across her heart: "How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow."

Her eyes, the color of warm cinnamon, narrowed, and her clammy hands formed fists at the sides of her skirt. The sound of horse hooves!

Mr. Pitt emerged from the cane field astride his gray gelding and turned down the carriageway toward her. She saw the rust-colored dust rise beneath its hooves. She waited.

A minute later he rode up, reining in his horse a few feet ahead of her.

Emerald looked up at him, heart racing.

Pitt was a vicious man, and she loathed his cruelty toward the slaves, although she usually had no concern for her own safety. This indentured servant who served the Harwick family wouldn't dare accost *her*, not the daughter of Sir Karlton Harwick, even if she was rejected by the family and her father was in danger of losing his share in Foxmoore due to his mounting debts.

Mr. Pitt would fear to antagonize Sir Karlton. Her father, a big man, was known on the reckless streets of Port Royal to duel for the sake of honor, and he would call Mr. Pitt out by pistol or sword.

She trembled slightly though, trying to mask her apprehension, for her father was not presently in Port Royal. He had been at sea as a privateer for months now, and though she was expecting his return any day, those days came and went. And while his absence grew longer, her uncertainties mounted with the burdens and troubles that came hurling against her like a hurricane.

Mr. Pitt did not dismount but sat astride his Spanish leather saddle. His wide panama hat was soiled with dust and drawn low over a leathery brow that was dotted with sweat. His grizzled red hair hung limp to his wide shoulders, and his canvas shirt was torn, showing his huge muscled arms and bare chest.

The man's prominent pale eyes stared down at her without the deference he offered her spoiled young cousin Lav-

ender Thaxton, who lived in the Great House. His wide mouth spread into a grin. He flicked his prized whip absently against a bronzed hand with squat fingers.

Emerald raised her chin, and her eyes refused to waver.

“Evenin’, missy,” came the syrupy voice.

She would not favor him as though she were on his level, for he was dangerous. Safety came in aloofness, as though she did not notice that he scanned her. She remained polite but distant.

“I received your message. Why did you ask to see me?” she asked with a dignity that surpassed her youth. She wanted to choke on the next words, dreading the answer. “Have you news about Ty?”

He leered. “Aye.”

She noted the evil gleam that sprang like fire.

“Yes?”

“I’ve found the runaway all right. Ain’t an African who can flee me and my hounds. I brought him back in chains.”

He must have seen her pale, for his lips turned and he appraised her again. “He needs a good lesson taught him, and I’m the man to do it. Aye, I aim to scourge the lad to an inch of his life, even if the half-breed is your cousin.”

Mr. Pitt took delight in his whip, and Emerald loathed him for it.

She held her head high, refusing to acknowledge his intended slur. Both Ty and Minette had been born to her French uncle, a notorious pirate on Tortuga. The African slave who had been their mother was dead, but they had a grandfather on Foxmoore, the elderly cook—Jonah—from the boiling house.

Ty, who was nineteen, had made plans from childhood to run away and become a pirate, hoping his father’s French relatives on Tortuga would take him in. And even though Emerald had warned him to wait until the day she could buy his freedom, his discontent had been too great. He took pride in his ancestry, and that was one of the reasons Mr. Pitt hated him. Pitt enjoyed making the slaves cringe and beg for his mercies, and Ty would not.

And now Ty had been caught.

Despite her inner struggle not to crumble before him, tears stung her eyes. "Touch Ty with your vicious whip, and you'll answer to my father when he returns," she whispered. "I promise you that!"

He didn't believe her, of course. His confidence remained. He slowly swung his hefty frame down from the saddle.

Emerald took a step backward in the dusty road. "And touch me, and my father will kill you."

He smirked, wiping his sweating brow on the back of his sleeve.

"Maybe your father's dead, drowned at sea. Maybe I have word he's been taken a slave by Spain. The Inquisitors will soon have him tied to a post and burned as a heretic."

*No*, she thought, trying to steady her nerves.

"He attacked a galleon like the pirate he is, though he denies it. And he lost to a Spanish don."

Her heart thundered in her ears. It wasn't true. Pitt was trying to frighten her, to make her cower before him. She would not beg of anyone except her heavenly Father.

"He's alive," she countered. "You'll see. And he'll soon be docking at Port Royal. And if you do anything foolish toward me or Ty, you'll live to regret it, Mr. Pitt."

"You can be glad it ain't your high and mighty ways that I'm wanting. No—" and his eyes narrowed "—I have me bigger plans, but I need you to aid me in getting them accomplished. And," he warned quietly, "aid me you will. If not, I'll see your cousin a quivering mass of bloody flesh under my whip."

Emerald wondered if the man were human. "Help you?" she breathed. "Never!"

"You're forgetting something, miss. It isn't your father who's managing Foxemoore anymore. It's me. And I have the run of the slaves. Lady Sophie trusts me—"

"And I mourn for my great-aunt's folly in ever trusting a beast like you!"

"Say what you will, it won't change things, and it won't stop my plans. Someday I aim to have land of my own. And I'll get the money and make myself a gallant gentleman. I may even have me a wife like your cousin Lavender."

“You dream. You’re an indentured servant, and you always will be. And even if I could get you the treasure you lust for, I won’t do it.”

“No? You’ll do it all right if you want to save your half-breed cousin from being flogged till his back is bloody. Think about it, Miss Emerald. You’ve seen such sights before. Remember how the sand flies come to cover the torn flesh in the blazing sun till the runaway slave is driven mad? You want that to happen to Ty?”

She winced and covered her ears. “You’re worse than a beast—you’re a fiend! If only I could convince the Harwicks of that.”

“But you won’t. You’ve no influence with your grandmother. And none with the others in the Great House. Oh, you might be called there to please the whims of your cousin Lavender, but has Lady Sophie received you as her niece?”

He read her expression. “Aye, nor will she. You’re not deemed parlor fancy enough for ’em. If you’re croaking-smart, girl, you’d cooperate with me. I’m the one who can spare Ty.”

Unfortunately it was true, and she remained silent.

He smiled. “That’s better, Miss Emerald. We can be friends. All I need is payment in them French and Spanish jewels that your wench mother left you before she died.”

“I don’t have them. They were stolen when I was a child. I’ve already told you that. You’re mad, Mr. Pitt. Even if I did own them, do you think I’d turn them over to you to buy land with? I’d have paid my father’s debts to the Harwicks long ago. My French cousin stole them from me before my father ever brought me to Foxemoore. If you want the jewels, then ask Captain Rafael Levasseur for them, if you dare! He has them!”

“Aye, I know as much. But he ain’t likely to listen to *me*. And he’s vicious with his rapier. He’s as cold-blooded a pirate as any in Port Royal. No, you’ll go to him, all right. You’ll get them. I’ve heard from Jamie that Captain Levasseur asked your father if he could marry you.”

At the mention of Jamie, she grew uneasy. James Bradford worked under Mr. Pitt as boss man in the sweltering boiling house that turned the cane into sugar. But Jamie’s



indentured service would end in months. He would be free, and they had made secret plans to marry and sail to the Massachusetts colony to establish a farm of their own.

"I won't go to Captain Levasseur!"

"You will if you want to save Ty. I've the authority to do with him as I fancy."

"The damnable result of slavery. It is a curse and a plague among men."

"The twitter of your preacher uncle. You want Ty in one piece? Then you'll get those jewels for me."

"Oh, don't you see? What you ask of me is impossible! I haven't seen Rafael Levasseur in a year, and I wish to keep it that way."

"I've news the buccaneers are arriving from the raid on Gran Granada. Old Captain Henry Morgan and Mansfield be leading his pirates into Port Royal in a few days. Your French cousin is with him, and he'll have booty enough and to spare. How you talk him into generosity is your problem, Miss Emerald. Just see you do. And don't be foolish enough to tell him about me, or why you want it. Remember, I'll have Ty—and Jamie Bradford—at my mercy."

Her heart lurched. "What does Jamie have to do with this?"

Mr. Pitt stood looking at her with a satisfied smile, like a fox who has trapped the hens.

"Jamie was fool enough to try to help Ty run away. For that, Miss Emerald, I can hang him if it pleases me. It's the law. You want your Jamie to hang in the public square?"

Devastation swept through her. Hopelessly she let out a cry, lunging at him, beating her small fists against his chest.

He laughed and seized her wrists. "A little minx, eh? Runs in that blood of yours from Tortuga, maybe? Well, you just go to your cousin Levasseur for the jewels. Jamie and Ty are both being held in Bridewell Jail."

He released her, and she stepped back, eyes stinging with tears.

"Pull yourself together, Miss Emerald. It ain't the end, if you do as I say." He tipped his floppy hat with its turkey feather and mounted his horse to ride back to his bungalow near the slave huts.

He looked down at her, his brown face unsmiling now.  
“You got two days.”

“Two days isn’t enough time!”

“It’s time enough. I hear the buccaneers are bringing their ships into Port Royal now. You best go there, Miss Emerald. In two days I’ll have the magistrate put Ty and Jamie in the town pillory to be flogged. Then I’ll have ’em branded on the forehead—Jamie as a political enemy of His Majesty and Ty as a runaway.”

“Oh, no, Mr. Pitt. Don’t, please!”

“Then you get the jewels. After their branding—if you don’t come up with them—I’ll go so far as to see em’ hanged.”

Speechless and shaken, she watched until he had ridden down the carriageway and taken the cutoff into the fields.

Two days.

## 2

# ON THE SPANISH MAIN

The deck of the *Santiago* smoldered. Spanish soldiers lay dying among the smashed bulkheads and broken mizzenmast. Sagging sail burst into flame. A ten pounder crashed through the overhead rigging, and the Spanish flag toppled to the deck below. Another projectile ripped the blue waters of the Caribbean and brought it splashing over the stern. The proud galleon from Madrid creaked and listed heavily.

From the quarterdeck, Captain Valdez shouted orders to his lieutenant, who raced down the companion steps into the waist.

Soldiers waited there in steel breastplates, gripping their fine Toledo blades. Their black eyes looked gravely toward the sea where their nemesis, the twenty-gun pirate ship under the command of the ruthless English Captain Foxworth, came steadily on, her Union Jack billowing arrogantly at her mainmast head.

The soldiers knew the battle would end in hand-to-hand fighting, for few of the pirates from Port Royal and Tortuga were known to give quarter to their enemy. The Spaniards told themselves they were not afraid. The priest was walking up and down with the crucifix and rosary, blessing each brave soldier who fought to destroy the heretics. What chance could these English buccaneers have against them, brave and bull-headed though they be? And who could undo a Spanish swordsman trained in Madrid?

The English captain had kept beyond the range of the *Santiago's* cannons, while bombarding them with longer guns. But now the *Regale* drew closer. The soldiers could see her billowing white sails through the gun ports below deck where they waited. They would defeat the *boucaniers*.

Captain Valdez watched with nervous satisfaction as the privateer approached, and his cannons spit fire upon her. But the *Regale* was now too close to repel, and little damage was inflicted on her low main deck. He swore into his neatly trimmed black beard as the English vessel audaciously bore down upon him, discharging her cannon into the galleon's waist.

The *Santiago* shuddered, flames leaping up. Confusion and panic reigned. *Capitan* Valdez knew his ship was a loss, and he cursed the pirates who plagued the Spanish Main, consigning them to the devil's inferno.

It was clear that the English would board.

His intense black eyes smoldered. "Come, then, *Señor* Foxworth," he breathed. "I shall impale you upon my blade as a pig for the flames."

The *Regale's* captain was known on the Main as an English dog who ridiculed grandiose Spain, and the Spanish captain who took the English pirate as a prisoner to Cadiz would win a great name for himself. Foxworth would be a fit prize for the Inquisitors!

On signal the Spanish soldiers poured from the waist and forecastle, shouting glorious words to the rule of Madrid.

The *Regale* slipped through the haze of smoke, coming closer. The English buccaneers were poised and ready to board, with grappling ax in one hand and cutlass in the other.

He heard the English captain shouting, "Take her, lads! She's all yours! First man to find and free Lucca has my share of the pieces of eight!"

The Spanish captain glared and whipped his blade from its scabbard.

Wild shouts filled the noon air as the buccaneers' grappling hooks snared the Spanish galleon. A legion overran the ship's sides, using their axes to form scaling ladders. From the spritsail yard they swung down upon the deck of the *Santiago*, swarming like locusts, swords in hand and long-barreled pistols exploding with acrid smoke. They pushed forward, bold and unafraid, sword smashing sword, hurling deadly daggers.

A ring of steel and the moans and shouts of dying men encircled the Spanish captain. He stood at the head of the companion, sword at the ready, wearing breastplate and tassels of fluted steel. His black eyes narrowed, intently searching the mob of cutthroats below for Captain Foxworth. He expected a man with snarled black curls and wild eyes.

He cursed the man's secret whereabouts and was surprised when an answer came from behind him—in Spanish.

“The despicable English dog you seek is here, *Capitan!*”

Captain Valdez spun about to confront the ironic gaze of a young man of handsome and formidable figure in white billowing shirt, sleek black trousers, and calf-length boots. The faint smile on the chiseled tanned face was sardonic. The breeze touched his dark hair, drawn back by a leather thong. He mimicked a bow.

“At your service, *Capitan!*”

And he came at him, his blade ringing against the Spaniard's. The steel blades mingled, withdrew, parried, caressed. In a fraction of a minute, Valdez knew that he had met his match.

Sweating profusely, he could but hold him off as he was forced to retreat across the deck, fighting for survival every inch of the way.

Infuriated by the calm smile of his attacker, Valdez lunged.

The English dog deflected his blade with a swift parry, stepping aside as Valdez came in.

A single thrust might have run him through. Instead, the buccaneer struck the flat of his blade to the side of the Spaniard's head with a ringing blow.

The captain of the *Santiago* sank to his knees, stunned, as his sword clattered to the deck.

Captain Baret Foxworth turned as the Spanish lieutenant rushed in, but English buccaneers were now on the quarterdeck beside their captain and halted the man.

“Stay your sword, *Señor!*” said Captain Foxworth. “Yield. I hold the life of your captain at my disposal.”

“Foul English dog! Pirate!”

“Softly, lad, softly.” Then, “Yorke, Thaddeus, Chalmers. Form a guard about the captain,” and he gestured to Valdez. Baret stooped, snatched up the captain’s sword, tried it for balance, then went down the quarterdeck steps into the waist of the ship.

The sun was yet high in the sky when Baret Buckingham Foxworth stood on deck of the *Santiago*, hands on hips, glancing about as his buccaneers scoured the captured vessel under his orders.

Few of the pirates on the Caribbean Main knew that the able Captain Foxworth of the *Regale* was a Buckingham, a grandson of the powerful earl who was in court service to His Majesty King Charles II. The young Englishman was believed to be a rogue at best, with a growing reputation as one of the finest swordsmen on the Main and a reckless sea rover who preyed mercilessly upon Spain’s treasure fleets.

Baret looked about on the laughing tanned faces surrounding him, enjoying the spectacle. As he did, he met the gaze of Sir Cecil Chaderton, scholar and divine from Cambridge. Sir Cecil wore a familiar wide-brimmed black hat, and the wind whipped his shoulder-length gray hair away from his lean face. He had a short pointed beard that curled a little.

The staunch Puritan was a respected scholar and a devoted friend.

*As well as a timely goad*, Baret thought, seeing the slight turn of the old man’s lips and his look of disapproval. Baret swept off his hat and bowed toward his old Greek and Latin tutor. He knew that, hidden beneath that grim exterior, the old Puritan scholar might secretly rejoice at another blow to Spain in the West Indies.

Baret’s decision to attack and board the *Santiago* had been a matter of concern to Cecil, but the occasion had proven to be a gladsome spectacle to Baret. The sight and sound of the *Regale*’s smoking guns and the crash of a mast carrying the Spanish flag had his heart thudding.

Sir Cecil walked toward Baret, stepping over the debris.

The captain of the *Santiago* interrupted with a shout, veins protruding in anger from his thick neck. “I am *Capitan*

Espinosa don Diego de Valdez! His Excellency the King of Spain will have you for this, you murderous English dog!”

Baret mocked a deep bow, sword in hand. “Permit me to introduce myself, *Capitan*. I am Captain Baret Foxworth, heretic.” He smiled faintly, his dark eyes glinting as he gestured airily to members of his gloating crew. “Gentlemen, hang him for the misfortune of being born a Spaniard in service to Madrid.”

The captain’s eyes widened. “*Señor!*” he gasped, hand going to his heart. “You—you are not serious?”

“*Si, Señor*, very serious.”

“Ai-yi, Captain Foxworth! I beg! I beg of you!”

“Do you indeed, my *capitan?*” he asked, maliciously amused. “Proceed.”

The surrounding crew laughed and forcefully aided the captain down to one knee.

Just then, Baret met Sir Cecil’s narrowing silver-gray eyes. Baret smiled. “Ah, you’ve arrived just in time to meet the illustrious *capitan* of the *Santiago*. Welcome, Sir Cecil, my esteemed scholar.”

“And *counselor*,” retorted Cecil. “What is this fellow doing on his knees?”

Baret portrayed innocence. “Begging. He’s about to be hanged. Perhaps you wish to counsel him in his prayers aforehand.” But the expression on Sir Cecil’s face affected in Baret a change of heart. “Perhaps, gentlemen, we should not hang our prisoner.”

There followed a disappointed groan. “Aye, Cap’n Foxworth! But he’d make such a pretty thing twistin’ in the Caribbean breeze!”

“Aye, indeed, but we have a more noble future for our illustrious *Capitan* Espinosa don Diego de Valdez,” said Baret. “Chain him to the galley,” he ordered two of his men. “And if he wishes to reach Maracaibo, he must donate some of his belly to the oars.”

A shout of glee reverberated on the deck of the *Santiago*. Captain Valdez struggled to free himself from crew members who, with great fanfare, hauled him below to the oars.

Then cheering crewmen carried five ornately carved chests containing pieces of eight from the captain’s cabin and

deposited them with a heavy thud where Baret and Sir Cecil stood.

“Aye, Cap’n Foxworth, feast your eyes upon this.”

Baret became strangely serious and looked at Sir Cecil, who mopped his brow with a white handkerchief.

“Baret, you scamp, this could ruin my reputation at Cambridge.”

“Is that all you’re worried about?”

Baret dipped his hand into a chest, spilling pieces of eight through his fingers. “It’s the wealth of the Main loaded into the bellies of Spanish galleons that feeds, clothes, and pays the Inquisition army of His Most Christian Majesty. This is booty the king won’t count in Madrid.”

“Need I remind you,” said Sir Cecil, “of the reason you captured this ship?”

Baret stood, his face grave. He had taken the *Santiago* believing the news from a paid spy that Lucca, a gracious old scholar and friend of his father, was on board. Baret believed that Lucca possessed secret information as to his father’s whereabouts.

“Lucca is not here,” said Baret soberly. “I’ve already searched, and the captain swore he’d never heard of him. I think he’s telling the truth.”

“Your grandfather the earl will hear of this. Yet it is His Majesty that arouses my worry. Remember, you must one day appear before him with a report of your father’s whereabouts. What will he say if Spain’s ambassador is also waiting at Court to accuse you of piracy! And *this*—” he gestured toward the deck’s shambles “—after participating in Henry Morgan’s attack on Gran Granada.”

Baret smoothly changed the subject. “Morgan is on his way with the other captains to Port Royal.” He threw an arm around the elderly man’s shoulders as they walked across the ruined deck to reboard the *Regale*.

“I have promised to join him there. It is said the governor of Jamaica will authorize an attack on Porto Bello. Come! A pleasant visit to Foxmoore will soothe your glower. While you sip Lady Sophie’s tea and snore on a featherbed, I will meet with the buccaneers from Tortuga. It may be that Charlie Maynerd has news of Lucca.”