

The Buccaneers Series (Buccaneers! Book 1)

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THE BUCCANEERS Å· 1

PortRoyal

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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 carriageway 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 Buckington 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 Foxemoore 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 Lavender 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 Foxemoore, 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. [20N 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 tasses 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." [BARRIVAL OF THE BUCCANEERS](#)

Cannon thundered. Acrid gray smoke curled and drifted. The buccaneer king, Captain Henry Morgan, was entering Port Royal Bay with his fleet of freebooters and pirates. In welcoming answer, the big guns at Fort Charles on the sea wall set off a volley that boomed like a cheer, splitting the blue waters as the projectiles splashed harmlessly. Port Royal would soon burst open like a ripe melon and onto riotous debauchery onto its cobbled streets. Emerald sat in her open buggy, watching the spectacle with mixed feelings. On one of the returning ships would be her cousin Captain Rafael Levasseur. White sails billowed in the wind as the ships, which sailed under articles granted by the governor of Jamaica, entered the bay. Brigantines followed and smaller pirate sloops—notorious for slipping into sheltered coves to avoid capture. Morgan's flags were flying in the Caribbean breeze, and loud drums beat out the exhilarating news to the town that another triumphal raid on the Main was completed. This time they had made an epic journey three hundred miles to Nicaragua and attacked a city known to the buccaneers only as Gran Granada, about which they had heard stories of great wealth. From her father, Emerald had learned about the manner of the adventurers that captained their own vessels. They were men from the society called the "Brethren of the Coast"—the infamous and formidable alliance of notorious pirates and the more gallant buccaneers. Their feared and respected commander, Captain Henry Morgan, was

considered to be a mere gentleman admiral by some and a ruthless scoundrel by his enemies. Morgan was a Welsh swashbuckler, who swore that he was not a pirate but rather a naval commander, sailing with a letter of marque from His Majesty King Charles. He was to harry Spain's shipping to Madrid and guard Port Royal from Spanish attacks. His second-in-command was Mansfield, who was from Holland, a land suffering under Spanish atrocities. Emerald scanned the throng waiting on the dock, cheering and waving at the thought of gold, jewels, and other treasures—pieces of eight, silver ducats, silver and gold pesos, and more. Her father had informed her that the Brethren were an assembly of variant men. Some were religious, mainly Protestants who had been driven out of France and Holland and who rallied on Tortuga. Others were political outcasts from France and England. Still others were notorious cutthroats and thieves. Among the Brethren were men of high education and honor, with courage unquestioned and gallantry displayed. Their code of conduct consisted of articles they had drawn up themselves and which they adhered to at all costs. Should a sea rover break faith with the signed articles, he was marooned, a fate looked upon as worse than death, or he was hanged by his captain. But they all shared one burning passion—hatred for Spain and memories of the Inquisition. The majority left their own alone and also refrained from pirating Protestant ships from Holland and England. But any Spanish ship was ripe to be plundered and scuttled, with no quarter given the crew. If men of such varied background could band together under the term *Brethren* and live in reasonable peace among themselves, it was in order to raid New Spain and the Main and plunder the annual treasure fleet from Porto Bello on its route to Madrid. In return, Spain continued to torture and burn her prisoners while demanding that King Charles arrest the pirates. Emerald had little doubt but that their ships were swollen with great treasure. She watched as the men left their vessels anchored out in the bay and rowed to the wharf in longboats. Port Royal would soon be ablaze with rum, and there would be duels before morning—for the Brethren were also known to have minor disagreements among themselves. After the decade that Emerald had spent in Jamaica as a rejected member of the combined families of the Buckingtons and Harwicks, she wondered that she could yet feel pain from her mother's sordid reputation as the daughter of the French pirate Marcel Levasseur. In the twilight she sat on the front seat of the buggy on a wide cobbled court by the Caribbean. The carriage's leather and fringe were a trifle frayed from weather and years of use and would hardly be recognized as belonging to a blood kin of Earl Nigel Buckington. Beside her sat Zeddie, her English driver and bodyguard, who was to her more a friend than a freed indentured servant working for her father. Zeddie held the horse's reins, his one good eye fixed upon Emerald, a black patch over the other. He straightened his golden periwig. "Sure, now, missy, this is a mistake. What if that rascally mouthed cousin of yours refuses to do you justice? Dare you draw wits like a cutlass with Captain Rafael Levasseur? And if he finds out what you plan aboard his ship, what then? Sink me, lass! And your father, Sir Karlton, what will I be telling him when he returns, should the daring risk you take go awry?" She moved uneasily on the hard seat, thinking of her beloved father. That robust privateer had grand schemes of his own to marry her off to a man of nobility in England. *As if he ever could*, she thought ruefully. And not that she now cared for such thoughts. It was Jamie Bradford she wished to marry. She cast Zeddie a side glance. "Nothing will go wrong. Levasseur's ship will be empty by midnight. He and his vile crew will soon be so raucous in their behavior that a Spaniard could capture his ship and he wouldn't know it till daybreak." Zeddie gave a snort. "I fear, me lass, it ain't as breezy as all that, but I'm understandin' you plainly enough. You intend to see this through for Jamie." Emerald shaded her eyes to peer ahead, watching the longboats being rowed across the jade green waters to the docks. The men came ashore like petty kings to claim their thrones, and soon her buggy was caught in the throng. High Street was swarming with sea rovers. Shopkeepers left their little two-story structures on the narrow street to converge on the buccaneers, cheering the homecoming of their private navy. Port Royal's citizenry was as diverse in class and character as were the pirates themselves, but even the most distinguished among them had an equal passion for red and green jewels, white pearls, creamy silk, and aromatic spices. What the pirates plundered, they spent in Port Royal, and the citizens' homes were decorated with looted treasures bought from the shops and stalls. A pair of silver candlesticks might easily have come from a bishop's table, silver dinner plates from some

Spanish don. She watched, embarrassed, as doxies from the bawdy houses hung out like flies on the wharf, waving to the buccaneers. The men carrying rapiers and baldrics with longhandled pistols were laying claim to familiar women with gloating painted faces, all snatching the gifts that the pirates dangled before their eyes like fish bait. She saw the "land pirates"—men who were either too old or too maimed to go a-buccaneering—being tossed Spanish doubloons. She watched barefoot whites, half-castes, Africans, and Caribs alike pour from the taverns at their owners' orders, rolling the familiar rum barrels into the street. Emerald winced at the loud, impatient whack of hatchets cracking into wood, followed by gleeful shouts as the fiery liquid spilled and flowed into cups, soon to light fires of unholy passion in bellies. Although accustomed to such sights, her upbringing by her great-uncle Mathias Harwick, a nonconformist minister, had instilled within her a loathing of the culture, a pity for its prisoners, and a desire to better her reputation by escaping Port Royal with Jamie. Her only regret was to leave Great-uncle Mathias and the Singing School on Foxmoore, where she aided him in his calling of translating the language of the African slaves into Christian music. She would also miss the few children who were allowed by the family to attend the school, the mulatto twin boys Timothy and Titus, and eight-year-old Lord Jette Buckingham, who "owned" them. She cautiously scanned the buccaneers, searching the throng for a glimpse of Captain Levasseur. Her cousin was not yet in sight as the other pirates cast pieces of eight into the street. Although it was money that she so desperately needed, she would not scrabble in the dust for an unwanted favor of a pirate. What was rightfully hers, stolen by her French cousin, waited aboard his ship. She must, in spite of the risk and her uneasy conscience, masquerade herself as a common cabin boy and board that pirate vessel secretly to retrieve it. "Zeddie, we shall never see him in this madness! We shall seek him on the wharf." "Wooden idols be tossed to the fire, m'gal, and your father would hang me on the yardarm should I allow you to go a-walking!" "Oh, Zeddie, I've little choice. And anyway—" she said with determination—"most of them know I'm Captain Karlton Harwick's daughter." "Aye, but remember the kill-devil rum pouring freely into the mugs, m'gal. It will soon make a rogue unfearful of ten men with the temperament of either your father or Levasseur." "I haven't forgotten," she said uneasily. She was soon down from the carriage, though, and pushing her way through the throngs of merchants and adventurers toward the wharf where other longboats were still arriving. A northeasterly breeze was tempering the tropical heat of the day's blazing sun, yet her unease goaded her into rapidly swishing her fan of vivid blue-and-yellow parrot feathers. In the center of the fan a small mirror flashed like silver as it caught the sunlight. Zeddie hobbled beside her, hard put to keep up with her rush, carrying his indigo-dyed shoulder sling with ornate pistol. In his younger days, he had been a decorated soldier in the army of Charles I. Zeddie had fought for a time in England's Civil War, where he had lost an eye and had been sent to Barbados as a political prisoner in the days of Cromwell. Her father, who had known Zeddie in London before the war, had bought him from his indentured service. Zeddie was the one person Emerald could rely on for protection in the absence of her father. And so for what ventures ill or good she might undertake in Port Royal, Zeddie was a staunch ally and never far behind. Emerald stopped on the wharf and scanned the ships. They were various sizes; some had twenty guns, or ten, or as few as six. There were a few schooners and sloops—for pirates often preferred the smaller ships in order to maneuver shallow waters and harbor in secret coves. She stood feeling the moist breeze, uncertain which vessel belonged to Captain Levasseur. He had, like the others, participated in the raid on Gran Granada. Zeddie had heard from the old turtle man, Hob, at Chocolota Hole that her cousin's vessel had been sorely struck in the battle and that he had limped home in danger of being overtaken by the Spaniards until he reached his allies among the French buccaneers at St. Croix. There his vessel had been repaired. Her eyes scanned the names of the ships, all scarred from recent battle. Uneasiness crept over her, for most bore the names of merciless pirates, even though the flags bearing the skull and crossbones or other equally vile insignia had been taken down and stashed away for future ventures. In place of the pirate flag there flew the Union Jack, the French fleur-de-lis, or the Dutch tricolor. She noted *The Black Dragon*, *The Kill-Devil*, *The Dutch Revenge*, and a host of other names humorously mocking the royalty of England or the dons of despised Spain. She saw an ill-drawn picture of the king of Spain skewered with arrows burning

with pitch. "Is the turtle man certain Levasseur returned from Saint Croix?" she inquired. Zeddie lifted his prized periwig—which a pirate had tossed to him on a previous run, calling in jest, "From the king of France"—and scratched his head. He lowered the wig again, squinting his one good eye like a bird as he scanned the vessels anchored offshore. It was a terrible yet beautiful sight against Jamaica's setting sun, which had turned the sky into the semblance of a purple amethyst. "M'gal, surely it is that fine one yonder. For the wretched rogue's come back with his sea chest bulging at the seams." In the twilight Emerald followed his gesture to a handsome ship without a flag. It was anchored a distance away from the others, as though its captain preferred solitude. She drew closer to the edge of the wharf to watch a late-arriving longboat. She did not see from which ship it had disembarked. "Looks to come from the *Black Dragon*," was Zeddie's guess. But Emerald was uncertain and wondered, Was her cousin in this longboat? Or could he still be aboard the *Regale*? She stood with Zeddie watching until the longboat came near the stone steps below the sea wall. She glimpsed a half-naked brown Carib kneel in the prow and grab a rope to steady it against the dock. Straining for a look, she saw not Levasseur but another buccaneer stand to leave the boat. She stared at the man. Wearing a white shirt with billowing sleeves laced tightly at the wrist, he was a handsome and virile figure whose features were shadowed beneath a wide-brimmed velvet hat and a cocky plume. His woolen hose were also black, worn over muscled legs with calf-length Cordovan boots sporting silver buckles. He stepped out onto the worn sea steps and looked upward to where Emerald gazed down. He paused, and for a moment their gaze locked. Then he said something in jest to the man behind him, who laughed. *Why, he must think I'm a doxy*, she thought, horrified. Swiftly she jerked her head away in the direction of her buggy. "Come, Zeddie, Captain Levasseur must not have arrived ashore yet. We'll wait in Father's lookout house until it's dark." Zeddie was scowling but not at the new arrivals coming up the wharf steps. She cautiously followed his stare across the street toward the gambling house, where a group of buccaneers was gathered, talking and laughing. Emerald noticed a vaguely familiar man wearing maroon and black taffeta trimmed with Spanish lace. His short black beard was meticulously curled below an arrogant face, and his black periwig was of shoulder-length King James style curls dusting his broad shoulders. "Sir Jasper!" She heartily disliked the conceited man, a widower—or so it was said—somewhere in his thirties. Beside operating a lucrative business as a slaver, owning two vessels that he sent to West Africa, he was a large landowner. Her father insisted that he had cheated his brother out of the family inheritance. No one in the West Indies had seen Sir Jasper's brother in several years. She put nothing past him. Despite Sir Jasper's irrefutable reputation, there were prestigious families in Jamaica who would easily have given their daughters to him in marriage. The planter who gained him as son-in-law would end up with one of the largest sugar estates on the island. Because of the benefits from such a union there were those parents who were willing to overlook the man's character and receive him as a guest in their parlors and at their fine dinner tables. Sir Jasper seemed to go out of his way to provoke Emerald when her father was away, for unlike most of the other women, who were flattered by his attention, she would have nothing to do with the rake, nor did her father approve of him. "The knave's not only after my daughter, but he thinks to buy out my shares in Foxemoore. I'll duel the rogue first!" he had said. It appeared to Emerald that Sir Jasper delighted to annoy her. He mocked her dedication to Christianity and spoke against her helping Great-uncle Mathias at the Singing School. Jasper had hinted that he might bring the work of her uncle before the Jamaican Council for teaching Christianity to the slaves. Doing so was forbidden by island law, but he had also intimated that if her father permitted him to call upon her, he might reconsider. She took his interest lightly, for she was not the only girl in Port Royal that he sought to flatter. He was even more attentive to her cousin Lavender. But Lavender with her golden hair and blue eyes had already informed Emerald that she was in love with another man. Sir Jasper, she said, frightened her, for he was on her mother's list of eligible men, although he was not considered to be nearly the prize that Baret Buckingham was, whom Lavender expected to marry. Viscount Buckingham was the grandson of the earl in London and was heir to all that belonged to his deceased father. Nevertheless Cousin Lavender was alarmed, for she had told Emerald that Sir Jasper was gaining political importance in Jamaica and was expected to receive a ruling seat on the governor-general's

Council. The news brought concern to Emerald as well. Her father said Sir Jasper was an associate of an uncle soon to arrive from London—an uncle who was close to His Majesty and having secret Spanish sympathies because of the lucrative business of clandestine slave trade on the Main. “A merry countenance!” stated Emerald in a low voice of dismay behind her parrot fan. “It’s just our luck to run into Sir Jasper now! Quick, Zeddie, before he sees us.” “Aye, lass, it’s the bloke, and notice whose comp’ny he seeks? Pirates! But no less one than himself, if you ask me.” A chill prickled her skin. Zeddie frowned and took hold of her arm to escort her across Fisher’s Row toward the buggy. “This ain’t a fair place to be hobnobbing, m’gal.” Emerald turned to march across the street, her slippers clicking on the cobbles, and Zeddie’s gangling frame following closely behind. “Sink me! Here the fop comes now!” he said. “Won’t be just Jamie Boy thrown into Brideswell if I draw pistol.” To her discomfiture, Sir Jasper made a pretty movement, overtaking them and bracing himself in the middle of the street directly ahead of her. He doffed his wide hat and bowed low at the waist. “Doth the lady rush away to join mongrels? Come, darlin’, and shoo away this noisome plague who imagines himself a bodyguard. You are, madam, I humbly assure you, quite safe in my presence. We have much to discuss.” Masking her alarm at this fox, she stood her ground. Sir Jasper walked toward her with a bold smile on his arrogant bronzed face, his hat held under his arm. With the other hand he reached to take hers. “Ah, Miss Emerald, how fortunate to come upon you like this. I beg your company at supper.” He gestured across the street to the gaming house. “It is a place noted for the finest turtles in all Jamaica. Miss Hattie will see we have all our wants met.” “Nay, Sir Jasper. If you have ought to speak to me, you can say it here and now in the presence of Zeddie.” His eyes flickered coolly. “Your company, madam, is preferred.” Zeddie stood behind her, and Emerald heard something of a growl in his throat. “Come, m’gal,” said Zeddie, taking her arm. But Sir Jasper would have none of it. He blocked her way, and his eyes fixed on Zeddie with malevolence. “Off with you, before I lose my gallant patience before the lady.” Emerald felt Zeddie’s arm tense, and she thought him to be in contemplation of a move for his pistol—a sure mistake, seeing that Sir Jasper could exercise his power against him if he chose. She was deciding her next move, a whispered prayer on her tongue, when Sir Jasper smiled and she felt his strong fingers on her arm, drawing her away from Zeddie to propel her across the street. Zeddie drew his pistol. One of Sir Jasper’s men struck a blow to the back of his head. Emerald let out a cry as he crumpled forward to the street. “Zeddie!” she gasped as she beheld the old man on hands and knees. Sir Jasper said easily, “No alarm needed, my dear. He’ll live—not that it’s any great loss if he did not. See now! It’s only your sweet face across the table of my supper I wish for. There are at least ten women with titles who would be pleased to dine with me.” A voice interrupted from a short distance behind her, a resonant voice that reeked calm yet cool challenge: “Your presence, Sir Jasper, is about as safe as a fox in the hen coop—and judging from the girl’s desire to depart, nearly as bothersome. She’s but a hatchling to be sent home. Let her go. As you say, ten titled women would be pleased to join you. I suggest you go find them.” Emerald forgot Sir Jasper and Zeddie and turned to the man who had pronounced her a hatchling. Sir Jasper also turned toward that easy yet commanding voice, as though he recognized it and felt no pleasure. “Ah! It is you, Baret. I see you’ve eluded the Spanish don. How fortunate for the cause.” His tone convinced Emerald that he had hoped otherwise, and she saw the buccaneer named Baret gesture with an airy wave of his hand. “No matter. A simple device.” Sir Jasper gave a short laugh. “I wish I had your arrogance, Captain Foxworth, and your luck. You live a charmed life.” Emerald now realized that the buccaneer named Baret Foxworth was the man that she had glimpsed earlier in the longboat. He was smiling aloofly at Sir Jasper, and she could see that there was a barrier between them. Sir Jasper did not appear anxious to test the strength of that barrier, and Emerald swiftly sized up the buccaneer. He was obviously an adventurer like the others who had sailed with Henry Morgan and raided Gran Granada. Yet she detected something more in his manner, a disciplined character that suggested uncompromising values. His lively dark eyes bore a hint of sardonic humor. His hair, too, was as dark as ebony, and though absent the fashionable periwig, it was worn in the length of the king’s Cavaliers who had followed King Charles into France during the days of Cromwell and the Civil War. Also like the Stuart king, he wore a thin mustache. About his mouth hovered a faintly mocking expression. He was armed with a hearty supply of wicked

things—a long rapier and a pair of pistols. He wore these, as all buccaneers did, at the ends of a leather sling studded with silver. “Your dinner awaits at the Red Goose,” he informed Sir Jasper. And with that same sardonic smile, more as a host than a challenger, he gestured toward the gaming house. As he did, the silver lace at his wrists gleamed in the light of the rising moon, now hanging like a shimmering orange in the black sky above Port Royal’s quay. If Sir Jasper wished to confront him over the matter, he was soon placated. With a smile equally as debonair as his opponent’s, he bowed deeply to Emerald and completely ignored Zeddie, who was blindly reaching for his golden periwig lying in the street. “Another time, madam,” he said and added as he smiled at Baret, “Perhaps you have plans of your own, Captain Foxworth?” “Perhaps, Sir Jasper ... but I hardly find robbing nurseries a pleasant pastime. Adieu.” Sir Jasper took leave with his men and crossed the street into the gaming house. Emerald turned toward the man, who now gestured to his half-caste serving man to see how Zeddie was progressing. By now Zeddie had his periwig on, albeit crookedly. The serving man whom Baret had called “Charlie” retrieved the pistol Zeddie dropped and calmly returned it to him. Emerald was about to express her gratitude to Captain Foxworth but found that he already appeared to have dismissed her. His manner was preoccupied as he spoke in a low voice to another of his buccaneers, who then followed Sir Jasper into the Red Goose. When Captain Foxworth saw that she was still there, aloofness showed in his smile. He bowed. “Your servant, madam. You may go.” The remark was spoken with the same casual tone of dismissal that the court of King Charles reserved for lesser servants. Bewildered, Emerald wondered, *Who is this buccaneer with the airs of nobility?* She felt a small flame of embarrassment and rebuked herself for standing there as though her feet were planted in the street like the cobbles. She disliked her plain calico dress even more. And her lack of status. She painfully remembered Cousin Lavender, who had everything she did not—including a noble reputation. Baret gestured toward Zeddie, who was now on his feet, though wobbly. “I think your bodyguard is now able to escort you to your destination.” She could think of nothing profound to say and hoped her behavior equaled that of a lady who may have come from a fashionable school in London. “My thanks for your gallantry, sir.” He smiled faintly and offered another bow, briefly appraising her. “It’s getting late. Your carriage waits.” Quickly she tore her eyes from his and walked away as though wearing rustling satin. Zeddie trailed behind, his hand holding onto the lopsided periwig sitting on his bruised head. She and Zeddie had not gone far when she heard Baret say something to his buccaneers. “Never saw her before, Captain,” answered one. “Doesn’t look like a doxy.” She cautiously glanced over her shoulder and saw Captain Baret Foxworth watching her. She turned her head and hurried on. She was frowning as she and Zeddie crossed the street toward her waiting buggy. “Did you ever hear of Captain Baret Foxworth?” she asked casually. “Aye, m’gal. A name growing as one of Morgan’s men. Foxworth’s a blackguard pirate to be sure, but a gentleman tonight, I’m thinkin’, and grateful I am.” Emerald silently agreed and climbed into the buggy, not waiting for Zeddie to help her. She wondered that she was faintly disappointed that Baret Foxworth was one of Morgan’s captains. He came up after her to take the reins. The night was loud with music and voices. As Zeddie turned the horse toward home, her offended emotions over Sir Jasper’s odious behavior began to cool, and her reason was restored. She had come here for one purpose, which thus far was not accomplished. “Oh, Zeddie, we can’t go home. I’ve got to board Levasseur’s ship, or Jamie and Ty will both be left to Pitt’s cruelties. I must try!” “Sure now, your cousin will be a rich man after the raid on Granada. But will the daw cock restore what he stole from you so many years ago?” She knew he would not likely do so. She also knew there would be plenty in his cabin aboard ship from which to compensate for the dowry he had unjustly taken from her—which would suit Mr. Pitt just fine. “I must risk Levasseur’s ship tonight. Can you find us a longboat?” He groaned, holding his head. “Aye, m’gal. But to be sure, you take a greater risk than coming upon Sir Jasper. And I’m in no good health to aid you none. Nor are we likely to come across Captain Foxworth again.” “What choice have I? Think of Ty! And Jamie! Do you think Mr. Pitt will show a morsel of mercy to them? Nay! The infamous dog will have his bribe, and it seems I’ve no choice but to see him satisfied.” [4PIRATES AND CUDGELS](#) It was nearing midnight, and the wharf was nearly deserted, for most of the pirates were in the bawdy houses and gambling dens or roaming the streets of Port Royal, where the noise of revelry

saturated the night. Emerald hid behind a stack of barrels on the dock, shivering despite the tropical warmth. She heard the lulling of the water against the pilings and the rhythmic creak of the wooden quay beneath her feet. In the distance men were talking, and the sound of boot steps stumbled across the wharf. A woman's cackling laughter echoed, then the voices filtered away in the rising wind, and silence hugged her. In haste Emerald donned calico drawers and cotton shirt, vestments that a common crewman aboard a pirate vessel would wear, grimacing as she slipped into them. *Ugh*, she thought. *Ah, cruel, leering hand of circumstance!* As if to taunt her prayers to become a lady of noble cause, the image of her young cousin Lavender, dressed in ivory-colored silk, strolled across her mind. Emerald felt the ugly cloth of the drawers, the roughness of the shirt. *Tsk!* Her eyes narrowed. What would it be like to be nobility? To have men of title and lands bowing over your hand? And yet, she thought, it took more than dressing in silk and possessing a title to make a Christian woman of excellent spirit. God looked upon her heart, and it too must be clothed with fairness. She frowned as she contemplated her actions, driven by desperation. Was she wise in secretly seeking Cousin Levasseur's ship? But what if Jamie and Ty were branded? What if they were hanged! She shut her eyes tightly, her small hand forming a fist. "Please, omnipotent God of my Uncle Mathias, do aid me in saving Jamie from such a dark fate." A tiny flame pulsated within her soul, seeming to ask, *Is He the mighty God of your uncle only? Is He not your God also, even your heavenly Father through His Son?* She hesitated, musing. Then as the urgency of the moment pressed in upon her, she swiftly concealed her hair beneath a blue pirate scarf and tied it behind her head. She placed her slippers inside her cotton frock and folded the awkward bundle. A moment later, leaving hidden the rolled-up clothing, she crawled out from behind a dray of wooden barrels on the loading barge and, seeing that she was alone, stood to her bare feet, cautiously glancing about for rats and detestable crawling things. A quiver raced up her back. What if she stepped on a cockroach and felt it squish against the sole of her foot? *I'll scream.* She placed cold fingers over her mouth and walked gingerly toward the quay steps, leading down to the water and Zeddie's waiting cockboat. Her heart thudded, but she thankfully felt nothing but the rough, damp wood pressing against her feet. Zeddie had been careful not to light the boat lantern, and she called for him in a whisper, pausing on the landing steps and squinting ahead for a glimpse of him. "Watch your step, m'gal. It's slippery with moss." As she came down the steps she saw that he sat with the oars ready, his bruised head bound with a cloth, his prized French periwig sitting on his knees, reminding Emerald of a dozing lapdog. Her conscience smote her. "You're sure you'll be all right?" She stepped into the boat, feeling guilty that she had involved him in the night's fiasco with Sir Jasper. "As fit as the governor's milkmaid, I'm thinking. Sure now, no need to worry. That rascally-mouth cousin of yours ain't likely to seek an honest night's sleep in his cabin, but you must take no chances." "Your head causes you no undue suffering?" He sniffed with disdain, dismissing the notion that the injury troubled him. "His lordship's man might've been a plaguey kitten for all the damage he did me. I've taken worse in ol' Charlie's army," he boasted of the king. "Anyhows, I've daubed the cut with Hob's turtle rum." His good eye twinkled in the moonlight. "Nary an Indies vermin could live in that vile brew." Emerald settled herself on a low seat in the cockboat, glancing over her shoulder toward the wharf to make certain they were not being followed. No one was in sight. The oars dipped and sliced through the water as they slid smoothly out past anchored sloops and schooners with tattered sails and tacking toward Captain Rafael Levasseur's vessel some quarter mile out in the smooth waters of the bay. As Zeddie rowed, Emerald gazed at the sleeping ship casting its tall silhouette against the lighter horizon, where the moon appeared a shining orb enthroned in the velvet sky. The trade wind pressed against her face, filling her nostrils with the aromatic scent of spicy nutmeg. The moonlight sent shimmers weaving across the water like schools of bright fish skimming in a dance. A short time later the vessel loomed large and forbidding before her eyes. It was clean and swift, and, though she knew little of such things, it appeared to have twenty guns and sat strong in the water, a sure sign that it had recently been careened and freed of barnacles, seaweed, and worms, which in the warm Caribbean waters gnawed and devoured the underbellies of ships. As they came alongside, Zeddie stilled the oars, and Emerald caught the mild groaning of the hull and the anchor chain taut in the water. All else was silent. He brought the boat to the foot of the ship's ladder and quietly seized a rope to steady

them. Emerald blinked up past the side of the ship to where the tall masts reflected the moonlight. In a moment of dread she half expected to be met by a swarthy crewman leaning over the rail with a long-barreled dueling pistol. But nothing moved. Naught stirred in the late night but the warm breeze moving through the tacking. She watched the long-legged Zeddie steady himself on the ladder and climb up awkwardly, and for a moment she feared a dizzy spell had seized him, but soon he disappeared over the side. She waited. Her anxiety grew when he did not reappear. *Oh, no ...* But then he came to the rail and signaled for her to proceed. She cautiously set her bare foot onto the rough rung of the ladder and began the steep climb up the ship's side, congratulating herself that the indifference with which she'd been treated by the family while growing up gave her benefits that Cousin Lavender did not have—Emerald could board a ship without fear of heights and could swim the Caribbean like a fish bred in its waters. She forced herself to a spirit of calmness as she inched her way up, taking in slow breaths to quiet her heart. In another minute she slipped over the side as silently as the wings of a moth. On deck Emerald crouched in the shadows, pressing against a bulkhead so as not to be seen, holding her breath, listening for the sound of footsteps, and feeling the wooden deck beneath her sweating palms. *Don't fear. Even if I'm caught, what can they do to me? Is not Captain Levasseur my cousin? He would rant and rave at my being here, but he would not harm me, nor would he allow any of his nasty crewmen to touch me.* What Mr. Pitt had said to her in their meeting on the wagon road was unfortunately true—Captain Rafael Levasseur *had* asked her father to marry her. Father, of course, had refused, and for that she was grateful. She breathed easier. After all, she could say she had simply come to see a member of her mother's family from Tortuga. Or she could say she had come as a *periagua*, offering to sell Levasseur fruits and vegetables. But the words of Great-uncle Mathias, taken from Scripture, warned against the sin of lying. The conflict waging within only added to her tension. Was she like Jacob in the Old Testament, using her wiles to secure her future rather than trusting God to guide her steps? One thing was always certain, God did not bless actions that contradicted His Word. Oh, rather to be like the biblical Esther—to do what was right and to trust the outcome to His faithful providence. *"The Lord has His way in the whirlwind and the storm."* She shivered in the moonlight. Was it a scepter of grace that awaited her appearance in his cabin or a pirate's cutlass? As planned, she waited until Zeddie signaled again that the way was clear, and then he took up the position of watchman. The urgency goading her into action silenced her fears. She crossed the deck as softly as though her feet were kittens' paws and went up the steps to the quarterdeck. With eyes shining like round pools, she approached the Great Cabin to find a lantern glowing in the window. Confusion rushed in, and her fingers closed tightly around the empty satchel she carried. Was it possible that he had not left the ship? But no, Zeddie had followed him to the gaming house—the Spanish Galleon—and had watched him go inside. *Escape, before it's too late,* her emotions clamored. She tensed, whirling toward the steps from where she had come. The dreaded sound of boot steps and low voices! There was no chance of retracing her path now. And what of Zeddie? Had he gone undetected? Wildly she looked around her for a place to hide. Dare she slip through the cabin door? No. If someone were inside ... The voices and footsteps approached. Soon she would be overtaken. She darted behind a barrel, drawing her knees into her chest and clasping her arms about them. She heard two men come up the companionway and pause near the Great Cabin. Her breath stopped. Then she glimpsed a man holding a deck lantern, a dignified man with the look of a scholar. He stood facing another, whom she could not see except for his black boot with its glinting silver buckle. Emerald stiffened against the cabin wall. They conversed quietly in a foreign language, and their words were lost on her. They walked on. She waited until the sound of their steps vanished. Whatever schemes certain crew members might have aboard Levasseur's ship were of no concern to her. She had her own quest, and she must succeed now—or fail. When she again heard nothing but the water lapping against the hull, her courage revived, and she crawled from behind the barrel. Still on her knees, Emerald took hold of the knob on the heavy oak door and opened it just a crack. Silence beckoned. When certain the Great Cabin was empty, she entered, shutting the door softly. In the glow of the oil lantern she was confronted by heavy dark beams and shadows. There was a large captain's desk of what looked to be fine mahogany, its contents neatly in order—a rather strange sight, considering her fiery and reckless young cousin.

Her eyes swiftly raked the bed in the corner. Again, it was neatly made and to her surprise, covered not with looted Spanish tapestry or French cloth of gold but with what she recognized as fine Holland tapestry. *Holland?* Had Levasseur also pirated a Dutch merchant ship from Curaçao? Yet it was not like the buccaneers to harry men of their own faith, and they had no cause to be at odds with Dutch merchants. It was Spain that both the French and the English scorned. The pieces of furniture were also of exceptional quality, as though their owner relished a taste for nobility. She frowned and paused to take a closer look at where she was. The lighting did not do justice to the texture and color of the furnishings or the carpet. Nevertheless she knew from her father's privateering ventures in the East Indies and Europe that these goods were of high value. Her eyes feasted on items of beaten gold, of silver mined by slaves and Protestant prisoners in Peru, of pearls from the island of Margarita, where Spain misused Carib slaves to cultivate oyster beds. Then she began her quiet search for a certain silver box she was well acquainted with from the past. She quietly opened bureau drawers and rummaged through fine Holland shirts and others made of expensive cambric with ruffles. She lifted one that felt smooth to the touch and sniffed the pleasant scent of spice. She frowned again. Her cousin had changed for the better. No more heavy French perfume for his sleek black locks? A teakwood trunk stood open, and she stooped, looking through vests and doublets embroidered with silver, Cavalier suits of black and sage green velvet, taffetas, as well as underdrawers of linen. Again she paused uneasily, considering. She stood and went to the large desk, but the top drawer was locked. It was too narrow, in any case, to hold the box she sought. It was then she noticed something that commanded her attention. On the desk lay a half-finished sketch, which suggested a mind that found release in creativity. Again she was learning personal things about Captain Levasseur that she had not suspected. Did she know him at all? The sketch was of a woman—well done and suggesting nobility. *I didn't know he had anything so fine within his unrepentant heart*, she thought grudgingly. *His ways are usually left to swords!* She left the sketch and opened the bottom drawer, dropping to her knees to search. At last! A treasure box of filigreed silver. But it was not as she remembered. She had been a child when she last saw the box in her mother's possession—before Levasseur had stolen it—but the box she remembered had been engraved with the fleur-de-lis of France. She studied the coat of arms but did not recognize it. It was not English, certainly not Spanish. From Holland? Where had Levasseur gotten it? "Stolen, without doubt," she murmured to herself indignantly and opened the latch. Perhaps it might still hold the heirlooms she searched for. She stood then, turned up the wick on the oil lamp, and emptied the contents on the desk. To her disappointment the silver box contained no rich bounty—only a simple silver chain with one large pearl that looked to be of another generation. She picked up a miniature portraying a young woman of winning loveliness, with fair hair and intelligent eyes that looked to be blue. Connected to the silver frame was a small cross, an unusual one woven of golden hair. Emotionally stirred, she studied the portrait and the cross, wondering. She did not know how, but she knew without being told that whoever owned these items before Levasseur stole them had a deep affection for the woman. The Christian faith was also held in reverence, for who would trouble to weave a cross from her hair—and who would keep it as a treasure? She was still holding the miniature when her eyes strayed across the cabin to a teakwood dresser. Startled, she stared at the undeniable portrait of her cousin *Lavender!* So! Levasseur was also infatuated with her. She nearly laughed. As if the family would allow anything between a pirate and an heiress to title and wealth! How had Levasseur even gotten hold of the portrait? she wondered. Certainly Lavender hadn't given it to him. She was a bluestocking, a league above them both in status. It wasn't likely that Lavender would give a framed portrait of herself to a known pirate that London hoped to hang at Execution Dock! Emerald's mind stumbled over her own conclusions. Then how... She caught her breath as reality rushed in. She whirled and looked about at the cabin that was so foreign to the nature of Rafael Levasseur. The clothing, the furniture, the neatness, the sketch on the desk, the silver box with hints that it came from Holland... Vapors! This was not her cousin's ship! With a smothered gasp, Emerald rushed for the door. How could Zeddie have been so wrong? Footsteps sounded from without. She halted. *Trapped.* The door opened. Stricken, silencing her alarm, she stepped back, confronted by the buccaneer that she had met at sunset on Fisher's Row, the smooth and arrogant man that Sir

Jasper had addressed as Captain Baret Foxworth. He stopped short upon seeing her standing in his cabin, but whether he recognized her as she was now dressed was not clear. He stood blocking the doorway. His eyes took in the faded calico drawers and cotton shirt, the blue scarf tied about her head, then came to rest on the object clutched in her hand. His expression hardened. Temper glinted in the darkness of his narrowing gaze. Emerald looked at what she held so tightly, and when she saw what it was, her heart sank to her bare feet. In her haste to escape, she had held onto the silver chain and pearl—the heirloom of endearment, undoubtedly worth more in memory to him than a bounty of silver ingots stashed in the hold of a Spanish treasure ship. She glanced helplessly at his rummaged desk and silver box. “I ... uh ... I didn’t mean to take *this*. I was looking for...” Her voice trailed off as her eyes rushed to his and she could see her doom approaching. He thought her a wench without morals who had crept aboard his ship to steal whatever she might find. And what could she do but deny his verdict? And her abominable clothing only reinforced his conclusions. Under his level gaze glinting with cool anger and something like malicious amusement, she blushed to her hairline, believing she was reaping the just chastisement of God for taking matters into her own hands. In an exaggerated move of weariness at finding her in his cabin, he removed his maroon cloak and dropped it onto the nearby chair. Wearing a white shirt with full sleeves, dark trousers, and calf-length boots, he leaned in the doorway, unhurried, arms folded. He studied Emerald, gesturing toward her with casual indifference, his hand flashing with gems. “And who is this wench, looking like a cross between a mouse and a cabin boy, who has dared board the *Regale* to rummage through my cabin?” *Shall I faint?* she wondered, dazed. It would be so easy—and a sweet relief. Or she might scream or burst into a shield of tears. The directness of his glance was extremely disconcerting. “They hang pirates,” he announced smoothly, a faint sardonic expression around his mouth. “Are you any better?” [5THE BUCCANEER](#) Emerald threw the cherished pendant across the cabin to distract him. When his attention was taken to where it landed and he straightened from the doorway in annoyance over its treatment, Emerald darted under his arm. His fingers briefly caught the back of her hair before she slipped away from his grip, leaving the blue scarf in his hand. She raced like a fleeing hind with wolves at her heels across the quarterdeck and down the stairs. *Zeddie!* Where was Zeddie! Emerald glanced back to see Captain Foxworth coming down the steps after her. He did not call out, though surely he could have had a dozen men quickly at his command. In horror, she straddled the ship’s rail, giving one last glance in his direction. “Please! Stay away!” she gasped. He stopped at the foot of the companionway and seemed to contemplate her hair, streaming in the trade wind. “Well, now,” he said. “At least you’re not a cabin boy.” “I’ve a dagger,” she suggested in a warning tone. He folded his arms, and she saw his smile in the moonlight. “I tremble. What is your name? Do you have parents?” He gave a laugh. “A doxy for a mother, no doubt. I suppose you both make your living preying on poor pirates with honest hearts?” She ignored the goading humor. She hesitated, trembling, uncertain about him, looking away to the dark shimmering waters below. A quarter mile to shore! He walked slowly toward her. Emerald leaned toward the sea. “Stay away.” “You’re to be congratulated,” he said. “There aren’t many who manage to secretly sneak aboard. Your skills must surely inspire songs in the bawdy houses.” Tears stung her eyes. “Stay away, or I’ll jump.” He folded his arms. “Go ahead,” he challenged with a smile. “I will!” He bowed and gestured to the sea. “But if you get lost out there, don’t say I didn’t warn you. And don’t think I’ll take pity and bother to send a longboat. If you do drown like a sodden mouse, Port Royal will be less one thief. You’d surely grow into one of the worst wenches that could plague a man.” Stung, she cried, “I am not a thief! I’m a lady!” He threw back his head and laughed. “You blackguard! You’re no better than Rafael Levasseur!” At the name of Levasseur his manner swiftly changed. “What do you know of *him*?” Emerald swallowed and remained silent. Did he know her cousin well? His eyes narrowed. “Down from the rail with you, you sniffy little brat. With what other of my cherished goods did you think to run off with?” As he came toward her, Emerald slipped over the rail and dove straight into the Caribbean, hardly making a splash. She began swimming toward the distant shore. He leaned over the rail. “Go on with you then! And if I find so much as a thread missing from my cabin I’ll come looking for you, if I have to invade every bawdy house in Port Royal. Enjoy your midnight swim,” he challenged. “By the time you get to shore maybe you’ll have learned a thing or two! And

if I ever catch you or any other thieving doxy sneaking into my cabin, I'll dangle all of you from the yardarm!" "Fly your skull and crossbones, Captain Foxworth!" she cried breathlessly. "You'll surely hang at Execution Dock!" She heard him laughing. *Oh!* she thought furiously, already shivering. She continued to swim toward shore. Several times she paused to catch her breath and, glancing back, was certain that he watched her progress with a spyglass. Whether it was to see if she could make shore or in malicious satisfaction of witnessing her struggle, she was not sure. Mustering all the remaining determination in her body, she swam on toward Port Royal. But Zeddie. Where was poor Zeddie? *Dear God, what have I done?* Hiding behind the barrels on the wharf, still wet and shivering from her long swim, Emerald waited to hear the welcome sound of Zeddie's returning with the cockboat. Several hours crept by before she resigned herself to the worrisome fact that he would not be coming. He was caught! He had to be! He would've been here by now! *Oh, Lord, please take care of him. This is all my wrongdoing. Please help us.* Disillusionment assailed her. Where was the hope to continue believing that she could succeed? Yet how could she give up and return to Foxmoore and leave Jamie and Ty to the injustice of the magistrate? There must be something she could do! But what? The sky became heavy with rain clouds as an unexpected frontal assault of wind brought in the warm humidity of the sea. The threat of a tropical squall did nothing to sober the sea rovers, however. A brawl broke out somewhere, and pistol shots rang from the direction of the Spanish Galleon gambling den. Winking back tears of weariness and frustration, Emerald was faced with little choice, in the absence of Zeddie, but to return to Foxmoore. *I must get home.* Beneath the big guns of Fort Charles, recently renamed in recognition of the king's return to the throne, Emerald ran along Fisher's Row close to the sea, darting here and there to take cover when she heard rum-sodden voices. This narrow old street could have told tales of Spanish treasure looted from Cartagena, from Hispaniola, from Porto Bello. Many of the town's inhabitants were rich with pieces of eight, silver plate, gold, emeralds, and pearls. Pirated treasure circulated freely, exchanging hands in the taverns, much of it ending up in the hands of the planters themselves. Her feet sped over the cobblestones. These had been brought as ballast on the ships, like the bricks that had been used to build the wealthier houses and shops cramming Port Royal. Nearly everything in Jamaica, except sugar and turtles, had to be imported. "'Tis the glaring Achilles heel of Jamaica in time of war," her father had once remarked, scowling. "King Charles is making a mistake calling home Commodore Myngs to fight the Dutch. Who can guard Jamaica now but the buccaneers from Tortuga?" She was intent on reaching the western end of Fisher's Row at High Street and emerged near the square where Zeddie had parked the buggy. But on arriving, to her alarm she saw a pirate sprawled on the buggy seat with a jug of rum, looking as though he intended to spend the wee hours there to sleep off his stupor. Her head jerked at a loud challenge: "The devil take you, you jackanapes!" "Sink me if'n you think you can best *me!*" Not more than ten feet from where she crouched in the shadows she saw two more pirates with drawn blades. Although dueling was strictly forbidden, the buccaneers obeyed no law but their own. One made a murderous lunge. The other parried in a flash that dazed her. How pirates inflamed on kill-devil rum managed their wits enough to stay alive she could never guess, but Uncle Mathias said they drank it instead of water and were accustomed to the venom of poisonous serpents. The familiar ring and clash of metal filled her ears. She winced. But what caused her heart to thud brought a cheer from the pirate sprawled in her carriage. He flung his hat down. "*Esprit de corps,*" he shouted, as though a friendly contest were underway to entertain him. The clouds gathering overhead sent a sudden squall of rain, but the men were oblivious. Emerald huddled in the darkness, squinting against the downpour pelting her face. In dismay she wondered what to do. If the ill circumstances that had plagued her footsteps all night continued for the remainder of the late hours, the pirate who had comfortably claimed her carriage would surely fall asleep there! Again tears filled her eyes. *Lord, help me.* She looked up as, from somewhere ahead, the echo of running feet clattered over the cobbles in her direction. Her spirits brightened. *A patrol of militiamen?* she wondered hopefully, teeth chattering. The militia, weak as it was, tried to serve the governor-general in an attempt to keep the peace. The buccaneers had the run of the town, and few attempts were made by the authorities to control them, for both Council and merchants feared that the pirates might take their stronghold back to Tortuga and leave Jamaica vulnerable to an attack by Spain. The

church-attending citizens complained to the governor-general of the violence and debauchery. "Will you bring the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah upon us?" But it was to no avail. What was a disturbance of the peace compared to the profits earned by the merchants and the protection they received against Spanish invasion? But as Emerald huddled there, her hopes were dashed. It was not the militia who came running but more pirates to choose sides in the duel. A privateer pushed his way through the group, and she recognized the Dutchman Roche. A former planter in Brazil, he had been expelled and came to Port Royal to launch a new career as a pirate. It was said that Roche feared nothing and had proven his claim by capturing a Spanish galleon right under the guns of Fort Havana. Roche was captain of a large following, including an elite band of black pirates who had escaped slavery on the West Indies plantations. Bearing cutlass instead of hoe, they were welcomed among the crews of the buccaneers as brothers. They had signed the "Articles"—the law of the buccaneers—and had sworn that they would never be taken alive to return to slavery. As Emerald watched from her hiding place, one of the black pirates walked up to the Dutchman, lugging a barrel of rum on his shoulder. He was tall, with a shaven head, and big gold earrings flashed in the torchlight. At the Dutchman's order he smashed open the keg with his cutlass. The Dutchman stepped forward and drew a long-barreled gilt-edged pistol. He leered at the two men who had now ceased their duel. "You'll drink with your captain, both of you! And if you don't, I'll cut the liver out of the first hog who don't honor me!" With the pistol pointed at them and scorn written on his pocked face, he stood by the barrel and gestured for his crew to bring mugs. Emerald held her arms, teeth chattering. *Please, God, don't let them see me.* How often did Uncle Mathias and the other ministers warn Port Royal's inhabitants that their violence, injustice, and immorality would bring a day of reckoning with a holy God? She closed her eyes and covered her face. For a desperate moment she went so far as to wish to see the arrogant and handsome buccaneer she had just escaped aboard the *Regale*. *O God, I don't know what to do! If only You would bring my father home from the sea!* Praying about her father brought a sudden thought: What of his lookout house near the guns of Fort Charles? Yes, of course! She'd been so upset that she'd forgotten. *Thank You, Lord.* She could find her way there easily and wait until morning to take the carriage back to Foxemoore. The lookout would be a welcome refuge from the rainy night, and perhaps there would even be dry clothing available. By morning light her hopes might be renewed. Why, Zeddie might even somehow manage to escape. The lookout appeared deserted as the rain beat against its tall, narrow structure. Houses and shops, crammed together in what looked to be a solid mass along the town's edge, were built upon the unstable foundation of the sandy cay reaching out far into the harbor waters. It was here, extending into the bay, that her father's lookout house was located. Emerald always had an uncomfortable feeling as she made her way past these houses built on pilings driven into the sand. She couldn't help but remember the Lord's parable about the two builders. When the storm came, the house on the sand collapsed. "And great was the fall of it," He had said. *Am I truly building my life and its future on the words and will of the Lord?* she wondered. Just what purpose did God have for her? She approached the lookout, and the head wind from the sea chilled her wet clothing as she climbed the steep wooden steps toward its oval door. She paused. High above in the lighthouse-style window a feeble lantern glowed. Had her father returned sooner than expected? Oh, if it were only so! She yearned to feel his strong arms around her, granting security once again. Exhausted, wet, cold, wishing for hot tea or coffee, she placed her hand on the latch and squared her shoulders. This was one night when she would not be turned out of her father's beloved abode to sleep amid barrels and barnacles! She would sleep in his old seabed and cover herself with comfortable blankets. To her surprise the door was unlocked, and she stepped inside. All at once she entered a different world, where dry surroundings and a promise of safety brought relief. Her gaze swept the steep flight of steps that led up to her father's room. Standing on the stairs and holding, presumably, the lantern she had seen in the upper window, was a stoop-shouldered African with white hair, tall and thin beneath a dark woolen sea coat that reached to his knees. "Jonah!" she cried. The grandfather of Ty and Minette started. "Miss Emerald! Is you hurt? Where's Zeddie?" He took in her disheveled array with alarm. Then he shuffled down the steps, holding the lantern before him. Almost immediately he was joined on the stairs by Minette. She clambered down after her grandfather, her form lost

within an ankle-length tunic. Minette was unusually pretty. She had amber eyes and a unique shade of wavy hair the color of honey, which framed her poignant face. Her mother had been a chieftain's lovely daughter from Guinea. With education and proper dress, Emerald believed, Minette would do well in getting a worthy husband. She had already considered the possibility of bringing the girl with her and Jamie to New England but had not yet broached the idea to Jonah. "Did you get your mother's dowry?" Minette cried. Emerald saw the light shining in their eyes. They looked on her as their one human hope that would save grandson and brother from whipping and branding. She had no heart left to tell them she had failed, that both Ty and Jamie would be left to the injustice of tomorrow's hearing at the courthouse. Jonah must have taken notice of her paleness, for the light went from his eyes and his thin shoulders sagged as though he guessed the plan had not worked. Yet he showed nothing to his granddaughter and gently scolded her. "Where's your high-flung manners, child? And after all the schoolin' Miss Emerald's given you with her books and Bible and such. Let her catch her breath!" He rested a gnarled, overworked hand on her shoulder. "Run get that coffee in the cook house." When Minette reluctantly left, looking back, Emerald nearly collapsed. Jonah caught her. "You going straight to bed. I'll send Minette to see you outer them wet clothes." "I can't deceive you. I've failed," she whispered. His eyes brimmed with tears. "I knows, Emerald. You needn't say nothing more. But Mr. Mathias says the Holy One who makes wind to blow and rain come down has His ways in the whirlwind and the storm." "I won't give up," she said wearily, holding his arm as they walked to the steps. "I'll be doing what I can tomorrow." "Yes, you bound to keep trying. And maybe Sir Karlton be home tomorrow." But they both knew he would not, and she looked away from his careworn face. Later that night, Emerald fell into her father's bed, exhausted, yet sleep eluded her. She lay there hearing the wooden building creak in the wind and the rain pound the window, rattling the pane that faced seaward. She could never get used to the structure. Seawater sucked at the pilings and seemed to intimidate the foundation. She supposed her father loved the lookout house because it reminded him of a ship at sea. Her anxious thoughts turned inevitably back to Mr. Pitt and his demand for jewels. The possibility remained that she might still get what she needed from her cousin. The *Regale* had not been his ship, and she had made a fool of herself before its arrogant captain, but there was no mistaking that her cousin was in Port Royal. She might make good on her first plan to board his ship if she knew where it was anchored. But even the thought of repeating the trauma she had faced tonight turned her squeamish. Besides, she no longer had Zeddie to aid her, nor did it seem the Lord was blessing her plans with success. Zeddie! What if that buccaneer decided to try him for thievery? But perhaps Zeddie would evade him after all and make it safely to shore. She might send a message to Captain Levasseur that she wished to see him. She could lower her dignity and plead with him to lend her the amount demanded by Mr. Pitt. But she knew her cousin too well to believe he would have sympathy for her cause in saving Jamie, especially if he discovered her plan to leave Jamaica and marry him. Restlessly she tossed the cover aside and went to the window, peering out through the rain to where the ships were anchored. Somewhere out there were two ships she had particular interest in: her cousin's and the *Regale*. She still blushed with shame, remembering the agony of being caught by the buccaneer who claimed her to be a wench and a thief. She shuddered. "Abstain from all appearance of evil," the Scriptures said. Oh, the gossip that would stain her already sullied reputation if the news got out that she had sneaked aboard Captain Foxworth's ship in the dead of night dressed in calico drawers and a pirate's scarf! "I knew she was just like her mother all along," she imagined Cousin Lavender saying to her gossipy friends, all daughters of rich planters and members of the governor-general's Jamaican Council. And that vile Sir Jasper, just what would he say if he learned about it? He would think the worst, of course. No doubt he'd become even more offensive. And her father! What would the stalwart privateer say as he scowled and insisted she explain every detail. What of dear and godly Great-uncle Mathias? During the years between her thirteenth and sixteenth birthdays, she had the good fortune of having Mathias come to Jamaica from England, where he had taught theology at Cambridge. He had come to live at the Manor with her father, and she'd been taught the Scriptures and the love and acceptance of her heavenly Father. But Mathias was nearing his seventieth birthday and was not strong, for he hadn't fully recovered from last year's attack of island fever, which often racked

his body, bringing weeks of sweating and delirium. He was up and about now and carrying on his work in the Singing School, but he certainly had no money to lend her to pay Mr. Pitt. Nor did he approve of Jamie, questioning his Christian faith. "His is a restless spirit." She thought of Cousin Lavender. Emerald had lived in the Great House until she turned twelve, though her bedchamber had been small and plain compared to Lavender's. During the season of childhood they had been friendly, sharing the same governess and tutor, although her great-aunt disapproved. Lavender too never let Emerald forget that she was lacking as a Harwick and that their Great-aunt Sophie and Lady Geneva Harwick would never leave her a dowry nor plan for her marriage to a man of title. She was at the Great House out of charity because—after all—despite her shameful birth on Tortuga, she was the offspring of Great-aunt Sophie's wayward nephew, Karlton. But once the truth that Ty and Minette were related to Emerald by marriage became known, Emerald did not even have the good fortune of living in the Great House. She'd been sent away to live in the Manor when Great-uncle Mathias arrived. During the last two years the relationship between Emerald and Lavender had taken a change. It began when Lavender became deathly ill with the same island fever that plagued Mathias. Lavender, the darling of the family, became bored in her long months of convalescence and, lacking someone her own age to talk with, insisted that Emerald be called up from the Manor to keep her company. Although the family at first balked at the request, it was clear that Lavender would not take no for an answer. Illness and beauty had resulted in her being pampered, and both Great-aunt Sophie and Lady Geneva doted on her. There was little she didn't receive when she put up a fuss, and Emerald had been sent for. In those early days Emerald arrived by way of the kitchen door and was ushered up the grand staircase by the mute governess, who heartily disapproved. Once in Lavender's bedchamber, Emerald would spend the afternoon hours in her cousin's company. At first they had not been happy hours for Emerald, but as her confidence in the Christian faith grew because of Mathias, she found that she could even begin to feel sympathy for her cousin, which was odd in itself, since Lavender had everything in the world that a young girl with a future title could wish for, and Emerald herself possessed so little. Thinking of all this now as she stood weary and hopeless before the window in the lookout house, she did believe that Lavender had a mild affection for her. If she turned to Lavender, would *she* help her? There was a glimmer of hope that she might, and Emerald decided to visit Foxmoore first thing in the morning. With her mind made up to try every possible door of escape, she felt some relief. Then she thought of that nasty buccaneer Captain Foxworth. A small shiver touched her skin. Suppose he unmasked her visit aboard his ship to the Harwicks? *Impossible*, she soothed herself. Captain Foxworth would have no opportunity to bring the matter before them. His reputation as a pirate forbade his being known or received by such a family. And anyway, he didn't know who she was or where to find her. "Perhaps," she murmured dourly, "there's some good in his thinking I'm a wench after all. Foxmoore will be the last place he'd ever seek me. He probably thinks my father is the owner of a tavern." She winced at the thought. Then new fears rushed in like a gale. *Unless*, she decided nervously, *Zeddie's tongue is loosened through torture*. Who knew what manner of man this buccaneer was? True, he had seemed gallant, even a man of the nobility, when he had rescued her from the unwanted advances of that loathsome Sir Jasper. Had he recognized her in his cabin as the same girl? She didn't think so, for he would have mentioned it and accused her of following him to his ship. No, she'd been disguised as a cabin boy. There was small chance she would ever see him again or had any need to worry about his accusing her to the family. She shut her eyes, leaning her head against the pane. Her ability to think was growing dull through lack of sleep. Then suddenly an image flashed across her mind as clearly as though she were standing in his cabin again. *The portrait of Lavender on his desk!* She drew in a breath. Could Lavender possibly know this pirate? No! But what if... Her hand clenched the drapery. She had laughed when finding that unlikely portrait, believing the ship to belong to Levasseur. Now the find was no longer amusing. What was the name of the earl's grandson whom Lavender was to marry in England? "Baret," she breathed aloud. "Baret Buckingham." But Sir Jasper had called him Captain Foxworth. He couldn't be the earl's grandson, she told herself desperately. Could he? She thought back to Lavender's bedchamber. Lavender had a number of paintings of the family from London. Surely she would have one of the earl's grandson, whom she would marry one day. Yet Emerald could not

recall having seen such displayed on her bureau. Now there was a second reason to seek a visit with Lavender. She must know if there was any connection between this mysterious Captain Foxworth and Lord Baret Buckingham. [6VISCOUNT BARET BUCKINGTON](#) The Jamaican moon appeared from behind the racing clouds and scattered a wake of shimmering jewels across the bay of Port Royal. The captain of the *Regale* left the quarterdeck, his boots ringing on the steps up to the high aftmost deck. He stood at the taffrail, the curved walk over the stern, looking every inch a roguish buccaneer in a white Holland shirt partially opened against his bronzed, muscled chest. He was oblivious to the strong tropical wind blowing his dark hair, shaking the billowing sleeves. He stood as still as a statue with his gaze fixed upon the big guns of Fort Charles looming ominously over the seawall. His dark eyes beneath even blacker lashes narrowed, but it was not the guns that he saw in his memory. The captain of the *Regale*—heir to the title of viscount—was Lord Baret Buckingham, recently known among the Brethren of the Coast as Captain Baret Foxworth. Gripped in his hand, which wore the family ring of his grandfather Nigel Buckingham, earl in London, was the small silver cameo and a cross woven of delicate golden hair. His mouth hardened, his dark eyes becoming warm with righteous anger. The knuckles on his hand turned white. He gazed now at the intricately carved frame that held the portrait of the woman, rubbing his thumb over the silver. He had deliberately placed her portrait in that despised silver frame. Baret had hired artisans to design the frame from a silver ingot taken from a Spanish treasure ship. *So I'll not forget what arms and feeds the Inquisition army of King Philip of Spain*, he thought. The silver had been mined in Peru by religious prisoners, men who died from exhaustion and disease. The whips of the Spanish captains serving the powerful family dons were not lax for long. The quota of silver bars brought by the yearly mule train on its long overland route to the treasure fleet at Porto Bello would not wait for the recovery of the depleted health of a slave. When a man died he was merely abandoned and replaced by a new prisoner: European, African, or Carib. The Europeans were usually heretics—Protestants from Holland and France. King Philip's Inquisition army raged in the Netherlands, and many of its prisoners were sold to the colonies on the Main. Again Baret touched the silver with its ruthless heritage. The silver was as much the cause behind his leaving Cambridge Divinity School to take to a life of buccaneering as was his present search for his father's whereabouts. As he stood with the wind blowing against him, he saw himself as a small boy hiding on the wide stairway at Buckingham House in London. His grandfather and his father, Viscount Royce Buckingham, were in a hot argument that set his boyish heart pounding. The earl, wearing a green satin dressing gown embroidered with gold thread, paced the red carpet in the drawing room. A painting of King Charles I was framed in gold above the hearth. Handsome portraits of the Buckingham family, all lords, viscounts, and earls, surrounded the king like a royal entourage. "I forbid this lunacy of yours, Royce. What of your reputation as viscount? You're to inherit the earldom after me. What of His Majesty! Civil war tears England asunder! Cromwell's Roundheads number in the thousands! If His Majesty's brother must flee, the Buckingham family is sworn to go with him into France and to draw sword to protect him abroad as king in exile! I for one will go with him, and so must you." Royce's rugged voice sounded with impatience. "Your ways slay me, Father. You bid me die for Charles—to fight my own brothers in England for a cause I question—but it is *Spain* who is the enemy of England and the Netherlands. Shall I not rather stop the stench of Spain's Inquisition army? Every Spanish treasure ship I sink will be a fortune lost to King Philip which he would otherwise use to feed his army in the Netherlands." "You'll not bring Caroline back by throwing away your life to become a common pirate!" "Pirate?" his father had repeated scornfully. "Is that what Felix says? Let my brother call me as he will. I vow my ship to become a dread and a terror to the Spanish dons. This is my answer!" "Put your sword away." "I shall sink every treasure ship of King Philip that I find in the Caribbean Sea!" "Felix is right," came the earl's bitter voice. "Before this madness of yours is over you'll have stained the Buckingham name! Look on the wall—what of them?" Royce gave a laugh. "Family portraits? There isn't a saint among the ancestry of scoundrels, my father. As for Felix, I've begun to think he's spying for Spain." "You speak thus of your brother!" "Half brother. A foe, just as sure as I stand here!" "And my son, even as you! And what of your own son? If you'll not think of yourself or the Buckingham name, what of Baret? You owe him more than a blackened reputation." "I have fair plans for Baret.

When he's of age he'll be sent to Cambridge as Caroline wished. He's not to know what happened to her yet. He's too young." Crouching on the stairway, Baret had listened thoughtfully. Cambridge! Divinity training! While his father took to sea to sink Spanish ships? His small hand formed a fist. Where *was* his mother? His father and grandfather were arguing again. He strained to hear above his pounding heart. "One day Baret will know that I loved his mother more dearly than a man may love a woman. That I love her still. He's to know I have honor, a cause to serve far nobler than civil war in England. I'll return from the West Indies to see him. I'll find no shame in my new life as a buccaneer, and I don't think he will either. When he's older, he'll understand the cause." "And if we must flee England with Charles into France?" "Then I'll find you in Paris. I'll see him again. And when it is safe to be Protestant in France, train him in the words of John Calvin. I've also asked Sir Cecil Chaderton to be his tutor. He's agreed to stay with the boy until it's safe to return to England." "Royce! How can you throw away your title for a memory?" "A memory? Do you call Caroline naught more than a memory? God have mercy! In Holland the Inquisitor questioned her faith until she fainted, but they revived her again on the rack. Oh, yes! They used all their devilish weapons to break her faith—the thumbscrews, the Iron Maiden—do you know what that is?" "I have no desire to hear tales of horror—" "You *will* hear! It's a form-fitting coffin studded with five-inch iron spikes! They slowly crushed her ribs, all the while the Inquisitor kept asking in his soft voice from hades, 'Where are the other heretics hiding? Where? Speak, child, speak.'" "You'll go mad! Do you think all Spain is a beast? That all the men who carry the cross and wear hooded cowls are Inquisitors?" Royce banged his fist against something hard. "Do you think I can ever forget? Then they buried her alive!" On the stairway Baret sat white and shaking, clutching his stomach. Dread, dark as a pit, sucked him into its hopelessness. He understood the hellish face of the terror his father had explained. Bending down his dark head on the stair, young Baret convulsed with silent sobs, hot tears splashing over the fist pressed against his mouth. *Mama, they buried you alive. After they did all those horrible things, they still hated you and covered you with dirt.* He could imagine his gentle mother with golden hair, screaming, clawing for air—his mother, who had prayed with him beside his bed, who had comforted him in his fears, who had cared for him when no one else was there. Baret suddenly saw the face of the only Spaniard he had ever seen—the ambassador to the court of Whitehall. A man named Bernardo, wearing rich black velvet with a high white ruff around his neck. He envisioned Bernardo, with his V-shaped beard, his cool dark eyes—the friend of Uncle Felix Buckingham—staring down at his mother while shovelfuls of dirt buried her alive. Bernardo's once kindly face was forever changed into that of an enemy. His mother's voice echoed in his memory: "*Jesus said to forgive your enemies, to pray for those who persecute you.*" "I can't," wept Baret on the stairs amid the shouting of his father and grandfather in the drawing room. "I can't." The new face of Spain was branded on his heart. His father! Oh, how he loved his brave father! "Destroy them, Father," he choked, clenching his fist. "Destroy Spain!" On the *Regale*, Baret stood gazing at the portrait of his mother while holding the cross woven from her hair. "Destroy Spain," he murmured to himself. "Like your father, you'll not forget," came a familiar voice. He turned from the taffrail toward Sir Cecil Chaderton. Baret had been friends with the Cambridge scholar since childhood, when Chaderton had reluctantly journeyed with the earl, his family, and other members of England's nobility into France with the exiled king. Although a secret supporter of Cromwell's Roundheads, and a loyal scholar with a seat at his beloved Corpus Christi College at Cambridge, Chaderton had left England because of his affection for Baret and his father. The man had been Baret's tutor in New Testament and Greek but also a personal counselor during the years of exile. All that Baret knew of staunch Calvin theology was due to the brilliant scholarship of "Sir Cecil," as Baret affectionately called him. Chaderton claimed a bloodline to that noble Puritan Laurence Chaderton, who, along with Lancelot Andrewes and other Greek and Hebrew scholars had been commissioned by King James I to translate the Authorized Version of the Bible. "It does not deserve to be forgotten," Baret answered him. "Nor will I forget my father." Sir Cecil made no immediate reply, and Baret left him on deck and returned to the Great Cabin, where he placed the small cameo and cross inside the silver box along with other items of intimate value. This time he locked the box and the desk drawer into which he placed it. He doubted that the girl had swum away with anything that would unmask his identity.

Remembering the incident that had failed to locate Lucca aboard the *Santiago*, he was reasonably assured that his secret goal as a buccaneer with Henry Morgan remained guarded and that his true identity was unknown. There were few sea rovers he could trust. Nor could he trust members of the family, least of all his father's half brother, Felix. Felix, a member of the High Admiralty Court in London, had secretly been involved in the verdict handed down three years earlier against Baret's father, declaring Royce a West Indies pirate. With that black mark upon his father's reputation as Cromwell's privateer had come the added news of the sinking of his ship off Havana. Felix had brought this dark news to the earl at Buckingham House. He produced a legal paper written in the hand of the governor-general of Jamaica witnessing to the fact of his father's escape and arrival at Port Royal. Later, his father had been killed. "Killed in a duel on the street of Port Royal." By whom? As yet, Baret had not been able to discover the pirate's name. He had reason to doubt Felix's story. Now that his father was declared to be dead, Baret had first right to the title of viscount, but the earl was furious with him for having taken to sea as a buccaneer and thought nothing of holding the title in abeyance. Baret's inheritance of his father's lands and jewels in England and his shares in the vast Foxemoore sugar plantation in Jamaica were also denied him in the hope that he would return to England chastened and willing to take his position in the family as his grandfather wished. He would return. But not yet. Baret stood now, hands on hips, and glanced about his ransacked cabin. His eyes narrowed. He thought of the little wench who had sneaked aboard. It would serve her well if he returned to Port Royal and found her—if only to make her correct the disarray in which she had left his cabin! Impatiently he snatched up a linen shirt and black trousers that she had pulled from his teakwood trunk. He replaced them. He glanced up then, aware of Sir Cecil's presence in the open door. Few of his peers would now recognize the staunch old Puritan who had taught at Cambridge before embarking with Baret in the dangerous pursuit of buccaneering on the Spanish Main. Absent his scholar's cloak with fur collar and his flat velvet hat, Sir Cecil was now garbed in an elegant Spanish suit of black taffeta trimmed with silver lace designed in Madrid for some wealthy don. Baret had retrieved the suit and matching broad-brimmed hat from the *Santiago* and with straight face had awarded the outfit to his Cambridge tutor, never believing that the dignified Puritan would wear it. Baret's memory flashed back to a certain wooden desk in France where as a boy he had watched Sir Cecil bent over a sheaf of papers, his pen scratching, occasionally pausing to dip the quill into the inkwell. The man now standing at his cabin door seemed a stranger. His jaw-length gray hair remained neatly paged against a lean hawklike face, once pasty from London's fog but now toughened and browned by long exposure to the tropical sun. The short, pointed Sir Walter Raleigh beard remained, now lightly oiled. He entered and stood, and Baret glanced at the serving tray in his hands. He lifted a brow and looked at his tutor for an explanation, for it wasn't Sir Cecil's typical manner to wait on him. Sir Cecil gave him a dry glance. "I bring you a worthy 'gift,' rowed out from Chocolata Hole by a musky old sea urchin who looks ripe for treachery." He gestured dubiously at the wet and sandy canvas bag sitting on the tray. At the mention of Chocolata Hole, Baret came alert. He thought he knew who the "sea urchin" was. "Where is he now?" "He insisted he couldn't stay. He's rowing back in his cockboat." Sir Cecil sniffed the bag with a show of disdain, but he held the tray with the deference due the crown jewels. "Smells odiously of something dead. Would you have me open the bag?" Baret folded his arms and leaned back against his desk. "I wait with fond anticipation." Sir Cecil's deft fingers opened the canvas sack and delicately removed a hard, dark green object. He placed it gingerly upon the desk. They watched. A moment later a small head with round eyes and a long wrinkled neck emerged from the shell and appeared to size up its new habitat. "From Hob," said Baret simply. He lifted the Jamaican green turtle, a staple food for pirates, and inspected it carefully under the overhanging lantern. As suspected, he discovered a rolled bit of damp paper under its shell, smoothed it with his thumb, and read the scribbled message that was partially spelled out in stick drawings. "I've other news concerning the thief who broke into your cabin earlier this night," said Sir Cecil meanwhile. "We've found the man who brought her aboard. A miserable looking fellow with a bump on his head. He's awake now, but seems a bit dazed in the cranium to me. Says his name is Zeddie. He's quite adamant in defending their innocence of all intent of thievery. They boarded the ... er ... wrong ship, is what he's saying.

Says they thought the captain was a French pirate." At the words "French pirate," Baret showed interest for the first time. "An antagonist of yours," explained Sir Cecil. "His name is Captain Levasseur." "Ah!" "The girl was his ... er ... cousin, so the fellow Zeddie insists." Baret didn't trust Levasseur, who suspected his allegiance to the Brotherhood at Tortuga. Had he sent an unlikely wench to search his cabin, looking for evidence to use against him? He scowled. Perhaps he had not taken her presence as seriously as he should have. Maybe she hadn't boarded on her own to search for loot but had a more sophisticated purpose. "Do you wish to see the man Zeddie for interrogation? He's putting up quite a fuss, demanding to know where his ward is being kept." "You can tell him that he best not squawk too loudly. He's blessed the captain of the *Regale* is a generous man. I could dangle him at the end of a rope." "Shall I release him then?" "No. Shackle him in the hold. Let him worry a little. See to him at your leisure. And when I return I'll see him also. Other matters are of import now." "You're going to Chocolata Hole?" asked Sir Cecil dubiously. "A necessity." He walked to where his weapons hung on a hook, ignoring Sir Cecil's frown. "You would trust the wily old pirate again? Was he not quite wrong about Lucca being aboard the *Santiago*?" "The information he hints of now is worth the risk." Baret passed his leather baldric—the weapons' sheath worn diagonally from shoulder to hip, holding rapier and pistols—over his head as Sir Cecil handed him his cloak and hat. "I would caution you. You may yet inherit more from your father than his title and lands. You also have his enemies to reckon with. Nor must you forget the Admiralty Court has little patience with privateers turning pirates." "Your concern is well taken. I've not forgotten." Baret handed him the turtle with a slight smile. "I prefer English pie." Sir Cecil reluctantly received the creature. Baret smiled and went to the door, then glanced back. "I won't return until after the wedding. I hope to talk some sense into Geneva. You'll be attending?" "Unfortunately, yes." He looked worriedly at Baret. "Felix has arrived." Baret already knew that his uncle was in Jamaica, and he showed no expression. "I'll see you at Foxemoore on Sunday. I've another call to make first." When the cabin door shut behind him, Sir Cecil stood staring at it, troubled. He knew where Baret intended to go, of course, and he felt uneasy. He hoped Sir Karlton Harwick could oblige the young viscount on the whereabouts of his father's journal and map. If not, Baret would confront Lord Felix, who was in Jamaica to marry Geneva Harwick. There was also the matter of Jette, Baret's eight-year-old brother. The very thought of Jette's being turned over to Felix was a hideous thought to Baret and to Cecil as well. Sir Cecil worried about the child's health and about his Christian training. He had written Lady Geneva asking permission to become his tutor in England when she returned with Felix, even as he had served the family in tutoring Baret. There was only one drawback, he thought. Returning to England to instruct Jette would mean leaving Baret alone in his pursuit to find his father. Was his father alive as he thought? Sir Cecil could only wonder. There were times when he believed that the youth's suspicions were fed by anguish rather than fact. Recently he had taken to worrying as much about the young viscount as he did about the boy Jette. Cecil frowned. He believed that the lives of both heirs to the Buckingham estate were at risk. He was also concerned for the condition of Baret's faith. How long would he continue to neglect his upbringing and training? He glanced across the Great Cabin to the portrait of Lady Lavender, a young woman of both charm and title, whom Baret intended to one day make his wife. She'd been quite ill with island fever for the past year and a half and had written Baret, asking to see him. The marriage between Lord Felix Buckingham and Lady Geneva Harwick at Foxemoore afforded that opportunity. Unfortunately it also gave Baret the responsibility of meeting with Felix. Sir Cecil looked down at the turtle, anxious to turn it loose. Later, as he did so, watching it swim away, he vaguely wondered what the scholars at Cambridge would think of turtle soup. [7CHOCOLATA HOLE](#) The year 1663 gave to Mother England two prized ports on the Spanish Main: Port Royal in Jamaica and English Harbor in Antigua. Even so, there was no presence of the Royal Navy, and the sugar planters and governor-general relied on the buccaneers for protection against Spain. Unfortunately, the ships serving Charles II in the West Indies were not the stalwart protection that planters wished for. The rumblings of a second war with the Dutch troubled England, for Charles believed France would join Holland against him. As the possibility of war with two old enemies gathered like clouds, the West India Sugar Interest in England's parliament feared losing their vast plantations on Jamaica

to a sneak attack by Spain and, dismayed, insisted that His Majesty permanently station squadrons of warships at Port Royal. However, King Charles lacked the finances for such a navy and often permitted Governor-general Thomas Modyford to authorize privateering under the protective flag of England. It was ironical that the buccaneer serving His Majesty today could tomorrow be hanged at Execution Dock as a rascally pirate. It was dawn when Baret paused on the waterfront to watch the sun rise from the Caribbean, turning the waters gray-blue in the dusky light. The rain had ceased, but fat clouds tinged with dark edges continued to assemble on the horizon. Hurricane season was not many weeks away. Baret knew by experience what hurricane-force winds could do to a vessel caught in their onslaught. He had watched the carcass of a ship fade into darkness, her masts shattered, the sullen seas washing her deserted decks. The upcoming storm season was of benefit to his private quest, however. Usually His Majesty's ships, now scarce in the Caribbean, underwent repairs at this time of year, while some of them were secretly sent off cruising for prizes as they covertly turned to buccaneering in the southern Caribbean out of storm's way. Baret would take a risk of another sort—perhaps more dangerous than a hurricane. He must risk his favor with his grandfather the earl and His Majesty the king by joining Henry Morgan's buccaneer fleet in its upcoming attack on an undisclosed location on the Main. There was the danger that he too could be hanged at Execution Dock. But he had reason to believe that his father might yet be alive, held by Spain as a prisoner, and Baret had gained passage on a small vessel for Chocolata Hole to meet secretly with his old friend and informer, Hob. The ship was a squat, ill-painted schooner that had preyed on fishing boats close to the Main. Baret was anxious to disembark the leaky craft and had no confidence in its captain, a fat, barrel-chested man who sprawled near the rail, one knee drawn up, the other foot propped against a rum barrel.

This set includes all three books of the *Buccaneers Series*: *Port Royal*, *The Pirate and His Lady*, and *Jamaican Sunset*.

In *Port Royal*, the Caribbean Sea teems with piracy and privateering as Captain Baret "Foxworth" Buckingham searches for his father. Though declared legally dead, Baret is certain his father is alive, perhaps being held prisoner. Willing to jeopardize his title, his inheritance, and his life in order to find his father, he sets sail and swears vengeance upon Spain. Amidst the slavery, brutality, and cruel gossip on a Jamaican Sugar estate, Miss Emerald Harwick seeks an escape. Rejected by her father's wealthy family, Emerald is constantly reminded of her deceased mother's notorious reputation and her father's escapades on the high seas. Only two things keep her going--working in the Christian Singing School and her plans to secretly marry an indentured servant. In desperation, they plan to leave Jamaica. But Emerald's father has other plans! As their paths intertwine, Emerald and Baret set out on a journey filled with danger, intrigue, and romance.

In *The Pirate and His Lady*, Jamaica is a hotbed of piracy, violence, and spiritual conflict. Emerald Harwick is caught amidst each. Her fiance, Captain Baret "Foxworth" Buckingham, defies the laws of the Jamaican Council and sails with notorious arch pirate Henry Morgan, hoping to find his imprisoned father among the Spanish dons. Her marriage delayed, Jamaican law forces Emerald to also put her heart's desire on hold: teaching Christianity to the African slaves. She fights disappointment and seeks an end to the spiritual conflict with her culture. Emerald is caught in a web of disillusionment, anger, and fear. As Spanish sympathizers gain the ear of the king, she must face a most frightening possibility: If caught, Baret will be arrested and hanged at Execution Dock.

In *Jamaican Sunset*, Emerald Harwick, publicly betrothed to Baret Buckingham, can scarcely contain her joy. She will manage her plantation's Great House on Jamaica until his return from sailing with buccaneer Henry Morgan, and then they will marry. Meanwhile, she will begin a singing school and translate the African slave chants God's songs of redemption. But then problems out of the past put in an unexpected appearance. Emerald is abducted and finds herself on an unscheduled sea voyage. That long-ago stolen treasure from the *Prince Philip* comes into play once more. Baret hopes to free his imprisoned father and unearth the treasure. But Baret's enemy--pirate Rafael Levasseur--emerges as a final threat to Emerald's cherished hopes. Can the God in whom she trusts indeed cause all things to work together for good? Â Â

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