

## Point Making

It started with us getting dressed for the occasion. Tight, black leather pants that were actually supple enough to provide a great range of movement while at the same time being incredibly sexy. Thigh high boots of the same color. A dark green shirt and a black leather vest over it. A black tricorne hat with a nice green feather to top it off. Add to the ensemble a black weapons belt featuring a cutlass, a parrying dagger, a nice curved fighting dagger and a few throwing knives. Oh, and a matched pair of flintlock pistols.

I was now ready for the high seas.

Max wasn't quite as enthusiastic about this particular venture. She had gone with the same style pants and boots and had added a nice sleeveless blouse in dark blue. For weapons she wore a silver casting dagger on one hip and a curved fighting knife on the other. To each her own. We spent a bit of time braiding each other's hair into a ponytail which we then tucked into the back of our shirts.

With everything ready, we rode down to the docks of Burgos City on the world of Deiggal. Once there, we turned over the horses to the attendant whom we had arranged to meet in front of a seaside store. I then strode down the docks with Max in tow and stopped in front of the berth where the *Fair Winde* rocked gently on the tide. She was a large war galleon bearing over 100 cannon. *Faire Winde* was Daddy's favorite ship. Unlike my own *Rose Thorn*, he hadn't augmented it with magic or higher technology. Still, it was a nice ship. And Max and I were stealing her. Actually, I was stealing her and Max was going along apparently to try to minimize damage.

Striding up the gang plank, I was briefly challenged by the guards. Max had to duck as they went flying off into the water. This caused the beginning of a commotion so I picked up the pace. Spotting the captain on the aft castle next to the wheel, I hurried up to meet him before the crew had the chance to figure out something was wrong.

Stalking across the aft castle, I drew a pistol and my cutlass. The captain seemed surprised and perturbed.

"Do you know who I am?" I asked him.

"Of course, Lady Clarissa. What's going on?" He was a rather pompous fellow but I had decided earlier that his loyalty to my father was unquestioned. Therefore I wasn't going to kill him. Or I probably wasn't anyway.

"I am stealing this ship, captain. You," I said to the crewman nearby, "Summon the officers up here on the double. Move." He moved. "Now captain," I continued, walking over next to him, "We have a problem you and I. A ship can only have one captain. At the moment that would be me. But you will probably want to show my father how loyal you are. And this ship and crew have been entrusted to you. I can see where this puts you in a bind. How are we to best solve this dilemma?"

"Here now young lady! This is totally inappropriate!"

"Very true," I agreed, whacking him upside the head with the bell of the cutlass. "Most inappropriate." The ringing sound this created was almost musical. I hadn't really planned on discussing matters with him anyway. I just thought it might be nice of me to see if he had any intelligent suggestions.

"You," I challenged, stabbing the cutlass in the direction of one of the nearby sailors

who looked the most disapproving, "Gather me a length of rope now. You," I said to another, "Bring me pen and ink and a heavy parchment. Now!" I ordered, emphasizing my point by slapping him across the butt with the flat of the cutlass. With a yelp, he hurried off.

Officers began arriving on the aft castle as did Maxine. Several of them looked down at the captain disapprovingly. I strongly suspected that their disapproval was directed towards me. "I'm glad you're here," I informed them before they could begin, "I am going to steal this ship and ransom the captain here to Andus of Regillus. Any of you who do not wish to swear a temporary fealty to me has about five minutes to get off this ship. Any questions?"

"Begging your pardon ma'am," one of the officers said, "But you are going to ransom the ship and the captain to your own father?"

"No lieutenant," I answered with a grin, "I am only ransoming the captain. I am stealing the ship." The sailor returned with my writing utensils. I penned a quick note, using his back as a writing desk, and then rolled up the paper. I then performed a quick sealing cantrip and handed the paper to the lieutenant, "Have this delivered to my father. Take the rope that the good sailor there was kind enough to bring and tie up the captain. Take the captain to the Laughing Mermaid Inne. Get him a room. And a bottle of rum. He's going to have a headache when he wakes up. Tell the staff at the inne to untie him in three hours. And be quick about it; we sail in thirty minutes."

There were some objections but after they understood that it was my way or over the side, those still onboard fell into line and began preparing the ship to depart.

"This is a bad idea," Maxine told me again when no one was in the immediate area.

"Most of my bad ideas turn out pretty well in the end. Trust to history." Max made a rather unladylike snorting sound before moving over to the stern railing.

"What are your plans my lady?" one of the officers asked. We were well underway and land had become a distant smear on the aft horizon.

"First off," I said looking around, "We're going to do a little training. After that, we're going pirate hunting."

"Umm. Very good, ma'am," he agreed. He was learning fast. "What might the nature of this training be?"

"Why I'm glad you asked," I stated with a grin that would have done Daddy proud and seemed to raise the hairs on the back of the officer's neck. "We are going to practice boarding, swordplay, and on top of that firing cannon, rifles, and pistols." He seemed to relax a bit. It made me wonder just what sort of hell Daddy and cousin Elmer put these guys through.

Training began with cannons. We sailed fairly close to shore and I had the men practice shooting at some pilings that were probably a former pier or maybe even the remains of a bridge. At the end of the exercise I gave the cannon team that performed the best a bag of silver. The next day shooting improved rather dramatically. I continued the bag of silver award for another week until I was satisfied with the cannon work. Then we began training with rifles. I used the same training methods except this time I added that the worst shot would get to clean bilges the whole next day. The improvement rate was most impressive.

A week later we sailed up to a derelict ship that just happened to be on our course. At least thanks to some midnight conjuring on my part it happened to be there anyway. I combined boarding drills with the swordplay. It was a lot of fun and Max even seemed to enjoy it a bit.

Five days later as we sailed away from the derelict ship, I suddenly felt Daddy trying to spy on me via my necklace. This was rather the point of the whole ship stealing exercise so I let him. A few minutes later I felt him teleport in.

"Hello Daddy," I greeted him without turning to face him. "How was the poker game?"

He was speechless for a moment. I imagine he was trying to decide if he should be glad I was wearing his colors or upset I was stealing his ship. There was probably a lot of other stuff going through his head as well but I won't even speculate on what that might have been.

"That poker game was over two months ago! And what the devil does it have to do with you taking my ship out?" Daddy wasn't upset yet. I wasn't really sure if I was going to goad him into being upset or not. I decided to wing it for the moment.

"You seemed to feel that yet another poker game was more important than spending time with your daughter," I answered. "Part of my point is to show you the dubious wisdom of this decision. Hence, here we are with *me* stealing *your* ship."

He mumbled that I wasn't supposed to have known about the poker game under his breath. My temperature instantly went up five degrees. Seeing that I'd overheard his little comment, he quickly said, "Now honey, you know that's not true. No poker game in the world is more important to me than you."

"Your actions speak otherwise, Andus of Regillus," I said coldly. He flinched at that. "This ship is going pirate hunting. You may stay if you wish... so long as you don't get underfoot."

"Oh it is, is it?" he asked quietly. His face flushed a bit but he kept his voice calm, "What happens from here out is still very much in question."

"You *might* be able to take the ship from me," I replied quietly. I waited a moment to see if he was going to rise to the bait but he didn't so I continued, "But I would advise against it. I have a point to make. Until I get that point made, I am going to become increasingly more annoying with my attempts until it is made. I assure you, father, you do not want that to happen." He was silent a long moment weighing carefully whatever he was going to say. Or maybe he was reigning in his temper... I couldn't be sure.

At last he said, "Make your point, daughter. And put an end to the veiled threats. Now." It was my turn to be silent a moment.

I gave him a slight, cool smile, "Agreed." After a long silence, I threw him a quick glance and said, "You know I am always looking for good sailors for my pirate hunting...."

He snorted but then looked thoughtful, "Very well. How can I be of service?"

"Well... I suppose the bilges have been pretty well cleaned already...." I began teasingly. It looked like he only just held in another snort. "Maxine has been working pretty hard here lately and deserves some time off. I suppose I could offer you the position of personal assistant." Daddy again looked thoughtful for a while before nodding. I suspected he didn't trust himself to speak at that particular moment.

I called Max over and let her know that she was now officially on paid vacation... at least until we found the pirates. She wasn't exactly overjoyed by the news.

"Great," she snorted. What was it with ships and all of this snorting? "I'm on vacation on a ship that's heading towards pirates with a bunch of scruffy sailors... no offense, sir," she added to Daddy who just smiled. "What a treat."

"Does that mean that you're going to stop watching the bare chested men going about their duties and go below and read a book?" I asked innocently.

"No, it does not," she replied, lifting her nose high into the air and giving her best Flosia imitation, "It means I'm going to get a nice lounge and read my book on deck where I can more conveniently ogle the bare chested men." Daddy laughed aloud and I couldn't help but smile.

When Max had disappeared from view, I smiled at Daddy, "Call to come to port ten degrees and to increase to full sail." Daddy smiled obligingly, gave a slight bow and called the orders in a voice that probably shook the crew's nest. And I thought cousin Elmer could be loud. The wheelman echoed the orders as he was turning the wheel. The bosun further echoed the order as he began instructing sailors on setting the sails.

"So," Daddy said, "Where are we going?"

"Montclarion," I answered watching the reflection of his face on a piece of brass railing most carefully. Daddy remained stoically silent and his face showed no reaction. He knew that Regillus had been having problems with the pirate, Jean Anton du Brevion. Daddy also knew that du Brevion had smashed a large portion of Tas Vibbon's fleet in his quest to make a fortune by disrupting Regillus sea lanes. Du Brevion was dangerous. He was rumored to make his home in the rather largish world of Montclarion. There was a fair chance that Daddy's favorite ship could get deep sixed in this little exercise. Daddy's face showed nothing and I turned my gaze back towards the horizon as my attention remained focused inside.

After three days of sailing, everyone aboard knew that Prince Andus had not come to take over the ship. I suspected that some of the officers were not too pleased about this but the sailors seemed to take the news quite well. After all, Daddy doesn't normally hand out bags of silver just for doing what they enjoyed doing in the first place. Maxine was on her second book and seemed to be enjoying her time off despite her occasional complaint about the locale.

On the fourth day the lookout spotted a ship. I'd been leading us through worldchannels towards du Brevion's ship for the last four days. Two years ago I'd considered killing him when I found out he had begun sinking Regillian shipping. During a surprise meeting that had been a genuine accident, I'd placed a tracer spell upon him. Surprisingly, Prince Marcus had not ordered him killed. Now, two years later I had caught up with him again. This was it. There was a couple of hours until his ship came within range of the cannons.

"Nervous?" Daddy asked.

"No. Are you?" Daddy's face showed he was taking the question serious despite the fact that it had been intended as rhetorical, "Let's just say that I'm concerned."

"What are you concerned about?" I asked. The answer to this question was very important to me. It took him several moments to answer.

"I know I can't keep you out of harm's way," he finally answered, "I know that the

dangers you face now, prepare you for the greater dangers to come. All the same, you are my daughter and I worry about you. Call it a parent's prerogative if you will." It was my turn to be silent. It was time to ask the question.

"How many strumpets, whores, and prostitutes do you sleep with and discard in a year's time?" I asked him quietly. My question clearly threw him off guard. Perhaps he had expected me to become misty eyed at his last statement. At one time it would indeed have brought tears... but not today.

"What in the world does that have to do...." he asked not finishing the thought and clearly perplexed.

The anger that had been smouldering beneath my placid exterior for the last several months as well as the anxiety that had built up over the last several years suddenly exploded forth, "Answer the question!" I shouted into his face, "Just answer the mother fittled question!" To my recollection I haven't cursed in Daddy's presence since that long ago day, when at the tender age of 24, I had solemnly announced that I was going to become a lady. He was obviously as shocked by the outburst as I was. Even I hadn't realized that I held so much pent up worry, frustration, and anger inside me. I was even more surprised to find that I held Daddy by the throat and that my fighting dagger was at his neck. Blushing and embarrassed to the core, I hastily resheathed the dagger.

"Sorry," I mumbled.

"At least the money I spent on your education wasn't wasted," he muttered under his breath. "I don't know why it's so important to you and I normally wouldn't answer a personal question like this," he stated quietly, "But since it is obviously very important to you I will answer - I don't know. I have no clue how many women I sleep with in a year's time. Quite a lot I imagine."

"I know," I almost whispered.

"Then why...?" Daddy trailed off again.

"You sleep with scores of women every year," I said still just barely above a whisper. "You use them and then you forget them. They mean nothing to you but a good time and when that good time is over you throw them away. Well, I won't be treated that way," I announced a bit more loudly with an iron determination. I could see sudden understanding in his eyes. "I am not someone you can use and then discard. I am your daughter and I deserve respect at all times... not just when it's convenient."

Daddy just stood there for a long time. I thought I saw tears brimming in his eyes but if so they never made it any farther. At last he nodded. "You're right. I never thought of it that way but now that you mention it, I suppose I have taken you for granted. I will try to treat you with the respect you deserve from now on." Words didn't come to me so I just threw myself into his arms and hugged him tight while I cried into his shoulder. Some time later I managed to stop.

"Look at this," I said, trying to sound annoyed as I began cleaning up my face with a hanky. "You made me cry in front of my men."

"Would you like me to kill them all for you?" he asked. He was halfway serious.

"No," I replied after a moment, "Let them know I'm human. It is a woman's prerogative to cry when she wants."

"Incoming spell!" Max yelled, bounding off the lounge and racing towards the front of the ship. Evidently, she got there in time to cancel the effect. A moment later I heard her whisper from the front although no one else would have, "Would you like me to counter

attack?"

Turning to Daddy I asked, "Would you like Max to counter attack?"

Daddy just smiled, "Don't ask me... you're the captain."

"No Sweetie," I told her in a whisper only her and Daddy could hear, "Just run counter spells. We're going to send them to the bottom the old fashioned way."

More loudly I called, "Ready cannons!" There was a moment of silence when the gunnery officer turned and looked at Daddy.

"You heard the captain!" Daddy barked, "Ready cannon!"

Du Brevion's ship was almost twice the size of Daddy's... *my* ship. And in less than thirty minutes we had won.

We ended up walking him off the plank, and sailed both ships back to Burgos. Du Brevion's ship, *Red Murder*, just seemed too big so I had it repaired and refitted and gave it to cousin Elmer who seemed more suited to a ship that size.

Back in port, Daddy and I walked arm in arm down the gang plank. I turned and bowed to him. "The *Fair Winde* is yours again, sir." Daddy just smiled, "However, there is still the matter of the ransom for your captain."

Daddy looked serious for a moment, completely disregarding the fact that the captain in question was running down the wharf towards us. "What ransom do you ask?"

"Lunch," I responded.

"Absolutely not," he fired back, "I will pay for nothing less than dinner and the opera."

I *almost* managed to keep the smile off my face as I agreed to his terms.