

The Puritan Pirate

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eISBN 9781682523018

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Cover Artist: Valerie Tibbs

Published in the United States of America

Loose Id LLC

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San Francisco CA 94117-0549

www.loose-id.com

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Part One

The Puritan Pirate
The Caribbean, 1664

Chapter One

Port Royal

Perry had not drunk nearly enough rum for his liking. He could not claim to be sober, but he could still think clearly, and his inhibitions seemed unhappily intact. He picked up his mug, only to find it empty but for a mere dribble. He gave a morose sigh.

There was a tap on his shoulder, and he turned, blinking a little owlshly – the tavern was poorly lit, and the air was thick with smoke from dozens of pipes. A comely young man had sat on his bench, a beguiling smile crooking his lush lips. He asked Perry a soft question that went unheard over the boisterous chatter of the tavern's other patrons, in strident competition with the raucous music of fiddles and flutes. Perry shrugged and shook his head, and the stranger shifted until Perry could feel the warmth of a leg against his own. A hand strayed to his thigh, stroking up the inside. It was not unwelcome.

Sliding an arm around Perry's waist, the handsome stranger filled his mug from a pitcher, encouraging him with gestures to drink up. Perry returned the flirtatious simpers with a stiff smile. Thus far the rum had failed to chase away his lingering sorrow, but he had not come here to mope like a child. Lifting his mug in a tentative toast, Perry drank off a great mouthful. The spirit was not mingled with tart fruit juices as was usual with punch, but it was not neat either. He could taste the hot sweetness of rum, but under all was a strange musty flavor that was bitter on his tongue.

A hand landed on his shoulder with a startling thump.

"Captain's asking to see you, Mr. Peregrine," a lilting brogue sounded in his ear.

He knew the voice all too well. Wiping his mouth on the back of his sleeve, Perry turned his head to meet a pair of sardonic hazel eyes gleaming in the light of the

lanterns that hung from the low ceiling. A strand of dark hair, escaped from the riband at the man's nape, brushed Perry's face. He flinched from that intimate touch.

"Your captain or mine?" He paused and then continued more aggressively, "If it's yours, I'll not stir; she can go to hell. And you can too."

Master Gabriel Quinn grinned down at him. That condescending smile, as always, sent Perry's pulse into a frenzy. "Yours, boyo. Best be coming along; 'twill not do to keep your captain waiting."

"God's blood, I'm two-and-twenty; I'm not a boy. I need go nowhere with you." Perry's voice was petulant, but obedience to authority was deeply ingrained in him. He lurched to his feet, his hands on the scarred wooden table for support.

Standing at a whisker over five eleven, his body well-muscled, Perry was hardly little, but the master was built on magnificent lines. Even though Quinn was only two—mayhap three—years his elder, Perry did feel like a boy next to him, short and scrawny and insignificant. Quinn certainly made no bones about mocking Perry for his slighter stature.

Grudgingly, Perry looked up, swaying as his head spun; he must have drunk more than he had thought. Or perchance his lack of appetite these last few days had betrayed him, for he had little enough food in his belly to soak up the spirits he had imbibed. The master put an arm out, holding him steady, and Perry leaned into him. As he did so, he caught a glimpse of that mocking sneer and collected himself. Shaking off Quinn's hand, he stood up straight.

Perry's companion rose and latched on to his forearm, his expression furious as he stepped forward. He pulled Perry behind him. Face-to-face Quinn and the stranger were tall and dark, each with long hair drawn back into a queue, and like many sailors in Port Royal, they wore shirt with no doublet, tucked into breeches secured about the hips with belt buckled over a colorful sash. There, however, the resemblance ended.

The stranger was pleasing to look upon—pretty blue eyes and an enticing smile giving him a boyish quality—but Quinn was a study in clean, sculpted planes. Eyes an

autumnal forest of dark green and coppery brown touched with gold, a straight, patrician nose set over a shapely yet masterful mouth, dark strands of hair escaped from their bonds to hang in charming disarray about a finely chiseled jaw. His gaze going from one to the other, Perry wondered that he had thought his new friend so fetching.

Speaking with understandable heat, the stranger said, "Hoy, he's with me. You're Gabe Quinn of the *Defiant*, ain't you? No poaching."

"And you're Peter Forker of the... Oh, you don't have a ship, do you?" Quinn added tauntingly.

Forker scowled. "Just acos some French shrew made you her sailing master don't make you no better than me. I paid for drinks and all for him, so bugger off, you bloody pirate."

"You'd best be stowing your gab, Mr. Forker," said Quinn in a mild voice that held a distinct threat withal. "That French shrew has a lot of friends, even in the Ingleside. Are you not knowing who your new chum is?"

"Well, he ain't one of her men. Don't nobody care about him, or he'd not be drinking alone." Forker's lip curled scornfully. "And he ain't so joyful to see you neither."

Quinn's smile showed his perfect, white teeth. Forker recoiled a little.

"This, Mr. Forker, is Mr. Perry-grin of the *Audacious*. I may no longer berth on his ship, but you know the custom of the coast—buccaneers watch out for each other. And you know well the Black Wolf doesn't take kindly to his crew being pinched."

Forker fell back, dread overtaking the chagrin on his face. "Jesu, he never said... No coin ain't worth that!" His voice was hoarse with fear. Perry watched him disappear into the crowd, his bewilderment at the man's sudden change of heart tempered by his slightly fuddled brain.

Following Quinn, Perry staggered from the tavern and into the street. Lime Street heaved with buccaneers in various stages of drunkenness, intent on celebrating recent

victories and the booty they had gained. The strumpets who inhabited the port were also out in force, equally intent on separating the lustful men from as much of their booty as they humanly could. Some leaned out of brothel windows to entice the sailors inside; others plied their trade in the streets and alleys. One or two called out to Perry, showing off their wares in a lewd manner that made him blush. They laughed stridently and sought other prey when he instinctively moved closer to Quinn. The sailing master sneered at his discomfiture.

"You ever need protecting, do you not, boyo? But for myself, you might be in an alleyway right now bent over with your breeches about your knees."

Perry glowered resentfully. "I can look after myself."

"Oh?" Quinn's eyes were alight with derisive humor. "You're a rose waiting to be plucked, boyo. Fancy, a good Puritan lad like you carousing in such a den of iniquity as the Ingleside!"

"I'm not carousing." He did not bother to correct Quinn on the matter of his religion—the crew had stamped him a fanatic long since. He knew his aloofness had not helped dispel that misapprehension.

"Of course not." Quinn's smile mocked him. "God forbid your virtue should be defiled."

Perry scowled. "I never made claim to any particular virtue, *Master* Quinn." He always strove to make the man's title sound like an insult. Quinn, of course, always lovingly returned the favor. "I desire a drink, and—and convivial company."

"Perchance not the convivial company you bargained for, *Mister* Peregrine. Was no one after warning you what sort of a place this is?"

Perry glared at him mutinously. Quinn knew perfectly well that no man on the crew would inform Perry of aught that did not directly affect ship's business. Not that Perry needed warning—he knew exactly what sort of men patronized the Ingleside. Preferring the master to think he had come here in error, he said nothing.

"So why was Peter Forker buying you drinks?" asked Quinn, his eyes narrowing. "I'd expect it to be the other way around. Has someone lifted your purse already?"

"Of course not; it's in my —" Perry broke off. He had no wish to tell Quinn it was hidden from thieves in the safest place he knew of. He shifted, and the coins pressed uncomfortably on his balls.

Quinn gave him a sapient look. "Ah. That accounts for the odd way you're walking. And why that cutpurse was cozying up to you like a port doxy."

"Not everyone finds me hateful, Master Quinn."

Quinn shook his head, that infuriating, patronizing grin curving his beautiful mouth. "As long as you've the coin, Mr. Peregrine, you'll not be short of love. But if you're seeking a sweetheart for the night, the Ingleside is not where you'll be finding her."

Perry would admit naught of his intentions to the master. It might be acceptable for buccaneers like Quinn to openly be sodomites, but it was certainly not for him. And if Quinn knew his true leanings, it might also lead the man to other, even less welcome, speculation about who Perry really wanted to fuck. He would not give the master yet more ammunition in their war of words.

"I but wanted a drink with someone friendly," he said in sullen accents.

"Friendly?" Quinn gave a scornful laugh. "Mayhap Forker was interested in your friendship, or mayhap your *beaux yeux*, but I've seen that chiseler pull a pigeon before. Upon my honor, if you'd so much as gone for a piss with him, you'd have woken on the morrow with a splitting headache and not much else. If you were lucky, he'd have left you your kerchief so you had something to cover your cods with."

Perry rolled his eyes and mumbled, "A pox on you," under his breath, and he knew from the flash in the master's eyes that the man had heard him. Quinn buffeted his shoulder, not hard, but enough to rock Perry on his already unsteady feet.

"Enough of your shit. God blind me, you're not a stupid man, Mr. Peregrine, whatever else you are. You know fine you might not have woken up at all. Not that you'd be much of a loss."

Perry glowered. Considering their history of enmity, he failed to see why the master would have any concerns for him. And after his own fine speeches to his crew about temperance, self-denial, and morality, Perry was annoyed that Quinn, of all men, was witness to his drunken folly.

"Captain Black never ask for me, do he?" he said truculently, his speech lapsing from his painfully correct accent as his anger mounted.

Quinn shrugged but grabbed Perry's arm when he turned to go back into the tavern. Perry tried to shake him off, and he was pulled back against the other man's chest. He struggled, but Quinn was too strong. The master's fingers dug brutally into him, and an arm locked around his chest. Perry was helpless in that powerful grip.

"Leave go o' me." He panted, panic surging through him at being restrained in Quinn's iron embrace. An unwanted heat fired low in his belly as blood rushed to his cock, leaving him lightheaded and breathless. The master's groin pressed to his arse, and he knew a humiliating urge to rub against it.

"Devil take you, boy, I'll not have you going back in there."

Quinn's voice was a command, one Perry did not have the will to disobey. He stopped struggling, his mind in chaos.

"K-kiss my arse," he stammered.

"Well now, some men might be taking that as an invitation."

The voice was warm, seductive; Quinn's breath was hot on his ear. A shudder cascaded through him, starting at his ear and running down his neck. Like falling dominoes, in swift succession his nipples peaked, his stomach fluttered, his cock swelled, his balls tightened. A faint whine of protest escaped his lips.

"Prithee...don't," he choked out.

The master snorted with derision. "By the holy saints, don't flatter yourself, Mr. Peregrine. I fuck men, not boys. Come back in five years, and I'll consider teaching you a thing or two."

Pulling himself together, Perry managed to snarl, "I've no desire to navigate as broad a channel as your windward passage, Master Quinn. With all the ships you sail, in five years you'll have marshaled an armada. A worn-out strumpet would have a t-tighter grip."

He could feel Quinn shaking with laughter. "You'd best be watching that sharp tongue of yours; many a time a man's mouth broke his nose."

"I might be afraid, were you n-not a limp-limbed wandought."

By now, Quinn was laughing out loud. "You ever were a feisty one, Mr. Peregrine! You'd best stop flirting with me; I might get to thinking your intentions are serious."

"I'll show you just how c-curst serious do you not let me g-go," said Perry with desperate belligerence. His head was starting to swim.

"Now, now, down, boy. But I'll allow even a Puritan has needs. If you're so determined, I'll take you to a whorehouse to get your lady-plough seen to. I know a decent one where the girls are clean and sweet-natured, and come in plump or slim, fair or dark, whatever your taste. And they won't be after robbing you blind."

"I d-don't want—" He bit his lip, knowing he had come close to blurting out that it was not a woman he sought. "God's d-death...l-leave me b-be!" His tongue was strangely thick, and he could barely get the words out. Quinn still held him, and fearful the other man would notice his arousal, he struggled again, which served only to make his prick harder.

"Fine," said Quinn impatiently, letting Perry go at last. "I'm done with you, Sasanach. Get bloody fleeced; I care naught."

Coldly triumphant, Perry tossed up his chin, shooting the master a contemptuous glare over his shoulder. The words "bedamned to you, Taig" formed in his mind, but he

failed to unglue his stiff lips to say them aloud. No matter. He took a step toward the tavern door.

Suddenly, his knees buckled. If Quinn had not grabbed him, he would have fallen. His head whirled, making him sick and woozy, and his face was numb.

"C-can't...f-feel...m-m-m—" His mouth twitched, but naught else came forth.

Muddled, he felt no more than a mild alarm that he had lost the power of speech. Quinn was holding him hard, chest to chest this time, and Perry let his head fall back, gazing up into that dazzling face, caught by the stunning eyes. It struck him as rather droll that he was in the master's arms, being held like a lover. As if in a dream, he heard himself giggle.

"Jesu, what the devil did that little cunt-lapper feed you," said Quinn softly. "Your eyes are like saucers."

Perry tried to say "rum," but it came out as a strangled groan.

Quinn looked at the tavern door, his face wrathful, and then back at Perry. The anger changed to resignation. "Best get you to your ship, boyo. You'll need to be sleeping this off."

In no state to object, Perry let the master half drag him through the sandy streets. His head rolled into the hollow of Quinn's shoulder, and he was overwhelmed by a masculine scent so delicious he wanted to bite into it. If he could have moved his mouth properly, he would have. He desired nothing more than to lose himself in this embrace even though Quinn despised him.

Perry's heart raced, thudding in his ears, and perspiration trickled down his back. Though he felt so queer and dizzy, his prick had not gone down. The thought of the master discovering his distressing fascination filled Perry with cold dread, and he took a deep breath to calm himself. It only filled his senses anew with the heady smell of the man wrapped around him.

Desperate to maintain some dignity, Perry tried to walk. His legs were working about as well as his thoughts, which was to say not particularly, but he did manage to

put one foot in front of the other for some of the journey. Reaching the dock, Quinn tumbled him into a small jolly boat where he collapsed into a heap on the thwart. The boat dipped and rocked as Quinn jumped in after him. Dazed, Perry heard thumping and creaking followed by gentle splashing and then felt the jerk of the boat as the master began to row them out to the *Audacious*.

Perry lay on his back, regarding with dreamy abstraction the velvet black sky above him, crowded with milky, bright stars. There seemed to be an astonishing amount, many more than usual, and then he realized his vision was doubling. The stars began to spin slowly, and then faster, until he closed his eyes to stop the deplorable movement. The dizziness became worse. He opened his eyes again, breathing into the sudden nausea that attacked him, hoping he would not disgrace himself further in front of the master.

He was still contemplating the dual fascination of the wheeling stars and his uneasy stomach when they reached the ship, a tall, dark hulk in the water, lit bow and stern with lanterns. Quinn heaved him upright, and Perry lifted his heavy lids, trying to focus.

"Jesu, you'll never make the climb on your own," Quinn muttered.

Moving carefully, he hoisted Perry over his back. Perry hung limply, Quinn's shoulder an uncomfortable pressure on his midsection. The boat lurched as Quinn stepped to the first rung of the ship's ladder, and Perry's stomach was jolted alarmingly. His thoughts nebulous, he wondered if Quinn would drop him into the harbor if he puked down the man's back. The notion was exquisitely amusing. He began to giggle again.

Hazily, he became aware of just how strong the master was. He might be smaller than Quinn, but he was no lightweight, and the master was carrying him as if he were a child's doll. As they ascended, Perry watched the dark water recede. A final heave came nigh to making him spew up, and then he saw the wooden deck of the ship under Quinn's boots.

He heard a voice – familiar, but he could not place it.

“You get lost, Gabe? *Defiant’s* over thataway.”

“We’re no’ a sodding bawdy house,” said another voice. “Tak’ your *beau garçon* to your ain ship!”

Quinn laughed. “Well met, Job, Crook. You labor under a misapprehension – this *beau garçon* is one of yours.”

Still hanging down the sailing master’s back, Perry tried to struggle, outraged by the epithet – he was no man’s whore. He could barely move, however, and all that emerged from his lips was a faint croak of protest.

“Awake, are you?” asked Quinn, tipping Perry upright and setting him on his feet. “Upsy daisy, boyo.”

As his feet found the deck, he staggered. Quinn held him firm, pulling Perry’s arm over his shoulder and snaking his arm about Perry’s waist to keep him upright. Perry was certain the embrace made them look every bit the lovers his crewmen had thought them. His head lolled heavily on Quinn’s chest, but he managed to lift it, blinking to clear his eyes. He recognized Abel Cruickshank – known as Crook – and Job Wright. Detailed as anchor watch, they were this moment barring passage to the main deck. Perry tried to address his shipmates, but in vain; his tingling lips moved, but nothing intelligible came past them. He hoped to God the moisture he could feel on his chin was not drool – or at least that it was not visible in the bright moonlight.

“Oh, hullo, Mr. Perry-grin,” said Job, a wide grin cracking his face. “Didn’t see as it were you.”

The two sailors stepped aside. With false dignity, Perry gave a jerky nod and gargled something incoherent.

“Pulled that stick out your arse, Mr. Perry-grin?” guffawed Crook. “Or was it pulled out for ye? Should ha’ known ye’d break him to bridle one day, Gabe!”

“He’s not quite broken yet, Crook, but he’s finding his legs are working none too well.” The two guards were by now laughing uproariously. “Unless you gentlemen would have him in an untidy pile on your nice clean deck, I’d best be getting him to his berth.”

“Nay, I ain’t cleaning up after the likes of him!” expostulated Job. “Got enough work of me own to do. He’s three along from the captain, if you misremember.”

Quinn smirked at the two watchmen before addressing Perry. “Pick your feet up, boyo; don’t make me hump you across the deck. I’d liefer save my strength to tumble you in your bunk.” He began to drag Perry toward his quarters. “No doubt you’ll get that relief you’re needing when you’re facedown on your pillow – I know I will.”

The two guards howled with renewed glee at Quinn’s innuendos as Perry staggered, slumped in the other man’s arms. He should feel humiliated, but he was too queasy to care overmuch. But tomorrow every man from his ship, and from the *Defiant* too, would know he had been disgracefully drunk, had been carried to his berth like a sack of potatoes by his *bête noire*, and every one of them would assume the sailing master had fucked his brains out.

And they would all be laughing at Lieutenant Thomas Peregrine, that supercilious, conceited prick that everyone tolerated but no one liked.

Chapter Two

Perry's service on the *Audacious* had been ill-fated from the outset.

The morning Perry joined the Black Wolf's crew, three long months ago, had dawned bright but brisk.

A heavy swell caused his ship, *Royal Covenant*, to heel sharply at anchor. Watching its squat form recede as he was rowed over to his new berth, Perry knew he would miss nothing aboard it. His quarters were the worst he had endured in the navy – even as a lowly ship's boy – and he had no friends there. Despite being horrified when his captain had told him he was to serve on the *Audacious*, one of the largest buccaneer ships in Jamaica, he was relieved to leave *Royal Covenant*, even if only for the next few months. He had never heard of such a duty as naval liaison on a privateer vessel, but bitter experience had taught him not to question Captain Pobjoy.

Under his casaque his clothes were damp from the heavy squall that had burst over their heads, so brief it had rained itself out before they completed their short journey. He was not cold. Having already endured weeks of what was laughably called winter in this region, he doubted he would ever be cold in Jamaica.

The tall frigate was rolling in the choppy water, but he climbed aboard nimbly, dexterous with years of experience in rough seas. He was ducking through the entry port when the ship pitched. At an awkward angle, he grabbed for the manrope, but a strong arm wrapped around him as he lurched. He was dizzyingly assailed by a scent he could not identify. Like any sailor, the man who held him smelled of salt, the smokiness of tar and tobacco, and a faint male musk, but under all was some elusive sweet-sharp aroma that teased his senses. Looking up into the face that hovered above

his, the smile in a pair of lustrous hazel eyes pierced him like an arrow, and for a moment he forgot how to breathe.

“Welcome aboard, Lieutenant Peregrine. I’m Gabe Quinn, sailing master of the *Defiant*. The chief mate desired me to show you to the wardroom.”

That cadenced voice resounded magically in his ear, but when his laggard senses told him the accent was Irish, Perry physically recoiled.

“Keep your filthy hands off o’ me, you curst Taig,” he bit out.

The arm dropped away, and Quinn stepped back, dark brows snapping into a frown over eyes now hard in a grim face. “As you wish,” he said coldly. “Come, this way.”

Perry was immediately ashamed of his offensive and unwarranted behavior. Later at the evening mess, he diffidently offered Quinn an apology. The master merely raised a derisive eyebrow and turned his back.

But Perry was used to such rejections. Aside from the monstrous insult he had given the Irishman, he knew he was unlikeable. Puritan-raised and reserved, he was too formal, too intense, too uptight to easily make friends, to relax and enjoy life as his new crewmates did with such abandon. Unfortunately, not even his iron control could stop his cock jolting every time he so much as heard Quinn’s voice. He adopted a scornful attitude, hiding his desire under a bristling hostility that was heartily returned.

His disdain extended to most of the crew. Perry had sneered at the almost egalitarian and, to his eyes, chaotic atmosphere on board. Many of the crew were matelots, a relationship common among buccaneers. Ostensibly they were friends who worked and bunked together, and were said to inherit each other’s property on death. It all sounded very fine, but ere long Perry learned that a matelot was chiefly a convenient partner for buggery. He hated to walk the deck while standing the midwatch—many a time he all but tripped over off-duty men rutting in the dark corners. He had no objection to the activity per se, but would as lief not have his own lusts stirred by witnessing their couplings or hearing their moans—sometimes muffled but usually

brazenly loud – when he himself must abstain. It seemed to him that the pirate ship was overrun with it; such activity would have been brutally punished on *Royal Covenant*.

Within days of Perry joining the *Audacious*, they set sail. For nearly three months they roved across the Caribbean, capturing enemy ships and gathering booty. Perry meticulously recorded all in his log. Upon their return to Port Royal, most of his crewmates immediately went ashore and found rum, women, and whatever other decadent amusements took their fancy. After a night and a day on board ship with his conscience giving him no surcease, Perry asked to be relieved of his watch duties and made his way into the heart of Port Royal's debauchery. It was not a long walk, he thought cynically.

Having listened to the crew's chatter, Perry knew the Ingleside was a place where men who had no desire for women congregated. There he hoped to find a companion for the night who would help him forget his shame, his sorrow – his loneliness.

And then Quinn appeared at the Ingleside, chasing away all those thoughts, and he was enraged that he could think of no other man when the sailing master was near.

Falling helpless into his arms, Perry felt his usual yearning for the man. But never had any liquor had such an effect on him – at least, not that he could recall. Like any sailor, he was no novice when it came to drink, but the Port Royal rum was notoriously potent. By the time Quinn dragged him aboard the *Audacious*, he was stupefied by rum, and any lustful desires were long sped. Leaning heavily on Quinn, he could think of naught else but his swimming senses and the sharp pain in his gut. Perry knew he should be grateful for that small mercy. The master was all but carrying him across the deck to the narrow passage that led to the aft cabins, and would surely feel any arousal of Perry's prick. It was enough that Quinn had already ridiculed his befuddled state.

The ship heeled a little, and Perry's nausea surged.

"W-wai –"

Gorge rose in his throat as he tried to speak. He rushed to the bulwark and began to heave over the side of the ship. A soothing hand on his back held him steady.

“There now. Puke it all up.”

The man’s tone sounded almost kind, and Perry knew he must still be very drunk to imagine such a thing. Tears stung his eyes, but whether from the strain of his stomach’s efforts or from humiliation, he knew not. But despite his shame that the master saw him in such a state, he took pleasure in the contact, the strong, safe hand bracing him while his body rebelled.

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Want to know what happens next?

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