

Chapter 3: Temptations and Tribulations

Well on their way to Pirate's Bay, Scarlet sat staring at the small box that was her prize possession from the raid on the Kissinger Majesty. It did not seem to have a lock on it, but it did not have an obvious opening either. Her fingers ran along the ornate symbols, tracing their silvery curves. It was as if the box was talking to her, tempting her, and with her daily chores completed, there was nothing holding her back from opening the box – but there seemed there was. Deep inside she felt the raging war. "*Scarlet, don't open the box,*" was the voice that reminded her of Mr. Cross; in the other corner was the quiet whisper, "*Sarita.*"

It wasn't warning chimes, just tribulation – trial, test of reserve, this was the pearl she had waited for, from the tale the witch at Pirate's Bay had told her. This was the prize, a prize "*like no other.*" The box was a precious onyx, no boxes are made of onyx and in the eerie voice of the strange witch, she heard "*Secrets and destiny come your way, a prize like none other, seek the hidden path, and find the source of power.*" It was there, on the "*sister ship*" – in the hands of a "*once friend*" and "*decorated of darkness and light.*" Silvery symbols she didn't recognize, but felt so familiar as her fingers traced them. "*Sarita,*" came the whisper that she knew must simply be in her head, "*Come to me, Sarita.*"

Slowly she pushed herself from the table and stood up from the wooden chair. She placed her hands on either side of the small box, palms on the table, her dark hair flowing down past her face forming nearly a cave hiding the box for only her eyes, and stared, willing it to give up its secrets with no further ado. It did nothing, didn't glow, didn't deliver some magical note, or drag her back to her seat, and the voice didn't come. For a few minutes, she stayed that way, as if the box would holler up at her if it were evil or good, if it was real or imagined, if it was – salvation

or damnation. Who knew with destiny, the witch hadn't answered, it was for Scarlet to determine. Fate is a puzzling matter of which side of the thread you are on when it hits. Her huff was more of a sigh, and scooping up the box she went to lounge on the short couch by the picture window, bathing the box in the fading light.

"Cap't," Mr. Cross knocked on the door. "Can I light the candles for you, and borrow a moment of yer time?" He only cracked the door an inch.

"Aye, com'in Mr. Cross," her voice hiding the frustration with the interruption to her contemplation. She still stared at the box and turned it over and over in her hands as Mr. Cross carefully lit the lamps and two candles that gently swayed with the rise and fall of the ship.

"Still not opened that box, Cap't," a sly grin on his face, "Are ye afraid that secrets of the world are too big for yah?" He pulled up the small stool and sat beside her, hand extended, "May I?"

"Hmph," she handed him the box. "It isn't that I can't open it, I am just savoring the mystery."

He smiled; he was a good friend, like a big brother sometimes, but always a friend. Turning the box around in his hands he said, "I can fetch Johan for you," he said dropping the accent for a moment while he pondered the box, "He might be a little rough handed with trinkets at times but he can probably get it open."

"No!" snatching the box away, and startling him for a moment. "I want to play with it," realizing that it was a bit out of character, "It is like a new toy, I can figure it out." Tracing the symbols again, she ignored his frown.

“Well, if ye wish.” Standing he walked to the table, “We have another pressin’ issue, Cap’t.” He fiddled with the maps and books on the table, “Maria is leaving.”

“Why this time?” she asked, only half listening as she discovered that the one symbol matched on all sides of the box.

“She’s had enough of Thomas, says he is a whore and a scoundrel,” he paused as if trying to remember what else she said.

“That isn’t different from last time,” placing her hands she found that she could touch the symbol on each side of the box when she held it right, except for the side facing her, her thumb wouldn’t reach. “Why should we worry this time?”

The symbols under her fingers felt like they wanted to move, a little singing in her fingers, like machines, but different. “Ce’ce says she thinks Maria might be with...”

Trying to listen to this most important gossip-rumor situation, an idea crossed her mind, with a little shrug she stuck out her tongue and brought the box to her mouth. Scarlet’s tongue pressed the symbol on the side nearest her and a whirring and clicking was suddenly followed by the world spinning away with a rush of fog and wind. Every muscle was frozen as she tried to understand what was happening, the spinning and rushing was both dizzying and invigorating, like a summer storm – lightning and thunder, but not as wet or noisy. Tingling rushed over her body, no more ship, no more sea, and Mr. Cross’ voice was gone.

Instead, there was an intense feeling of need, of loneliness, and unfulfilled desires. Reaching around her was a hungry feeling that tried to penetrate the emotions that had gathered her up, and it did, with a whisper, “*Sarita.*” That voice again, this time the voice caressed her, nearly a soft humming that seemed to reach right into her soul. “*I need you, Sarita.*” The touch

seemed to tickle along her skin, lingering at first on her palms, brushing up her wrists, and causing her to tremble as it continued over the inside of her elbow.

“*Sarita*,” his touch becoming more and more firm as his soft exploration reached her neck. No words were there, she had no voice, neither to resist nor comply with, “*Sarita, come to me.*” A warm spark was forming in her middle, spreading like a slow burning ember that sought to ignite her soul, her body – the world spun in place, tossing her upon invisible waves unlike anything she had ever felt. The brushes were firm soft explorations as they visited and teased over her hard nipples. Something in her found, it could not be real, the rest of her didn’t care, the brush was on her thigh, slowly, very slowly, reaching and teasing towards the sudden center of a need she felt building.

The touches were not stopped by clothing, there didn’t seem to be any, not here, as if she knew that to be the case – no clothing here, not ever. The flickering, exploring, lingered on the soft spot at the top of her thigh, Scarlet wanted to scream out, such a tease, nearly torture, on the verge of something, just if it would continue. Other teases were along her lower back, her hips, sliding down over her bottom. Struggling to gain control of find her voice, she twisted, squirmed, “*Please*,” her mind whispered, “*please*,” but not sure if the please was to stop or not to stop.

“*Sarita*,” the voice was there again, this time followed by what felt like lips exploring down her neck. Involuntarily, her hips tried to press towards the exploring touches, to make them reach her womanhood, to explore it, but it remained vigilant in the tease over her things. Tickling against the soft spot where her leg meets that lips craving for attention. His lips were on hers, and though she could not see him, her desire for him was overwhelming. More movement, feathery and firm, strong yet yielding, tempting and teasing everywhere that was handy on her body. She

trembled, the true explosion from the burning ember just out of reach, it was becoming maddening.

Touches exploring, tickling over her belly button, driving her to insanity at the thought that he might refuse to let her reach the peak. He may determine that she didn't need it, and then stop, but what was it that he needed, she tried to think, but resistance was futile and pointless, it was becoming the most pleasurable thing Scarlet had ever felt. It rose over her again, a warmth right on the edge of something so powerful that she thought it might be the most wonderful thing just waiting to happen. It was almost there, the kisses that pulled away from her lips and chin happily sought something else, warm, wet lips explored over her chest, down over her nipples, and then her belly button. The movements around and over her belly button causing the most extreme feelings to reach into her body and move about like mini explosions of bright Asian fireworks.

"Please," she thought, *"oh, please don't stop."* At first it seemed the touches heard, linger in breath like strokes above her dripping place of hunger; *"Please,"* no words would escape her lips. It did seem to listen, the breath-like touches taking on substance, a little at a time. She wanted to know who, and why, but for the moment she wanted to feel that explosion that seemed just below the surface. *"Sarita, cum for me, Sarita..."* The words surprised her, causing her mind to pull away, to fracture the spell.

Scarlet's gasp brought her sitting straight up, the open box in her lap. Startled she stared at Mr. Cross. "...child, which is of particular concern..." the sudden change in Scarlet causing him to pause. She looked visibly shaken, but the box lay in her lap open, sporting an expensive

looking ring and bracelet. “You did it!” He smiled and looked down at the open box, “There you go, Cap’t, somethin’ nice – keepin’ or salvage?”

Shaking her head she looked at the open box, there it was, the “*hidden treasure*” in the “*moonlight box*.” Reaching in, she was surprised at the coolness of the shiny silver metal and the strange stones in it. She lifted out the ring and realized that a small silver colored chain ran between the ring and bracelet. Feeling the metal – some form of silver, maybe she wondered, if it could be silver, but it was a bit brighter, and harder. Frowning she set the ring down and looked at Mr. Cross – had it all been a dream?

“Cap’t, before we talk about the treasure, we need to decide if we are putting Maria off at the Bay.” He looked into her eyes; his way of saying, he would like only her decision on the matter.

“Well,” she tossed her hair over her shoulder, trying to get past the strange feelings of the events that had seemed like at least long minutes if not longer and focus on what Mr. Cross had said. “We put both Maria and Thomas off at port, they are both ready to settle down somewhere, and we will take on a crew of four more to cover the extra work load that may be coming up with the storm season.”

“Very good, Cap’t. I’ll let ’em know.”

“No, I think we should wait until we reach port, less trouble and less time to reconsider their actions. They may find it difficult to focus on sticking to the decision if they have too much time to think on it. If they ask, let them know that I will have a decision by the time we reach port. They can bring me arguments if they would like.”

“Agreed,” he smiled at Scarlet, but he could see something was not quite right. “You ok, Cap’t?”

“Yes, just a little tired Cross. Hire on the new crewmates with my share of the loot and take a bag of coins from the chest.” Motioning over towards the chest in the corner, “We don’t want anyone feeling like we might rip ‘em off.” Scarlet’s fingers touched the gem again. “Oh, and give Maria and Thomas a little extra from the chest – you know, like a keepsake to get them started.” Lifting the ring higher to look closely at the sparkling stone surrounded by what looked like onyx and coral, she debated putting it on her finger.

“It is lovely, Scarlet,” he watched her examining the jewelry. “You should wear it.” He stood from the stool and placed it back in the corner. “I’ll keep the crew in order, you rest up, Cap’t.” He waved as he left.