

Inside Teasers: The Last Pirates

The Bayou Prince

Fiona lifted her loose mane of hair off her shoulders, hoping for a touch of coolness in the humid air of New Orleans. She hated these Society balls. At least tonight, a light breeze carried the sweet smell of magnolias and honeysuckle from the garden around the corner of the veranda.

“Exposing your neck like that makes me want to kiss it.”

She jumped and spun around, her long hair whipping across her face, and then gaped. Almost as if she had conjured him, the intriguing man she had noticed earlier on the dance floor stood only a few feet behind her.

He smiled. “I did not mean to startle you, *Mademoiselle Gordon*.”

He knew who she was? Finally finding her voice, she managed, “You did not—I was lost in thought. How did you know my name?”

Taking two steps toward her, he reached over and brushed strands of her hair from her face, the backs of his fingers grazing her cheekbone. The light touch was tantalizing as was his scent—soap and leather and *him*—and Fiona suddenly became aware of how very close he stood and how very isolated it was in this corner of the veranda. She shivered in the warm air, a strange tingle of anticipation washing over her. His eyes, so dark they looked black in the dim light, glimmered, as though he knew the effect he was having. His mouth quirked up in that little half-grin again. This was so totally improper that if Fiona had any sense of propriety, she would step around him and get back into that well-lit room before her reputation was completely ruined. And yet...

Treasure of Campeche

Ilsa took a deep breath and held out her hand. “If you’ll give me that, I had better get back to the mission.”

A corner of the pirate’s mouth lifted in half-smile as he tucked the necklace into a pocket of his wet breeches. “Since you don’t do well at following orders, *Mademoiselle*, I’ll keep it until we’re safely back on my ship.”

She tried not to dwell on how those wet pants clung to him and outlined his muscular thighs. The very few men—boys really—that her overly-protective father had allowed to court her hadn’t looked like this. She had the strangest urge to want to feel the muscles of his broad chest and shoulders. The priest would surely have her doing penance if he knew! She swallowed, her throat suddenly dry. “Once you’re on board and I’m on shore, how will you return it?”

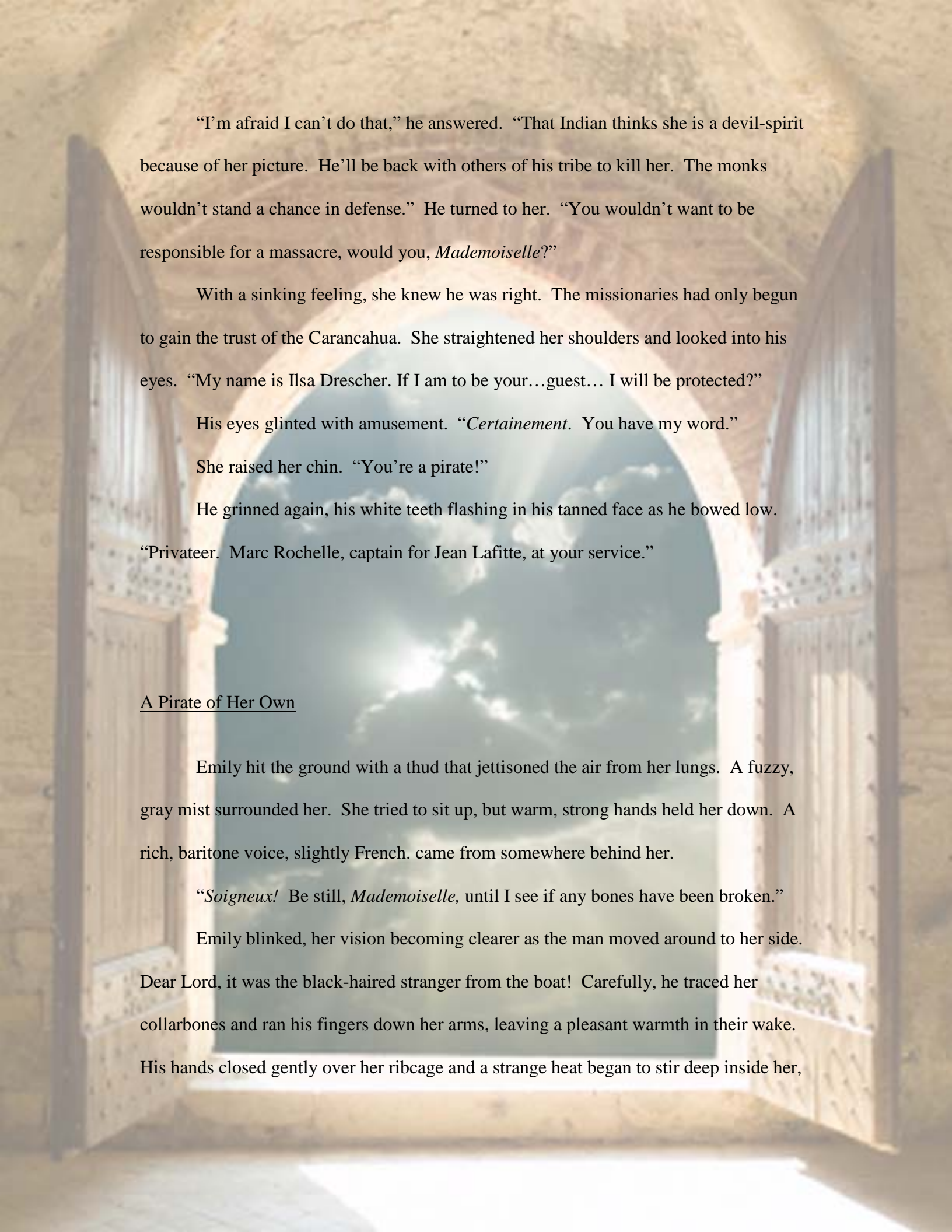
“Because,” he said as the quirk became a full-fledged grin, “you’re coming with us.”

“I most certainly am not! I may have lost my parents in the shipwreck, I’m not about to lose my virtue too.” Her mother—equally protective—had been quite firm that a girl should be a virgin when she married.

He raised a dark eyebrow. “I’ll take care of your virtue.”

She felt her cheeks warm. “I’m sure you will.” She was two-and-twenty years old; she’d heard stories of what pirates did to women. One of her mother’s fears, once they’d reached the warm Caribbean waters, was being boarded by pirates.

“Women are bad luck on board,” Louis interrupted. “Let her go.”



“I’m afraid I can’t do that,” he answered. “That Indian thinks she is a devil-spirit because of her picture. He’ll be back with others of his tribe to kill her. The monks wouldn’t stand a chance in defense.” He turned to her. “You wouldn’t want to be responsible for a massacre, would you, *Mademoiselle*?”

With a sinking feeling, she knew he was right. The missionaries had only begun to gain the trust of the Carancahua. She straightened her shoulders and looked into his eyes. “My name is Ilsa Drescher. If I am to be your...guest... I will be protected?”

His eyes glinted with amusement. “*Certainement*. You have my word.”

She raised her chin. “You’re a pirate!”

He grinned again, his white teeth flashing in his tanned face as he bowed low.

“Privateer. Marc Rochelle, captain for Jean Lafitte, at your service.”

A Pirate of Her Own

Emily hit the ground with a thud that jettisoned the air from her lungs. A fuzzy, gray mist surrounded her. She tried to sit up, but warm, strong hands held her down. A rich, baritone voice, slightly French. came from somewhere behind her.

“*Soigneux!* Be still, *Mademoiselle*, until I see if any bones have been broken.”

Emily blinked, her vision becoming clearer as the man moved around to her side. Dear Lord, it was the black-haired stranger from the boat! Carefully, he traced her collarbones and ran his fingers down her arms, leaving a pleasant warmth in their wake. His hands closed gently over her ribcage and a strange heat began to stir deep inside her,

but when he felt the length of her legs, the tingle moved decidedly to a spot between her thighs. Never in her life had she had such a reaction. She really should protest since she doubted that the man was a physician, but her body felt suddenly weak as a newborn.

He looked up. "I can't feel anything broken. Do you want to try to sit?"

She nodded. Somehow, her mouth was too dry for speech. His eyes were sea-green and so clear, she felt like she was swimming in them...or drowning.

