

OLOFF THE PIRATE SERIES

2. Sea of Vengeance



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SEA OF VENGEANCE

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Published by:

TREASURE CHEST BOOKS - PUBLISHERS

Strand Mews

Strand

2025

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The cover illustration for the Oloff the Pirate series was generated through AI software, enhancing the narrative. This book is being released in English for the first time in e-book format.

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Published by:

Treasure Chest Books - Publishers, Strand Mews, Strand 7140
South Africa

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Online Store: <https://panther-ebooks.com>

Website: <https://www.softcoverbooks.co.za>

SUMMARY

Prepare to be swept away by *Sea of Vengeance*, a thrilling tale set against the backdrop of the perilous 18th-century Indian Ocean. When Oloff van Wagenaar, a young nobleman, is falsely accused of murdering his father, he's forced to flee the Cape, becoming a hunted man, and is soon branded the notorious "Oloff the Pirate". But is he truly the villain the world believes him to be?

Anna te Hoogen, the governor's niece and Oloff's former love, struggles to reconcile her memories of the kind, intelligent man she knew with the horrific stories circulating about the ruthless pirate terrorizing the seas. Despite mounting evidence against him, a flicker of belief remains, fueled by a promise Oloff made to prove his innocence. As Anna embarks on a voyage to Batavia, fate throws her back into Oloff's path when their ship is attacked by pirates. A mysterious ship intervenes, saving them, only for Anna to discover its captain is none other than the infamous Oloff the Pirate himself. He is caught in a tumultuous sea of emotions, grappling with feelings for Anna while confronting the harsh realities of his outlaw life.

Torn between her heart and her head, Anna grapples with her feelings for Oloff. Can she trust the man who has shown her kindness or the pirate, who seems to embrace cruelty? She must also decide whether to embrace the attentions of Frederick de Nuys, a powerful man who can offer respectability and security, but not her heart. Oloff soon learns that an imposter, a look-alike has been committing atrocities in his name and he sets out to clear his name to reclaim his love for Anna. He vows to cleanse the seas of their terror, but can Oloff truly escape his reputation? As betrayal lurks in every shadow, Anna and Oloff must decide if love is worth fighting for, even amidst a *Sea of Vengeance*.

EXTRACT

Oloff bent down and took the dagger between his fingers just where the blade met the hilt. He felt the hilt swing downwards and immediately grasped it firmly. He merely wanted to ascertain where the dagger's center of gravity lay.

Ketner hadn't even seen the movement. He took a step closer. His sword was now stretched straight out in front of him.

"Can you see the length of this?" he exclaimed tauntingly. "How long do you estimate it is from my shoulder to the tip of the sword? Test yours," he said. "Is it just as long?"

A few of the pirates laughed. One of them, slightly behind Oloff, called out. "Try to get inside his defense, Ben!" and then they burst into laughter again.

Oloff kept his eyes on Rog Ketner's. In them, he would see the first movement.

Ketner approached cautiously. The tip of the sword was now slightly lower. He moved his feet one behind the other like a swordsman threatening an opponent. Oloff stood stock still. Suddenly, Ketner bent his right leg, and his torso fell forward. The sword tip drove down on Oloff.

Agilely, Oloff jumped aside, and when Ketner lifted his sword and struck towards the right, Oloff had already jumped four steps further away. The crowd around them screamed with delight.

"Run, Ben! Run!"

2. SEA OF VENGEANCE

Chapter 1

It is shortly before midday. Pleasant sunbeams fill the bay of the Cape of Good Hope. Upon the mirror-smooth water lies the large ship Jansje Meer. Its sails are furled, and the magnificent vessel appears like a castle among the smaller ships and boats in the bay. The Jansje Meer has already been in the harbor for a week. The luxurious craft of the Dutch East India Company is en route to Batavia. This afternoon at high tide, it will depart, and the fiscal of the Cape, Frederick de Nuys, as well as the governor's niece, Anna te Hoogen, will be aboard.

White breakers lap against the clean sand of the broad beach that curves away from the city, receding far in the direction of Blaauwberg. Table Mountain and Lion's Head stand out clearly against the cornflower-blue sky. No mist or clouds obscure their image.

The streets of the Cape are bustling. Lavish coaches rumble in the city center over the cobblestones of the main roads. Wagons and carts are drawn up in front of shops and businesses. At wine houses and other taverns, dozens of horses stand with their reins hung over the crossbeams. Sons of wealthy merchants, attempting to fill the idle hours of their comfortable existence, mingle with slaves who hasten through the city to carry out one or another command.

A luxurious coach rumbles over the paving stones in the direction of the Castle. When it passes beneath the gate, the guards salute smartly. They recognize the daughter of one of the senior merchants. Bertha Neethling is the intimate friend and confidante of the governor's niece. She visits the Castle often. This morning, she has come to help her friend pack her last belongings and make the final preparations for the long journey to Batavia, and also to bid her farewell. In fact, she is one of the dignitaries who have been invited to enjoy the midday meal at the Castle, a farewell meal for Anna te Hoogen and the fiscal, Frederick de Nuys.

A porter in the official livery of the building to the right of the Castle gate awaits. He hands her over to one of the ladies-in-waiting of the governor's niece.

In Anna te Hoogen's room, the friends embrace.

Bertha looks around in astonishment at the multitude of large trunks and parcels. She shakes her head while smiling.

“One would say you’re never coming back, Anna!” she exclaims.

Anna te Hoogen laughs. She glances around.

“It does indeed seem that way, Bertha,” she replies in her soft, melodious voice, “but as you know, it takes weeks to get there. Moreover, we will likely stay in Batavia for six months before we return.”

Bertha looks at her friend tenderly. She sees the wistfulness in her bright blue eyes.

Anna te Hoogen is a strikingly beautiful girl. Her face is strong, but around her chin and lips there is a fullness that lends a pleasant warmth to her appearance. From her satin-smooth forehead beneath the high, curled wig to the soft curve of her neck, she is perfectly formed. The simple but expensive tabard extends from her shoulders, cinching around her slender waist, and then flaring out widely over the hoops to the ground.

Most people who know Anna te Hoogen know her as the orphan who was adopted and raised by the governor. She has lived in the castle for several years. She is intelligent and has received the best education that the governor could provide. In many respects, she has identified with the problems of the Cape settlement. As the governor’s confidante, she wields considerable influence over his decisions, and the Political Council has also realized that her opinions are fair and well-founded, and that they dare not disregard them lightly.

However, this is not what Bertha Neethling is thinking about now. That expression in her friend’s eyes carries her back several months to an event that deeply shocked the Cape at the time.

“Anna,” she says softly, “it seems to me as if you haven’t forgotten Oloff van Wagenaar yet?”

“How could I ever forget him, Bertha?” Anna te Hoogen exclaims, as if even the thought of him pains her. “No other man has ever drawn me as he did. To this day, I still believe in his innocence. But it is so very difficult, after all these months, to still have faith while the whole world is turned against him.”

“You can’t blame them, Anna,” says Bertha. “According to all the

evidence, he took his own father's life. He returned with ridiculous stories that the people who could prove his innocence had been killed by pirates. I know that you told me how he promised you to bring back his father's murderer and thereby prove his innocence, but that has not happened yet, Anna, you must forget him."

"I cannot," Anna te Hoogen lowers her head. Her hands are clasped in front of her. "I believe that he will still come. It is only you, Bertha, who knows this secret of mine. It is only to you that I have told of his promise to me to track down that man who is his double and who actually committed the crime of which he is now accused, and to bring him to justice. Perhaps, Bertha, perhaps I will encounter him somewhere in the East. After all, he departed in that direction."

"You know what stories are being told," Bertha resumes. "You've heard of the atrocities of the pirates. The mightiest of them all is the dreaded Oloff. The man who calls himself Oloff the Pirate. They describe him as someone with blue eyes and red hair. The most terrible cruelties are attributed to him. And who else could he be but Oloff van Wagenaar? The very same Oloff is suspected of murdering his father with the help of pirates!"

"Stop it, Bertha!" exclaims Anna, and her friend can see how tense she is. "I refuse to believe that it is Oloff. It must be that other man who looks just like him."

"You're the only one who thinks so, Anna." For a moment, she falls silent. "Oh Anna, Anna," she then exclaims, "you know how sorry I feel for you!"

Anna smiles quietly. She puts her arm around her friend's shoulders.

"I know that you are my best friend, Bertha. I cannot say more than that." She shrugs and holds her head proudly upright.

"Come," she says. "Let us forget these unpleasant things. Perhaps it's all just dreams anyway. Tell me, Bertha, what are people saying about the fact that the attractive young independent fiscal and I are going to Batavia together?"

"What aren't they saying!" exclaims Bertha, clapping her hands together. "Everyone is convinced that we will soon be hearing wedding bells."

Anna te Hoogen laughs, but it is somewhat dry.

“Even he thinks so,” she says slowly.

“Don’t you perhaps think that it would be much better if ...”

“Don’t say it, Bertha,” Anna interrupts her. “You know how I feel about Frederick de Nuys. He may well be an intelligent young man, and he has quickly risen in the Company’s service, but, no. Bertha, let’s forget that too. Help me empty these few drawers. That is all that remains. After that, we must go inside, because the midday meal will begin in an hour or so. We must move amongst the people for a while, so that I can bid them all farewell.”

The large antechamber is already full of officials, merchants, and other dignitaries. They stand in groups, chatting. Servants move slowly among them with trays full of the sparkling Constantia wine.

When Anna te Hoogen and Bertha Neethling make their appearance, they are immediately surrounded by a group of young men. At the front is Frederick de Nuys. His elongated eyes are wide open now that he sees Anna. His high cheekbones are emphasized by the smile that spreads across his face. He offers her his arm, and they move through the crowd to a comfortable corner where a few chairs still stand empty. As soon as the ladies have taken their seats, the young men gather around them. They laugh, chat, and joke. The men lament the fact that they must remain without Anna’s beautiful presence for so long. They envy De Nuys the privilege of making this journey with her.

The young fiscal stands proudly beside her. He is still quite young, and yet he already holds an unparalleled position of power at the Cape. He is directly responsible to the Lords Seventeen, and even the governor must be careful how he acts before the fiscal. Through this, and also because he is constantly busy with official matters at the Castle, he has gotten to know Anna well. It has often happened that they have been seen together, especially at official receptions. This journey to Batavia has strengthened the suspicion that Anna te Hoogen is entirely pleased with the young fiscal’s attentions, although he is actually going on a business trip and she to visit family.

Captain Roelof Manker, captain of the Jansje Meer, and a few of his officers bow before the ladies. They exchange a few words, and then Captain Manker introduces two other men to the group. One is Captain Ruiter, and the other is an officer, Jan Heerden.

Upon hearing these names, several of the young men exclaim in surprise. Frederick de Nuys also steps closer.

“So, you are the Captain Ruiter who had the miraculous escape when the Seewraak attacked you? We had so hoped to meet you.”

“Yes,” Captain Ruiter replies slowly, and there is the calm smile of a man who has endured much suffering around his lips. “We were tired and wanted to rest before seeing people again. You can surely understand that the hardship...”

“Of course, of course!” exclaims de Nuys. “You must forgive us for being so curious and for bringing up the matter right away. If you prefer...”

“Not at all,” answers Ruiter. “We don’t mind talking about it. Unfortunately, our story is, however, of the sort that one would not want in the company of ladies...”

“But I assure you, Captain Ruiter,” Anna te Hoogen interjects, “that we are just as eager to hear what your experiences were. You have probably already heard that Mr. de Nuys and I are departing for Batavia this afternoon. It is on that sea route that you were attacked, is it not?”

“Yes,” the captain answers. “I must, however, inform you, Mr. de Nuys, that your comment from just now was not entirely accurate. Originally, we were attacked by another ship. It was not the Seewraak. The Seewraak, as I understand it, is the ship of Oloff the pirate, as he is known. They only came upon us after the battle was over.”

“But that sounds peculiar,” says one of the other young men. “The story that we heard was, of course, rather vague. I understand that you and Mr. Heerden are the only survivors?”

Captain Ruiter lowers his head. Only now are the deep creases on his face clearly visible. The scenes that played out before his eyes must have made a deep impression on him. Indeed, it rarely happens that anyone survives the ferocious pirate attacks.

“The rest of my crew were already dead when my ship disappeared beneath the rolling waves. Heerden and I clung to a piece of a mast. They didn’t notice us amongst the floating debris. A sea current drove us towards the coast during the night, and by the grace of God, we were not attacked by sharks.”

“But what actually happened, captain? Are the rumors that we hear in

connection with the dreaded Seewraak true?"

"Most likely, yes," says the captain and then begins to tell his story. "We were on our way to Batavia when we spotted a sail on the horizon. Immediately, I filled my ship's sails to their full capacity. One never knows who one might encounter. We tried to get into such a position that we could quickly make our escape if the approaching ship should be hostile. It was a privateer! It overtook us and brought us within range of its cannons. The heavy cannonballs sheared off our masts. While complete chaos reigned aboard, the pirate ship came closer. The grappling irons fastened the two vessels together, and like wild barbarians, the villains swarmed over the side, striking down every living creature before them.

"During the battle, no one noticed that another ship was quickly approaching us. Heerden and I were trapped in a corner before the stern. We were close to the railing, and when someone suddenly shouted that a third ship had appeared on the scene, our attackers momentarily retreated and looked around. Heerden and I took advantage of that moment to dive over the side and seek shelter beneath the curve of the ship. From the deck, we heard surprised exclamations. It sounded as if a degree of fear had arisen among the pirates. Hastily, they climbed back onto their own ship and cut the grappling ropes so that the two vessels moved away from each other.

"We could clearly see the approaching ship. It is one of the largest ships that I have ever encountered. I would say that the Company's most modern ship could barely compare to it. And what struck me most was the speed with which it cleaved through the waves. There was not much wind, but the ship moved as if a raging storm was driving it forward.

"It disappeared out of our line of sight when it sailed around the stern of my ship. A moment later, however, there was the thunderous roar of cannons. We could clearly hear the panicky screams and cries of pain. Carefully, we moved along the side of the ship to the bow. My ship was already sinking, but the scene before us made my bitter heart glad again. Our attackers' ship had already completely keeled over to one side and was quickly sinking. At that moment, the Seewraak, we could see the name clearly when the ship came closer, fired one last time, and once again the searing cannonballs swept across the deck of the privateer. A

few moments later, it disappeared beneath the waves.

“Never before have I seen a ship sink so quickly. Indeed, the Seewraak must have the most skilled gunner you could ever imagine.”

“It sounds like a fairy tale!” exclaims Bertha Neethling. “Were it not for the horror of it, it would almost have been romantic.”

“What did the Seewraak do after that?” asks De Nuys.

“It sailed in a wide circle around my ship,” Ruiter continues. “Heerden and I had already grabbed hold of the mast and hid behind it. We did not want to fall into their hands. The ship passed barely fifty paces from us, and so we could see its beautiful lines clearly. It is well-maintained, even though it is a privateer. We could even see the crew. On the quarterdeck stood three men. Two were of moderate height, and the third tall and lean. The one in the middle was a fellow with broad shoulders, and I even saw the sunlight glint on his red hair!”

He stops speaking when Anna te Hoogen takes a quick breath. Everyone looks at her. She has, however, already lowered her head, and when she looks up again, there is only serious interest in her gaze. It is only Bertha Neethling who is aware of the tension in her friend’s posture and who sees how she is clutching the armrest of the chair spasmodically.

“That must have been Oloff the Pirate, wasn’t it?” she inquires, and no one can detect the tremor in her voice.

“According to the other stories I have heard, it would seem so, yes.”

“But how is it that he is turning against his own pirate comrades?” exclaims one of the men. “I understood that they were all...?”

“Yes,” cries another, “surely pirates don’t rob each other!”

“No,” answers Captain Ruiter. “We reasoned about it for a long time too. My personal opinion is that the Seewraak’s men thought that the privateer that originally attacked us had not yet had the opportunity to rob my ship. That Oloff wanted to get away with the spoils.”

“Did he?” asks Anna te Hoogen.

“No,” answers Ruiter. “My ship sank too quickly. Indeed, Heerden and I had to hold on for all we were worth so as not to be sucked under by the water. After that, the Seewraak sailed away, as if it were merely continuing its voyage and had not sent another ship to the bottom of the sea just a few moments before.”