

# OLOFF THE PIRATE SERIES

## 5. The Traitor



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# THE TRAITOR

*by*

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## THE TRAITOR

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## SUMMARY

In the treacherous waters of the Indian Ocean, where fortunes are made and lives are lost under the shadow of black sails, lurks a darkness deeper than any storm. The Traitor plunges you into a world of cutlass duels, daring escapes, and hidden allegiances, where nothing is as it seems.

Oloff van Wagenaar, a name whispered with fear and respect in the pirate haven of Deelen Bay, seems every inch the ruthless pirate captain. Sitting at the right hand of the Admiral, he commands powerful ships and amasses considerable loot. But beneath the pirate garb beats the heart of a man sworn to justice. Secretly, Oloff battles the very evil he appears to embody, working to dismantle the pirate network from within. When reports surface of suspicious attacks on pirate vessels, the Admiral suspects treachery within his ranks. The tension in Deelen Bay becomes a palpable thing, suspicion falling even upon Oloff.

Compounding his precarious position, Oloff is tasked with intercepting a new Governor of Marseilles, a man who threatens the pirates' lucrative trade route. But is Oloff truly committed to the task, or does he harbor a hidden agenda? As Oloff navigates this deadly game of deception, he becomes entangled with two women. The fiery Delia Minard, a slave seeking freedom from a brutal past, and the noble Michelle St. Breton, a woman caught in a web of pirate schemes. Their fates become intertwined with Oloff's, forging unexpected alliances and fueling dangerous passions. Can Oloff trust either woman, or will their presence expose his secret and doom him to a traitor's death?

Haunted by a past he can't escape and pursued by enemies he can't afford to underestimate, Oloff must make a choice. Remain true to his mission and risk everything, or succumb to the allure of the pirate life and betray the very ideals he swore to uphold. With the fate of Deelen Bay, Marseilles, and his own soul hanging in the balance, Oloff sets sail on a collision course with destiny.

## EXTRACT

He moves to the left. Every now and then he peeks up until he determines that he is right below the porthole of Michelle's cabin.

He pulls himself up until his chest is level with the narrow ledge. Then he suddenly lets go with his right hand and grabs for the frame of the porthole. His fingers almost slip, but then he swings his knee onto the ledge and carefully balances himself while moving further up.

A light is burning inside. He peeps in and sees Michelle sitting on the couch. She is staring aimlessly in front of her.

He knocks softly on the thick glass. A jolt goes through her body and then he sees the joyful expression on her face. She can of course recognise his features where he is pressing his nose against the glass. He puts his finger warningly to his lips. She nods and walks back to the cabin door. She presses her ear against it and listens for a moment before she comes to open the small window.

"So it's you?" she says in a whisper.

"It is," he replies with a dry smile. "You probably know me by now."

"When you left the Nantes that day, I saw you going on board the Seewraak. I learned from the man who brings me food that you are Oloff, the dreaded pirate."

"And yet you're opening the porthole," he asks in surprise.

"After your predictions there in Le Havre and what has happened since then, I am just as safe in your hands as here."

He smiles at her logic.

## 5. THE TRAITOR

### Chapter 1

“This is now the third peculiar report, suspicious account, that I have received.” The massive shoulders of the man known in Deelen Bay as the Admiral are slightly hunched forward as he sits beside the large oval table, directly in front of the long counter in the Hanekraai tavern. His eyes, half-hidden beneath bushy eyebrows, scan the fifteen pirate captains around the table. A few of them lower their gaze and shift uncomfortably in their chairs when his piercing look settles upon them. Others bow their heads slightly so that the rays of the lamp above on the ceiling do not illuminate their features so brightly. In Deelen Bay, suspicion does not spare even the most innocent.

“Month after month, year after year,” the Admiral continues, his voice subdued, “the pirates of the Indian Ocean make port at Deelen Bay. Here they are safe and protected. Here they mingle amongst themselves like brothers.”

“There are many who, after their voyages, never return to Deelen Bay, Admiral.”

It is a young captain on the Admiral’s right-hand side who speaks. Because of his position so close to the Admiral, it is clear that he enjoys the ruler of Deelen Bay’s full confidence. His deep blue eyes also do not evade the Admiral’s sharp gaze. He sits comfortably back, and his body seems relaxed, but the straight lips above his strong chin are pressed firmly together, indicating that he regards the matter seriously. “I know that, Oloff!” the Admiral exclaims. “Our day is full of dangers, and the night is often merely a shelter for us against a lurking calamity. There are many who can never rest here again. But they die on the recognized sea routes where they hunt the rich, laden merchant ships. However, these three were attacked and wiped out along the coast of Africa, where they had sought shelter in protected harbors, to such an extent that those who discovered their remains could scarcely recognize them.”

Again, his eyes wander over the circle of captains. Further across the large floor of the tavern, tables are scattered where laughing, chatting, and noisy pirate officers drink and make merry. They are unaware of

the oppressive atmosphere around the Admiral's main table. The air is heavy with smoke fumes, and the lamps shine dully through it. Occasionally, the high laughter of a woman echoes through the room and is followed by boisterous remarks from people at the tables.

"Something is afoot that I don't like," the Admiral resumes. "I have the feeling that some of our people are being stabbed in the back by others who are aware of their movements. We must find out what it is and eradicate it root and branch, for it undermines the good spirit of brotherhood." He sighs. He lowers his gaze and brings the heavy mug to his lips. Over its rim, he looks up again. "I would have continued longer with this subject, but there is something else that is just as urgent. For quite a few years now, we have enjoyed the goodwill of the Governor of the island of Marseilles. As you all know, the main route to the East is here through the channel of Mozambique between Africa and Madagascar, and then northeast to India and Ceylon, from there slightly south again to Batavia. Between Madagascar and India, there are only a few islands where one can stop for refreshments. Marseilles is situated roughly halfway. Our ships often stay at sea for months, and you will agree with me that it will be a heavy blow to us if that harbor is closed to us."

"It will also be a considerable loss for young Raoul St. Breton," Captain Oloff interjects. "We pay enough for the bit of fresh water and other provisions we get there."

"Our agreement with Raoul is mutually beneficial," the Admiral replies. "I am fully aware of that. I have received word from him today that he has been recalled. A new Governor is being sent from France. He is of noble descent, but a military man, Captain Brisco La Fayette."

"Perhaps we can negotiate with him as well," suggests one of the other captains.

"St. Breton had to leave France!" the Admiral snaps at the man. "He has been guilty of misconduct. But his family is one of the most powerful houses in the country, and they arranged it so that he obtained the Governorship of Marseilles. It was easy to reach an agreement with him. It will be another matter with a man who is appointed on merit. Brisco La Fayette is, according to Raoul, an ambitious young man."

"Why is St. Breton now being allowed to return to France?" Oloff

inquires conversationally.

“His stepsister, apparently her eyes are closed to St. Breton’s shortcomings, originally accompanied him there. She has now, without his knowledge, sent a petition to the Royal Court in which she claims that he is a reformed man, and his name has then supposedly been restored to honor.” The Admiral is silent for a moment while he thinks. Then he looks from one to another again and continues slowly. “Brisco La Fayette must not reach Marseilles. I want some volunteers, at least six, to intercept him. According to the letter from St. Breton, he has already left France. He should, therefore, be sailing through the channel within the next few weeks, and you can lie in wait for him north of here.”

“Why are six of us needed?”

“La Fayette is on board a warship. There will, therefore, be no loot either. You will be compensated for your time and effort from my personal coffers. I will recover it again through taxes,” the Admiral concludes dryly.

A few moments of silence follow. Captain Oloff looks at his fingers, which are spread out on the tabletop.

“What is your plan then, Admiral?” he inquires, his voice subdued.

“My plans are in order,” the massive man replies quickly.

“Unfortunately, no one except the six volunteers will know about it. The circumstances we just discussed compel me to suspect everyone. It is a pity that such a state of affairs should prevail in Deelen Bay, but you understand, do you not, Oloff?”

“Of course!” Oloff exclaims. “I must congratulate you on your precaution. We know that you have our interests at heart.”

“Are you willing to go, Oloff? You have two ships. What about your friend, Henning Roux?” While the Admiral speaks, he looks across the table at a tall, slender captain on the opposite side.

Henning Roux shrugs his shoulders. His eyes seek those of Captain Oloff.

“It depends on Oloff, Admiral.”

“It will be impossible for me,” Oloff says slowly. “As you know, my contributions to your treasuries during the past year were twice as much as any other captain’s. But at the moment, I am penniless. My men are



impatient and restless. To lie in wait on the open sea for a few weeks for a warship will mean serious losses for you and me.” He looks meaningfully at the Admiral.

“That applies to all of us!” exclaims a captain to the left of the Admiral. He has a keen face, but his cheekbones are high, and his eyes are long and narrow so that the expression in them cannot be easily read. “I can cite the same reasons. This matter is in the interest of all of us. Lots should be drawn. Anyone who refuses to go should be forbidden from Deelen Bay in the future.” While he speaks, his eyes rest venomously on Oloff.

“Are you suggesting that I am unwilling to contribute my share?” Oloff throws back, his voice subdued.

“You have already indicated that.”

“I have explained my circumstances. You arrived here with a generous load of treasures two days ago. You can easily talk.”

“So you admit that you are not willing to cooperate?”

“I admit nothing!” Oloff barks. “And I do not intend to allow you to cross-examine me either.”

“That’s enough now!” the Admiral roars. “We are dealing with a serious matter. I have no time for your senseless babble.”

“I hope,” says Oloff softly, “that you will take into consideration that the cause for Mario’s outburst is nothing serious. I have noticed before that he does not like it when Delia Minard looks in my direction.”

“That is a lie!” Mario Fouche exclaims, enraged. He has come halfway to his feet, and his right hand closes around his sword hilt.

Oloff sits back. He smiles and makes an apologetic gesture.

“It is quite clear, is it not?” he says here in the Admiral’s ear. The big man with the bushy beard swings in Mario’s direction. His eyes flash dangerously.

“I see you are reaching for your sword, Mario,” he remarks nonetheless calmly. “I am sure that Oloff will not mind leaving the table with you.” Mario Fouche relaxes slowly. He turns his gaze away from the others and looks sullenly down at the table.

“In that case, we can proceed,” the Admiral resumes. “I am waiting for six volunteers.”

A few minutes later, he requests the remaining members of the

company to leave the table. Six men have gathered around him, and their heads are close together.

Captain Oloff walks between the tables toward the steps that lead up to the street in front of the Hanekraai. Beside him is the tall Henning Roux. At the top of the steps, they look back at the large oval table. The best-known captain there by the Admiral is Fernando Gonzalves, a Spaniard with a large, black mustache. Most likely, he will be chosen to lead the expedition.

“We’re just getting a bit of fresh air, Henning,” says Oloff, as he pushes open the swing door and steps out. Outside, he takes a deep breath and turns to his friend, who follows. “I’m going back in again. I would very much like to find out what the Admiral’s plans are.”

They stand still for a while without speaking. They look up and down the sandy main street of Deelen Bay. To their left is the wash of breakers on the white beach, and behind it, they see the few lamps on the ships in the dark harbor.

Deelen Bay is a pirate nest. After long voyages, the pirates return here to rest. First, a portion of the heavy loads of loot is deposited into the Admiral’s coffers, and then the crew can relax with more money than they can usefully spend. Deelen Bay has a fairly large permanent population, because many of the pirates have built houses for their wives and children. Around the small town are extensive fields and orchards, because hundreds of slaves, usually the crew of captured ships, are used to supply the bay with food.

The town center consists of numerous large, clumsy square buildings. This is the accommodation for the hundreds of sailors. There are also taverns and wine houses where women entertain the seafarers with dancing and singing. Wild scenes take place here regularly, because the only kind of people who ever move freely in Deelen Bay are scoundrels and murderers.

The Admiral rules the community with an iron hand. He lays down the law that must maintain order in the illegal existence. The captains compete to sit at his right hand at the large oval table, for it is the highest honor, according to Deelen Bay standards. And what can be done to anyone. It also makes such a person the second citizen of the town.

A while later, the two men return to the tavern. Inside, they separate,

and Oloff walks along the wall to the long counter. Here, he orders a glass of wine, and then he strolls down one of the corridors. On either side of it are partitions with heavy curtains in front of them. Behind them, he hears the laughter of men and women. Here at the secluded tables, one is away from the noise of the main room if one has business to discuss or wants to be private for other reasons.

Where the curtains at some of the booths are not drawn, some call out to him cheerfully. He answers with a wave of his hand. In public, Captain Oloff is a popular man because he sits on the right hand of the Admiral.

“Captain Oloff!” The voice is soft and hoarse, and it comes from behind bright red curtains that are not completely drawn. The lamp on the small table is turned low and casts only a dim glow on the soft cushions of the couch against the wall.

He pulls the curtain wide open and goes inside. He puts the glass of wine down on the table and makes a slight bow.

“Did you call?”

“I did.” Delia Minard’s hand rests in her lap where she leans back against the cushions. Her dark complexion is almost invisible because of the long black locks that hang down on either side of her face. The dress she is wearing is made of the most expensive material and was most likely still worn a few months ago in a Royal Court in Europe. It would be a gift from Mario Fouche. “Why are you pulling open the curtains, Oloff?”

“What else?” he asks casually.

“Why are you so cool towards me?”

“Cool?” Oloff smiles. “The alternative is that I feel the coldness of steel. Mario will...”

“Mario!” she exclaims as she gets up quickly and comes in front of him.

“Are you afraid of Mario?”

“I’m not afraid of him, Delia.” He picks up the glass and wets his lips with the wine. Then he puts it back down.

“What is it then, Oloff?” Her dark eyes are close to his. She looks pleadingly at him. “You know that I love you, Oloff. There is no other man that I desire.”

“You belong to Mario, Delia.”

She swings away from him, annoyed. She leans halfway against the table, and her head is bowed. "Because I was on a ship that was attacked by him," she says, her voice subdued. "And because he brought me here, does that mean that I belong to him? Is no one else now allowed to look at me? Is it always just Mario! Mario!" She turns around and stands here again, right next to him. "I hate him, Oloff."

He shrugs his shoulders. He wants to step back slightly, but her hand clamps around his arm.

"Listen, Oloff," she resumes urgently. "You are the most powerful man in Deelen Bay, you are the best swordsman. No one will dare to oppose you. Mario has given me expensive gifts. It is all for you, Oloff. You can negotiate with him. He will not oppose you. He will not dare to do it."

"He will never sell you, Delia," Oloff assures her. "He would rather die than give you to me."

"It's not that." She steps back from him. Her eyes are flaming with a new sensation. "It's not that, Oloff. Delia Minard is not good enough for you. You walk around here in Deelen Bay as if you are a king. You never look at one of the girls. You never drink too much. Who do you think you might be? I..."

Oloff sees her eyes flash quickly over his shoulder. He realizes that there is someone behind him, but even before he can turn around, she resumes bitterly. "You constantly try to impose yourself on me. How many times have I told you to stay away from me!"

Oloff hears the growl of anger behind him. Suddenly, he pulls himself together and jumps to the left so that he comes to stand partly behind the curtain. In the air, he turns around, and as his feet touch the ground, he looks at Mario Fouche where he is standing in the corridor.

He has already heard the scrape of steel, and now the sword point is being thrust at him. His left hand swings in front of him and grabs the fold of the curtain. He pulls it over the sword and into Mario's face. Then he jumps into the corridor and also has his sword in his right hand. With a cry of frustration, Fouche storms towards him.

Oloff strikes with his sword to the left, and Fouche's weapon scrapes against it so that the point floats past here beside Oloff's side. At that moment, it would have been the easiest thing in the world to pull his