

OLOFF THE PIRATE SERIES

7. The Ransom



GERRIE RADLOF

THE RANSOM

by

GERRIE RADLOF

and

translated, proof-read and edited by
PIETER HAASBROEK

Published by:

TREASURE CHEST BOOKS - PUBLISHERS

Strand Mews

Strand

2025

THE RANSOM

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.

The copyright for this story is reserved and cannot be reprinted or distributed in whole or in part without the publisher's written permission. Reprinting includes any electronic or mechanical form, such as e-books, photocopying, writing, recording on tape, or any other means of storing or accessing information. All characters and events in this story are purely fictional and have no connection to any living or deceased individuals.

THE RANSOM

by Gerrie Radlof

Published by:

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

Copyright @ Pieter Haasbroek (2025)

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

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

SUMMARY

Set in the treacherous waters east of Zanzibar, *The Ransom* plunges you into a world ruled by roaring seas and the ruthless code of pirates. On Beacon Island, a seemingly impenetrable fortress called Pirates' Bay, the fearsome Black Freek reigns supreme. His brutal dominance is challenged only by whispers of the legendary Oloff the Pirate, a phantom figure who haunts the trade routes.

When Black Freek captures Bernhardt du Bois, a nobleman en route to becoming the Governor of French India, and his captivating daughter, Rynette, he believes he's struck gold. He demands a king's ransom, setting in motion a desperate plan for freedom. But amidst the squalor and danger, a strange spark ignites. A newcomer, "Loffie," seemingly a disgruntled pirate seeking a new crew, arrives in Pirates' Bay.

He quickly gains Black Freek's trust with exceptional combat skill and a convenient hatred for a common enemy. But as he gains access to Rynette and begins to help her escape, is he truly who he seems? As their paths become intertwined, Rynette finds herself drawn to this enigmatic figure, a beacon of hope in a world of darkness. But a shocking discovery shatters her fragile trust. Oloff, known for his ruthlessness, may be the only one who can help her now.

Dive into *The Ransom* and discover if loyalty, love, and honour can survive where greed and brutality reign. Can Oloff keep his carefully laid plans from tumbling apart? Are all the residents of Pirates' Bay what they seem to be? And why has Oloff placed himself in such a dangerous position? Discover the truth, but be warned. Not everyone will get what they desire...

EXTRACT

He does not make use of the rope ladder. He waits for his chance, and when the ship heels over again, he swings to almost the side railing, a short distance behind the helmsman. From here, he can only distinguish the few figures on the quarterdeck. He takes the rope, which is as thick as his forearm, here near the end. Without any fear that anyone will see him, he creeps up on the helmsman. He draws back and delivers him a hard blow to the side of his head. The fellow slumps to the deck, and over his falling body, Oloff seizes the helm. The spoked wheel starts to turn quickly, and it tugs at Oloff's arms. With his full weight, he strains against the tremendous current as the ship is lifted against the slope of a breaker, and the crest breaks over the deck the next moment. Hastily, Oloff straddles the helmsman, so that he cannot be washed away.

The Rooi Tornyn has been turned halfway around by the blow. Oloff feels the stern sink beneath him as they slide down into the trough.

"How in blazes did you manage that'?" Valkenharm shouts a few steps away from Oloff. Oloff knows that he is looking in his direction, but since he can only vaguely distinguish the captain's figure, he is sure that Valkenharm will not realize that it is no longer his helmsman who is standing here at the helm.

"That was masterful! If you can continue like this, there is no storm that we will not navigate safely through. Now, try..."

But then, the howling of the wind is again in their ears, and it carries Valkenharm's voice away over the crest of the wave. In the next moment of "silence," the captain shouts at the boatswain and orders him to have the crew come down from the masts. Oloff smiles. He realises that Valkenharm has suddenly gained full confidence in the helmsman and that the constant adjustment of sails is no longer necessary.

7. THE RANSOM

Chapter 1

Approximately five hundred miles east of Zanzibar, upon the submarine ridge that connects Madagascar and the Seychelles to its north, a mass of rock protrudes from the sea. Perpendicular, and in places even overhanging, steep cliffs of petrified granite encircle an area of about five square miles. Day in and day out, the roaring sea continues its assault on this rocky bastion. The cliff faces, smoothly scoured by countless breakers, are perpetually damp. This massive rock formation, which rises from the sea like a plateau, is called the beacon, often also referred to as Beacon Island.

It is rare for ships to pass this way, for the well-known trade routes to the East run south of Madagascar or north of the Seychelles. Moreover, the sea around here is treacherous, for in several places there are hidden rocky points a few feet beneath the surface.

On the south side of the Beacon, there is a fissure in the cliffs. This forms a gateway through which the largest sailing ship can easily navigate into a bay where the water is as smooth and calm as a mirror on the stormiest day. Fine wavelets lap at a snow-white beach. Where the sand ends, lush green vegetation begins, filling a large basin with a diameter of more than a mile. It is like an oasis nestled between the rocks, with high cliffs surrounding it to preserve its beauty. When the sky is dark with thunderclouds and the wind screams across the cold stone, the graceful palms barely sway their heavy fronds in the gentle breeze that wafts through this hidden paradise.

The gateway in the cliffs is inconspicuous. From an angle, it looks mainly like a ridge in the rock face. If someone does not know of the existence of this bay, they would never discover it unless they sailed right past the entrance and happened to look in that direction. This perfect fortress is called Pirates' Bay.

In the calm harbour lie four privateer vessels. Three are rather small, but the fourth has two rows of gun ports on each side and boasts a total of forty-eight cannons.

Amongst the trees, right up to the cliffs, are numerous huts, and here and there also large, square mud buildings. Around the huts, patches of

ground have been cleared and vegetable gardens laid out. At the foot of the cliffs, the bellowing of cattle and the bleating of small livestock echo. Here and there a light flickers, for it is already an hour or two after sunset. Many of the buildings are, however, shrouded in darkness, because the inhabitants have gathered at the meeting places, large, flat halls with low thatched roofs near the beach. In contrast to the fresh coolness of the evening outside, the air inside is warm, stuffy, and murky with heavy smoke fumes that hang around the large oil lamps on the ceiling. The loud laughter and shouts of the hundreds of pirates and their wives reverberate over the smooth water and crash against the granite cliffs.

On the right side of the bay, just where the vegetation begins on the edge of the beach, stands the largest of these halls. It is part of a building of which the rear section is a dwelling house. On either side of it is a high pole fence that runs to the cliffs, enclosing almost an acre of land. There are vegetable gardens and a few outbuildings. This is the residence of the captain of the large ship in the harbour, Black Freek.

In the large front hall, surrounded by the captains of the other ships, the officers, and a crowd of laughing, chattering women scattered throughout the room, Black Freek sits at one of the tables against the back wall. His full six foot six inches of powerful muscle is stretched out in an armchair. His face is dark, and his hair, eyes, and fierce beard are jet black.

An empty beer mug stands before him. His massive hand grips it and slams it hard onto the table top.

“The Admiral!” he bellows, “the Admiral of Deelen Bay is a fool! He is a fool if he thinks that I, Black Freek, will pour a single penny of my loot into his coffers.” He looks at the circle of faces around him. “Would you do it, Falcon?” he asks of one of them.

Valkenharm, one of the other captains, shakes his head. He does not answer. He knows Black Freek’s moods. As soon as he has drunk too much, he tolerates no opposition.

“Of course not!” Black Freek continues. “Here we are free. We sit in a rock-solid fortress from which no fleet in the world can drive us. From here, we can sail out and waylay the fattest prey on the open sea. Behind these massive walls, we can then find shelter again with our heavily

laden ships.” He glares at them. “And none of us have to pay taxes! Here is a home for every man who entrusts his fate to Black Freek.” He wants to make them understand clearly what a privilege they enjoy. Again, he slams the beer mug on the table. “And where are they safer than here in Pirates’ Bay with me? Who is mightier than Black Freek?” A few of those within earshot nod sedately. Others laugh as if they completely reject any such possibility. One of the captains mumbles something that is not entirely clear to Freek. “What are you saying there?” he asks sharply.

“Nothing.” The man makes an apologetic gesture. “Absolutely nothing,” he assures Black Freek.

“It sounded to me as if you said something about Oloff.”

“I didn’t!” the fellow exclaims anxiously. “But now that you mention it, you must admit that there are many stories told about this Captain Oloff. They say that there isn’t another...”

Grimbeeck decides it is better not to answer. It is quite clear that Black Freek is not really interested in anyone else’s opinion.

“Tell me!” Black Freek exclaims. “Which of you has ever encountered this Oloff?”

Nobody answers. They just shake their heads.

“Who of you has ever even seen him?”

“He mostly seeks his prey south of Madagascar, Freek,” Valkenharm ventures to say. “And you know yourself that we usually keep an eye on the trade routes north of here.”

“And then you believe the nonsense you hear?” Freek snaps at them.

“I would like to meet this Oloff, this man they call Oloff the Pirate, one day. I’d soon put him in his place.”

“They say! They say!” Black Freek bellows. His black eyes flash with the anger this conversation stirs in him. “Wait until one of us, until I, meet him! Then we can talk! Not about what they say, but about what we say!” He swings the mug through the air as if to sweep away all thoughts of Oloff before him. He looks around him. “Rynette!” he calls out harshly. “Why are you standing there half-asleep? Bring more beer.”

Several men at Black Freek’s table look at the girl he has spoken to. There is not one of them who is not aware of the beauty of the girl that

Black Freek brought here the previous week as part of his loot.

Rynette du Bois moves behind a counter and places a few mugs on a tray. Her large dark brown eyes are soft, and the deep melancholy in them dominates her whole expression. She does not look up once while she is filling the mugs from a barrel.

Her dark hair hangs slightly over her face as she looks down at the tray in front of her. It casts a shadow over her fine, but noble nose and full lips. It is only around her mouth that there is a hint of defiance, as if, despite her downcast demeanor, she would fight like a tigress to defend herself against any act of violence.

“Hurry up!” Black Freek snaps at her from the other side.

She picks up the tray and carries it to his table. The men take a mug of beer one by one. Their eyes fixed on her all the while.

Black Freek swings one leg out from under the table. Over his shoulder, he yells at her. “Come here! Undo the buckle on my shoe. It’s pressing on me!”

Without a word, she kneels down before him. There is a sparkle in his black eyes as he looks down at her bowed head.

“She will probably be able to dance,” Valkenharm suddenly suggests.

Rynette du Bois’ head jerks up. There is anxiety on her face. Captain Grimbeeck laughs.

“Doesn’t it look as if she is scared?” he exclaims. “That means she can dance!”

“Let her dance, Freek,” Valkenharm requests.

Black Freek looks slowly towards them. Then he laughs loudly.

“Why not?” He slams the full mug of beer on the table, so that the foam splashes. “Dance, Rynette! You there!” he yells. “Move some of the tables aside. We have a dancer in our midst.”

She has slowly gotten to her feet. The fear has disappeared. With disgust, she looks at the men around the table in front of her and then at the rest of the crowd. Everyone is sitting eagerly forward. They are taking pleasure in her discomfort.

Valkenharm gets up. He steps around the table and takes her by the arm. Black Freek suddenly half rises. His black eyes are sharply fixed on them. But then he sinks back into the chair.

“We need music,” he shouts out loud. “Make music so that she can

dance.”

A young pirate jumps up. The only instrument they can find is an old harp, some of whose strings are missing. With this, the pirate comes to the edge of the space that has been made available for her. He runs his fingers over the strings a few times, and the crowd roars with laughter. The instrument is completely out of tune.

“Dance!”

From all sides they are shouting at her, but Rynette does not move. She has clasped her hands in front of her. Her head is bowed.

“Maybe she should rather sing,” Black Freek suggests. “Sing, Rynette. Play something she can sing. Something sentimental.”

Loud exclamations and raucous laughter greet this proposal. The young fellow with the harp starts a tune that is almost completely unrecognisable.

“Sing!” Black Freek orders again. “Sing, or...” He hesitates. “Or what?” one asks.

“Or I’ll sell her to Oloff, so help me God. She apparently doesn’t realize how privileged she is to be here amongst us.”

The crowd laughs. Grimbeeck gets up. He walks to the girl. “I’ll soon get her to sing,” he grumbles. He grabs her by the arm and roughly pulls her closer. His left hand goes up.

“Grimbeeck!” Black Freek bellows. The word cuts through the hall like a whiplash.

Grimbeeck lowers his hand. He turns around.

Black Freek is standing up behind the table. He leans slightly forward, his knuckles white on the tabletop. He glares at the man.

“Keep your hands off that girl. Do you understand?” he says ominously.

“You don’t touch her. None of you touch her!”

“But, Freek,” Grimbeeck replies dejectedly, “we’re just playing.”

“You don’t play with my property! Let her go now.” He waves his hand towards the door. “Go!” he orders her. “Go to your room.”

Light-footed and grateful, she hurries across the floor. At the door she is aiming for, a giant Nubian appears. He steps aside so she can go out.

“And the first man who molests my possessions again will have to deal with Goliath or Colossus!” While he speaks, Freek gestures in the direction of the Nubian. The Negro’s white teeth gleam as he smiles.

From the crowd, those standing closest to the huge fellow recoil. Everyone knows Black Freek's two bodyguards. There are few of them who have not yet seen how one or the other of them can knock someone down like an ox with a blow from the fist or forearm.

Black Freek sits down. The Nubian remains standing by the door. He and his mate move constantly like two watchdogs around their master's property.

Immediately there is another awkward silence around Black Freek's table. It is as if the captains and the few officers there with him cannot quite comprehend his behaviour of just now. "Come now," says Freek finally, while leaning his elbows on the table and taking a deep gulp of beer. "We need to talk about how we will go about getting a ransom for the girl's father. According to what I could gather on their ship before I sank it, he is a nobleman of the highest rank who was on his way to India. There, he is supposedly appointed as the new governor of the French Colonies."

"But write a letter to France," Valkenharm suggests.

"It will take a week or two to get it to Zanzibar on a ship to France."

"Who will go?"

"Valkenharm has been lying still in Pirates' Bay for a long time now. It is time he did something."

"Gladly. Who knows, maybe I'll run into something on the way!"

"Then it's settled," says Black Freek roughly. "Who is going to write the letter?"

The group looks at each other. Not one of them can write.

"Get someone," Black Freek orders. His voice is heavy, he speaks almost slurred. "The girl will be able to write. It would actually be quite a good joke to have her draw up the letter herself."

"Call her, or wait." Black Freek gets up slowly. He has to hold onto the table slightly to avoid toppling over. "I'll go and get her myself. I don't trust you."

Staggering, he reaches the counter. There, the Nubian takes him by the arm and helps him further. They go through a passage. At the back door, Black Freek shakes the Negro's hand off him. He walks alone across the yard to one of the outbuildings. He tries to push a door open, but finds that it is locked. He knocks hard.

“Who is it?” Rynette du Bois asks after a moment.

“It’s me. Open up!”

A bolt is slid back. The door swings open and she steps back quickly.

“What do you want?”

“I don’t want you to lock this door. If you do it again, I’ll have the bolt removed.”

“Am I not allowed any privacy then?”

“You have...” He hesitates, and before he can speak further, she asks unexpectedly.

“Why did you save me from those, those lot, just now?”

“Saved?” He looks at her uncomprehendingly. “What did I save you from?”

“You agreed with them at first, but suddenly you allowed me to go. Why did you do that?”

“I,” Black Freek lowers his head. He leans heavily against the doorframe. For a moment it is as if he is pondering what impression his words will make on her.

“When I was young,” he says slowly, and there is a sound in his voice that she cannot place at all. “When I was young,” he repeats, “I was different. I was married. My wife was refined and civilized. We had a little daughter. One day, they told me that I had killed another man. Maybe I had, I couldn’t remember anyway, because I had drunk a lot the previous night. They wanted to hang me, but I escaped. The fear, the shame, the sorrow caused her to take her own life. And I could never find my child again. I took an oath that I would not rest until I had taken revenge, taken my revenge on every human being who imagines that they lead a good and exemplary existence within the laws of the community. On everyone who imagines that they have the right to apply those man-made laws!” He leans his head against the door. He is silent.

“But, but that is not what I asked,” she says after a while.

“If I didn’t know that you were the daughter of another man, you could just as well have been mine, you have her mother’s eyes.”

Dead silence prevails. There is confusion in her gaze. The feeling of pity that wells up in her for this man is overshadowed by waves of disgust.

Then he pushes himself away from the doorframe. The callous