

OLOFF THE PIRATE SERIES

23. In Enemy Hands



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IN ENEMY HANDS

by

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SUMMARY

Oloff, the scourge of the seas, awakens to a nightmare. Left for dead amidst the burning ruins of a brutal attack, he remembers nothing. No past, no allies, no enemies. He is a blank slate in the hands of Mahara Jaman Malik, a vengeful prince who once tasted defeat at Oloff's hand.

Seizing his opportunity, Malik crafts a new identity for the amnesiac pirate. A loyal admiral in the Sultan of Zanzibar's fleet. Oloff, stripped of his former life, embraces his fabricated past, his fearsome naval prowess now serving his greatest enemy. Yet, even without memories, Oloff's core character shines through, attracting the affections of Jaharidi, Malik's beautiful and intelligent sister, setting off a chain of events that risks toppling Malik's carefully built charade. But beneath the opulent palaces and sun-drenched shores, betrayal festers. Mesud, Malik's trusted advisor, sees through Oloff's facade and plots to expose him, while echoes of Oloff's forgotten past begin to surface. The arrival of a mysterious figure, Jandien, further unravels the threads of deceit, igniting a forbidden passion and exposing a web of secrets that threatens to consume them all.

With the winds of war gathering and the scent of betrayal heavy in the air, Oloff is about to discover that some wounds cut deeper than the flesh, and that the deadliest enemies are often those closest to you. But what will happen when he sees her again?

EXTRACT

“Follow me and...” The words died on Oloff’s lips. He barely saw the flash of gunpowder, a mere ten paces from him. The impact of the bullet that struck him in his left shoulder, flung him back against the wall of the building behind him. His legs buckled beneath him and he slumped down onto the sandy ground. His eyes grew dim and the objects around him swam in a hazy swirl. He shook his head. He tried to get up, but his entire left side was numb and the movement of his right arm was like the helpless attempt of a bird that flaps one wing through the air but cannot take flight.

“Heem!” he tried to shout, but his voice was suddenly hoarse and only a croaking sound came from his throat and a numbing pain shot through his chest. He groaned, and then lay still.

Then his eyes flickered to the left. He saw the gigantic figure of the bearded cannoneer, Heem Beyers, who was charging after Oloff like a raging bull. He heard Heem’s war cries and saw the destruction being sown with the massive sabre as Heem and a few of the defenders pushed to reach him. They pushed back the attackers, but on both sides the overwhelming majority of the enemy enveloped them.

A feeling of helplessness overcame Henning. He cursed the fate that, at this moment, had prevented him from following his friend and leader. But his eyes glowed with pride as he watched the magnificent spectacle. He saw the flaming red of Oloff’s hair and the sword arm that rose tirelessly and struck and stabbed and parried. And close to Oloff, the massive shoulders of Heem that caused the assailants to fall around him like skins.

23. IN ENEMY HANDS

Chapter 1

“Oloff!” thundered Henning Roux. “Why are you dawdling? We must flee! Our only chance is towards the hills.”

The main street of Wagenaarsrust was brightly illuminated by the glow of burning buildings. Above the clash and grind of sabre on cutlass and the sporadic cracks of pistol shots where there was still space to fire, a woman’s scream resounded. Where Oloff had halted, he looked back at a house on the other side of the street.

“There are still some women trapped there, Henning. We must save them.”

“That’s madness!” Henning shouted above the din. “You are courting death, Oloff! Our people have already left the town. We must follow and protect them. You cannot gamble everything for a single individual.”

But Oloff had already turned. The flames reflected red and flickering on the shining steel of his sword. He charged into the fighting, struggling through.

Henning sighed. He knew Oloff. He knew that Oloff held himself responsible for the safety of every inhabitant of the settlement. Oloff knew that he, Henning, would follow him. That was why he hadn’t even called him. That was why he had paid no heed to Henning’s warning. He had complete faith that Henning and each of the defenders in the vicinity, would take part in the charge with him.

The blood coursed through Henning’s veins. How many times had they not already fought together? How many times had it not been proven that the strongest lines had crumbled before an audacious attack by Oloff, like a spear thrown at the enemy, a spear of which Oloff formed the point and Henning and Sias and Heem and Oloff’s well-trained men, the razor-sharp, cutting flanks.

“Follow me!” his voice boomed.

The defenders, fighting all the while, retreated step by step into the main street, and the women and children were given the opportunity to reach the safety of the dark hillside.

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flash of gunpowder, a mere ten paces from him. The impact of the bullet that struck him in his left shoulder, flung him back against the wall of the building behind him. His legs buckled beneath him and he slumped down onto the sandy ground. His eyes grew dim and the objects around him swam in a hazy swirl. He shook his head. He tried to get up, but his entire left side was numb and the movement of his right arm was like the helpless attempt of a bird that flaps one wing through the air but cannot take flight.

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Henning heard the groan of bewilderment and the bloodthirsty shout before he realised that he could no longer see Oloff. Where he had been just a moment before, he had disappeared like a drowning man beneath the dark waters that now closed over him. Then the roar of Heem Beyers echoed like that of a wounded lion.

“Fall back,” he commanded the men around him. “Fall back and protect your women and children!”

He himself pressed forward. He cleaved a path to the place where Oloff had fallen. But there were too many of the enemy around him. They descended upon him like ants upon an elephant. He dragged them with him, and hurled them through the air, but then they pulled him down and stormed over him, after the fleeing defenders of Wagenaarsrust.

Henning's head sank to his chest. Despair and a feeling of endless loss overcame him.

Then it was the end of Oloff the Pirate! Then this treacherous attack, this stab in the back, had sent the protector of the open sea, the liberator of the oppressed and the destroyer of evils, into eternity. Was it then thus that Oloff must die, the man who had made the trade routes of the seas of the world safe!

Like a drowning man before whose mind's eye the scenes of his life flash by, Henning relived the powerful moments that he had experienced with Oloff. When Oloff's father, a wealthy merchant at the Cape of Good Hope, had been murdered by pirates years ago, Oloff had taken an oath not to rest as long as a single pirate ship still roamed free. Oloff had managed to acquire two magnificent ships, the *Seewraak* and the *Jansje Meer*. He had established himself among the pirates under the guise that he was also a pirate so that he could better fight them. His crews, including Henning, whom Oloff had appointed as captain of the *Jansje Meer*, were all people whom he had freed from pirate clutches and slavery and who owed their lives to him. For a long time, the world was unaware of Oloff's true identity, and he was regarded as the most powerful pirate of all.

Eventually, after he had considerably thinned out the pirates, he had joined forces with the Dutch fleet and with one fierce blow, the routes to the East were swept clean of the scum of the sea. Oloff was elevated to honorary captain of the fleet of the Dutch East India Company. However, he preferred to settle with his crews here at the southernmost tip of Africa. He had founded the settlement of Wagenaarsrust and released his men from all obligations and given them the choice to return to their homelands. But everyone had chosen to stay with him. Some had gone to fetch their families and had returned. Comfortable homesteads had sprung up on the banks of the Kars River. Orchards and neat gardens had been laid out on the slopes of the hills. Large herds of cattle grazed on the hilltops.

In the delightful climate they revelled in their well-deserved rest. But now and then, the salt-laden evening breeze made their eyes gleam and the roar of the breakers made them think back to the open sea and the roll of the ship beneath them, and the blood flowed faster through their

veins. Then they looked longingly at their sabres and pistols where they hung against the wall, and a thunderous cheer went up each time they received news of pirate activities. At such times, no command from Oloff was necessary. Immediately, supplies were loaded aboard the Seewraak and the Jansje Meer where they lay peacefully, but always clean and ready, at anchor in the mouth of the Kars River. Singing and cheering, they had set sail at high tide to return after months from the far corners of the world, after sending strange pirates to the depths and destroying pirate fortresses.

And now it was all over. In the darkness of the night, without the slightest warning, a devastating attack had been launched on Wagenaarsrust from the interior.

There were always a few guards posted around the settlement. This was necessary because Oloff's reputation as an enemy of all pirates was known throughout the world and there was a constant danger that an attempt would be made to take revenge on Oloff. However, the largest part of Wagenaarsrust's defences had been erected on the sea side.

Henning had spent a peaceful evening with Oloff and Heem. They had turned in early and were rudely disturbed in their sleep when they heard the warning shots of the guards. Instantly every able-bodied man was on his feet, but so reckless was the charge of the attackers, that they scarcely had the opportunity to determine the direction of the attack and the numbers of the attackers, before the battle was already underway. Oloff had immediately realised that they were facing an overwhelming force. Immediately they had begun to evacuate the town. From street to street, they had fallen back slowly.

And just when Henning had thought that the women and children had a big enough head start and that it would be wisest to give way to prevent further losses, Oloff had heard the woman scream and had leaped back. Now it vaguely penetrated Henning's consciousness that it was quiet around him. Outside the settlement there was still the occasional crack of a pistol shot, but otherwise the commotion had subsided. Vaguely he was aware that the conquerors were plundering and setting fire to the houses.

And then he heard a new sound. His head jerked up. Here and there, figures moved around in the street in front of him. But where Oloff had

fallen, a few men stood together in a group and the sound that he had heard, was the mocking laughter of one of them.

He recognised him immediately. He recognised the fine moustache under the crooked, aristocratic nose. He saw the thick, sensual lips, the strong chin and the broad forehead under the satin turban. He knew the pale complexion of Mahara Jaman Malik, prince of Zanzibar.

And many things were now clear to him. Until now, the cause of the attack and the identity of the enemy had been obscure to them. Now Henning knew that this Eastern prince had come to take revenge. Barely a year ago, Malik with his narrow, fast ships had plagued the southern coast of Africa. He had overrun every settlement and seaside town within his reach and kidnapped the inhabitants to sell them in the slave markets of the East. It had gone well until he had come up against Oloff. Oloff had freed the prisoners and had chased Malik back to Zanzibar with his tail between his legs.

A deep hatred rose in Henning. He saw the black eyes that rested so sneeringly on Oloff's motionless body. He heard the gloating in Malik's voice and he became blind with rage. He tried to lift himself, because he had only one desire, he wanted to get hold of the unscrupulous villain by the throat and choke the life out of him. But when he tried to move, paralysing pains shot through him. It became black before his eyes and Malik's words faded out of his consciousness.

"There he lies, Mesud," said the prince contentedly to the young Arab next to him. "The mighty Oloff! Look at him now!"

"It is beneath you to belittle him, Jaman," answered Mesud, smiling. He addressed the Prince as his equal. His eyes were alert and combative and from the posture of his young, supple body it was clear that he was sorry that the fight was over. "He was the most worthy of all the adversaries that you have yet had. It is a proud day for you to be able to say that you have brought Oloff the Pirate down to his knees. Without your ingenuity and thorough planning, things might not have gone so well."

"My pleasure in his present condition is of a wholly objective nature," answered the Prince calmly. "Subjectively, I feel sorry. Can you imagine what a showpiece he would have been on the slave market?" Mesud laughed. He bent over Oloff.

"I always underestimate you, Jaman," he said over his shoulder. "I should have guessed that it would not have given you any satisfaction to just kill Oloff. It would have been solace for your soul if you could have furthered your revenge, shall we say, such a pinch of humiliation would have made the dish of your retribution more palatable."

Malik didn't answer. He looked around him. Most of the homesteads were ablaze. In the street his men had piled up their loot in heaps. He turned to one of his officers who stood dutifully a few paces behind him.

"Find out how many have been taken prisoner. Call the men back. The main objective of our attack has been achieved. Let those who escaped go their way. I..."

"Jaman!" Mesud suddenly called out in front of him. "Oloff is still alive!"

The Prince slowly bent down. It was almost as if he was afraid to believe what he had heard. He looked at the pale face, bloodied from the wound at his temple. He placed his ear close to Oloff's nose.

A devilish light glowed in his eyes as he rose again. His cup of revenge was full.

"We leave immediately," he commanded his officers. "Take Oloff aboard the flagship. Summon the physicians. Put him in a cabin next to mine." His thick lips curled down. His black eyes flashed.

"Treat him like the most precious jewel. Anyone who hinders his chances of living, will die!"

The officers bellowed their orders. The troops leaped towards the heaps of loot and began to carry it to the beach, anxious that they would not get everything on board before they had to leave. One of his lieutenants bowed before Malik.

"Not a single prisoner, Highness," he announced. "They either fought until they fell, or they fled."

"Let them go."

"And the wounded?"

"Let them lie. We depart immediately. By daybreak, I want to be as far away from here as possible."

He himself walked alongside the few men who carried Oloff. He even lent a hand when they lifted him into the ship's boat. In the bay of

Wagenaarsrust lay six vessels. They had been hidden behind the isthmus and had only come closer when the battle was already underway.

In the luxurious cabin next to his own, prince Malik stood anxiously by the porthole. The ship was already underway and rolled lightly on the swells. He looked alternately out into the dark night at the stars and at Oloff who lay on the sleeping bench. The physician rose. He had washed and bandaged Oloff's wounds.

"He has sustained a hard blow to the head," he informed Malik.

"I am not interested in what happened," answered Malik irritably. "I want to know if he will live."

"With thorough care it may be so."

"And that is your job," said Malik slowly and deliberately. "You ensure that he lives. Spare nothing and nobody. The whole fleet is at your disposal. If the movement on board is too much, we can go ashore. Anything, do you understand? Just make sure he lives!"

"I will do my best, Highness. At the moment he just needs to rest."

"Good. Have a cabin cleared out here next door and move yourself in. You must stay close by."

The physician bowed and left the cabin. Malik remained there, lost in his own thoughts. His black eyes rested on Oloff.

There was a light knock on the door. He looked up as it was pushed open without further ado. There were few people who would dare to enter his presence unannounced. But when he saw who it was, his stern face softened and there was even a hint of tenderness in his eyes.

"Is he still alive, Jaman?" Her voice was soft, but full and the sound was endearing to his ears. Her large eyes were dark beneath the black eyebrows. Her nose and mouth were finely and perfectly formed. Her black hair was smoothly combed back over her head and fastened at her neck with a comb full of glittering jewels. The ripe, soft curves of her slender figure were outlined in the light blouse and long satin trousers with the wide legs that billowed over her ankles.

As always, Malik was astonished by the beauty of his sister. It was not the first time that her vivacious, adventurous nature had refused to be cooped up behind veils in the harem of her father, the Sultan of Zanzibar. She had often managed to accompany her brother on one of