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# PLEASURING PAAVOLA

Cruel Masters - Book Three

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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only.  
Nothing in this book should be interpreted as the publishers' or the author's  
advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

*For Michael.*

*Because you believe in me. Without you? All this would be impossible.*

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## Chapter 1

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*Lazar—age eighteen, upon the Pride of Helena*

“**G**it up here, yer dirty wretch.”

A bucket of slop flung onto Lazar’s moth-ridden blanket, the only one he had both to sleep upon and to keep warm. He slept on the floor of the hold, a runaway child living on the streets who had been fortunate enough to be found by the merchant owner when he stole on board. He had been nine years old, and the man didn’t live long. Laz’s life before the streets was hazed with glimmer and gold, best forgotten anyway. Lazar felt grateful he hadn’t been taken to the gallows, used as live bait by one of the secretive new Patrol, or sold across the seas into Islin for pleasurable purposes. Boys who tried his tactic usually got that reward. Life on board was slavery, however he had been spared.

The man who gesticulated towards him hated him and never hid it, not from the time Laz came on board all those years ago. Irv, the b’osun, uneducated by any except the law

of the sea, crass and proudly diseased, gave Laz his daily orders. The officious man took delight in hurling whatever the pits contained from previous nightly excursions into Lazar's face. He did it often enough that Laz got used to moving out of the way—most times. This morning wasn't one of them.

"Shit," he muttered, wiping his already dirtied face with his forearm. Iriv cackled, slapping at his saggy torso like his heart might burst out of it. Laz hoped it fucking would; he hoped the man's heart would explode into a million fucking pieces and rip through the cavity of his goddamn chest.

"Tol' ya to git," Irv said, displeased. "We got comp'ny this fine morn."

"I see nothing fine about it," Laz said after cleaning himself as best he could with the brackish water in the nearby bucket. He then began climbing with limber ease up the rope ladder.

The older man harrumphed, eyeing Laz's quick ascent with the same bitter jealousy he showed any of the younger crew. Irv was fat, unable to climb any of the ladders, from hold to deck to mast. Once, it was rumored, the sailor was one of the best. Now, though? Laz grinned. Now the man was old and wasted. He was nothing.

Once on deck, Laz took in the hubbub and bustle with a practiced eye. Though his job was to be a general boy of errand, a job he'd endured for years and would endure many more if he stayed the youngest on the ship, meant he had become accustomed to learning many of the skill-sets of the older men. There was no way Laz meant to stay down in the hold, taking Irv's shit daily, and working for his keep. He wanted his own fishing boat one day, a small one, and a cottage in the forest. It was a dream, but one he aspired to. Unfortunately, as cabin boy of the ship, he'd gained little respect and even less coin. Ducking his head, he avoided another man carrying a coil of braided rope, nearly bumping

into the strangers hunkering against the rise of the wind and clinging to the railing, looking peevishly ill. Landlubbers, the both of them.

“You’re a tall, brawny fucker, aren’t you, Boy?” said the man, pretending to lean against the rail when he was actually holding onto it more than anything else. A cigar dangled in his thin, pasty fingers, the ash flinging back onto his jacket. That was a shame, for he obviously had money, and the ash burned tiny holes onto the woven cloth. The man wore a felt hat and a nice coat with lining, and he had a young girl around Lazar’s age by his side. That must be the company Iriv spoke of, one of the Captain’s benefactors. But it was odd that the man had brought the girl aboard. After all, they well knew females didn’t belong on a man’s ship.

The man stubbed the cigar out on the railing with exasperation, his eyes still on Lazar. “Well? You don’t speak?”

Laz stayed quiet. He knew better than to vocalize to men of his rank. He’d had the side of his head cuffed more than once for insubordination, for daring to converse with his betters. The man sighed again with irritation and pointed to Laz as he spoke to the girl.

“See, Paavola?” the man said, gesturing to Lazar. “This is the boy. He’ll be your guardian while upon this ship.”

Her eyes bowed low, her fingers pressed tightly together in front of her. She was the picture of submission, except that under her expensively made skirts that hung just above her ankles, her toes tapped impatiently. Laz hid a wicked grin, wondering if he dared expose that false rectitude.

Her eyes darted up. Eyes of sparrow-brown met his. Silently she observed him, then just as quickly as she scanned him, those pretty, lifeless eyes flicked downward again.

Lazar said nothing, not now, though his jaw clenched and his teeth ground. He didn’t want to be a fucking babysitter, and especially for a female. Especially for a female who looked

so pretty with her long brown braids, and her satisfyingly thick body, and those eyes that reminded him of a tiny bird's wings. She smelled fresh, delicate. Clean. He caught a whiff of her lavender soap clinging in the air. His cock swelled up under his loose-fitting trousers and he flushed uncomfortably. He wished he'd had time to rub one out that morning, but Irv's demand gave him little time. Now, witnessing the pretty girl as she pretended compliance made his balls ache. Fuck. It was no time to think of his dick. No time at fucking all.

Just as he was about to refuse the man's request, escaping to a less crowded berth before any sailor could reprimand him for overhearing him, the rich stranger lifted his hand lazily. Then with viciousness, his action more callous by its extreme casualty, the man backhanded the girl across the mouth. Her lower lip split and blood welled up. She flinched but didn't react. Delicately, she reached into the satchel by her side and took out a clean, embroidered handkerchief and dabbed at the cut. Her eyes stayed low. She said nothing.

"Don't disrespect me by pouting, young miss," the man said, his arm draping along the railing after he'd done the horrendous act. He sighed again, winked at Laz conspiratorially, and then took out another cigar to light it.

Looking around, it dismayed Lazar to realize he'd been the only one to witness the abhorrent action. Now he had to be the one to correct it. Fuck.

"Hey, mister," he said, his overly gigantic hands balling into fists. He stepped forward in what he hoped was a menacing manner. "You don't treat a lady that way."

The man chuckled, snubbing out the newly lit cigar and chucking it over the edge of the rail. "You don't say?"

Gently, the gentleman stroked the girl's braided hair. She winced almost imperceptibly. Not imperceptibly enough for Laz. He noticed. Hell, he noticed all kinds of shit about that female, and it was about to get him into all kinds of trouble.

“Do you think I’ve mistreated you, my dear?” the man said to the girl. Her whisper was almost inaudible.

“No, Uncle.”

“You sure as hell, fucking have,” Laz said, feeling a surge of protective rage swell over him. Now he knew others were watching, interest in his behavior having caught the attention of some other men. He didn’t care. He didn’t even fucking care if this meant a beating and the brig later on. Shit like that pissed him off. If he had a woman—well. He never had. But maybe she’d look just like this girl, eyes of sparrow-brown and a body meant to hold on to. “Get your fucking hands away from her. She’s hurt.”

Tipping his head back, the man laughed, his eyes mean. “You’re exactly what I had in mind. Come here to me. I have a task for you.” The girl kept her head low, her fingers fiddling, not saying a single word. Lazar frowned and didn’t move, not sure what the hell he had gotten himself into.

His legs were kicked out from underneath him and he sprawled in an angry and embarrassed heap on the deck-floor. Iriv’s voice bellowed out, his lumbering body shadowing over him. Fuck. His worst enemy overheard the interchange and was making his presence known. Now his shitty day had gone shittier. “You heard the gent’man. What you waitin’ fer? Git to him, Boy.”

“Fuck it. I’m going,” Laz grumbled, hating the reprimand before the others. The b’osun had every right to make him obey. Shirking on the job was just as shit-worthy as taking to task a man of greater privilege than he was, and if Iriv granted him a boon, he sure as hell meant to take it.

The rich man took pity on him and beckoned him forward, something he didn’t dare try to comprehend. The fancy were too strange for him to understand, their ways not like his own. If he had charged a lesser made man with that same sort of attack, the poor man would have quickly brought

a blade to Lazar's neck and finished him without qualm. But that was the difference between those who had money and those who didn't, of those who were joining the rebellious new order of the Patrol, and those who meant to contain it from spreading rampant at all costs.

Stepping behind the man and the girl, he followed them up to the officer's quarters, deep reluctance in his gait. "The master's not in quarters. No one's allowed in."

The man turned while the girl scurried into the shrouded darkness of the room as if her skirts were aflame, shutting and then bolting the door after all of them. "Skittish, isn't she?" said the man, showing a lack of admiration for his niece by the words. "As for your captain, he's given up his chambers for our use. It should show my position in your quaint little province." He folded his arms and observed Lazar, eyes narrowed with distasteful amusement.

"I'm told you've never had pussy." Laz's jaw clenched. He hadn't, but he sure as hell knew what he'd do if given the opportunity. Living in a hive of men, he learned early on the intricacies of the intimate act, what a woman preferred, and what a man preferred to do with a woman. The man continued, "Well, have you?"

Laz clipped out, "Not yet," then readied to leave the man and his quiet niece to their strange ways.

Striding over to the girl and clamping his hand around the back of her neck, the man pushed her forward, into the lantern's golden-glow light. While standing in the darkness, she had unhooked the front of her bodice. Now that she was visible, Lazar could see the exposed upper swell of her breasts, the shadowed delineation between them, softly scented of lavender and enticing to his greedy eyes. Of course he'd seen breasts before, while they docked and the whores paraded about looking for ware. But these? They looked as innocently

untouched as the girl who wouldn't look him in the eye, a flush upon her cheeks.

Lazar met his gaze, sudden and sick knowledge in his own eyes.

The man grinned, dark cruelty. The man's voice had a serpentine slickness to it. "I want you to fuck my niece."

Lazar's mouth set. He turned, his hand went to the bolt of the door. Like the sticky gunk slimed from a sea-creature's pores, the man's voice beckoned him. Cajoling him with his basest desire.

"I have one stipulation. Ram her hard with your cock. Make it hurt. Pussy, ass, mouth, whichever. Do it, and she's yours, yours to keep. You want that, don't you, Boy? A pleasant piece of pussy, some sweet ass?"

Lazar turned, his voice tight. "She's your fucking niece."

"Yes. And she's mine to do with as I choose." The man raised two fingers and with them, gestured the girl to do his bidding. "Paavola. Entice him like the little slut you are."

Fat tears rolled down her wan cheeks. Tears that concluded the conversation. Lazar fumed. "Fuck you, sir. I won't hurt her."

The words delighted the man. "Wonderful. I hoped you'd say that." Tart cynicism in the man's voice brought doubt whether Laz's pedestal-high ideals of a female were realistic, or was, in fact, nothing more than an untested virgin's monotone morality. The man leaned forward conspiratorially. "She chose you, you know, the stupid little bitch."

"What?" Lazar's gaze darted to the girl. Her sparrow-colored eyes flickered up, then just as swiftly looked back down to the planked floor. Her breasts rose and fell, rose and plunged, and with sudden urgency, Laz wanted to touch them. To taste them. But in his impulsivity, he'd given that right away.

"She wanted you. Shame," the man said, going to the

door and unbolting it. “Your dick might have gotten wet today, young sailor.” Dark viciousness painted a smirk on the older man’s face. “Now some other man will have that taste of cunt you deprived yourself of.”

“Why are you doing this to her?” Laz said, as he was squeezed out of the room, his throat tight and his stomach rolling with sickness. The window of opportunity was gone, both for him and for the girl, but that didn’t mean he couldn’t act for her benefit. He could do something about the situation if he decided, he’d easily be able to overpower the man. Even though the other man had years on him, Lazar had the developed musculature of a man of the seas. Thick thighs, muscular legs and arms and torso. The women on the docks often complimented him on his good looks, uncaring that he was young and untutored to pleasure them. His hair, blond and always windblown, tied back from his face, and he had his mother’s pale green eyes. Maybe he was strong, handsome even, but he sure as hell was a fucking fool. And he also knew to act was to die. The man whose evil shined back at him, masked himself in civility and paraded in wealth.

“I thought I made that quite clear,” the man said, just before beckoning another sailor to him. The sailor grinned with open acknowledgment of what would happen inside the room, and unlike Lazar, he welcomed it. Just before shutting the door on Laz’s face, the stranger patted his cheek mockingly. “Because, Boy. I fucking can.”