



A Novel

The
**Affectionate
Adversary**

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CATHERINE PALMER

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Adversary**



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The Affectionate Adversary

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*To Becky Nesbitt and Anne Goldsmith,
who have guided and supported me for so many years.
Thank you for reacquainting me with Miss Elizabeth Bennet,
Mr. Darcy, and the joys of Jane Austen. If only you lived
nearby, dear ladies, I might persuade you to follow my
example and take a turn about the room. It is so refreshing!*

*Looking at the man,
Jesus felt genuine love for him.
“There is still one thing you haven’t done,”
he told him. “Go and sell all your possessions
and give the money to the poor,
and you will have treasure in heaven.*

*Then come, follow me.”
At this the man’s face fell,
and he went away very sad,
for he had many possessions.*

*Jesus looked around
and said to his disciples,
“How hard it is for the rich to
enter the Kingdom of God!”*

MARK 10:21-23



One

THE INDIAN OCEAN

APRIL 1814

Through the salty mist that blurred the lens of his spyglass, Charles Locke watched the pirate ship draw near. A large, stout vessel, it boasted thirty guns and more than a hundred hands.

For two days, the captain of the privately owned clipper on which Charles sailed had taken pains to elude the pursuers, tacking first to the south and then heading due west toward the mainland of the African continent. His efforts were to no avail. The pirates bore down on the *Tintagel*, hounding their prey on the waters of the Indian Ocean—their familiar hunting ground.

“Have ye arms, Mr. Locke?” One of the ship’s boys joined Charles at the rail. A ragged, scrawny lad of twelve, Danny Martin had attached himself to Charles early in the voyage—polishing

his boots, laundering his shirts, bringing down a tray of tea in exchange for a few coins.

Charles enjoyed the young orphan's company. From this child—who made the *Tintagel* his home and the life of a sea captain his dream—he had learned much about the ocean, her ships, and the world's ports of call.

"We be in range of the pirates' cannons now," Danny declared, his gray eyes earnest. "It cannot be long afore they attack. The cap'n bids me ask what means of protection ye have, sir."

"Nothing more than a pistol," Charles told the boy. "Captain Heald knows I am a merchant, not a soldier. Yet I am a fair shot and I can handle a sword. Tell him I shall be happy to—"

"Take these." Danny handed him a brace of pistols and a small dagger. "They be from the cap'n's own closet. He says ye must do your best with them, sir, for he has no others to spare."

"But our ship's guns outnumber theirs, and the *Tintagel* is larger. Surely we can defeat such untrained savages."

The lad's narrow face grew solemn as he studied the approaching vessel. "The *Tintagel* be no warship, Mr. Locke. We have fewer hands on board, and them chaps be pirates from the Malabar Coast of India—the most fearsome of all. They ply the waters from their homeland southwest to Madagascar, north to the Gulf of Aden, and back to India again. They've not had formal trainin' at the Royal Naval Academy, no, but they be masters at fightin', sailin', and sinnin'. We'll be thankin' God if we come out of this alive."

His anxiety increasing, Charles thought of the chest of gold coins secured with locks and seals in the bowels of the *Tintagel*. Charles's father had labored many years as the steward of a grand estate in Devon, and much of that gold had been his reward.

Though loyal to a fault and greatly admired by the duke who was his employer, James Locke had little respect for the man. He had considered the duke uncouth, immoral, and unworthy of the lofty rank to which aristocratic lineage had elevated him.

But James had worked in silence and had kept his opinions to himself. Upon quitting his position at last, he had combined a lifetime of frugal investments and carefully hoarded funds with the substantial sum that the duke had settled upon him at retirement. This total he had turned into the gold coin with which he intended to build the foundation for all his hopes and dreams. And James had entrusted the gold to his only son, Charles.

Together, they had conceived of an enterprise that they believed would surely ensure the family's financial well-being for generations to come. Never again would a Locke labor under the charge of some slothful, profligate, pompous, and fatheaded aristocrat. Charles was to take the gold to China and purchase chests of the finest teas available. During his absence, his father would secure a warehouse in London from which to trade the tea. Both men would labor to recruit investors, for they intended one day to own a merchant ship, a tea estate in China, and a thriving business in London.

Pirates? Such a calamity had never entered their minds. Charles and his father had plotted out each move they must make to ensure success. They factored in every risk imaginable and chose to trust the Almighty. It was perilous to invest all their money in one product, they had acknowledged. Most traders carried manufactured goods, gunpowder, shot, and cannons to Oriental ports. They returned with silks, muslins, ivory, spices, sandalwoods, and other exotic products.

But Locke & Son, Ltd., would build an empire on tea. Tea alone. For what Englishman could start his day without a pot of the hearty brew? What Englishwoman would consider welcoming callers unless she laid out her finest china, silver, lace, and, of course, the best tea she could afford? From the vegetable mongers in the markets to King George himself, every soul in the realm drank several pots a day of the welcome amber liquid. Who better to provide it for them than James and Charles Locke?

Charles gritted his teeth now as the *Tintagel's* captain barked out orders in preparation for battle. The clipper's hands raced back and forth, arranging the guns in batteries on both sides of the vessel. Although the cannons could only be aimed straight ahead, they were deadly. Divided by size, the small-caliber guns fired eight-pound balls. The large-caliber weapons launched twenty-four-pound shot.

"Look, sir; she be pullin' broadside of us to attack!" young Danny told Charles as the pirate ship tacked into position. His voice rang with excitement and fear as he pointed a skinny arm at the battery of cannons facing the *Tintagel*. "The waves be high, and they will miss with some of their shot. We shall miss too. I doubt we can outlast them, sir." Danny's gray eyes met his. "Save your weapons until they board us, Mr. Locke."

"You speak of our defeat as a foregone conclusion," Charles called out as Danny started away.

"Now be the time to address your Maker, sir, for ye may soon be standin' afore the gates of glory!"



Sarah Carlyle, Lady Delacroix, dipped a silver spoon into her tea and gave it a stir. As she gazed from her deck chair upon the

fair scene of lapping waves and sapphire sky that stretched out before her, she could not imagine herself any happier. Her quest had succeeded admirably.

In China, Sarah had encountered the most admirable woman of her acquaintance, a teacher whose efforts to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ had met with much success. In Burma, a young missionary couple had welcomed Sarah into their hearts and home. In India, she had spent three weeks in the company of missionaries laboring to translate and print the Scriptures as well as to minister in body and spirit to the unsaved. While most of Africa remained darkened by sin and its villainies, Sarah had every hope of sponsoring those who would take the light of salvation to the green shores of that continent.

As she took a sip of steaming tea, Sarah closed her eyes and allowed a sense of well-being to flow through her. God had permitted her to endure many hardships in order to teach her the truths she now embraced with wholehearted devotion. She thought of her late father, Mr. Gerald Watson, an ambitious and ruthless opium merchant, who had taught his three daughters that while money might buy power, it could purchase neither respect nor honor. Position and esteem belonged to those born of aristocratic lineage, Mr. Watson had insisted—men such as George Carlyle, Lord Delacroix.

Determined that his descendants might experience the privileges of the peerage, Sarah's father had arranged the marriage of his eldest daughter to the penniless baron. She and Lord Delacroix were married for less than a year before her husband's unexpected demise in a carriage accident. Before his death, the dissipated and impoverished baron had taught his much younger wife that the admiration and deference due the

aristocracy were worth little without the money to enjoy them. Yet Sarah—who now lived with the privilege of title her father had desired and the wealth her husband had coveted—had discovered that neither of these two gleaming grails brought happiness.

Ambition had made her father heartless, while poverty had bequeathed her husband insecurity and self-loathing. A quest for position and money brought out unpleasant qualities in everyone she met, Sarah had learned. Women fawned over her with words of false admiration in hopes of earning the privilege of an invitation to be seen in her company. Men fairly stumbled over their own feet as they scrambled to win a place on her dance card, the favor of her presence in their opera box, or—the grandest prize of all—her hand in marriage. And what had all this wealth and admiration given her? Nothing but false friends and utter loneliness.

Sighing deeply, Sarah opened her eyes and gazed out at the endless expanse of turquoise sea. The *Queen Elinor's* white sails billowed overhead as the wind propelled her across the Indian Ocean toward England. Toward home and family. Yet only in the past months of solitary travel had Sarah discovered true joy.

Her Savior had been so right when He told His disciples how difficult it was for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven, she reflected as she took another sip of tea. When a wealthy young man had asked Jesus what he must do to be saved, the Lord had told him to sell all his possessions, give the money to the poor, and follow Christ. Jesus—and He alone—had taught Sarah the truth. She must cast off the privileges that came with her position in society. She must divest herself of the wealth that weighed like a millstone about her neck. She must give

up everything she owned, all that she might claim as hers, and surrender to the crucified and risen Christ.

Traveling throughout the Orient, Sarah had done just that. And how happy and free she now felt. Not only had she disbursed large sums to various worthy recipients, but she had identified various other causes that would help her be rid of the remainder of the vast fortune with which her father had saddled her. Upon returning to England, she would resume her philanthropic quest. Orphanages, schools, printing presses—

“Sail, oh!” A cry from the crow’s nest scattered Sarah’s contemplative musings. “Sail, oh!”

“Where away?” came the response from below.

As the bearings were called out, Sarah rose from her chair and hurried to the ship’s rail along with everyone else who had been lolling about the deck. Endless days of looking at nothing but the sea brought on a strange, hypnotic torpor, and all were eager to break its spell.

“Is it a friendly vessel?” Sarah asked a young man who was studying the horizon through his spyglass. Clad in the regimentals of the Royal Navy, he and several other officers aboard were responsible for protecting the *Queen Elinor*, one of the most reliable barks in the East India Company’s vast merchant fleet.

Sarah leaned her elbows on the rail and peered at the ship in the distance. “Can you make out her flag, sir?”

“Dash it all, I can hardly hold the glass steady with these infernal waves tossing us about so.”

“Dear me. You address the sea with much vehemence, my good man. Are these particular waves truly worthy of your linguistic efforts?”

The officer glanced at her. “Oh, Lady Delacroix,” he gulped,

straightening to attention and squaring his shoulders. “Forgive my poor manners, madam. I thought perhaps another of the passengers had spoken. Uh . . . would you . . . would you care to look through my spyglass?”

“You bestow your fine manners on some and save your ill ones for others, do you?” she asked with a smile. “For myself, I think it best to attempt politeness to everyone.”

“Yes, Lady Delacroix. Of course. You are absolutely correct.”

“I am glad to see that we concur, sir. And now if you would return to your glass, I should very much like to know what sort of ship shares our corner of the ocean. I hope it is not pirates.”

The poor fellow threw out his chest and fairly barked his response. “Madam, I assure you that any East India Company vessel is more than prepared to defend itself from such marauders. You must have no misgivings on that account.”

Sarah laughed. “And why do you suppose I booked passage on just such a vessel? But please, sir, do look through your spyglass ere we both die of curiosity!”

He snapped to obey, but before he could report, the good news rang out. The ship flew an English flag! No one could make out more, and speculation fluttered like seagulls across the deck. Pirates sometimes hoisted friendly flags to deceive unsuspecting ships. Could it be an enemy in disguise? Was it a vessel of the Royal Navy perhaps—a man-of-war patrolling the coastal waters? Or might it be another East Indiaman?

And suddenly news of greater import descended. The clipper was cloaked in a veil of smoke. It must be engaged in a sea battle! But where was the opposing vessel? A mixture of shock and thrill raced around the deck.

“Our captain alters course,” the officer noted grimly. “The wind is at east-northeast, and we tack to larboard.”

Sarah glanced at the wheelhouse. “We go to assist the English clipper?”

“Aye, madam,” he confirmed as the sails began to shake. “It must be so, for the captain brings the *Queen Elinor* eastward, and soon we shall head to wind. With more rudder, he will have her facing southeast.”

Sarah gripped the rail as the full-rigged bark performed the elaborate maneuver and then began an agonizingly slow trek toward the besieged clipper.

“She is definitely engaged,” the officer reported while observing the conflict through his spyglass. “I fear the English vessel is aflame. And now I make out another ship . . . just starboard . . . aye, there she is. . . . Great guns and ghosts—’tis pirates indeed!”

“Sail, oh!” came the cry from the crow’s nest. “Sail, oh!”

Now the captain emerged from the wheelhouse, and the young officer excused himself and hurried to join his fellow Royal Navy men who were forming ranks beneath the mainsail. The ship’s mates scrambled to prepare the *Queen Elinor*, while ashen-faced passengers huddled together near the galley in earnest discussion of the situation.

Still at the deck rail, Sarah tightened the bow on her bonnet. Difficulties, she had learned, were to be expected in the life of every Christian. And thus, with the smell of gunpowder stinging her nostrils, she began to pray.



His vision blurred and his head throbbing, Charles crouched behind the splintered stump of the foremast. Early in the pirates’

attack, a broken spar had tumbled down, dashing him to the deck. He had struck his head on a pyramid of iron cannonballs and was rendered senseless. How long he lay unmoving on the deck Charles could not say. But he had returned to consciousness only moments before a pirate missile struck the base of the *Tintagel's* soaring mast.

The timber had wavered for an instant before crashing to the deck, bringing foresails, gallant sails, and studding sails down in a tangle of canvas and rope. At the sudden imbalance, the deck dipped seaward, and the great clipper nearly capsized. Charles had clung to an armful of soaking canvas, only releasing it as the mast slid into the deep, and the ship righted itself in a dizzying swoop of wet wood and crashing waves.

Bloodcurdling howls rose from the pirates as they realized the *Tintagel's* hopeless position. They unleashed a barrage of ordnance from their cannon—chain shot, bar shot, canister, and deadly langrage. Composed of nuts, bolts, nails, and scrap iron, a langrage ball hit the deck and exploded in every direction. Men screamed as shrapnel tore into their flesh.

Charles stared in stunned shock at the carnage.

What once had been a scrubbed and orderly vessel now took in water at the bow and burned like a funeral pyre at the stern. Sailors lay groaning in pain or gasping for a last breath. Many had been tossed into the sea, some had leapt to their deaths, while others were crushed beneath the falling mast. Those men who still labored at the *Tintagel's* cannon shouted encouragement, but few remained to heed it.

Charles staggered toward the nearest gun and scanned the deck for young Danny Martin. The boy had vanished along with so many others, leaving the clipper eerily empty. Reaching

the poor man who vainly tried to load the cannon's muzzle, Charles clapped him on the shoulder.

"My good sir," he said, "allow me to assist you."

"Aye, but see how they shoot their grapnels at us now!" the fellow cried as the pirate ship's cannons launched an array of iron barbs across the narrow expanse between the two vessels. Charles knew the grapnel hooks carried ropes that would tie the ships together. It would not be long before the enemy would board the *Tintagel*.

His leg a bloodied mess, the sailor struggled to lift a ball. "Oh, God, where be Ye now? Shall Ye leave us to perish in the deep?"

"Take heart." Charles took the shot from the man's hands and thrust it into the cannon's mouth. "God has not abandoned us. Here, you must have this pistol, sir. Protect yourself."

"Bah! What good is a pistol? Look—their boats now hoist and swing away. They shall be upon us in moments!"

From the pirate ship, six smaller barks filled with well-armed men were lowered to the sea. Bellowing insults and taunts, they rowed toward the foundering clipper. There were too many of them, Charles realized, and far too few left to defend the *Tintagel*. The attackers came too fast, too furiously, and there was little hope for salvation.

But he would not give up his life and his dreams so easily. "Come, where is your tinderbox, man?" he demanded. "We are not dead yet."

The two worked to light the fuse, and in a moment, the ball burst from the gun with a blast of black powder that knocked them both to the deck. Charles rolled onto his knees just as another round of langrage hit the *Tintagel* and

exploded. Shrapnel flew. Wood splintered. Bolts and nails burrowed into the railings and the deck. A shard of scrap iron tore a hole through the chest of the man Charles had just assisted. He stared at Charles with lifeless eyes before toppling in a heap.

As a knot of disbelief and terror formed in his throat, Charles wiped the sweat and blood from his eyes. Now the pirate boats bumped against the hull of the *Tintagel*. Boarding pikes arced over the rail and buried their pointed iron heads in the splintered wood of the deck. Charles grabbed one of the seven-foot poles and yanked it loose. But he quickly saw there were too many to dislodge them all. The Malabar pirates were already climbing ropes attached to the pikes.

As Charles drew his pistols, they came. Swarming up and over the railing like so many ants, the pirates poured onto the *Tintagel*. Clad in every color of the rainbow and with gold chains and jewels hung about their necks, they carried cutlasses, flintlocks, axes, muskets, knives, and granados. The few seamen who were still able now unleashed the last of their weaponry. Balls flew, swords hissed and clanged, men cried out in pain.

Unable to still the trembling in his hands, Charles took cover behind the wheelhouse. A giant of a man with a great black mustache and a red turban spotted the Englishman, drew his saber, and rushed forward. When the pirate was nearly upon him, Charles pulled the trigger—and missed his target by a foot. With a roar of rage, the marauder continued his charge, pausing only to replace his saber with a brace of pistols drawn from a leather sling across his chest.

As the pirate resumed his headlong plunge, Charles caught a

glimpse of Danny from the corner of his eye. The lad was hidden inside a coil of rope near the capstan, yet his head protruded as he helplessly observed the massacre unfolding before him.

“Danny!” Checking the two pistols he yet carried and unsheathing his knife, Charles called to the ship’s boy. “Danny, ’tis Locke here! Take my knife!”

“Mr. Locke! Look well behind ye, sir!” Danny screeched the words as the pirate took aim at Charles.

Having only the two pistols remaining—and thus only two shots—Charles dropped to the deck and scrambled toward the capstan. A massive device used to heave the main topsail aloft, its long wooden bars provided little protection. As the pirate fired, a ball ripped through Charles’s sleeve, nicking his arm.

“Danny!” He tossed the knife to the boy at the very moment that another beefy buccaneer began to hack at the coil of rope with an ax.

A second ball hit the back of Charles’s leg, and he fell. Drawing his pistols, he rolled and fired. One shot went wide, but the pirate took the second in his right knee. With a snarl of pain, the man snatched another pair of pistols from the sling on his chest. Urging Danny to save his own life, Charles ducked behind the rope coil and began to crawl across the deck, his useless leg trailing behind him.

He would die now, he realized. This was how his life would end. His fingers gripped the wet wood as he pulled himself toward the rail in a hopeless attempt to escape the pirate. If he went overboard, he would drown. The ocean was too wide. Too deep.

One death or another.

His father's gold would go into a pirate's treasury. To hedonism and lust and drunkenness. All was lost.

Charles grasped the ship's rail and tried to heave himself into a standing position. But as his head cleared the wooden bar, the pirate lighted a granado and tossed it at him. The hollow iron orb filled with black powder glanced off the stump of the mainmast and burst into deadly pieces. One ripped through Charles's arm. Another cut across his shoulder. The shock wave deafened him, lifted him from the rail, and tossed him into the sea.

Water swept into his nostrils and poured down his throat. As he sank, Charles looked up toward the surface of the water. For an instant, he thought he saw heaven.