

LEAVE THE PISTOL BEHIND

by Chloe Yates

Anne the Bone was no fool.

Red Johnny Bootleg might be hung like a well-fed donkey, but he was a good for nothing bully of a blaggard and she was done with him. She'd been thinking with her cunny for too long, acting like a sex-starved old salt. Talented in the bedchamber he might be, but Red Johnny was the most incompetent captain she'd ever sailed with. No sooner had they stepped on that fucking island than they were in all kinds of hellish bother. No treasure was worth the kinds of shit they'd seen that day. Now, the black spot was upon him and there would be no running this time. He may have come within a breath of dancing with old Jack Ketch a hundred times – if you believed his tall tales – but Red Johnny's voyage was near its end, the devil take him.

Every good for nothing pirate knew Fang Sank Island was a place to stay clear of. Still, pirates weren't known for their restraint or lack of ambition when it came to riches, and many had gone to the island never to be seen again. Red Johnny would be no different. He'd once told her that he'd wanted to be a pirate ever since he'd been suckling on his mama's tit in one of Blind Bobba Boontang's brothels on Carpenter Bay. His cutthroat ambition had been what she'd found most attractive about him (other than his big cock) He was determined to be the most famous pirate ever to have sailed the Seven Seas. Instead, of course, he was a stereotypical drunken philanderer who'd beaten her black and blue when she'd dared to question his plans in front of the other men. When she and the crew had cut their losses and left him on the beach, he'd asked her to leave him the pistol but she'd denied him mercy. She'd be damned if she'd let him take the easy way out after everything he'd put them, her, through. Instead of famous, he was going to end up as food.

Red Johnny Bootleg never backed down from a challenge. However, for the first time in his life, he was beginning to wish he had because Red Johnny Bootleg was, frankly, cacking himself. Hanging by the neck until dead might once have sounded like the worst

kind of end, but now he knew better. He'd rather meet his maker at the hands of a man than the terrible darkness that was racing towards him across the sand. As he watched the creatures move swiftly in on him, their devil eyes flashing in the gloom, he felt his bowels loosen and with it his sanity. He began to scream.

This was how it was to be then, aye? Crapping in his pants and howling like a baby. Begad! He'd had such dreams, such a desire for greatness ... They were on him too soon and, as they sank their teeth into his flesh, he felt his life slipping away, his dreams dashed, but it didn't seem to matter any longer. He was a puff of cloud on the breeze ...

... The taste of strange blood in his mouth awoke him from his stupor. Was he dead? What did it matter? All he knew was that he was hungry, so fucking hungry. A red haze of lust came over him as he lapped at the blood. As it trickled down his throat and he began to drink in earnest, Red Johnny felt its life force fill him, fuelling him, changing him. Then, just when he thought he would burst from the aching fullness, but cared not a whit if he did, there was darkness.

The first they knew of the attack was the clatter of a cutlass and a strangled cry for help. Anne the Bone was awake in a flash. Something was very wrong indeed.

'No quarter, mateys!' The cackling voice was gravelly, altered, but she would know it anywhere. Somehow Red Johnny Bootleg had survived Fang Sank Island and was back on board. And he was angry. In a swift sequence of movements borne out of a long habit of self-preservation, Anne sprang from the bed, pulled her boots on, slipped her dagger into the left one and fixed her pistol belt around her hips. The noise was coming from the fore of the ship. It sounded an awful lot like screaming. And thudding. She needed to see what was out there because nothing about it sounded natural. She climbed up the ladder that led from the captain's cabin to the quarterdeck. Intended as an escape route, it was barely big enough to push a grown man's shoulders through. Carefully, Anne pushed up the wooden hatch and peered out into the darkness beyond. She hadn't heard the lookout boy sail ho any ships and couldn't for the life of her work out how Red Johnny could even be alive, let alone back on the ship.

Red-hot pain suddenly tore into Anne's scalp as she was lifted from the hidey-hole by her hair. Crying out in shock, she struggled against the talons sinking into her flesh but to no avail. As she was lowered to the deck, she looked up into the face of her attacker. Red Johnny, or what had once been him, grinned at her, his mouth full of teeth, more than she'd ever seen in a human's skull before. And she knew the legends about Fang Sank Island were true.

'You should have left me the pistol, Annie, love.'