
The
Pirate's
Bride

by Carolyn Fuller

Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.
Ephesians 5:8,9

The Gift

("You showed me the evidence of his changed heart: When he became free to do as he liked, he protected, provided for and loved the family of the woman he had hurt.")

- Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. **Ye shall know them by their fruits.** Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree brings forth good fruit: but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. Matthew 7:15-17
- I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. John 15:5
- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness (controlling one's temper), temperance (self-control): Against such there is no law. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23, 25
- For if ye live after the flesh, you shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Romans 8:13-14

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The cover illustration, designed by Tony Fuller, is built around the painting, *The Charles Galley Before a Light Breeze*, by Wilhelm Van De Velde the younger (1677), which is in the public domain.

The *Charles Galley* was one of two ships built in 1676 to combat the Barbary pirates in the Mediterranean. The other, nearly identical ship is the *Adventure Galley*, which was, for a short time, captained by Joseph Bradish, Jr.

should be cast into hell. Matthew 5:30

("Callahan realized that he could know that Christ had risen from the dead and was alive, because he had seen Him in Elena.")

- Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:20
- Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. 1 Corinthians 4:1

("Oh God, forgive me!")

- If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

("If so, that meant God had heard his prayer; God had answered it before he had even spoken it! ")

- And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. Isaiah 65:24

("Don't you know the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord?")

- For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23

A Dinghy With Two Captains

("He thought often of Elena, and remembered how earnestly she had told him that if God wished him to live, he would live. ")

- For he said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. Romans 9: 15b

Going Back

("The Bible says "walk as children of light," and that is what she was, a child of light.")

- For ye were sometimes in darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: for the fruit of the

This story is dedicated to

God,
the Father of Lights,

from whom comes
every good and perfect gift.

condemn the world; but that the world though Him might be saved. John 3:15,17

- And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. John 17:3

("Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?")

- And Jesus, when He was baptized, went straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Matthew 3:16-17
- He [Jesus] took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening. And behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elijah: who appeared in glory an spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. . . .there came a cloud, and overshadowed them. . .and there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear Him. Luke 9:28-31;34-35

("Do you believe that He rose from the dead and is alive today at the right hand of the Father?")

- But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God. Hebrews 10:12

The Navy Ship

("Oh for some wisdom! he thought.")

- If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. James 1:5
- And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body

have loved you. John 15:12

- And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. 1 John 3:23-4
- He that loves not, knows not God, for God is love. 1 John 4:8

It is God that Saves Us

("I can only do what I do for you because the Lord gives me strength.)

- He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. Isaiah 40:29, 31
- God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1

("At least now you have a chance to repent before you die.")

- Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? Romans 6:16

("The love you feel from me comes from the Lord, Cal.")

- He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. John 14:21
- Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. 1 John 4:11

("But as you believe in Him, you will be raised to everlasting life.")

- Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not His Son into the world to

Acknowledgments

I credit my husband, Jim Fuller, for motivating me to finish writing this story (which has been in process for years), and for encouraging me every day. I began the work sometime before 2021, put it aside until 2023, then picked it up once again at his request.

Our son, Beau Fuller, sacrificed much of his time to help illustrate this, and I am honored to have his work mingled together with mine. We both made marks on every illustration., learning together and learning from each other.

None of it would have been possible without the constant support of our son, Tony Fuller, who ran interference in a million little ways to create time and psychological space so we could finish. Tony also helped Beau with post-production work on the illustrations (scanning, editing), and did the overall layout for the entire book, including the graphic design for the cover, and bookbinding for the first copies. Tony helped with the original genealogy research prior to 2014, and I am thrilled that he created an audio book of the story.

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Table of Contents

Forward.	iii
1 Last Things.	1
2 The Sum of a Man.	4
3 Stephen.	10
4 The Memorial.	14
5 The Pirate's Bride.	18
6 The Arrival.	23
7 The Tilted Tap.	26
8 The Spy.	29
9 The Hearing.	33
10 The First Visit.	36
11 The Gospel.	40
12 Guilt and Innocence.	44
13 Greater Love.	48
14 Confession.	50
15 It Is God That Saves Us.	53
16 Facing Death.	55
17 The Navy Ship.	60
18 Late.	64
19 Shipwreck.	67
20 A Dinghy With Two Captains.	70
21 Going Back.	72
22 Alone Time, Together.	76
23 A Gift.	78
Appendix.	84

- All that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me; and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. John 6:37

("We are born blind and wicked, and know only selfish ambition.")

- We wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes; we stumble at noonday as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men. Isaiah 59:9b-10
- As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. Romans 3:10

("But Jesus told us that the Father's love is everlasting, and that He draws us with His lovingkindness.")

- The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Jeremiah 31:3

("Cal, if we accept Him as our Lord, He will heal us and make our hearts tender.")

- Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles. Psalm 103:2-5
- Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Psalm 51:10

("His love makes us innocent, in a way we have never been before.")

- Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness. Psalm 51:14

("We were designed to love others.")

- This is My commandment, that ye love one another, as I

("Jesus defeated the power of sin when He died in our place on the cross.")

- He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. 1 Peter 2:24 (ESV)

("All we have to do is believe in Jesus.")

- For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Romans 10:13
- Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. . ." Acts 16:31
- Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. John 6:47

("Jesus connects us to God.")

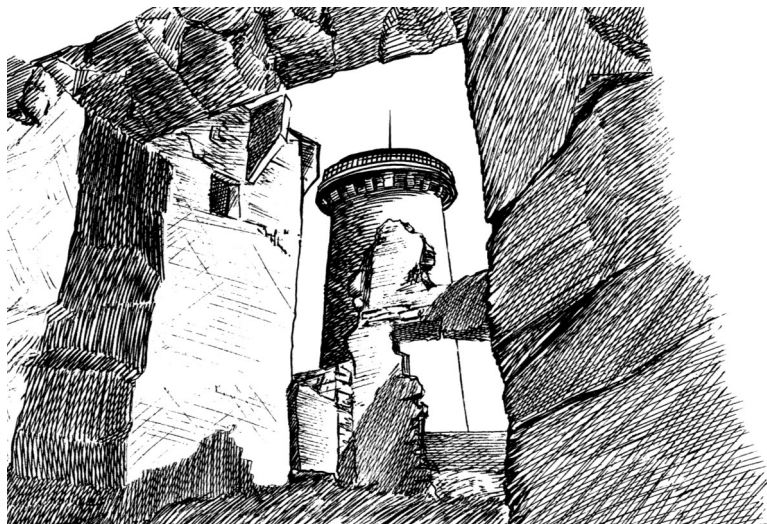
- And all things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:18
- Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 5:1
- We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Romans 5:11

("God's perfect love renews us.")

- In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 1 John 4:9,10
- There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear: because fear hath torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love. 1 John 4:18

("What chance would we have of reconciliation with God if He didn't pursue us? ")

- No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:44



Forward

This story is about redemption.

The Pirate's Bride is loosely based on real events: Generations ago, our family tree grew a pirate named Joseph Bradish, Jr. His grandfather, Robert Bradish, was a Puritan who immigrated from England to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1665.

Around 1698, Joseph became a sailor on the *Adventure Galley*. When the ship stopped to take on supplies, Joseph and the remaining crew stole the ship, and Joseph was elected the new captain. It was a fairly peaceful crime, other than a few marooned sailors. And right after this escapade, the pirates each took their share of the treasure and attempted an early retirement.

Unfortunately, Joseph was soon arrested in Boston and shipped to England for trial. He spent some time at the Marshalsea Prison in London, and was eventually hung at Execution Dock, Gravesend, on July 12, 1700. He was only 27 years old.

It's always exciting to find famous (or to a lesser extent, infamous) ancestors, and while we have learned lots of sad stories from our family history, this was the first execution I found. It shocked and saddened me.

("My reward comes from God.")

- And whatsoever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for you serve the Lord Christ. Colossians 3:23-24

("The Lord does not want us to be unequally yoked")

- Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 2 Corinthians 6:14
- Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

Confession

("When you sinned against Mark, you sinned against God.")

The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. Psalm 34:15

- But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Matthew 18:6

("Without faith, it is impossible to please Him.")

- But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Hebrews 11:6

("We cannot earn God's love; our sinful nature will never let us be good enough.")

- Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Romans 3:20
- And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified. Psalm 143:2

("We don't have the power in ourselves to overcome sin.")

- For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Romans 8:6,7

- For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16

("It is the ONLY thing that can save you.")

- I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no man comes to the Father but by me. John 14:6

("God made you, Cal.")

- I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are Thy works; and that my soul knows right well. Psalm 139:14
- Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou came forth out of the womb I sanctified thee... Jeremiah 1:5

Guilt and Innocence

("He has a plan for your life.")

- For I know the thoughts I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Jeremiah 29:11

("He is the source of all goodness.")

- Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of Lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. James 1:17

("He will change your heart if you let Him.")

- A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. Ezekiel 36:26

("I love you because God has put it into my heart to do so.")

- Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God, and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God, he that loves not, knows not God, for God is love. 1 John 4:7

Why would the grandson of a Puritan become a pirate? I asked myself. *What made him throw aside all of the truth he had learned as a child?* Another thought occurred to me: *Did his mother watch him die?*

I checked her death date, and found with relief that she had passed away first. But his father was alive, and lived another twenty years afterward. I don't know about his relationship with his father, but I bet **someone** loved Joseph.

Research deepened my understanding of the facts, but also increased my inner conflict. *What exactly had he done?* I wondered. *Was he tricked or bullied into it as one researcher speculated?* I wished he could have been spared a death sentence; but then, he had made choices, knowing the consequences.

It's complicated. Even if a thief or murderer "gets away with it," he or she is still stained with sin, and the injured parties need justice. Sadly, Joseph Bradish paid the ultimate price for his sin. *Could it have gone another way?* I wondered. *Is there any way he could have been redeemed?*

Redemption happens when Someone outside of us reaches into our lives and provides a way of escape. He saves us from imminent punishment, restores our status, and gives us a new heart. He makes us innocent, in a way we have never been before. He offers us a fresh start, a second chance.

Wrestling with these ideas is what got me started on *The Pirate's Bride* more than four years ago. Our family has spent a lot of time discussing these ideas around the dinner table, and I am grateful for their insights. I also spent a lot of time in prayer, and the Lord gave me the most answers.

While I have tried to get the details about Ireland, piracy, and the time period correct, I have taken liberties; for this is a work of fiction. But I painstakingly researched the details about redemption, and they are as clear and true as I could make them. An appendix in the back is provided for reference.

Each of the Fullers Four has worked on this story. We pray it lives on in your heart, and that it blesses while it entertains!

delivered thy soul. Ezekiel 33:8-9

("His Holy Word tells us that while we were yet sinners, he died for us.")

- But God commends His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

("Your own sin is killing you.")

- But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear. Isaiah 59:2

The Gospel

("He is the God of the living.")

- He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err. Mark 12:27

("Jesus is the perfect lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.")

- The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world. John 1:29

("Jesus is God, Himself.")

- Philip said unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? John 14:9

("He was not born in sin the way we are.")

- . . . He (Jesus) was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15
- Who committed no sin, neither was any deceit in His mouth. 1 Peter 2:22
- We were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 1 Peter 1:18-19

("That is why His death can be applied to our death sentence, to satisfy justice.")

- For as by one man's disobedience (Adam's) many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one (Jesus Christ) shall many be made righteous. Romans 5:19

Appendix

Scripture verses referred to in *The Pirate's Bride*
(King James Version)

The chapters come first, followed by the quote in parentheses.



The Sum of a Man

(illustration of Maggie sitting under the church windows)

- Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow. Isaiah 1:18

The Pirate's Bride

("For we are all sinners, Father!")

- For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23

("If he is guilty, he might repent!")

- Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Ezekiel 18:30

("We are all guilty before God, Father. We all need forgiveness.")

- Except you repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Luke 13:2-3

The First Visit

("If I were to hide your sin, then I would sin as well.")

- If thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast

Last Things

"Uncle Toby?" Maggie asked softly, and touched his hand. The alarms started.

Nurses came running into the room. One of them put a gentle hand on Maggie's shoulder and asked her to step outside for a moment.

"Of course."

Maggie picked up her camera on the way out, and waited in the hall. The feeling of fear started like a sickness in her stomach, but she willed herself to be positive. She knew that Uncle Toby's heart was failing, but knowing about it didn't make it easier.

Maggie paced back and forth. She caught movement in the corner of her eye in the large windows, but it was only her own reflection. She reached for her camera, and took a picture. She remembered Uncle Toby, and looked through the windows, out at the landscape. Far away, she saw a single light, blinking, and she knew it was the Marblehead lighthouse.

It was one of Uncle Toby's favorite places to go, and they went often. She must have taken a hundred photos there. The lovely old keepers' house and the row of trees that grew up

through the rocks were endlessly interesting, depending on the time of year. And while she practiced her art, or dangled her feet in the water, Uncle Toby walked back and forth across the rocky shore.

Once in a while, he would look back to see if she was all right, and if he caught her eye, she would wave. Each time, he would break into a quick smile, then turn his eyes back to the water. It was alone time, together.

She wished he were back to himself, and that they could visit the lighthouse again. But the long, white corridors with their black shadows inspired her, too. Especially now, after dark. Her eyes searched for a subject to photograph while her fingers checked the settings on the camera by feel.

Ah, the clock.

She raised the camera and shot the lower right section of the black frame with its fancy "6" and "7"; then she photographed a black umbrella that lay across a white coat on the landing; and finally she took a picture of a bottle behind a locked glass door. As she snapped the picture, she became aware of her subject. On the label was a skull and crossed bones.

Pirates, she thought. What is that doing here?

Feeling uneasy, her thoughts returned to Uncle Toby and she headed back.

As she rounded the corner, she saw a couple of nurses leaving Uncle Toby's room. When she looked inside, only one nurse remained, and she was holding Uncle Toby's wrist.

Maggie walked in and moved to the other side of the bed. The nurse looked up and nodded, but continued to count while she took her uncle's blood pressure.

When she was finished, Maggie slid her palm under Uncle Toby's hand, and gently squeezed. She thought she felt an answering squeeze, but the pressure was faint enough that she may have just imagined it.

She brushed a lock of white hair from his forehead, and finger-combed it gently into place. She was glad to notice that his hair, which had remained thick all of his life, was still reddish near the nape of his neck.

Maggie leaned close and whispered, "I love you."

This time she was sure the hand she was holding had moved.

The nurse looked at Maggie and matched her whisper, "You seem to have a good connection with him. Your grandpa's heart rate is much stronger now."

Maggie smiled. "I call him my great uncle. Since my father died, he has helped my mom take care of me."

Because of your beautiful testimony, Maggie, I now know that by the power of God, Cal was released twice: Both as a prisoner of the law and as a prisoner of sin. You showed me the evidence of his changed heart: When he became free to do as he liked, he protected, provided for, and loved the family of the woman he had hurt.

That family is you, Maggie! Cal took care of you because he loved your grandmother, and it was his responsibility to make things right.

This bottle, Maggie, is a testimony to the power of the grace of God over even the hardest of hearts. Cal used it to call for help, and I used it to remember to pray for help. It is your inheritance, for it was a part of what formed you, though you never knew.

You will be lonely and frightened without your Toby, of course. But consider that his love for you came ultimately from God, Himself. God inspired him and gave him the power to love your grandmother, your mother, and now you. Those years of love and support came through Toby, but it was all from God in the first place. It still is. Surely you must see it now, Maggie: God loves you!

Maggie unfolded the last third of the letter, and a small rectangular envelope with a picture of an airplane on the outside fell into her lap.

Now, don't be alone in your grief, and don't leave me alone in mine. I am going back to the place I was raised, on Inis Mor, for I am long overdue for a visit.

I would love for you to come visit me there! It is truly the most beautiful place on earth to me, but if you don't like island life, we can go back to the mainland, where I have been living.

Sure, it's a long trip to Ireland, but don't be afraid. Your life is a precious gift, Maggie. It was given to you for a purpose. Don't be afraid to live it, nor take for granted the One who gave it.

May God grant you His peace,

Elena

love. There was no question in her mind that if this story were true, he was not the same man.

If it were true. . . Maggie looked down at the bottle, and thought of the message inside, of Stephen, and the book, and of the memorial with the pirate ship and the little bride. She took hold of the ring on her necklace. What more proof did she need?

The thought of Stephen made her wish that he was here to help her with all of this. Uncle Toby had said Stephen was honorable, and that she could trust him. Maybe he would help her make sense of it all when she let him read the little book.

She began to make her way back to her car through the mist. In the darkness and fog, she was grateful for the light to guide her. Soon her hand was on the door, and she had it unlocked. She put the bag in the passenger seat, got in, and shut and locked the door.

Inside the car, it was very quiet. She reached down to the passenger floor to pick something up. It was the card, which had fallen out of the bag when it tipped over. She looked at her name on the front, and this time, she noticed that the card had a return address written on it as if it were to be mailed.

When she touched it, thoughts came in rapid succession:

The card came from the Irish woman at the funeral who knew Uncle Toby when she was young, when he was a (*pirate*); and she had just given Maggie his original message in a bottle. . .

"That woman," Maggie whispered, her eyes widening, "Could she be--is she--"

Her heart was pounding in her chest. *The card!*

She pulled it out. Inside was a letter folded into thirds.

Maggie, she read,

This bottle was my reminder to pray for your uncle, and I have prayed every day for his freedom. Now that he is gone, my job is done.

This bottle carried a lie that told the truth: For Callahan WAS a prisoner of his own sin. He was a lustful, domineering pirate, and I loved him so much that I have never loved another.

I served him faithfully, pointing him to the Lord. I was willing to both live and die for him; but God granted me life. I hid that fact from Cal, for I wanted him to be truly free. For a time, even my own family didn't know. But they have forgiven me now, and even accepted that I have taken my middle name.

"So he is your grandmother's brother?"

Maggie shook her head. "I don't think he's related to me at all, but he's always been part of my life."

"And your mother?" The nurse prodded.

"She passed when I was seven." Maggie said the words even more softly.

"So he raised you." The elderly nurse's eyes were compassionate. "That's very young to lose your mother."

Maggie nodded.

The nurse checked the I.V. once more and prepared to leave the room.

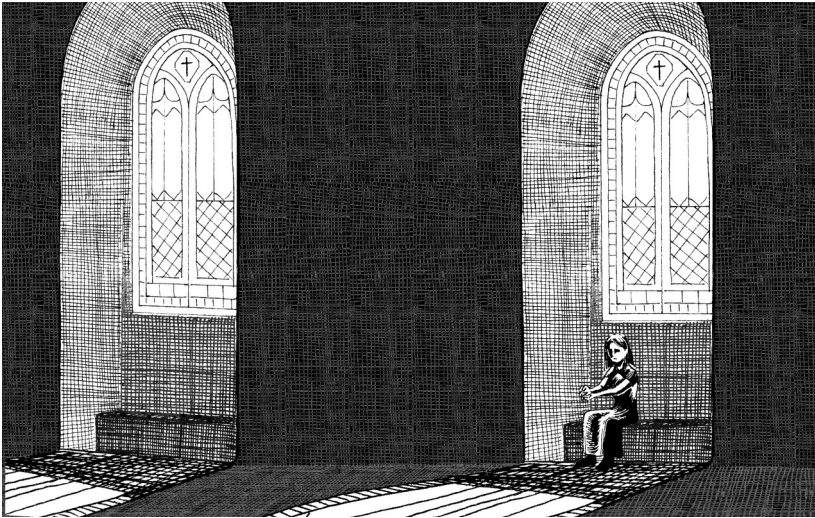
Maggie spoke up. "Visiting hours were over at 8," she said. "May I stay a little longer?"

The nurse nodded, and Uncle Toby woke at the sound of her voice.

"Maggie girl."

"I'm here, Uncle Toby." Maggie bent down just as he opened his eyes. The intensity still surprised her after all this time. They were so blue, like sapphires.

"I fell asleep," he said, pausing to draw in a shallow breath before continuing. "Many pardons, my beauty."



The Sum of a Man

A few weeks later, Maggie was sitting below the magnificent stained glass windows in an alcove off the foyer of the old Methodist church. It was a familiar place, and she felt comfortably invisible. Just as she had always done, she stretched her arms out into the red light, then moved them to the right and they turned white.

She listened to the hum of conversation around her and closed her eyes for a moment. It felt so good to rest there, pretending it was any normal Sunday, with the service about to start. But it wasn't Sunday, and she had responsibilities. Reluctantly, she got up and walked toward the sanctuary.

Uncle Toby's casket was positioned before the altar in front of the podium. There was a large photograph of him on top of the closed lid, and Maggie remembered taking it.

It was the day she had told Uncle Toby that she wanted to be a photographer. After Maggie explained to him that she needed practice, right there, in his denim shirt, he had posed for her. The

I am a prisoner on the Madeira. . .

Maggie gasped and dropped the bottle. It rolled off her lap and stuck in a crack between two rocks. But the paper snapped back into its tightly rolled condition, and the wind sent it tumbling toward the water.

Maggie scrambled after it. She got to the edge of the rock and peered through the gloom, feeling hopeless. But just then, a flash from the lighthouse revealed that it was caught in a hollow space under the rocks, and was rolling back and forth on the sand. Maggie laid down on her stomach and reached with her fingertips, and just then, a gust of wind blew it toward her.

She got a hold of the paper and was able to pull it up. She rolled into a sitting position and cradled it, waiting until her heart slowed. After a moment, she carefully unrolled it against her thigh, willing her trembling fingers to be calm. She turned it over, holding tightly so the wind wouldn't catch it again, and read:

"I find myself captain over a mutinous crew. . . ."

Her eyes dropped down to the bottom. "

We make for the port at Inis Mor."

"It's real--it's real--" She whispered the words into the wind, and looked out across the water, as if to convince her own mind. The waves splashed up against the rocks, again. She felt the spray on her face and turned away to protect the letter.

"Oh, Uncle Toby," Maggie whispered, almost in awe, tracing his beautiful writing with her fingertip, "you were a pirate."

Her hand stole down to the necklace she was wearing and she took hold of the ring, Mark's ring. Then she continued sadly, "And you killed my grandfather."

She imagined her grandfather as a young man, a kind man who hated to kill fish, kneeling on the deck. And that man towering over him in her imagination, could that possibly be her Uncle Toby, preparing to--kill him somehow? Maggie didn't know how it was done and so that part was mercifully blank.

I was raised by a murderer," she thought, but neither the picture in her mind, nor the words she was thinking made sense. Her Uncle Toby loved her and made sacrifices for her. He was so kind, and she couldn't picture his face on the body of a murderous pirate.

They were not the same man! Her thoughts and jumbled emotions swirled into a vortex like the one that swallowed the lifeboat: Confusion, anger, fear, grief, gratitude, and finally,

The mist was around her ankles, and as she moved away it rose around her. After a few seconds, her white hair was all that was visible, and then she vanished.

At this, Maggie looked around and saw it was nearly dark. The wind filled her ears, and when it died down, there was the crash of the waves. Without Erin's company, she was all alone at the edge of the water.

Maybe I had better go, too, she thought.

But she didn't want to get into her car until she knew what was in the bag. She walked back from the water, and sat down on the rocks with the bag next to her. She glanced back toward the light for reassurance. She had parked right at the base of the lighthouse, so all she had to do was walk toward it.

She reached in and found a card tucked into the bag. She pulled it out, and saw her name, "Maggie", written on the front.

She remembered how Elena had delayed reading the note she found in Callahan's knapsack. *This card might hold a secret, too,* she thought. *And I'm not sure I'm ready to know.*

She dropped the card back into the bag, and reached under the cloth. Her fingers touched cool glass, and she lifted out a bottle. It was made of thick, brown glass that was almost opaque in the fading light; it was clouded with age and use. The base was round like a ball, and it had a long, skinny neck.

Maggie held it by the neck and turned it upside down to see the bottom. As she lifted it, the strong light from the lighthouse strobed through, and she saw the shadow of something inside. What looked like a tightly rolled paper had slid down into the neck of the bottle, and with a couple of smart taps, it fell into her hand.

The paper was yellowed and brittle, with ledger lines drawn on the back. Maggie could feel her heart pounding in her chest. She carefully unrolled the ancient paper, bending the crumpled edges straight so that it didn't tear. She turned it over. The vintage script was beautifully curly, and still vivid, even in the waning light.

She remembered how Elena paused before reading her message to look around at the day. Maggie raised her head and looked around.

The waves were crashing against the rocks just a few yards away, and the light from the lighthouse caught the foam and made it glow. The air was chill, and she was more aware than ever that she was all alone. She shivered. Like Elena, she had made a memory.

She looked down and read words written in a familiar hand:

photo from that session was what represented him now, at his last formal event.

His smile stood out against his tanned skin; and his red hair, touched with white, shone in the sun.

"Isn't he handsome, though?" Maggie heard a female voice speak out behind her and she closed her eyes in gratitude, because that was what she wanted to offer those who loved him: A handsome new portrait to which they could say their goodbyes.

Maggie looked around and realized that while she only knew about half of the people in the church, many of them seemed to know each other. She felt out-of-place, for it was obvious that Uncle Toby had lived a lot of his life before she was born.

A woman with white hair, done up in a twist, approached the casket. Her age was difficult for Maggie to judge, for though her hair was white, her dress was youngish, and Maggie could easily picture her wearing a pair of hiking boots.

The woman stood looking down for a moment, then reached in and covered Uncle Toby's hand with hers. Maggie thought she saw a tear fall, but she couldn't be sure.

Curious about her, and wanting to remember who she was, Maggie took her picture. After a few moments, the woman moved away, but Maggie continued to watch her.

She seemed to be alone, and her expression grew lighter as she watched the people around her. When her eyes briefly met Maggie's, Maggie noticed gentle wrinkles at the corners of her eyes, as if she laughed a lot. The woman reached into her bag, pulled out a small notebook, and began to write. Maggie continued watching for a bit, then her eyes drifted back across the crowd.

The conversation was happy, and people were smiling everywhere she looked. A man near the back was telling stories, and except for the woman with white hair, no one else had seemed to openly share her grief.

The organist began to play "Oh, the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus," and the crowd quieted and began to take their seats. Maggie put her camera away, and joined the group that was moving toward the pews.

She went to the front row and was seated with the rest of his family, most of whom she didn't know. In a few moments, the woman she noticed at the casket sat down just behind her; her eyes were compassionate when they met Maggie's for a second time, and Maggie wondered who she was.

Finally, to Maggie's relief, the service started. She was going

over what she planned to say at the end, and as a result, she hardly heard the service. After the singing and the eulogy, it was Maggie's turn to talk.

"I--I am only here because of the generosity of Unc--the man I call Uncle Toby," she said. She looked at his blood relatives and shrugged. "I am sorry I don't know any of his real family, but I never knew you existed until after he died."

"I am so grateful for the life I have lived until now, not just for his financial support, but because growing up with such a wonderful man centered my life, and. . ." she had to stop for a few moments, wiping the tears away.

"He gave so much," she said finally. "He was so loving, and I will always remember his example. I wish he was my own grandfather, and in all the practical ways, he was. I will miss him every day." She sat down and discreetly blew her nose.

Several people she didn't recognize nodded, as if to say, "So *that's* who she is!"

After Maggie sat down, the woman behind her stood up, and the audience hushed when they heard her beautiful, Irish accent.

"I have known Toby longer than most of you here, for I met him when I was just a child myself," she said. "How I admired him. But what am I saying? The truth is, I spent at least half my life in love with him!"

She looked around at the group, and smiled with intention when someone's eyes met hers. When every eye was on her, she continued.

"He was like a handsome giant to my young eyes," she said. "And he had a gift of drawing people to him, which everyone felt --everyone who knew him. But when his visit was over, how I hated to see him leave. . ." She broke off, and looked down for a moment.

"Erin pined for him, sure she did! But it was more than that. I feared for his soul."

Her face was pained, now, as she looked across the crowd, searching the faces around her. Most people's expressions had been nostalgic as she recalled her young love, but now, a few of them seemed confused or frowned.

"I hope he made his peace with God," she said, her voice growing husky, "and lived a life to His glory." And with that, she sat down, her cheeks pink.

Several people whispered reassurance to her. One man rose to speak about how Toby's stories had changed his life, and a low murmur of agreement went through the crowd.

"I spent time with him in Guatemala, building shelters in the

happy. "God granted my prayer, for he couldn't have been the good, kind grandfather he was, without the Lord changing his heart."

"But why are you here?" Maggie asked. "And why now?"

"I overheard someone at the funeral talking about how Toby loved to walk out by the lighthouse, and how he often brought you with him." She nodded as she spoke, and watched Maggie to see if she was following her.

"I wanted to know where he went, my dear, for my own reasons. When they spoke of a lighthouse, I was quite interested, and sure enough, here it is!"

She pointed up at the lighthouse, with its light pulsing into the growing gloom. Maggie nodded back, matter of factly.

"Well, of course you know! But I didn't. And so I prayed for God to make it clear to me, my dear. He showed me what to do, and He showed me where the lighthouse is, and now, He helped me find you!"

Maggie shook her head slightly, and stepped back.

"Now, none of that, missy. This is important, and I don't have much time before my plane leaves. Here, I want you to have this."

She held out the bag toward Maggie, who made no move to take it.

"I can see you are confused, and I am sorry," Erin said, still holding out the bag toward Maggie. "But you clearly loved Toby, and I thought you might like to have something that we shared. My reason for keeping it is gone now."

Maggie looked down at the bag in the deepening gloom, and saw that there was something wrapped in cloth, inside. She looked up and saw Erin's face was a mixture of emotions: Her eyes were red from tears; but she was joyful, too. But there was an underlying tension in her expression that Maggie didn't understand.

After a moment's decision, Maggie reached out for the bag. When their hands touched, Maggie noticed the woman's delicate wrist. She looked into Erin's face and saw that the tension had vanished.

She was worried I wouldn't accept it, Maggie thought.

Maggie looked down into the bag, reaching for what was inside, but when she looked up once more, Erin was already several yards away, heading to the parking lot.

"I'm for the plane, dear. Pray it won't leave without me!" Her voice sounded thin in the rising fog, as if she was farther away than she looked.



A Gift

It's slippery with all this spray, thought Maggie. I wonder what she is doing here?

The older woman looked up from the rock where she was balancing, and searched Maggie's face. With a shock of recognition, Maggie saw that it was the Irish woman from Uncle Toby's funeral.

"Oh praises be, Maggie girl! It is you, isn't it?"

Maggie reached out a hand to steady her.

"Erin, what are you doing here?" Maggie asked.

"Believe me or not, I wasn't following you, my dear. But isn't that just how the Lord works? Oh!" A huge wave crashed up and wetted them both with a blast of cold water. Maggie stepped back and lost her balance.

This time Erin caught her, and Maggie was surprised, and very thankful, for her strength. They held onto each other and worked their way back from the edge.

"I was so glad to hear that he was good to you, my dear," Erin said, picking up their former conversation. She seemed very

jungle!" said a dark-skinned old man with white hair.

One young man stood with his shy wife at his side and spoke, "We owe him everything. He helped me find a good job, and kept me out of a gang so we could get married." His wife blushed and nodded, then sat down quickly.

One after another, people stood to express their appreciation for Toby's generosity or his encouragement during a time of hardship in their lives. Maggie was amazed to hear accents from all over the world: A British accent from his blood relatives, a Jamaican friend from his youth, and dialects from all over the United States.

Though she was glad to hear the stories, she realized that he had kept a lot of things from her. She had never realized he was a kind of celebrity until now. And all too soon, the funeral was over.

While the last few families finished their funeral dinner downstairs, Maggie slipped out and began to dismantle the display she had created to honor Uncle Toby at the back of the sanctuary.

A soft, Irish voice spoke near her elbow, and she turned.

"So. He was a good man, then?"

The mysterious Irish woman spoke to her as if they were continuing a conversation.

"Yes--Erin, is it?" said Maggie, turning toward her. "He was always as kind and supportive as I could have wished."

The woman closed her eyes and smiled, then very deliberately patted Maggie's arm.

"What a wonder, Maggie, dear; and it's all to the glory of God!"

At Maggie's look of surprise, she leaned in.

"It is Maggie, right?"

When Maggie nodded, and she smiled.

"Right! I am so sorry to know you are in pain, my dear, but it tells me you loved him, so that is good. How I wondered about him all of these years! I kept track of him through his writing, of course, but when they made the announcement that his column was ending, I knew he was very ill." Her eyes grew a little misty.

"How our first love marks us, my dear! I suffer as well as you, so I'll be thinking of you, dear, and praying for God to lift your grief. There is so much good to remember, right?"

Maggie nodded and said, "Right."

Erin paused and looked down at Maggie's necklace, on which hung a solid gold ring.

"What a lovely trinket you have," she said admiringly.

"Does it belong to your young man?"

Maggie took hold of the ring and lifted it, turning it around as she spoke.

"This was my grandfather's wedding ring, I guess. It was passed down from my grandmother to my mother, and I thought it would be a good time to wear it today."

She saw Erin's stricken look and continued quickly. "It didn't have anything to do with Uncle Toby, though. He and my grandfather were not blood relatives."

Erin shook her head as if to clear the cobwebs and smiled by way of apology.

"Of course not, my dear. 'Tis a beautiful thing, and it is made more beautiful because you are wearing it. May I?"

Maggie allowed her to hold it in her hand, and she looked it over, turning it to the side, and even looking inside for an inscription.

"It is just a plain gold band," Maggie said. "I wish it had some mark of remembrance, but at least I know what it is and can keep that much of the story going."

Erin nodded. "Hold onto it, dear, even though you might never know what stories are bound up in it. It is a piece of who you are." She gave the ring back to Maggie and closed Maggie's hand around it. "Did you wear that when you spent time with your uncle?"

Maggie frowned, and thought back. "I don't wear it that often. Sorry, I don't remember if I wore it around him or not. Why?"

"I'm sure I don't know why I asked such a daft question, my dear, except that your uncle, as I remember him, loved beautiful things." When Maggie nodded in agreement, Erin continued, "And one of those beautiful things is you, dear. What a precious beauty you are!"

She held Maggie's eye to let her know she was sincere, and then patted her shoulder as she turned away.

"So I'm off, but never fear! I'm for seeing you at least once more before I leave the states." With that, she turned and walked toward the door.

"Goodbye!" She called that last word over her shoulder.

Maggie was surprised at both her quick exit, and that she wanted to see Maggie again.

How will she ever find me, Maggie thought, when even I don't know where I am going?

Questions swirled through her mind, but she let them go. It would have been nice to hear stories of Uncle Toby when he was

standing tall against the vibrant sunset, comforted her.

A group of people were walking toward her on their way to the parking lot. When the largest group had gone by, she walked out to the edge of the water. There were only rocks here, piled high to protect the shore from erosion, and she couldn't help but think of Elena, and how she had prayed and walked on the rocks of Inis Mor by the sea at twilight.

Something caught her eye, and she turned back toward the lighthouse. It was only a solitary older woman, walking out from the parking lot.

Maggie turned back around and saw the sky had already grown darker. The crests of the little waves seemed brighter now as the tide came in.

The sun must have gone down, she thought.

She walked out toward the edge of the lake and closed her eyes. The wind buffeted her as she stood on the huge rocks, and she could feel the vibration of the surf through her feet.

Eyes still closed, she thought of how Elena had walked at night, her eyes on the moon, praying for her pirate. How could that pirate be her Uncle Toby?

Maggie pictured Elena wading out into the waves, her skirts held out of the water as she reached for the bottle. Maggie opened her eyes and searched the water, but she saw neither ship, nor bottle.

Of course not! she thought to herself. A wave came in against the rocks and sprayed her with water, so she stepped back and closed her eyes once again.

This time it was easy to picture the waves that battered the ship during the storm so long ago. She imagined the huge ship, tilted up on one end. In her mind, she could hear the timbers groan as the weight shifted.

She imagined the lights going out as the lanterns crashed against the deck one by one, and she could hear the ship's bell, tolling. She could almost see the sailors lowering the boats, or jumping into the water, with some still clinging to the broken mast. How desolate to see your only hope sinking under the waves!

The nearby sound of crinkled paper interrupted her thoughts, and Maggie opened her eyes. The older woman was climbing up onto the rock close to Maggie. She was carrying a gift bag and had unconsciously tightened her grip on it when she stepped up.



Alone Time, Together

Maggie sat back and closed the book, tears streaming down her face. She put her head in her hands, struggling to accept it all. A waiter stopped by and asked her if she needed anything else, and she quickly wiped her tears and shook her head “no”.

The waiter’s intrusion helped, though. She remembered that it was 1962, and all these things had happened long ago. Being mentally in the present helped her to put the past where it belonged.

She had finished her pizza, so she paid the bill, and took the little book with her when she got back in her car. She didn’t want to go home, but didn’t know where else to go.

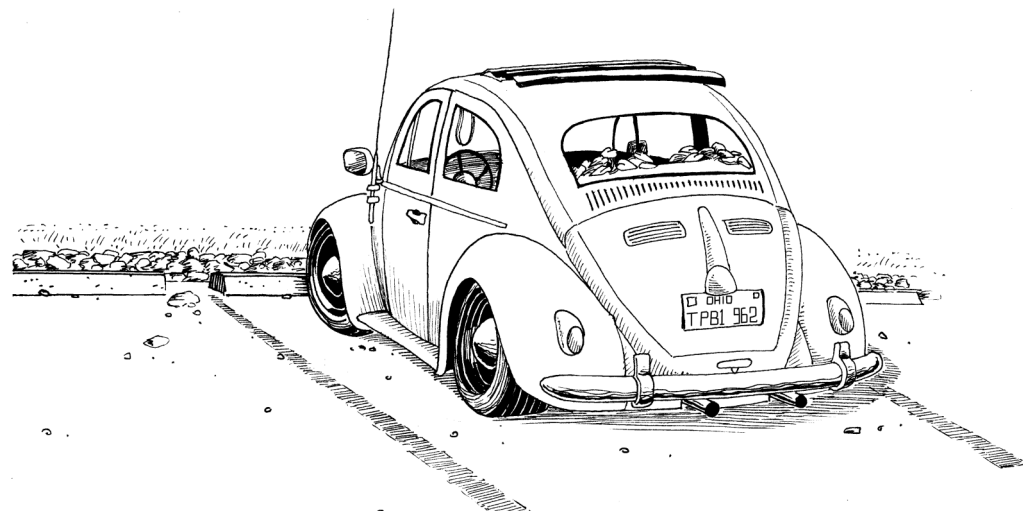
Alone time, together, she thought. This time, I’m the one who needs to think, Uncle Toby. I’ll meet you at the lighthouse.

She drove the short way toward Marblehead and pulled in. The lighthouse rose above the shore, and the familiar sight of it,

a young man, but now there were so many other things to consider.

It was nice to hear condolences, though, and to know someone else was missing him as much as she was. She hadn’t realized how her grief had lifted in the woman’s presence, until she felt it settle in again in her absence.

She called me a beauty, Maggie thought. Just the way Uncle Toby did.



Stephen

After Erin left, Maggie got back to work. She stacked the display into a box, and loaded it up. She went back upstairs to get a couple of potted plants someone had sent for the funeral, and put those into her car, too.

She placed the long, trailing vines across the ledge in the back window and smiled at the effect. From the outside, she liked the look of the green leaves in the window of her red car. For a moment, she had the urge to show Uncle Toby, and then she felt her eyes prickle when she remembered he was gone.

When will these tears ever stop? she thought. *But wherever he is, maybe he can enjoy what I see anyway.*

That thought cheered her, and she got into the car, and wiped her eyes. The funeral guests had mostly gone by now, so the parking lot was mostly empty. Maggie sat for a few minutes and considered that she really had nowhere to go. She had a place to sleep, of course, because she had inherited the house from Uncle Toby, but it was empty. She had no job, no close friend, nothing. Uncle Toby had been her whole life. But the thought of Uncle

feared was that you would hate me. I guess both are true. I felt unworthy to bring you up, but you had no one else, and it was my responsibility--my privilege--to serve as your grandfather.

Oh sweet girl! I grieve for the position you are in now.

To me, you are perfect, but God's Word says that all have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God. You need a Savior, too, Maggie. We all do.

I know you have heard the truth, but how I have prayed for it to become real to you, and for you to feel God drawing you to Himself! I hope that the story of my life, known in full only to you now, will help you understand.

I wish you could meet my Elena, who sacrificed everything for me, and taught me the meaning of true love. For true love is what I have tried to show you.

I have been looking for her all of my life, Maggie. She disappeared from the island after the shipwreck, and was never heard from again. I have searched all over the world, and done a lot of good in the places I have traveled, but in the back of my mind, I was always searching for Elena. It is too horrible for me to fully accept that she gave her beautiful life for me.

Oh, what a wretched man I am, if it is really true that she perished! If you can ever find it in your heart to forgive me, Maggie, then please, look for her, will you? There is one little flame of hope left in my heart that she still lives, and if you ever do find her in this world, Maggie, will you give her a message for me?

Tell her:

"Thank you, for doing what you did to give me a chance to repent. For I have done it, little love!"

gathered for you while I have been praying."

"Praying for what?" I asked.

"For your return," he said.

"I have been so miserable--"

"I know," he interrupted. "It is the faithfulness of God. He uses the painful consequences of sin to bring us back to Himself." He blinked up at me to see if I understood what he said, and my eyes, reddened with emotion, told him I did.

"We can only begin to appreciate our lives, and to know what love is, when we understand that it is a gift," he said to me.

"A gift?"

He nodded and took off his wire-rimmed glasses to rub his eyes.

"Our lives are not our own," he said finally. "God gave life to us in the beginning, and after Adam sinned, God bought our lives back with the blood of his son. By that tremendous sacrifice, He restores our lives to us, and gives us every chance, and the power, to return His love."

He looked up at me, wonderingly.

"You came back, son, and that fills me with joy," he said.

"God did it. Never forget, your life is a gift."

And he was right, of course.

Then I went back to Rebecca. I confessed my sin, and returned her property. I told her that my love for her remained, but Mark's murder had destroyed the possibility of any love between us. She forgave me, but the knowledge of what I had done to her Mark harmed her more than I realized. She became depressed, and in a few more years, she died. Her death was the greatest loss of my life.

And so I channeled my love for her into the care of her child, and that child was your mother, Cassandra. How she loved you, Maggie! And though her short life was troubled, and your father died when you were young, she did everything she could to provide for you. And I helped her.

Maggie, I was selfish not to tell you the whole truth, for you never knew how I wronged you. I have loved you as if you were my own granddaughter, just as I loved your mother, Cassie, as my own daughter. And I let you love me back.

You are a beautiful girl, Maggie, as I have told you often. You favor my darling Rebecca. How I wanted to tell you everything, but I was afraid that if you knew, you wouldn't have felt as special, or as beautiful, as you are.

Or maybe I was just lying to myself, and the thing I really

Toby had reminded her of something.

Whoops--forgot the check. One more stop, and then I'm done.

She started her car and headed out of the parking lot. In just a few minutes, Maggie turned in under a decorative metal archway that read "Maple Grove Cemetery," and followed the long, winding driveway toward a beautifully-kept, Victorian mansion.

She parked at the gravel lot in front, near a sign that said "office." The arrow was pointing toward what had probably been the parlor. She peeked inside the window to verify that it was, indeed, an office, and then, seeing it was empty, came back out onto the porch and surveyed the grounds.

The cemetery sprawled across rolling acres, and the front section was filled with very old stones. It was a quiet, well-maintained place, with shady trees and bright, flowering shrubs. Maggie was pretty sure it would take an entire day just to walk up and down the rows.

"Hello, there! May I help you?" The booming voice echoed so suddenly across the porch that she jumped a little.

The man's work shirt, rolled to his elbows, was the first thing Maggie noticed, and then she saw his kind face. He was sweating. He held his right hand out to her, but she saw it was covered in dirt and grass stains. When she hesitated, he looked down, then pulled his hand back.

"Sorry," he grinned, wiping his hands on his shirt front. "I was digging in the back when I saw you pull in. My name is Stephen, and I'm the only one here this afternoon. May I help you find someone?"

Maggie smiled and blushed.

"Hi, Stephen. My name is Maggie. I just came here to drop off a check," she said.

"Ah, Maggie," Stephen nodded. He pulled open the ornate door, and stood aside so Maggie could enter. The office was filled with furniture that would have been more at home a hundred years earlier, but the air smelled lemony, and she noticed that the dark wood desk and chairs were polished. Stephen pulled up on the handle of the old roll-top desk and sat down behind it.

"So. . ." he murmured, rubbing his nose and ruffling through some papers in a folder. "What's the name?"

"MacIntyre," she said. "Tobias."

He looked up quickly. "Toby MacIntyre?"

She nodded.

He smiled. "I thought that was you. I saw you at the funeral."

Maggie looked at him more carefully, but didn't recognize him.

"Ah," Stephen said, shaking his head, sadly. "He was a kind man."

He met her eyes and said, "I am sorry for your loss."

"Thank you."

Stephen's eyes went back to the papers he was ruffling.

"Here we are. So, do you have the check?"

"Yes," said Maggie quickly, digging into her purse and handing it to him. "This should cover everything."

Stephen looked at it and nodded; he put the check into a small safe under the desk, then wrote out the receipt and handed it to her.

Maggie watched him work, admiring his strong forearms.

"Wait just a moment, Maggie, before you leave. I almost forgot! I have something for you." Stephen turned his back to her and began rummaging through a drawer.

"Something for me? What is it?"

"Well, it's from your Uncle Toby, and I was to give it to you when you came to settle the account," Stephen said.

He reached across the top of the roll-top desk to hand her a small, black book. On the front, in gold script, was written, "The Pirate's Bride."

"What an interesting title," Maggie said. "I thought I knew all of Uncle Toby's stories."

"But this one is special," Stephen said. "He had only *one* printed."

She could feel Stephen's eyes on her as he said this, but her eyes were on the book. A rush of gratitude filled her heart. *You were always thinking of me, Uncle Toby. Thank you for this.*

She turned it over but the back was blank.

"Curious," she said.

Stephen walked her outside, and said, "I didn't expect you to come so soon to pay on Mr. MacIntyre's account; I was just working on his memorial. That's why I'm all dirty."

"His memorial? I thought his body was being shipped back to England."

Stephen looked down at himself and brushed ruefully at his knees.

"Well, here or there, Mr. MacIntyre specified that the violets had to be 'thick and weeded,'" he said, "so I'm preparing for the yearly inspection."

now that I am no longer with you.

Stephen was willing to work from my description. I needed help to bring Elena to life, and Stephen was able to put her together in the way she deserved. She was precious to me, an angel sent by God to reclaim me from death. And though I lost her, I wanted her to know that her work was successful.

Elena wanted to marry a pirate. But not just any pirate--she wanted me. I don't understand all of the pain I put her through, but I know her loyalty and devotion to me caused a lot of her suffering. She never tired of thinking of new ways to bless me. She gave her life for me, both because she lived to serve me, and because she must have died on the ship when she came to rescue me.

I created the memorial to honor her life. You will have to decide how much you want to share with the world, but even if no one else knows her story, she will be known by those who see her memorial in the way she wanted to be known. She is "The Pirate's Bride."

But I am no longer that pirate. Elena brought me gifts I really wanted: Delicious food, little comforts and gifts of beauty. With every visit, she reminded me of good things, and stimulated my hunger for truth.

The Bible says "walk as children of light," and that is what she was, a child of light. In my dark, walled-off mind, her persistence gave me hope.

I remembered her words, and then the words of our Savior when I sat in the darkness. I only asked God to survive, but He gave more than I dreamed. He gave me a second chance at life, and I took it! But I still had to clean up the pirate's mess.

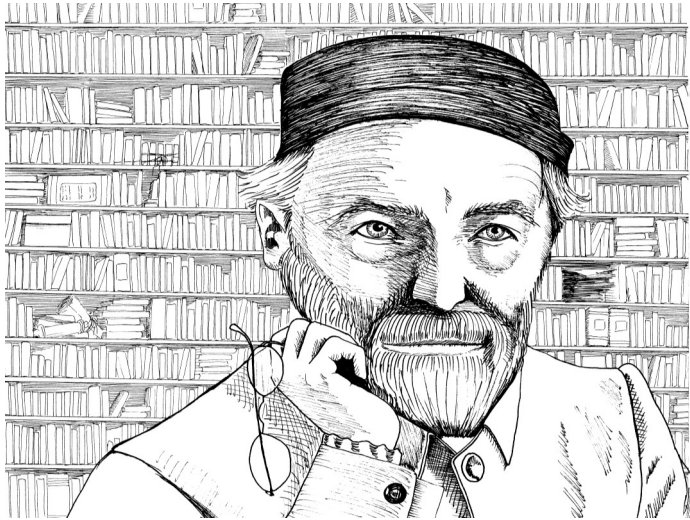
I first went back to the old priest who had mentored me, and let him know that I had returned to the Lord. When I pushed through the double doors that led to his study, I was reminded of his reverence for God. My eyes traveled the books that lined three walls of his room, so old, worn, and majestic in the yellow light.

I accepted the leather Bible he offered me.

"It is yours," he said, "your own copy I have kept for you all these years."

I had no memory of the Bible, but he showed me my old name, written inside the cover. There was a box full of books on the floor, and he directed me to lift the box onto the desk so I could look through them.

"Some of these were yours," he said, "and some I have



Maggie stopped and looked at him. "The violets?"
"C'mon," he grinned, beckoning with his head. "I'll show you."

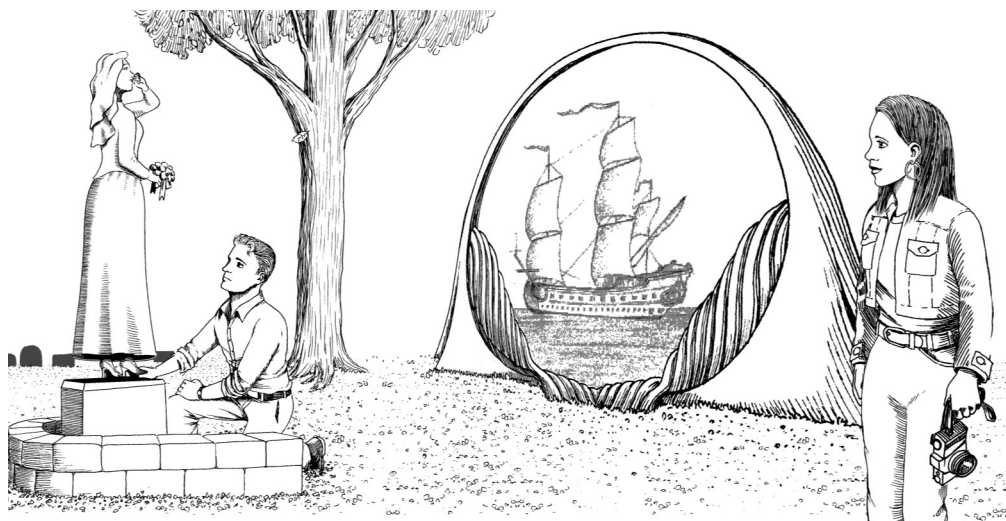
Going Back

Up until this point, Maggie, I have been writing as if I were watching a stranger and reporting on his life. That is who Callahan is to me: A stranger. He was one who died when the ship went down. When I started my new life, I changed my name to Tobias MacIntyre. You know me, of course, as "Uncle Toby."

Maggie looked up from the little book, shocked out of the story at being addressed directly. She became aware that she was reading a book that Uncle Toby had written. She was sitting in a pizza parlor with an empty pan in front of her, but she didn't remember eating much of the pizza. Only then did she remember that Uncle Toby was gone.

Her eyes dropped back to the book.

"Because you are reading this, you already know about the memorial that I created and dedicated to Elena. I found a man who was honorable and kind; he is an artist who loves beauty, and has the skill to tell the truth. His imagination is pure; unlike mine, which was defiled, and is only now in the process of healing. I pray you will find that he is someone you can trust,



The Memorial

She grabbed her camera from the car, and they walked together among the beautiful stones which were covered by traces of grayish lichen. Some of the headstones were so weathered that the names were no longer visible.

Maggie trailed her fingers along one of those that she passed and found that if she closed her eyes, she could "read" the stone with her fingers. Everything in this section was old and worn, including the large spectacle in front of the place where Stephen stopped.

The memorial was a large, oval-shaped marble wall. Around the outside edge were suggestions of water, and in the center, there was an engraving of an elegant sailing ship from the mid-eighteenth century. The ship was at rest in calm water, anchored in the bay as if waiting for the crew to return.

Across from the memorial was a half-circle of squared-off stones that stood about two feet tall. A marble figure of a young bride stood on a separate rock, set forward from the circle. Her veil was turned back with her head to the side, and she held her hand to her mouth as if remembering a kiss. Her wrist was thin and elegant.

"So who is the captain now?"

Callahan thought for a second or two, then said, "We'll share."

Together, they watched the wreck for what seemed like a long time, but finally, just as the sun came up, the last section disappeared under the water. Bits of broken hull and various flotsam continued appearing; some of these things made it past the rocks to wash up on the shore, but there was no way for their boat to get through.

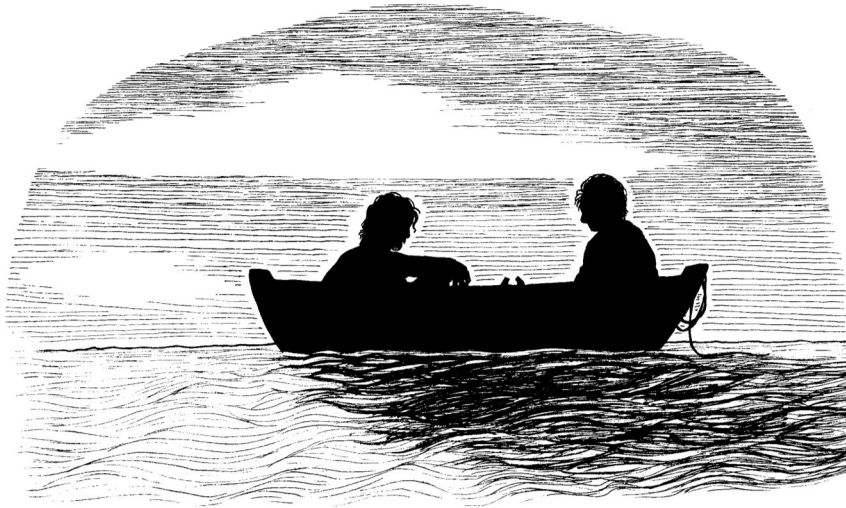
After two days on the open ocean, a fishing boat picked them up. The men were harmonizing to a tune they had devised for themselves called, "A Dinghy with Two Captains," and both seemed rather merry for a pair of shipwrecked men.

Callahan was secured with ropes after being brought on board, and was taken to England, to face trial. He did not resist, but rather looked forward to facing justice.

At the hearing, he freely admitted killing Mark, but also explained the circumstances under which it was done. The magistrate reviewed the evidence, but was most moved by the personal testimony of the young captain, who recounted Callahan's awakening and Christian conversion while in custody. (Apparently, Callahan had tried most strenuously to convert him while they were floating together at sea.) Callahan's friendship with the former captain, Paul Staidman, was verified by his widow (and she also testified to the miraculous change in his character).

The judge considered that an "act of God" had worked to spare Callahan, and so he declared that if God had decided Callahan should live, then he would not be responsible for countering the Divine Mercy.

And so Callahan was set free. He thought often of Elena, and remembered how earnestly she had told him that if God wished him to live, he would live. How he yearned to tell her she was right.



A Dinghy With Two Captains

He continued to call until he was nearly hoarse. He searched the choppy water for the next few hours, but there was no sign of the girl. He alternated between scooping water and rowing, and eventually the storm quieted. Though he never found Elena, he did rescue a soggy captain, whom he found bobbing in the water, still clinging to the empty barrel.

The man was barely conscious, but became more aware when he saw Callahan. When Callahan reached for the man, the hood, which Elena had made for him, fell out of his sleeve and floated away. Grabbing him by his jacket, Callahan hauled the smaller man out of the water and put him gently into the boat.

The captain coughed, and tried to bring some sort of order to his wet clothing, which consisted of a jacket over his night shirt. In short order, he gave up and sat hunched, with his hands on his knees, staring at Callahan.

"You're welcome," said Callahan.

The captain blinked and hiccupped. Then he sat up straight and demanded, with all the majesty of a drunken sailor:

In between the row of stones and the memorial was a lawn of blooming violets. They rippled in the breeze, first in one direction and then another, just as the surface of the water will move under the influence of the wind.

Maggie stood for a moment, taking the whole thing in.

"She's a bride," Maggie said. "And is she waiting or has she been left behind?"

When Stephen shrugged, she remembered her camera and began to take pictures. Above the scene, the great old maple trees shaded everything.

"You're a photographer?" Stephen's voice broke her concentration, and so she looked at him for moment, then nodded.

"I can't resist taking a few pictures," she said to him, "but I'm a little confused. What's the story?"

"This monument is called *The Pirate's Bride*," said Stephen. He walked around to the back of the wall and showed her. There in the center of the otherwise blank wall was an identical copy, in the same script, of the title of Maggie's book.

Maggie started when she saw it.

"So Uncle Toby did all of this?"

Stephen nodded. "Your great uncle had this installed about sixty years ago and his estate provides financing for the maintenance. Every year, an inspection takes place, and as long as it is correctly maintained, we will continue to receive a yearly endowment."

Maggie's eyes traveled over the whole thing, taking in all of the ornate carvings. *Sixty years ago!*

"Then this isn't a memorial for Uncle Toby," she said.

Stephen shook his head "no," and then waved his arm at the mass of violets. "While I encourage the grass and get rid of the violets in every other part of the cemetery, I do the opposite here."

Something seemed to catch his attention.

"Oh, crabgrass." He got down on his hands and knees, and pulled up the grass by the roots. He brushed his hands gently over the violets, checking for more grass.

Maggie was terribly confused. She used the opportunity to record a picture of the violets, captured a view of the "ship" from the rocks, and also took a quick picture of Stephen, without his knowing.

"Do you know the story behind this?" she tried again, after he had stood up and was brushing off his knees.

"Nope." Stephen smiled up at her. "I am interested, though."

I believe the story is in that book from your uncle. Once you read it, you will have to decide if you want to share it with me."

He glanced back at the statue of the bride while Maggie looked down at the book once again.

"This sweet girl was important to old Toby, but I don't know why." Stephen put his hand onto the tip of the stone shoe that peeped out from under the bride's dress.

"Yes," said Maggie. Stephen's obvious affection for the statue only increased her interest. "Do you know who sculpted her?"

"Well, yes," he said, as if she should know. "I did."

There was silence for a moment while Maggie absorbed this. "YOU did?"

Stephen nodded. "Your Uncle Toby saw I liked to carve, so about ten years ago, he gave me a chance to see what I could do. Apparently, he liked it."

"I thought you said the memorial was sixty years old."

Stephen nodded. "This part is," he said, patting the side of the marble wall which had the ship carved into it. "I was yet unborn when this part was made."

Maggie waded carefully through the violets and steadied herself against the rocks so she could look up into the bride's face.

"How did you know what to carve?" she asked. "Did you work from a picture?"

"I used your uncle's description," Stephen said. "He remembered the way she looked from every angle, and he sat with me during the carving sessions. She was not a beauty, but I think he loved her."

"But how can you not know her story, or how they were connected?"

"It has been frustrating," said Stephen, "and I'm hoping the answer is in that little book. But I swore to Mr. MacIntyre that I wouldn't read it, and I haven't. My job is done except for maintaining this."

Maggie resisted the urge to open the book with him right then. "I wish I could promise to tell you, but I'm not sure why Uncle Toby kept it from you. I guess I'll just have to read it and decide."

Stephen nodded.

"Is there anything else I need to know?" she asked.

"Not that I know of," he said with a smile, "but don't be a stranger, OK?"

Maggie smiled in answer, then headed toward her car.

he felt a warm breath on his cheek.

"They are all gone now, and you are set free, my love. May God bless you and--" Another loud crash came as the floorboards splintered under his feet. The touch on his shoulder disappeared as he pitched sideways and fell against the wall.

"Elena!" he called and flailed into the darkness, but he couldn't feel her. The water was rising. Stepping carefully to check for a floor beneath him, he waded to the door. He called again and again, but could not see or hear her.

The upper deck was in chaos. The mast had broken, and the main sail covered everything. Callahan clambered out from under the sail and made his way on top of the broken rigging, trying to see land. The wind drove the water into his eyes, but even with his eyes closed, he could see the lightning.

Squinting against the driving rain, he looked for lifeboats. The ship was taking on water, and the forward bow was already under. He could see no one else on board, and he began to search for anything he could use for a float.

"Elena!" He called once more, as loudly as he could. In that moment, something caught his eye. He held on to the rail and leaned over the side to look. There, still tethered to the side, was the last dinghy!

The galley had listed so far that he only had to lower the dinghy a short way into the water, and then he dropped aboard. He stubbed his toe on something and found that, yes, there were oars in the bottom of the little boat.

He picked up the oars, one in each hand, and stood tall, searching, searching through the driving rain for Elena. As he called her name, he felt the downward movement of the ship beginning to pull him under. He focused all his attention on the matter at hand and pushed off with a tremendous heave. After a few minutes of frantic rowing, he was able to escape the influence of the ship.

around, and then crashed into the rocks and splintered into fragments. Men and boards were tossed alike, as if they were small twigs in a rushing brook.

In the hold, the prisoners were screaming for release. The ship pitched and yawed, and the water sloshed over the prisoners, becoming deeper with every change of direction. Callahan was standing, holding the wrists of the men on each side high up, pulling them out of the water.

"Do not fear!" he thundered. "Have faith!"

Up on deck, a sailor made his way over to the first mate. "Sir, the hold is breached! What of the prisoners?"

"Give them to God," barked the first mate, taking one hand off the rigging to pull his keys from his belt. He tossed them to the sailor, and turned back to his work.

The sailor started across the deck with the ring, but a loose barrel hit him from behind. His legs buckled, and he fell forward. The keys flew up, out of his hand, and then skittered across the deck and were lost in the cascades of water coming across the bow.

During the confusion, a pale hand reached out from the shadows behind the broken barrels and dragged through the water several times for the ring. On the third try, the small fingers closed on them, and the keys disappeared backward into the darkness.

In the hold, Callahan struggled desperately to hold onto his faith. He had asked the men to call back to his shout, just so he knew they were still above water, but some were no longer answering.

"Release us, Father," he pleaded out loud. "We are dying in our bonds, drowning without hope--"

As he spoke, he felt a small hand on his forearm, and it slid toward his cuffs. He felt rather than saw the key, and in a moment, his bonds fell away.

"Praise God, here's the key!" he said. He grasped the ring and easily pulled it out of the weaker grasp. Going by feel to find the right key, he released his own legs, then the legs of the prisoners next to him. There was a deafening sound, like the felling of a giant tree, and the floor shuddered.

Callahan continued to work, and one by one, as each of the prisoners were released, they sprang out through the door and onto the deck. At last, all the men he could feel were gone, so Callahan bellowed to be sure there was no one left.

Something touched his shoulder. He could see no one, but

When she glanced back, Stephen was gone.

She got in the car, and rolled down the window to let out the heat. In the relative darkness under the trees, the little bride was still visible. While Maggie waited for the engine to warm up, she gazed at the monument, trying to make sense of the new information.

She looked down at the curious little book in her hand. Uncle Toby had been a constant writer, publishing many books, and even writing his thoughts rather than speaking them. Until today, she believed she knew almost everything about his life.

She thought back and remembered him telling her that he had fallen in love with a girl who died before they could marry. Could this girl be his long-lost love?

Stephen was another mystery. Apparently, he had known Uncle Toby for at least ten years. When had all these carving sessions happened? And why had Uncle Toby kept all this from her?

Obviously, all of this was part of his former life. Maybe Uncle Toby believed Maggie was too young to understand some of it. Or maybe he felt that it might change their relationship. Maggie wasn't sure, but she hoped her questions would be answered soon.

For now, she was hungry, thirsty and overheated, so she headed for a pizza place. It felt strange not to have to consider Uncle Toby anymore. But Maggie knew the time to worry about him was over; the only one she had to care for now was herself.

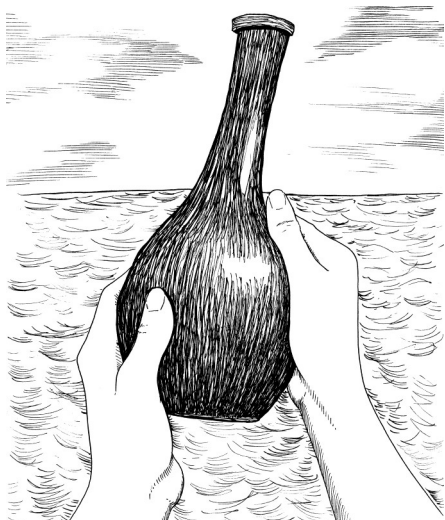
She ordered a small pizza, and because it was between mealtimes, she had the place mostly to herself. She sat down, feeling a little lonely, then she remembered the book.

"The Pirate's Bride," she whispered, touching the cover.

"*Uncle Toby, why did you save this for when you were gone? I wish you would have talked to me.*"

She turned past the title page, then folded back a page made of tissue which covered an illustration. The image she saw was of a romantic "tall ship," similar to the one she had seen carved in marble on the memorial. This ship was nearly on her side in a rough sea, with the sails full of the furious wind.

Beneath the drawing in script was the title, "Madeira Galley." She turned the page slowly, reluctant to look away from the picture, but the story soon caught her attention.



The Pirate's Bride

"Elena held the bottle up to the sun," Maggie read, "and saw the outline of something inside. She put her eye to the mouth of the bottle and tried to see what it was, but the neck was long and thin, and the brown glass shut out most of the light.

Elena shook the bottle, and felt the faint thump of the thing that was inside hitting against the top and falling back. It didn't weigh much, so she thought it must be paper. How would she get it out?

It never crossed Elena's mind to break the bottle, because she was a girl who was careful with things. She looked up past the edge of the rocky beach and saw a clump of shrubs. They were wind-whipped and spare, but that was exactly what she wanted.

She found a couple of long, thin twigs that were fairly straight, and after breaking them to about the same length, she sat down with the bottle held tightly between her knees. She slid one of the twigs down the mouth of the bottle, and found it was long enough to touch the bottom.

"What are you doing out here, baptizing your dolls again?"



Shipwreck

The rocking of the ship had loosened the sling that held the barrels together. One by one, those near the edge broke free and began to roll across the deck. A group of sailors had worked together to secure the first barrel that began rolling, but when the destiny of the ship became known, all discipline broke down.

One of the barrels rolled up against the side and crashed open. It was filled with down, and the soft feathers were quickly sodden in the rain as panicked sailors ran through them.

Another barrel was already missing the top and appeared to be empty. It rolled against the deck and wedged itself into a corner. The young captain made his way over to it, and held on.

None of his commands could be heard, let alone followed, and the men began to panic.

The captain glanced around, taking stock of where the men were, and saw that the cargo was already lost. He felt in the pocket of his coat for the package of evidence that he had been entrusted to transport with the prisoners, and found, with relief, that it was there.

And so it became each man for himself. The longboat was dropped. Overfilled with sailors, it foundered for a moment or two, and then it was sucked into a vortex. It spun completely

"Enter!"

"Captain!" The sharpness in the first mate's tone betrayed fear. "Sir, this vessel is in distress. We are being driven back against the coast."

"What? How can it be?"

The captain threw his jacket over his nightshirt, stepped into his boots, and went immediately out onto deck. He could hear the sails snapping in the fierce wind, and when he opened the door, both men were thrown back. The captain took hold of the first mate's shoulder and yelled to make him hear over the wind.

"What of the rocks?"

The first mate shook his head. The captain couldn't hear many words, but he read the man's lips. "Captain, we cannot steer. We have lost control."

It was only too true; it was plain, now, that they had left the harbor too late.

It was her older brother, Matthew. She had been so absorbed in trying to get the paper out that she hadn't heard him coming.

"You are wanted at the inn, you Minx! Do you remember anything about making beds and cleaning rooms?"

Elena lifted her violet eyes and smiled at him as if he had been complimenting her. And truly, she was grateful that he cared enough to come looking.

"I am not a child. I know what my duties are."

"You are mistaken, my girl! Gathering seashells is not one of your duties!" Matthew pointed to the pile of shells next to her on the sand.

She put a hand on them and smiled up at him.

Matthew noticed the freckles on her cheeks and touched one.

"You are supposed to stay out of the sun, you little bug."

How will you get a man if your skin looks sprinkled with ash?"

She shook her head at him and looked back down toward the bottle.

"Look, Matthew, there's something inside, and I've almost got it!"

Matthew's manner changed immediately, and he peered at the bottle she was holding. His eagerness made him seem years younger.

"I never thought you would really find one, Ellie! Is there a paper inside?"

She nodded, holding the twigs together and twisting them as if she were unscrewing a cap. As she turned them, the paper inside wound itself around the twigs. Just a few more rotations and a couple of inches higher, and the edge of the paper cleared the mouth of the bottle.

"Ah!" she said happily.

She tossed the twigs away, and smoothed the paper over her knee.

"What does it say?" Matthew asked. His shadow fell over her.

The paper was dirty. There were columns drawn on one side as if it might have been torn from some kind of ledger; but she could see through the paper that there was writing on the other side. She paused for a moment and looked around at the ocean waves that rhythmically lapped the beach.

"Just a minute," she said. "I want to remember."

The sky was clear blue, dotted with white clouds. To the west, the horizon was dark, and the clouds were darker, but they were still a long way off. The rocky terrain, which made up the majority of the waterfront areas of Inis Mor, lay totally empty

behind her. *Thank you, God*, she thought.

"Come on, Ellie!" said Matthew, conscious of his own need to get back to work. "It took me a while to find you!"

She drew in a deep breath, and turned the paper over. The script was in a clear hand, and the mind behind the words was urgent.

Elena read it out loud:

I am a prisoner on the Madeira.

*I find myself Captain over a mutinous crew,
a crew that would sooner murder me
than listen to a word of peace or comfort.*

*The old Captain, my friend Staidman,
has been murdered, and his body sent overboard.
The first mate, who was, I admit, no friend of mine,
followed him soon after.
I was "offered" the position of Captain
with no ability to refuse.*

*And now, on this darkest of nights,
while the ship reeks of guilt drowned in port,
I am alone at the helm.
I beg for the help, or at least the prayers,
of whomever may find this.
I know that I may die for other men's deeds,
but please believe that I am an innocent man.
I am as much a prisoner as the men in the hold below.*

We make for the port at Inis Mor."

They stared at each other for a moment, and then Matthew whistled a low note.

"We should take this to the elders, Elena."

He turned his back to the island and looked out at the open sea. The passage would take some time, but the brisk wind would help. He felt he had been wise to leave when he did. Had he waited until morning, the storm would have cost them a day or two. As it was, they had gotten ahead of it. Another gust hit the ship and it sped forward.

Matthew had finished his walk along the cliffs, but still saw no sign of Elena. He had searched the caves first, but they were empty. And he had checked the places where she usually searched for bottles. She was a headstrong girl, and he wasn't really worried, but he dreaded having to tell his mother that she was missing.

He looked out to sea and saw that the ship of prisoners was nearly out of sight. She had to go a long way east before she could turn south, especially with the approaching storm.

His chest tightened as he thought of what could be, but he shook it off. There had been another time when he had been afraid, though, and not for himself.

As a child, Elena had gone missing. And while that was nothing new, a storm had come up, and it was a terrible storm like this one. Everyone had been out looking for her, but the child was not to be found. One by one they returned without her, fearing she had been washed out to sea. And so they had come together in his father's house, and had done the only thing left: They prayed until dawn.

Matthew squinted in the fading light. Whether the sun went down or was covered by clouds, he wasn't sure. The gale wind pulled at his coat and that last button flew off. He clutched it back around him and shivered in cold and frustration.

When Elena had been gone before, they had found her the next morning, hidden in a cave. Her only explanation was that she had been "saved by God."

He glanced up and down the beach one more time, then shook his head. He drove back toward the house with a purposeful stride. If God had saved her before, then He would surely save her this time, too. Elena was probably back home already, waiting for him.

"Captain," the first mate was knocking at the door to the captain's quarters.

The captain rolled over and rubbed his eyes. He held his pocket watch up to the lantern and saw he had only been asleep for an hour.



Late

At twilight, they cast off, and the voyage began. The wind was already howling, and the sails filled immediately when raised. The ship jerked, and with a groan, righted herself and her speed began to climb. The captain nodded, and barked a few more orders.

In the hold, beneath the captain's feet, Callahan felt the ship move and ignored the twinge in his gut. It was too late in the day to leave safely, and with the storm coming, it was madness. But he was not in charge; he was bound in the belly of this ship. He knew each soul he was chained to needed him. And right now, they had no choice but to listen to him; and so the story of the redeeming love of God thundered forth.

Up on the deck, under the main sail, the captain stood with a hand on a barrel to steady himself. The barrel was part of the additional cargo that had been taken on at the last minute to help defray the cost of the journey back to England.

He looked down at the dock. He hadn't expected to see many villagers waiting to wave goodbye to the prisoners. There had been one tear-stained young woman who had waited quite a while, but he didn't see her now.

And so they did, though Elena had to go back to get her pile of seashells.

After the men of the village had seen the bottle and read the note, Elena was allowed to take them back. She put the note back into the bottle and kept it nearby as a reminder to pray for the man who was both captain and prisoner.

In her mind's eye, he was tall and strong, with a reddish beard and blue eyes. Sometimes she saw him in her dreams, and she thought of him in her waking hours. And pray for him she did, especially after she went to her father.

Her father was a strict church man, who enforced the laws with a clear eye and a soul unburdened by guilt. When he heard Elena implore the Lord for the captain's sake, he laughed.

"Yer a fool, Elena!" he roared. "The man's a bloody pirate, make no mistake. He'll swing, aye, he will. A thieving murderer is the worst sort of sinner, my dear, and I hope to be there when he pays his debt!"

"But we are all sinners, Father!" Elena said. "What if the man is innocent, as he says? And if he is guilty, he might repent!"

"Guilty in truth or guilty by association, Elena, it matters little. He is sailing with mutineers and has confessed to it in his own hand!"

"We are all guilty before God, Father. We all need forgiveness."

"You are too young, lass, and too full of your own ideas. You'll be wanting more to do, with less time to think!"

Nothing, not Elena's tears, nor the entreaty of her mother could sway her father from his desire for the harshest justice. 'Tis said that water will wear away the face of stone, and so one would hope that the tears of his only daughter might wear a path into her father's heart, but Elena's tears did not.

And so, while she was made to work all the harder for her boldness, the extra work didn't stop her from thinking or praying for her captain. But instead of appealing to her father, she turned her appeal to God.

She often spoke of the suffering man to her friends; every conversation came back to his plight. Soon, it came to be told that the shy Elena had fallen in love with a pirate.

With the news that a ship of pirates was on the way, the elders decided to prepare the abandoned lighthouse in the center of the island as a temporary holding facility. The men took turns working to build cells, repair holes in the courtyard walls, and dig latrines for the future prisoners.

While they worked, Elena stole away to the top of the abandoned lighthouse, watching the horizon for any sign of the ship. And as before, she walked the shores at night, always praying and watching.

One day when Elena's father went to the barber to get his beard trimmed, he noticed some of the men speaking quietly together. Jonathan McDougal sat with his head lowered, and off to one side, covering his mouth with the back of his hand.

"It's a terrible shame," he said softly, "that her young man has no chance."

"Aye," said his friend, Nathan, who was waiting for a shave.

He leaned forward and said in a near-whisper, "They will hang him for sure, and then what will happen to her?"

Elena's father was a man of few words, but he was not hard of hearing. He knew they spoke of his daughter's plight, and their interest ignited his. As the barber trimmed his beard, he began to consider his daughter.

When the townspeople met to prepare for a possible landing, Elena's father stood to present the idea that the young captain should be saved apart from the rest, and be given the benefit of a separate trial. He added that the letter Elena found in the bottle could be introduced as key evidence, to plea for his freedom. Because of Elena's fathers' standing with the people, his idea was quickly adopted.

Elena's eyes shone when she heard him make the suggestion.

"Thank you, Father, for your wisdom!" she whispered to him, when he sat down. But he prayed that he was doing the right thing.

Elena grew thinner while she pined to see her handsome captain.

"Elena," her mother said while she braided white flowers into Elena's dark hair, "You are such a naughty thing, always running wild. How you worry me! You are almost grown, but you are still mine to love and watch." Her hands soothed Elena's head, then continued to braid.

"Last night, I dreamed you were lost at sea," Elena's mother said matter-of-factly. "'Tis a sad fancy born of my own fears, no doubt! But now I am thinking another way. Perhaps you were born to roam, and this will be your chance!" She hugged Elena and leaned down to whisper in her ear.

"And today, my sweet, I am, once again, dreaming. But this time, it is a daydream in the sun, dreaming of a beautiful wedding for you!"

"It's too late for forgiveness, mate," a voice hissed in the darkness. "Next stop is justice."

Suddenly, Callahan realized the advantage of his position, chained in the dark to men that needed Christ. He waited a few moments for the mocking to die down, and during that time, hope seeped into his mind, and filled his heart. Could it be possible that this was the second chance to serve God that he had prayed for? If so, that meant God had heard his prayer; God had answered it before he had even spoken it!

"It is never too late for forgiveness," he said, "either for you or me. Don't you know the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord?"

As he spoke the full name of Jesus out loud, he felt the power of the Holy Spirit, filling his mind with the truth he once knew. And so, empowered by God at last, he began to pick up the work he had laid aside: In a mighty voice, Callahan raised his head, and began to preach.

He remembered what Elena had said about Jesus rising from the dead, and he tried to picture what that would mean practically. How could a heart that had been impaled on a spear beat again? How could a cadaver that had lain for three days in the Mediterranean heat get up, and breathe, and walk, and talk?

He thought about what his own body would experience in a few days or a week.

I am a dead man, myself. It just hasn't happened yet.

In a rush, beautiful things he had experienced in his life went through his mind, and he longed to feel them once again: Eggs and toast on the table while the sun streams in the window; Rebecca's smile as she leaned toward him; his friend, Paul, raising a glass in friendship.

Those things are my life; not being in this dark ship, chained to criminals, and facing the death penalty!

Elena had spoken about wanting to believe in a pardon, about hope, and about faith. Immediately, he remembered Elena's wholesome face before him with a raindrop dangling from the end of her nose. He had never known a woman to approach him so sincerely, without any self-consciousness. She was like a child.

"I am only trying to show you love," she had said.

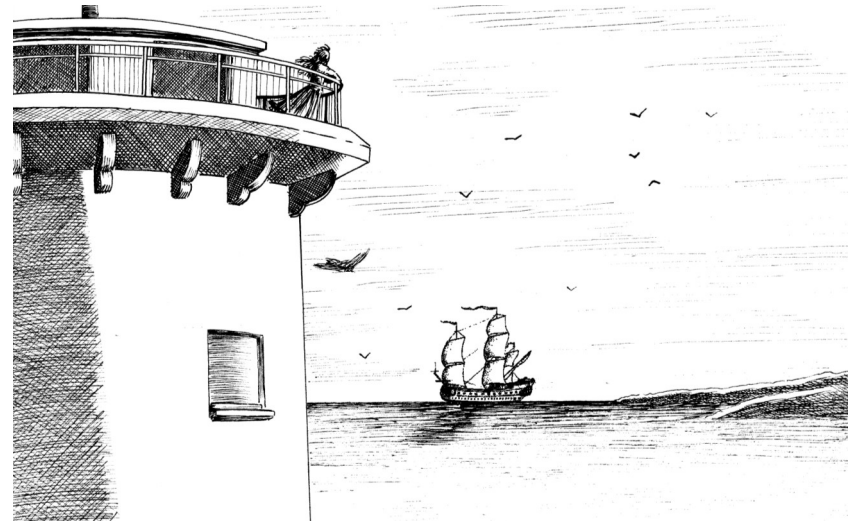
Callahan felt the love of God abruptly, like a physical force. Every sweet smile, and every warm, buttered scone and wildflower bouquet had ultimately come from God, she had said. God had moved that child to show love to him. Christ was inside of her, she said, loving him through her.

Callahan realized that he *could* know that Christ had risen from the dead and was alive, because he had seen Him in Elena. He saw it every time she was kind in response to his cruelty. She told him that her loyalty to him was empowered by Jesus Christ. Her constant love through all the times he had disappointed her, mocked her, and teased her was supplied by the Lord Jesus Christ. What he had been experiencing was the Spirit of Christ, living in Elena!

Humility burst over him in a flood. *Who am I*, he thought, *that she should love me? Who am I that God should love me? I gave up service to the King of Kings for . . . for what?*

His face flooded with shame. *Oh God, forgive me! Forgive my wretched betrayal, my selfish attitude, and my murderous actions! Please forgive me, O God! Give me another chance to serve you, my Lord and my God! Forgive me, please!*

Callahan was openly crying now, and those around him could hear him asking for forgiveness.



The Arrival

At last, on a Friday morning in June, while Elena was watching from the lighthouse, she spotted the top of the mast over the horizon. She paused to make sure it was real, and not just a ripple from the sun, then ran to alert the village. The ship would have to sail around the tip of the island to find the cove, so her early warning gave the villagers a few hours to prepare.

The gulls were crying when the ship came into full view. They circled the tattered main sail. The sound of their cries was mixed with a new sound, and Elena realized that it was the flapping noise from a torn piece of sail that had been used to patch a large hole where the captain's windows had been.

She felt reassured to see the Union Jack on the stern, but the mast bore a black flag with an hourglass. Whether it meant that time was running out, or that the ship had changed hands, or something of both, was not clear.

The emerging men were gaunt, and there was no fight in them. They immediately called for strong drink, but water was the strongest thing they got on their way to the jail.

There were no prisoners below deck.

There was precious little to unload, since the cargo had

broken loose during a storm and been washed overboard. The value of the lost cargo was considerable, but despite a thorough search, none of it was found.

Last to emerge from the ship was the handsome captain, and the townspeople were amazed to find he looked exactly as Elena had described him. He was tall and strong, and his reddish beard fell like glowing embers beneath his flashing blue eyes. His voice enthralled whoever came near, man or woman; and soon, the villagers were bustling about, each eager to serve him first.

Water, food, a pipe of fragrant leaf, and even a soft chair were brought for the man. Everyone seemed to have forgotten the thought of putting him in jail; his innocence was presumed. And he said his name was Callahan.

Elena was almost afraid to breathe. She hovered nearby, but didn't have the courage to approach him. His real presence was beyond her wildest dreams.

But the other girls on the island were not so timid. Fiona with the fiery hair was first to make his acquaintance, pointing out the similarity in their hair color with a flutter of her eyelashes; and one by one, the other single girls found a time when he was alone in the crowd to bump into him. And then the moment came.

"Aye, my thanks to you all," Callahan said, his voice booming. He stood with one boot up on a chair, and he held a flagon of ale in one hand and a sweet cake in the other, as he surveyed the crowd around him.

"But who found the bottle? That is why you are all waiting for us, right? Who found it? And did they pray for me?"

The crowd was silent. The single girls looked jealously at Elena, and Callahan followed their looks. Elena eased around the corner behind which she had been hiding and came into Callahan's view.

"Was it you, small one?" he asked, with eyebrows furrowed, and for just a moment Elena saw a brief flash of disappointment in his eyes.

She looked down and nodded, and felt heat flood her face.

"And did you pray for me, little love?" he demanded.

She looked up and met his clear blue eyes with her violet ones. "I did, sir," she said. "I prayed every day and every hour for your safe return."

Her voice rang out over the silent room, and for a moment all was quiet. Callahan didn't know how to respond, and on his face, Elena saw the struggle between laughter and gratitude.

She shrank back into the crowd. Loud voices drowned

Back on the island, Elena ran to the high point from which she would be able to see the cove. From far above, still out of breath from her furious climb, she watched the men being marched up the ramp, and herded into the belly of the ship.

She didn't know it, but all privacy was now gone for the men. Their feet were shackled, and they were chained to one another, and soon they would also be chained to the floor of the hold, in one group. And that was where they would stay until they arrived in England.

They were still in port when the evening meal was served. A bucket filled with carrot ends and potato peels in a watery, gruel-like sauce was placed on the floor for all the men to share. When the cabin boy left the hold and shut the door, it was nearly pitch black. Only a few bright slashes of reddish light around the door showed that the sun was setting.

Callahan, blessed to be on the edge of the shackled prisoners, was seated with his back against the curved wall. Though they had been waiting for hours, he dreaded the moment the voyage would start. There was precious little fresh air in the hold, and no windows: No windows, and no light.

Callahan thought of the lateness of the hour, and how it would soon be dark. He thought of the abandoned lighthouse where he had been held. A dark lighthouse wouldn't be any help in the black of night when they tried to go around the rocks.

Oh for some wisdom! he thought.

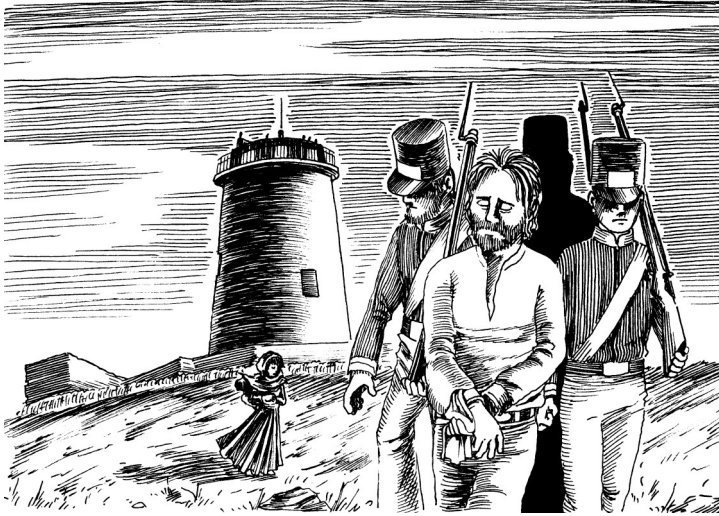
He tested the shackles on his leg, and tried not to think of what lay ahead.

Your own sin is killing you.

He could almost hear Elena's voice, as he gazed downward into the gloom where his mind told him that his hands rested. He could not see them now. But his own two hands were the reason he was here. With his own two hands, he had committed murder.

If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is more profitable to lose your right hand than to lose your whole body in hell.

This time it was the words of Jesus. Callahan remembered that from the famous Sermon on the Mount. He couldn't imagine cutting off his own hand; but then, it was already too late for that, wasn't it? He clenched his fists, and felt the shackles tighten around his wrists. If his hands were gone, he could--no. His feet were shackled, too. Hands or no hands, he was going to face punishment, and there was nothing he could do to stop it.



The Navy Ship

It was an ugly day when the English Navy ship arrived to pick up the prisoners. Dark clouds filled the sky and even the air was heavy. The young captain was eager to get the ship loaded and begin the return voyage to stay ahead of the storm.

There was no opportunity to say goodbye. Elena was waiting outside the jail when the group of prisoners was brought out, surrounded by soldiers, and made to march to the ship.

She tried to give Callahan his hood by reaching past the soldier as they marched, but she was roughly pushed aside for her trouble, and the hood fell to the ground. The company halted, and a soldier picked up the hood and held it high for all to see. Then without a word, he threw it in Callahan's face, and resumed the march.

Callahan's hands were tied in front of him, but he was able to catch the hood as it fell. He tried to turn toward Elena to thank her, but he was forced to march, and she was gone from view. He pushed the hood up his sleeve. It was the last thing she could do for him, and he felt comforted by the pressure of it on his arm.

He turned an eye toward the sky. The dark clouds were piling up and he shivered, feeling a dread of the sea. Even the birds were hiding.

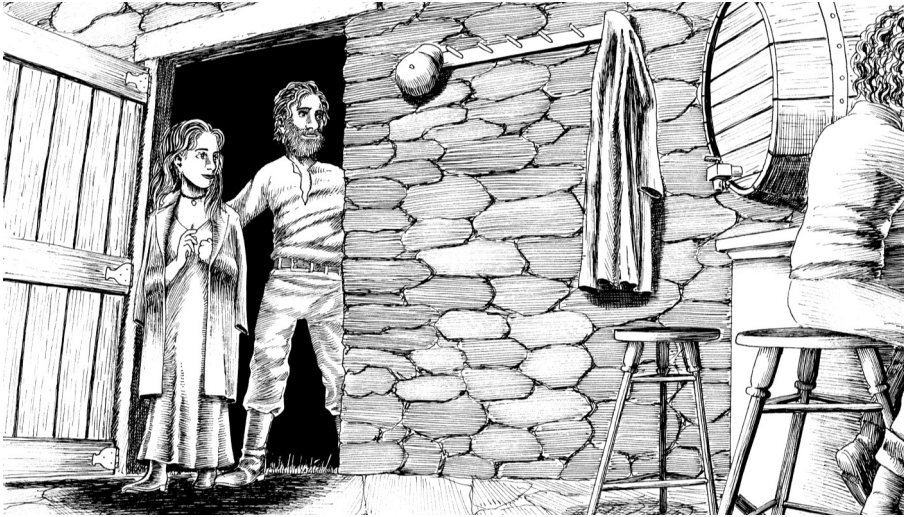
whatever he had been going to say with affirmations, and soon it was apparent to Callahan that the whole town knew that the girl, Elena, loved him.

But Elena fled the eyes, and found solace in her bedroom at the inn. She laid face-down, silent, her tears disappearing into the coverlet. After a time, her sobs quieted. She took a deep breath then, and washed her face. As the water splashed into the basin, she spoke severely to her reflection:

"You are a plain girl, Elena. He cannot see your heart, to know how deeply he is loved." After a moment, she became gentle with herself and went on softly: "It will have to be enough that you know."

And so, it was enough. She watched out her bedroom window for him pass by on his way to the inn, and after he and the crowd that followed him were gone, she slipped out to walk the windy shore before sunset.

During the beautiful time, as the sky transitioned from golden pink to the deepest blue, she implored God for understanding. Deep in conversation with her Lord, she walked back and forth beside the sea until the sun went down. Finally, when her heart had become as calm as the gentle waves that reflected the moonlight, she remembered to thank Him for answering her prayer to deliver the captain safely to Inis Mor.



patted her arm.

“I’ll make you a hood.”

The Tilted Tap

Elena's love drove her to be by Callahan's side as often as possible, so she volunteered to clean his room. She also cleaned and repaired his clothes, and brought him his favorite foods. Callahan accepted her favors heartily. And he definitely appreciated her skill in the kitchen.

It did her heart good to keep busy on his behalf, and though her father wished she would be more attentive to her family work, he was glad to see her happy.

But Callahan was restless as he waited for the hearing to begin, and soon he craved the distraction of rougher men. He began to spend time at the tavern, where he also found rougher women. It pained Elena to see him do these things, but she could not tear herself away from him.

And so the fateful night came. Elena wore her dark brown dress and, once again, donned her black cloak with the deep hood, which was her uniform when she walked by the sea. She took her supper earlier than usual, and walked to The Tilted Tap before suppertime. In the booth near the back, she sat in the

"You don't have the power, the stamina, or the wisdom to do it. God made the world and everything in it, including you. He gave you authority over yourself, but it stops there. We cannot tell God what to do. He says, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy'."

"I just don't deserve it, Elena."

"I know you don't, Cal, but none of us do. It's humbling to realize that we have nothing to offer God. But He is God: What could we offer Him that He doesn't already have? We can't earn His love." She looked down at her cloak and twisted the fabric.

"You talked earlier about living without God. But we cannot live for long without Him because we will either destroy ourselves or be destroyed. God is love, so living without God means trying to live without love. We were made to love and be loved. Walking in His love is how we find belonging and connection, not only to God, but to all who serve Him."

She waited but though she could see different emotions passing on his face, Callahan said nothing.

"Are you--" she faltered for a moment, then rephrased her question. "Do you regret the things you've done?"

"I do long to go back and do things over," he said earnestly. "I wish I could make things right. But I can't."

"You are so different," she said, her eyes searching his. "What has changed?"

"I--I don't know," he said. "I did ask God for help, and I began to see things I should do, but I don't have any way, or any time, to do them."

"I'm curious," Elena said, after a pause. "What would you do if you were somehow able to pay the price for your sins and yet still remain on earth?" she asked.

He took a deep breath, and then spoke without hesitation: "I would visit Rebecca, and pledge myself to her. I owe her everything that I cost her: A husband, a father for her children, financial security, all of it."

"Would you really do that?" Elena asked. "If you were free?"

His eyes filled with tears. "It would be my honor."

"Perhaps God will show you how His love brings life--in time," said Elena.

"In time," Callahan echoed, then swallowed hard, as if it hurt to speak the words.

She nodded, and then said quietly, "I pray we will see each other again."

She reached through the bars and tried to hug him, and he

shadows by the wall, waiting for her beloved to enter.

Just after seven o'clock, Callahan came in, already expansive with drink. He swung the door so wide that it crashed into the wall behind it, and the red-haired Fiona entered, giggling, before him. He followed her to a booth and ordered drinks for both of them.

While they waited for ale, Fiona lay her head on his shoulder. To Elena, their red heads blurred together, reflecting the light from the lamp above them into a single flame.

While she brushed away the tears, Elena still felt better being near him than being somewhere else. She waited until Fiona left at around ten o'clock; after which Callahan moved to the bar, and sang Fiona's praises in a drunken voice. The other men readily agreed, and then talk turned to other subjects.

Elena, who had been sitting for hours, was growing sleepy. She was just about to slip out when she heard Callahan speak her name:

"Elena did that? I had no idea!"

She sat up straighter and listened.

Mike, who was a friend of her brother's, was whispering into Callahan's ear.

"She walked the shores all night?"

Elena's face burned. She had never walked the shore all night, though it was true she liked the look of the moon on the water.

Callahan's face grew sentimental. "And she said she prayed for me every night--wait--she said every hour!"

The men around him all laughed and clapped Callahan on the back. He remarked about how "fortunate" he was. Talk soon drifted to the Madeira, and as Elena listened, the story began to come out in bits and pieces.

"It was my mouth that started it," confessed Callahan suddenly, and Elena stiffened. "I never liked the first mate, and he never had any praise for me. But Captain Staidman was my friend, and it was a hard thing to accept when they sneaked up behind him and-----" he broke off with real grief in his face, and then looked around, remembering for a moment to whom he spoke.

"Well," he continued with a laugh and a forced smile, "it was over almost as soon as it began, and there I was, appointed captain. I hated to accept, of course, but living as a captain is preferable to swimming with the fishes!"

The island men nodded and laughed as if they understood from their own experience.

"I couldn't say no," continued Callahan. "And when the first mate made an official request, that I, as captain, must be sure to deliver a letter to his wife, his next of kin, I accepted. He knew that--well, he understood his time was close."

He looked down at his hands and flexed his fists, and then shook his head as if clearing his thoughts. He shot a grin at his companions.

"I never liked him anyway!" He laughed, and those around him echoed back short laughs of their own, but one or two raised their eyebrows and looked at each other. While he ordered another round, Elena slipped out the back, her mind as cold as ice.

She ran to the cave that had been hollowed by the wind near the shore. Eyes wide, she remembered the way he spoke, and thought of the way his hands flexed and she *knew*. He was not only guilty of starting the mutiny; he was guilty of the murder of the first mate.

She collapsed to her knees, rocking. She hugged herself while the tears ran down her cheeks. She shook them away and then froze at her next thoughts.

Her talk had convinced the townspeople; her childish trust had beguiled all of them. Her father had been right all along. She thought of the flash of his red hair, and of the warmth in his smile when he laughed, and she felt a pang.

"Oh Father God," she whispered. "Why do I love him? What am I to do?"

She replayed the scene in her mind, dwelling on the last part where he talked of the first mate, and then she remembered the first mate's request that the letter be delivered to his wife after he died.

Poor man, she thought. I pity his wife. I wonder if Callahan ever delivered the letter.

Her face flushed hot. *How could he have? They came directly here after the mutiny. And where is the letter now?*

But she thought she knew the answer.

made in my own heart, I say it to prove a point. Wanting to believe gives us hope, and hope gives us courage."

Callahan's deep sigh interrupted her. He closed his eyes and put his hands over his face, then dropped his hands and looked at her.

"I DO want it to be true, Elena. I have spent time wondering why I am even here on this earth, and what makes life worth living. I realize that it all comes down to love."

Elena just looked at him. "You are loved, Cal. You just can't accept the love of the one who loves you."

He shook his head. "I wish God did love me enough to send his Son to die for me, and I wish Jesus did rise from the dead. Now, as I look death in the face, I wish for eternal life more than I can express. But I am not worth dying for, and surely God would know that!" his voice trailed off. He walked to the back of the cell and put one hand on the wall with his back to the window. His voice began again.

"I took Rebecca for granted, and in my proud attempt to fix the situation, I destroyed her happiness, and orphaned her child. I thoroughly deserve everything that is happening to me now."

He turned around and walked back to her.

"God knows everything, Elena. He hears my thoughts, and reads my imagination. You keep telling me He loves me, but I don't feel His love. I feel condemned."

Elena nodded. "Well, that's natural. You are condemned under the law, for you have sinned against both God and man. And now, you condemn yourself. But the good news is that the love of God doesn't depend on you. In his decision to love you, God didn't take into consideration how you value yourself. He has His own system."

Callahan frowned, but Elena continued.

"Your regret at taking your Rebecca's love for granted is one thing, but what of the way you took God's love for granted? At one time, it was an easy thing for you to toss away; it was worth nothing to you. Now you deny His love because you can't feel it."

She looked in his eyes and spoke earnestly. "God's love and mercy haven't changed, Cal. You can't feel God's love because you are disconnected from Him. But He will not force Himself on you; to the contrary, you must go to Him."

Cal took a moment to pace across the cell and back.

"Perhaps I condemn myself," he said. "I wouldn't love me if I were God."

"Trying to be God is a terrible responsibility." Elena said.

"Yes," said Elena. "That's it."

"But I won't be around long enough to enjoy my freedom."

She nodded. "That is the problem that Jesus died to prevent."

"But I have to die no matter what, Elena. Jesus can't stop me from dying."

"We all have to leave this earth sometime, Cal," said Elena.

"But we serve a God who holds the keys of death in his hand.

He decides. And if the Lord of heaven and earth desires you to remain alive, you will live."

"Well, I don't think he desires it, girl, for I face death soon."

"But as you believe in Him, you will be raised to everlasting life."

"I still don't fully understand that. But I am at peace for the first time. I am not scheming or fighting anymore, and it is almost as if I have no stake in my own future."

"Yes," said Elena. "That is what submission to God's will feels like. It is rooted in the knowledge that God deeply loves you and will care for you no matter what."

"Honestly, I believe I have just given up fighting," countered Callahan. "And since I have no control, anyway, I am determined to just be grateful for the time I have left."

"Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?"

He paused for a moment as if thinking, and then answered, "Yes."

"Do you believe that he came as a man and was crucified by the Romans?"

"Yes." This was faster.

Elena paused. "Do you believe that He rose from the dead and is alive today at the right hand of the Father?"

This time his pause was longer. After a moment, he said, "I want to believe, but how can someone rise from death? It's not possible." He looked at her intently and said, "This is not a game, Elena. In a short time, I will be dead. Everything seems to cut through me like a knife, with the knowledge that I have so little time left. I don't want to lie to you and say I believe when I don't."

"If I told you that I had secured a pardon for you," said Elena, slowly. "Would you believe me, even though you are a murderer and a pirate, and it is very unlikely?"

Callahan's face went white. "Don't say things like that, Elena. I can't stand it."

"But you want to believe it, don't you, Cal? You wish with all your heart that it is true! And though it is just a wish I have



The Spy

"Good morning, Cal," Elena said. He had finished his breakfast and was on the way out.

"Good morning, Elena," came his musical reply, and he bowed low to her. She noticed that he seemed to have no ill effects from the previous night's drinking.

She watched him glance around to see who else was watching, and then his eyes danced back to her.

"Have a wonderful day, my sweet." Mid-thought, he stopped, as if he was remembering something, and turned back toward her.

"Er--Elena," Callahan said, as gently as he could. "Did you have your hopes set on me, lass? On us?"

Elena said nothing, but her hands clutched the broom more tightly as she continued to sweep the floor. "*Did you*," she thought. *He means to casually break my heart.*

"I thank you for praying for me, dear. I do," said Callahan. "But--"

She looked up quickly. "Did you like your eggs this morning?"

Callahan colored. "Well, yes, Elena. You made my favorite—"

"And your laundry: Was it starched the way you wanted?" Her left eyebrow arched up as she watched him.

"Well, yes, thank--"

"And do you enjoy the fresh wildflowers on your bedside table every day?"

"Yes, yes," said Callahan, laughing at her. "It's perfect, and done with a loving hand, I know."

"And are you aware," she asked in the same tone of voice, "that you are accused of mutiny?"

He said nothing, but his eyes were on fire, and he moved toward her as if to do anything to close her mouth.

She stopped him, holding her broom in the air between them.

"I have no illusions, sir," she said, her voice trembling.

"None."

She looked down at his muscular hands. They were hands she admired, and knew so well; but they were also hands that may have murdered a man in cold blood. He saw where she was looking, and awkwardly brushed his hands together. He looked back at her face, a little confused.

Elena lowered the broom and her tears betrayed her, flooding her eyes for a moment. "You may not have much time left," she said, her voice lower, "and if it makes me feel better to do things for you, would you begrudge me?"

Callahan was stunned to silence.

Her violet eyes beseeched him, and when he didn't respond, she continued.

"It is the Lord who inspired me to love you," she said, "It's a pure love, and I ask for nothing in return."

Callahan opened his mouth, but just then, the church bell rang the hour, and she started.

"And now I'm late!" she said, briskly, her nose still red. "You had better move along so that I can finish." She looked at him pointedly, and her expression had changed so fast that he laughed.

"Tis true I can never sound the depths of a woman's heart! I am on my way, girl!" His exasperated gaze returned to its merry state, and then he turned to leave.

Believing he was out of earshot, Elena whispered, "You cannot make me stop loving you. It's what I was made to do."

Callahan turned back and gazed at her while she whispered



Facing Death

The next day, he seemed in better spirits.

"Hi, Elena," he greeted her. "You're just the woman I needed to see."

"Hello, Cal," she said cautiously.

"Can you make something for me?"

"I'll try," she said.

"You can do it," he said carelessly. "It's easy. Can you make me a hood to cover my face while I die?"

Her face turned pale.

"Well, can you?" he insisted. "I have to furnish my own hood."

She swallowed hard. "Yes, Cal. I can make you one."

"Thanks, honey."

She nodded, overcome with emotion.

"I have been thinking about what you said," Callahan continued haltingly. His bravado was suddenly gone. "And I realized that you are right. Justice matters more than the desire of one man. If I were to get away with what I've done, I would never rest. I would continue to feel the dead man, Mark, following me around forever, accusing me. I would still hear Rebecca crying in my dreams. But once I pay the price, I will be free."

you are using food to try to wring a confession from me."

"No, Cal," she said. Her nose was red, and it was hard to tell if the water on her face was from the rain or not. "I am only trying to show you love, and to bring you a small measure of comfort in your last days."

"By harassing me," he said.

"You are so strong, Cal," she said finally. "You are able to attract both men and women to your cause, and I have no doubt that if I hadn't found the letter, you would still be free today--free and unrepentant. At least now you have a chance to repent before you die."

He shook the fresh bread she had brought him angrily. "You said it again. I am not going to repent. I don't believe in the church anymore."

Elena looked up at the darkened lighthouse, then back into the cell. "It is God that saves us, not the church," she said. She wiped the rain from her nose with the back of her hand.

"But I didn't come to anger you." She gathered her wet things and turned back toward the rain.

The next time they spoke at length, it was two days before the ship was due. Callahan's eyes were swollen, and he barely responded when she spoke. She handed him a meat pie through the bars, and then asked what had happened.

"I am facing my own death," he said. "It's not easy."

"No, I am sure it's not."

"Thank you for bringing me food. I am sure I will miss this very much while I am on the ship."

"You're welcome," she said, but his words made her think.

"You have done so much for me," he continued. "I don't deserve to have you love me."

"None of us deserve love," she said. "It's a free gift. It's grace."

He nodded. "I see that."

"Have you made things right with the Lord?" she asked.

"I don't feel that He loves me," Callahan said. "You love me more than He ever would."

"No," she said, gently. "The love you feel from me comes from the Lord, Cal. You have betrayed me and made fun of me so many times that if the love I bore you was merely human love, it would have been destroyed long ago. My love for you is a gift, from Him, through me."

"So you are just doing this out of duty?" he said angrily.

"No!" she said, shocked. "I truly love you."

He turned his back on her.

to her broom. A question flitted across his face, and then he shrugged, and continued outside.

Elena heard the shout of laughter when Callahan passed the milk maids near the barn, and without a trace of jealousy, she began the dreadful walk upstairs.

She opened his door. There was his unmade bed; his clothes lay in a crumpled heap on the floor, and the remnants of his midnight snack were on a plate close by. She bent down to pick up the plate, and saw a rumpled *something* sticking out from under the bed.

She tugged on it, and found a calfskin knapsack closed with a string. She loosened the tie, and found three things inside: A folded scrap of paper, a knife, and something wrapped in a handkerchief. The handkerchief was loosely knotted, and when she removed it, something fell out.

The something made a thin, hollow sound when it landed on the wooden floor. It rolled into the room, then fell over and stopped, and Elena saw what it was.

She stared at the thin gold band against the dark floorboard, not fully realizing what she was seeing.

Why would he carry a wedding ring?

Her heart beat hard, and a tear slid down her cheek.

Is it treasure--or a trophy?

She closed her eyes with grief. In her mind, he was now a true pirate.

She remembered where she was and quickly bent to pick up the ring. She rolled it gently into the handkerchief, neatly this time, and tucked it out of sight in the bottom of the sack.

Next she touched the folded paper.

If I don't look, she reasoned, I won't know for sure. His talk will only be drunken bragging. Who will know without proof?

Elena, came a soft voice, *you know.* She heard the voice in her mind, but it didn't come from her. *And I know.*

She closed her eyes, with her fingers on the paper.

Help me, God, she prayed. If you want me to read it, please, give me the strength.

Immediately, she saw an image of the first mate's wife. Her face was red with weeping, but she pressed her cheek to her baby's. The pair swayed back and forth while the woman sang.

Elena opened her eyes. *Thank you, Father.*

Filled with resolve, Elena looked down at the folded paper. At first she could barely read the lumpy, uneven letters, but with some patience, the first line became clear.

"My Darling Rebecca," the letter began. Involuntarily,

Elena's fist clenched, but she forced herself to relax so she didn't crumple the paper. She scanned down the document, unable to read every word:

"A mutiny began. . . Captain has been. . . in cold blood. . . I'll never return. . . no choice but to trust. . . This token, our promise to love your sorrow was real. . . you understood. . . Please know. . . everlasting"

Elena's eyes dropped further down.

"Your . . . Mark"

This token, Elena thought, he must mean the ring. It goes with the letter, and was meant to go back to his wife, Rebecca. She winced as she imagined how Rebecca would feel, knowing her beloved was dead; Elena hoped she would find some comfort in the ring.

Does Callahan intend to return it to her? And does this letter prove he is guilty of murder?

Elena was confused. Her thoughts went round and round, as she tried to make sense of all she had seen.

My father, she thought. He will know what to do.



It Is God That Saves Us

A thunderstorm had broken the next time Elena visited Callahan. She stood outside under the edge of the roof, and passed the food she had so carefully prepared and protected from the rain, in through the bars to him. He felt the warmth of the bread appreciatively, and smiled.

"Thank you, my dear." He looked up at her as she stood half out of the rain. "I believe I have underestimated you. You endure much for me."

Elena smiled. "I am just a small, plain woman. What you underestimate is the love of God."

Callahan looked annoyed. "Why do you always turn everything back to religion?"

"I said nothing about religion, Cal," she said. Her hair dripped with water, and a drop dangled from her nose. "But I can only do what I do for you because the Lord gives me strength. He is MY LORD, and MY GOD. I have no strength of my own, and if I were to try any of this by myself, I would utterly fail. But with God empowering me, I cannot fail."

Callahan rolled his eyes. "Well, if you are trying to save me, then you HAVE utterly failed. First, you betrayed me and now

wrestled with that question myself. It makes no sense that God would take any notice of us, except that He made us. We all tend to love our children, don't we, even if they disappoint us?"

"Indeed," continued Elena when Callahan didn't answer, "what chance would we have of reconciliation with God if he didn't pursue us? For we are born blind and wicked, and live only to know selfish ambition. But Jesus told us that the Father's love is everlasting, and that He draws us with His lovingkindness."

She reached through the bars and touched the tip of her finger to his burly hand, and he looked up at her touch. She looked earnestly into his eyes, searching their blue depths for a sign that she was reaching him.

"Cal, if we accept Him as our Lord, He will heal us and make our hearts tender. His love makes us innocent, in a way we have never been before. We were designed to love others, not to use them. And we were made to be loved in return. That's why it hurts so much when our loved one rejects us. Isn't that what you really long for--true love?"

Callahan remained silent.

"Why did you resist Rebecca when she asked you to become a Christian?" Elena asked, pulling her hand back impatiently. "You could be married to her right now."

Callahan put his head back and looked up. He saw a spider spinning a web in the corner of the low ceiling. He took a corner of the cloth napkin he had been using and deliberately destroyed the web, crushing the spider.

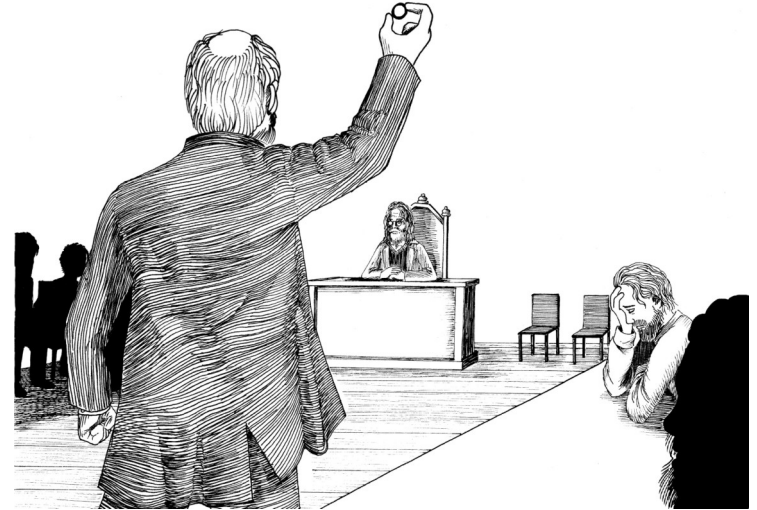
"I felt I was good enough the way I was," he said, still looking for a sign of spiders in the corner. He pushed the filthy napkin back through the bars toward Elena, who gingerly accepted it and put it into her basket.

"If I was going to commit myself to God, I wanted it to be my idea, not hers. It seems childish now, I guess, but it angered me that she wanted me to commit to God first. I know I am better than Mark; I believed she loved me more than she loved him. But she held my love hostage, and when I wouldn't make a commitment to God, she took her love from me as if I was worthless, and gave it to *him*."

"Would Mark have killed you if the situation had been reversed?" Elena asked. "I mean, if he had been made captain, would he have killed you to save himself?"

"No." Callahan looked around at her derisively. "He didn't even want to kill the fish we caught for dinner."

Elena nodded thoughtfully.



The Hearing

Two days later, at the hearing, Elena's father produced the original letter that Elena had found in the bottle, and read it to the courtroom. The sighs of relief were evident, and Callahan smiled broadly, winking at Elena. But her eyes remained fixed on the back of the chair in front of her.

Witnesses were called, and it became clear that Elena was not the only one shocked by the things that Callahan had said at the pub that night. The testimonial evidence appeared to clear Callahan of the murder of the captain, but it just as clearly implicated him as the one who had killed first mate.

Then her father produced the knapsack, and announced that it had been found in Callahan's room. Callahan's head swiveled to stare at Elena, and the eyes of everyone else followed. This time, she gazed sadly back.

Elena's father read the letter he pulled from the knapsack in its entirety, having had time to decipher the handwriting:

My Darling Rebecca,

*A mutiny began under the new moon last night.
Our good captain has been murdered in cold blood, and
I now know that I, as well, will never return to you. I
have no choice but to trust this man, of whom you know,
to deliver this token of our love. He granted me time so I
could write this to you, so I do thank him for that.*

*Your love is a precious gift, and I am sorry I went to
sea instead of trusting our Heavenly Father to provide.
When I told you my plan, your sorrow was real; for you
knew I was not to go. I laughed at your tears to cover
my own misgivings. But please forgive me now, and
know that my heart and body have always been true to
you.*

*I have repented to the Lord, as well, and I know He
will be with me, even now, as I face death. I know we
will meet again, though not in this life. I will always love
you.*

*You were right, my love, though I know it brings you
no pleasure. Bind up your sorrows with this ring, and
hold me close in your heart until we find each other once
more. Remember me, I pray you, to the little one I'll
never know.*

*Always,
Your Mark*

As the words of the dead man filled the room, all eyes turned to Callahan. He hung his head, not moving, and now, no one noticed how handsome he was.

"It's a beautiful bit o' poetry, coming from a sailor," said Elena's father. "But then, the writer must have been an educated man." He paused. His eyes swept the courtroom and ended upon the accused man.



wouldn't turn on them. The only way to be sure of me was if I did something worth hanging. And so they made me captain on one condition; I had to kill Mark, or they would have killed me."

Elena nodded, as she had already considered this. "So they made you kill the man you already hated."

Callahan nodded miserably. "I wouldn't have done it otherwise," he said. "Please believe me."

"I see your sincerity," she said, "but what does it matter?"

He stared at her. "What about God?" he asked. "Wouldn't it matter to him? What about His mercy and love?"

"Committing murder against your will makes it less evil in your own mind, but what about Mark's? Did it make it easier for him to know you didn't really want to kill him?"

Callahan's eyes glittered in the dark. "We were talking about God, not Mark."

"God heard Mark's prayers for mercy before he died! Mark was a believer, and therefore one of God's children. When you sinned against Mark, you sinned against God. Imagine how Mark's earthly father would have felt toward you! God designed Mark for a purpose, the same way He designs every man and woman, and it hurts him when his children are hurt."

Callahan threw up his hands. "Then if I walk on the grass, I'll offend God, too! He made the grass, didn't He?"

"Well," said Elena, "the earth is the Lord's, but I believe He made the grass to be walked on."

Callahan shook his head and looked down. "You know what I mean. By your reasoning, there is nothing we can do to please God."

"Without faith," Elena agreed, "it is impossible to please Him."

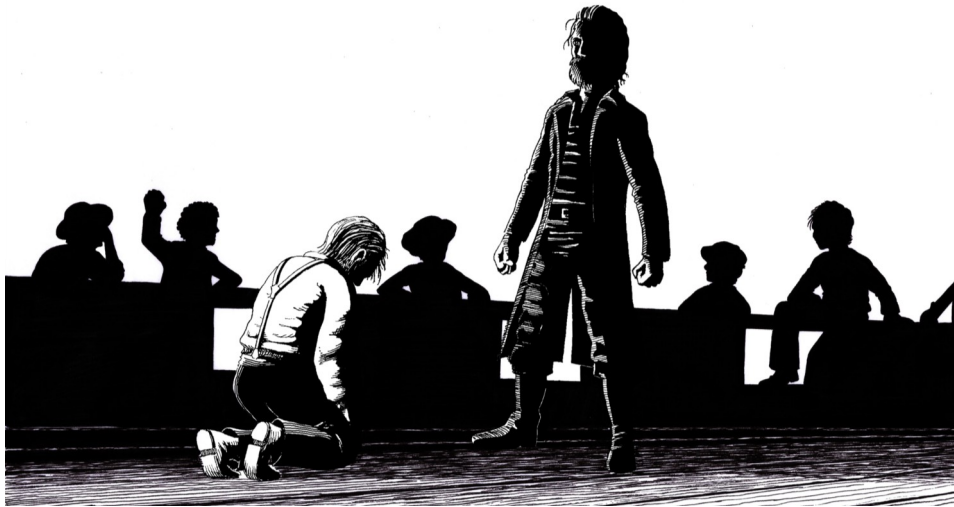
The silence lasted what seemed like a long time, and it was Elena that broke it.

Her eyes sought Callahan's. "The problem is in our hearts, Cal. We cannot earn God's love, for our sinful nature will never let us be good enough. We don't have the power in ourselves to overcome sin, for it has dominion over us. But Jesus defeated the power of sin when he died in our place on the cross. That paid our penalty, which is death. All we have to do is believe in Jesus and God will renew our hearts; Jesus connects us to God so that we can receive His gift of love; that perfect love renews us, so that we can bless others."

"A gift of love," said Callahan, staring thoughtfully at the floor. "Why would God give us the gift of His love?"

"There I cannot help," said Elena. "For many times, I have





Confession

A couple of days later, they spoke of the mutiny again. Callahan was enjoying the roasted potatoes and chicken which Elena had served him in a pretty dish, wrapped in a clean cloth and passed through the bars.

"I feel so sorry for Mark," said Elena. "It seems like he wasn't such a bad fellow, but was only in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Callahan nodded, and spoke with his mouth full. "Aye. And he said as much to me."

"Then how could you do it, Cal? How could you kill him?"

He looked uneasy, and swallowed hard, seeming to struggle.

"The idea," he began, "wasn't a strange one to me. I hated him for stealing my girl. But when it came time to do it, I resisted. I wasn't a murderer, and I knew he had fathered a child with my Rebecca, but I was in too deep." He looked at her helplessly.

"I was made captain against my will. I was upset about what happened to Paul, and I'd had no wish to be part of the mutiny. The whole crew knew that, and they wanted to make sure I

"More's the pity."

Callahan looked up, and squirmed under his gaze.

"Callahan," he continued, "Who killed the first mate?"

Callahan's eyes pleaded with him for a moment before he spoke. "It wasn't my idea, sir. I swear it wasn't."

"And which words of yours am I to believe? The ones you are saying now, or the ones you spoke when you were drunk? The voice of this dead man condemns you, for you kept this ring, did you not?"

He held the ring high and walked in front of the village men, showing each one the golden token.

Callahan said softly, "It was my responsibility, sir." He looked down at his hands, miserably.

The Governor looked around at the other prisoners. "Perhaps one of these young men would like to add some information to what the court has already heard."

Callahan looked at the others, wildly. They were seated, shackled together in one row. They glanced quickly at each other, then leaned in whispering and listening by turns. Finally, one dark-skinned sailor with a scraggly beard and an earring spoke.

"We don't know nothin'!" He sat back and folded his arms defiantly while the men around him elbowed each other and grinned, but Callahan just dropped his head.

"I see," said Elena's father. He looked at the Governor, and raised his eyebrows.

The Governor's face remained impassive, and he spoke:

"As no man will provide an alibi, we must rely on the evidence given. This concludes the hearing. All the prisoners will be remanded to the jail."

Callahan didn't resist as his hands were tied behind his back.

He walked out of the room behind the other prisoners, his angry eyes on Elena, as if willing her to look up. But she could not watch him walk away in bondage.

After he was gone, the room began to clear, and Elena's father came to her.

"You have surprised and pleased me, my dear," he said. "I cannot tell you how much I respect your honor. I know this hurt you very much."

She reached out to hold his hand, and then pulled it to her pale cheek, which was wet with tears.

"I love you, father," she whispered.



The First Visit

In the following week, the whole group was reported to the authorities in London for their part in the mutiny, including Callahan. His charisma was no longer effective, and now no one, except Elena, remembered to bring him food or water in jail.

At first, he wouldn't accept her help; but eventually, out of desperation, he took it. The navy ship that would transport the prisoners to England was due July first. There were only nine days left.

Elena visited the jail at least three times a day. Visitors were only allowed to enter the walled-in area after they passed through the guarded gate, and interaction with the prisoners was limited to talk through the bars that covered the windows.

On her first visit, she had walked around the compound to see how they had secured it. The guard at the gate was Matthew's older friend, Denny Cahill. Denny had nodded to her. Everyone knew who she had come to visit, but he stood tall and did his job.

"Who are you after visiting?"

"Callahan, Denny."

He looked behind her to see if she came with anyone else, though it was obvious she had walked up the hill alone, and then

felt sorry, for he knew his words burdened this little one who had invested so much in him, but he needed the truth.

Elena was praying for direction, for she thought she knew her own heart. *Why, Lord?* she pleaded. When she stopped her mental flood of words and waited, the words of Jesus echoed back into her mind: *"Greater love hath no man than this; that a man lay down his life for his friend."*

Elena gasped and opened her eyes, then looked quickly away from the sun into the dark jail. She continued to gaze into the dark for a few moments until her eyes adjusted and she could once again see Callahan's face.

"There is no danger of us being married, Cal. . . ." The words came out softly. She knew, no matter what, that they were true.

". . . and I don't think you understand how much Rebecca loved you," she continued.

Callahan looked up, disbelieving.

"Sure, and she loved me so much she left me," he said bitterly.

Elena shook her head, "No. Rebecca knew that if she married you, she would spend her life dreading your death. She knew she would rise to eternal life, but you would be lost forever.

Can you imagine the lifelong torture that would be for a woman who truly loved you?"

Callahan stared through the bars at Elena's plain face, so earnest in the sunshine. He realized that she had been thinking about these things for herself.

"And there was also the matter of her own salvation," Elena went on. "It would have been very hard to live her life with you and give herself to you, always opposed your beliefs. You may very well have convinced her to turn her back on God, and then she, too, may have been lost."

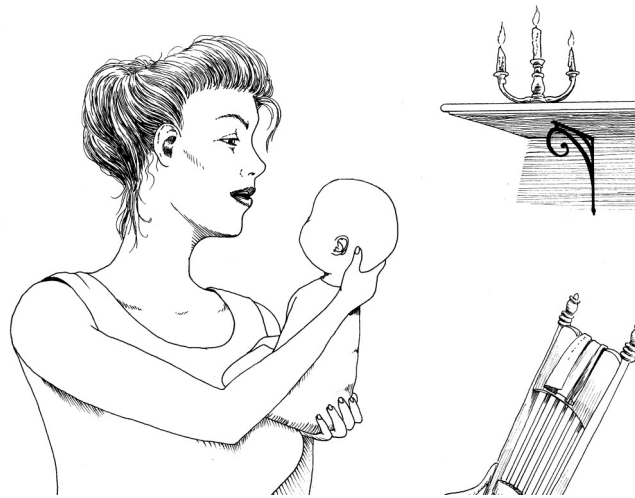
Callahan looked down and shook his head.

"What example would you have been to your children?" continued Elena, tenderly, stepping toward him. "If they honored their father and followed you into unbelief, Rebecca could have ended up losing her whole family."

He shook his head like it hurt. "I don't understand you," he said, meaning he didn't want to understand. "Why don't you just go home?"

Elena opened her mouth and then closed it and nodded.

"All right." She bent to gather her things.



Greater Love

"She cannot have loved him!" Callahan thundered, surprising her into taking a step back. "My actions saved her from a terrible fate, for she loved me--only me--for so long. She longed for me but made me wait for her--" his voice broke. "She DID love me, but she would not have me. And it almost killed her, but she would not bend. She wanted to marry a 'Christian.' I was almost a priest! Wasn't that good enough?"

"The Lord does not want us to be unequally yoked," Elena began.

"That's fine coming from you!" Callahan spoke harshly and she recoiled again. "You say you love ME! Why would you give your pure Christian heart to a man you would never marry?"

She was confused, for she had asked that same question of the Lord. *Why, Father? Why have you given me this love?*

Elena walked away from Callahan, and turned to face the sun with her eyes closed. She stood with rounded shoulders, her brow knit, accused. Callahan saw the wind stir her dark hair, lifting it off her neck where it flowed from beneath her kerchief. His eyes moved to the daisies that swayed in the long grass behind her. She was free, yet she wanted to love him. He almost

nodded.

"Show the basket."

She lifted the cloth that covered the food she had brought for Callahan, and the scent of fish and chips filled the air. Denny's stomach growled.

"Haven't you eaten, Denny?" Elena asked.

Denny blushed, and ignored her question. Elena replaced the cloth and moved toward the gate he was unlocking. As she passed through, she handed him a small piece of fish and a biscuit that she had wrapped in a napkin. He nodded as if this were normal, and the food disappeared into his pocket. He locked the gate behind her and went back into the guardhouse.

"Why you, Elena?" Callahan asked, after he had finished the rest of the fried fish and was brushing the crumbs out of his beard. "I have hurt you the most. Why are you the one to bring me food and comforts?" He swept his hand to indicate the little bouquet of pink wildflowers she had gathered for him on her way across the moor.

"Because, Cal," she said, "I love you."

"If you love me, then why did you turn me in?" His voice betrayed frustration, but he waited for her answer.

"Because justice demands it," she said, finally. "We have a higher power Who sees all, and you murdered a man in cold blood. If I were to hide your sin, then I would sin as well, and even worse, you would have no reason to repent."

"Is that your goal? To try to get me to repent?" This time the question was scornful, derisive.

"I only want you to have a chance," she said.

"A chance?" his voice was bitter. "What chance have I got? I am locked up in this God-forsaken darkened lighthouse--"

"Shhh," Elena said. "God has not forsaken this place; nor has he forsaken you. It is the other way around."

Callahan nodded. "I see. It's my fault, then. You see this as all my fault."

Elena just looked at him, silently, but her eyes were full of compassion and love. Eventually, Callahan dropped his eyes.

Later that day, when she brought his dinner, they spoke of his background before he went to the sea.

"I was training to become a priest," he confessed. "But I fell in love with a girl, and I couldn't imagine spending my whole life without her." He shrugged. "She soon left me, but I had a burning passion and I no longer wanted the church. I wanted to

live!”

He smiled and then stopped when she didn't return his smile.

“Is this what you meant by living?” she asked.

His face darkened. “Do you enjoy being cruel?”

“No,” she said. “I honestly want to know. What did you mean by living? How can one live without God?”

“Lots of people live without God,” he said, trying to affect a wise smile. “It IS possible.”

“Not for long,” she answered quietly. “But I really want to know what you meant by 'living.' Do you mean being free to follow your passions?”

“Yes,” he said, almost laughing at her. He lowered his head and raised one eyebrow. “I realize you have no idea what that means.”

She looked at him for a moment before answering. “I am just a girl, and have none of the experience you are talking about, but even I must cultivate temperance,” she said.

“Tell me about your need for temperance,” he said.

“I have walked the shores, looking for your message, long before you sent it.” She said. “I saw your face in a dream, and I knew it before you came. Ask anyone on the island, for I described you to them all. Many times in the middle of the day, I would be seized with a desire to pray for you, for your safety, your comfort, or your salvation. There were many times when I could not sleep, nor could I focus on my work for the excessive nature of my love for you,” she said. “I, as much as you, need temperance. I need self-control.”

Callahan was visibly moved. “I have heard some of this,” he said, “but I don't understand how you could guess what I looked like and love me so much before you even saw me. But I am even more confused about why you continue to love me now that you know the truth about all the things that I have done. Especially when you know that I, obviously, do not love you.”

Elena winced at his use of “obviously”, and paused for a moment before she responded.

“I am learning what it must have been like for the Lord Jesus.”

Callahan frowned and tilted his head. There was a silence while she gathered her thoughts, and then, just as she began speaking, another of the prisoners began yelling to the guard, and banging his metal cup against the stone wall.

“His Holy Word tells us that while we were yet sinners, he died for us.”

Callahan cupped his hand around his ear, and Elena raised

casual. “Did you turn me in for revenge?”

“No!” Elena said. “I wanted to believe in your innocence, but I understood the truth.”

Elena paused and bit her lip, but when Callahan said nothing, she went on.

“God gave me a vision of Rebecca’s sorrow, and when I saw her, I realized how desperate she was. Your actions have affected so many: The men who died on the ship deserve justice, as do their wives and children.”

“Ah, so you did it for Rebecca,” Callahan nodded patronizingly, “Now it makes sense.”

“Your Rebecca,” said Elena with a little heat, “has been waiting a long time to hear from her husband. You know she will never see him again, because you killed him! How can you say you love her when you took her chosen one away from her, and then continued to make her wait so long for news?”

"The treasure you planned to split with the others, the gold and silver, it was lost to you as well?"

"It was," Callahan sighed. "The entire voyage was built around the chest filled with treasure. The captain--" he broke off and corrected himself, "--my friend, Paul, had lashed himself to the chest at the first whispers of mutiny, in order to prevent it from being stolen. But he didn't know how ruthless the men were, and instead of protecting the treasure, he had only made himself vulnerable." Callahan's eyes were haunted as he remembered what he saw.

"No one really wanted to hurt him, for he was a kind man, and a good captain. And so they wounded him and left him bound to the treasure in his own cabin. I intended to go in the night to release him, but the storm was upon us, and I was delayed." Callahan's voice was heavy with regret.

"Later, when I entered, Paul was struggling with the silversmith. The smith was mad with lust to possess the treasure, and had mistakenly unlocked the chains holding the chest to the floor, in an attempt to get it open."

"Paul must have regained consciousness when the heavy chest began to slide back and forth, for I saw them grappling on top of it while it slid from one side of the cabin to the other, each time gaining momentum. It was all I could do to avoid being crushed when it cracked up against the side near me."

Callahan paused and wiped his eyes, "I watched it tear out the sill and go right through the window," he said, swallowing hard. "When I looked out through the hole, I saw it--saw them--disappearing into the water."

He was quiet for a moment, and then he turned toward Elena. His eyes were red.

"There was no way for me to save him, Elena. He was chained to the treasure, sinking fast. I knew there was nothing I could do, and so I did nothing." His eyes turned from hers to stare into the darkness. "I did. . . nothing," he repeated.

"And so you lost the treasure of his friendship," she whispered. "What a terrible thing."

He looked up at her sharply, then nodded.

"Yes."

"I am so sorry for you, Cal."

At her words of sympathy, he stood to stretch his legs in the tiny cell, and flexed his arms out to the side, making fists. It was almost like he was fighting off her kindness.

"And now, even you have betrayed me," he threw the words over his shoulder, stretching his back, and pretending to be

her voice.

"In a way, I have been giving my life for you, Callahan, though you care nothing for me. I have spent hours praying for you every day. I have waited on you and served your needs from the moment you landed on Inis Mor." The noise around them quieted when she spoke louder.

Callahan nodded. He fingered the clean, yellow cloth into which she had folded his bread, and considered that even this was evidence of her love. Because it was clean and yellow, it was new; new things were not easy for her to come by.

"When I saw the laughter on your face as I stood there, loving you, it stung," Elena moved closer to the window and continued in a softer tone, "but imagine how terribly you hurt God when you rejected his divine path for your life in exchange for the temporary love of a woman! And still, he continues to pour out His love upon you. But since you have rejected Him once, and have continued to reject Him since, He has allowed you to realize the desperate situation of your sin. Your own sin is killing you."

"I appreciate what you've done for me," Callahan said, finally. "But I am suffering from a misunderstanding with the law, not because I have disappointed God."



The Gospel

"Sin is killing all of us," she said. "We cannot be one with a perfect God when we have sin in our hearts. Sin always ends in death, and He is the God of the living."

Elena had been speaking softly, with her eyes down. She raised her eyes to him at the end, and saw that Callahan had opened his mouth to speak.

She raised her hand to keep him quiet and continued. "But there is good news. The gospel is the story of how God rescued us. Jesus is the perfect Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

Callahan nodded slowly and arched one eyebrow as he spoke. "I was studying to become a priest, remember?"

She nodded back and went on. "Jesus is God himself, in human form, born of a virgin. He was not born in sin the way we are. His birth gave him the power to resist temptation and remain pure. He was the only innocent man who ever lived."

Callahan remained silent, but crossed his arms.

"Jesus Christ was perfect," she continued, "so his death sentence was not needed for his own sin. That is why his death can be applied to our death sentence, to satisfy justice. The gospel is the good news that Jesus has the power to forgive, for

Cal shook his head and looked down. "Well, you won't find it in me."

Elena looked at him tenderly.

"God made you, Cal, and He has a plan for your life, even now. He is the source of all goodness, and He will change your heart if you let Him."

Callahan said nothing, but took another bite of the scone.

"I have a question for you, Cal. If you have no interest in God, then why did you write in your message to ask someone to pray for you?"

"I don't know." A deep sigh came from the darkness. "I guess I wanted to seem like a man who wasn't guilty."

Disappointment flooded Elena, turning quickly to anger.

"How dare you?" she asked, her eyes flashing. "You asked me to petition the Lord God Almighty as part of a TRICK? You will answer to Him for that."

She paced outside his cell window, then shook her finger at him through the bars. "I prayed so often, and so sincerely for you!"

Callahan tried to be serious, but when he walked to the window, his eyes were merry.

"I thank you for that, my love, in the same spirit I thank you for the other kindnesses you have gifted me: The food, the flowers, and the little luxuries. I did ask you to pray, but you must remember that I have not asked for all the rest of that. You offered that by yourself, little one."

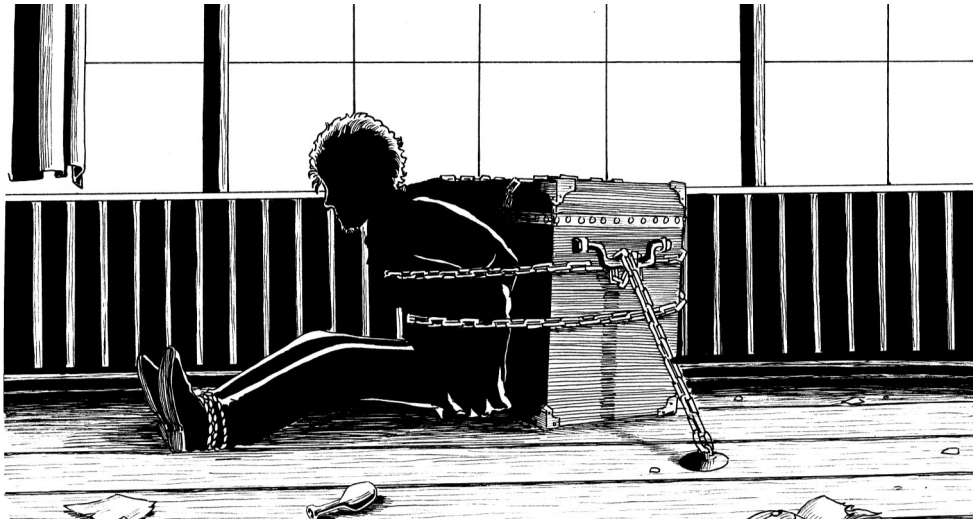
When he continued to chuckle, she turned toward the stone wall and walked furiously. She went all the way around the inside of the wall until it brought her back, and then slowed her pace as she came to the front of Callahan's cell once more. She closed her eyes and took a moment to catch her breath. When she opened her eyes, her anger was gone.

"No, Cal. I love you because God has put it into my heart to do so. I don't hope for something from you. My reward comes from God. I am doing as He directs me, and I know He is pleased. I am not sorry for praying for you. You need prayer whether you think you do or not, and I don't need your direction or your permission to pray. It is you who value the wrong things, and let real treasure slip through your fingers."

Her words penetrated deeply, and by the time she was finished speaking, all trace of his levity was gone.

"Yes," he agreed, "I have lost my treasure."

Elena knew he didn't mean her, and she wasn't sure if he meant Rebecca or the gold, and so she tested him carefully.



Guilt and Innocence

In the morning, Elena brought hot buttered scones. At least, they were hot when she left, and were still mostly warm by the time she got to the jail. The sun was shining, and when she passed the scones through to him in a red-and-white checked cloth, he smiled at her in gratitude. She put some honey into a small glass and passed it through to him, then handed him a little spoon.

"Ah, Elena! Thank you, little love!" He got some honey on his beard, and so she passed a pre-moistened cloth through the bars, and he laughed and shook his head.

"I see you thought of everything!"

She smiled. "I just thought of what I might need if it were me."

He nodded, still smiling at her. "You are near perfect in some ways."

She shook her head. "That's not what my father would say."

"Your father." Cal's smiled faltered. "He looks for evil, and hunts it."

She nodded, her face impassive. "In this world, we will always find evil. But I search for good."

he paid the price for all of our sin."

Callahan clapped his hands. "Well done, little one! You have learned your lessons well!" He widened his eyes, and nodded patronizingly. Then he stopped mock clapping and his expression darkened.

"I don't need your Sunday School lesson--you speak like a child. I am right here in front of you, wasting away in the darkness, yet you squander my precious time with emptiness. I have heard those words before. None of this can save me now."

"You're wrong," she said. "It is the ONLY thing that can save you."

"Nothing can save me! Your betrayal has finished me." He said the words bitterly, and almost triumphant, knowing it hurt her to hear him say it. He stepped back into the dark part of his cell and sat on his bed. For a few moments, everything was quiet, and Callahan could hear by the hitched sound of her breathing that she was crying, out of his sight.

"No," she countered sadly, her voice so soft he could barely hear it. "Your own sin is killing you."

In the quiet that followed, they both could hear the voices of the other men around them arguing, laughing, and fighting. Elena came close to Callahan's window and looked in.

"Surely you must see how the anger and passion in your life led you astray! You hated the first mate before you even went on board, isn't that right?"

"Yes," said Callahan darkly.

"Why?"

There was a pause.

"He stole my true love." Callahan whispered the words, staring off into the darkness, as if he saw something there. But how the words burned Elena!

"I followed him onto the ship," Callahan said. "I knew he was weak, and I understood that he would never care for Rebecca the way she needed care."

"So what did you plan to do?"

Callahan shifted his weight and spoke to his open palms. "I wanted to reason with him, I guess. I needed him to see that he wasn't good enough for her."

"I can't imagine anyone not wanting you," Elena said earnestly. "But she must have had her reasons."

"Aye," said Callahan, looking at her meaningfully. "She wanted a 'Christian'." He almost spat the word, as if it would somehow puff through the bars and physically hurt her. "And the spineless coward she married had that qualification."

"Why was he a spineless coward?"

Callahan looked at her for a moment as if he suddenly remembered to whom he was talking.

"Ah, girl," he said with a sneer. "I am not going to tell you all the dark things that happen at sea. He was right when he said that sea life was not for him, and that he should have been a gardener. And yes, he should have stayed at home."

Elena flushed angrily at his tone. "Did you plan to kill him?"

Callahan flushed in turn. "No! I wanted to keep an eye on him, to convince him to leave her to me. But I never wanted--well, never *planned* for him to die. That was just something that happened during the mutiny."

"Which you started."

Callahan shook his head. "No, girl. The captain was my friend from childhood. I never plotted against him, nor wanted any foul thing to happen to him. I only spoke against the first mate."

"Mark."

"Aye, Mark," he nodded harshly, then went on.

"The man who started the mutiny was a silversmith. When he realized the cargo was precious metals, he couldn't sleep for greed. But he--he didn't survive long."

"Don't tell me the details; I hate all of this," she said, brushing imaginary dirt off her skirt as if she could brush off the evil. "So much loss of life, for what purpose? Just to find treasure? For money?"

"Aye, girl," Callahan said wearily, "for money, and for treasure." He took a deep breath. "But also for honor."

"Honor?" she asked, disbelieving. "There is no honor in any of this."

"Aye, I see you think you're right," Callahan said. "But it doesn't change my heart. I never wanted anything bad to happen to my friend, Paul. I only wanted my girl and a way to care for her."

He paused a moment, and looked up at her with such questioning sorrow, it nearly took her breath away.

"Is that so wrong?"

Elena held his eye for a moment, and then dropped her head.

"No, it's not wrong. It's very right and good."

Callahan looked surprised.

She took a moment to think, and then said, "But she was already married."

Callahan closed his eyes. "She was."

He opened them quickly and looked at her. "And I know what that means, little love. Don't tell me, because I did learn the rules."

Elena was quiet, then said, "I'm glad."

Callahan moved deep into his cell, and stayed there, and after a while, Elena walked home slowly.