It's time for me to pay the price, and for the life of me I can't decide whether to step forward and pay it, or whether to run.

Why do I want Jack Sparrow in my bed?

The first I met him, I was ten. I'd joined a group of rum-runners as a lad-of-all-work. They'd come to a cay out in the middle of nowhere, and were offloading excess rum. I decided to skive off, and went for a bit of a wander. It was only a small isle; it wouldn't take me more than an hour to go all the way around it. Halfway around there was a man lying on the beach. I thought him dead. Once I was within earshot, I worked out he wasn't; he was snoring fit to wake any sleeper. Interesting looking fellow. All of a sudden his eyes flew open. He grabbed me by the arm and had me looking down the blade of a knife.

I yelled. He yelled himself, as though I'd frightened him. I ran toward the rest of the crew, howling as though the Wild Hunt were on my tail. He followed, and caught me within about ten feet of where we'd started. The other lads had heard the ruckus, and were heading in my direction, pistols drawn. They thought I might have scared a wild pig. They would've enjoyed the pork. That's how Captain Jack Sparrow met up with the rum-runners. It cost him three months service and a number of the jingle-jangles in his hair to pay his way.

I learned a lot of sea-craft from Jack Sparrow. He took me on as an apprentice. The rest of the crew were a slack and slovenly lot. He said I'd have to do things right. He made sure I did every chore to the best of my ability; taught me how to tell the course we were following; to steer by the stars; how to use the cross-staff.

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Now, I was raised in a convent; I didn't know how rutting worked where men were concerned – Sisters Boniface and Patrick and a spyhole in the wall of Sister Patrick's cell had educated me about the female side of things. I had no idea the captain's insistence on Jack Sparrow sharing his
meals and cabin had any other reason than friendliness.

To this day I cannot believe I was so naïve.

The Captain would disappear into his cabin after the evening meal and not reappear until morning. The bosun and the mate would share out duties between the watches. I'd been inheriting work as more and more of the men retired below, drunk as lords. One night, the bosun and the mate decided they were no longer interested in being responsible for the ship. I was in charge, as the only crew-member sober enough to see a single set of stars. I tried to keep things going, but after an hour or so, I got fed up with trying to do six things at once. I lashed the wheel, dropped the anchor, and trotted off to the captain's cabin to complain.

I could hear noises coming from the Captain's cabin - panting and groaning. I wasn't a complete innocent; I'd worked out what the men did. I'd learned not to interrupt: getting thumped by someone caught in the middle of a pleasurable bout of self-abuse is a very good teacher. I decided to wait until the captain had finished. Then I spotted the knothole. If it hadn't been for the lamplight inside shining out through it, I would have missed it for certain.

My education was much enriched by what I saw. I learned boys could do something similar to Sister Patrick and Sister Boniface. I learned people did something similar to what dogs and cats did, and I learned the Captain enjoyed it on the receiving end. Or he enjoyed it on the receiving end from Jack Sparrow. I watched them for a while, and learned a few more things which appeared to make the Captain very happy indeed. Once they'd collapsed, I snuck out of the wardroom, and noisily made my way back in again.

After that, if I wasn't on watch on deck, I was “on watch” in the wardroom. The Captain wasn't aware of what I was up to, but Jack Sparrow was. He cornered me one day and explained what was going on. I asked a lot of questions about girls, which made him chuckle. The next port we stopped in at, he took me to a whorehouse. I learned a lot that night too.

When next I met Jack Sparrow, we were working a smuggling crew out of Virginia. By this time, I was fourteen, and starting to sprout teats. I was no lad, although I was doing my best to look like one. One of the consequences of not looking a strong lad was being an unwilling partner in the sorts of things the rum-runner and Jack had got up to. If any of the crew got their hands on me, they were going to twig. Jack was quartermaster, and he recognised me straight off, called me by name. He remembered two things from our past acquaintance. One was my innocence – or rather my virginity - something he soon ascertained hadn't been mislaid in the intervening years. The second was I'm a light sleeper.

Jack decided to take me on as his assistant, for I could read and write, as well as knowing a little figuring. As his assistant, I got to share his cabin; so I could get some sleep, he told me. For the first few months, everything went swimmingly. I was able to sleep (and wash) in privacy. I thought he knew what I was – he was smart enough, and he didn't make any comment about anything. Then Monk Morgan joined the crew. Morgan was a burly man, who got the nickname of “Monk” because he would tup anything that moved. If it stayed still, he'd hit it until it moved, then tup it. He wasn't picky about whether the recipient of his “affections” wanted them, or even whether they were someone else's already. The only one way of staying out of his clutches was to fight.

I looked a rather slender and scrawny lad, fine-boned, with a pretty face. Paint me with circles and call me a target, as far as Morgan was concerned. He tried to corner me in the hold. I wriggled my
way out of it. He decided I was playing hard-to-get. The second time I put a knee in his groin, and he put me into the bulkhead with a backhand swipe which made my head spin. When he tried to pick me up and push me around, I threw up all over him. He let me go and I fell to my hands and knees, retching up two-thirds of what little I'd eaten in the past week. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see him preparing to kick me, and was bidding farewell to my ribs, when I heard Jack's voice.

“I wouldn't be doing that if I were you.”

Turned out one of the other men had seen Morgan heading in my direction, and decided I wasn't a fair match for the Monk. A couple of others came forward to tell my side of the tale and the long and short of it was Monk landed in the brig.

Jack supported me back to the cabin, and started checking me over to make sure I wasn't suffering more than a concussed skull and a few bruises. That's when he discovered the bandages around my chest. He took one look at those, and before I could so much as protest, he'd whipped down my breeches, confirmed his suspicions, hitched up my breeches, pulled down my shirt, and put me up into my hammock. Didn't say a word about it. As for me, well, once I realised this was the first he'd known of my secret, I didn't know what to say. I thought he'd guessed long since.

Once I'd recovered, he started teaching me how to fight properly, with sword and knife. Nothing changed until I had my first monthly bleeding. Near scared myself silly. We were in port, so Jack took me along to another whorehouse. He had a word with the Madam, who taught me the facts of life. That's what he told the rest of the crew. They all toasted “Mark” (my name at the time) for his first woman, while I tried hard to keep my voice in a low register.

After that, Jack Sparrow went off to the Far East, and had his adventures with the East India Company. Me? I got a berth on Jack Rackham's crew. That's when I stopped disguising myself as a lad: with Anne Bonney and Mary Read already on strength, there wasn't any harm in Mark Blackett becoming Black Maggie. I gained a reputation: a smart sailor, a dangerous fighter, and a clever navigator. The tale of my fight with Morgan had grown in the telling, until I'd bested the man single-handed and had him retching and heaving on the deck.

First time I learned that Morgan had heard it was in a tavern. I was there with a couple of friends, and the light was blotted out. I looked up and there he was. He wasn't in a mood to hear me explain. Said no woman was ever going to refuse him, much less get the better of him. Then he did something stupid – he pulled out his tackle. That's how he got the nickname of “One-Ball Morgan”. Once he'd finished screaming, I told him that the next thing I'd chop off was his cock. Then I was out of there at high speed, heading for places far and strange.

I met Jack Sparrow once more in a pub in Madagascar. It was the anniversary of Barbossa marooning him (something I didn't work out until later) and the pirate brand still raw and fresh on his arm. He was drinking fit to drown a whale. I was about sixteen, seventeen at this point, and I regarded Jack in the light of a big brother. I didn't expect him to treat me like some trull, and try to bed me in the middle of the pub. I clocked him one, and stalked out.

When he'd sobered up, he tried to apologise, asked me to join him for a couple of drinks. I said yes. He bought a couple of drinks, and a drink for me, and another couple of drinks, and another drink for me, and another couple of drinks. I started getting angry with him and he started getting angry with me. The end result was a barney between the two of us they still talk about. He told me I should have tumbled him while I had the chance the other night. I called him an indiscriminate slut and he called me a frigid ice queen. I swore up hill and down dale he'd never touch me, and he swore he'd never want to, and I clocked him again because, dammit, I wanted him to bed me
(although I'd never admit it aloud) and how dare he say such a thing.

Well, this time I went east, and he went west. We didn't meet up again until he'd got the *Black Pearl* back. By then, I'd acquired and lost the *Magpie* and was working as a peacekeeper in a brothel. I was waiting for him to pick up from where we'd left off, but he didn't. I was still seething over losing my ship, so I took the opportunity to get him drunk and hoodwinked him into helping me find her, for a price: that I go willingly to his bed.

No doubt he was expecting me to knock him back. Certainly, he wasn't as drunk as I'd thought him. After all, there was Madagascar to think of, as well as my own pride. But longing for a ship can do desperate things to a sailor, especially to one who's soul-tied to their ship. I agreed. No price was too high for my ship – especially not when the price was one I wanted to pay anyway.

So here I am. It's time for me to pay the price, and for the life of me I can't decide whether to step forward and pay it, or whether to run. It's been over ten years since I first met Jack Sparrow, and I'm near on one and twenty. I've not taken a man to my bed yet, although there's been a couple of women have graced it for short periods. Never a steady lover, never another man.

Have I been saving myself for Captain Jack Sparrow? I suppose I have. Let's see whether he's capable of handling Black Maggie.

End Notes

This is a previously-unpublished work, written as a prologue to another work which barely got started, and as a sequel to a second work which never got finished. I think it stands on its own.

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