

someone like Rayleigh, whose main hobbies were brooding and telling Maren not to steal things. It was just annoying to be shooed off like a biting minnow because she wasn't a pretty pirate with valuable information.

She wandered farther into the tavern, sneaking glances behind her. The Jackfish had unrolled a weathered map on the bar, their heads bent close together. Maren swallowed. Rayleigh wore a dark vest over a sleeveless white blouse fit neatly to her curves, and when she leaned her muscled arms against the bar, she looked . . . not quite as ugly as most pirates.

Distracted, Maren very nearly put her foot into a bucket of refuse. She caught herself against the wall and found it was pinned with a dozen pieces of parchment, all of them sketches of different pirates. Some were old and flaking, while others seemed brand new. Her eyes caught on two pictures near the top. A pirate with a dark ponytail and a crisscross scar on her grim face—Rayleigh. And right next to her, a drawing of Maren.

Maren stared. She'd seen her reflection in pools sometimes, and in the tiny mirror she kept in her pouch, but never like this. She glanced over her shoulder, checking for suspicious eyes—then she yanked the picture down and made off with it, stealing away to a dark corner of the bar with her newest treasure.

It was a few minutes before Rayleigh found her there. "I got what we need from the Jackfish," she said.

"Really?" Maren sniffed. "I thought you were too busy flirting."

Rayleigh looked amused. "What do mermaids know about flirting?" she asked, quirking a brow.