

# SEIZURE

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RAZORBILL

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*For Hannah, Madelynn, Brendan, Brittney,  
and Brianna, my Texas critics.*





# PROLOGUE

**JUST OFF GUN CAY, JAMAICA — 1720**

Cannons thumped in the distance.  
*Boom! Boom!*

Final, frustrated salvos that faded with the dying light.

Wind screamed and lightning slashed a bruise-purple sky.

Thunder clapped. Rain drummed the heaving forecastle deck.

Nervous shouts ricocheted as the crew struggled to trim the mainsail. Instructions. Curses. Prayers.

*Revenge* crested an enormous wave, then listed hard to port as a massive gust shoved her sideways. Timbers groaned. Voices bellowed in panic.

The pirate ship vibrated with an unnatural hum, moments from capsizing.

Seconds passed. Eons.

Then, mercifully, *Revenge* dropped into a deep trough. Shielded from the fierce gale, she slowly righted herself.

The deck leveled.

The shouts morphed into dark laughter, the giddy excitement of those pulled back from the brink. Backs were slapped. Grins spread like plague.

To all but one.

A tiny figure huddled alone on the quarterdeck, clutching the stern rail. Her body was drenched. Wind danced her hair, ripped at her shirt, bandana, and velvet waistcoat.

The woman had no complaints. The deadly storm was speeding *Revenge* to safety.

Her gaze scanned the trailing horizon. Anxious. Searching for enemy sails. Hoping not to spot them.

Then *Revenge* mounted another gargantuan wave.

There they were. A trio of black cutouts against the heavy, dark clouds.

Two were sloops similar to *Revenge*. Nothing they couldn't handle. But the third vessel was trouble.

English.

Frigate.

Bristling with thirty cannons.

*Bullocks*.

Calico Jack's men were good fighters, true pirates all. But they were no match for such a warship.

*Revenge* ran for her life.

Moments later the woman saw sailors scurrying the decks of the pursuing ships, frantically reefing sails.

Slowly the trio dropped back, swung about, and reversed course.

As it turned, the massive frigate fired one last broadside. A futile gesture. The range was far too great.

The woman finally smiled.

The approaching storm had soured the chase for the Crown's small fleet.

Her relief was short-lived, replaced by other worries.

Escape had a price.

*Revenge's* bowsprit was pointed into the heart of the rising tempest.

Anne Bonny watched a colossal breaker crash over the bow. Jack's crew had dodged the hangman's noose, but the sea would have the final say.

They'd had little choice but to chance the storm. Not after blundering into the British patrol. Frankly, Bonny was amazed *Revenge* had eluded the colonial authorities yet again.

*Third time this year. The net is tightening.*

Weeks earlier, the Charles Town militia had cornered *Revenge* while she was anchored off the Bahamian coast. Jack's men had awakened hungover and surly. They'd fought as best they could, but *Revenge* had nearly been forced against the rocks. Escape had been a very close thing.

And now they tempted fate in violent waters.

Bonny slumped to the deck, arm looping the rail for safety.

*So tired. Tired of running.*

For a moment, Bonny's eyes drifted shut. Unbidden came the image of Laughing Pete, his body crushed by a British cannonball.

Her lids snapped open.

A storm had saved *Revenge* this time. Climactic luck. How long could such good fortune hold?

Of late, the gallows loomed large in Bonny's mind.

*So few of us left.*

She saw faces, recalled names.

Stede Bonnet had been captured on the Cape Fear River, hanged at White Point in Charles Town. Rich Whorley had mistaken militia boats for merchant ships and paid with his life. Charles Vane had been hanged at Gallows Point, not ten leagues from where she now slumped.

Even Blackbeard was dead, killed in battle off the Carolina coast.

*Yet Jack refuses to see.*

Bonny raised her eyes to the topmast, where Calico Jack's banner flapped wildly. A black field, a white skull, two crossed cutlasses.

According to Jack, the flag announced he was always ready to fight.

*He thinks we can go on pillaging forever. Even as they pick us off, ship by ship.*

Bonny shook her head.

The other captains understood. Black Bart Roberts and Long Ben were already on the run. The rest would follow. Colonial power was increasing in the Caribbean. More warships. More troops. More control.

The golden age of piracy was drawing to a close. Any fool could see that.

*Our way of life is ending. I won't end with it!*

Bonny thought hard. Decided.

Pushing from the rail, she scurried amidships. Years at sea had made her adept at traversing the pitching, rolling deck. Rain pummeled her head and shoulders as she dropped through a hatch into the vessel's underbelly.

Dark. Dank.

Two pirates guarded the forward compartments. At her approach the men stepped aside, careful to avoid giving offense. Anne Bonny was not to be crossed. She needed no one's permission to visit the treasure hold.

Thunder boomed, shaking *Revenge* to her keel. Ignoring the storm, Bonny pried open a rough-hewn wooden door, passed through, then closed it behind her. She was alone, a rare luxury on a ship at sea.

Bonny took in the cramped chamber. Sacks of wool and tobacco lined one wall, piled next to oil casks and giant barrels of rum. A strongbox was bolted to the portside boards, filled to the brim with gold and silver coins.

Random objects filled what little space remained. Two leather chairs. A Spanish suit of armor. Jewelry boxes inlaid with rubies. Crates of English muskets. A set of ornamental brass sconces.

*Anything of value, pirates will take.*

Bonny smiled sadly. She was going to miss this line of work.

But she intended to survive.

Determined, she shifted aside a crate of perfume and two trunks of women's clothing, revealing a wooden chest secured by a stout iron lock.

She didn't open it. No need. She knew what lay inside.

*This one is mine, Jack. The rest is yours.*

But where to hide it?

Bonny's brow furrowed in thought.

Then the smile returned. Wider this time.

*Perfect.*

It would take patience, she knew, and luck. But she had plenty of both. And wouldn't *that* just goose the others?

Bonny chuckled softly. God, she loved being a pirate.

*Jack is a fool. I must speak with Mary. Tomorrow.*

Amused by the daring of her plan, Bonny retraced her path along the narrow passage and up the ladder to the main deck. The raging storm nearly forced her back down the rungs.

Night had fallen. *Revenge* was running in total darkness.

Bonny staggered to a rail and grabbed hold. Around her, crewmen struggled with lines and sails. She gazed out at the roiling ocean, oddly calm. She'd made her decision. Nothing would go wrong.

Two phrases winged through her brain.

*That chest is mine. God weep for anyone who tries to steal it from me.*

*Revenge* sped over an endless parade of enormous, frothing whitecaps.

Speeding Anne Bonny on her way.

North.



**PART ONE:**  
**BROKE**



# CHAPTER 1

## **SNAP.**

The rush was electric, like grabbing the third rail in a subway tunnel.

My blood raced, molten lead careening through scorched veins.

Pain.

Disorientation.

Then power. Limitless power. *Visceral* power.

Sweat exploded from every pore.

My irises sparked, flashed golden. Glowing yellow disks encircled bottomless, inky-black pupils. The world sharpened to a laser-fine crispness. My eyes pierced like daggers.

My ears buzzed, then honed to supersonic clarity. White noise filled my head. A beat. The dissonance coalesced into a symphony of distinguishable ocean sounds.

My nose awoke, whisked patterns from the summer breeze,

deftly read the coastal scents. Salt. Sand. Sea. My nostrils sifted the delicate nuances.

My arms and legs quivered, smoldering with caged energy yearning for release. Unconsciously, I bared my teeth in animal delight.

The feeling was so incredible, so potent, that I panted with the pleasure of it. I wanted to live in that moment forever. Never stop. Never return.

*I flared.*

Beside me, Ben grimaced, dark eyes clamped shut. Muscles tense, his powerful frame trembling, he tried to flare by sheer force of will. Failed.

*It doesn't work that way.*

I kept quiet. Who was I to give advice? In the end, I didn't understand our powers any more than Ben. My control wasn't much better than his.

Not once I freed the wolf.



I suppose you're wondering what I'm talking about. Or you've already decided I'm nuts and are slowly backing away from this book. Can't say I blame you. A few months ago, I'd have done the same thing.

But that was before I changed. Before a microscopic invader altered my biological software. Before I evolved, became something more. Something brand new. Something primal.

Here's the short of it.

A few months back, a nasty supervirus infected my friends and me. The organism wasn't natural. It came straight from a secret laboratory, created during an illegal experiment. And this bug had a taste for human carriers.

How did I get so lucky?

An unscrupulous scientist, Dr. Marcus Karsten, cooked up the germ. He was my father's boss at Loggerhead Island Research Institute. In a mad dash for cash, Karsten crossed two types of parvovirus, accidentally creating a new strain that was contagious to people. Unfortunately, we caught it from a wolfdog named Cooper, Karsten's test subject.

Don't get me started.

Anyway, I was sick for days. We all were. Then things got weird.

My brain would snap like a rubber band. My senses would go berserk.

At times I'd lose control, unable to suppress sudden animal instincts. Scarfing raw hamburger meat. Stalking a caged gerbil. It was the same for the others.

When the dust settled, my friends and I were forever altered, down to the core. The vicious pathogen scrambled our cellular blueprint. Rewrote our genetic code. Canine DNA barged into my human chromosomes and made itself at home.

It's not easy, living with wolf instincts buried inside your double helix.

But our condition is not without certain . . . *benefits*.

I'll be blunt. My friends and I have special powers. Superhuman abilities. Hidden, but very real. You heard me right.

We're kind of a big deal. Or would be, if we could tell anyone about it, which we can't. Not unless we want to learn about human dissection. Up close.

We call the power "flaring." That's the best I can describe the sensation. I burn up inside, my mind warps and snaps, and then *boom!* My powers unleash.

I'm learning to control my abilities. At least, I think I am.

Okay, *hope* I am.

Heck, I'd settle for just knowing what they are.

I understand the basics. When I flare, my senses go into hyperdrive. Sight. Smell. Hearing. Taste. Even touch.

I become faster. Stronger.

More alive.

*Viral.*

That's what we call ourselves. Virals. It seemed appropriate to have a group name after becoming a gang of genetic mutants. It's good for morale.

There are five Virals total. Me. Ben. Hi. Shelton. And my wolfdog, Cooper, of course. After all, he was patient zero.

The upshot is we Virals can tap the physical powers of wolves. But not always when we want them. And sometimes the changes come unbidden.

To be honest, we have no idea exactly what happened to us, or what we can do to fix it. Or what will happen next.

But one thing is certain: we're different. Freaks. Disambiguations.

And we're on our own.



Ben's frustration grew with each passing moment. Angry, he ripped off his black T-shirt and threw it to the sand, as if the garment alone was foiling his efforts. Perspiration covered his deeply tanned skin.

I turned away so he wouldn't see my already glowing eyes. Didn't want to increase his aggravation. Ben Blue in a mood is no fun for anyone.

Hi crouched just beyond Ben. A chubby kid with wavy brown hair, he wore a red Hawaiian shirt and green board shorts. Not exactly stylish—or even matching—but classic Hiram Stollowitski.

He stared down the shoreline, having long since lit his own flare. Of all the Virals, accessing the power came easiest to Hi.

"I see you, Mr. Rabbit," he whispered to himself. "You can't hide from Wolfman Hi."

"Good work," I deadpanned. With my powers unleashed, his every word was crystal clear. "Taunting a helpless bunny. That's a worthwhile use of our flare time."

"He taunted me first." Hi's gaze remained glued to his target. "By being so darn cute! *Aren't cha? Aren't cha cute, you fuzzy wittle guy!*"

My golden eyes rolled. “We’re *supposed* to be practicing.”

“Then practice your vision, Lady Buzzkill.” He pointed. “Fifty yards. Third dune from the tree line, the one with all the cattails. *Typha latifolia*. Brown fur, speckled. Black whiskers. It’s an eastern cottontail. *Sylvilagus floridanus*.”

Hi loved showing off his knowledge of natural history almost as much as he liked conducting scientific experiments. Both traits were inherited from his father, LIRI’s head mechanical engineer.

Then Hi mock-squealed, his cheeks reddening. “*Oh!* And he’s got a bunny friend now, too!”

We stood near the northern edge of Turtle Beach, on the west coast of Loggerhead Island. The interior forest loomed to my right. To my left stretched the Atlantic Ocean, unbroken all the way to Africa.

I focused on the spot Hi had indicated, a rough patch of cattails and salt myrtle at the wood’s edge. My gaze zeroed. Locked.

The scene leaped forward with awesome clarity, beyond anything a human eye should be able to see. I could make out every leaf, every twig. Sure enough, two snuffling rabbits were tucked inside the foliage.

Half a football field away.

“Your flare vision is fantastic,” I said. “Better than mine. I can’t make out their whiskers from this distance.”

Hi shrugged. “Then I’ve got you beat with one sense, at least. I don’t hear as well as Shelton, or have your schnozzaroo.”

Beside me, Ben grunted. Growled. Shook. He still couldn't light the lamp. His eyes remained closed, but his mutters had shifted to four-letter words. Unpleasant ones.

Observing Ben's struggle, Hi scratched his chin. Glanced at me. Shrugged. Then he quietly slipped around behind Ben.

And, without ceremony, kicked him in the ass. Hard.

Ben toppled forward into the sand.

"What the hell!?" Ben surged to his feet and advanced on Hi with clenched fists. His eyes now blazed with yellow fire.

"Take it easy, slugger!" Hi backpedaled, both hands in the air. "I was only getting you mad enough! Had to be done."

So far, Ben could only tap his power when enraged. Like now. He looked ready to remove Hi's head.

"Stop!" I yelled, anxious to prevent a homicide. "Ben, you're flaring now. It worked."

Ben paused and flexed his hands, noticing the change. Scowling, he nodded at Hi. Hi gave a big thumbs-up, grinning from ear to ear.

"We've *got* to figure out a better way," Ben muttered, "or I'm going to end up thrashing one of you guys. I may pound Thick Burger here anyway," he said, gesturing toward Hi.

Hi chucked Ben's shoulder. "Hey, you're welcome pal. Anytime."

Faster than thought, Ben grabbed Hi and wrapped him in a vicious bear hug. "Smart-ass."

Hi sputtered, gasped for air. "Back off! I don't like you that way!"

Ben laughed. Then he lifted Hi over his shoulders. Effortlessly. My jaw dropped.

Ben spun Hi overhead like a chopper blade. Once. Twice. Hi turned a pale shade of green. Lime? Teal? Shamrock?

“I’m gonna puke!” Hi warned. “DEFCON One!”

Ben bounded to the waterline. Heaved.

Hi flew like a ragdoll, landed face-first in two feet of surf, sputtering and cursing.

Ben grinned wickedly. “I think I’ve got it now. Thanks.”

“Ungrateful.” Hi blew water from his nose while surveying his sopping clothes. “But I’ll admit, that was kind of awesome. You get *strong*.”

Hi tried splashing his attacker, but Ben danced away, hooting. Then Ben sprinted down Turtle Beach, leaped the sand dunes, and disappeared from sight.

“Wow,” I said. “He’s fast, too. Much faster than me, even flaring.”

Hi slogged back onto the beach. “I let him win. He needs the self-confidence.”

“Right.”

“Hey, I’m a giver.”

“A saint.”

It was good to see Ben laugh again. Smiles had been rare since the Heaton case. The media firestorm had burned out quickly, but our parents were not so easily distracted. We’d each been grounded for most of the summer.

And I mean *grounded*. The adults had been savvy enough to

hit where it hurt. No visitors, TV, or phone. Not even Internet access. It was brutal, like living in a cave.

With no chances to meet or even discuss our abilities, I'd begun to quietly freak the flip out.

The virus was a wildcard rampaging through our bodies. *Anything* was possible.

Was the sickness gone for good? Had our powers stabilized? Did anyone else know about Karsten's secret experiment? About Coop? About us?

I'd been trapped with these questions for weeks. Alone.

The isolation hadn't been good for my nerves.

Ben escaped first. The senior Blues never paid much attention to discipline. My parole came August first, after nearly two months served.

Good behavior? More like constant moping. I just wore Kit down.

Hi had finally talked his way out last week. That surprised me. Knowing his mother, Ruth Stelowitski, I thought he'd be last for sure. Not so. As far as I knew, Shelton was still on lockdown. Apparently the Devers had zero tolerance for criminal behavior, regardless of justification.

Make no mistake, I was still on probation. Strict. Kit was watching me like a hawk. At least, he thought he was.

Once Hi shook free, the three of us began trekking out to Loggerhead every week. We needed to practice, safe from prying eyes. The isolation was ideal. And, right under my father's nose, I could visit the island without suspicion.

Loggerhead is held in trust by Charleston University. Very few have permission to visit. Luckily, dear old dad works here. So do the other Virals' parents.

Kit Howard is a marine biologist working at LIRI, the university's on-site scientific station. One of the most advanced veterinary facilities on the planet, LIRI consists of a three-acre walled compound nestled on the islet's southern half.

That's not all. Loggerhead Island is a full-fledged primate research center, with troops of rhesus monkeys roaming free in the woods. No permanent buildings exist outside the main complex.

The habitat is as close to undisturbed as possible for a prime hunk of real estate lying just off Charleston Harbor.

A perfect place to fly your freak flag.

This was our third practice session, and we'd begun to notice slight differences in our abilities. Strengths. Weaknesses. Variations in style and finesse.

But the powers were complex, our grasp of them far from complete. What I didn't understand would fill the ocean. Deep down, I suspected we'd barely scraped our full potential.

An explosion of sand reclaimed my attention.

My gaze fastened on a bouncing shape, moving wicked fast. Zoomed. Tracked. Unconsciously, my muscles tensed, ready to spring.

Then, recognition.

Ben, flying across the sandbank, a wild look on his face.

A second later, I knew why.

He was being chased.