

Jacques Cartier

by Karla Akins

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Chapter One

1502

"Jacques! Jacques! Where are you?" Elnora peeked under her parents' [bed](#) but found nothing. Above her, the canopy moved. "Aha! I got you now." Elnora grabbed a stool and put it at the end of the bed. She stood atop its footboard and peeked over the canopy.

"Oh it's you. You've fallen through the roof again, have ye?" Her cat, Adele, bathed herself in the luxury of the noonday sun that burst its dazzling rays through the ceiling. Elnora looked up where a gaping hole revealed a blue sky. The [thatched roof](#) where Adele liked to chase birds and mice had broken through. "So it's raining cats today, is it?" Elnora giggled. "Wait until Mama hears about this. She'll be shooin' you off and putting Jacques to work on that roof by and by."

Elnora climbed down, walked toward the large [window](#) and peeked through one of the small rectangular panes of glass toward the gray expanse of the gulf of St. Malo. She scanned the crowded [beach](#) looking for her brother Jacques, but only saw men loading cargo on and off ships, fishermen casting their nets, and waves rolling on and off of the shore.

As usual, Jacques was nowhere in sight.

She made her way down the stairs and into the main area of the house where her mother stood over a pot stirring [lamb stew](#) in the fireplace.

"Mama, do you know where Jacques is?"

Mrs. Cartier turned from the pot and back to the [apple pies](#) on the table. "If I know

your brother, he's down at the docks gettin' in the way of the ship builders."

"But he promised to play [backgammon](#) with me." Elnora sulked and plopped onto the bench beside the table.

"Elnora, don't pout. If you want to play, go play. If not, lend me your hands. The cook is out today and I'm trying to get things ready for your father before he gets home tonight."

Elnora picked up an apple and bit into it. "Adele fell through the roof again."

Mrs. Cartier sighed. "She was on the canopy?"

"Yes. Chasing a bug."

"Likely the bug fell through the roof and she jumped up there to get it. Go find your brother and have him check the thatch just in case. I don't want it raining both cats and dogs tonight."

Elnora giggled. "Yes, Mama. Shall I take Papa some bread?"

"Yes." Mrs. Cartier walked to the counter behind her, reached for a cloth bag and looked inside. One small piece of bread remained. She opened another bag and pulled out two [dried fish](#) and added it to the bread sack. "Here you go, Elnora. Tell your brother his meal is here at home if he is hungry. It will hurry him along. I know how hard it is to pull him away from the ships."

Elnora took the bag, kissed her mother and skipped out of the house onto the cobbled street. She ran down the main street and turned left into an alley that led to the docks. As she neared the shore, the aroma and sounds of the market overwhelmed her senses. After rounding the last house, she was greeted with the familiar sight of fishmongers waving dried and fresh fish, flustered women wearing long tunic gowns and

[wimples](#) haggling over cod, and impatient mothers scolding their children. Men in stockings and woolen tunics and [peasants](#) wearing dirty, threadbare tunics over clean linen undergarments, strolled between the fish mongers, searching for the perfect specimen for their evening meal.

There were many sea creatures to choose from. Countless large baskets overflowed with all types of fish: [cod](#), [plaice](#) and [pike](#). Lining the beach like giant stuffed pillows were [tunas](#), [mackerels](#), and [porpoises](#). Further up shore a [whale](#) was being [flensed](#) by fishermen as [Louis XII's](#) men stood guard. Large strips of blubber were cut from the great leviathan's body and packed into barrels. The king's men waited impatiently to take it to the palace where it was used for lighting the [monarch's home](#) and making [soap](#). Only the king and his family and friends were allowed to eat whale and porpoise meat. It was against the law for Elnora to take even a bite. Her mouth watered wondering how delicious it must be for only a king to partake.

She finally reached her father and noticed how his skin glowed like copper in the sun as he sat on the edge of his boat, mending his net. His feet, in leather boots covered with [pattens](#) to keep them dry, rested on a crate in front of him. He saw his daughter and his face lit with a smile of gapped teeth beneath a thick bushy moustache.

"My sweet Elnora, come and hug your Papa." He dropped the net, swung his legs around to the outside of the boat and held open his arms.

Elnora ran eagerly inside her father's embrace as he swung her onto the boat. "You are the sweet one, Papa. And look. I've brought you something to eat." She handed him the bag of bread and fish. "Where is Jacques?"

"The last I saw him he was at Gilroy's ship, asking questions. That child, always

asking questions. I hope he doesn't get in Gilroy's way. If I could get him as interested in fishing as he is in ships, I could bring home more cod." Father shook his head and looked down at the nets, torn from snagging an unseen path of jagged rocks.

"He promised to play a game of backgammon with me. And he left without doing so."

"Well, now, we can't have that, can we? Fetch your brother and tell him Papa says to play backgammon with the apple of his eye."

"Me, Papa?"

"Who else?"

"But what about Jacques? Isn't he your apple, too?"

"Non. Jacques is the plum. You, my sweet daughter, are the apple."

"Papa, you're teasing."

"Aye, indeed I am. Go on now. Find your brother. And don't forget to be good to your mother. I'll be home early tonight. We can see how good your backgammon is then, yes?"

"I shall win, Papa. Wait and see."

Elnora jumped out of her father's boat and toward the builder's cottage. The ship he was constructing was nearly finished, and Elnora could see sailors hoisting the sails and painting the outside of the vessel.

"Jacques! Jacques!" Elnora ran up the ramp and climbed aboard the huge vessel. She made her way through busy men sanding boards, [tying knots](#), and washing the deck.

"Jacques!"

"What are you doing here, Missy? This is no place for a little girl." The foreman,

Marc Le Meur stopped Elnora. "Aren't you Cartier's girl?"

"Yes, I'm looking for Jacques. Have you seen him?"

"Try looking up."

Elnora placed a hand over her eyes and looked up into the sky. Atop the foremast stood Jacques in the crow's nest, holding a cross-shaped instrument to his eyes and looking toward the horizon.

"Jacques! Jacques!"

Jacques peered down at his sister, jumping and waving on the deck below.

"I see you, Elnora. What are you doing here?"

"I want to play. Come down and play with me."

Jacques sighed and turned back toward the ocean. There was nothing about it he didn't love: the way the waves grew with white tops and pounded their frothy heads against jagged rocks; how the sea rocked him to sleep on his father's boat, and yielded up food for hungry bellies. He vowed to one day ride upon its shimmering, undulating surface and sail to places yet unseen, like his hero Columbus. No one yet had found a route to the Far East by sea, but he would. The only way to get there now was by traveling a dangerous route through Turkey and the Middle East where the Islamic Empires fought for control of the region. The way was also rife with thieves who robbed merchant caravans.

Cartier promised himself that he would study hard and become the greatest sea captain anyone had ever known. He would slay any sea monster in his wake, and be so brave that the fiercest storm would fail to sink his ship. He would...

"Jacques! Are you coming down or not?"

His sister's voice snapped him back to reality. He looked down at her and back

again at the ocean. Ever since the day they'd installed the crow's nest, Jacques had spent every second in it.

"Jacques! Does Mama know you're up there?"

"Why don't you come up and join me, Elnora? You should see what it's like. You can see all the way to China!"

Elnora grinned and tied up her [pellote](#) . She placed her bare feet on the rope ladder's rungs and climbed halfway up before she realized how far above the ground she was. She looked down and the wind moved the ladder. Her dress flapped in the wind and the force caused her to grab tighter to the ropes.

"Jacques! I'm affrighted!"

"Don't be affrighted. I do this all the time. Don't look down. Look up at me."

Elnora looked up at her brother and slowly climbed. But the higher up she went, the harder the wind blew, and her tunic kept getting tangled in her feet.

"Jacques! I can't!" Tears shone wet on her cheeks and her wimple came loose and covered her eyes. Her small hands were tired from clinging to the thick ropes. She began to slip.

"Jacques!" There was no strength left in her hands, and her legs felt like the jellyfish Papa found in his nets. She felt the wind push against her skirts and her limbs fall away from the ladder.

"Jacques! Help!"

"Elnora!"

Chapter Two

1534

"Sir!"

Jacques Cartier shook himself to bring his thoughts back to the present. He smiled remembering for a moment how a shipbuilder had caught Elnora when she fell and how his bossy sister had scolded him all the way home. Now he was a grown man leading two [carrack ships](#) on their way to find a northwest passage to the Orient.

"Commander! Shall I bring you your [victuals](#) here or in your quarters?" The cabin boy interrupted Cartier's thoughts.

"I'm not hungry this afternoon, Marc. I won't be eating until after sunset." Cartier returned to his thoughts as he raised the [astrolabe](#) to the sky, remembering what brought him to where the edge of the sea swept the coast of Terranova.

October 31, 1533

"Sir Cartier, I need you for a very important mission." [King Francis I](#) stood from his throne and approached Cartier who bowed. "Join me in reading the map of [Giovanni da Verrazano](#)."

"Of his journey to find the Northwest Passage?" Cartier's eyes sparkled with anticipation.

"Yes. You know it?" King Francis guided Cartier to a large table where the map lay spread between two flickering lamps.

"But of course. All mariners talk of it, and whether or not the things Verrazano said

are really true.”

“What such things?” The king stroked his beard and studied Cartier’s animated expression.

“That you asked him to explore the coast from [Terranova](#), the “New Found Land,” to [Florida](#) in order to find a route to the Orient. The entire country remembers when his two ships, [La Dauphine](#) and *La Normande* were the only two of four ships to return to Brittany.”

“*Oui*, indeed, he did return, but he left again after repairs,” the king stared down at the map.

“But the *La Normande* came back to Brittany again.” Cartier frowned.

The king nodded. “Pirates. And the danger of Spanish and Portuguese waters to the south. But Verrazano,” the king held up one finger and smiled, “he fearlessly sailed on with Captain Antoine de Conflans aboard the *La Dauphine*. [He thought he found the passage.](#)”

“You know this? But how? The cannibals...”

The monarch’s eyes went dark as he turned toward the window. “*Oui*, the [cannibals](#). His habit of anchoring off shore did not serve him well. No one could come to his aid on the island. They were too far away.”

Cartier stood in silence for a moment as the king stared out the window.

“But!” The monarch turned toward Cartier, clicked his heels and pointed up to the sky. “I have proof of his discoveries in the letters he wrote to me.” The king reached into one of the recessed partitions in the wall, pulled out a parchment containing Verrazano’s seal, and handed it to the navigator.

Cartier gazed at Verrazano’s words as the king watched the mariner’s lips mouthing

the words on the page. King Francis I crossed his arms and grinned as the mariner's eyes grew round with delighted surprise. He looked up at the king. "Your Majesty, such wonders he has seen."

"It amuses and delights you, *oui*?"

"Russet-colored natives with black hair, perfect figures, black great eyes. Such cheerful, strong and sharp-witted peoples. I long to see them."

The king smiled and placed his hands on the table. "I counted on that."

"Your Majesty, is it possible that he did indeed find the passage to China? Is it marked on the map?" Cartier held the letter to his chest and leaned down to view the priceless chart.

"Right here." King Francis I pointed to a wide area of water on the south side of the coast of the New World.

Cartier frowned. "But I have heard rumors there are [many passages](#) further north."

"*Oui*. I believe so, too. See there." The king pointed toward a spot on the map further north on the coast. "There are many waterways surrounding that area."

Cartier nodded. "I know of them from Commander Cabot's journeys and the fishermen who speak of the [Grand Banks](#)."

"You know of them? I assumed as much. It is one of the reasons I have asked you here. Your reputation as a master pilot has reached my ears." The king studied the map and walked to the side of the table. He leaned in and pointed. "This is where I want you to go. Far north. [Spanish and Portuguese ships to the south make it too dangerous](#)."

"You are sending me?" Cartier could barely contain his excitement, but reminded himself that he was in the presence of the King of France.

"Commander Cartier, I want to be the first to find the [route to the Orient](#) and control it for France."

"And find gold as well, I presume?" Cartier smiled. He knew that every king in the Europe hoped to find gold in the New World.

"But of course." The king nodded and put a hand on Cartier's shoulder. "It is of utmost importance that France controls the best route to Cathay, the Orient. Bring back a map to that passage and a treasure of gold, and you will be greatly rewarded."

"I will not disappoint you, Your Majesty."

"I have no doubt. Your cousin assures me you are well-experienced on the seas."

"My cousin?"

"*Oui*. Jean Le Veneur, Grand Almoner of France and Abbot of Mont Saint-Michel tells me you are already well-traveled. It is you he recommended to bring me riches and the way to Cathay."

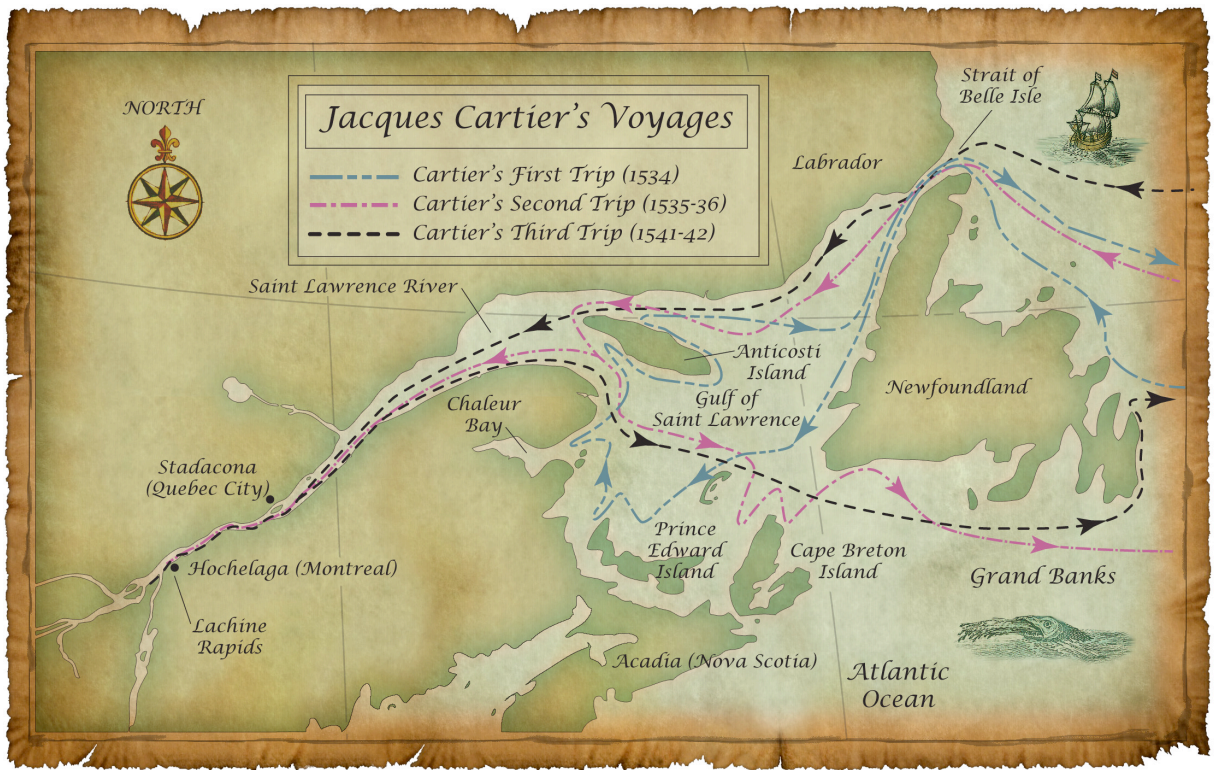
"I shall thank him when he returns from his pilgrimage."

"Commander Cartier, I am prepared to provide you a crew and two ships. I have already commissioned the *Triton* and the *Goéland* for your journey and hired 61 men. You will begin by sailing straight to [Baie des Châteaux](#)."

"I am familiar with the location, Your Majesty."

"Then you accept this mission?"

"*Oui*, Your Majesty." Cartier loosened his grip on Verrazano's letter, laid it on the table and placed his hand on his heart. "I will bring you riches and secure the way to Cathay in the name of France."



Chapter Three

The First Voyage May 10, 1534

"Land Ahoy!"

"Set a course north-northwest!" Cartier shaded his eyes with his hands and licked his lips in anticipation. Only 20 days before he had left the coast of St. Malo, [2,000 miles away](#), to reach the New World. Most of the journey had been easy with sails laid aback, but now the gales blew fierce and cold. Sharp needles of stinging rain bit at Cartier's cheeks and his hands fought to cling to the ropes of the ratlines as he shimmied to the top of the mainmast to stand atop the moonsail and look toward land.

"Set a course north-northwest!" The boatswain echoed Cartier's words and seamen went to work trimming the sails.

"Where's the commander?" Marc came running up from the hatch with a black and white cat wriggling in his arms. The excited cabin boy hugged the cat close to shield him from the cold rain.

The boatswain, adjusting the rigging, grinned at him. "Look up."

The boy shielded his eyes from the rain and spotted the commander in the crow's nest, his clothing vigorously flapping in the wind, looking for land. Most commanders sent up an apprentice, but Cartier was not that kind of seaman. He loved everything about the sea, and knew every inch of a ship better than he knew himself.

In the distance Cartier could see large floating chunks of ice covered with black dots. He barely contained his excitement as he slid down the mast and climbed down the ratlines to the deck.

"Land ho, lads, land ho! Man your positions. Come up on the wind." All the seamen set to work, hoisting sails and making ready for landing.

"Commander! Look! I found her!" Marc shoved the skinny black and white cat at Cartier. "She was in your sea chest the entire time."

"Well, now, there she is." Cartier reached out and patted the cat who leaned into his hand. "No wonder we've found land today."

"Aye, a lucky cat she is."

"Aye," Cartier agreed. "The black and whites, they're the luckiest. Tell Mr. Roux to find 'er an extra bite for dinner, eh?"

"Aye, aye, Commander." Marc hugged the cat and ran to the hatch to find Mr. Roux in the [orlop deck](#).

Cartier shivered and rubbed his arms. "And Marc! Bring me my coat!" He stood at the helm and barked orders as both ships neared the iceberg, the *Triton* leading the *Goéland*.

The commander continued to issue orders to the seamen while standing beside the pilot at the wheel of his ship. Marc appeared from the hatch, running with Cartier's heavy, wool, fur-trimmed cape. Cartier squatted down and Marc placed it on his shoulders.

"I'm surprised at how cold it is for this time of year." Cartier stood and dusted cat hair off the front of the cape. "Better get your coat as well, Marc. We're nearing land and I need you on deck."

"*Oui, monsieur.*" Marc smiled. It was his first trip across the Atlantic and it was a privilege to assist Captain Cartier. Only the aristocratic boys were allowed such a position. The other boys, like his best friend, Frank, were peasants who scrubbed the decks and

emptied the chamber pots. Because Marc came from a wealthy, well-respected family, he was in training to be an expert mariner, and assisted Cartier as a personal servant. Before disappearing down the hatch, Marc eyed the sand clock. He'd need to return straight away to flip it over. The commander used it to tell the time and navigate the ship and it was one of Marc's many duties to see that it was flipped promptly.

Cartier squinted into the wind. The rain mixed with snow and formed tiny icicles on his whiskers. But he was in familiar waters. As a younger man, he had travelled to the shores of the New Found Land many times with fishermen. The fishing was excellent and the birds plentiful. Cartier smiled and looked down at Marc who had joined him on the forecastle deck.

"How is Mr. Roux today?"

"He seems hearty enough." Marc spotted something in the waters far ahead.

"Commander! What is that shining on the water there?"

Cartier leaned over the railing and shook his head with a sigh. "Anchor ice." Cartier's skin crawled with fear. He crossed himself and kissed the crucifix he wore around his neck. "Say your prayers, Marc."

The commander bounded down the steps to the main deck. "Starboard bow ahoy! By the mark, six fathom!"

"Six fathom, sir!" The boatswain repeated Cartier's words and watched to see that the orders were carried out.

The sun sat brilliant white on the horizon. The explorer needed to think fast. Adrenaline coursed through his body at the thrill and terror of navigating icy waters. One wrong move and the ship would crash against icebergs and sink.

"All hands to your stations! Jump to it! Mr. D'Aramitz! Awake the sleepers! Now!"

"Aye, Aye, Commander!" Robert D'Aramitz, an apprentice not much older than Marc, ran below deck to awaken the night shift sailors. "Sleepers! Awake!"

"Lower the main!" Cartier shouted so loud his throat ached.

The boatswain echoed Cartier's words and sailors scurried among the ratlines to lower the great sail in the middle of the ship. He shot a glance at the *Goéland* and nodded in satisfaction as he watched men following their captain's orders, scurrying like the roaches that had hitched a ride. But it wasn't enough. The seas grew rough and they were moving too fast. Cartier steadied his voice before barking the next order.

"Sails off! Pass the marker, then turn hard a-starboard, Delacroix!"

"Aye, aye!" Captain Delacroix turned the wheel hard to the right.

"Reef the sails, lads! Jump to it!"

Cartier scanned the decks of the ship and his keen eyes settled on an apprentice who shuffled along the rails of the poop deck and leaned against the mizzenmast.

"Marc!"

"Yes, Commander?"

"Take note of that boy there. I will speak of him later."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The ship pitched to the right sending the yardarm toward sailors focused on reefing the sails, nearly knocking one of them overboard.

"Sail trimmers! Hold steady the yardarm! It's a hard alee she's leanin' on!"

Finally the ships slowed and glided safely past the [iceberg](#) that had caused Cartier such grave concern. Now the sun gleamed low, white and pink, and reflected on the ice-

covered waters.

But the ships were unable to move. Arctic ice kept them prisoner in a sheltered bay of the New Found Land.

Cartier grunted in disappointment.

"All hands prepare to anchor! Belay the lines, lads, before going below. I'll be in my cabin. We will try again tomorrow. Marc, bring me my supper."

Cartier went to his [cabin](#) to write in the [captain's log](#) and found his dog, Hatch, waking up from a warm, luxurious nap. "Well, old boy, you have the right idea. Mind if I join you now?"

The old rat terrier wagged his tail slowly, lumbered up to the captain and leaned against him for a scratch behind the ears.

"You're moving mighty slowly these days, [Hatch](#). Has the cold gotten to yer bones? Sorry, lad. I didn't expect it, either."

Marc sat a platter of salt beef, cheese, ale and hardtack in front of Cartier. As the commander sat in his chair, a beetle crawled out from between the [hardtack](#) and cheese and the observant cabin boy swiped it away before his superior could see.

"Would you like me to draw more beer, Commander?"

"Yes, Marc, thank you."

Marc went to a large [wooden tankard](#) and filled the commander's [mug](#) with beer. With no water to drink, fermented beverages such as beer and wine were all the crew had to drink.

"Marc, do you remember the lad on the poop deck I pointed out to you?"

"Yes, Commander."

"His name?"

"Dacey Allard, sir." Marc set the mug at the commander's place and stood quietly by. Something in the Cartier's serious tone made him afraid to speak or move.

"Have your friend, Frank, fetch him to me. Frank is hiding behind the door, is he not?" Cartier smiled to himself, well aware of the boys' friendship and Frank's nightly ritual of waiting for Marc before bed time.

"Aye, Commander, on me way!" Frank spoke from behind the door and Marc's eyes grew wide waiting for Cartier's reproach.

The commander smiled. "I, too, had a good friend when I was a cabin boy."

"Aye? You were a cabin boy? Were there great ships then?"

Cartier laughed. "I am not quite so old that there were no ships, lad."

Before the commander could finish his meal, Frank slid open the door and ushered in the lazy sailor that Cartier had spied earlier.

"Mr. Allard. Do you know why I have asked you to my cabin?"

Dacey Allard clenched his jaw and steadied his gaze down at the floor.

"No, sir."

"When I gave the order to reef the sails, what were you about?"

"I..I was followin' yer order, sir, but there were enough men about so I—"

"When I give an order it is to be followed do you understand? All hands means all hands and that includes yours."

"Aye, Commander."

"Marc?" Cartier turned to look at Marc who was standing behind him with such a solemn look the commander almost laughed.

"Aye, sir?"

"What is the [punishment for insubordination](#)?"

"Strikes with a [cat o'nine tails](#)?" Marc shuddered and the commander hid a smile behind his hand.

"Aye. Strikes. Mr. Allard, you shall be punished at dawn. The number of strikes to be determined as I sleep. I will not abide a mutiny, do you understand?"

Dacey Allard's face drained of its color and Marc thought he might faint. He fought the urge to catch the man should he fall. Dacey licked his lips and nodded.

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Frank." The commander could see the boy's foot peeking from the edge of the cabin's open door.

Frank's head popped into the cabin as he leaned in from the outside. "Aye, captain?"

"Go fetch D'Aramitz to escort this prisoner to the upper deck and shackle him. Dacey Allard will make his own cat o'nine tails while he waits for his punishment to be meted."

"Aye, captain."

Marc and Dacey stood fast while Cartier wrote something in the captain's log. The room was thick with tension until D'Aramitz entered the room bearing [leg shackles](#) for the prisoner.

"At your service, Commander," D'Aramitz nodded and took Dacey by the arm. "I warned you, Allard. Life at sea is strict and inflexible. You should not have signed if you weren't ready to carry your weight."

D'Aramitz escorted the prisoner to the upper deck to sleep in the cold and fashion his own whip.

Cartier sighed and pushed away the rest of his dinner. He took a piece of the cheese and fed it to Hatch who sat in quiet obedience at his master's side. The commander knew he was a fair commander, but he was also wise, and he couldn't allow the slightest disobedience lest it fester and infect the entire crew. There was a long, hard journey ahead, and he needed every hand obeying his orders. Those orders could mean the difference between life and death.

"Marc, I would like to be alone. Stand at the ready and see that I'm not disturbed for the rest of the evening."

"Aye, aye, sir." Marc motioned to his friend, Frank, to meet him outside the door and quietly slid it closed it as he left.

Cartier went to the window above his bed and peered out at the dark sky. Ice. How long would it keep him here? Wasn't it springtime? He looked down at his log where he'd written the date: May 10. Cartier sat down at the table and prayed. Tonight he would rest. Tomorrow, he would tackle the ice. And the flogging of Dacey Allard.

Chapter Four

Marc hoped no one else would have the need for a flogging. He turned his head away and refused to watch as Dacey Allard's own cat o'nine tails striped his naked back 40 times. Once the flogging was over, it was up to Marc and Frank to help the young man to his hammock below deck and aid the surgeon-barber in dressing the wounds. Frank shivered imagining not only the pain, but the humiliation of being stripped naked to the waist, tied up by the wrists overhead, and being flogged in front of the entire crew. One thing was sure—Marc would see to it that he never failed to carry out an order, and he hoped the rest of the crew would do the same.

After ten days of being wedged in the ice, the weather grew warm and Cartier's ship and impatient crew moved out of the bay. Sailors cheered as the boat inched its way toward a small island the French would later name [L'Isle des Ouaisseaux](#): "Isle of Birds."

"Commander! There are so many!" Marc's mouth hung open at the sight of fat, black and white birds gliding in the water like bulbous fish, and jumping back on shore.

"Apponauts." Cartier laughed. "They look like a goose with a crow's beak."

"Their wings are so small. Do they not fly?"

"I've never seen one fly. But they swim very well, don't you think?"

The hungry crew could hardly contain their excitement and reached over the sides of the ship and longboats to gather up the [Great Auks](#).

The cold wind burned their cheeks as they sailed past giant icebergs and islands where great white bears bounded along the shores and in and out of the water. The crew shot one with a long bow and the happy seamen feasted on [polar bear](#) meat that night.

For the rest of May Cartier sailed expertly among icebergs exploring the North American coast of Labrador, named for the explorer, João Fernandes Lavrador, who discovered it in 1498.

"If there is land God gave to Cain, surely it is this one," Cartier mumbled, complaining about the disappointing [rocky coast](#).

"Commander! Look!" Marc pointed to a creature peeking from behind a rock. "What is that?"

"Where?"

"There, see? Behind that great rock there?"

Cartier squinted and raised his hand over his eyes. More dark-skinned creatures appeared and stared at the ships sailing past.

"Are they people, Commander?" Marc had never seen so many creatures with skin the color of red clay.

"Indeed they are. But their hair – it looks like hay with birds' feathers." Cartier raised a hand over his eyes. "And they wear the skins of animals."

"What is that on their faces?"

"The stain of berries, I believe."

For nine more days Cartier and his crew sailed down the west coast of New Found Land against cold northeasterly winds and thick, gloomy fog.

"Set a course for south, southwest!"

"Aye, aye, Commander! South, southwest lads!"

In harsh, frigid winds, sailors set to work [belaying](#) the lines to secure the sails for the voyage south.

"Loosen sails and raise the [bonnet](#), lads!"

Cartier navigated his way into the [Gulf of St. Lawrence](#), looking for the passage to Cathay. Lush, green islands dripping in succulent fruits, voluptuous trees and aromatic flowers eased Cartier's mind as he left "the land of Cain" on the misty, rocky coast of Labrador. In his log he described abundant trees, flourishing meadows and dense fields of wild oats. He expertly charted a course through sparkling inlets and bays, and explored the fertile islands he came upon.

"It looks so much like the French countryside, *oui?*" Cartier bit down on a plum he'd picked after coming ashore and wiped the juice from his chin.

"Look, Commander! Strawberries!" Marc bolted down the hill and stuffed strawberries into his mouth and into the pockets of his shirt.

Cartier laughed and bent to smell a bush of wild roses. He breathed in deeply, taking in the ambrosia of scents on the [island](#).

"So many aromatic herbs, plants and spices, surely this must be the way to Cathay."

"Commander! What is that?" Marc pointed toward the shore where a [large, globular creature](#) lolled about. It had long whiskers, long tusks and made a deep barking noise.

"Sailors! To your marks on the creature! Capture it!"

The crew ran as fast as they could toward the edge of the sea, but the beast slipped quickly into the water.

"What was it?" Marc's eyes stayed glued to the ocean and he shivered at the thought of such a monster swimming in its depths.

"One of the many sea monsters that create terror in the water, I suppose," Cartier sighed. "If only we could have caught it for the King of France."

July 4, 1534

"The water is vast and smooth like glass." Cartier spoke to the pilot as they made their way into [Chaleur Bay](#). "And the wilderness here is too great to ignore. Prepare to drop anchor."

"Aye, aye, Commander." The pilot shouted commands as the sailors made ready to anchor the ship in the warm bay waters. He steered the vessel into the current and brought it to rest far enough away from the sister ship to anchor safely.

The commander walked impatiently to the railing. "Lower the longboats. I'm going ashore. Marc! Are you about?"

Marc popped his head out from behind the mizzenmast. "Aye, Commander."

"Going ashore. Bring Frank and Hatch. "

"Aye!"

The Commander, Marc and several other sailors rowed to the shore of Gaspé Peninsula. Hatch set at the helm and barked at a whale that breached the waters.

"Sea monsters, Commander!" Frank stood up to get a better view.

"Aye, lad, sit down now before you throw us overboard." The patient commander pushed the boy back down in his seat.

"These great trees are perfect for masts, Marc. See how tall and strong they are?" Cartier opened his arms toward the forest full of [cedars](#) and [spruce](#).

"Aye, and ships aplenty, too, for the French navy." Captain Delacroix rubbed his hands together in anticipation of riches gained from the sale of much-needed timber.

"Commander!" Before Cartier could turn to see what Frank was pointing at, the

longboat was surrounded by natives.

"Will they eat us?" Marc had heard the stories about Verrazano. There were three things sea explorers feared most: sea monsters, storms at sea, and cannibals.

"Not if I can help it." Cartier shot his pistol above the heads of the natives to scare them away. They retreated to the shore, but once there, yelled and waved their arms inviting Cartier to join them.

"They want us to come ashore." Captain Delacroix's hands shook as he tugged nervously at his beard.

Cartier frowned. "For supper, most likely. Row us back to the ship, lads. We'll not be anyone's main course tonight."

The next morning, nine canoes approached the ship waving animal skins.

"I believe they want to trade, Commander." Captain Delacroix said. "The furs do look fine and would bring us a good price back home."

Cartier nodded. "Perhaps. But it could be a trick."

The shouting natives terrified some of the sailors and yet others were curious and interested. Marc was fascinated.

"Commander, look, they smile. I think they are friendly."

Cartier scanned the canoes and noted the cheerful faces of each native. "I tend to agree with you, Marc. Captain, lower the longboat. I'm going ashore."

"Commander, are you sure?" The captain stood in front of the longboat before giving the order to lower it.

"Do as I say, Delacroix. I've gotten us this far, haven't I?"

"Aye, Commander. Lower the longboats, lads, we're going ashore."

The deafening cheers of the natives caused Marc to shiver as they advanced toward the beach. When Cartier and his men stepped out of the longboat, the natives became quiet, fascinated with the Frenchmen's white skin. They caressed the crew's faces and tugged at their beards. Men, women and children of the [Mi'kmaq tribe](#) surrounded the pale visitors, giggling and pointing at their unfamiliar features.

Cartier was fascinated, too. "Help me to remember the details, Marc, for my logbook. Their gleaming black hair and bronze naked skin."

"They're not completely naked, sir." Marc giggled.

"True. They do wear animal pelts about their waists and across their shoulders, but you won't see someone wearing such clothes in St. Malo. In Frenchman's terms, they are quite naked." Cartier turned toward the sailors. "Bring the knives, combs, bells and beads for trade."

As the sailors opened the wooden chests and poured out the contents, the Mi'kmaq people threw mountains of furs at the sailors, including those they wore.

The natives held up hatchets shouting, "*cochy!*" and knives in the air hollering, "*becan!*" Cartier was thrilled to learn two new words of their language and promised himself that he would write them once aboard ship.

Marc and Frank laughed at the Mi'kmaqs celebrating by throwing water over their heads, holding their hands up to heaven as if in worship, and dancing on the shore. Cartier gave their chief a red cap and the old native grinned widely while those around him reached to touch the cap as he placed it on his head.

More and more furs of beaver, lynx and fox were piled on the beach as the Mi'kmaq people walked away more naked than before. Marc frowned as he mentally measured the

size of the pile compared to the size of the longboat.

"Will they all fit on the boat? We might sink!"

Cartier laughed. "If they don't fit, we'll make two trips."

July 12, 1534

Cartier and his crew still had not found a passage to China, but they were determined to continue searching. They weighed anchor and sailed east. As they entered [Gaspé Bay](#), they met 40 canoes bearing over two hundred [Huron Indians](#) on a fishing expedition far from their home in [Kebec](#).

"They are naked, too, and have less hair!" Marc pointed down at the canoes as he and Frank busied themselves with the captain's orders.

"Commander, I do believe they want us to join them ashore. But there are so many." Captain Delacroix's voice cracked with tension.

"Agreed. You may go ashore. I'll soon follow. Marc, where is Favreau?"

"Gaillard Favreau, the carpenter?" Marc wasn't sure as there were several Favreau's at sea on this journey.

"Yes. Find him. Tell him I want a cross to raise on shore."

"Aye, aye, Commander."

As the crew lowered the longboats, Marc found Favreau and gave him the captain's orders. The carpenter was delighted.

"Finally! Territory for France! I have waited long to use this one." The carpenter pointed to a 30-foot cross standing next to several others. Inscribed upon it were the words, *"VIVE LE ROY DE FRANCE -- Long Live the King of France."*

On shore, the natives and sailors feasted on seal, fish and birds while [Chief Donnacona](#) and Cartier talked to one another using gestures. The chief was friendly and generous to all of Cartier's crew and everyone ate their fill.

After feasting with the natives, Cartier ordered the captain to bring the cross ashore.

"We will claim this land for France." Cartier beamed.

But when Chief Donnacona saw the [cross](#) being raised, and sailors kneeling before it, he frowned and put his hands out side to side to indicate that the land was the land of his people, not Cartier's.

"Don't worry. We only mean to mark where we have been so that we may more easily return to it." Cartier lied.

But Donnacona didn't believe him. Once the crew was back aboard their ships, Donnacona and his two sons, Taignoagny and Domagaya, and several other natives paddled after them. The chief stayed at a distance, but got Cartier's attention, pointed to the cross and shook his head. He made a cross with his fingers and pointed to all the land around him and again, shook his head.

"Show him an axe. Pretend you're going to barter." Cartier grumbled to a nearby sailor.

"Pretend, sir?" The young seaman scrunched his forehead in confusion.

"Do as I command, sailor."

The sailor held up an axe and Cartier gave a small nod to the boatswain who grabbed a canoe as other sailors jumped in and forced the natives aboard the ship. All the natives were brought aboard, including Donnacona's two sons. They were dressed in

sailor's garb and fed fine food. After getting them drunk, Cartier released all the natives except for Donnacona's sons.

"I will bring your sons back to that cross." Cartier promised.

Later in the Commander's cabin, Marc quietly served Cartier his evening meal. The explorer leaned back in his chair.

"You're quiet tonight, Marc. Are you well?"

Marc nodded his head. "Yes, sir."

"I see. But you have something to say. I can see it sitting there on the tip of your tongue."

Marc put down the tankard of fresh water and looked at the floor. "I'm thinkin', sir, that the chief is likely to miss his sons while they are gone."

"You wonder why I have taken them?"

Marc nodded.

"The King of France will be impressed and pleased with these savages. And, once in France, they will learn French and be interpreters for future expeditions. Do you understand?"

"Aye, sir."

But Marc didn't really understand. He could hear the sons of Donnacona weeping in the dark recesses of the ship, crying out for their father.

And their home in [Kanata](#).

Chapter Five

The Second Voyage

May 16, 1535

[Cathedral of St. Malo](#)

Cartier, Marc and the 112 member crew stood outside the cathedral and looked toward the sea. Cartier breathed in the salty air and looked at the young cabin boy standing to his left.

"We weigh anchor in three days, Marc. Is all at the ready?"

Marc smiled up at the Commander, his eyes shining with eagerness. "Aye, sir. Hatch, too. But found me a different set of cats."

The Commander chuckled, remembering how the cats had gotten loose upon their return to St. Malo and Marc's tears at his inability to find them. "Black and white ones, then?"

"Aye. Beautiful felines they be, sir. Sleep with Hatch now every night."

"Good. And you've given your confession and taken your communion as I've commanded the entire crew?"

"Aye, sir. And I'd plenty to confess if you don't mind me sayin'."

"We're all sinners, Marc. 'Tis why we repent before we set sail. Make sure all of us are right with our maker before we go. I never want to weigh anchor without the blessing of the bishop and of God."

"Aye. Is good of our dear Lord to bless us so. But I best be goin' now. My mother wants to feed me full o' meat pie before we take to the sea."

The Commander gave the young lad a gentle shove. "Then be gone with ya. Eat your fill."

Marc grinned and ran toward home, the Commander's words echoing in his ears: "And don't forget to feed those cats!"

May 19, 1535

Cartier's three ships, [Le Grande Hermine](#), *Petite Hermine*, and *L'Emerillon* were abuzz with activities for setting sail.

"Commander, what do you suggest I do with this [barrel](#) of hard tack? We haven't any room left below deck." The young apprentice, D'Aramitz, gasped for air and wiped his brow. The barrels were heavy and he'd hauled more than a few from the dock to the ship's hold below deck.

"Check with the cooper. If he hasn't room in his cabin, stow it with the barber-surgeon."

"Aye, sir."

"We've 112 mouths to feed on this fifteen-month journey. We need to bring all we can and leave nothing behind. Marc, are the natives in their berths?"

Marc turned over the [hour glass](#) next to the poop deck steps and jumped down to stand in front of Cartier. "Aye. They are eager to set sail as am I."

"Good. Captain!"

"Aye, Commander?"

"Weigh anchor. The wind is blessedly in our favor today."

The Captain cupped his hands around his mouth. "You heard the Commander, lads, allllll hands on deck! Weigh anchooor!"

Marc ran below while the sailors trimmed the sails and took their places for their departure. Marc wanted to be on deck, too, but it was his responsibility at this point to prepare the Commander's quarters by putting linens on the bed, organizing the Commander's belongings and making sure that the captain's inkwells were full. Before he finished lighting the lamp above the table, he felt the ship move and ran uptop to wave goodbye to his family on the shore.

Hatch followed him up the steps and barked his goodbyes as the happy crew waved to tearful wives, mothers, and friends.

Jacques waved at a sea of faces, unable to distinguish one from another. Somewhere in the crowd was his wife, Mary Catherine des Granches. "One never knows if we'll come home, Marc. The sea is an impartial maiden. She shows no favoritism towards those she keeps, be it lowly servant or Commander."

"Aye, sir, but not one was lost on our last journey. Perhaps the sea will be as kind this time. I've heard the sailors talk, and they say you are the most cautious navigator of the seas. You involve everyone in big decisions."

Cartier patted Hatch on the head and looked toward the Atlantic, dreaming of the riches he would find on his discovery of the Northwest Passage. So far he had avoided mutiny, desertion, and even deaths of his crews. The king had called him the "Pilot of the Western Sea" and believed that Cartier was part of God's plan of spreading the message of salvation in Christ to the New World.

Leaning over the rails of his 140-ton ship, *La Grande Hermine*, Cartier admired its 12 cannons protruding from her sides in a show of authority. Looking past her mizzenmast, a slight smile spread across his face. *La Petite Hermine*, a replica of the larger ship but half the size, she bobbed in the water like a seal pup following its mother. She was followed by the small [pinnace vessel](#), *L'Emerillon*, slicing easily through the waves and carrying more supplies than men.

The nervous commander said a silent prayer of protection as he closed his eyes against the familiar tingling of salty wind on his face. Once again the romantic allure of the Atlantic pulled him far from home to a New World of adventure, riches and fame. To his wife's disappointment, his favorite abode wasn't on land but on the great expanse of the Atlantic where he lived truly happy and fulfilled. He closed his eyes and felt the wind at his neck, listened to the rhythm of the ocean and the sounds of his crew rushing about with their duties. The sea was where he was the most alive. The sea was his home.

May 26, 1535

"It's a violent gale, Commander." First Mate, Thomas Fromont grabbed on to the bench at the captain's table as the ship pitched and rolled in the giant waves. Marc made a quick lunge for the pot of stew that slid past Cartier and caught it before it hit the floor.

"Nothing we can do but wait it out." Cartier looked out the porthole above his bunk at the driving rain and frothy sea. "And pray. I fear what I cannot see. It appears we've been separated from the other two vessels." Cartier frowned and sat down on his bunk, bracing himself against the ledge. The lantern above the table waved back and forth

casting dancing shadows on the cabin walls as Marc and Frank set about rescuing sliding tankards and bowls.

"Tis good you finished your meal before the storm hit, Commander." Marc grabbed at a spoon flying to the floor.

"Aye. Batten down the victuals, Marc. We're in for the long haul."

Hatch whined and leaned against Cartier's leg under the table.

Cartier sighed and patted the worried dog and remembered that he, too, leaned on Someone when afraid. Dependence on His Lord was the only thing that gave him peace in the storm.

The sound of feet running along the companionway alerted him before the loud knock on the door.

"Commander!"

Marc ran to the door and slid it open to reveal a disheveled sailor gasping for air.

Cartier grabbed the table to steady himself in the rocking ship. "What is it, lad?"

"It's Allard, sir. A barrel fell on his leg and crushed it. The [barber-surgeon](#) needs your permission to remove it, sir."

"The barrel?" Marc's eyes were wide with fear.

"No, the leg. What shall I tell him, sir?"

"I'm coming, lad. Take me to them. Come along, Marc. You'll captain your own ship one day, no better time than the present to learn surgery."

Marc swallowed. He'd rather not. The mere thought of Allard's crushed leg was enough to make his stomach turn inside out. But he followed the captain scurrying toward

the injured seaman down into the ship's hold at the bow. It wasn't difficult to find him, his screams and groans rose louder than the storm that raged outside the ship.

The cabin boy stiffened himself to keep his knees from buckling. The site was worse than he'd imagined. Dacey Allard lay in a pool of blood, and the boatswain poured rum down his gullet in between his screams.

The barber-surgeon stepped toward Cartier. "It needs to come off, Commander. Nothin' I can do. Infection'll set in and he'll die."

Cartier lifted the canvas that covered the leg and tossed it aside. "How did this happen?"

"Caught him stealin' a tankard of ale, sir." The ship's cooper, Mason Leblanc shook his head. "When I startled him, he fell against a stack of barrels, knocked them over and they fell on his leg."

Cartier nodded. He'd given this lad a second chance on this mission. And now, he was sorry. Not only was the young lad a proven thief, he would have to live his life without a leg. He'd be no good to anyone on board except to swab a deck on his hands and knees. The bad condition of his leg gave Cartier no choice. It had to be removed.

"Take it off."

Cartier stepped back and let the barber-surgeon take his place.

"Aye, captain." The reluctant surgeon took the [amputation saw](#) out of his chest of tools, poured wine over the blade and tied a cord around the injured leg.

"You." The surgeon pointed to Marc. "Hold his leg still."

Marc wiped his brow and rolled up his sleeves. Touch the injured leg? With all that blood?

"Hurry up now, lad. He's losing blood. And watch your fingers. Keep `em out of the way of my saw."

The boatswain gave Allard, now drunk, a piece of leather to bite down on. Marc closed his eyes and prayed. He concentrated on the sounds of the sea and the movement of the ship. He thought of the sunshine and the beautiful beaches of the New Found Land.

By the time the surgery was completed, Allard was asleep from shock and rum. The surgeon poured wine on the young sailor's leg and tied off the arteries and cauterized it with a hot [broad axe](#). After washing his hands, the surgeon dressed the wound and directed the sailors to carry the injured sailor to the [hammock](#) in the corner.

"That was fine work, lad." Cartier put a hand on Marc's shoulder. "You have the makings of a captain. You were very brave."

Marc's body shook and tears flowed down his cheeks. He looked away to hide them. He wasn't sure if captains were allowed to cry.

Chapter Six

July 26, 1535

"I sure am thankful for birds, Marc." Frank rubbed his full stomach and licked his salty lips. Being separated from the other two ships for nearly two months had meant food and water shortages for those aboard *La Grande Hermine* until they had at last reached the Isle of Birds near the New Found Land. "I do hope the other ships join us soon and that they were not lost at sea."

"Aye. The rum is nearly gone and the [barber-surgeon](#) says we need it for our stomachs." Marc looked in the Cartier's large storage tankard and shook his head. "If something doesn't happen soon, even the Commander's table will be without wine or fruit tonight."

The sound of cheers and running feet above them alerted the boys to go on deck.

"What is it, sir?" Marc ran toward the Commander with Hatch at his heels, but he needed no answer. He could see two ships entering the bay where they were anchored.

"Praise be to God," Cartier smiled. "They are safe."

For two months the three reunited ships continued their journey with Cartier's expertise. They stopped frequently to take [soundings](#) in order to navigate safely past sandy shoals and dangerous rocky shores. In August they reached the black, rocky shores of [Anticosti Island](#) only to be met by yet another storm on the [Feast Day of Saint Lawrence](#).

"We will anchor in [this bay](#) and name it for the Saint whose name we honor." Cartier ordered.

After the winds stopped, the determined crews raised their sails and set sail westward past the northwest tip of [Anticosti](#). The waterway opened up so widely that Cartier thought he had at last found the Northwest Passage.

"Kanata! Kanata!" Taigoagny and Domagaya pointed up the river and excitedly pointed toward the forecastle as they ran to the Commander on the main deck. "Kanata!" They explained to Cartier that further up the wide waterway was their settlement. "There the water is fresh and the way much more narrow."

Cartier's hopes that this was the passageway to Cathay were dashed. The mouth of the river was 80 miles wide and had seemed so full of promise. But Cartier determined to sail up the river anyway and explore the lands of the north.

Within days Cartier's disappointment turned to curiosity as he observed elk, deer and moose on the shore and salmon, eels and [lampreys](#) swimming in the bay.

"Look there, Marc. What is that creature?"

Before Marc could answer that he didn't know, Taigoagny spoke. "Adothuys. Good eating." He pointed at the [beluga whales](#) dancing alongside the ship and rubbed his stomach.

As Cartier navigated 500 miles away from Anticosti Island, Taigoagny and Domagaya explained the different things that they saw including the settlements of [Huron Indians](#). When they reached the Isle of Orleans, the river became much narrower and the two brothers saw some of their tribesmen fishing nearby.

"This place we call *kebec*. Narrow." Domagaya put his hands closer together to indicate a small passage.

Later, the area would become part of the province of Quebec.

September 8, 1535

Domagaya and Taignoagny couldn't be compelled to go below. They cupped their hands around their mouths and shouted greetings to the natives on shore.

"Kanata! Kanata! Home!" Domagaya grinned and spread his arms wide. Those on shore ran into the water to greet the ship and the Taignoagny jumped overboard to swim toward them. Domagaya turned to Marc and gave him a gentle nudge.

"Domagaya home. Domagaya home." Before Marc could reply, he too, jumped overboard and swam ashore. The boatswain looked at Cartier to await the order to stop the runaway natives but Cartier simply smiled and shouted a greeting to Donnacona, welcoming the Chief aboard the ship. The chief cautiously boarded the ships and held out his arms for an embrace.

Cartier greeted him with a wide smile. "Welcome, Chief Donnacona, I have brought back your sons, just as I promised."

The chief nodded and turned to watch his sons reuniting with their tribe. He motioned for Cartier to come ashore and the Commander agreed. There they celebrated and feasted on beaver and bear.

Cartier patted his full belly. "Chief, allow me to find a good harbor for the ships and we will come ashore with gifts for your people at your camp."

The chief nodded and sent a messenger ahead to inform the rest of the tribe there would be visitors.

After anchoring at the junction of the Saint Lawrence and Saint Charles rivers, Domagaya and Taignoagny rejoined Cartier, their father, and native council aboard the

ship. The young native men had removed their European clothing to decorate themselves with blue, red and white clay. Bright feathers adorned their long dark hair; and [wampum](#), beads and seashells hung from leather straps draped around their necks.

“Tell me, Chief Donnacona, about this great river. How far does it go?”

Donnacona turned to one of his sons who interpreted for him. He nodded and asked Taignoagny to interpret his words for Cartier.

“Further up the river is the kingdom of the Hochelaga. Do not go further. There are rapids, whirlpools, and evil spirits in the forests.”

Cartier laughed and shook his head no. “Tell him I will go further north. I have been asked by my king to explore it further.”

Donnacona frowned. The white man was ignoring his warnings.

Later that night, when the crews were aboard their ships, there was the call of alarm.

“All hands on deck! All hands! Sleepers awake!” Frank rang the bell and every crew member was roused from their sleep armed with knives, longbows and guns.

“Canons at the ready!” Cartier shouted, his face red with urgency.

Frank screamed. “Devils! Devils!” Marc looked out at the waters and back at Frank who screamed the Lord’s prayer as he held tight to his [rosary](#).

“Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy Name...”

Chapter Seven

Marc looked again over the side of the ship and giggled. Three natives wrapped in white-and-black dogs' skins with black paint covering their faces and a long horn protruding from each of their foreheads rowed toward them in canoes.

"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Frank continued whispering the prayer.

Marc patted his friend on the back. "It's okay, Frank. Look, it's just some Indians dressed in a costume, that's all."

"No. I'm sure they're devils."

Frank wasn't comforted. He trembled as the natives stood up in their canoe and shouted at Cartier. After trying to scare Cartier, the natives went ashore and held a [powwow](#), keeping the crews awake.

The next morning, Cartier called Donnacona's sons to his cabin.

"What was the noise we heard last night? And those creatures in the canoe. What does it all mean?"

"They are messengers from Jesus sent to warn you." Domagaya scowled at the Commander.

Taignoagny nodded. "There will be ice and cold weather. It isn't safe to continue."

Cartier laughed and ignored the warnings. He didn't know the chief wanted to keep Cartier to himself. With Cartier's help, Donnacona believed he could vanquish the Huron at Hochelaga and rule over them.

September 19, 1535

Cartier chose 50 men for the journey to Hochelaga. They boarded the smallest ship, *Le Emerillon* and continued slowly up the St. Lawrence River.

"I wish Frank could have joined us." Marc knew he shouldn't pout, but he would miss his friend.

"We'll be back soon enough. He is needed to help build the fort at Kebec. It will be winter soon and we will need lodgings."

Marc nodded. "I know. I just think he'd really like to see these trees. Aren't they magnificent, Commander? So many shades of gold and scarlet—I can scarcely take it in. I want to memorize it so I can tell my mother. I'm sure she's never seen such trees."

"Aye, I think you're right. There are many different kinds here. See that one there? That's an [oak](#). Over there is an [elm](#), and that one jutting out on the bank is a [willow](#). And the [ash](#) and [spruce](#)—these are the finest trees in the world—so tall and straight. Perfect trees for shipbuilding."

"And the [grapes](#), don't forget those."

Cartier threw back his head and laughed. Marc and Frank had made themselves sick a week before indulging on the copious vines of grapes that trimmed the banks of the great river.

"Yes, indeed, the grapes. Have we learned the lesson of moderation?"

"Aye, Commander. I have." Marc rubbed his backside, remembering the painful days of constantly running into the woods to relieve himself.

That night in his log, the captain recorded the animals he'd seen: [beaver](#), [deer](#), [moose](#), [elk](#), [bear](#), and many different kinds of birds including [ducks](#), [pheasants](#), [geese](#) and [cranes](#).

The explorers traveled up the river for nine days until they came upon a wide point in the river that looked like a lake and a cluster of islands.

"Captain, choose for me 28 men to disembark and explore with longboats." Cartier was eager to learn if it were really true that this was not the way to Cathay. And if it wasn't, could there be gold and riches instead?

October 2, 1535

"A mountain!" Marc pointed ahead, rousing Cartier from his slumber. They had traveled for three days in the open longboat, surveying the land and searching for rivers. Now they were more than 1,000 miles inland from the Atlantic, and eager for more adventure. The natives they'd met along the way had been welcoming and kind, and had traded with the sailors, giving them fish for trinkets. None of the natives seemed alarmed at the sight of their little boats, making Cartier wonder if a European had explored the area before.

Rubbing his eyes, the great navigator sat straight up at the sight of [a tall hill](#) on a large island in the middle of the river. At the foot of the hill was a large Indian settlement. Would they be as friendly to him as the natives along the way had been?

"Commander! Rapids ahoy!" The captain ordered the crews to stop rowing and pointed toward the bow.

"Head for shore, lads. We'll disembark at Mont Réal."

"How do you know it's called Mont Réal?" The captain looked at his Commander and raised his eyebrows.

Cartier smiled. "Because I just named it so."

Before the explorers reached the shore, it was covered with thousands of dark-skinned people—men, women and children—cheering and rejoicing as if they were welcoming a long lost relative home. They danced in circles—the men in one, the women in another, and the children also danced in their own circle. They filled the crew's longboats with cornbread and fish, and brought their babies so the commander would lay hands on them.

After praying for the babies, Cartier motioned for the women to sit in a row as he handed out trinkets. To the men he gave knives.

"There are so many, Commander, do we have enough to share?" Marc looked down at his nearly empty bucket.

"Don't fret, Marc. There are more buckets on the boat."

With arms aching from hugging, holding babies and passing out trinkets, the seamen returned to the longboats and feasted on the fish and cornbread. While they settled into the boats to sleep, they watched the natives dance around the fire shouting, "Aguyase!"

"Will they dance all night?" Marc whispered to Cartier who sat up watching the natives and writing in his log by candlelight.

"I don't know, Marc. But one thing's for sure. They're happy we're here."

Chapter Eight

The Third Voyage June 30, 1541

Cartier was nervous. The King of France had sent his “dear and beloved Jacques Cartier, who has discovered the large countries of Kanata and Hochelaga which lie at the end of Asia” back to the St. Lawrence River. The trip had been a rough one, with storms that took the five ships off course, making the journey the longest yet. Even though he wasn’t the true Commander of the voyage, Roberval was nowhere to be found, and that meant Cartier was in charge until his arrival.

As the crew landed once again at the village of Stadacona, Cartier feared telling the truth. The happy natives greeted their return with dancing and singing but the Commander knew their joy would not last once they learned the fate of their chief and his sons and friends.

Agona, who had taken the Chief Donnacona’s place in his absence, greeted Cartier with a bright smile and warm embrace. “Where are my kinsmen?”

Cartier looked down at his feet. “I am sorry to bring you bad news, Agona. Donnacona passed away and is home with Jesus now.” And then Cartier lied. “And the other kinsmen are married and have become great rulers in France. Because of their success, they did not choose to return.”

Agona nodded and seemed to understand, but he and the Indians he brought with him aboard the ship to greet Cartier, paddled back to the village without inviting the Frenchmen to feast. When the village heard the news of their loved ones’ absences, they mourned. They never trusted the men with white skin again.

Cartier, sensing their unhappiness, sailed twelve miles upstream and anchored at Cap Rouge.

"We will make the first French colony here, away from Stadacona. The natives are angry and we can't risk their anger."

"Do you really think they would attack us, sir?" Marc shivered at the thought.

"I sensed their unhappiness—did you not?"

Marc nodded. "Has King Francis told you what to call our new colony?"

"It is to be called [Charlesbourg-Royal](#), but there is no sign of Roberval. I need to send the two smaller ships back to France to inform the king of Roberval's absence. And then we will start construction of France's first settlement in this new land."

The crews who stayed behind in Kanata built two forts: one on a high cliff and another below. They planted crops of wheat, turnips, cabbage and lettuce while Cartier searched for gold. Marc joined him in the search, eagerly looking for something that would bring them great riches.

One day, while walking on the shore of the Cap Rouge River with Marc and Hatch, something caught Cartier's eye. He pointed toward Hatch barking at a turtle.

"Marc, that there on the ground by Hatch—do you see it? Or is that my imagination?"

Marc ran forward with a small shovel to dig at the gleaming stone. "It's not your imagination, sir. It shines!" Marc hacked at the ground, and uncovered dark rocks laced with gold.

"So it is true." Cartier whispered at the stones in his hands. "Saguenay has riches that will make France rich and please the King. At last." Cartier held his arms to heaven

and shouted with joy. He was finally rich. All the years of exploration, the hardships, the loneliness, the separation from his family—it had all been worth it. He'd finally found gold!

Hatch barked and jumped up on the Commander and licked his face. His master was happy, and that made him happy as well.

A few days later, on a neighboring hillside, Hatch was sniffing out ferrets when Cartier stumbled upon crystal-like stones sparkling in the sun. "Diamonds! Marc, look!"

"So beautiful." Marc held the stones up to the sun and watched them catch the light. "And so many. Does this mean I am rich, too, Commander?"

Cartier slapped his leg and laughed. "You can have as many as you can carry. You have made your mother a wealthy woman today!" He looked into his own satchel of stones and marveled. "If there are riches here, at Cap Rouge—there must be more at the rapids of Mont Réal. I must set out to explore the area as soon as possible."

September 7, 1541

Cartier left 200 colonists, Hatch and the cats behind at the forts and took the rest with him aboard two [longboats](#) to explore the route to Saguenay. He passed by the village of Hochelaga and prepared to fight his way through the first set of rapids that would one day be called Saint Mary's Current.

"We will use one boat and double up. Everyone—board one boat." Cartier ordered his men to hide one of the boats under brush and hunker down together in the other to navigate the dangerous waters.

"Batten down yer hatches, lads! We're in for the ride of our lives to be sure!"

Marc sat between the commander and two burly criminals from France who had exchanged their sentences for a chance at a new life in the new world. He was thankful for their strong arms and steely courage.

The boat bounced across the waves, and was thrown over rocks and down long falls that Marc thought would never end. His head whipped side to side and backwards and forwards. He held on to the boat with one hand and Cartier with the other. Without realizing it he held his breath and didn't let it go until they reached the end of the rapids. The crew cheered with relief at braving the first set of falls and happily set to work bailing water from the boat.

"Well done, lads! Well done!" Cartier was pleased with the crew of men he had handpicked for this journey. But when he eyed the next set of rapids his heart sank and the smile on his face fell. The jagged rocks before him were twice the size and scope of those in the first set of rapids. And the water moved even faster.

"I fear it's too treacherous." Cartier moaned and slapped his hand to his forehead as he stared at the rapids that would one day be named Lachine. "We will have to carry the boat on land to go past."

The men groaned but obediently lifted the boat over their heads. As they made their way past the noisy falls some natives approached them from the woods.

"How far to Saguenay?" Cartier spoke using some of the native words he'd learned when he'd lived years before in the new land.

The natives laughed at the men carrying the boat on their heads. Saguenay? They would be very tired before they got there because it took many moons and was impossible to reach by water.

Cartier's dreams of reaching Cathay and unknown riches were dashed. There was nothing to do but return to the colony at Charlesbourg-Royal. But upon arrival he found the colonists fearful, hungry and lonely.

And arrows streaking through the air.

Chapter Nine

Spring 1542

It was a long, lonely winter. Even Hatch and the cats had cabin fever. The first signs of spring came none too soon. The Indians had been unfriendly and had attacked the fort's walls with spears and arrows at unexpected times. More than once Marc had rescued a straying cat from leaping over the walls. He was afraid the natives would use the cats for fur or food.

One thing was clear: the French were no longer welcome in Kanata. The Forts had to be reinforced, and the colonists lived in constant fear for their lives. At the end of the long, hard winter, they confronted their Commander.

"We want to go back to France. We have no hope of a good life here. Our lives are threatened when we hunt for food, or try to garden. How can we bring women and children here to build a colony when the natives are trying to kill us?"

Cartier had to agree. If he didn't take the Frenchmen back to France, they would likely steal a ship and go themselves. Besides, he had found gold, and he was eager to show the king.

"I fear we must leave this land, Marc, before there is a mutiny."

Marc nodded. "Aye, sir. I hear plots brewing when I gather wood and bring in water. No one is happy here."

"Are you happy here, Marc?"

"Do you want the truth, sir?"

"Of course. You will not be punished for the truth."

"When we were here years ago, and Frank and I could run in the woods, hunt for food, gather grapes and herbs, I thought it was a paradise. But now, I am afraid to even fetch water for your tea. It is not a paradise at all, but a prison."

Cartier nodded and rubbed his brow. "You have had it much worse than I, Marc. I am content to study my books, and write in my logs. But you—you are young, and have energy to explore as I used to. Tell me, lad, do you think you would one day bring a wife here?"

Marc shook his head. "She would be too afraid and my children—they would not be safe, would they? We never know when a spear or arrow will find us. I want my children to run free and know the life I have had, sir. Not to be locked up inside a fort."

"Your answers do not surprise me, Marc. It's as I thought as well."

Marc sighed. "I wish it were not so, Commander. If only Donnacona and the other natives had not died in France. If only they had not been taken prisoner."

Cartier didn't answer.

He turned back to his books.

June 1542

As soon as the river ice melted, Cartier's ships made their way back down the Saint Lawrence and toward home. On the southwest coast of the New Found Land, Cartier met the ships of Count de Roberval.

"Now he arrives? Why the delay?" Marc wondered.

Cartier was furious and did not hide his anger when Roberval boarded his ship. Even Hatch gave a low growl of disapproval.

"Where have you been? You are too late." Cartier waved his arms in anger.

Roberval's face glowed bright red and his jowls shook when he spoke and pointed a finger in Cartier's face. "You must turn your ships around and go back to Chalesbourg-Royal. That is an order."

"I will not." Cartier stood firm. "I will not put my men through one more day of hunger, and fear. Nothing but death awaits you and your inexperienced crew, Roberval. You, too, should turn back and return to France."

"I carry out the orders of the King!" Roberval shouted. "I will not disobey His Majesty."

"But where have you been all this time? Why have you been detained?"

The two leader's voices carried through the trees lining the New Found Land's shores as Cartier's crews shared the news of the treacherous danger ahead with Roberval's unsuspecting men.

While docked at St. John's in the New Found Land, Cartier's ships escaped to France under the cover of darkness. They left Kanata behind and headed for home, eager to be reunited with their families. And Cartier could hardly wait to share his wealth with the king.

Once in France, Marc and Cartier secretly transported their riches to a goldsmith for testing. Soon after it was inspected, gleeful laughter filled the shop.

But it was not Cartier's and Marc's laughter that was heard in the streets.

It was the goldsmith's.

"This is nothing more than iron pyrite. This isn't gold at all. You, Cartier, are a fool!"

Cartier's heart sank. He had already sent word to the king that great riches had been found.

"But the diamonds? What about those?" Cartier looked hopeful.

"Mica. Nothing more than a transparent mineral. Your riches are worthless, Cartier. Go back to your fishing boats."

Word quickly spread of Cartier's failure to find riches and a route to Cathay. Stories and lies spread rapidly of his lack of courage to stand up to the natives and build a colony for France.

"What will you do now, sir?" Marc worried about his old friend, who did little more than look out the window staring at the sea.

"I will draw my maps. I will help geographers. I will breathe in the salt air and dream of my days at sea. I will do what old men do, I suppose, and remember the days of my youth when dreams seemed possible."

"But you did realize some of your dreams, sir."

"What dreams? I found no route to Cathay. No riches. I built no colony for France. I am a failure, and all of France knows it."

"I disagree, sir. You are far from being a failure. No one even knew there was a Saint Lawrence River before you discovered it. And isn't knowing that there is no passage to Cathay as important as knowing that there is? People can now look elsewhere for it and not waste their time."

Cartier smiled at the young man sitting across from him at the table who was no longer a boy. "Sometimes you are wiser than I, Marc. And often times, even as a young lad, you were wiser than I. But I never told you. Thank you for your friendship."

"Isn't that more important than anything?" Marc reached toward Cartier and placed his hand over the old seaman's shriveled one. "Friendship?"

Cartier looked out at the purple sky hanging over the sea. "Yes, I suppose it is."

"We are rich indeed, are we not?" Marc smiled.

Cartier looked at Marc, tears spilling onto his cheeks.

"Yes, Marc." Cartier looked out at the endless sea, up at the moon and stars and back at the young lad, his most faithful friend. "Quite rich, indeed."

The End

Dear Reader,

The character Marc in this story is a figment of my imagination. I created him to help me tell Cartier's story. Cabin boys were an important part of the crew of a ship, and while it is most likely Cartier had a cabin boy, nothing is known about him.

Dogs and cats were also part of ships at sea. Historians differ as to whether or not [cats](#) or dogs were considered lucky on ships. I decided to include both and to use the name "Hatch" for the dog because it is the name given by modern archaeologists to a [dog's skeleton](#) found aboard Henry VIII's famous sunken ship, the [Mary Rose](#). This amazing discovery was very helpful in my research for this book.

Like Marc, there are many things that Cartier did that I don't understand. But it was a different time and place, and hind sight of history is always much clearer than it is in the moments it occurred.

One thing was clear to me as I researched this story: Cartier loved Jesus Christ and was dedicated to Him. Part of his mission as an explorer was to spread Christianity to the New World. Whether or not he was a good missionary is for God to decide. Hopefully we can learn from history's mistakes and prevent them from being repeated in the future. No one is perfect. Not even world explorers. We all make mistakes and we all need forgiveness (Romans 3:23).

I hope you enjoy this book as much as I enjoyed writing it for you. May God bless you in your explorations and discoveries. Stay curious!

In Christ Alone,
Karla Akins

About the Author:

Karla Akins is a pastor's wife, mother of five, grandma to five beautiful little girls and author of *O Canada! Her Story*. She lives in North Manchester with her husband, twin teenage boys with autism, and three rambunctious dogs. Her favorite color is purple, favorite hobby is book-hoarding, and favorite food group is cupcakes. To learn more about Karla and to sign up for her history blog, go to her website: <http://KarlaAkins.com>.

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