

# **Vengeance is Mine!**

A Red McKenna Novel

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Read this first chapter of the next installment of the Red McKenna Series.

**MOBILE OPTIMIZED EDITION**

**SAMPLE CHAPTER**



# 1

“Oh, God, baby! They *raped* me!” Cheryl “Bud” Thompson cried, reaching out to Judith “Red” McKenna, who was sitting on the side of the hospital bed where Bud was propped up with an IV tube in her arm. Bud had been living alone aboard Red’s husband’s luxury superspeedboat *Strange Brew* for two months before things went very badly wrong for her.

“Who raped you?” Red asked, mostly to get Bud to keep talking. Red knew that describing her ordeal was the first step for Bud to deal with the emotional trauma.

The physical effects – sunburn, minor cuts and bruises, hunger, and raging thirst – would quickly heal. It was that horrified, frightened look, which Red had never believed she’d ever see in Bud’s eyes, that worried her the most.

When she’d pulled her best friend out of the Atlantic swells into the semi-inflatable boat, Red thought she still saw that indomitable spirit Bud always displayed. But, by the time they’d reached the Coast Guard cutter, Bud, by then wrapped in a heavy wool blanket and nestled under Red’s long arm, had seemed to fall apart, mentally.

Crying and shaking while Red handed her up to the cutter’s crewmen, she kept making a grunting sound and thrashing around, as if she were making a supreme effort to escape something, but couldn’t break free.

Red swore eternal vengeance on whoever had done this to her friend.

\* \* \*

The look on the face of Red’s husband, Doc Manchek, up on deck was a combination of concern and anger. The reason for the concern was obvious.

The anger was another matter. It was an anger Red had never seen Doc express. Doc had infinite patience. He never lost his

temper, or even his sense of humor.

Red knew that she, herself, didn't have Doc's patience. When she felt wronged, her heart turned toward revenge.

Doc joked about her cannibalistic tendencies with respect to her enemies' livers, but the joke was in the way he said it, not what he was describing.

For the first time since she'd known him, Doc looked *pissed* – implacably, thoroughly, remorselessly pissed.

It was new territory, and she wasn't quite sure what to expect next.

Red knew why Doc was angry.

Red couldn't imagine describing any mood of Doc's as "mad." *She* got mad, reaching anger levels where she wasn't quite rational. Doc didn't get mad. Sometimes he got *even*, but never mad.

Doc was angry because he saw Bud as a rare spirit who made the Universe a better place in which to live. Red could see that he'd already decided that whoever had done this to her he wanted *out* of the Universe. There was no second way.

A scream coming across the water drew their attention to Doc's boat, where the pirate leader jumped to the *Strange Brew's* controls, and jammed the turbine power levers fully forward. The boat leaped onto plane, and skated away so fast that the Coast Guard gun crew couldn't get off a warning shot.

The scream had come from one of the pirates, who was no more than a teenager. The leader had thrown him against the cockpit bulkhead while jamming the controls forward.

The third pirate, who'd been standing on the cockpit deck with his hands on his head in a gesture of surrender, had lost his balance and fallen over the boat's transom into the wake, bouncing once on the swim platform edge before disappearing under the foam.

"Sink her!" Doc shouted at the gunner, who was lining up for a transom shot as *Strange Brew's* course took her directly away from

the cutter, making for a temptingly easy shot.

“No!” Bud screamed, briefly coming out of her fit. “That boy’s still aboard! Don’t kill him. He’s not a pirate.” Turning to Red, she pleaded: “Help him, please!”

Not quite knowing what to think, Red tried to calm her down, saying: “Alright. We’ll help him.”

Doc, flashing a surprised glance at Cheryl, shouted “Belay that, sailor,” to the gunner. “*Don’t* shoot!” It was Doc’s call because it was still Doc’s boat.

He stepped aft to where Red was still hugging Cheryl.

“What’s that all about?” he asked, but Cheryl was no longer coherent. She’d gone back to fighting her internal demons.

\* \* \*

That was hours ago. The sedatives in her IV had calmed Cheryl down enough for her to become lucid.

Except for having shakes and complaining of a headache, and that all her muscles and joints ached, Cheryl was calm enough to start telling her story.

In fact, she couldn’t stop telling her story.

“Who raped you?” Red repeated.

“They all did!” Cheryl cried, then reached out for Red, but suddenly pulled back before touching her. When Red tried to embrace her, she pulled further back.

“Don’t touch me,” Cheryl yelled.

“What’s wrong?”

Shuddering, Cheryl hugged herself defensively.

“They were so filthy. Ugh. God knows what diseases they gave me. Stay away.”

Clearly, Cheryl felt unclean. She shrank back as if she didn’t

want to contaminate Red by touching her.

“They didn’t give you anything that will stop me loving you. Come here,” Red ordered, smothering her friend in an affectionate hug.

Gratefully, Cheryl let Red hold her. She buried her face in Red’s shoulder, sobbing.

“I’m so scared. What’s going to happen to me?”

“You’re going to get well again,” Red replied, “then we’re going to hunt those bastards down and introduce them to Hell.

“Then, we’ll kill ‘em.”

\* \* \*

**VISIT**



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