

## Chapter 9

### September 13, 1759

General Wolfe would never know how right he was.

For the next while, the Royal Navy brought the army ashore. It sounds like a simple thing. It was not. First to land were the hundreds of light infantrymen who had accompanied General Wolfe. They were armed with muskets and seventy rounds of ammunition. Each soldier also had two days' rations and canteens filled with water and rum. While more and more troops arrived, twenty-four volunteers and an officer scaled the cliff. They crept upward like insects on a wall, clutching at roots and branches. It was an amazing sight, one that left us sailors shaking our heads at the nerve it must be taking. I kept waiting for someone to come tumbling down and smash on the beach below. But the troops kept climbing.

Until those men had secured the top, the assault could not begin in earnest. I stepped back near one of the boats, to better see their progress, and nearly bumped into one of the oarsmen.

“Watch where you put your big feet,” he hissed. When he saw who owned the feet, he whispered, “William! As I live and breathe!” It was Baldish. “Boston Ben said you were in the town. Escaped, did you?”

“Baldish! As *I* live and breathe, it is good to see you! Yes, I . . . managed to get away. But how is *Pembroke*? How are you?”

“Still here, as you see. Less hair than ever. And you have missed a night of adventure, I will tell you that.”

*Pembroke*, he explained, was safely at anchor, being too large to come in close to shore. But it had been some of her crew that had joined in to create the diversion at Beauport.

Baldish laughed. “Old Montcalm thought the whole army was there. We can cause quite a disturbance when we put our minds to it. As you well know.”

“That I do.”

We heard gunfire and saw flashes from the barrels of muskets at the top of the cliff. War cries and whooping came next. Cannons boomed out from a nearby French battery in an attempt to sink and destroy our vessels. The cries of wounded men could soon be heard, but even that did not stop the boats from coming in and offloading more

infantry. And it did not stop the army from taking the battery, either. Once that happened, the French guns were silent and our ships safe.

I made myself useful, as I said I would, carrying powder, shot and supplies from the boats. The soldiers continued to come ashore, a river of red that now flowed up the Foulon Road to the heights. They would be having a far easier time of it than the men who had scaled the cliff. And there was also a stream of prisoners coming down, many of them wounded. I was glad to see that Vairon was not among them.

Capitaine Vergor, though, was. Musket balls had passed through his hand and leg. Unconscious, he moaned as they carried him past. The tide was low now and the current not as speedy, so he and the other wounded were rowed across to where a field hospital had been set up in a church at Pointe Lévis. I joined in this task, taking up an oar and settling myself behind Baldish in one of the flat-bottomed boats. Our miserable passengers delivered, we stood by to receive more orders. Some of the boats would carry even more soldiers across. Ours, though, would ferry something rather different, and deliver it to General Wolfe.

It was one of the six-pounders, a brass field gun complete with its carriage. Under the command

of an artillery officer named Captain-Lieutenant Yorke, we wrestled it into the boat, then loaded in the equipment necessary for firing it. What a sight we must have been as we rowed back across the river, that gun riding in our midst.

Once at the beach, we wrestled the heavy piece out of the boat. "Let us thank our stars that it is only this small gun, and not one of *Pembroke's*," I said, wiping sweat from my brow. "I would not much enjoy carrying Deadly Raker around."

"Tell me how small you think it is once we have it up there," laughed Baldish. "What I would not do for a couple of strong horses right now! Six hundredweight if it is a pound."

The sky darkened as clouds rolled in, and it began to rain. But what was a little rain in light of what was happening? Some of us took up the gun's drag ropes and began to haul it across the beach, Yorke calling out encouragement. Others pushed. There were hundreds of sailors milling around. Not many of them were smiling. Instead they cursed angrily and complained as they parted for us. They wanted to be in on the fighting. Who were these officers to deny them that right? There had been sounds of fighting up there for hours, some grumbled. The battle would be over, and not one sailor would have had a chance to draw blood.