

For all of you who believed  
I really could do this

O Lord, thou hast searched me out, and known me.  
Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising: thou  
understandest my thoughts long before. Thou are about  
my path, and about my bed: and spyest out all my ways.  
For lo, there is not a word on my tongue, but thou, O  
Lord, knowest it all together. . . .

Try me, O God, and seek the ground of mine heart:  
prove me and examine my thoughts. Look well if there  
be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way  
everlasting. (Psalm 139: 1–4, 23–24)



Dear Reader,

Few droplets of history have captured the imagination and curiosity so firmly as the “Lost” Colony of Roanoke Island. Subsequent explorers to the region have sought word of them, with only the barest rumors and scraps of evidence to mark their existence. Both weather and local politics have prevented serious pursuit of verifying those clues, almost as if God Himself intended them to vanish into the mists of time. But historians and storytellers, shysters and honest businessmen alike have fallen under the spell of the question: Who were the Lost Colony and where did they go?

At some point, all historical fiction becomes speculative fiction. This story especially so, because there is so little we know for certain about the fate of these people, or of those with whom they sought to build community. I can only hope my own attempt at exploring the possibilities in some small way does justice to their faith and courage, on all sides.

A note about names: though standardized spelling did not exist until the advent of Noah Webster’s great work, and language has changed greatly over the past four hundred years, I have used contemporary terms and spellings as much as possible. Sir Walter Raleigh spelled his own name in various ways, but the most common in his time was *Ralegh*. I also call Roanoke Island by what seems to be the closest phonetically to the Carolina Algonquian name, *Roanoac*, giving the word four syllables and not the modern three. More about this later in my notes at the end of the book, but many Algonquian place names carry the *oh-ock* suffix, transliterated to English as *oac*, *oak*, or *ooc* but spoken as two distinct syllables.

In the same way, the actual spelling of Elinor’s name varied between *Elyoner* and *Eleanor*, both of which lead me to believe the pronunciation of the time gave two syllables in the middle of the name: *ELL-ee-ob-nor* or, more likely, *Ell-EE-ob-nor*. I chose the simpler *Elinor* because it is one of the spellings recorded in her father’s own accounts (strangely enough, not even he was consistent), and it seems easier for the modern reader—the alternate pronunciation would probably be lost in translation, with the printed word.

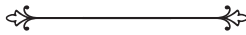
I have also spelled native words more or less phonetically. More on this later, and a glossary and cast of characters are included at the end.

A last note on words that carry negative cultural connotation. I personally hold great respect and appreciation for indigenous peoples—but an author often finds herself needing to use terms that while accurate to history are, frankly, very loaded in our time. The word *savage* in this story is one of those. It was used universally by Europeans—the English, Spanish, French, etc.—for the indigenous peoples of the Americas, whom they viewed as less refined, less educated, and less informed on true religion than themselves. Sometimes it was a reflection of their own personal attitudes toward such people, but in some cases it was considered just a word—a colloquial term of the time. It will no doubt offend some of my readers or at least cause discomfort—as did my use of the word *Negro* in *The Rebel Bride*—but it is an accurate reflection of the terminology of the era. While I do attempt in this story to explore the implied meaning of the term *savage*, please understand that mostly I am attempting to portray people in their own historical and cultural context, and no personal offense is intended, nor does it reflect my own views.

Thank you for venturing on this journey with me!

My most earnest regards,  
Shannon

# Part One





# Prologue

*August 1590*

Three years.

Three long years. But soon, please God, he would hold his daughter and granddaughter again.

This close, it seemed impossible to contain either longing or hope. Yet he must. He knew, with every shred of his being, how unlikely it was that the colonists had stayed on Roanoac Island beyond that first autumn. But the anticipation of stepping upon this shore once more—of gaining at least a hint of what had become of them—

He could hardly breathe.

Green and grey and blue were the waters around and behind him, but he had no eye for the dancing splendor of the waves. Only for the blinding brightness of the strand before him, the dunes clothed with grasses bending in the unrelenting sea winds, and the smudgy dark green of the forest rising beyond.

God had, despite much peril and many months of privateering, brought them safely through the storm. Would that He'd now hold back the tides long enough for him to find them.

Days of longing. Days of hope. He was near to exhausted with it. In their slow sail past the islands to the south, he'd expected some sign of life, of habitation, but—nothing. Not even a signal fire. Then, drawn by smoke

to the north, they'd passed on without any attempt to go ashore. Smoke to the south led to the decision to go ashore nearer rather than farther, leading to a long, hot trek only to find. . .an unattended, burned-out fire. An entire day lost. One delay after another, even that morning.

Now, however, they readied the boats for launch while the ship sat at anchor alongside—but not too close to—that brilliant shoreline, within sight of the inlet he recalled too well.

*Please, gracious God.*

# Chapter One

*July 1587, three years earlier*

In the beginning was the sea,” she murmured. Face turned to the wind, Elinor Dare clutched the ship’s rail with one hand, her coif with the other. Salt spray drove up over the rail, cooling her cheeks.

The scripture reading earlier in the week had been from the first chapter of Genesis, describing how God—who, aye, had created the heavens and the earth—hovered over the face of the deep before dividing the waters from each other and then dry land from ocean.

And so the sea had been, from the very start. Staring out over the stormy blue, with towering clouds rising in the distance, white and all shades of grey, Elinor could feel its ancientness to her bones.

Surely the sea would be either her deliverance or her doom. Mayhap both.

Inside her, the babe kicked. Elinor smoothed a hand across the roundness of her belly, which increased with each passing day. Soon, and the little one would be clamoring to make his appearance.

Would they reach land in time?

*Please, gracious Lord. . .*

‘Twas a selfish request, mayhap, but she wished most heartily to be on dry land to give birth—not on this crowded sea vessel.

With the creak of the ship and its rigging, the snap of the sails and the shouts of the crew filling her ears, only the scuff of a shoe warned her a mere moment before strong arms closed about her and a man's body settled against her back. The briefest alarm shot through her, then a laugh broke from her throat as she snuggled into the embrace of her husband. "La, Ananias! You are far too fond of catching me unawares."

His answering chuckle vibrated through her shoulders. "Guilty as charged, milady."

She crooked her neck to peer up at him. Beneath his soft hat, fair hair, streaked with gold, blew free in the sea wind, and eyes reflecting the color of the sky narrowed against the sunlight, the corners crinkling with a grin. "And what if," she went on, in her best scathing tones, "I were to become so used to your rude ways that one of these times I mistake the embrace of another for yours?"

"You are so fierce, Goodwife, that none other would dare," he said evenly, and she had to laugh at his play on words.

"Oh, is that it? Only you would dare because. . .only you are Dare?" And another peal of mirth shook her.

His reply was to snug her in closer, his bearded cheek against hers. She closed her eyes, savoring his strength and, aye, warmth as well, even in the full hot sun, not caring that they were in view of the crew and anyone else who might be strolling the decks.

Here, just for a moment, she could pretend the hardships of the last months had never happened.

The long anticipation of the voyage itself, when she'd hardly believed it would truly take place.

The days they'd lain at anchor before leaving England's shores.

The long, circuitous trek around the wide sea, whereby they passed Spain and Morocco and sailed on to the West Indies, taking advantage of sea currents, drawing their voyage from an expectation of weeks to a duration of three months.

Their most uncomfortable accommodations, little more than a blanket upon the floor in the ship's hold, women with women and men with men, and married couples separated for the duration of the voyage and

thus denied conjugal comforts.

The disappointment of visits to exquisitely beautiful islands where they were promised revictualing, then denied for reasons Elinor still did not comprehend.

The delight and relief of actually going ashore turning to dismay and horror, as many suffered burning and swelling from fruit they were assured was good to eat—and blindness for some who washed with unclean waters.

Inexplicable delay and, aye, mayhap even betrayal from those tasked with protecting and guiding them to safety. And then, after all else, to hear rumors that they'd not be finally put ashore at their intended location, but far to the south. A place whose very mention carved furrows in Papa's brow.

They'd seen wonders, verily—tropical waters bluer than the sky above, verdant forests, creatures passing all imagination—but there were too many things it would please her to forget.

She pressed more deeply into Ananias's embrace. "Tell me again we've done the right thing."

His beard brushed her ear, crisp-soft. "We've done the right thing, love. I swear it. There was no staying in London, crowded as it is."

She vented a sigh. Too true. The clamor, the filth, the murders and robberies, and pressing mobs on every street. . . Elinor popped her eyes open again and drew in a breath of the salty but fresh wind. Where they were bound, they were promised houses and land enough for each man to have a planting of his own.

At the moment, the prospect even of her own garden, to grow herbs and flowers, seemed almost too fantastical to believe.

"Granted, we expected to have arrived long before now," Ananias said.

"It matters not. Although I own I'd rather your son not be racing to make his appearance before we're landward."

His arms tightened a bit. "My brave girl. I'd rather that as well."

"I simply. . ."

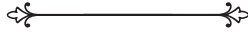
She let her voice trail off. The words felt too silly for her, a woman now grown, to voice.

“You what?”

Ananias’s voice was but a breath against her ear.

“I simply wish a place to call home.”

There. She’d said it.



John White turned his head as he crossed the ship’s deck, pretending not to notice his daughter and her husband embracing over against the starboard rail. After such a long and arduous journey, it was good to see them enjoying each other’s company. Although, with the knowledge he held, it might be the only moment of idyll they enjoyed.

He stepped from the main deck to the tiny compartment designated as his office, shut the door despite the day’s warmth, then tossed his hat into a corner and sank into the chair. With a sigh, he leaned his elbows on the table and shoved both hands through his hair.

*God—most gracious God—*

His trust in the Lord of heaven and earth was not the thing floundering. It was his surety that they as a people still had any favor with Him.

The cry yet echoed through his head. “*Christ our victory!*” And then the screams of the savages as Lane and his soldiers fell upon them.

The terror congealing in his own limbs as he stood, rapier in hand, unable to move.

Dear God in heaven, the utter wrongness of it all.

A sharp rap sounded on the door. Suppressing a groan, he straightened and cleared his throat. “Come.”

The door swung open, and the lean form of the ship’s master and navigator, Simon Ferdinando, stood outlined against the daylight.

The very last person he wanted to see, or speak with, in this moment.

The Portuguese navigator—not only shipmaster but also one of the colony’s Assistants, despite a former career of piracy, which the Queen had pardoned—shut the portal behind him and crossed the floor in a single stride. His braided sailor’s tail swung across his shoulders. “We’re but two days out of the West Indies. You’ve need to tell your people of the change in plans.”

Mingled annoyance and dread surged through him, as if he'd the sea itself sloshing about inside him. 'Twas not his own change of plans, but—John unclenched his teeth. “And tell them I shall.”

Ferdinando stared at him, blue eyes dark beneath the brim of his sailor's cap. “Sooner rather than later best befits your state.”

White tugged at the point of his short beard. “See here, I'm not yet convinced—”

“Do you wish your colonists to be slaughtered by the Spanish? Or worse, tortured and enslaved as papists?”

He fought the urge to swallow. “You know I do not.”

Ferdinando leaned his fists on the edge of the table. Teeth bared behind a yellow beard gone mostly grey, his breath gusting foul in the small space. “Then—tell them. You are the one appointed governor of this colony. It is your duty.”

White found himself seized of a nearly irresistible urge to glance away or to fidget—anything to avoid the weight of that stare—but he forced himself to hold the unblinking gaze. A dozen questions and accusations came to his lips, but he could find voice for none of them.

“In my own time and way,” he said at last. “Do not press me.”

The Portuguese shoved upward, still glaring. “You've not much time left. Mind that at least.”

“Aye,” White snapped, and with a nod, Ferdinando quit the chamber.

John hissed softly in the man's wake. The entire affair gave him no small vexation—that “the Swine,” so called for his vile manner and lack of proper reverence to God, presumed to dictate to White where the colony should go, and for what reason? His superior knowledge of the New World? Or was it rather revenge for John's insistence they spend the voyage in such industry as benefited the planters, rather than the crew collecting prizes of the Spanish as they willed? And then to pretend concern for the planters' well-being, when time and again on the voyage he had arranged hap for his own benefit, the harm of the innocent, or his own apparent entertainment.

He sank his head into his hands. “Merciful, gracious Father, grant me strength—and wisdom. Remember that You are the One who called us to

come out from among them. Do not forsake us now!"

When he had composed his spirit and a semblance of peace had returned to his heart, he stood, straightened his doublet, and stepped to the door. Ferdinando was right, at least in this one thing. It would serve nothing to delay sharing the news, at least with his closest officials.

He emerged once more into the brilliant day, where sailors worked the rigging and snapping canvas, and Elinor and Ananias had moved to a different portion of the rail. A dozen or more other passengers likewise tried to take in the sight of sunlight on heaving waves while not getting in anyone's way—a near impossible feat, with conditions on the vessel.

He angled toward the boys clustered at the foot of the midship rigging. "Ho, Georgie!"

Eyes rounding, the boy broke from the group and trotted toward White. "Aye, Gov'nor?"

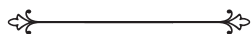
"A favor, dear lad, if you will."

Young George Howe was something of a ringleader with the lads on board, the cabin boy included, but eagerness stretched the broad, freckled features. "Of course, Gov'nor! That is, if I can."

White allowed himself a smile. "You and your cronies—take word to my Assistants and tell them to come to the deck as soon as they may."

Georgie darted back to the others, the chatter of their efforts rising over the clank and creak of the ship and its crew. Just as they darted off to accomplish their mission, however, a cry came from the crow's nest.

*"Land ho!"*



Elinor pressed her way between the shoulders of others as they jostled along the gunwale, two and three deep, to catch a glimpse of Virginia, the first English colony in the New World. This—this was the land they'd been promised, still but the barest smudge on the horizon. Although landing would not yet take place, not until they'd stopped to look in on the fort at Roanoac Island, to see how the men left there the previous year were faring. Just a day or two, and then the ship would carry them up the coast to a place at Chesepiok, called Jacán by the Spanish.

Or would it? With the way talk had spread like wildfire amongst their fellow settlers, it was anyone's guess what might happen.

Ananias had been called away on an errand before the crowd gathered. Elinor thought herself safe enough to linger abovedecks, but now the press grew so deep that someone elbowed her in the belly, and she lurched backward, in turn thumping the person behind her. Tightness seized her entire middle, nearly doubling her over. Air—she needed air, just to breathe—and something firm on which to lean, just for a few moments.

“Excuse me—please—”

Doubtless hungry for their own look at the nearing coastline, folk resisted her nudging them aside, and none too gently. Not one took note of her distress.

At least, she thought none took note, but just as the sway of the ship and the crush of the crowd knocked her off her feet, a pair of hands plucked her by the shoulders and set her aright. Elinor glanced up into the round, tanned countenance of Manteo, the savage who was just completing his own second voyage to England and back, and whose homeland they were in all likelihood gazing upon now.

The man dressed so thoroughly in English clothing—shirt and doublet and characteristically baggy trunkhose, with a jaunty cap covering hair tied back at his nape—that only the indelible markings across cheeks and beardless chin gave him away as being of another nation altogether. He flashed a grin, his brown eyes crinkling. “Careful, Mistress Dare. Come sit aside until the others tire of looking.”

The words were heavily accented, but clear. She expelled a hard breath, then summoned a smile. “Thank you kindly.”

She took the perch he offered, a barrel lashed to one of the masts, where one of the boys had been standing before Manteo shooed him off in favor of Elinor. When she peeked up at him, his pleasant expression had not altered, despite the press about them. How would the rest of his people appear, and would they receive the English settlers with as much openness and generosity as Manteo evinced, and Papa insisted they possessed?

“You must be very glad to see your own country again,” she ventured to add.

He nodded once. "It will indeed be good."

"And—your family too, mayhap?"

Though present for many a conversation with the quiet but cheerful savage, she'd never yet engaged him directly in talk before now. Her curiosity had been much aroused, however, and it seemed a most opportune time—if not strange, with all others vying to see the approach of land while the two of them hung back.

His expression became more thoughtful. "Aye, my family as well."

Was that now sadness in his eyes? She thought of kin to their own party who remained in England. "And what family did you leave behind?"

He crouched beside her, and she wasn't sure at first that he'd reply. "A people is all family," he said, so softly she had to lean to catch the words. "But my mother is there, an older brother and his woman and children, and younger sisters."

He looked as if he'd say more, but he had no time to do so, and she'd likewise none to respond, for the strident, accented voice of their Portuguese pilot rose above the din of the crowd. "Ho! Patience, good folk. Back from the rails and return belowdecks. 'Tis but a first sighting and we'll not be putting ashore for several days yet."



The cargo hold was no place for a council meeting, with a dozen men, eight of them his Assistants, packed in amongst crates and barrels and furniture. But it would have to do. "Hush," John warned them all sternly. "This must not be noised about."

His words had the intended effect. Thankfully. The other men's eyes were instantly on him, sharp and curious. A single lantern gave just enough light to discern faces.

That scourge of a Portuguese navigator was nowhere among them. Also thankfully.

"We must ourselves keep calm, and we must do our best to calm the rest of our planters as well. I cannot emphasize this enough. But you have heard it whispered that we are to disembark at Roanoac Island and not farther up the main at Chesepiok. I have gathered you to say that, aye,

those whispers are true.”

As expected, a murmur arose as the men turned to each other, but John held up his hands for renewed silence. “All is not yet settled, and the situation may yet change.”

“Pardon us, Governor,” said Roger Prat, one of the older colonists, the lamplight catching his bald forehead and the silver in his dark hair, “but was this your decision? Or that of another?”

John shifted to address him. “It most emphatically was not. I have outlined before my reservations regarding a settlement on Roanoac Island—that the island itself is insufficient to sustain a full colony, including its attendant plantings, and that the harbor cannot accommodate anything but the smallest of ships. We will be stopping to look in on the men that Greenville left, and to be advised by them, but Lord willing, no more. Our esteemed pilot, however, is of the opinion that we should settle there, if only temporarily, because of the threat of the Spanish. With Darby Gland’s departure from our company—” John forced a deep breath, in and out. What he wished to say about that matter was much stronger. “Well, let us just say, it is probable that the Spanish may be informed of our intent to settle the Chesepiok. And we have women and children to think of on this journey, where we had not before.”

The sound of shuffling and harrumphing filled the close space. “Do you mean to tell us you favor us being left where we choose not?” This time the voice was of Christopher Cooper, nephew to John’s own Thom-asyn, God rest her soul. A young man of good courage, if overbold to speak his mind at times.

“Most assuredly, nay. I am, however, compelled to inform you good sirs that there is that possibility. I will continue in conversation with Ferdinando. And perhaps plans may unfold as originally laid out, but we must consider the alternatives.”

Dread already pooled heavy in his gut, and the other men’s palpable shock and anger were helping it not a whit.

“We were promised the Chesepiok,” Prat said slowly. “It makes no sense to—” He stopped and shook his head. “When was this suggestion first made to you, that we might be landed upon Roanoac instead?”

“Just after the West Indies. Ferdinando and I have been hotly debating it ever since.”

More mutters and head shaking.

If they only knew the full of it. . .

*“Christ our victory!”*

John gritted his teeth. *Please, God, no! You are our victory, aye, but our shame in misusing those words is more than I can bear. Abandon us not to our past folly, I beg You!*

“None are happy about this, and I blame you not for it. I only ask that you remain steadfast, no matter what may befall us. We launched this endeavor in submission and trust of our God—let us not falter now.”

The murmur turned more assenting, but still, he knew they liked the news not. He shared that sentiment, but better to forewarn than to surprise them on Roanoac’s shores.

“Mum’s the word, now, until we know for sure. No sense in raising a panic among the others.”

As the men quietly dispersed, a bare handful lingered, questions in their gazes. “And you,” John said, meeting their eyes, “accompany me back to my office. I mean to question Ferdinando here and now about this.”

While he had the impetus to do so. Before the Portuguese swine could squirrel out of it.



A short while later, he sat on the edge of his desk, facing the half dozen assembled—or crammed, more like—in the office. Ferdinando’s blue eyes remained flinty. So did those of Sir Kendryck, once-corpulent jowls hanging more loosely than their wont, betraying the rigors of the sea journey on a man unused to such privations.

“Are you honestly looking to be slain by the Spanish?” Ferdinando said after a moment.

That tired argument again. ’Twas not insignificant, but he was beyond weary of hearing it used to overrule other concerns. “Of course not,” he snapped.

“Then I do not understand. What does it matter where your colony

settles, so long as you have resources and access to an inlet?”

“Resources.” John snorted. “You cared nothing for our resources when you refused to let us go ashore and get salt or mutton. When you assured us those greenish fruits were edible—”

“Now, now, my good men.” Kendryck’s voice was a study in boredom. “Ferdinando, of course White wishes for the most felicitous setting for his colony. And of course you have only their best interest at heart. Surely we will reconsider the matter and give it our best answer, anon.”

“And now,” the Portuguese said, pushing away from the wall, “if you will excuse me, gentlemen, I have a ship to navigate. These waters are too treacherous for inattention.”

## Chapter Two

July 22

The hours crawled by, and the distant shore neared, then receded. Elinor had barely ventured on deck yet again before the cry went up that the ship was in peril from the shoals that abounded along this coast. She thought to tuck herself into a corner, out of the way, but one of the crew snarled at her to get below and pray, if she valued her life.

Ananias was nowhere in sight. With the barest hesitation, Elinor hid herself back belowdecks.

In the women's section, partitioned off from the rest of the hold, she lowered herself to her pallet and fought back tears. Rose Payne scooted across from the next space over, setting one arm about Elinor's shoulders. The other women huddled similarly around them. Would they perish now, within sight of land, after all the tribulations they'd endured on the passage over?

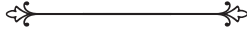
The ship pitched and rolled. That itself was a familiar enough sensation. Shouts rang out abovedecks. Elinor closed her eyes and let the tears flow.

*Gracious God, You are Lord of heaven and earth. It is for Your name and for zeal for Your Word that we embarked on this voyage. We are Yours. Save us!*

The vessel yawed again, sending all the women grappling for each other and nearby beams. A sob bubbled up from her chest.

*Will You not save us, oh God?*

A shout, and then the ship righted itself and steadied. Cheers and whistling ensued. Elinor covered her face with her apron and wept without restraint.



Hours later, the announcement was made that they'd found the right inlet, and preparations began in earnest for the men to go ashore. Ananias rolled and tied his pallet before tossing it next to the knapsack on the floor and turning to gather Elinor into his arms. "We shall return as soon as we can."

She laid her head on his chest. Beneath her ear, his heart thudded, strong and sure. "I know." There was no room for tears now, nor show of fright.

"That's my brave girl."

A smile curled her lips. How well she knew him, even in the short time they'd been wed. He valued strength.

"Now then." A long, lingering kiss, then another, and he released her, bending to retrieve his knapsack and bedding. "It'll be but a few days."

"Aye."

She followed him abovedecks so as to watch him and the others depart. They emerged into the open air, the wind nearly taking her coif, and Papa turned from speaking with a group of his Assistants to catch her in a quick embrace. "Today is the day!" he called out over the crowd, stilling their voices. "Let us give thanks to our Maker and Savior for safe passage."

The *Sunne*, a full-rigged pinnace, was drawn up next to the *Lyon*, with but a plank connecting the two. After Papa led them in prayer, the men hefted their baggage and filed across. Ananias easily traversed the space, dropping lightly onto the deck of the *Sunne*. Quickly enough they all crossed and the plank was withdrawn. Once the windlass holding the *Sunne's* anchor began to turn, the pinnace slid past the *Lyon*.

Elinor tucked herself against the rail, lifting an arm to wave at Ananias, who caught her eye with a jaunty grin and waved back. As the swells and wind lifted the smaller ship and carried it farther away, he blew her a kiss.

A man called out over the waves from his place at the rail of the *Lyon*, and Elinor realized with a jolt that it was the older gentleman, Kendryck, whom Papa and Ananias told her had helped fund the voyage and then had come along for who knew what reason.

“—charge thee, do not bring any of the planters back again, but leave them on the island, save the governor and two or three such as he approves!”

A murmur went up from the crowd on the *Lyon’s* deck. At the rail of the *Sunne*, Papa pushed between two of the other men, his bearded face pale beneath the tan he’d acquired on the journey.

“The summer is far spent, and we can go no further,” Ferdinando called out. “We will land all the planters in no other place.”

“What means this mischief?” demanded one of the men near Elinor.

“Aye, aye,” one of the sailors on the *Sunne* replied, and others echoed him.

Not a single sailor said him nay, nor even Captain Stafford, master of the *Sunne*, despite the outcry among those left upon the *Lyon* and the mutterings and protesting among Papa’s Assistants, all milling about him on the pinnacle’s deck.

Elinor marked it well, the slackness of Papa’s expression in obvious shock at first, then the tightening of his features, the clenching of his jaw and the grimace. He shook his head, said something aside to Ananias, then turned and was lost to her sight amongst the crowd on the deck.

“What is he saying? We are to be left upon Hatorask? Or another of the islands? What about Chesepiok?”

Mutterings around her became an uproar. She found her hands clenching the rail, her throat dry as her mouth hung open and lungs heaved for breath. A terrible tightness gripped her belly and buckled her knees.

“Hie now!” Ferdinando’s accented command rang above the commotion. “Disperse and back belowdecks!”

Some obeyed, but Elinor could not move. Nearby, Margery Harvie, as great with child as Elinor, was helped toward the ladder by her husband.

“Mistress Dare, are you well?”

The soft voice of Rose Payne broke through the babel around her, but

she remained unable to respond.

“Mistress Dare? Elinor. . . ?”

The woman’s hands took hold of her shoulders, and the round, plain, but earnest face swam into view.

“Is it your time?”

Elinor shook her head, slowly, then more sharply. “I—know not. I think not, but—” The tightness about her middle eased, and sucking in a deep breath, she drew herself upright. “I earnestly hope not.”

Rose slipped one arm around Elinor’s shoulders and drew her toward the belowdecks ladder. “Well. I’ll stay with you until we know for certain.”



His heart beat double-time with the rise and fall of the bow in the swells. *We will land the planters in no other place. No other place. No other place.* The words echoed in his head like the wind soughing through the rigging, punctuated by the snap of the sails.

This must have been their plan all along. They’d likely only made a show of being persuaded to consider otherwise. And he, the governor, so-called by Sir Walter Raleigh and endorsed by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth herself, had no say in the matter. None whatsoever.

What kind of governor could he be if robbed of his will even in regard to where they were to settle?

He pushed through the press of men until he found Captain Stafford. “Are Kendryck and the Portuguese in earnest? Surely they cannot contradict the order of Raleigh and Her Majesty the Queen that we be settled on the Chesepiok.”

The captain’s lips firmed, but he refused to meet John’s eye. “It is their command that we bear you to Roanoac and settle you there. I can do naught else.”

Stafford might as well have punched John in the gut. He fought for breath. “Surely not. I am the Governor of Virginia, and our plans were clear—”

At that, Stafford did turn, his gaze colliding with John’s, and he gave a single hard shake of his head. “I am most regretful, Governor, but—nay.”