

*The
Mayflower
Bride*

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Our mission is to inspire the world with the life-changing message of the Bible.



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DEDICATION

This book is lovingly dedicated to my fellow “super-pants” wearer: Tracie Peterson.

For two decades you have taught, mentored, loved, and cheered me on. Now, umpteen published books later, I hope you know how much you are appreciated.

Without you, I wouldn't be where I am, and I know it's to God that the glory be given—not only for this gift of story and publication, but for the gift of you. You are my dearest friend other than my precious husband—and sometimes I wonder how or why you ever put up with me. But you do. Through thick and thin. And I'm so very grateful.

Precious lady—my prayer and Bible study partner, accountability partner, and listening ear. I love all the opportunities to learn from you, teach with you, write with you, and laugh with you. What a privilege it is to have you in my life.

Thank you for telling me I was a storyteller all those years ago and encouraging me to keep working at it. I also need to thank Jim. Without his encouragement, consistent help, and prayers—and let's not forget all the bunny stories—I would be lost. Give him a hug for me.

This dedication could never encompass my heart of gratitude for you, Tracie. So I will leave you with these simple words: Thank you. For everything.

DEAR READER

What an awesome joy and privilege to write the first book in the **Daughters of the *Mayflower*** series. It has been a delight to research such a monumental moment and to present to you this work of fiction based on the real events.

Writing historical novels is a passion of mine, and I must admit I got caught up in the research. But this is a first for me—most of the time as an author I get to make up the majority of my characters and then sprinkle in real people from the time period. This time was different. With historical events surrounding the *Mayflower* and her passengers, I had to research each person on the ship and then bring aboard only a few fictional people.

But just so you are aware, the main characters—William, Mary Elizabeth (along with her father and brother), and Dorothy's family—weren't real people on the *Mayflower*. Nor was the character Peter. I did that for a reason. I didn't want to take anything away from the ones who lived the true story and live on in history. Rest assured the remaining characters were true *Mayflower* travelers. I pray I've done them justice in this story.

To keep this book enjoyable for today's reader, I have written *The Mayflower Bride* with both modern English and spellings (i.e., I didn't use *thee* and *thou* in the characters' speech. After I trudged through all the historical documents and journals, my eyes and brain were exhausted just from trying to figure out what they were saying, so this decision was for your benefit. You can thank me later). English of the day didn't have common spelling, so a lot of it was phonetic, with spelling changing from person to person. A sample of the way things were written in 1620 is the handwritten copy of the

Mayflower Compact from William Bradford's book. Here is a small sample of it so you can experience the spelling and language:

Haueing vndertaken, for ye glorie of God, and aduancemente of ye christian faith and honour of our king & countrie, a voyage to plant ye first colonie in ye Northerne parts of Virginia: doe by these presents solemnly & mutually in ye presence of God, and one of another, couenant, & combine our selues togeather into a ciuill body politick; for ye our better ordering, & preservation & furtherance of ye ends aforesaid; and by vertue hearof, to enacte, constitute, and frame shuch just & equall lawes, ordinances, Acts, constitutions, & offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meete & conuenient for ye generall good of ye colonie: vnto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

Notice the various uses of *u* and *v*. If you try to read an original copy of the Geneva Bible, which the Separatists used, in addition to the interesting spellings and language of the day, you'll see the *s* that looks like an *f* without the cross bar.

I used scans of an original Geneva Bible (1560) for the Biblical quotations throughout this novel, but again, because spelling wasn't modernized yet, I modernized some of the spelling to make it easier to read. It's a beautiful piece of work—the original Geneva Bible—and there are two copies believed to have come over on the *Mayflower* in the Pilgrim Hall Museum. And while the King James Version would have come out by the time the Separatists journeyed to the New World, they would *not* have had anything to do with it because it was authorized by the Church of England and their persecution for many years had come directly from the King whose name the new version held.

Many readers may equate this period with Puritans, but remember that these brave souls, the Separatists, were different. The Puritans wanted to change the Church of England from within and thus fully reform it, while the Separatists wanted to completely separate themselves from the Church of England.

Another important thing to note is the timeline. Back in 1620, the Julian calendar was still used by the English and the colonists. That meant that the new year didn't start until March 25. To try to keep this novel as historically accurate as possible—and yet still understandable for you, the reader—I've time-stamped the dates from January 1 until March 24 with the year notation 1620/1. To the passengers, these events happened in 1620, but we would now think of them as taking place in 1621.

You'll notice throughout the book that there are variations on the spelling of "Plymouth." Modern spellings of both the US destination and England are "Plymouth." But to keep things as accurate as possible and yet clear to you, I used "Plymouth" for Plymouth, England, "Plimouth" to depict how Captain John Smith has this area labeled on his map of New England from 1614 which the travelers used on their journey, and then "Plimoth" for the original settlement. Plimoth Plantation is a fabulous place to visit at the original location.

While a lot of different conversations have taken place about the details of the *Mayflower* and its passengers, many particulars aren't known as fact. I did extensive research, but as always, this is a work of fiction. In trying to stay true to the historical story, I may have made a choice here or there that was based on opinion or supposition because the facts weren't clearly known. Please check the note at the end for more details. Any mistakes are purely my own.

Hopefully, this story will give you a glimpse into the lives of people who sacrificed everything for a better future almost four centuries ago—and were the beginnings of our great country. If you have a passion to read more about this historical time period, might I suggest the following nonfiction books: *Of Plymouth Plantation* by William Bradford (the true account/journal written by one of the passengers of the *Mayflower* and the eventual governor of the area—the edited version by *Mayflower* historian Caleb Johnson is phenomenal with footnotes and other journals included); *Here Shall I Die Ashore* by Caleb Johnson; *Plymouth Colony* by Eugene Aubrey Stratton; *Thanksgiving* by Glenn Alan Cheney; and *Mayflower* by Nathaniel Philbrick.

My favorite website was MayflowerHistory.com by Caleb Johnson.

I pray you enjoy this series full of fascinating history from our incredible country.

It is a joy to give you *The Mayflower Bride*.

Enjoy the journey,
Kimberley Woodhouse

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Aback: wind from wrong side of sails

Alee: in the direction in which the wind is blowing

Aft: near or in stern of ship

At hull: to lay at drift with the wind

Battens: Narrow strips of wood used for several purposes on ships. One of the main uses was to fasten down the hatches—thus the phrase “batten down the hatches.”

Bow: front of ship

Bulwark: The planks that made up the “sides” of the top deck to keep crew and passengers from being washed overboard (what today we might think of as the *railing*)

Caulk: The pushing or driving of fibrous materials into seams to make them water-tight. Not to be confused with modern caulk compounds.

Companionway: staircase/ladder between decks

Gangway: The long, narrow board used as a walkway onto ships. Most times it had smaller strips of wood across the width of it to aid in climbing onto the ship without slipping. The term changed to *gangplank* in the 1700s.

Gun deck: Where the passengers lived on the *Mayflower* and *Speedwell*. So named because in time of conflict, the guns—or cannons—would be brought out of the gun room to fire out of the gun ports. The gun ports were open only during a conflict or during nice weather to provide light and allow air to circulate.

Hold, the: cargo hold, bottom level of the ship

Larboard: left side of ship, changed to *port* officially in 1844

Masts and sails:

Fore mast (front) held the fore-course sail and a bonnet sail

Main mast (midship) held the main sail and a bonnet sail

Mizzen mast (aft) held the lateen-rigged mizzen (a triangular sail on diagonal)

Spritsail came up off the bowsprit (a long diagonal-looking mast that hung well over the sea past the bow of the ship)

Poop deck: deck above cabin of the ship master on the aft castle—highest level above the stern

Shallop: Also known as a *tender*, the shallop is a vessel used to ferry supplies and people between the shore and the ship.

Shoal: submerged natural ridge or bar that can be very dangerous to a ship

Steerboard: right side of ship, changed over time to *starboard*

Stern: rear of ship

Thatch: dried plant material such as straw, reeds, grass, and leaves

Ton or tonnage: Does not refer to the weight measurement we use today. Back then it was used to show the cargo capacity of a ship. A ton referred to a wine or beer barrel that was used for food stuffs, as well. So the *Mayflower* was listed as a 180-ton ship. That meant she could carry 180 barrels, each holding an equivalent to about 250 US gallons today.

Whipstaff: Device used to steer the ship. (The large wheel that we think of for steering large sailing vessels hadn't come into use yet.)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Saints from the Leyden Congregation:

Fictional:

Mary Elizabeth Chapman

Robert Chapman, Mary Elizabeth's father

Elizabeth Chapman, Mary Elizabeth's mother, deceased

David Chapman, Mary Elizabeth's little brother

Dorothy Raynsford, Mary Elizabeth's best friend

Dorothy's mother and father, Mr. and Mr. Raynsford

Historical *Speedwell/Mayflower* passengers:

Isaac and Mary Allerton and their children: Bartholomew, Re-
member, Mary

William and Dorothy Bradford

William and Mary Brewster and their children: Love and Wres-
tling. William was head of the congregation because Pastor
Robinson stayed in Holland.

John and Katherine Carver; their ward, Desire Minter; and their
servant, Dorothy

James and Susanna Chilton and their daughter, Mary

Francis Cooke and his son, John

John Crackstone and his son, John Jr.

Moses Fletcher

Edward Fuller, his wife, Anna, and son Samuel, about twelve
years old

Samuel Fuller (eventually the colony doctor) and his servant, William
Butten. Fuller's wife, Bridget, stayed behind and arrived in 1623.

Degory Priest

Thomas Rogers and his son, Joseph

John and Joan Tilley and their daughter, Elizabeth
Thomas Tinker and his wife and son
John Turner and his two young sons
William and Susanna White and their son, Resolved (approx.
five years old). She was pregnant when they left England.
Thomas Williams
Edward and Elizabeth Winslow
(Myles and Rose Standish also left with the Leyden congrega-
tion from Holland, but they were not part of the congrega-
tion. He was a military man hired to be the colonists' militia
captain. But he appeared to have strong Separatist leanings.)

Strangers from England who joined the Saints on the venture:

John Alden, hired to be the ship's cooper and given the choice to
stay at the colony or return with the ship to England
John Allerton
John and Elinor Billington and their children, John and Francis
Richard Britteridge
Peter Brown
Robert Carter
Richard Clarke
Edward Doty
Francis and Sarah Eaton and their son, Samuel
Mr. Ely
Richard Gardiner
John Goodman
William Holbeck
John Hooke
Stephen and Elizabeth Hopkins and their children, Constance,
Giles, and Damaris. Elizabeth was pregnant when they left.
John Howland, manservant to John Carver
John Langmore
William Latham
Edward Lester

William Lytton (fictional)
Edmund Margesson
Christopher and Marie Martin and her son, Solomon Prower
Ellen, Jasper, Richard, and Mary More: four children aged four
to eight, who were sent without parents
William and Alice Mullins and their children, Joseph and Priscilla
John and Alice Rigsdale
George Soule
Elias Story
Edward Thompson
Edward and Agnes Tilley with their nephew Henry Samson
and niece Humility Cooper
William Trevor
Richard Warren
Roger Wilder
Gilbert Winslow

Crew of the *Mayflower* (about thirty men, but we know the names
of only those listed):

John Alden, cooper (barrel maker)
John Clarke, ship's pilot and master's mate
Robert Coppin, master's mate
Giles Heale, ship's surgeon
Christopher Jones, master (captain)

Other crew members:

Boatswain: responsible for all the ship's rigging and sails, along
with the anchors and longboat
Leadsman: kept track of the depth of the waters around them,
could have had another crew title, as well
Master gunner: responsible for the ship's guns, cannon, etc.
Quartermasters (four): maintained the shifts and watch hours,
in charge of the cargo hold, and responsible for fishing and
maintaining lines

Ship's carpenter: responsible for fixing leaks and anything else ship related

Ship's cook: responsible for feeding the crew

Other sailors climbed masts, worked the sails, and performed other duties

Native Americans:

Massasoit: sachem (chief) of the Wampanoag in the area

Samoset: native from Mohegan

Tisquantum (the English nicknamed him "Squanto"): from Patuxet, which was the native village that had been where Plymouth is located

But here I cannot but stay, and make a pause, and stand half amazed at this poor people's present condition; and so I think will the reader, too, when he well considers the same. Being thus passed the vast ocean, and a sea of troubles before in their preparation (as may be remembered by that which went before) they had now no friends to welcome them, nor inns to entertain, or refresh their weather-beaten bodies, no houses, or much less towns to repair to, to seek for succor.

—William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*



A splinter of wood pierced Mary Elizabeth Chapman's thumb as she crept behind her lifelong friend Dorothy Raynsford. Resisting the urge to cry out, she stuck the offending appendage in her mouth and tasted blood. Adults weren't supposed to sneak around in the rafters. Why she ever agreed to follow her friend on this escapade, she'd never know.

Well, she did know. She was as curious as Dorothy, just not as brave. The thought of the elders below hearing and catching them? It was enough to make Mary Elizabeth want to faint. But she pressed on behind her bold friend and crawled like a small child up in the attic of the meeting room. The smell of hay filled her nose as fear crept up her throat. This meeting would decide her people's fate. And Mary Elizabeth wasn't sure she was prepared to hear the answers.

Dorothy stopped a few feet ahead of her and laid flat on her stomach, peeking over the edge of the rafters. Placing a finger over her lips, she waved to Mary Elizabeth.

As Mary Elizabeth reached the lookout spot, voices from the room below became clearer.

Pastor John Robinson spoke to a room full of their congregation's elders. "It's clear that the time has come. With the patent from the Virginia Company for a colony, and with the investments of the Merchants and Adventurers, I believe a small contingent can go on ahead and begin the settlement. Within a few years, we

should have our whole congregation there and our debts to the investors for the trip paid in full.”

Murmurs resounded throughout the room.

“Can these Strangers be trusted?” A voice from the back put words to Mary Elizabeth’s own thoughts. She’d grown up with the stories of how their congregation had fled England and King James’ religious persecution. The first attempt had been thwarted by a ship’s captain who swindled all the passengers and turned them in to the King’s sheriffs. When they tried again, a number of families were separated for a year as one ship deserted them, leaving many behind.

But that hadn’t deterred them. Eventually, they’d all made it to Holland.

Labeled as Separatists because they wanted to separate themselves from the Church of England—which didn’t exactly please the King since he was the “head” of the church—everyone outside of their small group became known as Strangers. Their longing not to abide by the church produced persecution they endured and that was almost as bad as when Bloody Mary reigned.

It was no wonder several folks voiced their concerns about trust this evening.

Twelve years had passed, and here they were again. Discussing a way to leave. This time, not so much to flee persecution, but to secure a better future. The memories of dishonest people, though, were still fresh to all who remembered. No one wanted to go through those atrocities again. They’d lost everything.

Pastor Robinson spoke in a soothing tone. “While no man is without sin, I do believe we can trust them. The investment is sound, and the contracts are binding. We all know the worries that have arisen. It’s getting harder to make a living, and our children are being influenced too much by the culture around them. Sin and evil abound. If we stay, we risk losing the future generations to a dangerous course.”

Nods accompanied many affirmations.

Mary Elizabeth tuned out the conversation. How would they even survive? Stories of tragedy abounded for those who had ventured

across the ocean. And to start a whole new colony? There wouldn't be stores or supplies or. . .anything.

A shiver raced up her spine. Even though they were often looked down upon by the Dutch because they were outsiders and resolved to live out their faith in ways that went against the norm, she'd felt at home in Leyden. To be honest, it was the only home she remembered. But her people had worked menial jobs and longer hours to support their families, and times *were* getting tougher.

A poke to her shoulder made her look at Dorothy.

Her friend's face lit up in an exuberant smile. She raised her eyebrows. "Can you imagine the adventure?" The words floated toward Mary Elizabeth in a soft whisper.

"What?" Had she missed something important?

Their pastor's voice echoed through the room. "It's decided then. We have chosen the first group to go."

As they waited for the room to clear, Dorothy filled her in on the families who would venture to the New World. Dorothy's family—which made her even more animated than usual as she talked with her hands—and the Chapmans, Mary Elizabeth's family, were part of the group.

Mary Elizabeth went numb. She didn't register anything more that Dorothy said. Even as they walked home, her heart couldn't make any sense out of the jumble of words.

Dorothy must have recognized something was wrong and followed Mary Elizabeth home. "Mary Elizabeth. What is going on in that head of yours?"

Lifting the latch to the door of her home, Mary Elizabeth clamped her mouth shut.

"Don't shut me out. Aren't you excited about all this?"

She turned and stared at her friend's eyes. Eyes that sparkled with excitement and joy. Why couldn't *she* feel that way?

Dorothy's warm hand reached out and covered her own. "Come. Let's get some tea and discuss what you're thinking. My parents aren't expecting me home—I told them I was staying over with you—and

as long as I am there to milk Polly in the morning and feed the chickens, I should be able to stay as long as you need me.”

All Mary Elizabeth could manage was a nod. They entered the door to the small rooms she called home. Familiar smells greeted her. Running a hand over a chair her father had carved, she let the feel of it seep into her soul. How could they leave all of this behind?

Heavy footsteps sounded on the stairs, causing Mary Elizabeth to jump and put a hand to her chest. “Father.” Releasing a sigh, she looked down at the floor. He didn’t know where she had gone—did he?

“I need you to stay with David.” His face was alight with anticipation. “I have much to discuss with the elders.”

“Is there anything I need to know?”

“Not yet, my dear. But soon. Very soon.” He kissed her cheek and strode out the door.

Dorothy pulled out a chair and pointed to it. “Sit. It’s time to destroy this fear and doubt that I see etched all over your face.”

Tears sprung to Mary Elizabeth’s eyes. They burned as they overflowed and ran down her cheeks.

Dorothy stayed up with Mary Elizabeth in the kitchen, talking about the meeting until daylight crept in through the windows. While Dorothy’s voice held excitement and wonder, Mary Elizabeth felt only worry and fear. Her friend quoted scripture and hugged her. Told her it would all be all right. God was in control. This was a good thing.

But what would become of them? Too many of their group were elderly and would have to stay behind, and the elders made it clear that only so many could make the journey. That meant only a small fraction of all the people she’d known the whole of her seventeen years would venture across the vast ocean to the unknown land of the New World.

“Mary Elizabeth?” Dorothy placed her hand over Mary Elizabeth’s cold one. “Mary Elizabeth, have you heard anything I’ve said?”

All she could manage was a nod. “I just need some time.”

“All right. I’d better get back home. The chores won’t get done

by themselves.” Her cheery voice did nothing to soothe Mary Elizabeth’s nerves.

She doubted anything could.



“Mary Elizabeth, may I go play with Jonathan?” Her little brother pleaded the same thing almost every day.

And she always said the same thing in response: “Have you finished your chores?”

He nodded and smiled.

She tousled his hair and handed him his cap. “Be home in an hour.”

“I will.”

Brushing her hands on her apron, she watched him run down the street. He wouldn’t be a little boy much longer, but oh, how she adored him.

“Mary Elizabeth,” Father called from the stairs, “I need you to sit down with me for a moment.”

“Of course.” The flutters of her heart couldn’t be stopped, knowing all too well what he would say. She eased herself into a chair across the table from him.

“We’ve been chosen to go to the New World. Actually, I volunteered.” The smile that lit his face was one she hadn’t seen since before her mother died. “It will be good to have a fresh start and finally have land to call our own.” His gaze went to the window as the smile disappeared. “And there are too many sad memories here.”

He turned back to face her and shook his head. “Forgive me.” The smile returned. “The journey is soon. It’s all very exciting, but we have much to prepare and I need your help.”

Odd how the body worked. She remembered forcing herself to nod, trying to look like she was interested in what he had to say, and tamping down all the fear and frustration inside. But she didn’t really hear a word after that. So many emotions erupted inside her that she didn’t know how to contain them. Before she knew it, Father stood,

kissed her cheek, and walked out the door.

A sob choked its way to the surface. Without thinking, she stood and raced out the door.

Mary Elizabeth's heart pounded as her feet thudded against the ground. Running for all she was worth, she didn't care that it was unseemly for a young woman her age to run. How could Papa be so willing to volunteer?

She reached the edge of the cemetery and slowed down. Tears streamed down her cheeks as she opened the gate, walked through, and quietly shut it behind her. There always seemed to be a hushed reverence in this small plot of graves surrounded by trees.

Mary Elizabeth walked through a few rows and stopped in front of her mother's grave. The fresh flowers she'd left yesterday were already wilting.

Just like her heart.

She fell to her knees in the grass and sobbed harder. "Mother, I don't know what to do! Father has agreed for us to go to the New World. . . ." She couldn't even finish her thoughts.

This place—this hallowed ground—had been her sanctuary in the year since her mother had died. When she had no words to express her thoughts, she came here. And her heart spilled out.

How could she leave behind her mother?

Oh, she knew that her mother no longer resided in the body buried beneath the place where she knelt, but it still felt wrong.

It meant she'd have no refuge. No place to come and hash out her thoughts and questions.

Mother had been the only one to truly understand her. Dorothy was a dear friend, but she couldn't fill the hole left by the woman who'd given Mary Elizabeth life. The one who'd kissed her head good night every evening and sung her awake every morning. No matter how scared Mary Elizabeth had been about trying something new, her mother had always been there to encourage her and tell her she could do it.

Could she do *this*?

No. It wasn't possible.

But the elders had decided. Father had readily agreed.

The reality of the situation sank into her stomach like a rock.

Leaning back on her heels, she cried like she had when her mother had died. "Mother. . .I can't do this. I can't."



CHAPTER I

Saturday, 22 July 1620
Delfthaven, Holland

Gentle waves rocked the *Speedwell* as the vessel left behind the only home Mary Elizabeth remembered. Salty air stung her nose, and the breeze tugged at wisps of her hair—threatening to loosen them from under her confining cornet.

Standing as close to the stern of the ship as she could without bothering the crew on the poop deck, Mary Elizabeth inhaled deeply. If only the crisp air could clear her mind like it cleared her lungs. Breathing out a prayer for courage, she clung to the bulwark. Courage had never been her strength. The past few weeks had confirmed that indeed it was all happening. And here she stood. On a ship.

Could she do this? Truly?

She'd armed herself with her prized possessions: her mother's red cape draped comfortingly around her shoulders; treasured receipts from generations prior sat safely tucked into the pockets tied around her waist; and the memory of the woman who loved her and modeled what it meant to be a godly wife and mother resided, always and forever, in her heart. Reaching her hand behind her apron, she slipped it through the slit in her skirt and found the string of pockets tied around her waist. The one with the receipts hung in the middle. She ran her fingers over the edges of the worn papers. Grandmother's savory egg-and-spinach pie receipt, a boiled pudding receipt from her mother, and her favorite—Mother's rye-and-barley bread—were among them.

If only mother were still alive. Maybe this journey wouldn't be so difficult.

Even though their time in Holland had been full of difficult stretches, God had been good to Mary Elizabeth there. She'd had her family, her dear friend Dorothy, and plenty of work to keep her busy. Besides that, it was familiar. Safe.

But no more. The land she knew had drifted out of her sight hours before. Never to be seen again.

The Saints, as they preferred to call themselves, had left England twelve years before while under persecution from the King and the Church of England. When they left for Holland, they wished only to separate themselves from England's church so they could study the scripture more and follow the state's rules and taxations less. They believed only what the Bible told them, so they considered all the man-made rules and traditions of the Church of England to be wrong.

She didn't remember England. But Holland would remain forged in her mind for the rest of her days.

Now it all seemed surreal. Listening in the rafters that night had been the beginning for her, but the group's preparation had been going on for years.

Correspondence to grant the Saints permission to start a colony in the New World had gone back and forth to England. And then John Carver and Robert Cushman were sent to London to negotiate an agreement.

Finally, permission from the King had been granted. In fact, he seemed to bless the endeavor with his words, "as long as they went peaceably."

Memories of their departure from Leyden washed over her. The rest of the congregation that stayed behind and many of their Dutch neighbors had come to see them off. There had been shedding of tears aplenty. But when Pastor Robinson dropped to his knees, tears streaming down his face, Mary Elizabeth had lost control of her emotions, as well. As he prayed for the Lord's blessing and commended the travelers on their journey, she wanted to gain strength from his words. But she'd only felt weaker and more inadequate.

A spray of salt water hit her face and brought her back to the reality of where she stood. The planning was done. The packing was over. Goodbyes had been said. And now Holland had vanished from sight. She and the others on the ship would reach England soon, and after they met up with the *Mayflower* and her passengers—the other brave souls who would journey to the New World with the Separatists to establish a colony—they would be on their way.

To what, she was unsure.

Squinting, she gazed toward the horizon in the west. What would this New World hold? Papa had regaled her with stories of lush, fertile land. Land unclaimed by anyone else. Land supplying an abundance of food. Land that held no persecution for their faith.

Her faith. It meant everything to her. And the thought of freedom to worship and learn and grow in God's Word thrilled her beyond imagining. It was the one thing that helped her through the past weeks when she'd had to swallow the reality that yes, she was going to the New World. Dorothy helped her to focus on the positive, and Mary Elizabeth clung to the thought of her faith.

Years ago, her father had spent almost a month of wages on a Bible so they could read it themselves. The first time she'd been allowed to hold the volume in her hands, she'd cried. She found it such a privilege to read the Bible, translated in its entirety to her own English language and printed in 1560, and understood why her people—the Saints—longed to separate themselves from England's Church. Why didn't *everyone* long to read the Word as she did? Why were they content to sit in church, pay homage to their country, and listen to passages read from the *Book of Common Prayer* and nothing else? Church was an obligation, a ceremony, a ritual to them. But followers of Christ were called to share the Gospel and be set apart. The difference in thinking didn't make sense to Mary Elizabeth. Especially since so many had been persecuted for it.

The New World held more than just release from persecution. Papa and the other men dreamed of working their own farms with land as far as the eye could see. In Holland, the hard labor they'd all

put in for decades had given them nothing of their own.

To think the New World could hold the answer to all their hopes and dreams.

It sounded lovely.

So why did her heart hesitate so? She'd shed enough tears to create a river the past few weeks, and she'd finally told the Lord that enough was enough. The only way she could make it through was with His help. Her new recitation became *I can do this*.

Papa's excitement rubbed off on her younger brother, David, but most of the time she'd had to force a smile. No matter. It wasn't her place to go against Papa, and his mind was made up. They'd been chosen.

Her father had kept himself busy with the plans to go. So much so, she'd hardly seen him in a fortnight. His absence made their departure that much more difficult to bear.

It made her feel. . . alone.

And now she stood on a ship. Going.

She felt lonelier than ever.

She shook her head. She *could* do this. Her mind just needed to stay off these thoughts of loneliness and instead keep occupied.

Papa was engaged in excited conversations with the other men, which would probably be the daily activity for him the entirety of their voyage. So she must find something to keep her mind occupied and off these thoughts of loneliness.

She *could* do this.

But the recited phrase couldn't keep the questions from filling her thoughts: Would the New World be as beautiful as Holland? Would she make friends? Would she find a God-fearing husband?

Or would the savages kill them all in their sleep?

Another tiny shiver raced up her spine. Such thoughts were not appropriate. Papa would have a fit if he knew she'd listened to the sailors' stories. He'd scolded David for repeating the derogatory name *savages*. But what if that's what they were? Were they sailing into their own demise?

“Mary Elizabeth!”

Dorothy’s voice drifted across the deck of the ship, and Mary Elizabeth waved and smiled at her friend. She must not allow her foolish doubts to dull Dorothy’s enthusiasm for every aspect of this new life.

“I had a feeling I would find you here. Fresh air is always your first choice.” Dorothy smiled and leaned on the bulwark as the ship listed to the right. “Your father is teaching David about Jamestown and the New World.”

“David is thrilled, to be sure.” Mary Elizabeth looked back to the water. She really must swallow this doubt and fear. Far better to grab hold of the thrill and joy she saw on her friend’s features.

Dorothy laid a hand on Mary Elizabeth’s shoulder. “I’ve been praying for you. I know this isn’t easy, leaving your dear mother behind and all.”

All Mary Elizabeth could manage was a nod as an image of the cemetery flitted through her mind.

The gravestone with her mother’s name—Elizabeth Chapman—denoted the all-too-short span of the beloved woman’s life. It would lay bare now. No flowers. No one to visit.

Even though Mother’s memory resided in Mary Elizabeth’s heart and mind, leaving behind the grave—the place she visited weekly to pour out her heart and soul—hurt more than the loss of any other physical object in Holland.

“Here.” Her friend offered a brown-paper-wrapped package. “I wanted to give it to you on your birthday, but I couldn’t wait.”

Mary Elizabeth smiled and took her time unwrapping the gift. The brown paper could be saved and used again, and they wouldn’t have access to such frivolities—or anything of the sort—for quite some time. As she turned it over in her hands, she found a deep brown leather book with a leather string tied around it. There weren’t any words on the cover or spine. “What is it?”

“It’s blank pages. For you to write down your thoughts. I thought it would help since you won’t be able to visit your mother’s grave anymore.”

Tears sprang to Mary Elizabeth's eyes. Only Dorothy knew her heart and the lengthy visits to the cemetery and what she did there. She clutched the treasure to her chest. "This must have cost you a small fortune." Paper wasn't a commodity most could afford. Mary Elizabeth looked back down at the precious book. "Thank you so much." The words seemed all too inadequate.

"I know you have a quill and pots of ink with you since I helped pack them"—Dorothy laughed as she patted Mary Elizabeth's arm—"and once we have a settlement and regular shipments coming in, you might want to write even more. You've always had a talent for stringing beautiful phrases together."

Tears flowed down Mary Elizabeth's face. She didn't even want to wipe them away. What a treasure. Not just the book, but the friend.

Dorothy bounced on her toes. "I will be with you, dear Mary Elizabeth. Through every step of this new journey."

Mary Elizabeth smiled through her tears. "I know you will, and I'm very grateful, I am. The journey will just take some getting used to."

"Well, don't take too long. Adventure awaits!" Dorothy's arms stretched out, and she spun around. Her friend's eagerness for the unknown made Mary Elizabeth laugh and wipe the tears off her face.

Mary Elizabeth folded up the brown paper and tucked it into her cloak. God had truly blessed her. With a wonderful family and a delightful friend. She *could* do this.

Courage. Her prayer from before sprang back to her mind.

The pounding of boots behind them made Mary Elizabeth turn and wrap her cloak around her tighter. The sailors weren't the most gentlemanly of sorts.

The ship master emerged from the group and looked straight at them. The weathered man always appeared tense and stern, but today another expression hid behind his eyes. Was it fear? "Go get your men. We need all able-bodied hands on deck. Including the women and children."

Mary Elizabeth nodded and moved to do the ship master's bidding.

But Dorothy tugged on Mary Elizabeth's cloak and stopped. "What's happened, Mr. Reynolds?"

Seeing the other sailors' grim expressions, Mary Elizabeth felt a knot grow in her stomach. She faced the man in charge.

Mr. Reynolds's mouth pressed into a thin line, and he clasped his hands behind his back as he glanced out to the water and then back to Mary Elizabeth and Dorothy. The severe expression grew dim. "It's not the best etiquette to speak to women of such calamity, but since you will carry the message below and there's not a lot of time, I feel it's best to be honest." He took a deep breath. "The ship's been leaking for some time now, and we're taking on a good deal of water. It is far worse than I suspected. If we don't do something about it, we'll sink before we ever reach Southampton."



Tuesday, 1 August 1620
Southampton, England

William Lytton lifted the last crate and his satchel of tools and readied to walk up the gangway of the *Mayflower* one more time. His leg muscles burned from the numerous trips up the steep, narrow walkway, but it was worth it.

The New World.

For years, he'd longed for change—a fresh start. The opportunity before him now presented all his dreams in one nice package. And the *Mayflower* would take him there.

If he could just make it through the weeks at sea, he'd be fine. They would all have to start with nothing. They would have to build or create everything with their own hands. They would be far away from everyone and everything they'd ever known. That was fine. Making a new life took hard work and sacrifice.

He was ready.

In a matter of weeks, he'd be standing on shores across the vast ocean—literally on the other side of the world. The thought made him smile. He might be an orphan, devoid of family or anyone who

cared about him, and unworthy of English society's approval, but he was done with all of that. In this new land, in a new settlement, he could be someone else entirely.

A hand on his shoulder made him start and lose his grip on the crate, but he caught it with his knee. The man standing there didn't look like a thief.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, and I don't wish to startle you, but I have a proposition." The more closely William observed, the more he noted why the man's appearance exuded wealth. A shimmer of gold on the man's right hand didn't escape his notice. Only the wealthy donned such adornments.

William nodded. "Sir. Let me set my burden down, and we can discuss whatever is on your mind."

The man glanced around and moved to sit on another crate. As he reached into the pocket of his vest, the embroidery on the man's sleeves caught William's attention. The man must be rich indeed.

The mysterious stranger cleared his throat. "Are you William Lytton?"

Who was this man? The ring and clothing reminded William of royalty, but he'd had little experience with the upper classes, much less royals. "Yes, sir. I am."

The man smiled and motioned for William to move his crate closer. "I don't wish to take a lot of time, nor do I wish to be overheard, so I'll be brief. I'm with the Virginia Company and am also one of the Merchants and Adventurers. You may know that we have heavily invested in all who will be journeying with you to the New World."

It was no secret. The Merchants and Adventurers provided the monetary backing for the trip, and the Planters were the travelers to the New World. Every Planter over the age of sixteen received one share, while the Adventurers could invest and buy as many shares as they wanted. Once all the debts were paid in seven years, the profits would be divided by those shares. A rush of thankfulness hit William's chest. He had two shares when most Planters only had one.

“Yes, sir. I am aware.”

The man leaned closer, his voice hushed. “We need to hire a man with integrity to keep records for us.”

William felt his brows raise but attempted to keep a plain expression. “Records? What kind of records?”

The man coughed into his fist as another sailor ran up the gangway. When the young man was past, he continued. “A journal of sorts recording all the comings, goings, workings, business—all that takes place at the new settlement. The ten-point agreement we have with you all, the Planters, is to come to fruition in seven years. While seven years seems like it can go by quickly, it is a good length of time, and the New World is a great distance away. We don’t have a man available who can pick up and leave his life and family here, so we thought it prudent to find someone who would be a part of the new colony to help us out. Your name was given to me as a recommendation. We wish to see this venture succeed with the utmost honesty and respect.”

Respect. If he’d learned nothing else, William had learned the importance of respect in business matters. As for honesty and integrity? Well, as far as he was concerned, there was no other way to act. And it gave him a boost in his confidence to learn that someone had recommended him. He lifted his shoulders and nodded. “How may I help?”

“We would obviously compensate you for your time—as I said, we are seeking to *hire* someone.” The man held a small velvet pouch and a leather book out to William. “This would be your first payment. We will send a messenger down on the *Fortune* next year with another hefty sum. After we have reviewed your report and see how the settlement is doing, there will be additional duties and payments. The book is for your record keeping. Details and exact quantities are important. While we will be receiving the wood, salted fish, and other goods made by the Planters to sell, we need to know that they are abiding by the agreement. Four days’ work for us. Two for themselves. We believe them all to be honest people, but we also know many who are going are not a part of the Separatist’s congregation and do not

abide by the same strict moral laws.

“In essence, you will be our representative there, but we don’t want to alarm anyone or create any chaos by making that fact known. Far better to keep this information. . . among those who need to know it. Just until the colony is well under way, you understand. Then we may have a higher position there for you since you will have gained everyone’s trust.”

William took the book and then the bag, a bit startled at the weight of it. The man’s logic was sound. Everyone would have to work together if they were to build a lasting colony and survive. He could handle another job like this if it was just keeping records. It was honest. Even if it was a bit secretive. The extra money would definitely help.

Decision made, he nodded. “I would be honored to assist you, sir, the Virginia Company, and the Adventurers.”

“Thank you, William.” The man stood and turned on his heel. “I will be in touch.”

William launched himself at the man and tugged at his cape. “How did you know my name, sir, as I do not know yours?”

The man’s face softened with a slight smile. “Your master was a close friend. He spoke highly of you and often.” He straightened and nodded at William. “As for me, you may call me Mr. Crawford.”

As Crawford walked away, a tiny pang of grief hit William’s chest. *His master.* The only kind person William had ever known. Twenty years ago, he’d been abandoned as a baby and left on a family member’s doorstep. They’d barely clothed him and fed him occasionally. But he would have taken those conditions over what happened next. At the tender age of nine, he’d been kicked out and told to find his own way.

Many other orphans his age had been out on the streets, but William soon learned to work as many odd jobs as possible so he could put bread in his stomach.

Then one day—after years of misery, filth, and almost starvation—this man appeared. His master, Paul Brookshire. The man who’d taken

him in at thirteen, taught him the valuable trade of carpentry, and given him hope for life. The man who'd loved him like a son for seven wonderful years when no one else wanted him. The man who bought an extra share for William—costing almost an entire year's worth of earnings—before he made his apprentice promise to make the most of his life, throw off the baggage of the past, and seek God.

William never had much of a use for God. The thought of a loving heavenly Father was foreign to a boy orphaned and shown contempt in the streets of London. But his master? He'd started to change William's mind.

Questions he'd longed to ask would go unanswered. Alas, his master died.

William had cared for the man until he took his last breath and had kept up with all the orders for their shop by working into the night. The day he buried Paul—his master and friend—was the hardest day of his life. Harder than living with a family that did nothing but show him contempt. Harder than living on the streets of London. Because he'd lost the only person who ever cared—the one who had. . . *loved* him.

If he were to be honest, no one else knew William—not even his customers—because he'd never given anyone else a chance.

A scuffle on deck of the ship made William look back toward the gangway. He shook his head. These thoughts were best left for a later time. He had work to do and a long journey ahead.

Tucking the bag inside his shirt, William breathed deeply. The grief that often hit in waves needed to be tucked down into his heart, away from probing eyes.

William Lytton was on a journey to a new life. The old had to be left behind.