

Praise for *The Pirate Bride*

“I’ve always enjoyed Kathleen’s vivid descriptions and page turning romance. No matter the time period or setting, Kathleen works hard to bring the story alive through her characters and passion for God.”

–Tracie Peterson, bestselling author of over 100 novels including the Heart of the Frontier and Song of Alaska series

“In a captivating tale of the seas, Y’Barbo gives readers a unique story of history and romance. Not just your everyday pirate tale, readers will fall in love with the troubled soul of a ship captain, and an unclaimed waif destined to take ownership of his heart. A story of loss, of love, and of the budding foundations of a nation still in infant form. This is a don’t-miss on my list!”

–Jaime Jo Wright, author for Bethany House Publishers

“I love pirate books, and *The Pirate Bride* is a delightful read that has a totally unique story line. Most of the characters don’t fit the mold of other pirate books, so this story was a fresh and interesting read. I loved the twists and turns in the plot. A lot surprised me. It kept me turning pages as fast as I could read them. I highly recommend this novel for all readers of historical fiction.”

–Lena Nelson Dooley, author of *A Heart’s Gift*, winner of the 2017 Faith, Hope, and Love Reader’s Choice Award for Long Historicals

“It is not often that I venture beyond the realm of my Kansas prairie, but for several days now, Kathleen Y’Barbo’s *The Pirate Bride* has transported me to a whole new world of magnificent sailing vessels amid privateers and pirates, a beautiful little island inhabited by nuns and orphans, opulent mansions of New Orleans, and newfound love—all through the eyes of the precocious, wise-beyond-her-years Maribel Cordoba. Rich in history, it’s a story I didn’t want to end and will revisit again soon.”

–Julane Hiebert, author of Brides of a Feather series
and I Plight Thee My Troth series

“Kathleen Y’Barbo’s brilliant storytelling skills shine through in *The Pirate Bride*, taking her reader on a swashbuckling adventure onboard a privateer ship through the Caribbean. Kathleen’s characters come to life on the pages of this book and her high-spirited young heroine will surely capture your heart as she did mine. I highly recommend this novel.”

–Annette O’Hare, author of The Bolivar Point Lighthouse series

“A captivating heroine, rich historical detail, and a fascinating setting make for a lovely, satisfying story. Readers will root for Maribel Cordoba every step of the way.”

–Dorothy Love author of *Mrs. Lee and Mrs. Gray*

“Once again Kathleen Y’Barbo has written a story that will pull the reader into an exciting world of adventure, mystery, and romance. *The Pirate Bride* kept me up late at night turning pages to find out what happens next. To my delight, surprises awaited me at every turn of the plot.”

–Louise M. Gouge, award-winning author

“Kathleen Y’Barbo’s *The Pirate Bride* is a unique tale filled with characters who defy stereotypes and the expectations of their contemporaries to find adventure on the high seas, a new and action-filled slant on the classic story of pirates and their ladies.”

–Julianna Deering, author of *The Drew Farthering Mysteries*

“A gripping tale of adventure on the high seas, *The Pirate Bride* will sail straight into your heart. Readers are going to adore this fiery heroine, and the piratical hero’s nobility will have you cheering. Couldn’t put it down!”

–Roseanna M. White, bestselling author of the *Ladies of the Manor* series and *Shadows Over England* series

“A spunky, loveable heroine, who reminds me of Anne of Green Gables, and a patient, determined hero encounter danger and adventure on the high seas. This fabulous swashbuckling tale of friendship and love is my favorite Kathleen Y’Barbo story to date. I didn’t want to see it end.”

–Vickie McDonough, best-selling author of 45 books and novellas, with over 1.5 million copies sold

“*The Pirate Bride* is a swashbuckling adventure set during the time of pirates and privateers. Engaging and fast-paced, this story is like an epic movie with plenty of romance and intrigue. Of all the titles Kathleen Y’Barbo has put out, this is one of my all-time favorites!”

–Michelle Griep, award-winning author of the *Once Upon a Dickens Christmas* series

*The
Pirate
Bride*



KATHLEEN
Y'BARBO

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



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DEDICATION

To the survivors:

As I type this, my beloved Texas has been drenched by the
Historical flood waters of Hurricane Harvey.

May God richly bless those who waded through water,
Either away from a flooded home or toward one.
May He allow His blessings to shine upon the heroes
And His mercy on those who mourn.

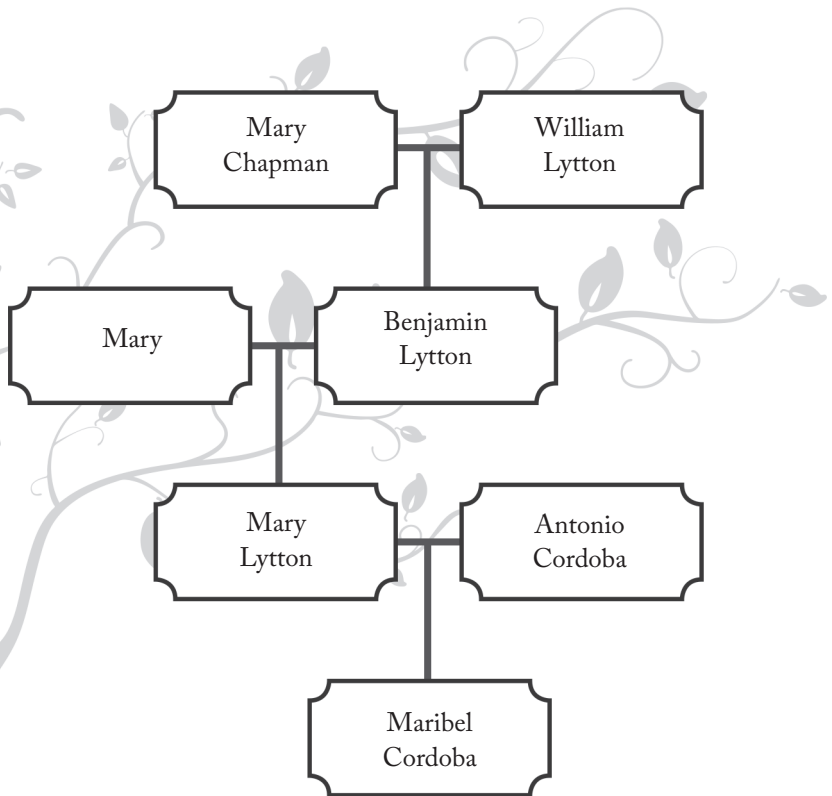
From the tip of the coast at Port Aransas to
Galveston where my youngest son lives,
To Houston where two of my children and I call home,
And to Port Neches and the rest of Jefferson County,
The place where I was born and raised,
To any place on Texas soil where rain and tears have fallen this week,
We are Texas Strong.

God bless Texas!

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

MATTHEW 6:21

Daughters of the Mayflower



The Lytton Family

William Lytton married Mary Elizabeth Chapman (Plymouth 1621)

Parents of 13 children (one son is Benjamin)

Benjamin Lytton married Temperance (Massachusetts 1668)

widowed then married Mary (Massachusetts 1675)

Born to Benjamin and Mary

Mary Lytton who married Antonio Cordoba (Spain 1698)

Born to Mary and Antonio

Maribel Cordoba

“As the Testimony of your Conscience must convince you of the great and many evils you have committed, by which you have highly offended God, and provoked most justly his wrath and indignation against you, so I suppose I need not tell you that the only way of obtaining pardon and remission of your sins from God, is by a true and unfeigned repentance and faith in Christ, by whose meritorious death and passion, you can only hope for salvation.”

From the Lord Chief Justice Judge Trot’s speech
pronouncing sentence of death
upon the pirate Major Stede Bonnet,
November 10, 1711, at Charles Town

MARIBEL AND THE PRIVATEER

PART I:

In the waters of the Caribbean Sea

April of 1724

*He sent from above, he took me,
he drew me out of many waters.*

PSALM 18:16



CHAPTER I

*Aboard the Spanish vessel
Venganza near Havana*

Mama may have been named for the great-grandmother who traveled from England on the *Mayflower*, but that fact certainly did not keep her in the land of her birth. Twelve-year-old Maribel Cordoba sometimes wondered why Mama refused to discuss anything regarding her relations in the colonies beyond the fact that she had disappointed them all by marrying a Spaniard without her papa's blessing.

The mystery seemed so silly now, what with Mama gone and the father she barely knew insisting she accompany him aboard the *Venganza* to his new posting in Havana. Maribel gathered the last reminder of Mary Lytton around her shoulders—a beautiful scarf shot through with threads of Spanish silver that matched the piles of coins in the hold of this magnificent sailing vessel—and clutched the book she'd already read through once since the journey began.

Though she was far too young at nearly thirteen to call herself a lady, Maribel loved to pretend she would someday wear this same scarf along with a gown in some lovely matching color at a beautiful ball. Oh she would dance, her toes barely touching the floor in her dancing shoes. And her handsome escort would, no doubt, fall madly in love with her just as Papa had fallen in love with Mama.

Her fingers clutched the soft fabric as her heart lurched. Mama.

Oh how she missed her. She looked toward the horizon, where a lone vessel's sails punctuated the divide between sea and sky, and then shrugged deeper into the scarf.

Nothing but adventure was ahead. This her papa had promised when he announced that, as newly named Consul General, he was moving her from their home in Spain to the faraway Caribbean.

She had read about the Caribbean in the books she hid beneath her pillows. The islands were exotic and warm, populated with friendly natives and not-so-friendly pirates.

Maribel clutched her copy of *The Notorious Seafaring Pyrates and Their Exploits* by Captain Ulysses Jones. The small leather book that held the true stories of Blackbeard, Anne Bonny, and others had been a treasure purchased in a Barcelona bookseller's shop when Papa hadn't been looking.

Of course, Papa never looked at her, so she could have purchased the entire shop and he wouldn't have noticed.

But then, until the day her papa arrived with the news that Mama and Abuelo were now with the angels, she'd only seen this man Antonio Cordoba three times in her life. Once at her grandmother's funeral and twice when he and Mama had quarreled on the doorstep of their home in Madrid.

On none of these occasions had Señor Cordoba, apparently a very busy and very important man, deigned to speak to his only daughter. Thus his speech about Mama had been expectedly brief, as had the response to Maribel's request to attend her funeral or at least see her grave.

Both had been answered with a resolute no. Two days later, she was packed aboard the *Venganza*.

She watched the sails grow closer and held tight to Mama's scarf. Just as Mama had taught her, she turned her fear of this unknown place that would become her new home into prayer. Unlike Mama—who would have been horrified at the stories of Captain Bartholomew Roberts and others—Maribel's hopes surged.

Perhaps this dull journey was about to become exciting. Perhaps the vessel on the horizon held a band of pirates bent on chasing them down and relieving them of their silver.

By habit, Maribel looked up into the riggings where her only friend on this voyage spent much of his day. William Spencer, a gangly orphan a full year older and many years wiser than she, was employed as lookout. This, he explained to her, was a step up from the cabin boy he'd been for nigh on seven years and a step toward the ship's captain he someday hoped to be.

Their passing annoyance, which began when she nearly pitched herself overboard by accident while reading and strolling on deck, had become something akin to an alliance during their weeks at sea. To be sure, William still felt she was hopeless as a sailor, but his teasing at Maribel's noble Spanish lineage and habit of keeping her nose in a book had ceased when she discovered the source.

William Spencer could not read. Or at least he couldn't when they set sail from Barcelona.

He'd been a quick study, first listening as she read from *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Iliad* and then learning to sound out words and phrases as they worked their way through Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. By the time she offered him her copy of Captain Jones's pirate book, William was able to read the entire book without any assistance.

She spied him halfway up the mainmast. "Sails," she called, though he appeared not to hear her. "Over there," Maribel added a bit louder as she used her book to point toward the ship.

The watch bell startled her with its clang, and the book tumbled to the deck. A moment later, crewmen who'd previously strolled about idly now ran to their posts shouting in Spanish words such as "*pirata*" and "*barco fantasma*."

"Pirates and a ghost ship?" she said under her breath as she grabbed for the book and then dodged two crewmen racing past with weapons drawn. "How exciting!"

"Don't be an idiot, Red." William darted past two men rolling a

cannon toward the *Venganza's* bow then hurried to join her, a scowl on his face. "This isn't like those books of yours. If that's the *Ghost Ship*, then you'd best wish for anything other than excitement."

Shielding her eyes from the sun's glare, Maribel looked up at William. "What do you mean?"

"I mean they're bearing down on us and haven't yet shown a flag. I wager when they do, we won't be liking what flag they're flying."

"So pirates," she said, her heart lurching. "Real pirates."

"Or Frenchmen," he said. "A privateer ship is my guess if they're not yet showing the skull and crossbones."

She continued to watch the sails grow larger. "Tell me about the *Ghost Ship*, William."

"Legend says the ship appears out of thin air, then, after it's sunk you and taken your treasure, all twenty-two guns and more than one hundred crewmen go back the same way they came."

"Back into thin air?" she asked.

"Exactly. Although I have always thought they might be calling Santa Cruz their home as it's near enough to Puerto Rico for provisioning and belongs to the French settlements." He paused to draw himself up to his full height. "And care to guess who the enemy of the men aboard the *Ghost Ship* is?"

Maribel leaned closer, her heart pounding as she imagined these fearless men who chased their prey then disappeared to some mysterious island only to do it all over again. "Who?"

"Spaniards, Red. They hold license from the French crown to take what anyone flying under the Spanish flag has got and split it with the royals. And they don't take prisoners."

She looked up at the flag of Spain flying on the tallest of the masts and then back at William. "No?"

William shook his head. "No. They leave no witnesses. Do you understand now why you do not want that ship out there to be the *Barco Fantasma* as these sons of Madrid call it?"

She squared her shoulders. "Well, I care not," she exclaimed.

“There are no such things as ghosts. My mama said to pray away the fear when it occurred, so perhaps you ought to consider that.”

Of course, if she allowed herself to admit it, Maribel should be taking her own advice. Much as Mama reminded her of her status as a woman not born in Spain, her father’s lineage and the fact a Spanish flag waved in the warm breeze above her head would seal her fate.

“I’m not scared,” William said. “If those fellows catch us, I’d rather join up with them than stay here. Wasn’t asked if I wanted to sail on this vessel, so I figure I might as well invite myself to sail on theirs.”

“You wouldn’t dare. You’re not the pirate sort.”

“Privateer,” he corrected. “And who says I’m not? I read those books of yours. Sure, I’m not one for breaking the law, but if Captain Beaumont offers honest work for my share of the pay, then I’d be better off than I am here. Besides, I can always jump off at the nearest island and stay there like Mr. Robinson Crusoe did. If I tried that now, the Spaniards would come after me and beat me senseless.”

She recalled the bruises she’d seen on the boy’s arms and nodded. “If you go, I’m going with you. I’ll join up with this Captain Beaumont and climb the riggings just like you do.”

“You’re just a girl,” he protested. “Don’t you know girls are bad luck on privateers’ ships? It was right there in the book.”

“It was indeed,” she said as she cradled the book against her chest. “But I don’t believe in luck. If the Lord allows, then it happens. If He doesn’t, then it doesn’t. That’s what my mama says, and I believe it is true. So I’m going to pray that Captain Beaumont is a good man.”

“That’s ridiculous, Red.”

“The praying?” she said in a huff. “Prayer is never ridiculous.”

“No, of course not,” he hurried to say. “But to suggest that Captain Beaumont might be a good man—”

“You there, boy,” a sailor called as he jostled past William.

“Back to your post and look smart about it.”

William fixed her with an impatient look. “While you’re doing all this praying, go down to your cabin and hide,” he told her. “Bar the door and, no matter what, do not let anyone inside except me or your papa, you understand?”

“Papa,” she said as she looked around the deck. “I need to find him.”

“Likely he’s helping prepare for the attack and won’t want a child bothering him,” William said. “Do as I said and make quick work of it. Oh, and Red, can you swim?”

“I can,” she said even as his description of her as a child stung. “My mama taught me but said we couldn’t tell my papa because he thought swimming was undignified and beneath our station. Why?”

“Then if all else fails and you’re faced with being captured or the threat of death, jump overboard. It’s a known fact that most pirates cannot swim, so you’d be safer afloat in the ocean than aboard a sinking ship.” He nudged her shoulder with his, a gesture that reminded her once again of their friendship. “Now off with you, Red. I’ve got work to do.”

“But what about privateers and Frenchmen?” she called to his retreating back. “Can they swim?”

“You better hope you don’t find out,” was the last thing William said before he disappeared into a crowd of crewmen.

Maribel stood there for a full minute, maybe longer, surveying the chaos unfolding around her. Though she was loath to take William’s advice—he was always such a bossy fellow—she did see the wisdom in making herself scarce until the fuss was over.

Oh but she’d not run to her cabin where she would miss all the excitement. There must be a place where she could stay out of the way and still watch what was happening on deck.

Pray away the fear.

She raised up on her tiptoes to look over the men gathered around the cannon. The sails of the approaching vessel were much closer now, their pristine white matching the clouds on the horizon.

A roar went up among the men of the *Venganza*, and then the cannon fired. Covering her ears, Maribel ran in search of the nearest shelter and found it behind thick coils of rope and stacked barrels. Only when she had successfully hidden herself inside the coil did she realize she had dropped her prized book. She had to retrieve it; nothing else would do.

She rose slowly, clutching the ends of Mama's scarf just as the vessel made a turn to the right. With the tilt of the deck, the book slid out of her reach. Braving the throng of people, she headed toward the book, now lodged against the mainmast.

Pray away the fear.

She removed the scarf from her neck and tied it around her head like the pirates whose likenesses filled her books. The ends fluttered in the breeze, and if she thought hard, she could remember Mama wearing this scarf.

She did that now, thought about Mama. About how she loved to tie the scarf around her waist when she wore her pretty dresses. Someday she would tie this scarf around her waist like Mama did.

Someday when she was a grown-up lady.

A cannon sounded from somewhere off in the distance, and then the vessel shuddered. Stifling a scream, Maribel took a deep breath and said a prayer as she grasped the edges of the scarf.

Smoke rolled toward her as Maribel struggled to remain upright on the sloping boards beneath her feet. She reached the book and then slid one arm around the mainmast to steady herself against the pitching motion.

Pray away the fear. Pray away the fear. Pray away. . .

The cannon roared again. A crack sounded overhead and splinters of wood and fire rained down around her.

Then the world went dark.