

PRAISE FOR *THE LIBERTY BRIDE*

“Love and liberty sail the high seas in this thrilling tale of traitors, treason, and tyranny during America’s Second War of Independence—the War of 1812. When it comes to historical fiction, no one—and I do mean no one—charts a course for romantic adventure like MaryLu Tyndall, the Queen of the Seas when it comes to love, liberty, and the pursuit of a story that will steal both your heart and your sleep.”

–Julie Lessman, award-winning author of *The Daughters of Boston*,
Winds of Change, and *Isle of Hope* series

“*The Liberty Bride* has all the ingredients of a great Tyndall read—richly-textured historical setting, feisty heroine, strong and honorable hero, all interwoven with a thread of unyielding faith. I’ve long been a fan of her work, and this one did not disappoint!”

–Shannon McNear, 2014 RITA® finalist and
author of *The Cumberland Bride*

“You only need to read one line on the back cover of MaryLu Tyndall’s latest novel, *The Liberty Bride*, to know she has once again given readers a swashbuckling adventure of romance and intrigue that she is so admired for. Who can resist the tale of a woman captive aboard a British warship, while her allegiances are tested and a romance grows for a first lieutenant? I know I can’t.”

–Rita Gerlach, author of the *Daughters of the Potomac*
Series and other Christian romances

“MaryLu Tyndall never fails to deliver a spine-tingling, faith-inspiring story. *The Liberty Bride* is no exception. From page one, through many dangerous adventures to a satisfying conclusion, this novel will thrill and delight Tyndall’s readers and have them eagerly anticipating her next epic tale.”

–Louise M. Gouge, award-winning historical romance author

“In true MaryLu Tyndall fashion, MaryLu gives her readers another exciting adventure on the sea. Danger lurks around every corner and suspense on every page. This is one you won’t want to miss!”

–Debbie Lynne Costello, Amazon #1 seller

*The
Liberty
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MARYLU
TYNDALL

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All scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or used fictitiously. Any similarity to actual people, organizations, and/or events is purely coincidental.

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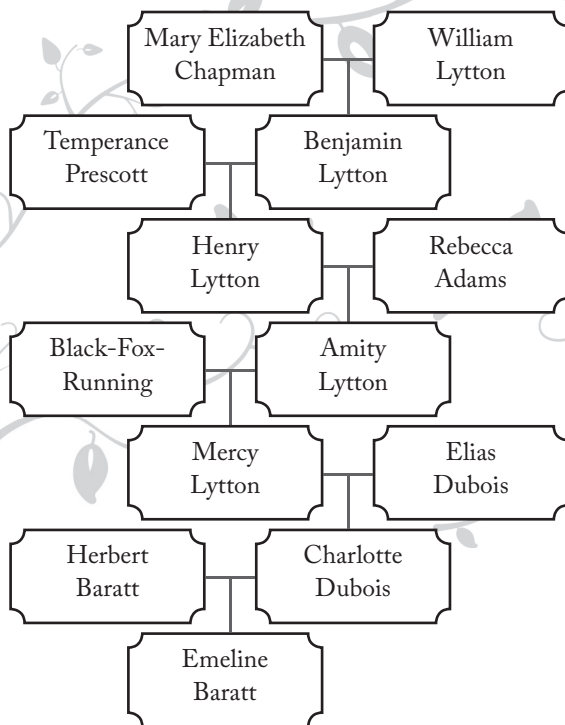
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Daughters of the Mayflower



The Lytton Family

William Lytton married Mary Elizabeth Chapman (Plymouth, 1621)

Parents of 13 children, including Benjamin

Benjamin Lytton married Temperance Prescott (Massachusetts, 1668)

Born to Benjamin and Temperance

Henry Lytton married Rebecca Adams (New York, 1712)

Children were Goodwill and Amity

Amity Lytton married Black-Fox-Running, a Mohawk warrior (New York, 1737)

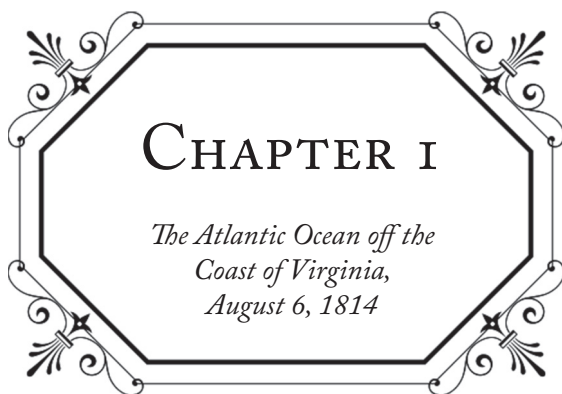
Only child was Mercy Lytton (aka Kahente)

Mercy Lytton married Elias Dubois (Massachusetts, 1759)

Children included Charlotte

Charlotte Dubois married Herbert Baratt (Maryland, 1788)

Children included Emeline



CHAPTER I

*The Atlantic Ocean off the
Coast of Virginia,
August 6, 1814*

What would it feel like to drown. . .to float listlessly down. . .down . . .beneath the chilled waters of the Atlantic? To feel salty fingers wrap around you, their deadly talons tugging you farther into the murky darkness, your lungs burning until they screamed for air that would never come. . .until finally, cloaked in a silent, peaceful tomb, you floated into eternity. . .

Emeline Baratt pondered these things as she gazed upon the dark waves from the larboard railing of her father's merchant brig—or rather, privateer—*Charlotte*. The pondering sliced an icy knife down her back. Was it the thought of dying or the chilled mist of the morning that caused her to suddenly draw the warmth of her cloak tighter about her neck? Perhaps both.

Unable to sleep as usual, she'd come up on deck just before dawn. It was the only time of day she was left unhindered by the many sailors on board who felt it their duty to protect and entertain their employer's daughter. On her long journey across the pond from Calais, France, she'd endured more than enough male attention to last a lifetime. Whether their desire for her was motivated by her dowry, their need for a wife to take care of them, or her "exquisite" beauty—as many of them claimed she possessed—she did not know. Nor did she care. As far back as she could remember, she had never wanted to marry.

A sliver of a moon frowned its disappointment down upon her. A scowl with which she was quite familiar, having seen it enough on her father's face whenever she'd dared to tell him of her dreams. Mockery

always preceded his frustration, a complete dismissal of all that was important to her. Yet she knew he meant well. He wanted to see her settled and cared for. He wanted grandchildren. And while he didn't voice it, she knew he wanted to be free of the burden of her support.

"At two and twenty, you should be married with a bevy of wee ones frolicking about your skirts," he had told her after he'd discovered her painting away the afternoon. "It is the godly and proper station for women—raising children and caring for a husband. Not wasting your time with frivolous art that will never sell."

That frivolous art was the most beautiful seascape she'd ever painted and a secret commission from the mayor's wife, who'd admired Emeline's work from afar.

She never finished it. The next day her father whisked her overseas to Brighton to spend a year with her great-aunt, a wealthy daughter of a baron.

"What you need is a woman's influence, someone to teach you how to be a proper lady." He waved his hand through the air and huffed. "Perhaps you'll even find a husband. God knows you've rejected every eligible gentleman in Baltimore."

Indeed she had. A smile lifted her lips at the memory of those suitors vying for her affections like puppies for their mother's milk. But she would not be any man's pet. Why tie yourself down to a life of endless scrubbing and mending and cooking and tending? She'd done enough of that in the past fourteen years caring for her father and two brothers after her mother died and then most recently her aunt. If that was to be her life, what was the point?

She gazed at the churning water again.

She *could* jump.

The brig pitched over a wave, sending the deck tilting and wood creaking, jarring her from her morbid thoughts. Gripping the railing tighter, she sighed and gazed at the blanket of golden light swaddling the horizon, fluttering threads of gold and azure over the inky swells. Soon the deck would be abuzz with sailors, joining the two night watchmen and helmsman standing at the wheel. Soon she would have to go below

to spend her final day at sea cooped up in a cabin the size of a privy closet. At least she had her charcoal and paper to keep her busy.

She may even finish her sketch of the captain if one of the sailors didn't come down with some phantom illness she had to address. Possessing medical skills she'd learned while accompanying her uncle on his rounds in Baltimore was yet another thing that kept her forever tending to everyone else's needs.

Everyone's but her own.

La, but she sounded bitter. *Forgive me, Lord.*

The pound of footsteps and groans of men unhappy to be awakened from their sleep rumbled behind her. A brisk wind flapped loose sails and stirred the curls dangling about her neck, and she drew a deep breath of the sea air. She'd grown so accustomed to the scent of brine, wood, and tar these past six weeks she'd all but forgotten what land smelled like.

She'd nearly forgotten her father's face as well—at least the look of chagrin it usually held. Would he be happy to see her? Perhaps her absence for nearly two years had softened his resolve to force her to marry if she returned without any prospects. Or would he be angry that she returned no better off than when she'd left? Without a husband and with but a pittance of an inheritance from her eccentric aunt.

She supposed his anger would win out, especially since he'd been forced to risk one of his merchantmen-turned-privateers to bring her home during wartime. Not just any privateer, but his best one, along with his best captain, Henry Lansing, notorious not only for capturing three British prizes but also for his skill at breaking through the British blockade of American ports.

Now that they neared the American coastline, they'd need his skill more than ever.

"Good morning to you, miss." One of the sailors smiled at her on his way to the foredeck as more men emerged from below and hurried to their posts.

Facing the sea once again, she drew back her shoulders. She had made up her mind. She would give up her art, marry within the year, and settle down to the life that was expected of her, a life that would please her

father, society—and most of all, God.

No more wasted time, no more painting, no more frivolous dreams. . .

She dropped her gaze once again to the misty sea. She *could* still jump. Death would come within minutes, and then she would be taken to heaven. To be with Mama.

“Oh Mama, I miss you so.” She gripped the locket hanging around her neck as the sun peered over the horizon, soon becoming naught but a golden blur in Emeline’s teary vision.

More sailors greeted her.

Wiping her eyes, she leaned over the railing and watched the line of bubbling foam rise and fall over the hull.

It would be so simple.

But of course she wouldn’t jump. She straightened and glanced over the dissipating mist. From this moment forth, she intended to be a proper lady. And proper ladies certainly did not hurl themselves into the sea.

“Lay aloft! Loose top sails, Mr. Brook!” the boatswain shouted behind her.

Sailors leapt into the shrouds and skittered to the tops like spiders on a web. Within minutes, sheets were dropped, flapping idly before they caught the wind and ballooned in a thunderous roar.

Lowering her head, she prayed for forgiveness for her negative thoughts. She prayed that God would take away her dreams and help her be a godly woman. Then, perhaps then, He would choose to bless her and not punish her.

Warmth caressed her eyelids, and she opened them to the sunrise kissing the waves with saffron and whisking away the remaining fog. Perhaps an omen of God’s favor at last. She started to turn and descend to her cabin, when a dark shape on the horizon caught her eye. Squinting, she watched as it grew larger. . . a leviathan emerging from the mist.

“A sail! A sail!” A shout came from the tops.

They hadn’t seen a single ship in the entire crossing. Odd since America was at war with Great Britain. Odd also because the captain had warned her that they may encounter some trouble.

She scanned the deck and spotted him mounting the ladder to the

quarterdeck where he took the telescope from his first mate.

Another shout came from the tops. “She’s flying the Union Jack, Cap’n!”

“What in the blazes! Where did she come from?” Captain Lansing bellowed, scope still to his eye. “Why was she not spotted earlier?”

“There was a heavy fog this morning,” the boatswain offered.

“We are at war, man! Fog is no excuse!” Captain Lansing gripped the quarterdeck railing, his face mottled with rage.

“She’s heading our way, Cap’n, signaling for a show of colors.”

“By God, then we’ll show her our colors! Raise the flag! Beat to quarters! All hands make sail!”

The string of orders sent the sailors dashing here and there as the first mate shouted further commands to the crew.

More sails were loosed. Wind glutted them like white pregnant bellies. Emeline stood frozen, watching the harried crew race about, their eyes sparking in fear. The ship veered to larboard. She caught the rail and slammed against the bulwarks.

“She’s running out her guns!” the first mate yelled.

Emeline dared a glance back out to sea. A Royal Navy frigate advanced toward them in a sea of raging white foam.

A spindle of terror wove down her back. She couldn’t move. Could hardly breathe.

A foul curse spewed from Captain Lansing’s lips, followed by something about bearing off and starboard guns. . . . Emeline could no longer make much sense of his words.

Boom! The roar shook both sky and brig. Her heart seized.

Someone shouted, “All hands down!”

Her last thought before dropping to all fours was that God so rarely answered her prayers.