

SURRENDER *to* DESTINY

❖ SERIES ❖

SURRENDER  
*the*  
HEART

*MaryLu Tyndall*

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## ❖ CHAPTER 3 ❖

**M**r. Brenin, come back here this instant!" Incensed at the man's loathsome behavior, Marianne rushed out the front door after him. Clutching her skirts, she leapt down the stairs and dashed out into the street. "Mr. Brenin!"

Noah halted, shifted his shoulders, and turned to face her. "My apologies, Miss Denton, but I have a ship full of cargo I must get to England as soon as possible."

"You will do no such thing!" Marianne tripped over a stone and stumbled forward. She caught her balance before making a fool of herself and tumbling to the ground. Noah's friend, Mr. Heaton, chuckled as Noah faced forward and continued on his way.

"Go home, Miss Denton." He flung a hand over his shoulder.

"Marianne!" Lizzie's sweet voice filled the air.

"Dearest, come back." Her mother's plea wrapped around her like an invisible rope, halting her, tugging her home to safety and love.

But one slice of her fury severed it in an instant.

"Never fear, Mother, Lizzie, I will return shortly," she shouted as she stomped forward after the two men. Her rage tore away any pride

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left within her and tossed it to the cobblestones beneath her feet. She knew her behavior only made her shame all the more evident, more humiliating, but she couldn't help her actions. How dare Noah embarrass her in front of everyone, the councilmen, and the mayor? How dare he shame her in such a horrid way? Why, she would be the laughingstock of the whole city. She'd be unable to show her face in any social circle.

One quick glance behind revealed her worst fear. A mob of guests crowded the porch of her home. Some laughed while others looked at her with pity. The latter included her mother, standing alongside her two friends Cassandra and Rose.

But Marianne could not stop. "Mr. Brenin, if you please." She darted before a phaeton. The driver jerked the horse's reins and the animal neighed in protest.

"Watch where you're going!" the coachman shouted. Marianne waved an apology and forged ahead.

"Mr. Brenin!"

Halting, Noah swung about, a look of annoyance twisting his handsome features. Beside him, Mr. Heaton seemed to be having difficulty holding back his laughter. A gust of hot wind tugged at Marianne's curls. Perspiration dotted her neck.

Noah's blue eyes sharpened. "Miss Denton, it is unseemly and most unsafe for you to be chasing me through the city streets."

"Mr. Brenin it is most rude and incorrigible for you to abandon me at our engagement party."

Noah released a sigh and gazed down the avenue toward the docks, then back at her as if she were an annoying rodent. "I have not abandoned you, miss. I simply have more important—" He halted and flattened his lips. "I have crucial business to attend to. Surely you don't wish to have a sluggard for a husband."

She didn't wish to have a husband at all, if truth be told. Marianne drew a deep breath and composed herself. "What I wish for, sir, is a husband who treats me with respect and doesn't make me an object of mockery before the entire town."

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A flicker of sympathy crossed his face before it hardened back to stone. "When I am your husband, you have my word I will never do so."

"How am I to believe you when you so freely disregard me now?"

He smiled, that arrogant half smile that set her blood boiling. "Me? I believe you are the one acting beneath your station, chasing me down the street like a needy little wife."

Marianne contained herself with difficulty. "I am neither needy nor your wife. Can you not spare my dignity with a few hours of your time, sir?"

"Your dignity?" He laughed, his blue eyes sparkling. Removing his hat, he palmed the sweat from his brow. "Is that what this is about? Your dignity? You always did care for the opinions of others."

"Why, you insufferable clod," Marianne spat.

Mr. Heaton chuckled, but was instantly silenced with one look from Noah. The first mate turned toward Marianne, "If I may, Miss Denton, I—"

"You may not, Mr. Heaton." She gave him a scorching look. "Not unless you can convince your captain to return to our engagement party." Marianne eyed Noah's first mate, the man whose daring ways were the talk of the town amongst the ladies. A perfect specimen of manhood save for the tiny scar that sliced through his right earlobe. The twinkle in his eye as he perused her told her he was also a man who had no difficulty drawing female attention.

Yet she felt naught but annoyance at him.

Mr. Heaton shrugged and instead tipped his hat at a lady who passed on his left.

Noah shifted his leather boots impatiently over the cobblestone. "Now if you please, Miss Denton, we must be on our way. I suggest you return home posthaste as the night falls and the crowds appear quite agitated."

"I will do no such thing unless you return with me. How can I face my guests when my own fiancé can't stand the sight of me?"

His eyebrows shot up and he gazed at her curiously, but then he

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placed his hat atop his head and straightened his coat. "It is not the sight of you that disturbs me, miss, but your attempt to rule over my affairs. Now run along, Miss Denton." He flapped one hand toward her as if to brush her away. "We can discuss this when I return."

Marianne's eyes burned with tears at the man's cruelty, but she willed them away. She would not give him the satisfaction.

Obviously taking her silence as compliance, he swung around and marched down the street, Mr. Heaton by his side. Together, they disappeared into a mob of citizens who were shouting and cursing as one man at the center held up a pamphlet.

"Federalist garbage!" one man yelled.

"I'll not have this treason printed in my town!"

Clutching her skirts, Marianne circled the mob, thankful when they ignored her. Standing on her tiptoes, she peered down Conway Street, searching for Noah's hat. Since he stood a head taller than most men and wore that pompous purple plume, she should have no trouble spotting him. She knew following a man through the streets would not only besmirch her reputation but put her in harm's way, especially as the sun slipped below the buildings and the shadows crept out from hiding, but she could not let him win again. Not this time. This time he would learn that he could not treat her like a child to be bullied whenever he pleased.

Memories assaulted her of the time when she was five years old and Noah had dropped a frog in her bonnet, only to laugh hysterically when she placed it atop her head and screamed. Or the time he had stolen a pie from Marianne's cook, Maggie, and showered crumbs in Marianne's hair and on her dress to incriminate her for the infraction. She had spent two days alone in her chamber and received no pie for a month as punishment. Memory after memory assailed her, fueling her resolve to forge ahead and bring him back. If she had to marry this unscrupulous rogue, then she had better assert herself from the start. He could set sail as often as he liked, he could do whatever he wanted as long as he cared for her mother and sister, and treated Marianne with respect. Was that too much to ask for?

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Above the bobbing heads, the imperious flutter of his purple plume marked his location. She dashed between two carriages and followed him as he turned down Light Street. A breeze coming off the harbor whirled around her, bringing with it the smell of the sea, of fish, and crab, and the sting of refuse. Tall ships of all sorts and sizes bobbed in the choppy bay, some docked at the long piers that ran out into the water.

She tripped over a brick, and pain seared up her toe and into her foot. Biting her lip, she continued threading her way through the sailors, merchantmen, footmen, coaches, as well as ladies and gentleman out for a stroll along the bay.

Noah turned right onto Pratt Street and she followed him.

Workers and slaves hustled over the wharves as they carried last-minute goods to the ships. Baltimore had grown so much since the Revolution that it had become the third largest seaport in America. Though Marianne hated the harbor, she was proud of that fact and proud of her grand city. Ignoring the glances and whistles the sailors cast her way, she dashed through the throng and kept her head down to avoid drawing unnecessary attention.

A pianoforte twanged from one of the taverns lining the street as a cacophony of laughter and song erupted from men taking early to their cups. Marianne shivered, though the night was warm. She hated the inner harbor. Not so much because of the lecherous stares from the seamen or because of the danger, but because of the dark choppy sea that stretched its greedy fingers up the Patapsco River. Didn't the sea claim enough victims upon the open waters? Did it have to invade the land as well?

Continuing onward, she avoided looking at the water licking the pilings of the dock as if smacking its lips in anticipation of a meal. She avoided looking at the ominous spot that loomed up ahead.

The spot where they had found her father facedown in the harbor.

His body bloated and pale from spending days in the water. She swallowed a burst of sorrow and shifted her gaze to the warehouses



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and taverns tucked across the cobblestone street, all the while silently cursing Noah for forcing her to visit a place she'd successfully avoided for three years.

Noah marched onto one of the piers then dashed across a plank that led to a ship. Mr. Heaton followed, and the air instantly filled with Noah's resounding voice spouting orders to his crew.

Heart stuck in her throat, Marianne inched down the wobbling wharf and halted at the foot of the plank. Her feet went numb. On the ship, Noah and another sailor perused a document. Never once did he look her way. She glanced at the name painted in red letters upon the hull. *Fortune*. Of course. A perfect name for a man who cared for nothing but wealth.

"'Scuse me, miss." A worker hoisting a crate onto his shoulder drew her attention. She stepped aside to allow him to pass.

Other workers loading goods onto the ship passed her by, the plank buckling beneath their weight like a spring. But would that spring snap? Beneath the flimsy plank, claws of foam-encrusted water leapt up in search of unwary victims.

Noah disappeared down one of the hatches, and Marianne knew she hadn't much time. She held her breath and dashed across the plank. The wood shifted beneath her slippers as if it were water itself, but then she felt the firm railing. She looked around, proud of her accomplishment, but not in time to see there were no steps leading down from the ship's railing.

Waving her arms through the air, she tumbled to the deck in a heap of silk and lace. Her skirt flew up, leaving her petticoats fluttering around her.

Chuckles bombarded her from all around, followed by catcalls and whistles. Her face heated.

"Ye ain't supposed to be here, miss." One of the sailors reached out to help her to her feet.

Rising, she released his hand and pressed down her skirts, ignoring the crude comments flung her way.

"Begging your pardon, sir, but I believe I am. I am the captain's

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fiancée.” She thrust out her chin. “And I must speak to him at once.”

The sailor, a young man in a checkered shirt, red scarf, and tan breeches, looked her over as if she couldn’t possibly be the captain’s fiancée. A thick jagged scar ran down his left cheek and disappeared into the scarf tied around his neck. “I expect he went to his cabin, miss.”

Marianne turned her gaze away from his disfigurement. “And where might that be?”

But before he could answer, another man grabbed him by the arm and pointed to something above in the yards. The two men climbed aloft, leaving her alone.

Very well. Though she’d never been on a ship before, it didn’t appear to be too big. How hard could it be to find the captain’s cabin? Marianne sauntered to the hole into which Noah had disappeared and peeked below where a ladder descended into the gloom. Grabbing the rail, she lifted her skirts and carefully lowered herself down the narrow, steep stairs. The smell of aged wood and tar filled her nose. At the foot, she headed down a long corridor, lit by lanterns hooked along the sides. A row of cannons wrapped in thick ropes and sitting on wood carriages lined both sides of the deck. Surely the captain’s cabin would not reside next to such dangerous guns.

“All hands aloft!” Feet pounded above her, echoing like drums.

Men passed by her, looks of surprise on their faces. Some tipped their hats, while others stared at her curiously before they sped on their way. The ship seemed to close in on her. Why was everything so cramped down here? How did these men survive in such tight quarters?

“Sir, if you please.” Marianne leapt in the path of a sailor. “Can you direct me to the captain’s cabin?”

Halting, he eyed her and adjusted his dirt-encrusted neckerchief.

“Come along, Rupert!” a man yelled from above.

The sailor glanced upward and shifted his feet nervously. “It’s aft, ma’am,” he said before scurrying away.

*Aft.* Hmm. Marianne wasn’t quite sure what this aft meant. Down perhaps? She found another ladder. Surely the captain’s cabin was below,

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away from the noise and clamor where he would have more space and more quiet. A stench that reminded her of rotten eggs assaulted her as she descended farther into the gloom. Holding a hand to her nose, she reached the bottom and continued down another narrow hallway. At the end, a door stood ajar. No lantern lit this room, but the dim light coming in from the hallway revealed nothing but barrels and crates. She was about to shut the door when a tiny meow sounded from the corner. Peering into the darkness, she scanned the room.

“Meow.”

“Heave short the anchor!” A man bellowed from above, and the sound of a chain chimed through the ship.

Marianne crept inside the room. “Poor kitty. Down here in the dark all alone.” Releasing the door, she felt her way around barrels and chests toward the last place she’d heard the meow. The ship lurched. The door slammed shut. A darkness blacker than she’d ever witnessed closed in on her.

“Meow.”

“I’m coming, little one. I’ll get you out of here.”

A snap that reminded Marianne of the crack of a huge whip crackled the air. The ship jerked again. She took another step forward, feeling the edge of a wooden cask with her gloves. A splinter pierced the silk and into her skin. She winced.

The ship pitched, and she gripped the crate to keep her balance. The sound of wood scraping against wood filled her ears. She inched her way forward. A creak and another scraping noise.

*Thump! Twack!* The drums and chests came to life around her.

She bumped against something tall beside her. It moved.

“Meow.”

“I am here, little one.” Marianne reached in the direction of the feline’s plea. Warm fur brushed against her glove.

The ship jerked again.

*Thunk!* Something heavy struck her from above. She crumpled to the floor. The last thing she remembered was the burning pain in her head and the cat licking her face.