Surrender
the
Dawn

Mary Lu Tyndall
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MaryLu Tyndall

MaryLu Tyndall dreamed of pirates and seafaring adventures during her childhood days on Florida’s coast. She holds a degree in math and worked as a software engineer for fifteen years before testing the waters as a writer. Her love of history and passion for storytelling drew her to create the Legacy of the King’s Pirates series. MaryLu now writes full-time and makes her home with her husband, six children, and four cats on California’s coast, where her imagination still surges with the sea. Her passion is to write page-turning, romantic adventures that not only entertain but expose Christians to their full potential in Christ. For more information on MaryLu and her upcoming releases, please visit her website at www.mltyndall.com or her blog at crossandcutlass.blogspot.com.
DEDICATION

To anyone who has ever felt like a failure.

“I am the Light of the world, he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”

John 8:12 NASB
Miss Channing, no privateer in his right mind would accept money from a woman investor. It is simply bad luck.”

Raucous laughter—all male—shot through the tiny coffee shop that smelled more like ale and sweat than coffee.

Wrinkling her nose beneath the odor and bracing her heart against the mounting impediment to her well-laid plans, Cassandra rose from her seat. “That is merely a foolish superstition, Mr. McCulloch. I assure you, my money is as good as any man’s.”

Snickers and grins interspersed with the occasional salacious glance continued to fire her way. But Cassandra brushed them off. After an hour of sitting in the muggy, male-dominated room, listening to various merchants selling shares for the equipping of their vessels into privateers, she had grown numb to the attention.

When the customs agent had finally announced eight shares offered at two hundred dollars each to be invested in the Contradiction—a one-hundred-and-three-ton schooner out of Dorchester, housing one long nine gun, ten men, and captained by Peter Pascal—Cassandra had raised her hand. With her one thousand dollars, she could purchase over half the shares rather than be one of many investors in a larger, better-equipped ship. Owning more of a privateer meant higher returns. And she definitely was in dire need of higher returns.
Mr. McCulloch shoved his thumbs into the pockets of his trousers and shot Cassandra the same patronizing look her mother often gave her younger sisters when they failed to comprehend what she was saying. “Aye, your money is good, Miss Channing. It’s the mind behind the coin that begs concern.”

“How dare you, sir! Why, you are no more...” Cassandra clutched her reticule close to her chest and spat out, “My money and my mind are equal to any man’s here.”

Again laughter pulsed through the room.

“It’s the comely exterior of that mind that I’m partial to,” one man yelled from the back, prompting yet another chorus of chuckles.

Cassandra narrowed her eyes and scanned the mob. Did these men honestly believe they were amusing? Most of them—with the exception of a few unsavory types loitering around the fringes of the assembly—were hardworking merchants, bankers, shop owners, mill workers, and farmers. Men who often tipped their hat at her on the street. Her gaze locked with the wife of the coffeehouse proprietor, scrubbing a counter in the right corner. Sympathy poured from her eyes.

Mr. McCulloch scratched his head and gave a sigh of frustration. “A share in any privateer gives you a voice in its affairs. A business voice, miss. A voice that needs to be schooled in matters of financial investments and risk assessment.”

The men nodded and grunted in approval like a band of mindless lackeys.

Cassandra tapped her shoe on the wooden floor, the hollow echo thrumming her disdain through the room. “A mind like Mr. Nash’s here, I presume.” She gestured toward the gentleman standing to her right. “No offense, sir”—she offered him a conciliatory smile—“I’m sure you have acquired a plethora of financial wisdom while shoeing horses all day.”

The low rumble of laughter that ensued was quickly squelched by a scowl from Mr. McCulloch.

“And Mr. Ackers.” She nodded toward the stout man sitting at the table next to hers. “Surely you have become a master of investment while out tilling your field?”

The proprietor’s wife emitted an unladylike chortle that drew all gazes her way. Her face reddening, she disappeared through a side door.

“Besides,” Cassandra huffed. “What business decisions need be made for a privateer already armed, captained, and ready to set sail?”
No reply came—save the look of complete annoyance shadowing the customs agent’s face.

Cassandra pursed her lips. “Let me make this very easy for you, sir. You need investors, I have money to invest.” She clutched the silk reticule until her fingers ached. “I am not without good sense, and I assure you I will seek out advice from those more experienced should the need arise.”

“We cannot trust that you will do so.”

“That is absurd!”

“Trouble is, miss, there’s not a man among us who’d be willing to partner with you.”

Nods of affirmation bobbed through a sea of heads.

Cassandra scanned the crowd, making eye contact with as many of the men as she could. “Is there no man here brave enough to stand with me?”

The hiss of coals in the fireplace was her only reply.

Mr. McCulloch sifted through the stack of papers before him. “Perhaps we could allow you to invest a much smaller percentage in a privateer if you promise to forsake your voice in any decisions and if the other shareholders would agree to it.” His beady eyes swept over the mob, but not a single gentleman spoke up.

Cassandra batted her gloved hand through the air. “I will not accept a smaller percentage, sir.”

“Then I fear we are at an impasse.” Mr. McCulloch plucked out a pocket watch, flipped it open, and stared at it as if it contained the answer to ridding himself of her company. His gaze lifted to hers. “Miss, your father was a good man. I am sorry for your loss. But not even he would risk the bad luck that would surely come from aligning with a woman in any seafaring venture.”

Tears burned in Cassandra’s eyes, but she shoved them behind a shield of determination.

Mr. Parnell, a worker at the flour mill, gave her a sympathetic smile.

“Perhaps you should marry, Miss Channing,” Mr. Kendrick, the young banker assisting Mr. McCulloch, said. “A woman your age should not be unattached.” A wave of interested eyes engulfed her. “Then with your husband’s signature, you may invest in whatever you wish.”

Cassandra’s blood boiled. She wouldn’t tell them that she had no intention of marrying any time soon, and certainly not for the sole purpose of investing in a privateer. “Any man I marry will allow me to do with my money as I see fit, sir.”
Again, a quiver of laughter assailed her.

Withdrawing a handkerchief from within his waistcoat, Mr. McCulloch dabbed at the sweat on his bald head. “If you don’t mind, Miss Channing, we have serious business to discuss.”

An angry flush heated Cassandra’s face, her neck, and moved down her arms as a hundred unladylike retorts flirted with her tongue. Tightening her lips, she grabbed her cloak, turned, and shoved her way through the crowd as the man began once again taking bids for the *Contradiction*.

Contradiction, indeed. This whole meeting was a contradiction of good sense.

After turning down several gentlemen’s offers to walk her home, Cassandra stepped from the shop into a gust of March wind that tore her bonnet from her hand. Too numb to chase after it, she watched as it tumbled down South Street as if all her dreams blew away with it. Perhaps they had. Perhaps her dreams had been overtaken by the nightmare of this past year.

Yes, only a nightmare. And soon she would wake up and be comfortable and carefree as she once had been. And her country would not be at war. And her father would still be with her.

But as she watched the sun drag its last vestiges of light from the brick buildings, elm trees, and the dirt street, her dreamlike state vanished. It would soon be dark, and she had a mile to traverse to reach her home.

Through a rather unsavory section of town.

Swinging her fur-lined cloak over her shoulders, she shoved her reticule tightly between her arm and body, pressed a wayward curl into her loosely pinned bun, and started down the street, nodding her greeting toward a passing couple, a single gentleman, and a group of militiamen as she went. The snap of reins, the clomp of horse hooves, and the rattle of carriage wheels filled her ears as she wove between passing phaetons and horses. An icy breeze tore at her hair and fluttered the lace of her blue muslin gown. She drew her cloak tighter around her neck. A bell rang in the distance. A baby cried. Sordid chuckles, much like the type she’d just endured in the coffeehouse, blared from a tavern along Pratt Street. Was the entire town mocking her?

Up ahead, the bare masts of countless ships swayed into the darkening sky like thickets in a winter wind. Most were abandoned merchant ships. Some, however, were privateers, while others were merchantmen that had been issued Letters of Marque to board and confiscate enemy vessels—both forbidden investments to her.
Simply because she was a woman.
The briny scent of fish and salt curled her nose as she turned down Pratt Street. Dark water caressed the hulls of the ships like a lover luring them out to sea. Where they could damage British commerce and put an end to this horrendous war. But the blockade kept many of Baltimore’s finest vessels imprisoned in the harbor. Only the fastest privateers could slip past the fortress of British ships capping the mouth of the Chesapeake and only then, during inclement weather. The rest remained at sea, hauling their prizes to ports along the Eastern Seaboard where they sold them, along with the goods in their holds, for considerable sums of money.

Which was precisely why Cassandra needed to invest the money left to her by her father and brothers in a privateer. She patted the reticule containing the banknote for a thousand dollars—all the wealth her family had left in the world. Now what was she to do? Cassandra swallowed down a rising fear. Investing in a privateer had been her last hope. How else could a single woman with no skills provide for a family? Cassandra’s mother and sisters depended on her, and she had let them down.

Luke Heaton trudged up the companionway ladder and emerged onto the main deck of the ship—his ship. Or his heap of rot and rust, to be more precise. Setting his hammer atop the capstan with a thud, he shuddered against the crisp air coming off the bay.

Biron looked up from the brass binnacle he was polishing. “Did someone die?”

Luke gave a sardonic chuckle and grabbed the open bottle of rum from the top of a barrel. Plopping down on the bulwarks, he took a swig and wiped his mouth with his sleeve. “Yes, this ship. All she’s good for is a watery grave.”

Biron continued his polishing. “At least she stays afloat.”

“But not for long. She’s got two gaping holes in her hull.”

“They can be fixed.” Biron shrugged, but the encroaching shadows stole his expression. Setting his bottle down, Luke struck flint to steel and lit the lantern hanging from the main mast.

“What of the rotten spars, rusty tackles, and frayed sheets?” Luke ran a hand through his hair.

A twinkle lit Biron’s brown eyes. Or was it merely the lantern’s reflection? “All repairable.”
The ship teetered over an incoming wavelet, and Luke stretched the ache from his back. An ache formed from working all day belowdecks trying to transform this heap into a swift sailing vessel. “Repairable yes, but with what, is the question.” Luke took another sip of rum. “How did I ever end up with this old bucket?”

“You won it in a game of cards, if I recall.”

Yes, the hazy memory returned. Along with another more disturbing one—another card game the following night when he’d lost all the money he intended to use to repair and equip his new acquisition.

The Agitation was indeed living up to her name.

Luke huffed out a sigh and fingered the rim of the dark bottle. A gull squawked overhead, taunting him, while the waters of Baltimore Harbor slapped the hull in laughter. The smell of rum along with his own sweat combined with the scents of wood, tar, and salt. He loved the sea. Had wanted nothing more than to return to her after his captain and best friend, Noah, had cast him from his ship.

Luke shifted on his seat as the memory stung him. The year he’d spent as Noah’s first mate on his privateer, Defender, had been the best year of Luke’s life. But he’d gone and ruined his first opportunity to make an honorable living, as he had done to everything else he touched. Even so, the experience hadn’t been a complete loss, for privateering had left Luke with a love of the sea, a love for his country, and a yearning for the riches he could make in the trade. But now with no money and a broken-down hull of a ship, that dream began to sink beneath the murky waters of the bay.

“I should sell her.”

Biron’s gray-lined hair shimmered in the lantern light. “What? And give up?”

“Don’t be a fool, old man.” Luke stood and began to pace. “Where am I going to get the money to fix and arm her as a privateer?”

“Perhaps God will provide.”


Ceasing his scrubbing, Biron looked at Luke with understanding. “I know your responsibilities weigh heavy on you, Cap’n.”

Responsibilities. Luke gazed at the sliver of a moon smiling at him in the eastern sky. Was that what he would call John? Perhaps. Yet, he was so much more than that. A responsibility Luke would never forsake. And one he hoped with everything in him, he was worthy of.
Biron spit on his rag and began rubbing the binnacle again. “It is a good thing you have someone dependin’ on you, or you’d while away your time in taverns, wastin’ your money on wenches, wine, and whist.”

“At least I find I am good at those.”

Biron chuckled and shook his head. “My guess is that you are good at many things, Cap’n. If you’d just believe in yourself—and in God.”

“I’m not your captain yet.” Luke eyed his friend. Sturdy as a ship’s mast and just as weathered, Biron had been at sea his entire life. Tufts of gray floated across his dark hair like clouds across a night sky. “Why do you stay with me, old man?”

Biron scratched his whiskers. “You promised work for this aged seaman, and I’m holding you to it, Cap’n.” He smiled.

Luke took another swig. “I wouldn’t place your bet on me. I’ll no doubt disappoint you.”

Biron set down his cloth and stood, stretching his back. “Ah, I wouldn’t be too sure about that, Cap’n.” He winked, tugged at his red neckerchief, and made his way over to Luke. “It grows late, my friend. I’ll see you in the morning.” With a moan, he hefted himself onto the dock and gazed up at the night sky. “You never know what tomorrow will bring.” He turned around and winked at Luke. “Or even tonight.”

A sudden chill struck Cassandra. She hugged herself. In her musings, nighttime had spread a cloak of darkness over the city. With the exception of a sailor sitting on the deck of his ship by the dock, an old man ambling down the street, and a couple disappearing in the distance, no one was in sight. Facing forward, she hurried along.

Footsteps sounded behind her. Her chest tightened. She quickened her pace.


She glanced over her shoulder. Two bulky shadows followed her.

Air seized in her throat. She hurried her pace and nearly tripped on the uneven pavement. The footfalls grew louder. Grabbing her skirts, she started to run. Where were the night watchmen? Why, oh why, had she been foolish enough to bring all of her money with her? Lord, please. . . her prayer fell limp from her lips. God had never answered her petitions before. Why would He now?

She crossed Light Street. A cat meowed.
A man jumped out of an alleyway in front of her. Cassandra screamed and spun around. The two men approached her. Shadows swirled over their faces, masking their features. “What do you want?” Her voice came out as a squeak. “We wants what’s in yer purse there, miss.”

Luke took another swig of rum and squinted into the shadows where Biron had disappeared. Across the street, a lady walked alone. Two, maybe three men crept behind her. Foolish girl. From her attire, he could tell she wasn’t one of the tavern wenches. What was she doing wandering about the docks so late? Luke flipped the hair from his face and slowly set his bottle down. The ship eased over a ripple and the bottle shifted, scraping over the oak planks. The men continued their pursuit. Luke shook his head. The last thing he needed was more trouble. He shouldn’t get involved. He should stay on his ship. But the rum soured in his stomach. Oh, lud. With that, Luke shot to his feet. Searching the deck for his sword, he sheathed it and leaped onto the dock. The woman started to run. Another man leapt out in front of her. They had her surrounded.

Cassandra’s pulse roared in her ears. Her legs wobbled. She would not allow these ruffians to steal all that kept her and her family from starvation. Her terror quickly turned to anger. She jutted out her chin. “Well, you cannot have it, sir!”

“If you give us the purse, there’ll be no trouble.”

“Oh, I assure you gentlemen, if you do not leave this instant, there’ll be more trouble than you can handle.”

The men exchanged mirthful glances then broke into fits of laughter. Cassandra ground her teeth together. She grew tired of being laughed at. Tired of being told what she could and couldn’t do.

One of the men, a short, greasy-looking fellow, approached, hand extended. She recognized him as one of the men at the coffeehouse. “Give it up, miss.”

“You’ll have to pry it out of my dead hands.”

The slimy man grabbed her arm. Pain shot into her shoulder. “If ye insist.”