

One

*In the time of the first planting of corn
there will come a tribe from the bay of the Chesapeake.
This tribe will build their longhouses on the land of the
Powhatan.*

*They will hunt and fish and plant on the land of the
Powhatan.*

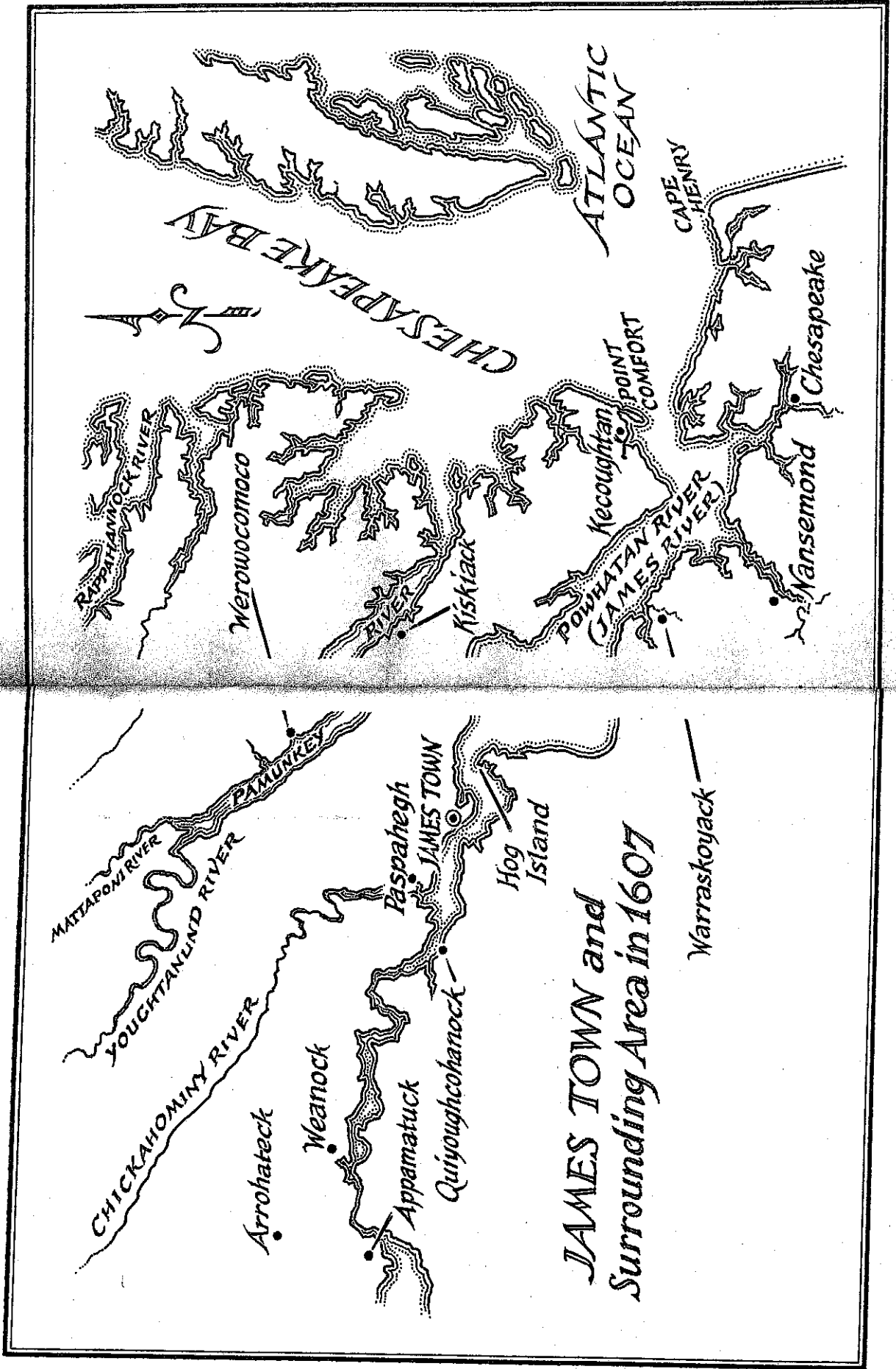
*Three times the Powhatan will rise up against this tribe.
The first battle will end and the Powhatan will be
victorious.*

*But the tribe will grow strong again.
The Powhatan will rise up.*

*The second battle will end and the Powhatan will be
victorious.*

*But the tribe will grow strong once more.
The third battle will be long and filled with bloodshed.
By the end of this battle, the Powhatan kingdom
will be no more.*

-Prophecy delivered to Chief Powhatan, ruler of
the Powhatan empire, by his trusted priests,
sometime before the Christian year 1607



Two

On Saturday, the twentieth of December, in the year 1606, the fleet fell from London. . . .

—Master George Percy, *Observations Gathered out of a Discourse of the Plantation of the Southern Colony in Virginia*

SOME WOULD SAY I am lucky. Others would say I'm doomed. I escaped the gallows—that is why I am lucky. The magistrate mumbled something about having a son my age, pulled me out of my dark jail cell after just two days, and marched me down to the orphanage. "His name's Samuel Collier, age eleven, son of dead peasants. Can you take him?" he asked Reverend Hunt when he opened the orphanage door.

The reverend nodded to the magistrate and showed me to my bed in a row of neatly made beds.

Reverend Hunt is a tall, quiet man with broad shoul-

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ders and more patience than anyone I have ever known. He tells me I have a lot to learn about right and wrong.

"It was wrong to steal the locket," he says. "It was no longer yours—it belonged to the pawnshop owner." He says I need to make decisions based on love, not on anger.

"I loved my mum and wanted her locket back, so I was acting out of love," I say.

He just shakes his head. "The locket would not have brought your mother back," he says. I know he is right, and I know the real reason I stole it is that I was angry at the bosses at the poorhouse, angry at our landlord, angry at the world. But how can I make decisions based on love when there is no one left to love?

The orphanage was not a bad place—better than sleeping on the streets. Maybe if I'd been less of a danger to the other boys they'd have let me stay. But the boys started calling me "thief" and "jail rat" and I knew only one way to settle the argument: with my fists. Collin's nose spurting bright red blood was quite an accomplishment. But I think Richard's tooth only fell out because it was already loose when I punched him.

As for being doomed, if I am doomed then so is Richard. We are the two boys Reverend Hunt decided to bring with him on this journey to the New World. Richard is to be the reverend's servant, and I am to serve a man called Captain John Smith.

Three

The fifth of January [1607], we anchored in the Downs. But the winds continued contrary so long that we were forced to stay there some time, where we suffered great storms.

—Master George Percy, *Observations*

I RUB MY EYES and blink in the dim light of the 'tween deck. The ship pitches and rolls. I only know it's morning because of the bit of light that peeks in around the gun ports and the closed hatch, and because the roosters and hens down in the hold know, and they have started a racket.

The 'tween deck reminds me of the root cellar at the orphanage, with its close walls and ceiling. It is one long room running almost the length of the ship, though one can hardly walk for the barrels and crates that are taking

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up most of the room. At first, a few of the gentlemen hung pieces of cloth to make partitions, since they thought they deserved some privacy, but those have all come down now in favor of setting up crates as card tables and barrels as sitting stools for their card games.

The chickens are luckier than we are—most days their crates are brought up on deck and they get fresh air to breathe. And the ship's cats and two dogs have the run of the place. So do the ship's one thousand rats. We passengers are only allowed up to empty slop buckets or get the stew pots for our meals. Captain Newport says he doesn't want us getting in the sailors' way up on deck.

We are all seasick. And bored. And we are going absolutely no place. We have had nothing but storms and winds blowing the wrong direction for weeks now, and so we sit anchored in the cold, close enough to see England's shores but still trapped down in this hole of a 'tween deck with the stench of urine and vomit and chicken dung. The gentlemen complain constantly. They want to sail back to shore and go home. Sir Edward Maria Wingfield is the most vocal in his complaints. He is furious at Captain Smith, who keeps reminding the gentlemen that they have signed seven-year contracts with the Virginia Company, and they can't quit this voyage. I can see why Master Wingfield wants to quit—even living on the streets was better than this.

Next to me, sleeping in our bed—a straw-and-canvas

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men wield their power when they are insulted.

Master Wingfield answers Captain Smith in a low growl. "You have forgotten your place, Mr. Smith."

"They should never have sent you gentlemen on this voyage!" Captain Smith nearly shouts it. "You're all weak, every one of you. You know nothing about survival."

Master Wingfield is livid. I think he is about to thrash Captain Smith. I would like to see a fight, but Reverend Hunt steps in. Sick as he is, Reverend Hunt calms Master Wingfield down and talks about how God wants us to bring Christianity to the New World. He somehow makes a fragile peace, somehow convinces the gentlemen to wait just a little longer for an east wind. But I know there is no peace inside Master Wingfield. I know it is only a matter of time before he strikes. It will not be with his fists, as we commoners do. It will be with his power, and it will be worse than fists.

Four

Travel south until your butter melts, then turn right.

—Old British mariner's axiom:
How to get to the New World

FEBRUARY 1607

MY SOUL NEARLY left my body last night. I felt it, slippery and shimmery inside the shell of my body, trying to slide out through the top of my head. But Reverend Hunt came and laid his hands on my brow to keep my soul from leaving, and prayed for me to recover. And so today, my fever has broken and I am still in my body, still aboard the *Susan Constant*, bound for the New World.

We are finally sailing. I feel the speed of the ship

Five

We anchored at Dominico . . . a very fair island . . . inhabited by many savage Indians . . . They are continually in wars, and will eat their enemies when they kill them, or any stranger if they take them.

—Master George Percy, *Observations*

EVERY SOUND WAKES ME. I crane my neck—is *this* the night someone will murder Captain Smith? But each time it is only one of the men groaning in his sleep, or the retching of one of the poor souls who has not yet gotten over the seasickness. And so, Captain Smith is still alive.

We anchor at one of the Canary Islands—Gran Canaria. I steal a chance to go on deck and have my first sight of land in many weeks. Huge gray mountains, steep and rocky, rise up into the clouds. A few of the sailors go ashore in the longboats to fill our barrels with fresh water, and then

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we are on our way, riding the trade winds west toward the West Indies in the Caribbean.

Captain Smith is still in chains, though they have freed his wrists and only his ankles remain shackled. When I bring him his morning wash water, he is writing. I glance at the page, then quickly look away. I don't want to be caught being nosy.

He washes his face, takes off his shirt, and washes under his arms. I hand him a cloth to dry with. When he is dressed again, he looks at me hard.

"Reverend Hunt says you can read?" he says. It is a cross between a question and a statement.

I nod my answer.

"He tells me your mother taught you. But your mother was a commoner, a peasant, correct?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you tell me how it is that she learned to read?" he asks.

"She was taught by a friend, sir. It was the son of our gentleman landlord." I don't tell him that he also gave her the silver locket when she turned thirteen or how, when their friendship was discovered, he was sent away to France.

"I see," he says, and goes back to his writing.

I wonder how Captain Smith can be so peaceful while he is locked up like this. Since the moment when he nearly punched Master Wingfield, the moment when he

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Quietly, I ask, "How did you know the language of those natives?"

He smiles. "Every man speaks the language of greeting, of trade, of hunger. I spoke with my hands."

I nod. "But the words . . ."

He shakes his head and whispers, "Those are Algonquian words—a language spoken in Virginia by the natives there. Roanoke settlers brought back word lists, and I have studied them. Let Newport and the others think they need me as a translator in these islands. It's too hot for those chains."

I have one more question, but I am not sure if I want to know the answer. I take a deep breath and blurt it out. "Do the Carib Indians chop people up for their cook pots and eat them?"

He stops rubbing his ankle for a moment and looks at me. "Only if they catch them," he says.

Six

Whilest we remained at this island we saw a whale chased by a thresher and a swordfish; they fought for the space of two hours. We might see the thresher with his flail lay on the monstrous blows, which was strange to behold. In the end these two fishes brought the whale to her end.

—Master George Percy, *Observations*

THESE ISLANDS ARE strung together much like beads on a necklace. When we sail past one, in half a day we catch sight of another. I sneak up on deck so often my back is sore from being smacked with that oar. But the sky and water are so blue and everything is so new, I keep coming up anyway.

It is hot. We boys and common men abandoned our shoes, stockings, doublets and slops weeks ago. Now even the gentlemen go around with their white, knobby knees pecking out from under their long shirtrails.

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That evening I hear hammering, and after a while I go to see what is being built. Have some of the gentlemen decided they need *houses* instead of tents to sleep in?

When I see what it is, my mouth goes dry: a wooden frame, a rope hanging from the highest beam, a noose tied in the rope. Master Wingfield has not forgotten his promise to hang Captain Smith.

Seven

Such factions here were bad as commonly attend such voyages, that a pair of gallows was made, but Captain Smith, for whom they were intended, could not be persuaded to use them.

—Captain John Smith, *The True Travels, Adventures, and Observations of Captain John Smith*

THE NEXT MORNING dawns clear and warm. Captain Smith is back in chains, and the gallows sits ready.

Reverend Hunt calls us together for Sunday services. We meet, gathered around the tree where Captain Smith is chained so that he can join us. Reverend Hunt's sermon goes on for hours. I think maybe he will not stop until every single one of us has promised never to sin again. He says to tell a lie is a sin, and that any man who lies for his own gain and does not repent will spend eternity in the agony of hell's flames. He looks right at Master Wingfield

Eight

The six and twentieth day of April, about four o'clock in the morning, we descried the land of Virginia.

—Master George Percy, *Observations*

THE 'TWEEN DECK seems dark after all those sunlit days on the island. We are sailing north now, toward Virginia. Reverend Hunt says we will travel right past Florida without stopping because it belongs to the Spanish. He says that forty years ago the French had a colony at Fort Caroline in Florida. He tells me how he heard that the Spanish came and massacred all of the French settlers—men, women, and children. No, we will not be foolish enough to land at Florida.

Foul weather makes the 'tween deck even darker. Thunder cracks, loud as a cannon shot. I look up through

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the hatch opening and see black storm clouds boiling in the sky.

"Take in the sails!" Captain Newport orders.

Another crack of thunder booms and lightning flashes. I hear the wind whip the rigging against the masts. The sea bucks, and the ship rolls and jerks. Men begin to retch again as if they were new to seafaring. The rain comes down in torrents, and when we shout that it is flooding the 'tween deck, the sailors oblige us by covering up the hatch so that we are shut in the dark with only stale, vomit-scented air to breathe.

Lanterns are lit, and they swing wildly, making shadows move like ghostly dancers. The gentlemen complain bitterly. We should go back to England, they say. We should have reached Virginia weeks ago. We must be off course. This voyage is ill-fated.

I lie in my bed, angry and discouraged. Captain Newport has been telling us for weeks that we'll see land any day. Maybe we *are* off course. I am sick of the 'tween deck, sick of sailing, sick of the storms that come one after another. And this is the most violent storm yet. The sound of crashing waves is a roar in my ears, punctuated by the creaking of the wooden ship.

James and Richard lie next to me. "Are we going to die?" James asks. "Will the waves break open the hull?"

I hear a loud crack and it makes me jump. It is followed by frantic squawking, and I realize it is only a

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Indians are already leaving, creeping away silently on hands and feet like bears. The musket balls don't even come close to them.

The injured men are brought to Dr. Thomas Wotton, aboard the *Godspeed*. A gentleman, Gabriel Archer, has been shot through both hands, and a sailor has been shot twice in the torso.

I see now that this land is not so free and open. This is Indian land, and they do not want us here. And what is worse, it seems to me that their bows and arrows are quicker, more accurate, and can shoot farther than our muskets.

Nine

Now falleth every man to work: The council contrive the fort; the rest cut down trees to make place to pitch their tents, some provide clapboard to relade the ships, some make gardens, some nets, etc.

—William Symonds, ed., *The Proceedings of the English Colony in Virginia*

HAVE WE CROSSED the wide ocean only to be shot by the natives the minute we set foot in Virginia? We servants gather around our mess pot, but no one eats much. James is crying, sniffing, with snot running into his mouth. "I want to go home," he whimpers.

Richard keeps his eyes cast down. "Reverend Hunt said we'd tell them about the Bible," he says softly. "He didn't say they'd want to kill us."

Henry slaps him on the back with a loud thwack. "You can't believe everything you hear, my boy."

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Reverend Hunt has seen our interaction. He comes over to talk to me. "Samuel, that poor child is unwanted by his father and despised by his stepmother. You should be able to find more kindness in your heart for him."

I hang my head. I know Reverend Hunt is right. But I have been too tired and too thirsty to think about being kind.

That night in our tent there is more discussion about an Indian attack. Henry and Abram talk of making armor for themselves out of wood. Richard and James discuss what they will do if an attack comes.

"I'm going to run to the ships," says James. "I'll row the longboat out to the *Susam Constant* and hide in the 'tween deck. No arrows can get me there."

You are a stupid, stupid boy, I think. I picture him running toward the ships, with arrows flying all around, and him with no armor. But I don't mock him or tell him he is stupid. I hope Reverend Hunt would appreciate my effort to be more kind.

Ten

The people in all places kindly entreating us, dancing, and feasting us with strawberries, mulberries, bread, fish, and other their country provisions, whereof we had plenty, for which Captain Newport kindly required their least favors with bells, pins, needles, beads, or glasses, which so contented them that his liberality made them follow us from place to place, and ever kindly to respect us.

-Captain John Smith, *A True Relation of Such Occurrences and Accidents of Note as Hath Appeared in Virginia*

CAPTAIN NEWPORT GOES off exploring with eight or nine gentlemen and a dozen sailors. They leave in the shallop, the small boat they put together here in Virginia, so they will be able to navigate the narrow riverways. He takes Captain Smith along to be an interpreter with the Indians.

They go in search of gold and silver, and to find that new passage to the Orient everyone is talking about. They don't take many provisions with them. They say the last time they went exploring, each time they approached a vil-

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Outside, men come around with torches, calling out, "Who is wounded? Who is shot?"

We crawl out of the tent and find Abram lying there, an arrow in his side. "I was just coming to bed," he says in a weak voice. "I guess I didn't quite make it."

"Here," I call out. "A man is wounded here."

Two men come and lift Abram. He groans. "We'll get you to the doctor," they say.

"James . . . he went to the ships," I tell Richard. We make our way down toward the riverbank, where our ships are moored. Along the way we step over arrows lying everywhere on the ground.

Captain Gosnold comes walking up from the river. I realize he must be the one who fired the cannon. He is carrying something draped over his outstretched arms. In the gloom of the cloudy night I can't see what it is.

I hear running footsteps behind us. "Captain," a man calls out, "there are seventeen wounded, no one dead." The running man holds a torch, and as he comes closer the torchlight glints off of Captain Gosnold's armor and makes clear what he has in his arms. It is James, his thin body lying limp.

"No," says Captain Gosnold gravely. "This one is dead."

Eleven

Hereupon the president was contented the fort should be palisadoed, the ordnance mounted, his men armed and exercised.

—William Symonds, ed., *The Proceedings*

REVEREND HUNT KNEELS with me in the dirt in front of the altar. He puts words to the prayers I cannot speak: "Please take James's soul into heaven with You, because he was just an innocent child." Then he lays a hand on my shoulder. "Samuel," he says, "you've been here a long time. Have you finished your prayers yet?"

I shake my head. How can I finish praying for forgiveness? "It was my fault," I say. My throat feels dry as sand. *I should have explained to him the danger of running to the ships. I should have been kinder to him so that he would trust me. I should have been able to grab him and pull him back into*

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I rub my sore fingers and move them until they feel better. Then I grasp the sword again, narrow my eyes, and concentrate. I will try again.

Captain Smith moves slowly at first, giving me a chance to find my rhythm. Then he speeds up as before, and I follow. I put my mind aside and feel only my body, stepping, moving. The dance of death sweeps us into its circle. Our swords clash and clang. My breath comes in short gasps. I see the opening. I *lunge*.

My blade finds its mark. The tip presses into Captain Smith's armor, just above his heart. He holds up his hands, drops his sword. He speaks slowly. "The student," he says gravely, "has impaled the teacher."

I begin to shake my head. I did not mean to anger him.

Then he breaks into a broad smile.

I wipe beads of sweat from my face. My hand is shaking.

"We will train every day," he tells me. "Wear your armor whenever you leave the fort. The sword will be no match for flying arrows, but tomorrow I will begin to teach you to use another weapon—one that is much more powerful than this sword."

I nod calmly, but inside I am excited. Tomorrow I will learn to use a *musket*.

Twelve

Wingapo: Hello (literally, "My beloved friend")

Pokataweer: Fire

Attonce: Arrows

Neropperw: Friends

Marrupoughb: Enemies

Werovence: Chief (literally, "He is wealthy")

—From Algonquian/English word lists compiled by Thomas Harriot, John Smith, and William Strachey

THE NEXT MORNING, Captain Smith does not bring me a musket. He brings me a book. It is well worn and the stitching is coming loose. I sound out the letters of two of the words on the cover: "Thomas Harriot."

"Thomas Harriot lived in the Roanoke colony," Captain Smith explains. "He learned much of the Algonquian language, wrote it down, brought his papers back to England, and they were published in this book. I want you to learn these words. They will be better protection than any weapon."

Thirteen

As I understand by report I am much charged with starving the colony, I did always give every man his allowance faithfully, both of corn, oil, aqua vitae, etc., as was by the council proportioned.

—Edward Maria Wingfield, *A Discourse of Virginia*

MASTER WINGFIELD IS no longer our president. He is under arrest, locked up on the *Discovery*, and his private store of wine, dried beef, eggs, oatmeal, and other good food has been shared equally among all of us. He says he was keeping it to dole out to us if we ran out of provisions, but that didn't keep the council from voting him down. Now we have Captain Ratcliffe as our president. Captain Smith says we have gone from the frying pan into the fire.

Reverend Hunt is looking much better. Many of us

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gave him some of our share of eggs and meat, and so he has been eating well for days. We have had rain, too—great drenching storms of it. We have caught it in buckets and barrels to drink, and the river is no longer so salty. The rainwater tastes so sweet, I would think it had honey in it. Reverend Hunt has color in his cheeks again, and he is able to lead Sunday services for the first time in many weeks.

Captain Smith has taken all of the credit for discovering Master Wingfield's stash, and for that I am grateful. Henry has no idea it was I who told, and so he has had no compulsion to kill me.

Richard is much better now, too. I am relieved. I decide to take the first step toward becoming his friend.

"Richard, you want to see my sword?" I ask one day when he is up and looking stronger. "I could show you some of what Captain Smith is teaching me."

Richard looks at me warily, as if he thinks this could be a trick.

"I just thought you might be interested," I say quietly. I look down, avoiding his eyes.

There is silence between us. Then Richard says, "Are you ready to fight a duel yet?"

I cringe. Is he challenging me to a duel? But when I look up he is grinning.

"Not yet," I tell him, "but Captain Smith says I'm learning well. Come on, I'll show you a few things."

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By the time the Indians leave, all of the baskets of food have become ours. They leave with some colorful glass beads, mirrors, bells, needles, pins, several pieces of copper, and three hatchets. Captain Smith does not trade away a single sword or musket.

Fourteen

The new president . . . committed the managing of all things abroad to Captain Smith, who by his own example, good words, and fair promises set some to mow, others to bind thatch, some to build houses; others to thatch them, himself always bearing the greatest task for his own share.

—William Symonds, ed., *The Proceedings*

CAPTAIN NEWPORT DOES not return in October with new supplies. But instead of being hungrier, we have finally gotten through the sickness and we are healthy again. The tribes who are our friends must have convinced our enemies to stop attacking us, and it is no longer dangerous to leave the fort to hunt or fish. We have a pitiful harvest of wheat and vegetables from our gardens, but the Indians often bring us food from their own harvests to trade.

The air is filled with birds flying south for the winter,

Fifteen

Now in James Town they were all in combustion, the strongest preparing once more to run away with the pinnace for England.

—William Symonds, ed., *The Proceedings*

THE DISCOVERY BOBS in the river as the gentlemen on board unfurl her sails. There is no wind yet, but their intent is clear. They have loaded up all of our food, and as soon as a breeze lifts, they will set sail for England. There are ten or twelve gentlemen on board and they are leaving the twenty-five of us commoners behind to starve.

In twos and threes men come out from the fort to stare at the *Discovery*.

"I'll shoot them all," one of the soldiers declares. He prepares to load his musket.

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"Don't be stupid," Henry says. "They'll shoot you before you can fire a second shot, and they'll hit some of the rest of us as well."

"They've already killed us," says John Laydon. "You think we'll make it through the winter? The river will freeze over our fishnets, the birds are already gone, and there's nothing more to harvest. We might as well be shot. At least it'll be a quick death."

My stomach grumbles for its breakfast. I wonder how long it takes to die of hunger. I wonder if it hurts.

The men continue to argue. Some think we'll be able to trade with the Indians, and others insist that the Indians will not trade now in mid-winter when they are probably going half-hungry themselves. Many want to kill the gentlemen, or die trying.

Reverend Hunt is standing near me. He is staring out at the ship, his face set in grim lines. "Is it all lost, Reverend?" I ask him. "Are we doomed?"

He puts his hand on my shoulder. "Do you see any wind?" he asks.

I take a good look at the surface of the river. There is hardly a ripple. I shake my head.

"Then the *Discovery* is not going anywhere—yet. There is time for me to pray for a miracle." He walks off in the direction of the fort, to the chapel.

I listen to the men argue about how to shoot to kill the most gentlemen at once. Richard touches my arm. His eyes

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I feel the old urges, the desire to punch and rip, to see blood before my fury is spent. Captain Smith's voice speaks in my head, *Learn to channel your anger, Samuel, and it will become your strength rather than your weakness.*

"I know what they're doing," Henry is saying. "They'll kill Captain Smith and then they'll go ahead and sail away and leave us to starve."

Channel my anger? No!

I can't stop myself. I run at Master Archer. I will knock him down and pummel the snot out of him.

Sixteen

Great blame and imputation was laid upon me by them for the loss of our two men which the Indians slew, insomuch that they purposed to depose me.

-Captain John Smith, *A True Relation*

IT IS EITHER Richard, or God in His mercy, who trips me. I sprawl on the ground, my face in the dirt.

"Grab him!" Master Archer orders.

"Run!" Richard cries.

But before I can scramble to my feet, Reverend Hunt lifts me by one arm and holds me fast. "He is a boy," he says slowly and firmly to Master Archer. "Leave him be. I will deal with him."

Master Archer wipes his bloody hand with his handkerchief. He gives me one last disgusted look, then turns to go.

Seventeen

The country is excellent and very rich in gold and copper. Of the gold we have brought a say [an ore sample, which proved worthless] and hope to be with Your Lordship shortly to show it His Majesty and the rest of the lords.

—Captain Christopher Newport,
from a letter to the Lord of Salisbury

CAPTAIN NEWPORT BRINGS so many changes it nearly makes our heads spin. Captain Smith is freed and Master Archer is taken off the council. Our cabins are suddenly crowded with sixty new colonists, and the fort becomes noisy with several new dogs, a dozen hogs, and enough chickens to coat the ground of the whole fort with their droppings. He also brings a new boy, Thomas Savage. The men tease him because of his name. "He is a savage," they say. "Send him to live with the savages."

Our storehouse is filled to overflowing with the good

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things the ship has brought: wheat, pork, ale, wine, butter, and beef. We eat very well, and since this puts everyone in a good mood, there is no more talk about stealing away to England. There is a fragile peace between the gentlemen who were willing to kill us by starvation, and us commoners who were ready to murder them in their beds. It is a good thing we have the sixty new men and boys to help buffer our smoldering anger toward one another.

A few days after Captain Newport arrives we hear shouts of "*Wingapo!*" and look to see Indians paddling to shore in three canoes. "*Wingapo, Captain Smith!*" they call. When the canoes land and the Indian men begin to pull them up onshore, Richard and I go closer. The canoes are filled with bread, fish, and meat: turkey, squirrel, deer, and raccoon.

"We don't even need to trade for food," I say to Richard. "We've got so much in the storehouse now that the ship is here."

But Richard's eyes are wide, fixed on something. I follow his gaze. In one of the canoes sits a little girl. She has straight black hair, cut very short on the front and sides, and fastened in a long braid down her back. She wears several necklaces of pearls and copper, and a mantle of deerskin over one shoulder. As we watch, she jumps out of the canoe and trots up to Captain Smith. She is fairly skipping with excitement at seeing him. I hear some of what she says as she speaks to him in Algonquian, "I

Eighteen

"You did promise Powhatan what was yours should be his, and be the like to you. You called him father, being in his land a stranger, and by the same reason so must I do you . . . And fear you here I should call you father? I tell you then I will, and you shall call me child, and so I will be forever and ever your countryman."

—Pocahontas speaking to Captain John Smith when they met in England in the year 1616 or 1617.
Quoted by Smith in *The General History*.

WHEN I LIVED on the streets of London I was a loner. It was me against the world. But coming here to James Town has changed me. I have learned to depend on others, especially Reverend Hunt, Captain Smith, and even Richard. I have learned the importance of standing together, of cooperating. My circle has become bigger.

Now, this fire has changed all of us. Our houses, our food, even our blankets and extra clothing are gone. And it has turned cold—bone-chilling, winter cold. And yet,

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we have not all starved or frozen to death. Instead, our circle has become bigger.

The day after the fire, Pocahontas comes again with several men from her tribe. They have seen the smoke and are here to see if we are all right. Pocahontas runs to where Captain Smith's cabin used to be. I follow her. She stands among the ashes, bends down, and sifts through a pile of burnt wood. Then she stands and looks at me. Her eyes brim with tears.

"It is all gone," she says. "Captain Smith's house, his bed, his mirror, his beard-cutting knife . . . all gone."

I nod. She blinks, and tears run down her cheeks. She wipes them quickly away. "Captain Smith is now my brother, my countryman. My father will send gifts to help." She says it with such authority that I am reminded that she is not just a little girl, but a princess.

The Powhatan people, whom we have at times considered our enemies, now treat us as their own. They bring us deerskins and bear furs to keep us warm. Every few days they come in canoes laden with meat and bread and corn as gifts.

We start to rebuild right away, with everyone working hard. We make the fort bigger, giving it three new walls where the one wall fell down, and making it five-sided. We begin again to build houses.

January stretches into February and it turns even colder. The night air sucks the warmth from our bones as

Nineteen

"You must obey this now for a law that he that will not work shall not eat, except by sickness be be disabled. For the labors of thirty or forty honest and industrious men shall not be consumed to maintain an hundred and fifty idle loiterers."

—Captain John Smith, quoted in William Symonds, ed., *The Proceedings*

ON SEPTEMBER 10, 1608, Captain John Smith takes the oath of office and becomes our new president. He officially decrees: "He that will not work shall not eat," and he holds us to it. Gentleman or not, any man who wants supper has to pitch in.

But even with this decree, he is well liked. Unlike Presidents Wingfield and Ratcliffe before him, Captain Smith divides the rations equally with us and works right alongside us sharing the burdens, too. And he stays in the cabin he has always shared with Reverend Hunt, John

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Laydon, and others. There will be no mansion in the woods for President Smith. There are a few gentlemen left from the group who tried to run off on the *Discovery* with our food, and I sometimes hear grumbling from them; but they are far outnumbered now by men—new settlers and old—who have great respect and trust for Captain Smith.

So now I am the page of a ruler. It is the most important I have ever felt in my life. I wish my mum could know, and I hope she does know, taking a peek down from heaven now and then. She would also be very surprised to see that a commoner is our president. I think it would make her happy to know that here in the New World, the gentlemen don't hold all of the power.

Captain Smith continues to write our story. He is also drawing maps of the rivers and land he has found on his exploration trips. I am relieved to find out that not all of his writings were destroyed in the fire—some of the pages had already been sent back to England with Captain Newport.

One day in late September, Richard and I are in the field harvesting vegetables. We have grown them the way Namontack taught us, planting the corn and beans together in a mound, so that the bean plants can climb the cornstalks. Suddenly we hear shouts from the river front. "Ship ashore!" and a few moments later, "She flies the British flag!"

Twenty

*Thus did they show their fears of arms,
and others art in dancing.
Some other us'd their oaten pipe,
and others voices chanting.*

—William Symonds, ed., *The Proceedings*

THE MORNING WE are to leave for Werowococo I am jittery with excitement. Namontack is, too—it will be his first time home since he went to England. He will have lots of stories to tell his people. "You will love my home," he says to me. "It is—"
"I know," I interrupt him. "It is much better than my home."

We both laugh.

Namontack collects the gifts he received in England: a red velvet cassock, which he says is not as warm as a deer-skin mantle; a pewter chalice, which he says is not as

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good as a gourd to drink out of; and an ivory tooth scraper, which he refuses to use because he says the Indian way of cleaning his teeth, with a sassafras root, is much better.

I gather my spoon and bowl and a waterskin. We present ourselves to Captain Smith, each with a small bundle to carry. Captain Smith looks up from cleaning his musket. "Samuel, where is your sword? Where is your armor? Go back and get properly attired."

But I thought we were at peace with the Powhatans, I want to say. I know better than to argue with Captain Smith so I simply go to my cabin and do as he says. At least he is not making me carry my heavy musket on the hike to Werowococo.

When I get back to Captain Smith's cabin, the carpenter John Laydon is sitting out front with his tools, working at making a small wooden chest. He is carving initials into the top of the chest. He already has an *A* and as I watch, he finishes a *B*.

"Who is that for?" I ask.

He keeps his eyes cast down, intent on his work, and does not answer me.

Then it dawns on me. I tip my head close to his. "Is it for *her*?" I whisper.

He glances at me and I see he is afraid to tell me, afraid I will announce it and give the other men a chance to ridicule him.

I look at the small chest. It is beautifully crafted out

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kill them. Those thoughts seem so strange to me now, now that Namontack has become my friend and Chief Powhatan has rescued us from cold and starvation, and the princess Pocahontas has treated us as her countrymen. This New World is a good place to live, I think, as long as we live in peace with the Powhatan people.

Then I remember how Captain Smith dressed as a warrior to bring news of the coronation to Chief Powhatan, how he said this news would not sit well with the chief. And I wonder how long the peace, and the love, will last.

Twenty-One

"If your king have sent me presents, I also am a king and this is my land. Eight days I will stay to receive them. Your father [Captain Newport] is to come to me, not I to him nor yet to your fort, neither will I bite at such a bait."

—Chief Powhatan, quoted in
William Symonds, ed., *The Proceedings*

IT IS MORNING when I see Wahunsonacock, the Great Powhatan, for the first time. He is tall and imposing, strong and regal. He wears a necklace of a large piece of copper, and many strings of beads. If copper and beads are the Powhatan gold and jewels, then he must truly be wealthy.

Captain Smith delivers his message: Will the great chief come to James Town to receive his gifts from King James? I see immediately that Captain Smith was right—an emperor should not be invited to come to another town

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I am surprised by this sudden announcement. I shake my head. I am an orphan, the son of dead peasants. Of course I will always be a servant—what else could I be, I wonder?

"You must learn from what you see around you," he says. "Learn from Captain Smith—President Smith. Do you know why he is well liked as president while President Wingfield and President Ratcliffe were not?"

I know the answer because I have already thought about it. "It is because Captain Smith cares about all of us," I say. "The other leaders cared only for their own comfort and their own gain, and for the gain of a few of their friends."

Reverend Hunt nods. "Good. You are already learning. This is important for you to remember because I will not always be here to remind you." He lies back down and closes his eyes.

"But . . . if I will not always be a servant, what *will* I be?" I ask. Could I become a soldier? Even an officer like Captain Smith?

Reverend Hunt smiles with his eyes closed. "You will see," he says. "Remember what we have talked about here. And remember that you will always know the right decision because it is when you choose from love."

He looks as if he has talked enough. I take a rag, wring it out in a bowl of cool water, and lay it on his forehead. He is so pale and seems so weak—it is the

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worst I have seen him. My chest feels heavy with sadness. Reverend Hunt was the first person I opened my heart to after it was closed up tight when my mum died. I can't stand to see life slipping away from him like this. I wonder if I might lay my hands on his head and pray, and keep his soul from leaving his body the way he did for me many months ago. But, I realize, if God is ready to take Reverend Hunt up to heaven, it is not my business to try to stop Him.

"Would you like some supper?" I ask Reverend Hunt quietly.

He shakes his head slightly.

I touch his hand and leave him to rest.

Reverend Hunt does not leave his bed again. Richard and I keep a vigil, one or the other of us checking on him each hour. Finally, he stops asking for food or water and wants only to lie still. I know it is my last chance to speak to him. I go in the evening, light a candle, and kneel by his bed.

"Reverend Hunt," I whisper.

He opens his eyes for a moment and nods, and I know he is listening.

What do I want to say? *Don't leave. Please stay. Pray for another miracle!* I shake my head to stop these thoughts. *He is leaving. I tell myself firmly. You can't stop it.*

"Reverend Hunt, thank you for teaching me," I say. I force myself to talk past the lump in my throat. "Thank

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you for treating me like I was worth something."

The day we bury Reverend Hunt it is rainy and cold. My feet sink into the mud at the grave site. Richard stands with me, both of us silent. They shoot off the cannons in Reverend Hunt's honor; a great man has gone to his reward in heaven.

Twenty-Two

"Captain Smith, you shall find Powhatan to use you kindly, but trust him not; . . . for he hath sent for you only to cut your throats."

—Chief of the Warraskoyacks, quoted in William Symonds, ed., *The Proceedings*

OUR TROUBLE STARTS when winter sets in. If we had more skilled farmers and hunters, and if we all worked at farming and hunting, we might be able to produce enough food to get us through the winter. But as it is, our men are kept busy searching for gold, digging sassafra, and making clapboard, glass, pitch, tar, and soap-ashes to ship back to England, in the hopes that something in the lot will make a profit for the Virginia Company. And to make things worse, when Captain Newport leaves in December, he takes a lot of our food stores

Twenty-Three

"What will it avail you to take that by force you may quickly have by love? Or to destroy them that provide you food? What can you get by war when we can bide our provisions and fly to the woods? Whereby you must famish by wronging us, your friends."

—Chief Powhatan, quoted in
William Symonds, ed., *The Proceedings*

IF TROUBLE CAN multiply like rats in grain, then that is what our troubles do in 1609. By mid-summer, Captain Smith sends word to the Warraskoyack village that we are to return to James Town. A ship has arrived, so there is food. There is also much work to be done: We need to build houses for the new colonists. When I get to James Town, I am stunned by what I see. The Virginia Company has sent not only men but families with women and children.

Richard and I watch as two women meet in front of a cabin to talk for a moment. One holds a baby on her hip,

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and the other has a little boy of four or five clinging to her skirts.

I shake my head. "How could they do this?" I wonder out loud to Richard.

"It must be because no one is allowed to say anything bad about James Town in their letters back home," says Richard.

I nod. "The Virginia Company lies to them—about how it is paradise here, and how they will find mountains of gold. And they believe the lies."

The little boy sees us and grins around the thumb he has stuck in his mouth. I wonder if he will live through the winter.

It is strange for me to be living with Englishmen again instead of Warraskoyacks. Not even Namontack is with us anymore. It is hard to get used to eating only at mealtimes and having my food rationed again. I cut the long side of my hair and go back to wearing English clothes. I keep my bow, arrows, and moccasins in a corner of my cabin, but I still wear the buckskin carrying pouch with my knife inside hanging at my waist. Some nights I dream that I am back in the Warraskoyack village or hunting with Kainta and Namontack in a quiet, snow-filled forest.

It is good to see Ann and John Laydon again. When I first see Ann my jaw drops, and I think John must have been giving her all of his food rations along with her own, because she is very big around the middle. Richard sees

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I think these two gentlemen just want to get away from our crowded fort and go exploring. Then, a new thought strikes me: What if they are not just bored young men who want an adventure? What if they are under the influence of Captain Ratcliffe, Captain Archer, and the others who hate Captain Smith? What if they plan to do him harm?

The morning they leave, I watch the shallow sail away. There are six of them in the boat, and I am glad to see that three of the men are Captain Smith's trusted friends. Still, the uneasy feeling does not leave me.

Twenty-Four

Sleeping in his boat . . . accidentally [some] fired his powder bag, which tore the flesh from his body and thighs nine or ten inches square in a most pitiful manner. But to quench the tormenting fire frying him in his clothes, he leaped overboard into the deep river where ere they could recover him he was near drowned.

—William Symonds, ed., *The Proceedings*

THEY SAY IT WAS an accident, no one's fault. Captain Smith lay down in the boat to take a nap. He was still wearing his powder bag. While he slept, a spark must have lit the powder bag—a spark from someone's pipe or from the slow match on someone's musket. The powder caught fire and exploded. It seared the flesh right off his leg. In agony, Captain Smith leaped overboard to cool the burn. His leg was so badly injured and he was so weak that he nearly drowned before the men could pull him out.

When Captain Smith comes back to us, he is crazed with pain, moaning in a delirium. Three men carry him

Twenty-Five

What shall I say? But thus we lost him, that in all his proceedings, made justice his first guide, and experience his second; ever bating baseness, sloth, pride, and indigntie, more then any dangers; that never allowed more for himselfe, then his souldiers with him; that upon no danger would send them where he would not lead them himselfe; that would never see us want what either he had, or could by any means get us . . . whose adventures were our lives, and whose losse our deathes.

—William Symonds, ed., *The Proceedings*

THE DAY THE SHIPS are to leave, I go to Captain Smith's cabin to help him gather his belongings. He is able to take a few painful steps with a cane now, but it is still hard for him to get around. Everyone says he is returning to England to get better medicine than we have here, but I know he would stay if they had not robbed him of his authority and his power to help our colony.

Captain Smith holds two strings of beads in his hand. They are a new kind—blue, with intricate designs made by layers in the glass. They are worth a fortune in trad-

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ing because the Indians prize them so much. He looks at the beads sadly.

"I will not need these for now," he says. He holds them out for me to take. "Use them to trade this winter when the hunger sets in."

I am stunned. I have never before touched these New World diamonds. As a servant I did not feel I had the right to. Now I am no longer a servant. Slowly, I take the beads from him. They feel cold and smooth in my hand. I tuck them into the buckskin carrying pouch hanging at my waist.

Captain Smith looks at me hard. "Samuel, it will not be easy here. Things will happen that will make you angry. But do not let your anger get the best of you. *Channel* it—let it give you strength for what you can do to change things, to make things better. Do you understand?"

I nod. I have watched him do this over and over, this shifting of anger into calm action. "I understand," I tell him.

He looks around the cabin as if he is wanting to remember it always. My throat is tight with tears, but I will not let them fall. I remember the first time I saw Captain Smith on the docks at Blackwall, how strong and brash he seemed. I remember how I hated the idea of serving him and learning from him. Then I think of how much I *have* learned from him, how much I have changed because of him.

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hear Captain Smith's voice in my head: *Samuel . . . do not let your anger get the best of you. Channel it—let it give you strength to change things . . .*

I take a breath, try to calm the fury inside me. I walk over to the cradle where baby Virginia is sleeping. She is wrapped in a blanket, her eyes fluttering in sleep, her little mouth making sucking motions. She is so new, so innocent. I look at Ann. She is young and innocent, too—only fifteen. And she is naïve—she trusts Captain Ratcliffe to keep her safe and fed. Suddenly it is Reverend Hunt's voice I hear in my head: *You must learn to make decisions out of love, not out of fear . . .*

I take another deep breath. My anger is focused. I have made a decision. I have a plan. I believe Reverend Hunt would approve—I have made this decision out of love. I am about to steal a baby.

Twenty-Six

*Good men did ne'er their country's ruin bring,
But when evil men shall injuries begin,
Not caring to corrupt and violate
The judgment seats for their own lucre's sake,
Then look, that country cannot long have peace,
Though for the present it have rest and ease.*

—William Symonds, ed., *The Proceedings*

THE NEXT MORNING I am ready. My canoe, nestled in the rushes, has a bed of blankets, a jar of sweetened water, a clean rag, and a spoon for the baby, and a piece of bread saved from last night's supper for me.

I go to Ann and John's cabin. Ann is busy wrapping up dried beef and bread for John, and John is trying to comfort a fussy Virginia.

"Let me take her for a walk in the fresh air," I say. "Then you two can have some time together before the barge leaves."

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I hear footsteps, voices, someone out of breath. "It was a trap!" the man cries. The voices come nearer to my jail cell. I press my ear against the wall, hoping to hear. "Captain Ratcliffe and his men—only a few have escaped."

I listen as he describes the horror. The men were lured to Werowocomoco with promises of corn. Instead they were attacked, their throats slit. Captain Ratcliffe's end was even worse—he was tortured to death.

I crouch against the wall, straining to hear, but the voices fade as the men walk away. I shake my head in despair. More men dead, and no corn brought back to James Town.

A sound startles me—the scraping of the lock on the brig door. I get to my feet. It is time to face my sentence, and my punishment.

Twenty-Seven

Powhatan thus invited Captain Ratcliffe and thirty others to trade for corn, and having brought them within his ambush, murdered them.

—William White, *The Black Boys Ceremony*

POINT COMFORT, FEBRUARY 1610

SNOW FALLS, FINE as sugar, but inside our cabin it is toasty warm. I am about to get scolded, as usual.

"Samuel, what are you doing?" Ann stands with her hands on her hips.

"I'm hiding," I say simply. "Watch—she likes it when I pop my head out."

I drop the handkerchief, and Virginia erupts with giggles.

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it off quickly. No sense worrying about James Town now—I have my duties here, and we are safe here.

Safe. The word settles on me like peace. Ann, John, and Virginia are here with me, and we are safe.

I load my arms with a few more pieces of wood, then turn and walk back through the snow to our cabin.

Afterword

Now all of us at James Town beginning to feel that sharp prick of hunger which no man truly describe but he which hath tasted the bitterness thereof. . . . All was fish that came to net to satisfy cruel hunger, as to eat boots, shoes; or any other leather some could come by. . . . And now famine beginning to look ghastly and pale in every face that nothing was spared to maintain life and to do those things which seem incredible, as to dig up dead corpse out of graves and to eat them.

—George Percy, *A True Relation of the Proceedings and Occurrences*

DURING THE WINTER of 1609–1610 the settlers at Point Comfort did not go hungry. They had enough extra fish and crabs that even their hogs were well fed.

As winter set in, ice formed on the river, and travel between James Town and Point Comfort became impossible. It was not until spring that those at Point Comfort found out about the horror that befell James Town that winter.

Chief Powhatan ordered his tribes to stop trading with the settlers at James Town. The natives also went to