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Crafting Stories, Building Faith

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A Tide of Change

Flash Fiction - Historical

Today, the tide would flow out and everything would change. But would things be better? Catherine wrapped the ends of her fur stole across her chest to shed the cold morning air. A flag flapped lazily atop a ship mast and men called to each other, loading barrels and trunks onto the three-masted pinnace rubbing against the stone dock.

"Our home for the next month," William said.

"Or more." She had promised him "for better, for worse." She breathed a sigh. It had become worse.

William drew a deep breath and pursed his lips, surveying men loading other ships against the dock stretched along the river. His dark, wide-brimmed hat held his collar-length, curled hair behind his ears. A thick, ox-hide coat stretched to his hips. Thank God, a breastplate did not cover it. He'd worn the armor too much of late. Leaving war behind would be for better, but leaving their home? For worse.

Shouted curses rose behind her. A brown horse clattered down the cobblestone. A woman reined the animal around piles of cargo and wagons, scattering workmen and groups of people.

"Margaret." William spat the word. "Has she come to gloat? I'll leave you to your sister." He turned and marched down the dock toward their servant minding the trunks.

She crossed her arms and lifted her chin. Margaret would not best her today, no matter what she said.

The sweaty horse drew to a stop, lather dripping from its mouth. Margaret threw the reins, unhooked her leg from the pommel and slid to the ground. Her dress fell into place, the hem draping her ankles. Bright red mottled her cheeks and clouds of breath steamed from her mouth into the cold air.

She arched her eyebrows. "Margaret, did your husband refuse to allow you a servant and carriage?"

"Catherine, I must —"

"You rode a horse all this way on such a cold morning? Poor beast. You pulled it from its warm stable before the sun rose and whipped it over hill and dale. Just look at it. How *cruel* of you."

Margaret smoothed the front of her long coat. "Catherine, I must speak to you."

"Have you not already said too much?" She sniffed at Margaret's puckered forehead and pursed lips. Whatever her sister wanted, she couldn't have it.

"I heard you and William were sailing to Virginia."

"What of it?"

"I don't want you to go." Margaret twisted her hands together.

"Why ever not? What is there here for us? You Roundheads have won. Why should my husband and I stay here and witness the destruction of our country and polite society by mirthless men like your husband? At least in Virginia we can start afresh."

"But it is so far. I'll never see you again."

"My dear Margaret, we haven't seen each other these past several months. What difference will it make if it becomes years? I don't think anything you say will change my mind." She lifted her chin higher. Nor could Margaret say anything to make this day better. She would leave her home, but her family had already left her. She spun on her heel and strutted toward William.

A hand on her elbow jerked her around. She gasped. How dare Margaret treat her so roughly?

Margaret's chin trembled. "But I need to . . ." Her jaw clenched and she drew a quivering breath through her nose. "Catherine, I was wrong to say those things at

your wedding." She pressed the heel of her hand against her chest and her face crumpled. "Will you forgive me?"

A quiver ran through her chest. Margaret *ruined* her wedding. Now she wanted forgiveness? She licked her lips. "Forgive you?"

"Yes, I was wrong."

Her hands trembled and she clasped them together. An ache rose in her throat.

Margaret's shoulders slumped. "I am so sorry. Please forgive me." A tear streaked her cheek. "I love you."

Her lips quivered and she blinked at the tears filling her eyes. Could she forgive the hurtful, embarrassing comment? Could she continue to hold onto the bitterness? Her older sister had cared for her after their mother's death. Brushing her hair and brushing away her tears.

William stepped beside her. "Catherine, it is time. We must leave."

Margaret's eyes swam in tears and her head tipped to the side. The tense determination within her sank like water into the ground. "Oh, Margaret, I forgive you."

Margaret clutched her in a tight embrace, sobbing into her shoulder. "I'm so sorry. I just couldn't allow you to leave with this distance between us."

She drew her head back, placing her hands on Margaret's upper arms. "I'm glad you came." She drew a handkerchief from her coat and wiped her eyes. Margaret did the same and they chuckled together.

"It's time. We must board the ship." William touched her shoulder.

An ache wrapped around her heart. She threw her arms around Margaret and sobbed. "I've missed you so much."

"I've missed you, too."

"I'll write when I can."

"So will I."

A hand rested on her shoulder. "Come, Catherine. We must go."

“Goodbye.” She choked on the word. William drew her away, an arm across her back.

Would she ever see her sister again? Would she ever feel her hug? Would she ever see England again? William and his friends claimed settling Virginia was the best choice. Would it be for better or for worse?

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Notes & Updates



- I was selected as one of seven semi-finalists for the ACFW Genesis contest! [See this post for more information.](#)
 - I have completed the first book in a series set in ancient Judah and will start submitting it to agents this month.
 - I'm enjoying the summer and hope you are as well! Thanks for reading my newsletter!
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