

A Song for the Ages
by Kandi Wyatt

12th Century—off the Iberian Peninsula

The wind and the waves buffeted the ship making conversation impossible, even if the men wanted to. Most of them were discouraged. The storm began three days ago. Many were too sick to bother with eating or even want to. Martinus was among them.

Was it even worth the trip? Would they make it to the Holy Lands? Where was the fame and glory they had been promised? It definitely wasn't in the holds of this ship.

Martinus shook his head. Would any good come of this? Only God knew.

The thought of God took him back to the poem he had read just before embarking on this crazy journey. It was a new writing by Bernard of Clairvaux. He began reciting it to take his mind off of the turmoil around him.

"Land Ho!"

Martinus, startled awake by the cry, blessed God for the sight. He knew they were not close to their destination, but maybe they could get out of this storm.

"What is it Martinus?" Johannes asked.

"I don't know. I just know it was an answer to prayer."

"That it is. What were you muttering when the waves were so high and rough? I couldn't quite hear you, but it seemed to bring peace to your face."

"Ah, a poem I learned before coming."

"What does it say, if you don't mind my asking?"

"Not at all, Johannes, not at all."

Oh sacred head now wounded,
With grief and shame weighed down,

17th Century—St. Sauveur, France

"Maria!" Jean called to his wife. "Maria, we must leave at once."

"Jean, sh," Maria answered, repositioning the nursing boy at her breast. "You will wake up little Jean."

"Maria," Jean entered the room and caught her eye. "The Edict of Nantes has been revoked."

Maria paled. No wonder Jean had been so upset. The edict was what had kept them safe these last few years. Protestants living in a Catholic country were looked down upon. Nobility who were not Catholic was even worse.

"Where would we go, Jean?" Maria's voice wavered with the gravity of the situation.

Jean looked up at the high ceiling, taking in the elaborate tapestries that covered the walls. This was their home. No one had the right to take it away from them, and yet, that is what was happening.

"The carriage will take us to Portbail. A vessel awaits us there. It will carry us to Jersey Island."

Fear shown in Maria's eyes, but she knew what must be done. To save her family, she would move.

"Wake up little Jean. I will grab some things for Matthew and me."

Jean nodded his gratitude in his eyes. His back was straight as he walked out, but Maria sensed the hesitancy in his steps.

Gathering the baby to her, she repositioned her gown and ran to collect some supplies.

A few moments later, they met at the main door. No servants greeted them. It was late at night. It was better this way. The dear people could honestly say they did not know where their masters had gone.

Upon climbing into the carriage, Maria sat beside little Jean her husband across from them. Her eyes moved of their own accord to the window to see their beloved castle in the moonlight.

A small hand on hers drew her back to the carriage.

"Maman," little Jean said. "Where are we going?"

A tear stole out from her eye as she repositioned baby Matthew around the little one growing inside of her. Then she turned to ten year old Jean.

"God will guide us, Jean. I do not know where he will lead us, but he will guide us."

"Remember the song that Pastor Navarre just taught us?" her husband asked.

Maria nodded her head. "The one translated into German, right?"

He agreed. How could she forget? The thought of her savior dying for her was too much to take in. The song helped her understand.

The words filtered through her mind. A small smile crossed her face. "If He could leave His home in heaven, then I can leave my home on earth," she said.

Jean reached across and squeezed her hand.

"Maman, sing it to me, please."

So, Maria sat back and sang. As she did a peace came over her. She was in her Savior's care.

Now scornfully surrounded
With thorns Thy only crown,

19th Century—Trail to the Potomac

Jostled awake by a bump in the road, William groaned. Only other sporadic moans replied. He tried to roll over, but only succeeded in eliciting another cry from someone to his left. William opened his eyes. What remained of a Confederate uniform met his eyes. Memories washed back over him.

"Form up, men," the command sounded across the Pennsylvania hillside three days ago.

William was anxious to go. They were taking the initiative led by General Lee himself. They would win. There was no question about it. The others around him moved into formation.

What followed was pure mayhem. For three days they fought their hardest. Men on both sides fell around them. It was at the end of the second day towards the end of the afternoon. William had holed up behind a log. Bullets whizzed past him. He felt a pull on his pant leg. Looking down, William couldn't see anything, so he bent over. A burning pain hit his head. Loosing his balance, he plopped on the ground. His hand came away from the back of his head covered in blood.

"Thomas," he cried to his fellow soldier, "help! Don't let me be taken by the Yanks!"

Thomas helped William get back to a wagon. Consciousness had come and gone over the course of the last several days.

The stench around him was enough to knock him out again, but he fought it.

"Sir, we have some awake," a voice called.

"Do they need immediate attention?"

"No sir, but soon they will."

"Let's get a few more miles in, then."

"Yes, sir!"

The light had changed when William awoke again. Someone was moving beside him.

"Easy, there, soldier," a voice said. "I need to change this bandage. It looks like you were lucky."

William tried to nod, but the pain was too great.

"Yes, I was. I bent over and that was it. If I'd been standing, I would not be here today."

"Well, thank your lucky stars, then."

"Not stars, sir," William replied. "Thank God. He kept me safe."

"There's no denying that," the man agreed. "Well, I need to go check on others. Some weren't as fortunate as you."

William was alone again. The wagon didn't move. Somewhere a shovel split the earth. A song sung by a male voice pierced the air. It was a haunting melody. Sad and lonely like the men.

How art Thou pale with anguish,
With sore abuse and scorn!

A future day—Heaven

I look around me and wonder. Never did I dream it would be so wonderful. I should have known if earth was filled with so many amazing and marvelous things, then so would heaven. I am still amazed though.

A young man walks up to me and greets me.

"So, you are Hartford's, granddaughter. It is nice to meet you."

I shake his hand.

"And who are you, sir? You look familiar."

"Oh, there's no reason you should recognize me. We never met on earth. I was here before you were even born. My name's William Henry Patterson."

"Great-great-grandpa?" I exclaim.

"The one and the same," he answers.

There are no words to express how excited I feel. To meet the man who dodged the bullet in the Civil War.

"Come," William says. "There's someone else I'd like you to meet."

I wonder who he could mean. He leads me through the people mingling. Exclamations like the one I just made abound. People running into other's arms, hugs, kisses, happy tears, all fill the area.

A man and women come walking toward us. They smile a greeting to William.

"How is she doing?" the woman asks.

"Not bad," William says. "Not bad at all. She's quiet and taking it all in."

I look at William with questioning eyes. I want to ask who these people are, but I know my manners.

William laughs. "Maria and Jean Gosset meet the great-granddaughter of Ralph."

I stare stunned as Maria takes me in her arms.

"Welcome."

Jean reaches out his hand when Maria lets me go. I shake it trembling.

"Jean Gosset?" I ask.

He nods his head. "I gave up my lands in France, but what is that compared to what our Savior gave up."

I agree. I feel so unworthy. What had I given up for the Lord? Not much compared to these people here.

"Don't think about it," William tells me, putting an arm around my shoulders.

Maria takes the other side, and Jean is beside her. They begin telling me their tales. I shake my head in wonder. What a day!

A song breaks out somewhere. It begins low and soft, but builds. The melody is hauntingly familiar. Then I remember and join in.

How does that visage languish
Which once was bright as morn!