

THE SOUTHDOLD CHRONICLES + BOOK 2

TO CAPTURE
HER HEART
A NOVEL



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This book is a work of historical fiction based on the lives of real people set during real events. However, details that cannot be historically verified, as well as some characters and events, are purely products of the author's imagination.

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To my three sweet daughters,
Jennifer Ann Brasbear, Lisa Marie Taylor,
and *Kelly Michelle Adams.*

They are the lights of my life and the dots
that connect the lines from one generation to the next.

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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

As I wrote the second book in *The Southold Chronicles* series, I once again enjoyed being immersed in Southold, Long Island, town history. The village was isolated from English rule in the seventeenth century, but with the Montaukett to the south, the Dutch to the west, and the Narragansett to the north, it was never humdrum.

While Dirk Van Buren is a completely fictitious person, the existence of Heather Flower is somewhat controversial. Many believe she was Quashawam, the daughter of Wyandanch, the Grand Sachem of Montauk. Some say she was a second daughter of Wyandanch, and a few believe she was Catoneras, a native woman who married a Dutchman. Others say she is a legend. Historically there are accounts of the kidnapping of Wyandanch's daughter, with a ransom paid by Lion Gardiner.

The Hortons and Southold provide the backdrop for *To Capture Her Heart*, with the second generation coming of age and not always seeing the world through their father's eyes. They were looking forever forward, while through my stories I take a look back. My mother, Helen Jean Horton Worley, inspired my first novel, and she remains forever my inspiration.

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June 21, 1653

The thunder of a thousand hooves pounded in her ears and she buried her head beneath her tethered hands. She muffled the noise with her arms pressed against her ears. Heather Flower sat very still. She remembered the childhood game peekaboo. She'd believed if she could not see her mother, her mother could not see her.

But this was not a game. Her legs, bound at the ankles, were drawn up under her skirt, and her knees trembled as she lowered her covered head till her forehead touched them. A pool of quiet tears soaked the soft, beaded deerskin.

Sudden silence, save for the occasional snort from the winded horses, or the soft swish of their tails, brought intense fear. Her body shook as she tried to draw herself into the smallest mound possible. The restraints dug into her slender wrists, but her lips were sealed together in a thin line and not a cry escaped.

The footfalls approaching were not the tread of her Indian captors. A leather-clad hand lifted her chin, and her heart

quaked in her chest. Her throat constricted until it ached as she gathered her courage and lifted her eyes.

“Hallo! You are Heather Flower, the daughter of the Great Sachem, Wyandanch?”

His posture bore no malice but was instead gentle, kind. She dared to hope he would not harm her.

Her chin quivered in the cup of his glove, her moist lashes fluttered, but her voice was strong. “I am Quashawam, the Heather Flower of Montauk.” She studied his face and saw kindness.

“We were sent from Lion Gardiner and his friend John Smith to find you and take you to your father, who waits for you.” His voice was deep like the sound of the ocean in a conch shell, smooth and comforting. He removed his gloves and drew his knife. With a quick cut he released her ankles. He grasped her arms and lifted her to her feet.

Her legs found no bearing, and he steadied her before taking her hands in his to cut the last tether.

“Thank you, my paleface brother.” She looked into eyes the color of the crystal clear bay on a warm summer afternoon.

“Take some water to drink, and when you have had your fill, I have some biscuits and dried berries for you. When did they last give you food?”

“They left me here for many days. I do not remember how many. They might come again soon. We must go. I fear the mean brothers of Connecticut.” His face blurred in front of her as she dropped into his arms. The young white brave helped her back to the ground and pressed a cup of water to her lips. She drank deeply, then pushed the cup away. “*Ooneewey*. Thank you.”

She knew the accent of his speech. “You are Dutch? What is your name? Why would the Englishman Gardiner send you?”

“I am Lieutenant Dirk Van Buren, from Fort Amsterdam. I serve a different army, but when Gardiner needed men, I asked to be permitted to head the party. These men are English from the Southold Militia, led by Lieutenant Edward Biggs. They are under my command on this mission. We Dutch have our own reasons to hate the fierce Narragansett. And I know their territory intimately.”

He dug into his knapsack and offered a biscuit. “You may call me Dirk. Here, eat this before we travel. You need strength.”

A thicket of bayberry shrubs directly behind her rustled and she startled, her reply frozen in her throat. A young cottontail scrambled from beneath. Relief rushed through her veins, quickly replaced by a wave of embarrassment. It did not go unnoticed by this man Dirk.

He squatted close beside her and pressed the biscuit in her hand. “Amazing what noise a small creature can make, *ja*? You are safe now. Take this.”

She chewed as she stared at the rescue party, now dismounting and rummaging in their own knapsacks for food. She counted twenty-five men. “I heard the running of many hooves—I thought hundreds of horses, thousands of hooves.”

“I’m not sure there are that many horses on Long Island.” His clear blue eyes penetrated hers. “*Hoe gaat het?* How are you? How were you treated?”

She drew a deep draught of warm air, scented with the bayberry and old pine needles, and calm engulfed her. “They were happy to have the daughter of Wyandanch. They taunted me with thoughts of what my father must endure. And though they did not hurt me with arrows or knives, they cut to my heart with their words. When they received the wampum sent by my father and the paleface Gardiner, they told me they were

releasing me, but then left me here to die. Or worse, to fear they would return with their mean ways.”

Dirk stood and held out a strong hand. She held tight as he pulled her up and watched as he brought his horse, the color of tanned buckskin with a sooty black mane and tail, to her side. She held out her hand and stroked the horse’s muzzle. “She has a name?”

“*Ja*, her name is Button. Miss Button I call her.”

Heather Flower nodded.

“I can protect you best if you ride in front,” he said simply as he lifted her in one swoop onto pommel of the saddle.

The English lieutenant gave the search party the command to mount their horses and they split to ride fore and aft of the Dutch lieutenant. The long ride around the North Sea began.



The woman captivated Dirk as he guided his horse up a wide deer trail. The Montaukett were a tall, strong people, and she was almost his equal in height. She held herself in a majestic manner that bespoke of the royalty she was born into. Her eyes were fiery like black opals, and her mouth pouty and red like a blossom. Her skin was a creamy copper, and her hair ebony with the sheen of bear grease. Tangles and snarls from weeks without a comb made him want to reach out and smooth her tresses. He made a mental note to give her his military issue comb when they made camp.

He was drawn to her, there was no denying, and he longed to be her hero, to protect her. That he would do, but her heart was tender. Ninigret, the fierce sachem of the Narragansett and enemy of the Long Island natives, had killed her groom on their wedding day. His warriors forced her to watch and then

kidnapped her and thirteen other Montaukett women. Dirk would protect her, yes, but that meant to protect her heart as well. He'd have to guard his own to do that.

He urged his steed down a steep embankment toward the bay and kept the reins in, guarding Heather Flower like he would a flickering flame on a windy day. "We will ride west along the bay until we can cross the East River at Manhattan over to Brooklyn. It's a hard seven-day ride to Montauk in good circumstances. You must tell me when you need to rest or when you are hungry. I want you to be strong."

She stared straight ahead, head held high. He knew he would not hear a complaint from her, not even a whimper. It was the way of her people.

Hours passed and the sun became a blazing ball in the west, low on the horizon. Fort Saybrook loomed on the hill and Dirk passed word to the front that Captain Mason expected them. As they rode past the old burned-out portion of the fort, he found it odd to be coming here, a Dutch fort now under English control, and he, surrounded by Englishmen. But there were issues in this wilderness that brought them together on some fronts.

As they entered the palisades, a small contingent of men greeted them, taking their horses to the livery and directing them to headquarters.

Captain Mason stood up from behind his desk and came around to shake Dirk's hand, but his eyes were on Heather Flower. She remained in the open doorway, and with her high cheekbones, large eyes, and lips like Leonardo's Mona Lisa, Dirk was certain the captain was as enchanted as he was. "Sir, I present Heather Flower, daughter of the Grand Sachem Wyandanch of Montauk."

Mason cleared his throat. "We have much regard for your

father. It is a privilege to assist Captain Gardiner in your return. You shall sleep here tonight and on the morrow Lieutenant Van Buren shall escort you home. Now in the meantime, you need a hot meal.” He took her arm and led her out.

A hearty meal of corn mush and biscuits with a slather of butter was served, and Dirk watched with pleasure as Heather Flower eagerly ate a full portion. The contented but weary party threw their bedrolls down for the night. He spread hers a bit further from the men.

“You are safe here. Men guard the gates and fence line at all hours.” He settled himself atop his own bedding, tucking his musket close to his side. The ground was hard and the night alive with cricket chirps. Somewhere an owl hooted. He propped his hands beneath his head and stared at the heavens.

The night was warm and the ink sky a dance of thousands of winking stars. An astral display fell as if the sky had parted. Some Indians believed it to be a sign of travel heroes and he glanced over to the still form of Heather Flower and hoped she’d seen it.

He asked God for travel mercies as sleep claimed him.



Heather Flower was awake before the sun rose. The crescent moon had set hours ago, but the crisp stars still illuminated the sky. She crept toward the glow of the fire and sat. She clutched the comb Dirk had given her the day before and began to pull it through the tangles in her hair. Strand by strand the snarls came undone. As the men began to stir around her, she finished a long braid over her shoulder.

Cook came out to refresh the fire and fried yesterday’s corn mush for a tasty breakfast. He put together a dinner packet

of salt pork, biscuits, and dried apples. Dawn was still new as the small band of men mounted their horses. Dirk lifted her to the saddle, then swung up behind and led the party out of the palisade gate.

The man Dirk was very quiet, but Heather Flower did not mind. She was safe and she was going back to her father and mother, back to her people. “You are brave to rescue me from the Narragansett. You are clever too. You did not come across your North Sea in the great canoes with wings. You would have been slaughtered by Ninigret. You came by horse following the land.”

“*Ja*. I know the heart and thoughts of Ninigret. I know his land like my own home-country. It is why Captain Gardiner entrusted his best men to my care. It was the wish of your father, as well.”

They rode in silence as she thought of her family, her head barely touching Dirk’s shoulder. She studied the trail in front of them and listened to the wind in the willows that lined the path. She would know trouble before it could be seen and certainly before any of the rescue party.

At length they entered an open saltmarsh and she relaxed ever so slightly. “They killed my new husband. I saw them. As we celebrated our wedding, Ninigret killed him. My father, mother, and brother were tied up. His warriors held me by my arms and made me watch. My husband looked into my eyes until his last breath. And then Ninigret ordered his men to take me and the other women. They threw us into the bottoms of canoes and rowed swiftly across the black waters.”

“You need not tell me this if it hurts you. I know the story. I am sorry for the terrible massacre. I am sorry for your husband and your pain.”

“I would die rather than stay with the Narragansett.”

“*Ja*, but you don’t have to. You are safe, Heather Flower. Safe with me.”

She let her head rock backward until she rested in the hollow of his shoulder. This man she owed her life to. A small smile played at the corner of her mouth—the first smile since she’d smiled at her new husband—as Dirk tried to speak her language with his Dutch accent. It was very different than the English, but she liked the cadence.

They rode long days, with few stops. With the summer solstice only a day behind them, the evening light gave them a long day of travel, and when it faded they bedded down where they could, always with men guarding the night. On the fourth day of travel, Fort Amsterdam was a welcome sight. Heather Flower was given her own quarters that night. The Englishmen slept in their bedrolls by the fire.

At dawn Heather Flower awoke before anyone, as she had each morning. She warmed herself by the fire until the search party joined her. They broke their fast with little cakes the Dutchmen called *poffertjes*, which she found to her liking. She watched Dirk while he ate with gusto. Her brother, Wyancombone, could wolf his food in that way. It would be good to see him again. Soon she would be home.



Dirk tied his knapsack and musket to the back of his saddle. Moving to the front of Miss Button, he untied her feedbag and talked low as he patted her neck. The last leg of the journey would be a long one. They could make Wading River in two days, but tonight they would need to find shelter somewhere in Samuel Ketcham’s valley. Montauk would be another day’s ride.

Button's ears flicked toward excited shouts at the front gate. Dirk turned as Joseph and Benjamin Horton rode through to the livery. He strode toward the brothers. "Hallo there!"

"Good morrow to you, Lieutenant." Joseph swung down from his Great Black and stuck out a hand, his gloves tucked under his arm.

"What brings you to New Amsterdam?" Dirk's brow creased as he gripped the Englishman's hand.

"We've been sent to escort Wyandanch's daughter."

Something of a rock formed in his throat and he swallowed hard before answering. "I am her escort. You may accompany your men home with us. We will make Samuel Ketcham's by dark." Dirk looked from the Horton brothers to Biggs.

Benjamin stepped forward and offered to shake. "Captain Gardiner and my father, Barnabas, send their regard and a hearty thank-you, but we are instructed to bring Heather Flower from here. There will be no need for you to travel with us."

A flock of noisy red hens pecked at the dirt in hopes of a seed or kernel of corn. Dirk watched as they bobbed and then scurried in every direction as Heather Flower approached. How would she feel? She trusted him. He wanted to scoop her up onto his horse and ride fast.

Instead, he waited for her to join them. "These men are here to take you home. They tell me I am to stay here at the fort, and you will be under their jurisdiction. Is that what you would want?"

She nodded to Joseph and Benjamin. "*Aquai*, friends. Dirk, they are like brothers to me. They are the sons of Mary, friend of my aunt Winnie of Southold, Old Yennicott. It would be unkind of me to say no. But I thank you from the heart for what you have done for me. I will never forget you."

Joseph untethered the horse they brought had for her and Dirk stepped forward to brace Heather Flower's foot as she swung to the saddle. He caught her hand as she picked up the reins and gently squeezed. She graced him with her small smile that barely turned the corners of her mouth. Her dark eyes shimmered with dew as she turned away and followed the Horton brothers eastward, away from the fort.

He shielded his eyes against the bright morning sun, watching as the small rescue party rode into the distance. He rubbed his hand across his mouth. He was always so sure of himself. So in control. But in the matter of a moment, from the first they had met, he'd fallen. *Ja*. He'd fallen all right. He'd never loved before, but there could be no mistaking the jagged pain that started in his throat and burned down to his very heart. He wanted her to come back. No, he wanted to get on Miss Button and chase her.