

POCAHONTAS



Joseph Bruchac

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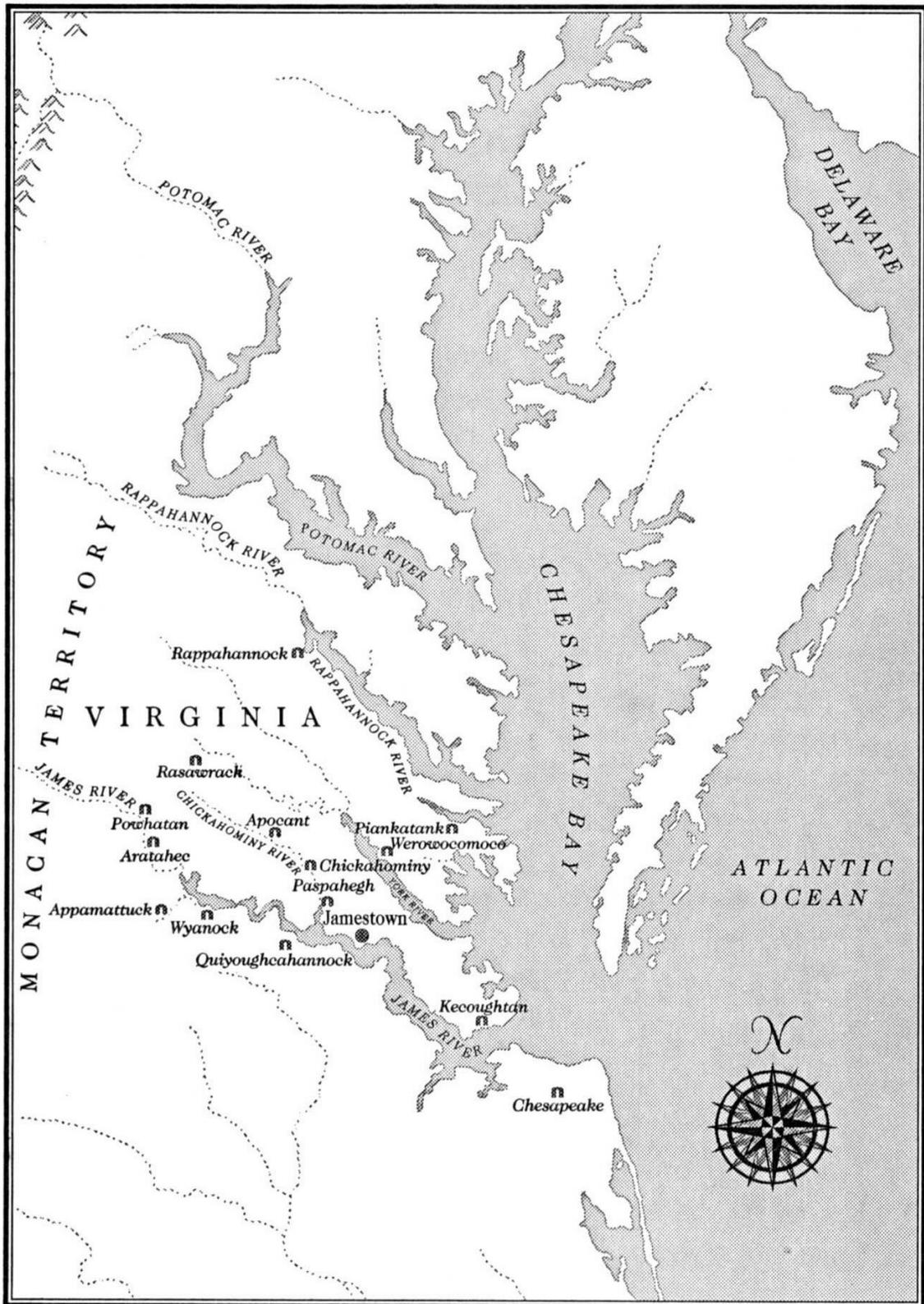
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THE POWHATAN CONFEDERACY AND ENGLISH SETTLEMENT, 1607



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To Paula Wiseman, friend and editor, without whose encouragement this book never would have been written

You brave, heroic minds,
Worthy your country's name.
That honor still pursue,
Go and subdue,
Whilst loit'ring hinds
Lurk here at home with shame.

Britons, you stay too long;
Quickly aboard bestow you,
And with a merry gale
Swell your stretch'd sail,
With vows as strong
As the winds that blow you.

Your course securely steer,
West and by south forth keep;
Rocks, lee shores, nor shoals,
When Aeolus scowls,
You need not fear,
So absolute the deep.

And cheerfully at sea,
Success you still entice
To get the pearl and gold
And, ours to hold,
Virginia,
Earth's only paradise!

MICHAEL DRAYTON
FROM "ODE TO THE VIRGINIAN VOYAGE" CIRCA 1608

Preface

In December of 1607, a meeting took place between two very different people. Their cultures and languages, their views of the world, differed so greatly that understanding each other was close to impossible.

Yet communication did take place and, for a time, bonds of peace were forged between their two nations. The dramatic meeting of those two, an energetic eleven-year-old girl of the Powhatan nation and a twenty-seven-year-old Englishman whose intellect had been deepened and whose resolve had been hardened by his experiences as a warrior, would become one of the most powerful, romantic, and frequently told stories of American history. As a result of their legendary encounter, seeds were sown that grew into a new nation. This is the story of the events throughout the year of 1607 that led to that dramatic moment, the story of Pocahontas and John Smith.

POCAHONTAS: The Swan Canoes

Long ago, Ahone, the Great Mysterious Spirit, created the world. Great Ahone created Moon and Stars to brighten the darkness of the night and to be companions and dwell with Great Ahone.

Sun was also made by Great Ahone to give brightness and warmth to the days. With that light of the Sun, all could be seen, and all that had been made by Ahone was good to see.

CATTAPEUK

TIME OF LEAVES RETURNING

LATE APRIL 1607

I AM MY FATHER'S favorite daughter. This means a great deal, for he is Mamanatowic, the Great Chief of all the Powhatan towns. My formal name is Amonute. But my everyday name is Pocahontas. That name, which almost everyone calls me, fits my personality much better. In the language of the Coatmen it might be translated as One Who Makes Mischief. My father suggests that it really means She Who Wants to Know Everything. He says that although I have only seen the leaves return eleven times, I have already asked more questions than most people do in a whole lifetime.

It is because I ask so many questions that, even though I was not there, I know what it was like in times past when the great swan canoes swam into sight on Chesepiock, our great salt bay. The man of Kecoughtan who first saw them said that for a few heartbeats—and his heart was beating very fast—he did not recognize what they were. Those *quintansuk* looked like birds, giant swans with huge white wings, breathing smoke and fire out of their beaks. When he realized what they were and who they must be carrying, his heartbeat became even faster. Tassantassuk. Outsiders! He quickly turned his *quintans*, made from the trunk of a cypress tree, and paddled as fast as he could to shore. He had to warn the people. The Tassantassuk had returned! They had come from the sunrise to our lands and waters before. Our memories of them were not good.

I am too young to have my own memories of the first arrival of the Outsiders. But my father's memory and the memories of our elders all look much further back along the circle of seasons than my eyes can see. It would be better if they were the ones to speak of what happened, but I will do my best to tell their memories truthfully.

The first Outsiders to come in such giant canoes called themselves Espaniuk. Some wondered if they were really men and not giant squirrels dressed in long coats. The faces of those coat-wearing men were as red and furry as squirrels. They also had long, clever fingers like those of Arakun, the masked one who scratches with his hands. Further, the Coatmen spoke in a strange language, which sounded to some of us like the growls and whines and barks of animals. Strange as they were, our people greeted and welcomed them as friends. That friendship did not last long. Those first Coatmen

treated our people badly. When we protested the way they pushed us about, they attacked us.

Some of the Coatmen had what we thought to be hard shells like Terrapin, the Sea Turtle. Those shells were so hard that arrows and spears could not pierce them. The men also carried sticks that burned and then roared like thunder. Whenever the thunder sticks roared, they shot out a hail of small stones that made terrible wounds when they struck a person.

When our men finally caught one of those hard-shelled Espaniuk during a battle and skinned him, they were surprised at how easily his shell came off. They realized then that it was only a hard kind of clothing. Those first Coatmen finally saw they could not make us do as they wished. They left our land and waters.

When those Outsiders left, they stole one of our people, a man named Young Deer, whose father was werowance of Paspahagh. They took him across the wide water to a great island called Kew-ba. Then they sailed even farther, to the place where all men have faces like furry animals. Ten winters passed before those Outsiders came back. With them was Young Deer, who now dressed as the Coatmen dressed, wearing a long black robe. They called him Ton Loo-wee. He looked much like them, but our people recognized him. Hair had not grown to cover his cheeks, and he still knew how to speak as we human beings do.

The Coatmen thought Young Deer had become one of them. He had not. He threw off his long black coat and rejoined his people. Some of those black-robed Coatmen followed him to his uncle's home. They insulted Young Deer and tried to beat him. They called our people thieves because we picked up and took some of the things the Black Robes left lying about. Those black-robed Coatmen behaved so badly that all but one of them were killed. Some of our people thought that this ended the trouble. Young Deer told them otherwise.

"You do not know the Espaniuk as I do," he said. "More will come again from the sunrise in their great swan canoes. When they come, they will try to kill us."

Six moons passed, and it happened just as Young Deer had said. When the Corn Moon came, the Espaniuk returned. They killed many of our people with their thunder sticks. Then, once again, they left our land and waters. From that day on, the people of Paspahagh held both fear and hatred for the Coatmen.

From then on, I am told, we kept a watchful eye. More than anyone else, my father saw that we must be ready for danger. He was then the werowance, the commander of our village, of Powhatan, the place at the head of the waterfall. His vision told him what must be done. All the different villages of our people had to band together to be strong for when our enemies returned from the sunrise. My father's vision was strong. Some joined his great alliance willingly. Other villages only gave in after we made war upon them and defeated them. My father became Mamanatowic, Great Chief of all the villages, the Powhatan. All decisions for peace or war were now made through him and his council of advisers. So it was that word was quickly brought to him about the arrival of these new Tassantassuk.

Some prepared to fight, especially the Rappahannocks. Only three winters ago, a swan canoe like these three had come to our shore bearing Outsiders who called themselves Songleesuk. Those Songleesuk visited my father. The Great Man of those Songleesuk, who was very tall, said he came to trade with us and wanted to be our

friend. This pleased my father. Perhaps these new Coatmen were different. He gave them permission to trade with our villages. The new Coatmen then took their big ship up the Rappahannock River. The werowance of Rappahannock made them welcome. But the Songleesuk did not continue to behave as guests should. They did something awful.

It is said that the strangers did that awful thing because a Rappahannock man picked up one of their tools as if to carry it away with him. It is hard to believe that. Why would anyone hurt another person for only picking up a tool? But perhaps it is so. One of the strange things about Coatmen is that many of them seem to value their possessions over friendship or human lives. For whatever reason, the tall Great Man of the Tassantassuk pointed his thunder stick and killed the man who had picked up the tool. Then the other Coatmen fired their thunder sticks, too. They killed the werowance of Rappahannock, burned the town, took some of the shocked villagers as captives, and sailed away. So it was that the Rappahannocks swore they would fight the Coatmen if they ever returned.

Many of our own people, though, hoped that these new Coatmen would finally be different. Perhaps they would be true friends. After all, some Tassantassuk had learned to live peacefully among us. Those Outsiders came to the outer shore five returnings of the leaves before I was born. They made a small village on the island Roanoak. Then their swan ship left them. They were abandoned so long by their own countrymen that they began to starve. All would have died without the help of our people. Finally, the surviving Coatmen took off their coats. Outsiders no longer, they joined us. Some of them came to live at Chesepiock. It is sad what happened to Chesepiock because of the prophecy. Because of the prophecy, my father used his power of life to wipe out that village.

As my father's favorite daughter, I sit close to his feet. Others fear him for his power, but I do not. His power, though, is greater than that of any other man. Our many villages trusted my father so much that when they came together under his leadership, they gave him the power of life.

"Why is this so?" I asked my wise older brother, Naukaquawis. "Why does our father have the right to order another persons death?"

"In the days of our father's father," he explained, "whenever there was great wrong done to someone, that man or his relatives would seek revenge and injure or kill the one who had done wrong. Throw, I am ready."

Naukaquawis, who died into manhood six returnings of the leaves ago, knows many things. Although he is no longer a boy and thus does not play with me as he did when he was younger, we still talk together about things. Also, I help him when he practices with his bow and arrow. All of our men are great shots. A boy is given his first bow almost as soon as he can walk. It is the job of his mother to help him practice early every morning by tossing things up into the air for him to shoot at. To make it more interesting, that boy may be denied his morning meal if he misses too many times. Since our mother is no longer with us, I have taken on the task of making sure that Naukaquawis stays sharp as an arrow point now that he is a man. In return, he must always answer anything I ask him. I have at least one question for every arrow he shoots.

“What happened then?” I asked, tossing a ball of moss back and forth between my hands. Then, “*Hi-yah!*” I shouted, as I threw it high up into the air. It had not even reached the height of my throw before Naukaquawis’s arrow pierced it.

“Then,” Naukaquawis continued, not even bothering to take another arrow from the quiver on his back, “the relatives of that person who had been punished would themselves seek revenge. It went back and forth like this so much that there was always fighting between not only different families but also their villages.”

“So what could be done to stop this?” I said. “*Yah-hey!*” I cried, throwing the second ball of moss as hard as I could over his head and to his left.

With a motion so fast that his hand blurred like a bird’s wing, Naukaquawis whipped an arrow from his quiver, nocked it to his bow, spun, and let loose his shot. This time he hit the ball of moss as it was descending.

“When the power to judge and punish wrongdoing was taken out of the hands of individuals and given to our father,” he continued, “that fighting ended.”

“Why is that so?” I asked. Then I lifted up my hand as if to throw the ball of moss in it. “You will get no breakfast at all if you miss this one,” I said. Then I hurled the second moss ball, which I’d concealed in my other hand.

My brother was not fooled. He did not even look toward the target as he let his arrow go. It struck the target and pinned it to the trunk of a mulberry. Then he made a face at me, squinting his eyes and thrusting out his lips.

I made one back, sticking out my tongue, and he laughed. But it did not stop him from giving his answer. “Now we have peace between our villages because all complaints are brought to the Mamanatowic before any fighting takes place. Our father makes his decision, with the quiet counsel of his advisers.”

“Like Rawhunt?” I asked.

“Unh-hunh, and others, both women and men. With the help of his council, our father judges who is right or wrong and what punishment must be given.”

My brother slung his bow over his shoulder and held out his hand in a gathering motion. We were done with target practice—and questions—for that day. It was now time to retrieve the arrows he had shot.

But he was not done with his words about my father’s justice. “Those who do great wrong,” Naukaquawis said as he pulled the arrow from the trunk of the mulberry, “such as willfully killing another person, those wrongdoers may even be put to death by our father’s orders.”

I grew silent at that. I do not like the thought of people being put to death. I do not like the stern, sad look that giving such commands brings to my father’s face. But I know how to make him laugh. All I have to do is dance, or stand upon my hands, or sing to him. Then his stern face breaks into a smile. I know how much he appreciates the fact that I can always bring him laughter. He likes to have me by his side.

So I was there on that day in the season before the leaves returned in his great bark-covered longhouse. He waited, sitting in great dignity upon his bench covered with woven mats and padded with leather pillows that were beautifully decorated with shells. I listened with excitement as my father, Powhatan, the Mamanatowic, received the message about the coming of three swan canoes.

My father nodded calmly.

“We will not attack them,” he said. “I will keep my eyes upon these Tassantassuk in their swan ships. We do not know yet if they are friends or not, but we are ready. We are ready for peace . . . or war.”

**JOHN SMITH:
Aboard**

In the year 1606 Captain Newport, with three ships, discovered the Bay of Chessiopeock in the height of thirty-seven degrees of northerly latitude, and landed a hundred persons of sundry qualities and arts in a river falling into it; and left them under the government of a president and council, according to the authority derived from and limited by his Majesty's letters patents.*

—FROM A TRUE & SINCERE DECLARATION BY THE COUNCIL OF VIRGINIA

DECEMBER 19TH, 1606—MARCH 1ST, 1607

MY NAME, DEAR READER, is John Smith. I am, indeed, that same Captain John Smith, Gentleman, of whom others have lately spoken. I take pen to paper to give answer to certain questions that have arisen about my enterprize in fair Virginia, how our plantation there did come to be, our relation with the naturals of that land, the weak judgement in danger and less in peace of certain of those who were called our leaders, how I did provide for others neglecting for myself, &tc., &tc.

First, one might ask, why did it take so long? It might well be thought a country as fair as Virginia is, and a people so tractable, would long ere this have been quietly possessed to the satisfaction of the adventurers and the eternizing of the memory of those that effected it. But because all the world do see a default, this following treatise of mine shall give satisfaction to all readers how the business hath been carried. Then, no doubt, they will easily understand and find answer to their question how it came to pass there was no better speed and success in these proceedings.



Captain Bartholomew Gosnoll was one of the first movers of our plantation. For many years he solicited his friends for help, but found small assistance. At last he prevailed with some gentlemen as myself, Master Edward Maria Wingfield, Master Robert Hunt, and diverse others. We then waited a year upon his projects. It was only with our great charge and industry that certain of the nobility, gentry, and merchants spoke in our favor. More than five hundred pounds of my own estate was invested in this pursuit. So at last, on April 10th, 1606, His Majesty King James I affixed his seal to letters patent granting our London Company the right to settle in Virginia.

Now, near another year was spent to effect this. By this time three ships were provided. None of them were over large. The French man-of-war on which I, John Smith, did sail from North Africa to the Canaries (where I engaged in battle two Spanish warships) was twice the size of our flag ship. In point of fact, every one of the ships on which our hopeful company sailed to the new land was smaller, even that ill-favored vessel upon which I once took passage from Marseilles.

Long shall I remember how when a Mediterranean storm came upon us, the rabble of pilgrims of diverse nations going to Rome cursed both myself and our dread Sovereign Queen Elizabeth. Saying they should never have fair weather as long as I was among them, they then threw me overboard. Yet, God did provide for John Smith. As has so often been the case, foul fortune brought me fair. I swam to a small isle, where I was rescued by the good Captain la Roche of San Malo. Joining his company, we met with an argosy of Venice. When they fired upon us, we gave them back a broadside and bloodily fought until they yielded. As reward for my part in the taking of that ship, I was given five hundred chicqueenes and a little box made of gold worth near as much more and was set well financed down upon the coast of Italy. But, interesting as that tale of my adventure may be and though my readers may surely wish to hear more of my telling of it, there is no time for that now. I must, perforce, return to the matter of Virginia.

Our flag ship was the *Susan Constant*, seventy feet in length, one hundred and twenty tons. Its captain was Christofer Newport. Though he had lost one arm in battle with the Spanish, Captain Newport had crossed the Atlantic several times. The *Godspeed*, forty feet long and forty tons, was captained by Bartholomew Gosnoll himself. The third of our ships, the *Discovery*, was but a pinnace of twenty tons, scarce thirty feet long. Captain John Ratliffe—or so he called himself at that time—held its command.

The names of them that were the first planters are these following:

COUNCEL

Master Edward Maria Wingfield
Captain Bartholomew Gosnoll
Captain John Smith
Captain John Ratliffe
Captain John Martin
Captain George Kendall

GENTLEMEN

Master Robert Hunt, preacher
Master George Percie
Anthony Gosnoll
George Flower
Captain Gabriell Archer
Robert Fenton
Robert Ford
William Bruster
Jehu Robinson
Thomas Wotton, chirugeon
& thirty-nine other gentlemen

CARPENTERS

William Laxon
Edward Pising
Thomas Emry
Robert Small

Anas Todkill
John Capper
James Read, blacksmith
Jonas Profit, sailor
Thomas Cowper, barber
John Herd, bricklayer
William Garret, bricklayer
Edward Brinto, mason
William Love, tailor
Nicholas Scot, drummer
William Wilkinson, chirurgeon

LABORERS

John Laydon
William Cassen
George Cassen
Thomas Cassen
William Rodes
& seven others

BOYS

Samuell Collier
Nathaniell Pecock
James Brumfield
Richard Mutton

—with divers others to the number of 105.

On the 19th of December, 1606, we set sail from Blackwall. We had expected the crossing to take but ten weeks. However, from the start, our voyage was not easy. Unprosperous winds kept us long in the sight of England in the Downs off the east coast of Kent. Master Hunt, our preacher, was so weak and sick that few expected his recovery. Yet, though he was but twenty miles from his habitation, he preferred the service of God in so good a voyage. With the water of patience and his godly exhortations, he quenched the flames of envy and dissension. Six full weeks passed before we finally were able to leave the Downs and set out at last across the uncertain ocean.

Even then, all did not go easy for us. The waves were high and most aboard knew little of sailing. Their fears were as great as their stomachs were weak. My oft-told tales of my own adventures, of how I managed to overcome far greater hardships than this voyage, gave comfort to many of our company. When a blazing star did arc above our heads on the night of February twelfth, some among us saw it as an omen of doom. Yet our good captains continued on. At last, nearly ten weeks after setting forth, we had sailed no farther than the Canary Islands. The greater part of our ocean journey still lay before us when, on the first of March, we landed on those islands and took on water.

That half of those among us were gentlemen, and more accustomed to give orders than to engage in work, would cause much sorrow, both on ship and in Virginia. Not only I, but others took note of how the gentlemen would not dirty their hands with work of any sort on ship or land. So it was that I, who did not forswear either labor or the company of our good sailors, came to be in the disfavor of those perfumed dandies who lazed about. It was whilst in the Canaries that an incident occurred and the haughty wrath of certain of those gentlemen was settled upon me.

Vincere est vivere. To conquer is to live. Such has been my motto since I first earned my coat of arms. There were many among our gentlemen planters who un-gently did elevate themselves in my presence. Yet they had no answer when I asked which of them had done battle against the Turk, as did John Smith. There was, indeed, little courage among those who styled themselves my betters.

The most puffed up among them, Edward Maria Wingfield, went so far as to lie that I had begged across Ireland. True it is that I am of good family but not of noble birth. Unlike Wingfield, a man impressed by his own sense of superior birth and position, I fully earned whatever rank I have held. Edward Maria Wingfield was born into a knightly family, their seat at the castle Kimbolton in Huntingdonshire. Yet his father was a papist and he, himself, has been suspected of Popery. It was perhaps his wish to appear a good Protestant that led him to become a soldier by profession. (Though we have also heard it voiced that he suffered from youthful excesses and premature debt and escaped both by taking up arms.) He then served in Ireland and in the Netherlands. Who did he fight there but other Christians (servants of Rome though they might be)? And how did Wingfield distinguish himself but by being taken captive at Lisle in 1588 to be exchanged for Spanish prisoners taken by Drake?

I, myself, also did battle in the low countries against other Christians when I was but nineteen. However, I found little joy in such work. I was both lamenting and repenting to have seen so many Christians slaughter one another. So when I returned home, I repaired to a woody pasture. There I made a pavilion of boughs and lived the life of a hermit with but one man to serve as my squire. With me I had but two books. The former was a collection of the sayings of the Roman philosopher and emperor Marcus Aurelius. The latter was Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Art of War*.

In that humble field, with my horse and lance, I practiced the arts and crafts of knighthood. Lord Willoughby, my father's neighbor and noble friend, was so impressed by my devotion that he sent to me Master Theodore Paloga, the most famous horseman in Europe. I grew in skill under Paloga's tutelage until my horse and I were one creature. I could wield both sword and lance while riding at full gallop and force my steed to turn on a shilling. Then, well prepared for battle, I set out again into

the world, vowing to fight only the enemies of Christendom, like those knights of old who were far nobler than I could ever hope to be. Perhaps, dear reader, I shall later tell more of those adventures. But now I must return to my own restraint.

What then can be said about those circumstances that led to this humble knight's confinement aboard ship during those first days in distant Virginia? Two words alone may suffice. Envy and spite. To explain this I must go back and tell of what befell before we touched on the soil of the new world.

The great strain of our voyage had made tempers short. Immoderate words were oft spoken. As I have earlier told, by the time we fell with the Canaries, we had been at sea a full two and a half months. Through the skillfulness of our Admiral, we had suffered no great loss or danger. Having taken sail many times before, I was not as affected by the sea as were others on board. Some were close to death from seasickness. So, when we came to those whistling islands, I chose to tell yet another of my entertaining stories to take their minds from their troubles.

I modestly told of how in Hungary I, John Smith, engaged, one after the other, three Turkish champions. These were, to wit, the Lord Turbasha, one Gualgo, and Bonny Mulgro. By the skill of my sword I defeated each and took their heads as trophy. I then related the instructive tale of how, in dismal battle late in 1602, not long after winning my coat of arms, our forces were so overwhelmed that at the end I stood alone among the slaughtered dead bodies of my comrades, who had resolutely ended their days in defense of Christ and his Gospel. Then captured, I was delivered to the young and beautiful Turkish noblewoman Chratza Tragabigzanda, who took much compassion on me.

Even as I related these tales to an appreciative throng of planters and mariners alike, those haughty gentlemen mostly un-gently came upon me.

"Take the traitor," Wingfield snarled.

I forebore from struggle, though my sword was at my side. In truth, I knew I had done no wrong and could not imagine their charges would be believed.

Envyng both the admiration of our crew and my repute, Wingfield and his cronies then accused me of diverse crimes. The orders for government had been put in a box not to be opened, nor the governors known, until our arrival in Virginia. The petty plotters feigned that I, John Smith, intended to usurp the government, murder the council, and make myself king. They scandalously suggested that my confederates were dispersed in all the three ships and that diverse of my confederates who had revealed my plot would affirm it. So, though there was never no such matter, I was committed as a prisoner.

The penalty for such mutiny is death. This was the aim of their plan, and failing that, they hoped to make the name of John Smith so odious to the world as to touch his life or utterly overthrow his reputation. The importance and reputation of those gentlemen who sought my ruin was so great that I was restrained from then on. Our good Captain and many others misdoubted those words spoken against me. So, though restrained, I was not kept in irons nor—most fortunately—relieved of my personal arms.

When we fell with the island of Nevis, on the twenty-seventh of March, the eight days that we stayed there gave opportunity for those who hated John Smith to complete their plan. Upon the third day, I was informed, most casually, I would be

suffered to go ashore. I was curious to see this island. Indeed, I wondered also what labors had been taking place upon the shore, for the sound of sawing and hammering had drifted over the calm water. Ere I climbed down into the longboat, good John Collson, one of the mariners who had befriended me and harked to my stories, plucked my sleeve.

“Captain,” Collson whispered, “I beg ye to be cautelous. I doubt the subtlety of them who doth hate ye.”

I feigned not to hear his words, grateful though I was. The warning surprised me not. I had yet made sure that I was well braced and ready. I stood in the front of the longboat and sprang onto the beach before any man could close with me. Seeing their erstwhile victim so ready, no one was ready to see him restrained, least of all those gentlemen who were waiting my arrival by the foot of their construction. Not seeing me before I was upon them, their conversation was how they would now for once and all have done with the odious Smith. They shrank back in shock when I came upon them. The warrior Wingfield was chief of those to lead their hasty retreat.

I walked about their construction, whistling a small merry tune. My hand on the hilt of my cutlass, I gave their work a most careful examination. Well built that structure was, indeed. It was as fine a pair of gallows as might be seen in the Indies. Having satisfied my curiosity, I then did walk up from the beach and hewed a limb from a tree. Thrusting my sword point first in the sand before me, I took out my sharp poignard and carved that branch into a lovely bastinado, a club well suited for the cracking of thick skulls. I waited with great patience, but none approached me.

Alas, though they had labored hard upon that pair of gallows, Captain Smith, for whom they were intended, could not be persuaded to use them.

Thus it was that I spent a pleasant and unmolested several days upon the island of Nevis. When we set sail on April fifth, it was noted that someone had fired that subtle construction. The smoke that rose from the unused gallows was visible for many miles as we continued on our way.

POCAHONTAS: Dressing Myself

The Great Circle of the five good seasons then was made for the people, made by Great Ahone. The first of the seasons is Cattapeuk, when all of the leaves swell again on the trees. The second is sweet Cohattayough, when the berries are ripe and sweet. Nepinough is the season when the corn forms ears. Good Taquitock is the harvest season, when the leaves fall from the trees. Last of all is Cohonk, when the Geese fly in with the coming of the cold. Hardest of all the seasons, still it may seem the shortest of all. For we know well that when it is done, Cattapeuk and the leaves shall return again.

COHATTAYOUGH
TIME OF RIPE BERRIES
EARLY MAY 1607

THE NEW TASSANTASSUK have now made a camp for themselves. They have tied their swan canoes to the big trees along our river and put up small shelters made of white skins that look like the wings of their big boats. The place they have chosen to camp was once also a camping place of our people, close to the village of Paspahagh.

Because of the place they have chosen, it seems that they do not intend to grow crops. The soil is poor on that head of land, too marshy and close to the salt. Also, as my father noted, there seem to be no women among them. Women know the plants and can coax the corn and beans and squash from the soil. Only the tobacco likes best the touch of a man's hands. Since there are no women, my father believes that these men may be here to fight. Men without women are more likely to make war and behave recklessly. Women are always a sign and a means of peace.

Still, I am greatly curious about these Coatmen. I would like very much to visit them. As the daughter of the Great Chief, I can go where I choose, well protected by those who travel with me. And surely even these new Coatmen would not dare to mistreat someone such as myself.



My father has three times seen the death of nearly all his people. It is true that he has watched the leaves return eighty times. Most of those who were young with him have gone to the high place and stepped onto the road to the sunset. But it is not because of his age that this is true. Nor did so many of his people die because of the wars through which he forged our great alliance of seventy tribes. It was the sicknesses. New diseases came among us after the Tassantassuk touched our shore. Those sicknesses burned through our villages like fire through the dry grasses in summer. Some of our people believe that those sicknesses will continue to come as long as the Coatmen keep arriving.