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WAYWARD VOYAGE longlisted for the Virginia Prize for Fiction 2020.

BLIND EYE screenplay: joint-winner of the Green Stories screenplay competition 2020.

BLIND EYE novel: published by The Book Guild autumn 2021.

<https://www.dyingmatters.org/blog/viv-anna-holmes-part-three> 8 part blog published by

‘Dying Matters’

### **WAYWARD VOYAGE. Extract from chapter 1, voyage from Cork to Carolina, 1704**

She had given up trying to pick lice off her clothes and hair and resigned herself to itching day and night. When a sore bump under her arm began to weep pus, she was embarrassed to find herself crying again. Pa wiped away her tears. At home he used to shave every day but now he had a dirty beard. He laid her hand on his cheek.

‘I’ve got one under here too and—’ He leant closer and whispered, patting his backside. ‘Another down here. I can’t sit down.’

She laughed, just a little.

‘You’re such a brave girl, I’m so proud of you. It won’t be long now.’

But more days and weeks passed.

One day she watched four boys wearing only their breeches swinging from the ratlines. Anne could feel the boiling sun on the back of her neck and her shirt was sweaty so she stripped it off and clambered up to join them. Her hands were calloused like the sailors’, and she could hang on swinging and making whooping noises like the creatures called monkeys they had told her about. As she swung she wrapped her legs around one boy trying to pull him off.

‘Anne! Get down.’

Pa glared up at her, Ma by his side. He had shaved and they wore their best clothes.

‘Mary, I’ll not have her going ashore like this.’

Pa grabbed her leg and she fell into his arms.

‘Look at you, naked as a savage, filthy and scabby all over.’ Pa sighed.

She yowled when Ma dragged a comb through her salt-encrusted hair. She protested when her outgrown shoes were jammed on her feet. She squirmed when Ma laced her dress, but at least it had been washed and didn’t stink of sick.

At the rail she squeezed in front of Pa and Ma to get a good view.

The *William and Mary* glided into the estuary with just the jib catching enough wind for the helmsman to steer. She knew the names of things now. Ahead were low sand dunes and strange tall trees with spiky leaves, and the call of birds were unfamiliar.

‘So still... Empty...So humid...Nothing like home, William.’ Ma sounded anxious.

‘It’ll be fine – just fine.’ Pa always said that.

They slid past low swamp and brown creeks surrounded by reeds. Pa pointed out three shaven-headed brown-skinned men sitting in a canoe with fishing nets. One stood, a spear poised to strike a fish, naked except for a bit of cloth around his private parts. Ma gasped, and Pa cleared his throat, mumbling, ‘Well, well.’ Anne wondered if she would be allowed to run around naked in this new land.

Charles Town, where they’d come to live, came in view.

‘It’s tiny...’ Ma’s fingers clutched Anne’s shoulder.

Ma was right. It was a small settlement with half-built defensive walls edging the water and lots of forest behind.

‘You’d think they’d station a man-of-war here,’ Pa said to Ma.

There was nothing like that that Anne could see. Nothing much at all really.

Passengers began hauling trunks up as sailors dropped anchor, so Anne kept out of the way and watched small boats leaving the quayside to collect them. She counted six, then began counting the rowers. She stared at them to make sure before rushing off to find Ma to share her discovery.

‘Look at the men rowing. Look at their faces. They’re inky black!’

Ma’s fingers gripped tighter than before. Anne wriggled away, impatient to be ashore.

For all that this land was strange, William didn’t regret leaving Ireland – or Europe – as that distant place seemed to be tearing itself apart with land wars in the Netherlands and sea battles in Spanish waters.

The population of Charles Town, tucked into the point between the Ashley and Cooper Rivers, was tinier than he had expected – well below three thousand white settlers and as many blacks. There were taverns aplenty and a church or meeting house on every corner to satisfy all persuasions, whether Church of England or one of the Dissenter congregations such as Quaker, Methodist, Baptist. There was no tolerance for Catholics, so Mary would just have to adapt to this. Popish doctrine was too close to Spanish sovereignty – and the Spanish were themselves too close for comfort: south along the coast in Florida.

Taverns were the best place to pick up gossip and advice and William favoured the White Horse on the waterfront. The easy camaraderie reminded him of his first weeks at school as a new boy: survivors like to boast and create a frisson of danger for newcomers. At the White Horse he listened to stories of attacks and heard of men sliced and battered. One tough looking fellow had just returned from such an encounter. He’d taken up arms and joined with the militia and Creek Indians to attack and destroy Catholic missions on Spanish territory. Carolina wanted to discourage their better-established Spanish neighbours from

spreading the Roman Catholic faith far and wide to the Indian tribes. During the recent excursion, buildings had been razed, dozens killed, and hundreds of Indians - who had sided with the Spanish - enslaved.

‘That priest, he put up a decent fight. Reckon he’d put the fear of God into those Apalachees barricaded in the church along with him and women and kids. We tried to smoke ’em out, but arrows came flying. My word, they are accurate, make no mistake. I didn’t expect to make it back home.’

The fellow rolled up his breeches to show a nasty looking arrow wound on his thigh.

‘Well, turns out our God was on our side and the Popish God didn’t save ’em. It was a messy business, though we didn’t mean to harm the women and children, I swear to you....’

The fighting fellow chuckled and winked at William. ‘Brought some souvenirs home: four Indian bucks. Selling at a good price. Interested?’

‘Don’t waste your money, stay clear of ’em!’ The unmistakeable tones of an Ulsterman joined the conversation. ‘First chance they get, they’ll leg it into the interior back to their people. You’d be wiser putting your money into Africans. Where’re they going to go? Can’t swim home.’