

“ANYWHERE YOU GO, LET ME GO TOO”

by Vernanne Bryan

from the PROLOGUE

The Bishop of Acres had been killed. The Holy Cross which he had carried into battle was in the hands of an infidel. The dead horses of the Christian warriors were strewn over the hillside, some with their masters close by. When the victorious Moslems reached the hilltop, the knights and the king amongst them were lying on the ground, too weary to fight and no strength to hand their swords over in surrender. The Christian leaders were taken to a tent set up for the sultan on the battlefield.

Saladin received King Guy and his noblemen graciously. Seating the king next to him, he handed him a goblet of rose-water, iced with the snows of Hermon. Guy drank from it and handed the glass to the rebel baron who had raided the Egyptian caravan. By Arab laws of hospitality, to give food or drink to a prisoner meant that life would be spared. Saladin quickly told his interpreter to warn the king that he personally had not given that man drink. He then turned on the impious brigand and reminded him of his crimes, his treachery, his blasphemy, and his greed. When the man answered back arrogantly, Saladin took his sword and struck off his head.

Trembling, Guy thought his turn would come next. Saladin reassured him that a king does not kill a king; adding with fierceness that the man's perfidy and insolence had gone too far. He then gave orders that none of the lay barons were to be harmed, but he would not spare the knights of the Temple. To a band of fanatical Moslem *sufis* he gave the task of slaying his Templar captives, leaving their bodies to the jackals and hyenas in the hot desert sun.

Christians of the East had suffered tremendous losses before – on the Horns of Hattin the greatest army that the kingdom had ever assembled was annihilated. Worst of all, the Holy Cross was now lost to them. The victor was lord of the whole Moslem world. With his enemies destroyed, it only remained for Saladin to take over the fortresses of the Holy Land. One-by-one he especially sought and wiped out the Templar castles. For the Moslems, he had at last avenged the humiliation of the First Christian Crusade.

But further south would be one city Saladin would not take. This omission would prove to be his greatest mistake. Refugee Christian barons would crowd into Tyre, the strongest city of the coast joined to the mainland only by a narrow sandy peninsula across which an extensive wall had been built. Had he continued with his siege, the wall would have easily crumbled.

Into the port of Tyre against a soft pink and gold sunset sailed the black silhouette of a single European ship containing a beautiful noblewoman. She was seeking a particular Knight Templar. Constantly informed that it was highly unlikely he would still be alive, her heart refused to give in.

And so the progression of the family history had read, leaving more to mystery and imagination throughout the centuries for those to come after, for it was not the Knight Templar that had been lost.