

# [PDF] Total Surrender

## Cheryl Holt - pdf download free book

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### Description:

**About the Author Cheryl Holt** is a lawyer, mom, and bestselling novelist who lives on the Oregon coast. Her varied employment history includes public school teacher, mediator, cook, bartender, lobbyist, musician, and political activist. A graduate of the University of Wyoming College of Law, she worked as a law clerk for the Attorney General of Colorado and Wyoming. Later, she served as a deputy district attorney in metro-Denver. She has numerous national writing awards to her credit, including the prestigious Reviewer's Choice award from *Romantic Times* magazine. *Further Than Passion* is her thirteenth book.

She loves to hear from fans. You may visit her Web site at [www.cherylholt.com](http://www.cherylholt.com) or write to her at: [cheryl@cherylholt.com](mailto:cheryl@cherylholt.com)

**Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.** Chapter One

BEDFORD, ENGLAND, 1812 . . .

"My goodness!" Lady Sarah Compton murmured aloud as she sat up straight and peered out the window. "I didn't know things like that went on in the country!" Her voice resonated in the empty, elegantly appointed bedchamber to which she'd been assigned.

Down below, the grounds were immaculately tended, with walkways carved in symmetric lines through the shrubbery. Torches were flickering, and couples were strolling about, enjoying the summer evening. Far at the rear of the yard, one pair paused for a lingering kiss. Their lips melded, their arms wrapped tightly, the embrace continued on and on, and she watched, embarrassed about staring but unable to stop.

The man slipped his fingers inside the bodice of the woman's dress, tenderly caressing her voluptuous breast, and for some reason, Sarah's own breasts swelled in response. Her nipples tightened and elongated, rubbing irritatingly against her corset, making her aware of her body in a fashion she'd never been before. Uneasy with the odd sensations, she shifted about in the window seat where she'd reposed, but she couldn't get comfortable.

Eventually, the man lowered his hands to the woman's bottom, urging her closer by massaging her buttocks, and Sarah lurched forward, intrigued and amazed by the blatant spectacle, until gradually, the duo shifted away, heading into the shadows where she couldn't observe them.

Raising her fingertips to the glass, she held them against the pane, tracing in deliberate circles, her gaze lingering on the spot where they'd been. They looked so compatible, as if they unequivocally belonged together, and their display stirred in her an unbearable longing for a similar attachment with another.

Her room was cheerful and pleasant, decorated with light blue rugs, wallpapering and draperies.

The furniture was serviceable, the bed large and soft, the chairs cushioned for snuggling in front of the small hearth, but it was located on the third floor in a secluded wing of the mansion, which meant that there were no guests' voices or servants' footsteps passing by in the hall.

Though it was early June, the night was cool, and one of the maids had lit a fire. The dry wood popped and sizzled, creating the only sound in the silent chamber, and she felt totally removed, as if she was the very last person on earth, so disconnected that she might have been sitting on the moon. The twilight sky was a deep indigo fading to black, and a single star flickered on the horizon. As though she was a silly young girl, she nearly made a wish on it, but caught herself before engaging in the absurd flight of fancy.

Wishing was for fools.

Even if she still believed in such idiocy, what would she pray for anyway? A different fate? A fortune to fall upon her? A rich husband? How ludicrous! As if she'd marry on the spur of the moment just to rescue her brother, Hugh, from his current fiasco!

"What am I doing here?" she queried aloud, but no answer echoed in reply.

A sense of separation and disorientation manifested, which was out of character. Typically, she relished solitude and preferred her own company to the blathering of others. Yet, now, she found herself yearning for . . .

She wasn't quite certain what. A huge cloud of dissatisfaction hovered over and around her, and she couldn't shake it. Nothing interested her, and there appeared to be no appropriate remedy for what ailed her. Since she wasn't precisely sure of her affliction, she couldn't concoct a cure.

Until recently, she'd always been assured of her path. Her reclusive life in the country, her management of the family's Yorkshire estate, those decisions had been easily made and the results gratifying. But no longer. Discontentment reigned supreme.

Perhaps her restlessness was due to her advancing age. At twenty-five, she was entitled to evaluate the turns in her road, to review the detours she'd selected because of her unwavering recognition of duty and responsibility. The men in her family had never shown a predilection for preserving the ancient Scarborough title or property, so she'd juggled a cumbersome burden.

In the process, she'd given up a chance for her own home and children. While in the past, she'd

never thought she'd wanted them and had never obsessed over their absence, of late, the missed opportunities were weighing heavily.

Should she have wed all those years ago?

She'd actually had a Season in London, but when she'd gone at age sixteen, she'd been ungainly and socially inept. Teased and laughed at, she'd been tormented, and the butt of more than a few cruel jests. Girls had tittered behind their fans over her genuineness, her lack of sophistication. Boys had snickered over her inadequate breasts, her crimson hair, her unwillingness to hide her intellect. She'd fled the city, vowing never to return. Despite their father's subsequent ultimatums and demands, his insistence that she marry to shore up the family's lagging finances, she'd rebuffed his attempts at wedding her to any of the cruel oafs of the aristocracy who had belittled her. A categorical spinster, she'd spent the intervening years flourishing in the country at the Yorkshire property she loved.

Since those early days, she'd blossomed and matured, and she could have selected another path for herself. If she had, her life would be so different. She'd be admired, cherished and respected, a nobleman's wife, a parent. Instead, she'd remained single, a sort of jaded nanny for her father and half brother—two adults who had no inclination to grow up, and who had thus required incessant mothering. Somehow, somehow, she'd succumbed to the insupportable existence, and she couldn't tolerate the untenable onus inflicted upon her by those she was supposed to love.

When her father had been alive, it hadn't seemed so difficult. He'd been a kindly man, with good intentions, but his judgment was perpetually routed by bad choices. His disasters had habitually left him perplexed over the size of the catastrophes he'd wrought, but with his death, Hugh had assumed the title of Earl of Scarborough, and he gambled and played as though decadent comportment was his preordained right.

In direct contrast to their departed father, Hugh never evinced any fondness for the estate or the people who depended upon its prosperity for their incomes, and he was even more apathetic now that his character had worsened. Drink and fast living had brought on strange mood swings, and he could be cruel, prone to violent outbursts and heedless conduct.

His latest gambling blunder was a perfect example of his slide to perdition, and she couldn't help but replay their horrid conversation, when they'd discussed the loss and the unknown man who'd prompted it. The words tumbled through her head like a bad refrain, flaying her with the evidence of the sorry state of her affairs.

"Was it the faro tables?" she'd asked him, as if the method of his downfall had mattered!

"No."

"But it was cards?"

"A few games of commerce is all."

"I see. How much?"

"All that's left."

"Define all."

"Whatever is not entailed to the title."

"The furniture?"

"Yes."

"The last of the farming equipment?"

"Yes."

"The clothes off my back?"

"Perhaps. I'm not sure how far he will dip into the personal possessions of the family."

"How about me?" she'd probed starkly. "Have you wagered me away, too?"

"He'd have no use for you," Hugh had retorted coldly. "He typically likes his women a tad on the feminine side."

The cut had been harsh, striking at her old insecurities, and it still hurt to think that he'd uttered it, but that was Hugh: rash, negligent, and caustic.

What she wouldn't give to throttle him! It was bad enough that he'd gambled away the last of their

possessions, but the twenty thousand pounds he'd lost as well—money they didn't have and never would—was reckless beyond imagining.

When he'd visited at Yuletide, she'd given him the last three-hundred pounds from her dowry, and she'd warned him there was no more. Not that he'd listened. He'd forged ahead with his corrupt course and, while the villain holding his markers had allowed him three months to pay, there was no way they could come up with that amount of cash.

Of course, Hugh's solution was that she save him, once again, by marrying a wealthy husband as quickly as possible. The idea was absurd, yet she'd found herself agreeing to try, simply because she hated being at odds with him, but she was heartily weary of pandering to his needs, of adapting to his degeneracy, scrimping and saving, never having enough.

How she hated being poor!

Perhaps that was the real reason she'd decided to go visiting and had traveled to Bedford and Lady Carrington's house party—for it assuredly wasn't in order to snag a spouse as Hugh insisted she must.

Excessive, unrelenting poverty was so grim. Didn't she deserve a bit of fun? Hadn't she earned some frivolity and merriment?

There was so little joy in her days, no carefree, gay entertainments, no pleasurable meals or leisurely afternoons spent at capricious pursuits. There was just apprehension and despondency and gloom, and now—with Hugh's latest conundrum—there was desperation, too, but she'd been expecting the worst forever so the end was anticlimactic.

For once, she had no inclination to rescue Hugh. She'd delivered him from one debacle after the next until he'd be...

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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