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nine days



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Nine Days

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12 June 1553

The room smelt of death. John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, fought the urge to gag as he entered. It would not do to be seen to be repulsed by ones King, particularly if one needed something from him.

Edward, the sixth King of England to bear that name, lay in bed, his discoloured, blotchy skin covered with sores. His hair had all but gone now and his stomach was hideously distended. The boy raised his head and retched, but Edward had stopped eating long ago and all that came from his mouth was a trickle of pale yellow liquid. *What I am about to do will be a mercy*, Northumberland mused, though he was under no illusion as to how posterity would judge him.

Edward's nurse was keeping vigil at the boy's bedside.

'You can leave us,' Northumberland instructed her. Northumberland was a tall man, with pinched features and a thin beard that traced the line of his jaw. His grey eyes were cold and unsympathetic.

'My lord, I really don't think...' the nurse began, but Northumberland cut her off.

'That wasn't a request.' The woman continued to dither, so the duke added, 'It's not as if I can make his condition any worse.'

The nurse was forced to concede that point and slunk from the room. Northumberland sat down in the now vacant chair.

'Your Majesty,' he said. Edward continued to stare at a point somewhere to his left.

Dark storm clouds were gathering outside and the only illumination came from a lantern on the desk. Northumberland waved his hand in front of the King's face to attract his attention. Edward tilted to face him, but his blue eyes were still glassy and blank. His periods of lucidity were becoming less and less frequent as the illness ate at both his body and his mind. *Let this be one of those times*, Northumberland prayed. *I only need a few moments.*

'Your Majesty,' he repeated.

Edward squinted at him. 'Your Grace, the Duke of Northumberland.'

Northumberland bowed. 'The same. Your Majesty, there is a matter of grave importance we must discuss.'

'What... What matter?' The King forced the words from his raw, parched throat.

'The succession, your Majesty. You realise, should something untoward happen to you, God forbid it, that your sister Mary will assume the throne. Your *Catholic* sister Mary.'

Edward's lips curled into something that might have been a smile. 'There's no need to deceive me. I know that I'm dying.'

'Nonsense,' Northumberland replied. 'It is just a passing illness, nothing more.'

The King shook his head wearily. 'As to my sister, do you think I want to abandon my people to a Catholic ruler? But she is the rightful heir, as ordered by my father.'

'If I might be so bold, your Majesty, I believe King Henry was mistaken. Your sister is a bastard and, by law, a bastard cannot inherit. Think of your people, sire. Think of the true faith as set down by the father you hold dear. Do you really believe that this is what he would have wanted, to have England governed by a heretic?'

'Then what would you have me do?'

'All it would take is your signature on a legal document, an amendment to the established order of succession.'

'Then have the document drawn up at once.'

Northumberland smiled and produced a furled roll of parchment. 'I have already taken the liberty.'

Edward pulled himself up in his bed. 'To think that it will take just a stroke of my pen to save England. The crown will be in good hands with Elisabeth once I am gone.'

'I think not, you Majesty.' Northumberland drew back, taking the parchment out of the King's reach. Elisabeth was wilful and headstrong, difficult for Northumberland to control. No, Elisabeth as Queen would not do at all.

'I don't understand. You know my sister to be a good Protestant. She would be an ideal successor.'

'Under different circumstances, I have no doubt,' Northumberland agreed, thinking swiftly, 'but there is the small matter of the law. If Mary is declared a bastard then it follows that Elisabeth must be one also.'

Edward's brow furrowed. He could sense that Northumberland's logic was flawed, but could not think clearly enough to see how.

'Then who should succeed us?'

'Might I suggest your cousin, the Lady Jane? You will recall her positive zeal for our faith.'

'I also recall that she is married to your son, your Grace,' Edward replied.

'Indeed,' Northumberland said, inclining his head, 'and as such I have come to know the girl quite well. You will not find a better candidate for this honour.'

'So you say, and yet I wonder...' A terrible bout of coughing wracked Edward's frail body and he fell back on the bed, convulsing. Northumberland leaned forward, but the King, bringing himself under control, waved him away. 'A moment's weakness. Nothing more.'

'Such moments are becoming more frequent,' Northumberland commented.

Edward sighed. 'Your point is taken,' he admitted. 'Time is short and if this is the only way to safeguard my England...'

He held out his hand for the parchment and Northumberland gave it to him, trying not to look at where fingernails had once been. The quill scraped across the paper and then Edward closed his eyes.

'It is done,' he murmured.

'Indeed it is,' Northumberland agreed.

The nurse was waiting at the door as Northumberland left the room. He paused.

'Are you treating him with arsenic?'

The nurse nodded. 'It can prolong life, in small doses.'

'Double his dose,' Northumberland said. 'No, let's be sure. Treble it.'

'But that will kill him,' the nurse protested.

'He's dying anyway. You're simply hastening the inevitable.'

'But...'

'Nurse, in a very short time, I shall be the most powerful man in the country. Do you really feel up to crossing me?' Thunder cracked as the storm broke. 'I didn't think so. Increase the dose. The King has outlived his usefulness.'

10 July 1553

Jane Dudley, Queen of England, stood in the barge that carried her down the River Thames towards the Tower of London. She was wearing a green velvet dress, decorated with gold, and chopines, shoes with a raised cork sole to make her appear taller than she really was. Her clothes, however, could not disguise the fact that Jane was both short and very thin.

Tiny though she may have been, her features were attractively proportioned and her skin had a good colour, marred only by a smattering of freckles across her cheeks and nose. Her eyebrows were arched and of a darker brown than her hair, which, where it peeked out from beneath her coif, glowed almost red in the early afternoon sunshine. Her hazel eyes sparkled and she kept her gaze fixed directly ahead, staring off into the distance. She appeared outwardly calm, but an attentive observer might have noticed her fiddling nervously with the lace at her wrists. She was fifteen years old.

Reclining indolently next to her, clad in white and silver, was Jane's husband, Guildford Dudley. He was tall, strong and handsome, with fair hair and sharp, white teeth, which he proudly displayed to the crowd as he grinned at them, revelling in the attention. One arm hung loosely over the side of the boat and tips of his long fingers trailed through the water.

Along the banks of the river, the people of London had gathered to witness the arrival of their new Queen, which had been declared in a proclamation posted in church porches throughout the capital, and indeed up and down the country, the previous day. The crowd stood in stony silence, however, bar the occasional smatter of discontented muttering. The only noise came from the rhythmic beat of the drummers clad in their royal regalia. *Tum, tum-tum. Tum, tum-tum.*

At the opposite end of Jane's barge, Frances Brandon, Jane's mother and Duchess of Suffolk, turned to her husband.

'Why aren't they cheering? There should be cheering.'

Frances had whispered her concerns, but her daughter's keen ears had picked up every word. In appearance - and, some would argue, in attitude - Frances was the female equivalent of her uncle, the late King Henry VIII. Her husband, though barrel-chested and with a spade-like beard, looked insignificant by comparison.

'They'll cheer in time,' Henry, Duke of Suffolk, assured his wife. 'They just have to get used to the idea, that's all.'

'They cheered Edward.' Frances glanced at her daughter and hissed, 'Jane, stop playing with your dress. Remember where you are.'

Jane's mouth was too dry to form a reply, but she stilled her hands.

'Edward was Henry's son,' the Duke of Suffolk said. 'Jane is only Edward's cousin.'

'She's his chosen successor,' Frances pointed out.

'I know that and you know that.' Suffolk swept his hand in an arc to indicate the crowd. 'Even *they* know it. But, as I say, they've yet to get used to the idea. Give them time.'

Frances folded her arms and scowled.

In a boat following along behind sat the Duke of Northumberland. He was dressed in a black doublet and hose with matching cap, beneath which he studied the crowd. His eyes narrowed.

'You look troubled, my love,' his wife said.

'I'd hoped that the crowd might take to the girl when they saw her,' Northumberland said, 'but they're still distrustful.'

'They'll accept her as Queen soon enough. They have no choice.'

Northumberland shook his head wryly. 'You forget, my dear, that Mary Tudor refused to answer our summons. As long as she is still free, she can oppose us.'

'And who is going to rally to the support of a sickly old woman with neither money nor influence?'

'You'd be surprised.'

'Then have them arrested for treason,' the Duchess of Northumberland said. 'Jane is the rightful Queen as named in Edward's will.'

'A will written by a child has no validity in law,' Northumberland replied. 'Even if Mary doesn't realise that, I'm sure Elisabeth does. I'll feel much better when they are both confined and I can keep an eye on them.'

'Then detain them,' his wife said, 'and ensure that our son gets his kingdom.'

'Yes, dear, whatever you say.'

By this point, the flotilla had arrived at the Tower. Jane disembarked cautiously, tottering unsteadily on her unfamiliar shoes. Guildford Dudley offered her his arm for support, but she shrunk away from him. Jane's mother took up her train and together the royal party processed past the onlookers and into the Tower's apartments. Once out of sight of the general populace, Jane bowed her head and raised a hand to her temple, the strain making her dizzy.

'Stand up straight, Jane,' her mother snapped in a harsh whisper. 'You're still on display and I will not have you disgracing this family.'

'I'm sorry, mother,' Jane replied.

'Don't apologise.' Frances sounded more annoyed by this than by the original mistake. 'You're the Queen now. Start acting the part.'

Jane was guided through to the presence chamber in the White Tower and seated herself on a chair on the raised dais at the far end of the room. The lords who made up the Privy Council filed into the hall behind her and took up their positions along the walls to either side of her. Walking to the edge of the dais, Northumberland dropped to his knees before Jane. As one, the other councillors followed suit. The Marquess of Winchester, the Lord Treasurer and only councillor still standing, shuffled forward, his back bowed by age. In his hands, he carried the crown on a velvet cushion.

'Your Majesty,' he began, raising it up, 'if you will permit me...'

Involuntarily, Jane retreated from Winchester as far as her chair would allow. 'I don't know. I don't think I should.'

'Only for a moment,' Winchester said, 'just to see if it fits.'

The eyes of everyone in the room were fixed on Jane and her voice quavered as she said, 'I'm not sure that it's my right. Shouldn't the Lady Mary be here instead of me?'

There was an audible gasp from the councillors. Frances was glaring angrily at her daughter.

'Foolish girl,' Northumberland muttered.

'Jane,' Guildford said hurriedly, 'you have to take the crown.'

'I don't have to do anything, Guildford.'

'Don't you,' Northumberland said smoothly. 'Aren't you obliged to honour the late King's wishes? Did he not name you as his rightful heir?'

'My cousin was ill and I don't believe he was in his right mind when he made that will,' Jane said, fixing Northumberland with a piercing stare, 'and it may be that others manipulated him to their own ends.'

Northumberland bowed his head, hiding the smile that was tugging at the corners of his mouth.

'Not so foolish girl,' he murmured to himself.

'Your Grace,' Winchester said to Jane, 'think of the Church. The *true* Church. Think of what would happen to those of the true Faith if Catholic Mary takes the throne. You owe it to them to take the crown.'

'I...' Jane was torn. She closed her eyes, blotting out distractions, but it did not help. Then she felt a firm hand envelope her own.

'You can take the crown,' a familiar voice told her. 'It's the right thing to do.'

Jane opened her eyes, taking in the sharp cheekbones, high forehead and swept back grey hair.

'Doctor,' she said.

24 August 1550

A cow flicked its tail to discourage the flies buzzing round it and pricked up its ears as a raucous trumpeting shattered the peace of the Leicestershire countryside. A short distance away, a blue box faded into existence. The cow stared at it for a moment, assessing its importance, then returned to its grazing. A door in the box creaked open and a man in a grey morning-suit emerged.

'Don't worry, Silver, I'll only be a moment,' this man – the Doctor – called back into the box. 'I just need to check our bearings and we can be on our way.'

He stuffed his hands deep into his trouser pockets and began to stroll across the field.

'I don't suppose you know where we are?' he asked the cow. The cow blinked at him. 'The silent treatment, eh? I suppose I'll just have to work it out for myself.' He looked around. 'Earth, or at least Earth-like.' He bent down, plucked a blade of grass and chewed on it. 'No, definitely Earth.' He inhaled a deep breath of air. 'And pre-industrial Earth at that.'

His reverie was cut short as the raucous trumpeting cut through the air once again. He ran back across the field, but the box was fading away too quickly and, by the time he reached the spot where it had landed, the box had gone.

'Stupid, stupid, stupid Doctor,' he cursed himself. 'Forgot to set the drift compensators.'

The cow lowed.

'I don't see what you're laughing at,' the Doctor said. 'It's something any slightly absent-minded genius might have done.' He took a fob watch from his waistcoat pocket and consulted it. Having failed to properly back the TARDIS, his time-space machine was now sliding forwards in time. The only question was when it would next materialise. 'Hm, one hundred and seventy-nine days and eleven hours. That can't be right.' He consulted the watch again. Unfortunately, the readings had not changed. 'Six months! I'm stuck here for six months!'

The Doctor sighed and pocketed his watch. Then he crossed to the cow and scratched it behind its ears. 'Well, I suppose I should make the best of it. Which way to civilisation, my friend? That way? Is it far...?'

A half-hour's brisk walking later, the Doctor had arrived at a large, square, red-brick building decorated with turrets and boasting an imposing gatehouse. The Doctor paused and inspected his clothes. Dusting off the mud of the road, he straightened his jacket and marched up to the door before tugging on the bell-rope. He waited and watched the ducks frolic in the pond in the garden. He rang the bell again, but again he was left waiting. Finally, when it became clear that no one was going to answer his summons, the Doctor decided to explore, circling the building and peering in through the windows as he did so. At the back of the house, looking out towards Charnwood Forest, the Doctor's search was rewarded. Looking in at the arched window, he could see a young girl in a grey dress sitting at a table that was buried beneath a rich red and gold cloth. On the table, propped

up on a wooden stand, was a heavy book. The book was open and the girl was following the words with her forefinger as she read.

The Doctor tapped at the window and the girl jumped. She mouthed something at him and the Doctor cupped a hand to his ear to show that he could not hear her. Rising from her chair, the girl crossed the room and opened the window.

'Good morning, sir,' she said. 'Who are you and what are you doing at my window?'

'I'm the Doctor and I was looking for someone to talk to. Are you alone in the house? Where is everybody?'

'They've gone hunting,' the girl explained. 'They'll be back presently if you want to wait.'

The Doctor nodded thoughtfully. 'So they've all gone hunting and they've left you behind?'

'I have my studies. To tell you the truth, I prefer it this way.'

'You do? Good book is it?'

'Plato's *Phaedo*. Have you read it?'

'Read it? I criticised the first draft for him.' The Doctor paused. 'Hold on a moment. Plato? How old are you?'

'Twelve,' the girl replied, 'but I'll be thirteen in two months.'

'Twelve years old and already reading Plato.' The Doctor squinted at the book. 'And in the original Greek, no less. Do you really prefer doing this than being out there?' He pointed in the direction of the trees.

'Yes, sir.' The girl looked down at her feet. When she raised her head again, her hazel eyes sparkled with defiance. 'Do you want to know the truth? When I'm with my father and mother, it doesn't matter what I do - whether I open my mouth or stay silent, whether I'm cheerful or sad, whether I'm sewing or playing, dancing or eating - it's always wrong and they punish me for it. But when I'm at my studies, they leave me alone and I am at peace. For that reason, I find far more pleasure in my books than in an activity in which I might take part in the company of my parents.'

The Doctor was momentarily taken aback by the girl's forthrightness. 'So you're saying that you like Plato then?'

The girl grinned, showing off a set of perfect white teeth. 'Very much so, sir, yes.'

'Would you mind reading some to me?' the Doctor asked.

The girl returned to her desk. 'In Greek or English?'

The Doctor considered. 'Both. That is, if you don't mind.'

The Doctor rested his arm on the window-ledge, his elbow jutting into the study, and looked out towards the forest as the girl began to read aloud. First, she would share a passage in Greek, then she would repeat the same passage in English, more hesitantly on account of having to translate as she went along. She had a clear, precise reading voice that the Doctor found soothing.

A dozen pages later, the sound of hoof beats could be heard pounding up the hill.

'The master of the house returns,' the Doctor remarked.

The girl's father reined in his horse and, seeing the Doctor standing at the window, he jumped down from his mount and stormed towards him, spry in spite of his girth.

'Who are you, sir,' he bellowed, 'and what are you doing with my daughter?'

'Father, he wasn't doing any harm.' The girl rushed to the Doctor's defence.

Her father rounded on her. 'I'll be the judge of that, Jane,' he said, 'and you can be sure that your mother will have something to say about your insolence.' He turned back to the Doctor. 'Well, sir, are you going to answer my question? Who are you?'

'I could ask you the same,' the Doctor replied calmly.

'I am Henry Grey, Duke of Suffolk. I own this house and these lands around you.'

'Jane. Jane Grey,' the Doctor muttered to himself.

Suffolk frowned. 'What of it?'

The Doctor burst into life, taking the duke's hand in his and pumping it vigorously. 'It's a pleasure to finally meet you, your Grace.'

'It is?' Suffolk snatched his hand back. 'Devil take you, would you kindly tell me who you are?'

'Don't you know?' the Doctor asked, his eyes shining with amusement. 'I'm your daughter's new tutor.'

10 July 1553

'Take the crown,' the Doctor repeated. 'It's too late to back out now.'

Jane was relieved when he gave her hand a squeeze. The additional pressure helped to convince her that he was real and not a product of wishful thinking.

The Marquess of Winchester looked at her hopefully. Jane nodded to him and removed her coif from her head so that he could replace it with the crown. It was heavier than she had expected and Winchester had to steady it to stop it falling from her head and ending up on the floor.

'Most becoming, your Majesty,' Winchester said.

'He's right, you know. Though by looking at him, you wouldn't think he'd know much about fashion.' The Doctor kept his voice low so that only Jane could hear and she had to fight to stop herself from giggling. It had been too long since the two of them had last shared secrets.

'Your Majesty, if you'll excuse me?' Winchester leaned forward and retrieved the crown. 'I must make this ready for your formal coronation.'

'Of course. Will that be all?' Jane looked to Northumberland who nodded. 'In that case, I shall retire to my rooms. Doctor, attend me.' She lowered her voice. 'That is what queens say, isn't it?'

'Attend *us*,' the Doctor corrected her. 'You have the right to talk about yourself in plural now. Though why anyone would want to has always been something of a mystery to me...'

As the lords dispersed, the Duchess of Northumberland approached her husband.

'What was that about?' she demanded. 'That stupid child nearly gave away the crown.'

'But she didn't,' her husband pointed out.

'Fortunately for you. You promised me that our son would be King.'

'And he will be.'

'Not if that girl gets her way.'

'Jane can be brought into line,' Northumberland assured his wife. 'The Greys have as much riding on this arrangement as we do. I think we can rely on them to make sure Jane does as she's told.'

'You had better be right, John,' his wife replied.

Jane and the Doctor had reached the apartments set aside for the Queen. Jane's parents were right behind them.

'Could you excuse us for a moment, Doctor,' the Duke of Suffolk said. 'My wife and I would like to talk to our daughter in private.'

'Not at all.' The Doctor inclined his head and then turned to Jane. 'We'll wait for you inside.'

He ducked through the door. Once he was gone, Frances exploded.

'What did you think you were playing at in there? Refusing the crown indeed.'

'It shouldn't be mine,' Jane said.

'And don't we all know it,' Frances snapped back. 'I have more right to be Queen than you do, but I sacrificed my claim to give you this opportunity and I will not see you waste it, do you understand? Don't you ever embarrass your father and me like that again.'

'Embarrass you? We're talking about ignoring the legal right of succession and that's all that matters to you?'

'Don't you dare answer me back, girl. You're not too old for me to give you the thrashing you deserve.'

Jane's eyes narrowed 'Not too old perhaps, but I am Queen, remember? Maybe I should order you beaten in my place.'

Frances paled. Her mouth moved, but no words emerged. Jane spun on her heel and walked away, leaving her parents standing alone and subdued in the corridor.

When Jane entered her apartments, she saw that the Doctor was not alone.

'Who's this?' she asked.

'Your Majesty,' the Doctor said, 'allow me to present Miss Rachel Silverstein.'

The Doctor's companion raised a hand in a half-hearted wave. 'Call me Silver,' she said.

'Silver? Are you the Doctor's new student?'

'Student?' Silver laughed and folded her arms across her chest. 'I don't think so.'

'Silver is my travelling companion, your Majesty,' the Doctor explained.

'You don't have to stand on ceremony with me, Doctor.' Jane sat down, smoothing her skirts as she did so.

'Of course not, your Majesty.'

'That means you can drop the "your Majesty". I'm still not comfortable with it.'

'Then maybe *your Majesty* should start getting used to the idea,' the Doctor suggested.

'Stop it,' Jane said.

The Doctor grinned. 'Stop what, your Majesty.'

Jane tipped back her head and laughed. 'You're impossible, do you know that?'

'He should do,' Silver interjected. 'I've told him often enough.'

'Wonderful,' the Doctor muttered. 'Now you can both gang up on me.'

Silver rolled her eyes in Jane's direction and the young queen giggled.

'It's been a long time since I last laughed like that,' Jane said when she had recovered at least some of her composure. 'A little over two years I should think, since my favourite tutor disappeared into the night.'

'Yes, well, I'm sorry about that.' The Doctor was looking at a point on the wall rather than at Jane directly.

The moment dragged on to the point where it started to become uncomfortable, so Silver stepped in.

'How did you two meet, anyway?' she said.

'It was while we were on route to...' The Doctor trailed off, his brow furrowed in concentration. 'Actually, I forget where now. Doesn't matter. Anyway, I had just made a

brief stop to recalibrate the coordinates and, while I was outside, the TARDIS just slipped away.'

'Slipped away?'

'Well, er, yes,' the Doctor replied. 'I'd forgotten to initialise the drift compensators when we landed so the TARDIS hadn't synchronised its temporal momentum with that of Earth's timeline and, before I knew it, she and I were out of phase.'

Silver considered. 'So what you mean is that you forgot to set the handbrake and she rolled off without you.'

'No, what I meant is what I said. Must you always reduce everything to a twenty-first century analogy?'

'What can I say? It helps us mere mortals cut through your technobabble.'

'Technobabble? Technobabble? I despair sometimes, I really do. I try to impart some detailed scientific knowledge and this is the thanks I get. Technobabble.'

'Whatever. So you were stranded, right?'

'Yes,' the Doctor replied, 'at least until the TARDIS and I stepped back into phase, which I calculated would next take place in about six months' time. Now obviously I couldn't pass six months sitting in a field...'

'Obviously.'

'...so I went in search of civilisation.'

'And you found me,' Jane said.

'And where was I during this six months, Doctor?' Silver asked. 'I don't remember being on my own for all that time.'

'Well, no, you wouldn't,' he Doctor replied offhandedly. 'That's the beauty of time travel. Now, if you'd let me get back to my story...'

'Whatever.'

'Thank you,' the Doctor said. 'Jane was in need of a tutor, I was in need of a place to stay. It seemed a mutually beneficial arrangement.'

'Until you left,' Jane pointed out.

The Doctor squirmed in his seat. 'Yes, there is that, but it's not as if you haven't done well for yourself in my absence. Queen of England is not a job to be sniffed at.'

'I think the most my father ever hoped for me was doctor or lawyer,' Silver said. 'I don't think royalty ever entered into it.'

'Did you keep up with your correspondence as I suggested?' the Doctor asked Jane.

'I kept in touch with Ascham, like you said,' Jane replied, nodding, 'and he suggested writing to Bullinger and Ulmer.'

'Henry Bullinger?' The Doctor leaned forward in his chair. 'I've always meant to go and meet him. What's he like?'

'Alas, I've never had the opportunity to meet him face-to-face,' Jane said, 'but if his letters are to be believed, he's a really intelligent man. Not quite on your level, though.'

'Who is?' the Doctor replied.

Silver hid a yawn behind her hand.

'I'm going to leave the two of you to catch up,' she said, 'while I go and find somewhere to lie down. It's been a long day.'

Engrossed in their conversation, neither the Doctor nor Jane noticed her leave the room.

Silver wandered through the stone corridors marvelling at how quiet it was. She had been to the Tower once before, on a visit to London, and on that occasion all the tourists had been pressed together, their conversations amplified and echoed by the walls. Today, there were only the councillors and the Grey and Dudley families in residence and the Tower felt deserted in comparison.

She knew it was rude to just walk out on the Doctor and the Queen like that, but she needed some time by herself to process what they had just told her. Six months. She had thought that they were a team, but the Doctor had gone off without her for six whole months. Was this the first time this had happened or had he been making a habit of it? Part of her wanted to confront him about it, but a larger part was afraid to find out. She found herself replaying all of their previous travels in her head. How difficult would it have been for him to slip back to the TARDIS without her and go off by himself for a few hours, or even a few years? Like the man said, that was the beauty of time travel; with the TARDIS, he could always return the instant after he had first left and no one would be any the wiser.

Am I that boring, Silver asked herself, that he needs to get away from me for a while? She knew that she was not the first girl that the Doctor had travelled with. Was the Doctor now growing tired of her as well?

Her reverie was interrupted by the sound of voices in the distance.

'How long will it take to make the alterations?' The first voice was soft, but the diction so precise that its owner didn't need to raise it to be overheard.

'Oh, not too long, I should think. The modifications are quite minor.'

By contrast, the second voice was more difficult to make out. The man speaking was mumbling and Silver crept forward to get into a better position for eavesdropping. She did not feel overly guilty about spying on the two men. The Doctor clearly knew where they were, but had neglected to share the information with her. Therefore, she had to figure things out by her own devices. Keeping herself pressed against the wall, Silver peered around the doorframe in an attempt to identify the speakers.

'Good, I want to get the formal coronation out of the way as soon as possible. A bit of pomp and circumstance may help to placate the masses.'

The man in black was the Duke of Northumberland. Judging by his attitude in the presence chamber, Silver suspected that he was head of the council. The man talking to him was the man who had given Jane the crown. Silver recognised him because he was still carrying the crown now.

'Don't forget, Winchester, that you'll need to get a second crown made for my son,' Northumberland was saying.

'Are you sure that the Queen will approve?'

'Let me worry about the Queen.' Northumberland placed a hand on Winchester's shoulder. On the surface, it was a friendly gesture, but Silver saw Winchester flinch beneath Northumberland's touch. 'She's only a child. Do you really think she's capable of running the country without a firm hand to help her?'

'Your hand, I suppose,' Winchester said, making no attempt to mask the bitterness in his voice.

'I am her father-in-law, after all,' Northumberland continued amiably. 'I can't help but feel responsible for the girl.'

Queen Jane, clad only in a simple white shift, sat at her table while her nurse combed out her hair. Her green dress, which the nurse had already helped her out of, was hanging up on her wardrobe. The nurse finished her work and put the comb down at the edge of the table.

'Thank you, Mistress Ellen,' Jane said. She was looking at her reflection in the mirror, noting with some concern the dark shadows under her eyes. And this was only her first day as monarch.

'Will there be anything else, your Majesty?' the nurse asked.

'No, that will be all,' Jane said, rising to her feet. 'Goodnight, Mistress Ellen.'

'Goodnight, your Majesty.' The nurse curtsied.

Jane stepped forward and, taking the nurse's hands in her own, helped back up. 'Mistress Ellen, please call me Jane when we are alone, the way you used to when you were teaching me my letters. Have I changed so much since then?'

'It wouldn't be proper, your Majesty.'

'Not even out of friendship?' Jane's heart sank. Was this how it was going to be from now on? Did her new status set her so far apart that she had only loneliness to look forward to. She could order the nurse to call her by her name, as Queen she had that power over her, but that was not what she wanted.

'Goodnight, Mistress Ellen.'

The nurse turned to leave, but hesitated when she reached the threshold. She looked back over her shoulder.

'Goodnight... Jane,' she said.

A smile lit up the young Queen's face and then the nurse was gone. Jane turned back the coverlet on her bed and was about to retire for the night when there was a knock at the door. Before Jane could react, the door was thrown open and Guildford Dudley entered the room. He was naked from the waist up.

'Guildford,' Jane said, 'what are you doing here?'

'I'm your husband,' Guildford replied. 'Where else would I be?'

'You have your own rooms.'

'I have my own bed, but that doesn't mean I want to spend the night alone.'

'Well, I don't want to spend the night with you.'

'You're my wife,' Guildford said. 'Why can't you act like it?'

He grabbed Jane by the wrist and, pulling her close to him, kissed her savagely on the mouth. Jane shoved him away.

'Get off of me,' she spat, wiping her lips with the back of her hand. 'Get out. Have you forgotten that I'm the Queen?'

'And I'm King,' Guildford replied proudly, 'or I will be and I can take what I want.'

'King? You? You'll never be King, Guildford, not as long as there is breath in my body.'

'But... But...' Guildford gawped at Jane. 'But I'm married to the Queen. That makes me the King, doesn't it? Mother and Father promised that I'd be King.'

'Poor baby,' Jane sneered. 'Did you really think I'd ever make you King? You disgust me. Now get out. Get out before I call the guards and have you thrown out.'

'So it sounds like the Duke of Northumberland is plotting to get rid of the Queen.'

The Doctor had finally returned to the rooms that had been allocated to him and Silver and she was telling him about the conversation she had overheard. The Doctor, however, did not seem to be all that interested.

'It doesn't surprise me,' he replied, taking a bite from an apple. 'Northumberland only tolerates Jane because he has no claim to the throne without her. The Dudleys are fairly insignificant as English nobles go. The Greys, on the other hand, or rather the Brandons, Jane's mother's family, are part of the royal line. With the legitimacy of Henry the Eighth's direct descendants in question, they do have a potential claim on the throne. And by joining with them, by marrying his son to Jane, Northumberland makes that claim his own.'

'But now that his son is King, doesn't that make Jane expendable?' Silver asked.

'Being married to the Queen doesn't make you King,' the Doctor said, 'not outside of fairy tales at any rate. Jane could choose to make Guildford King if she wanted to, but until she does or until she has a son, she's the only thing keeping the Dudleys on the throne of England. While I don't doubt that Northumberland would happily do away with Jane once she has outlived her usefulness, for the moment, he needs her alive.'

'Who is Jane anyway and why haven't I heard of her?' Silver asked. 'I don't remember a Queen Jane of England.'

'I thought everyone had heard of Lady Jane Grey, the Nine Day Queen.'

'Well I haven't. Wait a minute, did you say "Nine Day Queen"? Does that mean what I think it means?'

'That would rather depend on what you think it means,' the Doctor replied. 'Nine days from now, Mary Tudor will depose her cousin and take the throne for herself.'

'And what happens to Jane.'

'She gets arrested for treason, of course,' the Doctor said, 'and then she's executed.'

Beyond the Tower precincts, the Sheriff of London, accompanied by three heralds, a trumpeter and an escort of guards, had journeyed to Cheapside. A light drizzle was starting to fall as he and his escort took up positions around the cross that Edward I had had erected to mark the passage of the bier of his wife Eleanor over two hundred and fifty years earlier. The trumpeter sounded a fanfare and the street began to fill with people investigating the commotion. Clearing his throat, the sheriff unfurled a scroll and began to read.

'Jane, by the grace of God Queen of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith and of the Church of England and also of Ireland under Christ. To all our most loving, faithful and obedient subjects, greetings.'

The sheriff paused and glanced nervously and the crowd, who watched him in sullen silence.

'Where our most dear cousin Edward VI, late King of England, by his letters patents and signed with his own hand and sealed with the great seal of England, having no heirs of his own body begotten and that there being no heirs lawfully begotten of our great uncle, Henry VIII, and forasmuch as Lady Frances, our mother, had, in the life of our dear cousin and beloved Edward, no male issue, so the Imperial crown and other premises belonging or appertaining to the same now pass to us in our actual and royal possession by authority of said letters patents.'

Discontented muttering emanated from the crowd, but the sheriff dutifully persevered.

'We do, therefore, by these present, signify unto all our most loving, faithful and obedient subjects that we shall, by God's grace, show ourself to be a most gracious and benign Sovereign Queen to all our subjects in their just and lawful suits and causes and to the utmost of our power shall preserve and maintain God's most holy word and the good laws, customs and liberties of these our realms and dominions.'

'God save Queen Jane!' the heralds shouted.

'God save Queen Jane!' the guards echoed.

The crowd, however, did not join in the call. One man, a tapster at a local tavern, stepped forward.

'She's not the Queen,' he said. 'The Lady Mary has the better claim.'

There were murmurs of assent from the crowd and the sheriff looked nervously at the guards. There were already in motion, having needed no prompting, and seized the tapster by the arms. He continued yelling as they dragged him away.

'This is treason. The Lady Mary is the rightful Queen.'

One of the guards struck him a savage blow to the side of the head, but the tapster refused to be cowed.

'God save Queen Mary!'

3 October 1550

The Doctor sat in an armchair, the fingers of his hands laced together in front of him, his legs crossed at the ankle. Jane was standing at the lectern, reading aloud from a book. The book was in Latin; Jane's task was to translate it into Greek. The Grey's had been invited to court to see Jane's cousin, the King, so lessons had had to be cut short today and there was no time for the usual written exercises. Jane, however, had requested that at least some time be set aside for her studies and her parents had readily agreed.

Jane was working her way through a particularly tricky passage when her father entered the study.

'Good morning, father,' Jane said, curtsying.

'Good morning, you Grace,' the Doctor echoed.

'Good morning, Doctor,' the Duke of Suffolk replied. 'How fares your pupil today.'

'Her translation is, as usual, flawless,' the Doctor said proudly, 'though her pronunciation could do with some work.'

'Do you hear that Jane?' Suffolk boomed. 'You're not working hard enough.'

'I didn't say that,' the Doctor put in hastily. 'Jane is one of the most conscientious students I've known.'

Jane's mother joined them and drew in her breath sharply when she saw how her daughter was dressed.

'What on earth are you wearing, Jane?' she demanded, eyeing the simple grey dress with disdain. 'I thought I told you that a plain dress was completely unsuitable for court. Go and get changed at once.'

'But, mother,' Jane said, 'people say that his Majesty is a good Protestant King who hates on unnecessary ostentation. I've dressed accordingly.'

Frances Grey slapped her daughter across the face, leaving a vivid red welt on her cheek. Instinctively, the Doctor started to get to his feet.

'How dare you answer me back,' Frances said. 'Apologise at once.'

The pain had brought tears to Jane's eyes, but she stood her ground.

'But I've done nothing wrong,' Jane protested.

'Apologise,' Frances repeated, 'or you can stay here and we'll make your excuses to the King.'

Jane bowed her head. 'I'm sorry, mother. Please forgive me.'

'Very good,' Frances said. 'Now go and get changed. The gold damask gown should be suitable, I think. And be quick about it.'

Jane fled from the room.

10 July 1553

Jane rolled over in her bed. Her mind awl with concerns over the day's events, she had only just managed to drop off to sleep and now someone was banging on her door in an effort to wake her. She tried to ignore it, drawing the coverlet over her head to block out the noise, but whoever was determined to interrupt her rest was also not prepared to give up. Wrapping the coverlet about her like a robe, Jane crossed to the door, the stone floor uncomfortably cold against the soles of her bare feet.

'Who is it?' she asked.

'The Duchess of Northumberland,' came the imperious reply. 'Now, are you going to open this door or aren't you?'

Jane opened to door. Standing outside was the aforementioned duchess standing next to her son, Guildford, who had a smug grin on his face. Standing behind them, looking vaguely embarrassed, was the Duke of Northumberland.

'What can I do for you?' Jane asked, looking up at the duchess.

'You can tell me why you are failing in your duties as a wife and denying Guildford access to your bedchamber.'

Jane was momentarily taken aback, but she raised her chin defiantly. 'That's between Guildford and myself and is none of your business.'

'Guildford is my son.'

The duchess offered no further explanation and Jane refused to take the hint.

'Ask her about the crown,' Guildford prompted. 'She said I wouldn't be King.'

'Is this true?'

'Yes,' Jane replied. 'I have no intention of making Guildford my king.'

'But he's your husband.'

'My cousin's wish - ' Jane glanced at Northumberland. ' - if his will really represents his wish - was for me to rule England, not for me to pass that responsibility onto another. I am prepared to make Guildford a duke, but I won't bestow any higher authority on him.'

'A duke?' Guildford wailed. 'But I don't want to be a duke. I want to be King.' He turned to his mother. 'You told me I would be King. Why can't I be King?'

'You ungrateful child,' the Duchess of Northumberland said to Jane. 'You wouldn't be where you are today if it wasn't for us.'

'I didn't ask for any of this,' Jane pointed out.

'Then give it up. Give it to someone who wants it.'

'Like Guildford? I may not have desired this authority, but now that I have it I will see it used wisely and responsibly.'

'How dare you? You're just a pitiful scrap of a girl. What do you know about responsibility?'

'Jane,' Northumberland cautioned his wife.

'You forget yourself,' Jane said to the duchess, 'but you are clearly upset about your son so I'll forgive you. Now please leave.'

'Forgive me? *You'll* forgive *me*? You're nothing, do you hear me? Nothing? I am Viscountess Lisle, Countess of Warwick and Duchess of Northumberland. You're just a spiteful child.'

'I am Queen,' Jane said quietly.

'Jane,' Northumberland again said to his wife, 'you've said enough. We should leave.'

'But...'

'Leave.' Northumberland's soft voice hardened. 'Now.'

'Fine,' Guildford muttered. 'If she doesn't want anything to do with me then there's nothing for me here.'

He slouched off down the corridor, his mother following in his wake. Northumberland turned to the Queen.

'I'm very sorry about that, your Majesty,' he said.

'I'd be more likely to accept your apology if I felt that you meant it.' Still angry, Jane could not keep the spite out of her voice.

'I do mean it,' Northumberland said, bowing as he took his leave. 'This time, at least, I do.'

'What was that all about?' Northumberland demanded as he caught up with his wife.

'What do you mean?' she replied hotly. 'I'm trying to secure a future for our son. I thought one of us should since you don't seem to be doing anything about it.'

Northumberland took several calming breaths before answering.

'I am doing everything I can,' he said, 'but these things take time.'

'Your just using that as an excuse.'

'It's not an excuse. You can't just blunder in and make demands of the girl.'

'She's just a child,' the duchess pointed out.

'A child who happens to be Queen. If we make an enemy out of her then we'll never get what we want. Trust me, I know how to play this game. Given enough time, I can make her believe that making Guildford King was her idea.'

The duchess snorted. 'I'll believe that when I see it.'

'Then I look forward to demonstrating it to you,' Northumberland replied. 'In the meantime, I want you to go home to Syon House. You're making my job here that much harder.'

'My place is with my son.'

'That's all right, mother,' Guildford said sulkily. 'I don't want to spend another minute in this place.'

'You'll stay until I say otherwise,' Northumberland told him. 'We need to present a united front. With Mary still free, Jane's hold on the crown is vulnerable. We can't afford any appearance of weakness.'

'So we're helping her, after everything she said about me?' Guildford asked.

'If you want to be King, Jane needs to be Queen,' Northumberland said. 'Therefore, you stay.'

'If Guildford stays, I stay too,' the duchess said.

'No, you won't,' Northumberland replied. 'By being here, you're making my job that much harder. Think of Guildford, Jane. Remember why we're doing this.'

'Very well,' the duchess replied, slightly mollified, 'but when next I see you he had better be King or you may as well not bother coming home.'

11 July 1553

Jane was woken once again by the sound of someone banging on her door. She was tempted to ignore it, suspecting that it was the Dudleys come to torment her some more, but the shaft of sunlight streaming through the narrow window indicated that morning had arrived. She stood up and swayed precariously, her head spinning, but the moment soon passed. Just in case, however, she kept one hand against the wall as she walked over to the door and opened it.

'Mistress Silver?' Jane was surprised by the figure standing on the other side of the door. 'What is it?'

'Your Majesty, you've got to come quickly. It's...' Silver paused, frowning. 'Are you okay? You're really pale.'

'I didn't get much sleep last night.' Jane waved away her concerns. 'Never mind about that, what's so urgent.'

'It's Northumberland,' Silver explained. 'He's summoned the Privy Council and they're meeting without you.'

'They can't do that. They don't have the authority to make any decisions without me.'

'Maybe no one told them that,' Silver said. 'The Doctor's gone to talk to them and he sent me to find you.'

Jane chewed her bottom lip.

'Fetch Mistress Ellen,' she said. 'I need to get dressed.'

A short while later, with a little help from her nurse, Jane was dressed in an unadorned black gown and her hair had been pinned beneath a hood and coif. She stormed into the presence chamber, but hesitated as she crossed the threshold, taken aback by what she saw. Northumberland, as head of the Council, was standing beside the throne directing the course of discussion, but what shocked Jane was the figure sitting on the throne. It was Guildford Dudley.

'What is the meaning of this?' Jane said.

Northumberland turned to her. 'As I was explaining to your friend, the Doctor, the Privy Council is simply getting on with the business of running the realm.'

'Without me?'

'We didn't want to trouble you while you were sleeping, your Majesty.'

'But you require me to sign any decisions the Council may make.'

'That's true, very true,' Northumberland agreed, 'but this Council served both King Edward and King Henry and we were sure that you would be willing to accept the benefit of their experience in these matters.'

Jane looked from one side of the room to the other. Were the lords laughing at her? Everywhere she turned her head she was confronted by impassive faces, but she was sure that she could hear laughter.

'Well, I'm here now.' She crossed the room, stepped up onto the raised dais and fixed Guildford with an imperious glare. 'Out.'

Guildford stood up and took a step back, allowing Jane to sit down on the throne.

'Please continue,' Jane said.

'Yes, well, actually you're too late,' Northumberland said. 'We've already concluded our business for the day. Perhaps you would like to attend tomorrow's meeting?'

'Yes, I would very much like to attend, your Grace,' Jane said, inwardly seething. 'Perhaps you would be so good as to send for me before the meeting begins next time.'

'Of course, of course,' Northumberland replied, bowing. 'In the meantime, your Majesty, if you don't mind me offering some advice, I suggest you get some rest. You don't look at all well.'

Dinner was served in the main banqueting hall. Jane sat apart from the others at a table at one end of the room, with Guildford on her right. Neither party said a word to the other throughout the meal. The remaining tables, at which the lords and ladies were seated, were arranged in a horseshoe shape, facing the Queen. Her family sat closest to her, at one end of the horseshoe. The remaining guests were arranged according to status, with the most notable lords occupying positions close to the royal family and the most insignificant relegated to the base of the horseshoe. Silver and the Doctor were seated somewhere towards the middle. Neither had any status to speak of, but the Doctor was known to be a favourite of the Queen so this seemed a reasonable compromise.

'What's that?' Silver asked as the servants started to bring in the dishes.

'Civet of hare,' the Doctor replied, moving a portion onto his plate. 'Would you like some?'

Silver wrinkled her nose. 'I don't think so. How about that?'

The Doctor craned his head to see where his companion was pointing. 'That would be a quarter of stag.'

'Stag? You mean, like, with antlers?'

'Usually, though I doubt they've cooked those,' the Doctor said. 'The members of the Tudor dynasty are all keen hunters. What do you expect them to do with what they catch? Surely this is better than killing just for sport?'

'I'd rather they didn't hunt it at all,' Silver replied.

'All the meat you eat was a living creature at some point, Silver,' the Doctor said, 'so it's a bit difficult to take the moral high ground. Or is your objection based more on the fact that you find a cow less attractive than a stag so you feel less attachment to it?'

The Doctor's observation was uncomfortably close to the mark so Silver changed the subject.

'Maybe I'll just stick to the pie,' she said.

'Pigeon.'

'Sorry?'

'The pie,' the Doctor said, 'has got pigeon in it.'

'Alternatively,' Silver said as she slumped in her chair, 'I could just starve.'

Sipping at her wine, Silver turned her attention from the food to the other diners. Sitting on her other side was the Marquess of Winchester, whom Silver had overheard in conversation with Northumberland the night before. He was conversing with another lord in hushed but urgent tones. The noise generated by the other diners made eavesdropping difficult, but, if she strained her ears, Silver found that she could just about make out what was being said.

'I'm telling you, Arundel,' Winchester was saying, 'Northumberland is staging a coup.'

'That's a bit harsh, don't you think?' Arundel replied around a mouthful of rabbit. 'I mean, I know he's a bit power hungry, but even he wouldn't stoop to overthrowing the Queen.'

'Wouldn't he?' Winchester's voice was insistent. 'Isn't that what he's done already? Isn't that what we've *all* done?'

'Come now, Winchester, we both know that Mary is illegitimate. That makes Jane the only legal claimant to the throne as per Edward's will.'

'Maybe. But I still say Northumberland wants to seize power for himself.'

'I'm sure of it,' Arundel said. 'Could you pass me some more of that stag? Thank you. Yes, I don't doubt that Northumberland would like to be King, but there's a big difference between wanting something and actually doing something about it.'

'So what if I told you he was doing something about it, eh? What then? He's only asked me to make a crown for his son. He wants him proclaimed King at Jane's coronation.'

'That's only natural, I suppose. He is her husband, after all, and you can't expect the girl to be able to govern on her own. She is only a woman after all.'

'Maybe so, but do you really think Guildford will be the one advising her?' Winchester asked. 'The boy's not exactly renowned for his brains. I'm telling you, Arundel, Northumberland will be the one pulling the strings.'

Arundel shook his head. 'It won't happen. You've seen the way Jane treats him. She'll never allow herself to be led by him.'

'But don't you see, that's exactly my point. Once Guildford is crowned and the Dudleys have a firm claim to the throne, do you really think Northumberland is going to allow Jane to stand in his way?'

'You're talking about treason,' Arundel said.

Winchester nodded gravely. 'I know. The question is, what are we going to do about it?'

At this point, the servants came round with the next course and, amid the commotion, Silver lost track of what the lords were saying. Her attention was drawn instead to movement at the top table. The Duke of Northumberland had risen from his seat and was speaking to his son. Northumberland nodded in Silver's direction and Guildford rose and left the room. Mumbling excuses, Silver followed suit.

If Guildford was trying to be stealthy, he was doing a very bad job of it and Silver could easily follow him by the sound of his footsteps. For her part, Silver removed her shoes and padded along in her socks so as not to be overheard. Guildford led her away from the banquet hall and down a number of spiral staircases, deeper into the Tower. The windows were narrow slits and permitted only minimal light to enter, making Silver wish she had brought a torch with her from the TARDIS. As it was, she had to use her sense of touch as much as her sight to find her way.

She reached a fork in the corridor.

'Now what?' she muttered to herself.

The footsteps had stopped and she could not tell which way Guildford had turned. Mentally chiding herself for not following more closely, she took a coin from her pocket and flipped it. She took the right fork. As she progressed, a low growling began to fill the corridor. The source of the noise became obvious as she reached the end of the passage and emerged into a large chamber filled with cages. Within the cages were a number of exotic birds and animals, presumably gifts to the royal family from overseas. A parrot lunged at her, cawing loudly and Silver jumped back, even though the bird could not reach her through the bars.

She laughed at her action. 'It's only a zoo, Silver,' she said to herself as she waited for her pounding heart to calm down. 'Just a zoo.'

Something brushed past her in the semi-darkness and Silver spun around. Her heart rate picked up again. One of the cage doors was open.

Silver started to back away down the corridor. Maybe the cage had always been open and she had only noticed it at that moment. Maybe the cage was supposed to be empty.

A large cat stalked out of the shadows towards her, the muscles in its shoulders rippling as it moved. It bared its teeth and growled.

'Keep calm, Silver,' Silver told herself. 'It's just a bigger version of Mortimer. It's probably already been fed today.'

The leopard roared and lunged. Silver turned and ran.

'Help!' Silver yelled as she sprinted down the corridor, her socks slipping and sliding on the floor. 'Somebody help me!'

Maybe she was imagining the cat's hot breath on the back of her legs, its claws almost catching on her clothes. She was not about to turn around and find out. Her lungs burned and she had to stop shouting to save all of her energy for running. No one was going to come to her rescue anyway. They were all too busy dining, far too far away to hear.

Then the ground disappeared from beneath her and she found herself underwater, particles of red mud and sand penetrating her nose and ears, her mouth and eyes. She fought her way back to the surface, spitting out water as soon as her head emerged into open air. She blinked, trying to clear the film that covered her eyes, and was greeted by the sight of the leopard, sitting calmly on the edge of the flagstones waiting for her to return to dry land. Silver started to tread water, prepared to wait for the cat to get bored. At least she was safe where she was.

Something caught hold of her ankle and dragged her back down. Unprepared, she swallowed another mouthful of the foul tasting water. She struggled back to the surface, but was only able to briefly gasp for air before plunging down again. The next time she emerged, she was able to cry for help, but, despite all her flailing, the river swallowed her once again. Unable to breach the surface another time, Silver swam downwards, trying to find whatever had hold of her. Feeling her way through the reddish-brown murk, she discovered that she had managed to get her angle stuck between two stones, but, try as she might, she could not dislodge them. Her lungs ached. Black spots were starting to appear in front of her eyes. Would anyone find her body down here? Would the Doctor even know what had happened to her?

Strong hands clamped around her arms and dragged her back towards the surface. As she was stretched, the stones seemed to pinch even tighter and she feared that she would lose her foot, but her rescuer refused to let go. Finally, one of the stones shifted and Silver burst like a salmon into the open air and was carried back to the corridor. Crawling over to the edge, she voided the contents of her stomach back into the river.

'Thank you,' she said, sitting up. She did not trust herself to stand just yet. Her eyes widened when she focussed on the face of her rescuer. 'You?'

Guildford Dudley grinned back at her, openly appreciative of the way her sodden clothes clung to her body. Silver wrapped her arms around herself protectively.

'What are you doing here?' she wanted to know.

'I heard you calling for help,' Guildford replied.

'I'm grateful,' Silver said, aware that she did not sound it. 'Where is here anyway?'

'One of the accesses to the river, I think,' Guildford replied, sitting next to her. Part of Silver wanted to shove him away, but he was holding a burning torch that provided some much needed warmth. 'They bring goods into the Tower through here.'

'Like big cats?' Silver asked sarcastically. 'What happened to that, by the way?'

'I scared it off,' Guildford said proudly, waving the torch by way of demonstration.

'So you mean it's still out there?'

'Well, yes, I guess so.'

'In that case, do you really think we should be sitting here?'

Bracing herself against the wall, Silver struggled to her feet. Guildford did likewise.

'Are you okay?' he asked as Silver took a few stumbling steps forward.

'I've just been chased by a leopard and then nearly drowned,' Silver snapped. 'Of course I'm not okay.'

'Sorry,' Guildford mumbled, looking down at his feet. 'I was only trying to help.'

'No, I'm sorry. You didn't deserve that.' Silver took another couple of steps forward, but her bruised and twisted ankle refused to support her. 'I'm never going to make it back at this rate.'

'You could lean on me,' Guildford suggested. 'That is, only if you want to.'

'It beats staying here waiting to be eaten,' Silver said, draping an arm across Guildford's shoulders. Guildford gingerly put an arm around her waist.

'You can hold on a bit tighter, you know. You'll never take any of my weight like that. Don't worry, I won't break.'

'Sorry.' Guildford increased his grip and the pair of them set off in the direction of the stairs.

'What were you doing down here, anyway?' Silver asked.

'My father asked me to check something for him.'

'What?'

'I can't tell you,' Guildford said. 'Father told me not to.'

'And do you always do what your father says?'

'He and Mother have always been good to me and now they're going to make me King. Maybe.'

'Maybe?'

'Father says he will, but, well, I don't think it's really up to him this time.' Guildford stopped and pinned Silver beneath a mournful, blue stare. 'Why doesn't she like me?'

'Who?'

'Jane. I'm her husband, but she doesn't treat me like it.'

'I'm no expert,' Silver replied, 'but I think it takes more than marrying someone to get them to like you. There's more to it than that.' She glanced behind her. 'Look, do you think we could keep moving. I don't feel safe down here.'

'What? Oh, yes, of course.' Guildford started to help Silver up the spiral staircase. 'I think she loves your Doctor friend more than she loves me.'

'Really?' Silver said, uncomfortable with the direction this conversation was taking.

'What's he got that I haven't?'

'I don't think I'm the right person to ask.'

'I'm younger than him, stronger than him, better looking than him.'

'All true,' Silver conceded.

'Than why does she hate me so? I don't understand what she wants from me. Why won't anyone tell me what I'm supposed to do?'

'Have you tried asking Jane?'

Guildford looked stricken. 'I couldn't do that.'

'Why not?'

'Um, honestly? She's a bit scary.'

In her mind's eye, Silver pictured the tiny Jane squaring up to her much larger husband. She could not help laughing. 'You think she's scary? Are you kidding me?'

'She answers back to my father,' Guildford explained. 'Nobody does that.'

The Doctor was feeding the ravens when Silver stepped out onto Tower Green to find him. A search had been conducted for the escaped leopard and it had been captured and returned to its cage, but not before it had mauled one of the treasury guards. No one seemed able to explain how it had got out in the first place. Silver had spent the afternoon resting in her room. Jane had taken the time to visit her, but the Queen looked even more worn than Silver felt and she had kept the visit brief. She had, however, given Silver one of her dresses to wear while her own clothes were drying. Silver found the corset a trial, but at least the dress was clean.

'Are you all right?' the Doctor asked. He had his back to her and Silver could not see how he could have known it was her who was approaching, but she accepted it as one of his things.

'I'm fine,' she replied, 'thanks to Guildford, if you can believe that.'

'You were lucky he was nearby.'

'Well, I *was* following him,' Silver admitted.

'You expected him of something nefarious, I take it?'

'Something like that. At first I thought he was the one who released the leopard, but that doesn't make sense given that he saved me.'

'Unless he never meant to kill you. It could all be part of some cunning plan to scare you off.'

'Doctor, this is Guildford we're talking about. Cunning plans don't really seem his style.'

'Fair point.' The Doctor pointed to a bench in the shade of a tree. 'Do you want to sit down?'

'I don't think I can in this dress. I've just about mastered breathing in it and I don't want to push my luck.'

'Fair enough,' the Doctor said. 'You don't mind if I do, though? This body's not as young as it was.'

The two friends walked slowly across the lawn towards the tree.

'Doctor,' Silver began, hesitantly, 'why are we here?'

'How very deep,' the Doctor said, sitting down. 'Still, I suppose a near death experience could turn anyone towards existentialism.'

'No, Doctor, I meant why are we here, specifically? The Tower of London, 1553?'

'Well, that's the thing with setting random coordinates. You never know where you might end up.'

'And it's just coincidence that we've dropped in on an old friend of yours?'

'What else would it be?'

'I don't know. That's why I'm asking.'

The Doctor sighed. 'Silver, I admit that, when I saw where we'd landed, I thought it would be good to see Jane again. I was also hoping that you might appreciate the chance to experience a bit of history.'

'Okay, I've experienced history,' Silver said. 'It tried to eat me. Can we go now?'

'Go?'

'I just don't see what the point of us being here is. There's no alien invasion to stop or crisis in time to resolve. We're just waiting for a teenage girl to be executed and that's not my idea of fun.'

'I didn't realise you felt that way,' the Doctor said.

'Look, Doctor, it's obvious you care about Jane,' Silver said, 'but you can't save her. I just don't want to see you get hurt, that's all.'

The Doctor slowly got to his feet. He put a hand on Silver's shoulder.

'Let me sleep on it,' he said. 'We'll decide what to do in the morning. I promise.'

9 December 1550

Jane's father tore off a chunk of bread and popped it into his mouth.

'We'll be having some guests staying with us for a few days,' he said, talking as he ate.

Jane continued eating her breakfast in silence.

'Well, aren't you at all curious, Jane?' her mother asked.

'Yes, mother,' Jane replied, keeping her eyes lowered, 'but I wouldn't want to appear to pry.'

'At last she starts to learn some manners,' Frances Grey muttered.

'The Duke of Northumberland and his wife are paying us a visit,' Suffolk explained, 'together with their son, Guildford.'

'It will be good for you to have someone your own age to talk to,' Frances said.

'Yes, mother,' Jane agreed without enthusiasm.

'I was thinking of taking them hunting,' Suffolk said.

'That sounds like a wonderful idea, Henry.'

'I thought so,' Suffolk said, 'and I also thought Jane could come with us.'

'But what about my studies?' Jane interjected.

'Oh, I'm sure the Doctor won't mind you missing them for one afternoon.'

'I'd really rather not,' Jane said. 'You're always saying how I need to work harder.'

'I don't understand this reluctance, Jane,' Frances said. 'Most normal children would jump at the chance to spend an afternoon outdoors.'

'I can't help it if I don't take pleasure in the slaughter of a beautiful animal.'

'Jane!'

'You wanted to know why I don't want to go hunting. You can't blame me for being honest.'

Suffolk ran his hands across his face. 'Why couldn't you have been a boy?'

'Is that the problem?' Jane jumped to her feet. 'Is that why you hate me so? Because I'm not your son?'

'Sit down, Jane,' Frances snapped. 'Sit down at once. I will not tolerate this outburst!'

'Why? Am I really such a bad daughter? What have I done to justify the pinches and the beatings? I do my very best, but it's impossible to please you because I can't be what I'm not. I can't be a boy.'

'Insolent child.' Frances' face was white with rage. 'Go to your room. You will stay there and live on bread and water until you beg for my forgiveness. I will make you obedient if it's the last thing I do. Now go. Get out of my sight.'

12 July 1553

Jane woke up screaming. The noise summoned her father, with the Doctor hot on his heels.

'Jane, what is it? What's wrong?' the Duke of Suffolk asked. His daughter's skin was disturbingly pale and her eyes were red from crying. She showed him the clump of hair that had come off in her hand.

'Look at this,' she said, 'and this.' She bared her arm to display peeling skin.

Suffolk opened his mouth to speak. 'Jane, I...'

Jane cut him off. 'It's Northumberland, I know it is. He's trying to poison me.'

'Now don't be silly, Jane.'

'Silly? Look at me. I'm telling you, he's trying to kill me.'

'The Duke of Northumberland has only ever tried to help you, Jane,' Suffolk continued, trying to keep calm in the face of his daughter's mounting hysteria. 'Why would he want to hurt you?'

'He wants the crown for himself,' Jane replied. 'Tell me he doesn't.'

The Doctor stepped forward, placing his hands on her upper arms and gently, but firmly holding her in place.

'Think for a moment, Jane, just think. Northumberland's only claim to the crown is through you. If anything were to happen to you, he loses that claim. Surely it's in his best interests to protect you, not hurt you, hm?'

Jane met his gaze with defiance for a few moments more then seemed to deflate.

'So what is wrong with me?' she asked morosely.

'Nothing's wrong with you,' the Doctor replied. 'It's just stress. You've had a very difficult few days so it's hardly surprising that your body is feeling under the weather. Once you get used to the new routine, you'll be right as rain.'

'Listen to the Doctor, Jane,' Suffolk said. 'Everything's going to be all right.'

Jane looked up at her former tutor. 'Is that true, Doctor? Will everything be all right?'

The Doctor hesitated. 'Yes, Jane. Everything's going to be all right.'

The council meeting two hours later seemed to give the lie to the Doctor's claim.

'Is this report true?' the Earl of Pembroke demanded.

'I wish I could say otherwise, but our spies can be relied upon,' Northumberland replied. 'Mary is amassing an army at Kenninghall.'

'How long before she marches on London?' one lord asked.

'She may not need to,' another replied. 'I hear three cities have already started proclaiming her Queen.'

'I heard it was five.'

'The Earl of Sussex has come out in support of her, too.'

'Well that's no great loss.'

'I hear she's written to the Pope for aid.'

The hall erupted with noise as the lords all tried to speak at once.

'Enough!' Northumberland appealed for calm. 'Let us not forget that the rightful Queen is here in this room with us and that it is our duty before God to ensure that she retains the throne.'

'So what do you intend to do about it?' Winchester asked.

'We still control the bulk of the military,' Northumberland began.

'But more traitors are rallying to her banner every day,' Pembroke interjected.

'Yes, your Grace,' Northumberland continued with a trace of irritation, 'which is why we must act quickly while her forces are still weak and disorganised. I propose we send an army of her own to arrest the Lady Mary without delay. We'll see how much popular support she has after she's tried for treason.'

'And who will lead this army?' Arundel asked.

'I will,' the Duke of Suffolk said, stepping out into the middle of the chamber so that he could address the whole council. 'The Lady Mary threatens my daughter. As a father, I must defend her.'

'No, Father, you mustn't.' Jane jumped to her feet, causing the assembled lords to turn and stare. 'I couldn't bear to be parted from you at such a difficult time.' She turned to the Duke of Northumberland. 'Your Grace, have pity on me and agree to lead the army in my father's place.'

'A capital idea,' Winchester said quickly, 'don't you agree, Northumberland?'

'Very well, if it is the Queen's wish, I will arrest the traitor myself. My force will be ready to depart in the morning. Now, if the Council will excuse me, I will take the rest of the day to make ready.'

Northumberland bowed to the Queen then turned and marched from the room.

'What was that about?' the Doctor asked.

The Privy Council had disbanded for the day and Jane had returned to her rooms to sign the orders necessary to assemble Northumberland's army. The Doctor was sitting at the window, watching the preparations being made in the courtyard below.

'I thought that we had agreed that Northumberland wasn't a threat to you,' he continued.

'I know, I know,' Jane sighed, her pen scratching over parchment, 'but I'll feel safer knowing he's somewhere far away. I'm sorry, but I can't help the way I feel.'

'No, I'm sorry,' the Doctor said. 'I shouldn't snap. You're not my student anymore; you're your own woman now.'

'More's the pity.' Jane set down her pen. 'Will I be a good Queen, Doctor?'

'I don't understand.'

Jane stood up and crossed to the window. She wrapped her arms around herself as if cold.

'I didn't ask to be Queen,' she said, watching the horses being led from the stables, 'but now that I am I want to get it right. I am responsible for every member of my kingdom and I don't want to let them down. But I'm going to, aren't I?'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean that I've only been Queen for a few days and it's already making me ill. I mean that my councillors have more respect for the Duke of Northumberland than they have for me. And I mean that I'm supposed to be the ruler of England, chosen by God, but I feel like nothing more than a lost little girl.'

There were tears in Jane's eyes as she said these last few words.

'Come here.' The Doctor rose to his feet and wrapped his arms around her. 'There, there. Remember what I told you. Everything's going to be all right.'

'Promise?' Jane tried to smile, to be strong, for him.

'Now you listen to me, Jane Dudley,' the Doctor said. 'You've been Queen of England for what, two, three days? You can't expect to get everything right straight out the gate. It's like any skill; it develops with practice and experience. The fact that you're worried about getting it right is, as far as I'm concerned, a good thing. It means that you'll try that much harder to succeed. As for Northumberland, you've already shown that you can outmanoeuvre him and there aren't many people who can do that. He'll find it a lot more difficult to undermine you from Norfolk.'

'I guess,' Jane conceded.

'I know,' the Doctor replied firmly. 'You were your cousin's choice to take over where he left off. Make him proud.'

'There you are,' Silver said. 'I've been looking all over for you.'

The Doctor was sitting in the presence chamber, staring at the empty throne. He held his heads in his hands.

'I needed somewhere to think,' he replied, 'and this room was empty.'

Silver shrugged. 'Whatever. I've been speaking to the stable-hands. Apparently, Northumberland's army sets out first thing in the morning. I'm thinking we could slip away in the confusion.'

'Yes,' the Doctor said distractedly, 'that's probably a good idea.'

'Right, well, okay. I'll see you in the morning then.'

Silver turned to leave. She was at the door when the Doctor spoke again.

'I told her everything was going to be all right,' the Doctor said.

Silver did not need to ask who he was talking about. 'You were just trying to say the right thing. It's not like you could have told her that she was going to have her head cut off.'

'She expects me to look after her,' the Doctor continued, 'but when the time comes, I'm not going to lift a finger to save her.'

'You don't have a choice,' Silver told him. 'We've been here before, remember, only it's normally you reminding me of this. You can't change history.'

'Actually,' the Doctor said, 'that's not true.'

The silence seemed to stretch for a very long time. Silver was the one to eventually break it.

'I don't understand.'

'It's very simple,' the Doctor told her. 'I can change history. You can, too. It's one of the advantages of being a time traveller. We exist outside the normal flow of events and so have the capacity to divert them.'

'But... But what happens to the future?'

The Doctor shrugged. 'It changes, but it's difficult to predict these things too far down the line.'

'Which is why you can't change history. You've no idea what the consequences might be.'

'It's certainly an argument, but it's never stopped you before. Every time we step out of the TARDIS we change history. Every time we interfere, the time stream alters to accommodate our presence. When we thwart an alien invasion, do you ever stop and think how things might have turned out if we hadn't been there?'

'That's different,' Silver insisted. 'That's the future. This is history.'

'Everything is history to somebody,' the Doctor countered. 'It's all relative, it depends on where - or, more accurately, *when* - you're standing at the time. Why should your history be any more sacred?'

'Because... Because...' Silver floundered, searching for words to justify the way she was feeling. 'Because it just is, okay. Because it's *my* history and I don't want to wake up one morning to find that everyone I thought I knew no longer exists because you've decided to play at being god.'

'But what about all the people who will die if I don't interfere? When Mary comes to power, she'll try to restore the Catholic Church in England that her father abolished. To do this she'll persecute the Protestants, the unbelievers. They'll be burned at the stake as an example to others. More people will die in three years in England as a result of these persecutions than will suffer at the hands of the Spanish Inquisition and the French *chamber ardente* combined during the same period. Don't they deserve to live? If this was an alien world and you knew there was a dictator who intended to commit murder on such a scale, wouldn't you want me to try to stop them? I could save those people, Silver. Isn't that a worthy cause?'

'But this isn't about them, though, is it, Doctor?' Silver said. 'This is about *her*. You're willing to gamble the future of the human race against the chance of saving one girl.'

'Maybe so,' the Doctor said, his voice barely more than a whisper, 'but what's the point of having this power if I can't save just one girl?'

17 December 1550

'Is this really necessary,' the Doctor asked Suffolk.

The two of them were standing on the stairs. Mistress, Jane's nurse, had just passed them carrying Jane's ration of bread and water.

'Do I tell you how to run your classroom?' Suffolk asked.

'Frequently.'

Suffolk chuckled dryly. 'Yes, I suppose you have me there.'

'It's been over a week,' the Doctor said.

The Dudleys were long gone. The excuse that had been given was that Jane was ill and resting.

'Jane knows what she has to do if she wants to be let out,' Suffolk said. 'We're just trying to instil some discipline in her.'

'At least let me in there to teach her,' the Doctor suggested. 'She's neglecting her studies.'

'She enjoys her studies,' Suffolk pointed out. 'It wouldn't be much of a punishment if she was allowed to do the things she enjoyed.'

'I take your point, but she doesn't really deserve this, does she?'

'My wife would beg to differ.'

'And what do you think?' the Doctor asked.

'I think...' Suffolk looked away. 'I think Jane should have taken the time to meet Guildford Dudley. Her future is dependent on making a good match and I don't think she realises how important that is. My daughter's right, had she been born a boy her life would be easier. She needs to learn that, as a woman, she doesn't have the same freedom.'

Night had fallen, but Jane kept the drapes pulled back from the window so that she could watch the stars. She sat on her bed, her knees tucked under her chin. Her stomach grumbled; hunger was keeping her awake.

The door opened and a familiar face appeared at the door.

'Doctor!' Jane cried with delight.

'Shush,' the Doctor hissed. 'Your parents don't know that I'm here.'

As he closed the door behind him, Jane noticed that the Doctor was carrying a tray laden with food.

'Mistress Ellen saved some leftovers from dinner,' the Doctor explained. 'She thought you might be hungry.'

Jane eagerly fell upon the tray. Then she blushed, realising how she was acting.

'Would you like me to get my book?' she suggested. 'We could do some translation...'

The Doctor sat down. 'I'm not here for a lesson, Jane. I just wanted to see how you were. Now eat up. It will only go to waste if you don't.'

Jane did not require any further prompting.

'You know that your parents just want what's best for you, don't you, Jane?' the Doctor asked.

'They've got a funny way of showing it,' Jane replied, talking with her mouthful.

'Perhaps, but that doesn't mean it isn't true.' The Doctor turned his head and looked up at the moon. 'Tell me, Jane, have you given much thought to your future?'

'I wasn't aware I had one.'

'Jane!'

'You know what I mean, Doctor,' Jane said. 'All there is for me is to become someone's wife, whether I want it or not.'

'Your mother and father are keen for it to be the right someone.'

Jane shrugged. 'What does it matter, so long as I can continue my studies.'

'You should take more of an interest, Jane,' the Doctor chided her. 'The wrong match could be very bad for you.'

'It won't matter what I say, though, will it? My mother's bound to get her way, as usual.' Jane flopped back on the bed and stared up at the ceiling. 'Will it always be this? Will women always be trapped because of their sex?'

'No, it won't always be this way,' the Doctor said. 'There'll come a time when a girl can grow up to be whatever she wants.'

'And you know this how?'

'Oh, it's just a dream I have,' the Doctor replied.

Jane propped herself up on her elbow. 'Tell me more about this dream of yours, Doctor. It sounds interesting.'

'Your wish is my command.' The Doctor took a deep breath. 'Do you see those stars up there? Well, in my dream, people sail between them.'

'Between the stars.'

'And with no more trouble that you might sail from Dover to France.'

Jane sighed. 'I wish I could live in your dream world,' she said, 'instead of being trapped here.'

'I wish I could take you,' the Doctor replied.

They talked long into the night, but eventually it came time for the Doctor to leave.

'You should get some sleep,' he said, stooping to retrieve the tray, 'and in the morning you're going to apologise to your mother.'

'Do I have to?' Jane protested.

'Yes, you do,' the Doctor replied. 'I expect to see you in my classroom tomorrow afternoon.'

'Oh, all right,' Jane said, 'if you insist.'

The Doctor smiled. 'Good girl.'

13 July 1553

Early the next morning, the Queen and the Privy Council gathered to take their leave of Northumberland. The Duke's servants had been up most of the previous night readying his armour and he strode into the room resplendent in shining steel.

'Your Majesty, your Graces,' he began, 'I beg permission to take your leave so that I may fetch back the traitor Mary.'

'Is your force prepared?' Jane asked.

'It is, your Majesty, but I urge you to continue the muster and send reinforcements as soon as you can. Mary continues to expand her army so can we do any less.'

'It will be done,' Jane told him.

'In that case, my comrades and I will gladly sally forth to meet the bloody strokes and cruel assaults of the enemy trusting ourselves and the wives and children we leave behind to the faith and truth of those gathered here.' Northumberland surveyed the assembled councillors. 'I give them into your custody, gentlemen. And if there is any man present that intends to violate that trust, to leave your friends in the briars and betray us then let him remember that treachery is a blade with two edges. Let him also think on God's righteous justice and the oath he has sworn to this virtuous lady the Queen's highness, who by your and our enticement is rather of force placed therein than by her own seeking and request. Let him also consider that we go to fight in God's name, to defend this country from the evils of the papistry that good King Henry drove from these shores and which his bastard daughter now invites to return.

'Finally, I entreat you all to use constant hearts, abandoning all malice, envy and private affections. And this I pray you, wish me no worse speed in this journey than you would have to yourselves.'

'My Lord,' Winchester said, shuffling forward, 'if you mistrust any of us in this matter, your Grace is far deceived, for which of us can wipe his hands clean in this matter? If we could shrink from you as one that were culpable, which of us can excuse himself as guiltless. Throw away your doubts; the die is already cast.'

Northumberland nodded in the old peer's direction. 'I pray God it be so.'

'Do you really have to go, Father?' Guildford asked.

The councillors had gone to dinner, allowing Guildford time for a private moment with his father.

'Yes, son, I do,' Northumberland replied. 'The Dudleys are the first family in England now, but we have to work hard to earn that privilege. There are responsibilities that go with it.'

'But you're leaving me all alone.'

'Not alone. You've got Jane.'

'Jane?'

'Son, I know how you feel about her,' Northumberland said, 'but she's the Queen and she's your wife and that has its own set of responsibilities too.'

'That's what I keep saying,' Guildford said, 'but she doesn't seem to realise that.'

'I'm not talking about her responsibilities. I'm talking about yours, as a husband.'

'Mine?'

'Yours, Guildford. I wish I had more time to stay and teach you, but time has run out on us. It's time for your to grow up, my son, time for you to be a man.' Northumberland clapped a hand on Guildford's shoulder. 'One day, Jane is going to bear you a son of your own. On that day, you'll understand that there's nothing a father won't do for his child. Just in case – just in case, mind – I don't come back, I want you to remember something. I'm going into battle for my Queen, for my country and for my church, but, most of all, I'm doing this for you, son. Promise me you'll remember that.'

'I promise, Father.'

'Good boy.'

Having said goodbye to his son, Northumberland's final task was to collect his written orders from the Queen.

'So, did you mean any of what you said back there,' Jane said, affixing her seal to Northumberland's commission, 'to the Privy Council?'

'Every word.'

'Your Grace, it's just the two of us now. Let's drop the pretence.'

'As your Majesty wishes,' Northumberland replied. 'I doubt it did much good where you were concerned anyway.'

'You don't really care what happens to me, do you?'

'On the contrary, your Majesty, I care a great deal. Without you, I can't put a Dudley King on the throne.'

'And that's all I am to you?' Jane asked. 'A means to an end?'

'I can't afford to get sentimental,' Northumberland said. 'One never knows when one might have to sacrifice a pawn in the game.'

'So this is all a game, is it?'

'It's about winning, certainly,' Northumberland replied, 'though the stakes are somewhat higher.'

'Somewhat,' Jane agreed. She handed him his commission. 'At least we know where we stand. Godspeed, your Grace.'

'Thank you, your Majesty. You know, if I were to be sentimental, I might think that you wouldn't make a bad Queen. No, not bad at all.'

'I was worried you weren't coming,' Silver said.

She was waiting near the Tower gates. The Duke of Northumberland's retinue were filing out past her.

'Yes, well I'm here now,' the Doctor replied sharply.

Silver bridled at his tone, but decided not to comment on it.

'Let's go,' she said. She crossed to the gates then realised that the Doctor was not following her. Instead, he was looking back towards the White Tower. Silver followed the line of his gaze; he was looking up at the window of the Queen's apartments.

'Doctor?'

"It is necessary only for the good man to do nothing for evil to triumph", he quoted. 'Edmund Burke, 1729 to 1797.'

'There's nothing you can do,' Silver said.

'I know, Silver, I know. It's just...!' The Doctor looked away. 'It shouldn't be acceptable to leave a child to her death. There should be another way.'

'Doctor!' Jane was standing at the edge of the green. 'Doctor, where are you going?'

The Doctor looked from Jane to Silver and back again. 'Jane, I...'

'We're leaving, your Majesty,' Silver said. 'We don't belong here.'

'Is this true, Doctor?'

'I never intended to stay for long, Jane,' the Doctor said. 'To be honest, I don't know what I intended, but...'

'So you're going to abandon me again? I thought you cared, Doctor.'

'I do care, Jane.'

'Really? And that's why you're leaving me to die, is it?' Jane's voice was breaking. 'I overheard you talking. Everything you said about my future as Queen, about how everything would be all right, it was just hollow words, wasn't it? I trusted you, Doctor. I thought you were the one person I could count on.'

'It wasn't like that, Jane.' The Doctor reached out for her, but she turned away, out of his reach.

'Just go, Doctor, you've done enough.' Shoulders shaking as she fought to hold back the flood of tears, Jane hurried back to the Tower.

'Come on, Doctor,' Silver said. 'Let's get out of here.'

The Doctor stared after the Queen. 'No,' he said.

'What?'

'I'm not coming,' the Doctor said. 'I can't abandon her again, Silver, not like this.'

'So you're choosing her over me, is that it?'

No, Silver, it's not like that. Jane needs me.'

'And I don't?'

'No, you don't.' The Doctor tried to put a hand on Silver's shoulder, but she stepped back, out of his reach. 'In the time we've been together, you've grown so much. You don't need anyone anymore.'

'Yeah, well, maybe I want someone,' Silver said. 'Did you ever stop to think about that?'

'Silver, I...'

'Don't, Doctor,' Silver said, turning her back on him. 'Just don't, okay.'

'Go back to the TARDIS, Silver,' the Doctor said, his voice catching in his throat. 'She'll see you safely home.'

'I thought the TARDIS was home, Doctor.' Silver risked a glance over her shoulder and saw only the Doctor's retreating back as he set out in pursuit of Jane. 'Guess I was wrong.'

'Jane?'

The door to her apartments was not lock so the Doctor let himself in. Jane was curled up on her bed, her body racked by sobs.

'Jane, I'm so sorry.'

'Doctor?' Jane sat up, wiping the tears from her eyes with her hands. 'You came back.'

'Yes, I did,' the Doctor replied. 'I'm not going to abandon you this time.'

Jane stood and the Doctor opened his arms to her. Rather than go to him, however, Jane crossed to the other side of the room, keeping her back to him.

'You said that I was going to die,' she said. 'I heard you talking to Silver.'

'I was talking hypothetically,' the Doctor said. 'What I meant was that if Mary does come to power then she'll probably have you executed. But that's not going to happen. Northumberland will see to that.'

'Don't lie to me, Doctor,' Jane replied. 'I'm really going to die, aren't I?'

'How could I possibly know that?'

'I remember our time together at Bradgate Hall,' Jane replied. 'You painted me a picture of the future. You told me it was just a dream you had, but I wonder... I think you really know what the future holds. I don't know how you know, but you do. So, when you say that I am to die, I can't help but believe you. Now, can you tell me that's not true? No, I didn't think so.'

The Doctor hung his head in shame. 'Do you really want to know the truth?'

'Yes,' Jane insisted. 'Yes, I really want to know.'

'Then come here.' The Doctor took hold of Jane's right hand and placed it, palm flat, against the left side of his chest. 'Do you feel that? The beating of my heart?'

'Yes. It's beating very fast.'

'Well, I'm a little nervous. Now, give me your other hand.' The Doctor put Jane's left hand on the right side of his chest. 'Feel that?'

'Two hearts? But that's impossible.'

'I'm not human, Jane,' the Doctor explained. 'I'm a Time Lord from the planet Gallifrey, another world out among the stars, and I travel through time and space...'

'What would you do, Mortimer?' Silver asked, leaning against the TARDIS console.

Having returned to the TARDIS, Silver had prevaricated by taking time out for a much needed shower and change of clothes. Suitably cleansed and refreshed, she now had to decide on her next move. Mortimer, the TARDIS cat, was perched on top of the time rotor. He stretched and yawned when Silver spoke to him.

'Not a lot, huh?' Silver said. 'I guess that is what I was trying to get the Doctor to do, after all. You agree with me, don't you?'

Mortimer blinked slowly.

'I mean, changing history is wrong, right? That shouldn't really be up for debate, but...'

Silver slammed her fist down on the console. Startled by the impact, Mortimer jumped down to the ground. Back arched, he hissed at Silver.

'Sorry, cat. It's just that the Doctor's got me so wound up and turned the wrong way round. He should be the one talking me out of crazy stuff like mucking about with the timelines. But what if he's right?'

Silver slumped down into the Doctor's armchair and Mortimer hopped up into her lap. Absently, Silver started to scratch behind his ears and the cat purred contentedly.

'The history we know is hardly perfect. There are plenty of points in time that would benefit from a bit of Time Lord interference. With the TARDIS, the Doctor and I could make a real difference if we wanted to. But what gives us the right to decide what bits of

history should be kept and which get changed? Who asked us to play God with other people's lives? But, on the other hand, if we just let these things go by unchallenged then what kind of heroes are we?

'Damn him. He's not even here, but he still finds a way to make my head hurt. I should just leave. That's what he wants me to do, right, Mortimer? He's got Jane now so I guess I'm yesterday's news. Let them sort it out.'

Silver scooped Mortimer up in her arms and clambered to her feet. 'Have you put on weight, Mortimer?'

The cat bared his teeth and hissed.

'I was joking,' Silver said as she reached for the dematerialisation control. 'So you're going to take me home, are you, ship. I wonder where we'll end up. You know, it's funny, but I always imagined I'd be the one who decided when I'd leave, not him. What do I know, huh? Goodbye, Doctor. It was fun while it lasted.'

Silver's finger hovered motionless over the console. The silence was broken only by the relentless ticking of the ormolu clock. Finally, she drew her hand back.

'Sorry, Doctor, but I can't do it,' she said. 'I may not need you, but you still need me and, whether you want me or not, you've got me.'

'You really have seen the future?' Jane said. 'I suspected something, but I never imagined this.'

'How could you?' the Doctor asked. He lit a candle. His explanation had taken so long to tell that it was now getting dark outside.

'I wish I could travel with you,' Jane said. 'Just once would be enough. To walk on alien soil, to see one of these strange worlds of which you speak. Truly, that would be a wonder.'

'I could take you,' the Doctor said. 'We could go wherever you want.'

Jane smiled sadly. 'We both know that that's impossible. I am fated to go to my death.'

'Maybe,' the Doctor replied.

'What do you mean "maybe"? Surely the future is fixed?'

'Ah, now that's the question,' the Doctor replied. 'It all depends on where you stand. For you, none of this has happened yet so the path of events is still being formed.'

'But this is all history to you.'

'As I said, it all depends on where you stand. From where I am currently, all of that is in the future.'

'Are you saying that you could change things? That I don't have to die.'

'No child should ever have to die.'

'What happens to the future you've seen if I live?' Jane asked.

'I don't know.'

'But you believe that future is worth preserving?'

'I think so,' the Doctor said. 'I'm not sure anymore.'

'And the only way you can be sure that that future will come to pass is if I die.'

'I don't want you to die.'

'I don't want to die either, but I have a responsibility to my country.' Jane chewed her lower lip thoughtfully. 'What happens to my England in the future? Do her people no longer spill blood in the name of religion? Are her politicians loyal and upstanding and not corrupt and lustful for power? Is she free from the influence of other countries dragging her

into wars she does not want? Convince me that your England is worth saving, Doctor, and that my sacrifice will be worth it.'

14 July 1553

On Friday morning, Northumberland, at the head of his army of three thousand men, rode out. As they passed through the village of Shoreditch, the way was lined with silent staring crowds. Their eyes were cold and their expressions stern.

The Duke turned to Lord Grey of Wilton, who rode on his left, and said, 'The people press to see us, but is it to wish us well or ill, I wonder.'

'Does it really matter, your Grace, as long as we are successful?'

'Perhaps not,' Northumberland said, 'but it disturbs me that the Lady Mary's arm has grown long enough to spread her influence from Kenninghall almost to the Tower gates themselves.'

'Begging your pardon, your Grace,' Grey said, 'but our scouts report that Mary is no longer at Kenninghall. Apparently she has relocated to Framlington Castle.'

'Hardly the news I was hoping for, Grey. Framlington is much more defensible. We can't afford for this to turn into a long siege.'

'Your Grace?'

'Every day, more people declare their allegiance to Mary. She only has to wait us out and she'll win this conflict without having to fight a single battle.'

'Then the sooner we reach Framlington the better,' Grey said. 'I'll increase the pace of the march.'

'You're a good man, Grey,' Northumberland replied, 'but it will take more than these men to breach the walls of Framlington.'

'What do you propose?'

'I have the beginnings of an idea,' Northumberland said, 'but the less you know the better for you, Grey. Keep the men marching towards Framlington. I'll rejoin you as soon as I can.'

With that, Northumberland spurred his horse and galloped away from his army. He did not look back so he failed to notice the rider detach itself from the cavalcade set off in pursuit.

'What you ask is impossible, your Grace. If King Henry were to openly support Queen Jane, do you not think that the Spanish would act in support of Mary?'

Northumberland paced in front of the two other men in the room, both of whom were seated. He was growing increasingly agitated as he spoke.

'The Spanish won't declare for Mary. They can't afford to make an enemy of the Queen.'

'And can we afford to make an enemy of Mary, in the event that she should become Queen in Jane's stead?'

'Mary will never be Queen,' Northumberland replied, 'not if you give me the men I need to take her out of Framlington Castle.'

Outside the room, the soldier who had followed Northumberland all the way from his army to this inn on the outskirts of London was crouched at the door, peering into the room.

'Henry will be reluctant to risk the lives of brave French soldiers in what is, after all, purely an internal English dispute.'

'We don't have time for these games. Every hour we waste is an hour Mary can use to fortify her defences.'

'Then maybe we should be talking to her representative instead.'

Northumberland gritted his teeth. 'Would it help to encourage cooperation if I were to offer you Calais? I know that your King has had his eye on it for some time.'

'That is so, but then we consider Calais to be ours anyway. We would thank you for the return of our rightful property, but it's hardly an inducement to commit troops.'

'Then Ireland,' Northumberland offered desperately. 'Surely that must be worth something.'

The seated men looked at one another. 'Something, certainly. I believe something could be worked out.'

'Then make it fast,' Northumberland replied. 'We don't...'

A commotion outside the door cut off what Northumberland had been about to say. A guard burst into the room, shoving the soldier who had been spying to the floor ahead of him.

'Your Graces, I found this person listening at the door,' the guard explained.

'Really? And who have we here?' Northumberland cupped his hand beneath the spy's chin and tilted it up so that he could get a good look at the spy's face. 'You?'

'Yes, me,' Silver replied.

15 July 1553

'Pembroke, over here. I need to talk to you?'

The Earl of Pembroke was on his way to the banquet hall when the Earl of Arundel dragged him to one side.

'What's the meaning of this, Arundel,' Pembroke demanded, 'and couldn't it wait until after we had eaten.'

'Always thinking with your stomach, Pembroke, when there are more important things to worry about.'

'I happen to find good dining to be extremely important,' Pembroke replied. 'Would that my own chefs could match those of the Queen.'

'She may not be Queen much longer,' Arundel said. 'Haven't you heard the news?'

'What news?'

'The whole of East Anglia has risen up in support of Mary. They say she marches on London even as we speak at the head of an army of thirty thousand men.'

'Thirty thousand, but that's - ' Pembroke counted on his fingers. ' - that's ten times as many as Northumberland's got. I think.'

'Indeed, and it gets worse.'

'How can it possibly get any worse?'

'They say Oxfordshire is on the point of open revolt. Devon too. Even Protestant bishops are urging their congregations to declare for the Lady Mary.'

'The traitors,' Pembroke spat.

'It's only treachery if you believe Jane to be the rightful Queen,' Arundel replied. 'To Mary, we're the traitors.'

'Us?'

'Yes, us. And you know what they do to traitors, don't you, Pembroke?'

Pembroke placed a hand over his stomach, visualising the knife.

'That's right,' Arundel continued. 'They disembowel them.'

'But this is terrible,' Pembroke said when he could find his voice again. 'What are we to do, Arundel?'

'I suggest that we find somewhere to be that isn't here,' Arundel replied. 'Then we can wait the matter out and declare for whoever is finally victorious.'

'A capital idea,' Pembroke agreed, 'with just one snag.'

'Yes?'

'Jane will never let us leave.'

Arundel raised an eyebrow. 'Who said anything about asking her permission?'

'You ride well for someone with her hands tied behind her back,' Northumberland said.

'Thanks, I think,' Silver replied, using her legs to grip the horse that the Duke was leading behind him. 'I don't understand why you didn't just leave me behind, rather than dragging me all the way back to the army.'

'What? And have you report back to the Lady Mary? No, my dear, I'm keeping you where I can see you.'

'But I'm not working for Mary.'

'A likely story. Why else would you be spying on me?'

'Because I thought you were going to stab Jane in the back, that's why I joined up with your army and followed you,' Silver replied. 'And guess what? I was right. The first chance you get, you're carving up her kingdom.'

'Is that what you think I was doing?'

'It's certainly what it looked like, you holed up with your co-conspirators.'

'Co-conspirators?' Northumberland laughed. 'Those men were the French ambassadors. I was trying to convince them to help us in capturing Mary. I need their help if I'm to keep Jane on the throne.'

'Like you want to help Jane.'

'And you do? Or were my spies mistaken when they overheard you wishing her dead?'

'I didn't...'

'Didn't you?'

'It's complicated,' Silver replied.

'Actually, I find treachery so seldom is. How much is she paying you?'

'Who?'

Northumberland scowled. 'Don't be coy. It doesn't suit you. The Lady Mary, of course.'

'She's not paying me anything.'

'So it's a religious thing, is it?'

'What? No!' Silver insisted. 'I've already told you, I'm not working for Mary.'

'So you don't want to see her succeed to the throne?' Northumberland asked.

Silver did not answer.

'That's what I thought. It seems to me, my dear, that you need to work out whose side you're really on.'

'Frances,' the Duke of Suffolk said as he entered his chambers, 'could I have a word?'

'Of course, Henry,' his wife replied. 'Tell me, do you think this dress will be suitable for the coronation or should I get a new one made specifically for the occasion?'

'I think it may be a little premature to talk of coronations,' Suffolk said.

'Henry, surely you don't mean...' Frances turned to face her husband and her words dried up when she saw the worry etched on his face. 'Is it really as bad as all that?'

'Worse. Northumberland is a fine soldier, but even he can't fight the whole of England.'

'The whole of England?' Frances stared off into space as she sank slowly into a chair. 'No, I won't believe it. It's just a few rabble-rousers looking to cause trouble. They'll soon shut up once Mary is arrested and tried for her crimes.'

'I pray that you are right.'

'I have to be right,' Frances said with conviction. 'Otherwise...'

'I know,' Suffolk said quietly. 'I know.'

Frances would not cry, it was beneath her dignity, but Suffolk could tell that it was taking all her effort to maintain her composure. He dropped to one knee in front of her and gave her hand a comforting squeeze.

'I want you to go back to Bradgate Hall,' he said.

Frances shook her head. 'I won't leave you. I won't leave Jane.'

'You must,' Suffolk persisted. 'I can't protect both of you, not here. I need to know that you're somewhere safe so that I can focus all my attention on Jane. Can you do that for me?'

Frances nodded and the tears that had been welling up inside finally breached her defences. 'Oh God, Henry, what have we done?'

In the depths of the White Tower, the Doctor was sitting cross-legged on the floor of the menagerie. The leopard that had pursued Silver paced up and down beside him within its tiny cage.

'I don't suppose it matters much to you what happens,' the Doctor said. 'Whoever is on the throne, you'll still be kept down here as a trophy. It must be nice not to have choices. Back home, my people tried to teach me the virtues of non-interference. I laughed at them and called them cowards. Who's laughing now? Well, actually, I don't suppose they are - they have a hard enough time cracking a smile - but the point is still the same. Where's the courage of my convictions when I really need it?'

'It's not like this is the first time I've been in the situation, but the boot is usually on the other foot. My companions are the ones trying to change events and I'm there, doing my Time Lord duty, and preaching the importance of preserving established history. But then I don't normally take the time to get to know the people involved. It's a lot easier to treat them as statistics that way, rather than as individuals.'

'You know, Jane's just the sort of person who, if circumstances were different, I would have invited to join me in the TARDIS. She deserves to see the universe.'

The Doctor stood up, brushing the dust from his trousers.

'Well, it's been a pleasure talking to you,' he said to the leopard, 'but time marches on. I have things to do and people to save. Or not.'

He walked back up the corridor until he reached the fork where Silver had lost track of Guildford. A servant hurried past and the Doctor stopped him and beckoned him over.

'What's down there,' he asked, pointing down the left-hand branch.

'That's the Treasury, your Grace,' the servant replied.

'The Treasury,' the Doctor mused. 'I wonder...'

16 July 1553

Jane was kneeling on her floor, vomiting into the chamber pot when the Duke of Suffolk knocked on her door in the small hours of Sunday morning. Wiping her mouth clean, she unlocked the door and greeted her father.

'Jane,' Suffolk said, 'are you all right? You look terrible.'

'My illness is getting worse,' Jane replied. 'I'm finding it hard to keep any food at all. But it's not important.'

'Not important? Jane, you need to rest.'

'There'll be plenty of time for rest when this is all over,' Jane said. 'Now, tell me what brings you to my room in the middle of the night?'

'I'm not sure it's fair to trouble you with more bad news,' Suffolk prevaricated.

'You're here now,' Jane pointed out, 'so you might as well tell me.'

'The guards caught the Earls of Arundel and Pembroke trying to sneak out of the Tower under cover of darkness.'

'Is no one loyal anymore,' Jane said. 'Instruct the guards to lock the Tower gates at eight each evening and to bring the keys to me directly. If they will not stay at my side through choice then we will force them to remain.'

'It shall be done,' Suffolk said. 'Now try and get some sleep, Jane. Please.'

'Your Grace, so this is where you've been hiding,' the Doctor said.

Suffolk was sitting alone in the empty banqueting hall. The only illumination came from the candle he had placed on the table in front of him.

'I couldn't sleep,' Suffolk said. 'Do you think I could convince someone to prepare me some breakfast or is it still too early?'

The Doctor pulled out a chair and sat down beside him. 'Given that they're servants, I suspect you could persuade them to prepare whatever you liked.'

'There is that. Would you like anything?'

'No, but thank you.'

'No, when it comes to it, I don't suppose I've got much of an appetite either.'

A draft swept through the room causing the candle flame to dance.

'I'm not a bad father, am I, Doctor?' Suffolk asked. 'I raised Jane as best I knew how. I know that you didn't always approve of my methods, but a parent has to discipline his child otherwise they'll never learn boundaries. You see that, don't you?'

'It's hardly my place to criticise,' the Doctor said, 'but I will point out that, in Jane, you and your wife produced a remarkable young woman so you must have been doing something right.'

'We drove her hard, I admit that,' Suffolk continued, 'but that was only because we had such high hopes for her. We wanted to give her the world so we made a deal with the devil.'

'You take it you mean Northumberland?'

'Yes, him and his wife,' Suffolk replied. 'We helped them get what they want and, in return, they helped us put Jane on the throne. Our daughter, Queen of England. I don't think I've ever been so proud. How could I have been so stupid?' He buried his face in his hands. 'Have you seen her this morning? She's wasting away. I did that to her.'

'Don't be ridiculous,' the Doctor said. 'She's wasting away because she's being poisoned.'

'What?' Suffolk sat bolt upright.

'That's what I wanted to talk to you about, since you're one of the few people in this building that actually have your daughter's best interests at heart.'

'But you told Jane that it was just stress.'

'Well, I didn't want to alarm her,' the Doctor said, 'not until I was sure.'

'So she was right,' Suffolk said. 'Northumberland is trying to kill her.'

'Of course he isn't,' the Doctor replied. 'There's no benefit to him in it and, even if there was, he isn't here, is he?'

'Then who?'

'I have my suspicions,' the Doctor said, 'and I think Northumberland did too. Come on, we need to find Guildford.'

The Doctor and Suffolk burst into Guildford's room to find him in bed with a serving-girl. Startled, the girl pulled on the sheet to cover herself. Guildford simply grinned at the intruders.

'What can I do for you, gentlemen?' he asked.

'What is the meaning of this?' Suffolk demanded, his face red with rage.

The Doctor guided him back out of the door. 'Now is not the time, your Grace.' He turned to Guildford. 'Get dressed. We'll speak to you outside.' Nodding to the girl, he added, 'Excuse us, madam.'

'What is the matter with that boy?' Suffolk asked the Doctor when the latter rejoined him in the corridor. 'And to think, I encouraged my daughter to marry him.'

'Don't blame yourself, you were doing what you thought was right,' the Doctor said. 'But now is not the time to be dwelling in the past. Your daughter's life is in danger.'

'I still don't understand how she can have been poisoned,' Suffolk said. 'Mistress Ellen supervises the preparation of all her food and Jane even employs her own food taster.'

'Yes, that puzzled me at first. It's interesting that he uses poison, don't you think?'

'Interesting how?'

'Well, there are more direct means to kill someone, aren't there? If one has the strength.'

'To what do I owe this interruption?' Guildford asked. He was still tucking in his shirt as he emerged from his room.

'You were good enough to rescue my friend from an escaped leopard on Tuesday,' the Doctor said.

Guildford beamed proudly. 'Yes, I was, wasn't I?'

'Do you mind telling us what you were doing down there.'

'Yes, actually I do mind,' Guildford replied.

'Why, you little...' Suffolk grabbed Guildford by the collar, but the Doctor put out an arm to restrain him.

'Your father swore you to secrecy, didn't he, Guildford,' he said.

'Yes, that's right. How did you know that?'

'A lucky guess,' the Doctor replied, 'and while I'm at it, why don't I push my luck a little further and suggest that your father sent you to look at the Treasury.'

'Maybe,' Guildford said cagily.

'Why?'

'That's none of your business.'

'I think you'll find it's very much my business, young man,' the Doctor replied. 'But that doesn't really matter, does it? You can't tell me because you don't know why your father sent you.'

'I do too.'

'Do you really expect me to believe that your father trusted you with his secrets? I don't think so.'

'If you must know,' Guildford replied, 'he sent me to search the Treasury because he thought Winchester was hiding something.'

'Winchester?' Suffolk exclaimed.

'And what did you find, Guildford?' the Doctor asked.

'Nothing,' Guildford replied. 'I heard your friend calling for help before I got a chance to look.'

'I don't understand,' Suffolk said. 'What was he supposed to find?'

'Poison, your Grace. Nothing more, nothing less. Come along, I think it's past time we paid the Marquess of Winchester a visit.'

Guildford and Suffolk trailed behind the Doctor as he hurried through the Tower.

'It doesn't make any sense,' Suffolk said. 'Winchester never had the opportunity to poison my daughter.'

'Oh, but he did, and right in front of your eyes, too,' the Doctor replied. 'Tell me, who provides the jewels that your daughter has been wearing of late?'

'They come from the Royal Treasurer.'

'And are, thus, the responsibility of the Lord Treasurer.'

'Winchester,' Guildford said.

'Just so, Guildford. Winchester.'

'So he provides my daughter's jewels,' Suffolk said, uncomprehending. 'What of it?'

'Before he parts with them, he coats them with a contact poison that Jane then absorbs through her skin when she wears them,' the Doctor explained. 'The Marquess of Winchester is a clever and ruthless man, but there was one thing he didn't count on.'

'And that was?'

'You forget, your Grace, that your daughter is a good Protestant girl who dislikes ostentation. Despite having ready access to all those wonderful jewels, Jane only wears them when she absolutely has to, limiting her exposure to the poison. I imagine Winchester is becoming quite frustrated that she isn't long since dead.'

They had arrived at the Lord Treasurer's apartments.

'It's locked,' Guildford said, trying the door.

'Allow me.' Suffolk shoved Guildford out of the way and kicked at the lock. It took free attempts, but the wood around the lock finally splintered and the door swung open. 'Winchester, where are you?'

'Not here,' Guildford said, unnecessarily as they looked around the empty room. 'Maybe he's already fled.'

'He can't have left the Tower,' Suffolk replied. 'The guards would have seen to that.'

'Then where...' The Doctor trailed off. 'Quickly, we must get to Jane.'

He set off at a run and Suffolk and Guildford struggled to keep up.

'I may have been more prescient than I knew when I said Winchester was frustrated by his lack of progress,' the Doctor called over his shoulder. 'What if his impatience has finally grown too much to bear?'

They burst into Jane's bedchamber to find Winchester standing over her holding a knife.

'Get away from my wife,' Guildford snarled. Vaulting across the room, her grabbed the elderly Marquess's wrists and slammed his hand against the wall until he dropped the knife.

'What is the meaning of this, Winchester?' Suffolk demanded.

'Don't you see, Suffolk?' Winchester said. 'We can't allow Northumberland to rule the country. With Jane out of the way, all his plans will come to nothing.'

'And that justifies killing my daughter, does it? You're coming with me. I think we need to have a little talk. Guildford?'

Guildford shoved Winchester in Suffolk's direction. 'You're welcome to him.'

'No, don't let him take me,' Winchester protested as Suffolk dragged him away. 'I was only trying to protect England.'

'Save it for someone who cares,' Guildford muttered.

'Wh-What's going on?' Jane asked, the commotion disturbing her rest. She rolled over in her bed and caught sight of her husband. 'Guildford? What are you doing here?'

'I...'

'Get out! Get out of my room!'

'Jane, it's not what you think,' the Doctor began.

Guildford cut him off. 'Don't bother, Doctor,' he said. 'It doesn't matter.'

17 July 1553

It was mid-afternoon when the Duke of Northumberland, still leading Silver along behind him, caught up with his army, camped as it was outside of Bury St Edmunds. As he rode towards the main tent, he felt the eyes of his men staring accusingly at his back. He kept his head held high and proud, his mouth set in a grim line. When he reached his destination, he dismounted and handed the reins of his horse to a servant. He turned to help Silver down, but she ignored him, swinging her left leg over the horse and sliding down to the ground unaided. Northumberland held the tent flap open for her and she entered ahead of him.

'Lord Grey,' Northumberland said by way of greeting.

'Your Grace,' Grey replied, looking up from his map. His gaze alighted on Silver. 'Who's this?'

'A spy for the Lady Mary.'

'I'm not a...' Silver began. She trailed off, sighing. 'Oh, what's the use?'

'Is it wise to bring her here?' Grey asked.

'Wiser than leaving her at liberty,' Northumberland replied. He crossed the tent to examine the map Grey had been poring over. 'What news?'

'The very worst. You recall those ships you sent to Yarmouth to cut off Mary's escape by sea?'

'What of them?'

'They've defected to her cause.'

'All of them?'

'All six,' Grey replied, 'taking their guns with them.'

'No wonder the encampment seems smaller than I expect. I take it the missing men fled when they heard this news.'

'I wish that were so, your Grace,' Grey replied, 'but the truth is that we've been losing soldiers ever since leaving London. They don't even know about the ships yet, but when they do...'

Northumberland walked over to the tent flap and surveyed his troops. 'When they do, we'll be lucky if even half of them agree to remain.'

'But what of your mission?' Grey said. 'Tell me that there is still some hope.'

Northumberland shook his head. 'Reinforcements, if they are on their way at all, will not arrive in time to save us.'

'Then all really is lost.'

'Perhaps, but we can still make a fight of it,' Northumberland replied. 'I intend to ride out in the morning. Will you ride beside me, Grey?'

'I would consider it an honour, your Grace.'

'Good man. Go tell the men we march at first light. I have to deal with this spy.'

Grabbing hold of the rope that bound her wrists, Northumberland dragged Silver out of the tent. Silver struggled, but the Duke refused to let go.

'Don't fight me, woman,' he hissed. 'You're in the heart of the enemy camp. Do you really think you would get very far without my protection?'

Northumberland guided her through the maze of tents and across the open field until they were out of sight of the troops. Then he drew a knife from his belt.

'Turn around,' he said.

'Why, so you can stab me in the back?' Silver asked. 'If you're going to kill me then at least look me in the eye when doing it.'

'Brave words, but are you really ready to die?' Northumberland raised the knife so that the tip was on a level with Silver's eye. 'Now turn around.'

Silver turned. Northumberland lowered the knife and severed her bonds.

'What are you doing?'

'I'm letting you go,' Northumberland said. 'What do you think I'm doing?'

'But you think I'm a spy?'

Northumberland laughed, but without mirth. 'Do you really think that matters now? This war is lost. Whether you live or die makes no difference to me.'

'But...'

'You thought I would kill you anyway? Is that the kind of man you think I am?' Northumberland leaned in close and pressed the blade of the knife against Silver's exposed throat. He hissed in her ear. 'Believe me, if I thought killing you would gain me some advantage then I wouldn't hesitate, but I'm not mad and I don't kill without reason.'

He straightened up and returned the knife to his belt.

'Get out of my sight,' he said.

Silver did not need to be told twice.

18 July 1553

Jane looked up from her book when she heard a knock at her door.

'Come in,' she said. The Duke of Suffolk entered. 'Father?'

'Jane. How are you feeling this morning?'

'Much better, thank you.'

'That's good, that's very good.' Suffolk looked away, studying the paintings on the wall.

'Father, what is it? You didn't come here just to ask after my health.'

'Why not? Isn't that what a father's supposed to do?' Suffolk balled his hands into fists, his nails digging into his palms.

'Father?' Jane stood up, alarmed by this uncharacteristic outburst. She started to reach out a hand towards him, but stopped, unsure if it would be welcome. It hung uncomfortably in the air between them.

'Forgive me, Jane,' Suffolk said quietly. He cleared his throat. 'The Privy Council respectfully requests an audience with your Majesty. They are waiting within the presence chamber.'

Jane nodded, grateful for this return to business. 'Then let's join them without delay.'

The councillors rose to their feet as Jane entered the room. She climbed onto the dais and sat down on her throne while Suffolk took up a position beside her, in the place Northumberland had once occupied.

'My lords,' Jane said, 'my father tells me that you requested this audience. Would someone like to tell me what I can do for you?'

The lords looked at one another. Arundel stepped forward, bowing low.

'Your Majesty, it pains me to be the bearer of such grave tidings,' he said, 'but it would seem that Northumberland's army has mutinied.'

Discontented muttering erupted amongst the councillors.

'Mutinied?'

'It would appear,' Arundel continued, 'that the men were not prepared to face Mary's forces in battle. She now advances on London unopposed.'

'And what of my father?' Guildford asked, his voice shaking. 'What happened to him?'

He looked so young and uncertain in that moment that Jane's heart went out to him. 'Answer my husband,' she said.

'We do not know, your Majesty. Your Grace,' Arundel replied. 'We do not have that information.'

'Then find out,' Guildford said, launching himself across the room at Arundel. 'What good are our spies if this is all they can tell us?'

'Guildford!' Jane brought him to a halt with a single sharp word. 'This won't help your father.'

Guildford turned to her. 'He made you Queen. You can't just abandon him.'

'I know,' Jane said quietly, 'but what would you have me do?'

'Let me go looking for him,' Guildford replied. 'All I need is a horse.'

'You want me to let you ride into danger, to throw your life away?' Jane asked. 'Your father would never forgive me.'

'But he's my father,' Guildford implored.

'I know,' Jane said sadly. 'Ask yourself this, Guildford, if your father were here now, what would he tell you to do?'

Guildford looked up at her. 'He'd tell me that my place was here, with you.'

'Then come and stand here,' Jane said, indicating the dais, 'at my side.'

'Your Majesty,' Arundel said, 'I hate to interrupt, but the Privy Council and I have a request to make.'

'Then make it, your Grace.'

'The Council and I, well, we think it might be wise to speak to the French ambassador and we'd like your permission to leave the Tower.'

'All of you?' Jane asked.

'Well, that is, we, er...'

Pembroke came to Arundel's rescue. 'We feel that making our case in numbers will impress upon the ambassador its importance.'

'I see,' Jane said, 'and this wouldn't be an attempt to fly before Mary gets here, would it, abandoning your Queen to her fate?'

The lords loudly and hastily protested their innocence.

'There's not a loyal man among you, is there?' Jane said. 'Go. The guards won't stop you. It really doesn't matter anymore.'

19 July 1553

Nine days after Jane had journeyed down the river to the Tower, the crowds were back out in the streets. This time, however, the cheering was unrestrained as the people prepared to welcome their new Queen. Bonfires blazed on street corners and crowds sang and danced round them, drinking to Mary's health.

At the Cross in Cheapside, Arundel and Pembroke were proclaiming their own support for Mary.

'We were misled,' Arundel was saying, 'forced to support the pretender Jane by the evil Duke of Northumberland. But in our hearts, we've always been loyal. It's always been Mary we wanted on the throne.'

'God save Queen Mary,' Pembroke shouted, throwing a capful of gold coins into the crowd.

'What do you think you're doing,' Arundel hissed, 'throwing money away like that.'

'If it keeps me away from the executioner,' Pembroke replied, 'I'll consider it money well spent.'

'Yes, there is that,' Arundel mused, digging in his pockets for coins of his own. 'God save Queen Mary.'

Within the White Tower, Jane was standing at her bedroom window. She could not see the revellers from where she was, but she could hear them and see the smoke from their fires rising up over the rooftops.

'It's finally over,' she said.

'I'm so sorry,' her father said.

'Don't be,' Jane told him. 'What's done is done.'

'Come with me,' the Doctor said. 'I can take you far away, where they'll never find you.'

'And what of the future?' Jane shook her head. 'This is my destiny, Doctor. I've accepted it. It's time you did, too.'

'But...'

'No, Doctor, no more words.' Jane held out the keys to the Tower. 'Go, while you still can. I'll face my fate more easily if I know that you're safe.'

'It shouldn't have to be like this.'

'''Must not all things at the last be swallowed up in death?''' Jane quoted.

'Plato,' the Doctor said. 'From *Phaedo*?'

'I was reading it when we first met.'

'I remember.'

Jane smiled 'It's a memory I'll always treasure.'

'As will I,' the Doctor replied.

'Goodbye, Doctor.'

The Doctor took hold of the keys and enveloped Jane's hands in his own for a brief moment. 'Goodbye, Jane.'

He hurried from the room.

'You should go, too, Father,' Jane said to Suffolk.

Suffolk shook his head. 'My place is with my daughter.'

He wrapped his bear-like arms around Jane's slight frame and held her tight. Jane embraced her father in return, burying her head in her chest and allowing her tears to flow free.

20 February 1551

The hooting of an owl brought Jane to wakefulness. Some sixth sense was troubling her so she rose from her bed and crossed to the window, looking out on the snow-covered landscape. Silhouetted against the ground, she could see a figure saddling a horse. She peered closer and, as she did so, the figure looked up, his face illuminated by the moonlight. It was the Doctor.

Troubled by her tutor's nocturnal activity, Jane hurriedly grabbed a coat and forced her feet into a pair of boots. Opening her window, she took hold of the ivy that clung to the stonework and scrambled out and down to the ground. The Doctor was not driving the horse any faster than a gentle trot so it was an easy matter for Jane to follow him on foot, flitting from tree to tree so that she would not be seen.

The Doctor led her uphill, skirting the edge of Charnwood Forest and out across a farmer's field. The field was empty, the farmer having taken the cows inside for the winter, and Jane was afraid that the Doctor would easily spot her without any cover to hide behind, but he never looked back. Instead, he rode to the centre of the field, took his watch from his pocket and consulted it.

A great trumpeting sound filled the air and Jane clamped her hands over her ears to shut it out. A wind picked up, tugging at her hair and her cloak and, to her amazement, a blue box started to appear in front of the Doctor.

'Doctor,' said a voice that drifted out of the box, 'are you still out there? You haven't gone off and left me, have you?'

'No, Silver, I haven't left you,' the Doctor said, as he dismounted. 'The very idea.'

'It just seems like you've been gone ages.'

'Well, you know what they say. Time flies when you're having fun.'

The Doctor entered the box, closed the door behind him and the trumpeting started up again. Filled with a horrible premonition, Jane started to run towards it.

'Doctor, wait,' she yelled. 'Don't leave me!'

But she was too late. Both the box and the Doctor had vanished like mist burned away by the morning sun.

12 February 1554

A crowd had gathered on Tower Green to witness the execution. The scaffold had been erected over against the White Tower and the executioner stood nearby, his great axe held casually in both hands. Jane, dressed in black and accompanied by her nurse, Mistress Ellen, walked calmly out onto the grass. She held her prayer book in her left hand. Earlier that morning, she had witness, from her window, Guildford Dudley being led out to meet his end and, shortly after that, had seen the cart containing his decapitated body on its way to the Tower chapel. Despite this gruesome reminded of her fate, she retained her composure as she climbed up onto the scaffold, she turned to address her audience.

'I know that what I did in accepting the crown was wrong and an offence before the Queen' she said, 'but I never sought or desired it and for that I wash my hands in innocence before God and before you Christian people. I ask that you bear witness that I die a good Christian woman and that I look to be saved by no other means than by the mercy of God and his son Jesus Christ.'

She dropped to her knees in prayer and repeated the words of the fifty-first psalm in English.

'Be merciful to me, O God, because of your constant love. Because of your great mercy, wipe away my sins.'

When she was finished, Jane stood up. She handed her prayer book to Sir John Bridges, the Lieutenant of the Tower, and pulled off her gloves. Mistress Ellen unlaced Jane's gown and helped the girl out of it. Clad only in kirtle and bodice, Jane shivered in the chill winter air.

The executioner stepped forward and knelt in front of her.

'My lady, please forgive me for what I am about to do,' he said.

'I forgive you,' Jane said. 'Please, dispatch me quickly.'

The executioner directed Jane to stand on the straw, behind the low wooden block with its worn-out hollow for her chin. Mistress Ellen tried to pass Jane a cloth to use as a blindfold, but the girl forced it away.

'Not yet, not yet,' she protested, scanning the crowd. Then her eyes alighted on a familiar face and she smiled in spite of her situation. 'He escaped.' She said with relief. 'I knew he'd find a way.'

Taking the cloth from her nurse, she bound it round her eyes. Kneeling, she reached blindly for the block.

'Where is it? Where is it?' she said. 'What shall I do?'

The executioner took her hands and gently guided them to where they needed to be.

'Do I still have time for my prayers?' Jane asked.

'Just stretch out your arms when you are ready,' the executioner said. 'I'll wait.'

'Are you all right?' Silver asked the Doctor.

'No, not really,' he replied, 'but thank you for asking.'

'We didn't have to come,' Silver said.

'Yes we did. It's my fault she's up there. It's only right I should face up to the consequences of my actions.'

Head resting on the block, Jane was quietly murmuring her prayers.

'We could still save her,' Silver said. 'We could materialise the TARDIS around her and be gone before anyone realised what was going on. There's room in the TARDIS for three or I could, you know, move out to make room, if that's what you want.'

'I'm not ready to lose you quite yet, Silver,' the Doctor said, attempting a weak smile. 'As for Jane, I suppose that there are some rules even I won't break. Maybe one day, but not today. I'm sorry.'

Jane stretched out her arms.

'Into thy hands I commend my spirit!' she cried.

The executioner's axe fell.

John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, was tried and convicted of treason on 18 August 1553. He was beheaded four days later.

Henry Grey, Duke of Suffolk, suffered only a brief spell of imprisonment, thanks to the intercession of his wife with Queen Mary. Having obtained his freedom, however, Suffolk became involved in Thomas Wyatt's ill-fated attempt to overthrow the new Queen. He was executed for treason on 23 February 1554.

Frances Grey, Duchess of Suffolk, escaped imprisonment and three weeks after her husband's execution, she married her steward, Adrian Stokes, a man fifteen years her junior. She remained at court and established a friendship with the new Queen. Her two surviving daughters, Catherine and Mary, were appointed the Queen's maids of honour. Frances died in 1559.

Henry FitzAlan, Earl of Arundel, was appointed Lord Steward of the royal household following Mary's coronation and retained this position when her sister, Elizabeth came to power. He was involved in a number of conspiracies during Elizabeth's reign, but was never stripped of his property or titles. He died in 1580.

William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, had married his son, Henry, to Catherine Grey, Jane's younger sister, prior to Jane coming to the throne. When Jane was deposed, Pembroke had the marriage annulled in order to distance himself from the Grey family. He went on to crush the Wyatt rebellion of 1554, thereby winning the new Queen's favour. He died in 1570.

William Paulet, Marquess of Winchester, was affirmed in his position as Lord Treasurer by Mary following her coronation and he remained in this position throughout her reign and into the reign of Elizabeth. He died in 1572.

Mary Tudor, made her state entry into London on 3 August 1553 and was formally crowned Queen of England on 1 October. In 1555, she began her persecution of the Protestants, burning hundreds of people at the stake for their faith. She married Philip II of Spain and was persuaded by him to join Spain in a war against France. The war went badly for the English and the French reclaimed Calais, England's last territory on the continent. She died on 17 November 1558.

THE DOCTOR WHO PROJECT



On Monday 12 February, 1554,
Lady Jane Dudley was led out onto Tower Green.

Kneeling and blindfolded, her chin resting on a wooden block, she was
beheaded with an axe.

Her crime was treason. She was sixteen years old.

Eight months earlier, following the death of her cousin, Edward VI,
Jane had been proclaimed Queen of England.

A pawn in both the schemes of her father-in-law, the Duke of Northumberland,
and in the conflict between the Protestant and Catholic faiths that divided
the country, Jane was deposed after just nine days, the shortest
reign of any monarch in English history.

This is the story of those nine days and of what might have been.

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