

# **King Henry VIII**

**by William Shakespeare**

Presented by Paul W. Collins

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## Prologue

I come no more to make you laugh,” the popular performer tells his listeners, as he walks onto the London stage in his role as Prologue. “Things that bear a *weighty* and a *serious* brow—high and sad, full workings of state and woe—such noble scenes as draw the eye to flow, we now present.

“Those that can pity may here, if they think it well, let fall a tear; the subject will *deserve* it.”

Queen Elizabeth’s long reign came to an end, and her successor, King James, has ruled for several years; his daughter is soon to marry. The British people, enjoying peace, prosperity and the expectation of continued greatness, look to their history for assurance.

“Such as give their money out of *hope* they might believe, may here find *truth*, too.” Previous theatrical works have centered on flaws in English kings of old, whose pride and ambition brought strife and bloodshed, leading to their downfall. In this production, loyal subjects are to learn about the Virgin Queen’s father—complex, and notorious—the better to appreciate her and the England she inherited.

The player strides to the front of the platform; he is centered, now, in the three-tiered circle of wooden galleries.

“Those that come to see only a *show* or two, but who agree the *play* may pass,” he says, dryly—some in the higher-priced seats are here mainly to be seen, and to chat, “if they be still and willing, I’ll undertake may see away their shilling *richly* in two short hours!

“Only they who come to hear a merry, bawdy play, or the noise of targets,”—shields being battered, “or to see a fellow in a long, motley coat trimmed with yellow”—a court jester—“will have been deceived.

“For, gentle hearers, know that to prank out our chosen truth with such show as ‘fool-and-fight’ has—besides forfeiting our own brains, the effort we bring to making that ‘*only true*’ we now intend—would leave us ne’er an *understanding* friend.”

Today’s play is *The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth*. Cynics might scoff; the tale was initially titled *All Is True*.

“Therefore, for *goodness*’ sake, although you are known as the first and happiest hearers of the town, be solemn as we would make ye!

“Think that ye see the very persons of our noble story as they *were, living*—think you see them *great*, and followed by the general, thronging sweat of a *thousand friends*.

“Then, in a moment, see how soon this mightiness meets *misery*!

“And if you can be merry *then*....” He shrugs. “I’ll just say, ‘A man may weep upon his *wedding day*!’”

## Chapter One Accusations of Treason

Good morrow, and well met!” says the Duke of Buckingham. “How have ye done since last we saw you, in France?”

“I thank Your Grace, healthful—and ever since, a fresh *admirer* of what I saw there!” replies old Lord Norfolk, approaching the duke and Lord Abergavenny, one of Buckingham’s sons-in-law.

“An untimely ague stayed *me* a prisoner in my *chamber*,” Buckingham claims, “when those *suns* of glory, those two *lights* of men, met in the vale of Andren.” He considers King Henry’s elaborate and costly peace overtures to King François to have been ill-advised.

“Twixt Guynes and Arde!—I was then *present*!” says Norfolk, “saw them salute on horseback; beheld them, when they alighted, how they clung in their embracement!—as they drew together into such a compounded *one* what *four* thronèd ones could have weighed!”

The portly kings had met, clad in fur-trimmed finery and wearing much gold jewelry, to begin a series of negotiations conducted in the extravagant grandeur of festival, tournament and pageant.

“All the whole time I was my chamber’s prisoner,” says Buckingham sourly.

“Then you lost the view of *earthly glory*! Men might say that till *this* time pomp was *single*, but now married to one *above* itself! Each following day became the *next* day’s *master*!—till the *last* made former wonders *its own*!

“Today the *French*, all *cliquant*, all in gold like heathen *gods*, shone down the English—and tomorrow, *they* made Britain *gilded*!—every man that stood showed like a *mine*! Their dwarfish pages were as *cherubins*, all *gilt*! The madams too, not used to toil, did almost *sweat* to bear the *pride* upon them—and their very *painting* was to them a labour!

“Now *that* masque was cried *incomparable*!—but the *ensuing night* made it a fool and *beggar*! The two kings, equal in lustre, were now best, now worst, as presence did present them: him in eye, till *him* in praise—and, being present *both*, ’twas said they saw but *one*!—and no discerners durst wag his tongue in censure!

“When these *suns*—for so they praised ’em!—by their heralds challenged the noble spirits to *arms*,”—friendly jousting, “they did perform beyond *thought*’s compass!—so that formerly *fabulous* story, now being seen possible enough, got such credit that *Bevis* was believed!”

“Oh, you go far!” The tales of that medieval knight’s exploits are quite fantastic.

Norfolk assures him, “As I belong to worship, and affect in honour *honesty*, the tract of everything *action*’s self was tongue to would by a *good* discourser lose some life! *All* was *royal*!—the *office* did distinctly fulfill its *function*!—to the disposing of it nought rebelled: *order* gave each thing *view*!”

“Who did *guide*—I mean, who set the body and the limbs of this great *sport* together, as you guess?” asks Buckingham—as if he himself had no idea.

“One, *certes*, who promised no element in such business!” says Norfolk.

“I pray you, who, my lord?”

“All this was ordered by the good discretion of the Right Reverend Cardinal of York.”

“The Devil speed him!” cries Buckingham. “*No* man’s pie is free from *his* ambitious finger! What had *he* to do with these fierce vanities? I wonder that such a *keech*”—blob of fat—“can with his very bulk *take up the rays* of the beneficial *sun*, and *keep them from the earth*!”

Norfolk is more charitable toward the corpulent, ambitious Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, Archbishop of York and Lord Chancellor of England. “Surely, sir, there’s something in him that puts him to these ends, he being not prompted by *ancestry* whose grace chalks for successors their way.” The cleric’s father was a butcher. “Not called upon for high *feats* done for the crown, nor *allied* for eminent assistance, he gives us note only *spider*-like, out of his self-drawn web.

“The force of *his own merit* makes his way—a gift that Heaven gives him which buys a place next to the king!”

Says Abergavenny angrily, “I cannot tell what *Heaven* hath given him—let some graver eye pierce into that—but I can see his *pride* peep through each part of him! Whence has he *that*? If not from *Hell*, the Devil is *niggardly*, or has given all before—and *he* begins a *new hell* in himself!”

“Why the devil took he upon *himself*, upon this French going out, without the privity o’ the king, to appoint *who should attend on him*?” demands Buckingham. “He just *makes up a file* from all the gentry—for the most part, those upon whom he means to lay as little *honour* as *great charge*!” The nobleman is irked that, without so much as Privy Council approval, the archbishop decided who was to accompany the king—and to pay taxes levied for the trip.

“And in the paper”—taxation order—“his *own* letters—the honourable board of Council left aside!—must fetch!” The churchman, while only an *ex officio* member of the king’s Council, controls use of the Great Seal of England.

Abergavenny further laments the cost of the king’s venture across the channel: “I do know

kinsmen of mine, *three* at the least, who have by this so sickened their estates that they shall never abound as formerly!”

Complains Buckingham, “Oh, *many* have *broken their backs* in laying *manners* on ’em for this great journey!”—borne the heavy assessments by selling land. “What *did* this vanity but minister *communication?*—a *most poor issue!*”

Norfolk must concur. “I think, grievingly, the peace between the French and us not worth the cost that did conclude it!”

A heavy rain had dampened the conference’s conclusion. “*Every* man, after the hideous storm that followed, was a thing *despairèd!*” says Buckingham, “and, without consulting, broke into a *general prophecy*: that this tempest, dashing upon the garments of this peace, boded the *sudden breach of it!*”

“Which is *budded out,*” Norfolk admits. “For France hath *flawed* the league—and hath attached our merchants’ goods at Bourdeaux!”—seized English ships’ freight.

“Is it therefore that the ambassador is silenced?” asks Abergavenny. The king has confined the French representative to his home in London.

“Marry, is’t.”

Abergavenny is disgusted. “A proper *title* of a peace, purchased at an excessive rate!”

“And *all* this business our reverend *cardinal* carried!” notes Buckingham.

Lord Norfolk looks around warily; they have been called here to the palace this morning for a hearing—at the behest of the archbishop. “*Like* it, Your Grace,” he urges soothingly. “The state takes *notice* of the private difference”—personal antipathy—“betwixt you and the cardinal.

“I advise you—and take it from a heart that wishes towards you honour and plenteous safety—that you read the cardinal’s *malice* and his *potency* together!—considering, further, that what his high hatred would effect requires not a minister of *his* power!

“You know his nature—that he’s *revengeful!* And I know his sword hath a *sharp edge*; it’s *long* and, ’t may be said, it reaches far! And where ’twill not extend, thither he *sends darts!*”

“Bosom-up my counsel; you’ll find it wholesome.” He sees movement down the corridor. “*Lo* where comes that *rock* that I advise your shunning....”

Cardinal Wolsey, surrounded by his guard, tall men with polished but serviceable halberds, walks behind a servant who carries a leather pouch holding the Great Seal—the metal stamp which, pressed into warm sealing wax, authenticates royal documents. Wolsey’s two secretaries are with him, minding papers of state. In passing toward the throne room, the archbishop stops to fix his eye disdainfully on Buckingham—who glares in return.

The cardinal turns to his chief secretary. “The Duke of Buckingham’s surveyor—where’s his *examination, eh?*”

The clerk sorts through some documents. “Here, so please you.” The listed questions are for a witness who serves as an assistant to the duke’s steward.

“Is he in person ready?”

“Aye, so please Your Grace.”

“Well, we shall then know *more,*” says Cardinal Wolsey, meeting the duke’s bold gaze. “And Buckingham shall *lessen* this big look!” The chancellor and his party proceed; the king awaits them.

Growls Buckingham, “This butcher’s cur is *venomous!* I have not the power to *muzzle* him; therefore best not wake him from his slumber.” He feels revulsion for the low-born official’s power in administration: “A beggar’s *book* outworths a noble’s *blood!*”

“What, are you *chafed?*” says Norfolk. “Ask God for *temperance*—that’s the only appliance which your disease requires.”

Buckingham shakes his head. “I read in’s looks matter *against* me, and his eye *reviled* me as his *abject object!* At this instant, he bores into me with some *trick!* He’s gone to the king; I’ll follow and outstare him!”

“*Stay,* my lord, and let your *reason* with your choler question what ’tis you go about!”

cautions Norfolk. “To climb *steep* hills requires slow pace at first; *anger* is like a *full-hot horse*—being allowed his way, his self-*nettling tires* him!

“Not a man in England can advise thee like *you*; so be *to yourself* as you would to your friend!”

But Buckingham has decided. “I’ll to the king, and from a mouth of *honour* quite *cry down* this Ipswich *fellow’s insolence!*—or proclaim there’s difference in *no* persons!”

Norfolk is alarmed. “Be *advisèd!*—heat not a furnace for your *foe* so hot that it do singe *yourself!* We may, by violent swiftness, run past that which we run at, and lose by over-running!

“Know you not?—the fire that mounts the broth ’til it *boil o’er*, in *seeming* to augment, *wastes!*”

“Be *advisèd!* I say again: there is no English soul more stronger to direct you than *yourself*, if with the stream of *reason* you would *quench*, or but *allay*, the fire of passion!”

Buckingham wills himself to be calm. “Sir, I am thankful to you; and I’ll go along by your prescription.

“But this too-proud fellow—whom I’ll not name in the flow of *gall*, in open *actions*—by intelligence and proofs as *clear* as *fountains in July*, when we see each grain of gravel, I do know to be *corrupt* and *treasonous!*”

Norfolk is startled—and fearful. “Say not *treasonous!*” he warns.

“To the *king* I’ll say’t!—and make my avouch as strong as shore of rock!” insists Buckingham. “Only hear: this ‘holy’ fox—or *wolf*, or *both*, for he is equally as *ravenous* as he is *subtle*, and as *prone* to mischief as able to *perform* it, his mind and place *infecting* one another, yea, reciprocally!—showed his *pomp* as well in *France* as here *at home!* In the interval that *swallowed so much treasure*, he urged the king our master on to this last costly *treaty!*—one like a *glass* that did break i’ the *bringing!*”—shipping home.

Norfolk concurs—quietly, in hope of ending the discussion: “Faith, and so it did—”

“Pray, *give me favour*, sir!” Buckingham is annoyed; he has much more to say. “This cunning cardinal the articles o’ the combination”—peace treaty—“drew as *himself* pleasèd!—and as they were ratified, he cried, ‘Thus let *be!*’—to as much end as giving a *crutch* to the *dead!*”

“Our *Count Cardinal* has done this alone—and ’tis *well*: for worthy Wolsey, who *cannot err*, *he* did it!” The cardinal is known to aspire to be Pope, whose pontifical rulings are believed infallible. “Now *this* follows, which, as I take it, is a kind of *puppy* to the old dam, *Treason: Charles the Emperor* here made visitation—under *pretence* to see the queen, his aunt. For ’twas indeed but his *cover*: he came to *whisper with Wolsey!*” The Holy Roman Empire, ruled by Charles of Spain, is contesting with France for domination of Europe; England would be a valuable ally for either side.

Buckingham continues: “Charles’ fears were that the meeting betwixt England and France might, through their amity, breed him some prejudice; for from this league peeped harms that menaced him.

“He privily dealt with our *cardinal*; and, as I trow—which I well *do*, for I am sure the emperor *paid* ere *he* promisèd, whereby his suit was *granted* ere it was *asked!* When the way was made and paved with *gold*, the emperor desired that Wolsey would please to *alter the king’s course*, and *break* the foresaid peace!

“Let the *king* know—as soon he shall by *me!*—that thus the cardinal does *buy* and *sell* his honour as he pleases, and for his *own* advantage!”

Honest old Norfolk is dismayed. “I am sorry to hear this of him!—and could wish ye were some way mistaken in’t!”

“No, not a *syllable!* I do pronounce him in that very shape as he shall appear in proof!”

They watch, surprised, as a knight approaches, with several members of the royal guard—who surround the lords and lower their halberds’ sharp blades threateningly.

“Your office, sergeant—execute it,” says the knight unhappily.

The sergeant-at-arms tells one nobleman, “Sir, my lord the Duke of Buckingham, and Earl of

Hereford, Stafford, and Northampton, I *arrest* thee for *high treason*, in the name of our most sovereign king!”

Buckingham pales as he turns to Norfolk. “Look you, my lord, *the net has fall’n upon me!* I shall perish under *device* and *practise!*”—trick and scheme.

“I am sorry to see you ta’en from liberty,” the knight tells him, not wishing to be drawn into comment on the indictment’s allegations; Buckingham is well regarded. “To look on the *present* business: ’tis his highness’ pleasure you shall go to the Tower.”

Buckingham stares, stunned; Wolsey has already persuaded the king. “It will help me nothing to plead mine *innocence*, for that dye is on me which makes my whitest part black!

“The will of Heaven be done in this and all things. I obey,” he tells the knight. “Oh, my lord Abergavenny, fare *you* well!”

“Nay, he must bear you company,” says the knight. “The king is pleased you shall both to the Tower, till you know how he determines further.”

The young nobleman is also resigned. “As the duke said, the will of Heaven be done, and the king’s pleasure by me obeyèd.”

The knight unfolds a paper and confers with the sergeant. “Here is a warrant from the king to arrest Lord Montacute, and to bring the persons of the duke’s confessor, John de la Car, and one Gilbert Peck, his chancellor.”

“*So!*—so those are the *limbs* o’ the *plot!*” says Buckingham sourly, of his associates who are named in the document. “No more, I hope.”

“A monk o’ the Chartreux.”

“*Oh?* Nicholas Hopkins?”

“He.”

Buckingham now realizes that the priest is betraying him. “My surveyor is *false!*—the o’er-great cardinal hath showed him *gold!*” But the sergeant’s men move their blades closer, urging the duke toward the doors. “My life is spanned already; I am the *shadow* of poor Buckingham—whose shape even this instant’s cloud puts out by darkening my clear sun!”

As he and Abergavenny are led away, he calls to Norfolk, “My lord, *fare well!*”

**A** loud flourish of cornets silences the nobles in the Council chamber at the royal palace in London, and they rise from their seats.

King Henry VIII, clearly disturbed, precedes Cardinal Wolsey as they enter the room from a side door. Henry climbs the steps heavily and seats himself in a large, cushioned chair. The archbishop sits on the dais just below, to his right, and the king immediately addresses him.

“My *life* itself, and the best heart of it, *thanks* you for this great care! I stood i’ the level of a full-chargèd *confederacy*, and give thanks to you that *choked* it!

“Let be called before us that gentleman of Buckingham’s! In person I’ll hear him his confessions justify; and, *point by point*, the treasons of his *master* he shall again relate!”

The courtiers hear a herald’s cry: “Room for the queen!”

Katherine, daughter of Spain’s aging King Ferdinand—the emperor’s grandfather—and Queen Isabella, is ushered in by Lords Norfolk and Suffolk. She approaches the king, and kneels.

King Henry rises, smiling, and takes her hand.

“Nay, we must *longer* kneel,” the queen tells him. “I am a *suitor*”—here to make a request.

“Arise, and take place by us!” says Henry, assisting her. He kisses Katherine, and motions to the chair at his left. “*Half* your suit never name to us!—you *have* half our power! The other moiety, ere you ask is *given!* Repeat your will, and take it!”

“Thank Your Majesty,” says the queen. “That you would love *yourself*—and *in* that love leave not unconsiderèd your *honour*, nor the dignity of your office—is the point of my petition....”

“Lady mine, proceed.”

“I am solicited—by not a few, and *those* of *true* condition—that your subjects are in great

*grievance!* There have been commissions”—assessments of money—“sent down among ’em which hath flawed the heart of all their *loyalties!*” She looks over at Wolsey. “Wherein, although, my good lord cardinal, they vent reproaches most bitterly on *you* for putting on these exactions, yet the king *our master*—whose honour heaven shield from soil!—even *he* escapes not language *unmannerly*—yea, such which breaks the sides of loyalty, and almost appears in *loud rebellion!*”

“Not ‘almost’ appears, it *doth* appear!” says Norfolk. “For, upon these taxations, the *clothiers* all, not able to maintain the many to them beholden, have put off”—sent away, unemployed—“the spinsters, carders, fullers, weavers, who—unfit for *other* life, compelled by hunger and lack of other *means*—in *desperate* manner daring the event to the teeth, are all in *uproar!*—and *danger* serves among them!”

“Taxation? Whereon—and *what* taxation?” asks King Henry. “My lord cardinal, you that are blamed for it alike with us, know you of this taxation?”

Cardinal Wolsey seems surprised. “Please you, sir, I know but of a *single part* in aught that pertains to the *state*—at front but in that *file* where others count steps *with* me.”

Katherine faces him gravely. “*No*, my lord! You know *more* than others, but you *frame* it among things that are *not* known!—and which are not *wholesome* to those who *would not* know them, yet *must perforce* be of their acquaintance! These *exactions* whereof my sovereign would have note, they are *most pestilent* to those *bearing* them!—and to bear, the *back* is sacrifice to the *load!*”

“They say they are *devised by you*; or else you suffer too hard an exclamation. . . .”

“Still ‘*exaction*’?” says King Henry, frowning. “The nature of it—in what *kind*, let us know, is this *exaction*?”

The queen replies. “I am much too venturous in tempting of your patience, but am boldened under your promised *pardon*.

“The subjects’ grief comes through commissions which compel from each *the sixth part of his substance*, to be levied without delay! And the pretence for this is named: *your ways in France!* This makes *bold mouths!*—tongues *spit* their duties out, *curses* now live where their prayers did!—and cold hearts *freeze allegiance* in them. And, it’s come to pass, thus *unruly* obedience is a slave to *each incensèd will!*”

“I would Your Highness would give it quick consideration, for there is no primer business!” Henry assures her, “By my life, this is against *our* pleasure!”

“As for me,” says Cardinal Wolsey, eyebrows raised, and blinking in feigned innocence, “I have no further gone in this than by a single voice—and *that* not passed from me but by learned approbation of the judges”—the Council. “If I am traduced by ignorant tongues—which know neither my faculties nor person, yet will be the chronicles of my doing—let me say ’tis but the fate of *place*, and the rough thicket that *Virtue* must go through.

“We must not stint our necessary actions for fear of finding *malicious censurers*—who ever do as ravenous *fishes*: follow a vessel that is newly trimmed, but benefit no further than vainly *longing*. Oft what we *do best*, by *sick* interpreters is not *ours*, or not allowed; and, as befits the grosser quality of *weak* ones, what *worst* is cried up as our *best* act!

“If we shall *stand still* for fear that our motion will be mocked or carped at, we should *take root* here where we sit, or sit as state *statues* only!”

Says King Henry, “Things done *well*, and with a care, *exempt* themselves from fear. But things done without *example*, in their issue are to be fearèd; have you a precedent of this commission?” he asks the cardinal. “I believe, not any.

“We must not *rend* our subjects through our laws, and *stab* them by our *will!* *A sixth part* from each?—a *trembling* contribution! Why, we’d take from every *tree* the top, bark, and part o’ the *timber!*—and though we leave it, thus hackèd, with a root, the air will drink the *sap!*”

Henry decides. “To every county where this is questioned, send our letters with *free pardon* to each man that has denied the force of this commission! Pray, look to’t; I put it to your care.”

Cardinal Wolsey rises and bows. He summons an assistant. “A word with you. Let there be



letters writ *to every shire* of the king's *grace* and *pardon!*"

But as he walks with the secretary, Thomas Cromwell, he speaks privately, so no other can hear: "The aggrieved commons hardly conceive of *me*; let it be noised that through *our intercession* this revokement and pardon comes. I shall anon advise you further in the proceeding."

Cromwell bows and moves away.

Queen Katherine has another issue to bring before the king: "I am sorry that the Duke of *Buckingham* is run into your *displeasure*."

"It grieves *many*," Henry admits. "The gentleman is learned, and a most rare speaker; to Nature, none is more bound; his training such that he may furnish and instruct great *teachers*, and never seek for aid out of himself.

"But see: when these so-noble benefits shall prove not *well-disposed*, the mind once growing *corrupt*, they turn to *vicious forms*, ten times more *ugly* than ever they were fair! This man so complete, who was enrolled 'mongst *wonders*, with whom we, almost *ravished* in listening, could not find in his *hour* of speech but a *minute!*—*he*, my lady, hath into *monstrous* clothing put the graces that once were his, and is become as stained as if besmeared in Hell!

"Sit by us." He points. "You shall hear from *him*—this was his gentleman in trust—things to strike *Honour* sad!" Henry motions to Wolsey. "Bid him recount the fore-recited practises"—schemes—"whereof we cannot *feel* too little, hear too *much!*"

"Stand forth," the cardinal tells the duke's overseer, "and with bold spirit relate what you, most like a careful subject, have collected out of the Duke of Buckingham."

"Speak freely," the king tells Charles Knevet as he comes forward.

The surveyor bows. "First, it was usual with him—every day it would infect his speech—that if the king should *without issue* die, he'd carry it so as to *make the sceptre his!* These very words I've heard him utter to his son-in-law, Lord Abergavenny—to whom by oath he menaced *revenge* upon the *cardinal!*"

"Please it Your Highness," adds Wolsey, "to note in this dangerous conception a *point*: not amended by his wish for your high position, his will is most *malignant*, and it stretches beyond you to your *friends!*"

Katherine chides: "My learned lord *cardinal*, deliver all with *charity*."

"Speak on," Henry tells the spy. "How *grounded* he his title to the crown, upon our fail? To this point hast thou heard him at any time speak aught?"

"He was brought to this by a vain prophecy of Nicholas Hopkins."

"What was that Hopkins?"

"Sir, a Chartreux friar. His confessor *fed him* every minute with *words of sovereignty!*"

"How know'st *thou* this?"

"Not long before Your Highness sped to France," says the overseer, "the duke, being at The Rose, within the parish Saint Lawrence Poultney, did of me demand what was the speech among the Londoners concerning the French journey.

"I replied that men feared the French would prove perfidious, to the king's danger.

"Immediately the duke said 'twas the fear *indeed!*—and that he expected it would *prove* the verity of certain words spoken by a *holy monk*—'who *oft*,' says he, 'hath sent to me, wishing me to allow John de la Car, my chaplain, a choice hour in which to hear from him a matter of some moment!

"Later he, my chaplain, under the confessional seal—to no creature living but *me* should it be uttered—solemnly swore to what that monk had spoken. With demure confiding, *this* pausingly ensued...."

Loudly, the agent pronounces the monk's prophecy to the chaplain, as, he says, was it related by Buckingham: "Neither the *king* nor 's *heirs*, tell you the duke, shall prosper!

"Bid him strive for the love o' the *commonalty*... the *duke* shall govern *England!*"

Gasps are heard among the counselors and attending courtiers.

But Queen Katherine eyes the witness dourly. “If I know you well, you *were* the duke’s surveyor—and *lost your office* on the complaint o’ the tenants!” She doubts the hearsay evidence. “Take good heed you charge not, in your wrath, a nobler *person*, and spoil your noble *soul*! I say, *take heed*—yes, *heartily* beseech you!”

The king, though, is eager to hear more. “Let him go on. Forward!”

“On my soul, I’ll speak but truth!” says the surveyor. “I *told* my lord the duke that, by the Devil’s illusions, the monk might be *deceivèd*!—and that ’twas *dangerous* for him to ruminate on this so far, until it forged in him some *design*—which being believèd was much likely to be *done*!”

“He answered, ‘*Tsk*, it can do *me* no damage!’—adding, further, that had the *king* in his last sickness failed, the cardinal’s and Sir Thomas Lovell’s *heads should have gone off*!”

King Henry’s fears are confirmed. “*Hah!* What?—so *rank!* *Ah*, there’s *mischief* in this man! Canst thou say further?”

“I *can*, my liege.”

“Proceed.”

“Being at Greenwich, after Your Highness had *reproved* the duke about Sir William Blumer—”

“I remember of such a time!” says the king. “The duke—being *my* sworn servant—retained him *as his!*” To the king’s annoyance, one of his knights switched to Buckingham’s service—and now Henry wonders how long Blumer had been in the duke’s pay. “But *on*; what thence?”

The overseer relates Buckingham’s comments. “‘If,’ quoth he, ‘I for this had been *committed*’—to the Tower, as I thought—‘I would have played the part *my father* meant to act upon the *usurper Richard!*—made suit to come in ’s presence—which if granted, as he made *semblance* of duty he would have *put his knife to him!*’” King Richard III had been at Salisbury when the duke’s father considered killing him.

“Abominable *traitor!*” cries King Henry.

Cardinal Wolsey rises to face the queen. “Now, madam, may His Highness live in *freedom*, with that man *out of prison?*”

She scowls at his daring. “God mend *all!*”

King Henry is watching the witness. “There’s something more would out of thee; what say’st?”

“The duke—after his father, with one hand on his dagger, another spread on ’s breast—the knife he stretched, mounting his eyes as he did discharge a *horrible oath!*—whose tenor was: were he evilly *used*, he would *outdo his father* by as much as a *performance* does an irresolute *purpose!*”

King Henry rises. “There’s his *intention!*—to sheathe his *knife* in *us!*”

“He is attachèd”—in custody. “Call him to immediate trial!” he tells the captain of the royal guard. “If he may find mercy in the *law*, ’tis his—if none, let him not seek ’t of *us!*”

“By day and night,” growls Henry, “he’s *traitor* to the *height!*”

## Chapter Two Courtly Encounters

**T**he aging lord chamberlain is amused by young courtiers’ latest foppish affectations. “Is’t possible the spells of France should juggle men into such strange comport?”

“New customs, though they be never so ridiculous—nay, let ’em be *unmanly!*—yet are followed,” says his companion, Sir William Sands, Earl of Worcester. They are drinking wine this evening in a side chamber of the royal household in the palace at London.

“As far as *I* see,” says the chamberlain, “all the *good* our English have got by the late voyage is but merely a *fit* or two o’ the *face!*”—haughty expressions. “But they are *shrewd* ones; for when they hold ’em you would swear directly their very *noses* had been counsellors to *Pepin* or

*Clotharius*,”—ancient French kings, “they keep state so!”—are held so high.

“They have all *new legs*, and *lame* ones! One would take it, who never saw ’em pace”—dance—“before, that the *spavin* or *springhalt*”—crippling diseases of horses—“reigned among ’em!”

“By’s death, my lord,” laughs the earl, “their *clothes* are after such a *pagan* cut, too, that surely they’ve *worn out* Christendom’s!”

Another nobleman joins them. “How now!” says the chamberlain. “What *news*, Sir Thomas Lovell?”

The constable of the Tower takes a seat at the table with them and pours himself some wine from a flagon. “I’ faith, my lord, I hear of none but the new *proclamation* that’s clapped upon the Court Gate”—at York Place, Cardinal Wolsey’s London palace.

“What is’t for?”

“The reformation of our travelled *gallants*, who fill the court with quarrels, talk, and *tailors!*”

“I’m *glad* ’tis there!” says the chamberlain. “Now I would pray our *monsieurs* to think an *English* courtier may be wise without having seen the *Louvre!*”—the French royal court.

“They must choose *either*,” Lovell reports. “For so run the conditions: *leave* those remnants of fool-and-feather that they got in France, with all the horrible points of ignorance appertaining thereunto, such as fights and fireworks, abusing better men than *they* can be, out of a *foreign* ‘wisdom’—renounce clean the faith they have in *tennis* and *tall stockings*, short, blistered *breeches*,”—puffy ones, “and that type of drivel—and *understand* again like *honest men!*—

“Or *pack unto their old playfellows!* There, I take it, they may, *cum privilegio*, ‘oui’ away the lag end of their lewdness,”—final days, “and be *laughed at!*”

Sands is pleased. “’Tis *time* to give ’em *physic*, their diseases are grown so catching!”

The chamberlain chuckles: “What a loss our *ladies* will have of these trim vanities!”

“Aye, marry, *there* will be woe indeed, lords!” laughs Lovell. “The sly whoresons have got a speeding trick to *lay down* ladies: ‘a *French* song and a *fiddle*’ has no equal!”

“*The Devil* fiddle ’em!” mutters Sands. “I am glad they are *going*—for surely there’s no converting of ’em! *Now* an *honest* country lord, as *I* am, a long time beaten out of play, may bring his plain song and have an hour of *hearing*—and, by’r Lady, bold music in *exchange*, too!”

The chamberlain claps him on the back. “Well *said*, Lord Sands! *Your* colt’s-tooth is not cast yet!”

Sands grins. “No, my lord—nor *shall* not, while I have a stump!”

“Sir Thomas, whither were you a-going?” asks the earl.

“To the cardinal’s. Your Lordship is a guest, too,” he points out.

“Oh, ’tis true. This night he makes a *supper*—and a great one, for many lords and *ladies!* *There* will be the *beauty* of this kingdom, I’ll assure you!”

“That churchman bears a *bounteous* mind indeed,” says Lovell, “a *hand* as fruitful as the land that feeds us! His *dews* fall everywhere!”

“They *may*, my lord! He has the *wherewithal!*” notes Sands, of the powerful and wealthy prelate’s highly pragmatic largess. “In him, *sparing* would show as a worse sin than ill doctrine! Men of *his* way *should* be most liberal; they are set here for *examples!*”

“True, they *are* so,” says the earl, “but few now give such *great* ones!”

The chamberlain looks forward to the cardinal’s evening of entertainment. “No doubt he’s noble,” he declares, dryly, finishing his wine. “He had a foul mouth who said *other* of him!”

“My barge stays.” He invites Sands: “Your Lordship shall along!” They are to travel by boat down the Thames to the private landing at the cardinal’s mansion—one more magnificent and lavishly furnished than some of the king’s own dwellings.

Says the chamberlain, rising, “Come, good Sir Thomas, we shall be late, else—which I would not be, for I was spoke to, with Sir Henry Guildford, this night to be *comptroller*”—monitor of the spending.

Lord Sands is delighted. “I am Your Lordship’s!”

Ladies, a general *welcome* from his grace salutes ye all!” cries Sir Harry Guildford a handsome young courtier, as some of the guests come into the huge dining hall at York Place. “This night he dedicates to fair *contentment*—and to *you!* None here, he hopes, in all this noble bevy, has brought abroad with her one *care!*—he would have all as *merry* as, first, good *welcome*, then good *company*—and good *wine!*—can make people!”

Music of lutes and hautboys plays softly while servants ready long tables set for the sumptuous supper. On a dais at the front of the hall, a small table, canopied with a cloth of state, has been laid for Cardinal Wolsey.

“Oh, my lord, you’re tardy!” chides the courtier, as the king’s chamberlain arrives with two other noblemen. “The very *thought* of this fair company clapped *wings* to *me!*”

Laughs the chamberlain, “You *are* young, Sir Harry.”

Beside him, the courtier’s friends chat happily in private as they watch the lovely, bright-eyed gentlewomen.

“Sir Thomas Lovell, had the cardinal but half my *lay* thoughts”—a play on *secular* and *sensual*—“in him, some of these should find a *running* banquet ere they rested!” says Lord Sands. “I think that would better please ’em!” He gazes at the silk-laden ladies present. “By my life, they are a sweet society of fair ones!”

Lovell grins. “Oh, that Your Lordship were but new *confessor* to one or two of these!”

“I would I *were*; they should find easy *penance!*”

“Faith, *how* easy?”

“As easy as a *down-bed* would afford it!”

The chamberlain now steps forward to address the guests politely: “Sweet ladies,” he calls out, “will it please you sit?”

“Sir Harry, place you at that side; I’ll take the charge of this.” He offers seats to the cardinal’s other guests, alternating them by gender.

“His grace is entering,” notes the chamberlain, glancing toward the doors. “Nay, you must not freeze!” he cheerfully advises a pair of beauties as they hurry to be seated. “Two women placèd together makes *cold weather!* My lord Sands, you are one who will keep ’em *waking!*—pray, sit between these ladies!”

Sands beams at the gentlewomen, whose fashionable gowns’ bodices imply invitation. “By my faith!—and *thank* Your Lordship! By your leave, sweet ladies—if I chance to talk a little *wildly*, forgive me!—I had it from my *father!*”

Lady Anne Boleyn regards him, amused. “Was he mad, sir?” she asks gaily.

“Oh, *very* mad, *exceeding* mad—in *love*, too!” says Sands. “But he would *bite* none—he would just *kiss twenty* at a breath!—as I do now!” Leaning over, he kisses her.

“Well *said*, my lord!” chuckles the chamberlain. “Now that you’re so fairly seated, gentlemen, the penance lies on you if these fair ladies pass away frowning!”

Sands, entranced with Lady Anne, is not worried. “As for *my* little care, let me alone!”

While the reed instruments play a stately refrain, Cardinal Wolsey, smiling and nodding as he moves among the tables, walks to the steps and stands beside his table on the dais.

“You’re *welcome*, my fair guests!” he cries. “That noble lady or gentleman who is not freely *merry* is not my friend! *This* to confirm my welcome,” he says, raising a large, silver chalice, “and to you all, good health!”

“Your Grace *is* noble!” calls Sands. “Let *me* have such a bowl; it may hold my thanks, and save me so much talking!”

The cardinal’s smile is thin. “My Lord Sands, I am beholding to you. Cheer your neighbours.” He regards the women with mock concern. “Ladies, you are not *merry!* Gentlemen, whose fault is *this?*”

“The *red wine* first must rise in their fair cheeks, my lord,” says Sands. “Then we shall have ’em talk us to silence!”

Anne raises an eyebrow. "You are a merry gamester, my lord Sands."

"Yes, if I *make* my play!" He lifts his cup. "Here's to Your Ladyship! And *pledge* it,"—join him, "madam, for 'tis to such a thing—"

"—as you cannot *show* me!" interjects Anne, laughing; *thing* can be a term for the male member.

Sands laughs as the chamberlain looks dismayed. "I *told* Your Grace they would talk anon!"

The supper is served, with much fine wine from Italy—all enjoyed heartily by the guests and their jovial host, who is pleased with the steadily rising flow of happy conversation.

But when they have just finished eating, from outside a sharp report of cannon-fire startles the guests—and loud sounds of trumpet and drum follow.

Cardinal Wolsey rises from his chair. "What's *that*?"

"Look out there, some of ye!" orders the chamberlain; two servants run to the doors at the front.

"What warlike voice, and to what end is this?" the cardinal wonders aloud. "Nay, ladies, *fear not*; by all the laws of war you're privileged!" he assures them.

A servant returns and bows. "How now! What is't?" demands the chamberlain.

"A noble troop of strangers!—for so they *seem*. They've landed and left their barge, and hither make, as great *ambassadors* from foreign princes!"

"Good lord chamberlain, go, give 'em welcome! You can speak the *French* tongue," says Cardinal Wolsey. "And, pray, receive 'em nobly, and conduct 'em into our presence—where this heaven of beauty shall shine at full upon them!" He motions to his men. "Some attend him."

The chamberlain and servants leave, and head toward the riverside landing. The guests rise and exclaim, chatting among themselves as the tables are cleared, then removed.

"You have now a *broken* banquet," says the cardinal, "but we'll *mend* it! A good digestion to you all!"

"And once more I shower a welcome on ye! *Welcome, all!*" he cries, as the chamberlain ushers in a band of high-born masquers, garbed in the guise of fabulous "shepherds," in silks and satin. They pass directly before the cardinal and gracefully salute him. "A noble company! What are their pleasures?" he asks.

"They speak no English," says the chamberlain, "so they prayed to tell Your Grace that, having heard from *Fame* of this so noble and so fair assembly this night to meet here, they could do no less, out of the great respect they bear to *beauty*, than to leave their flocks!—and, under your fair conduct, crave leave to *view* these ladies—and entreat an hour of *revels* with 'em!"

Cardinal Wolsey smiles. "Say, Lord Chamberlain, that they have done my poor house *grace!*—for which I pay 'em a thousand *thanks*, and pray 'em *take their pleasures!*"

Masked shepherds move among the guests, looking for ladies with whom to dance.

Their leader, his sequined mask heavily embroidered with gold thread and pearls, is first to choose; he stops before Lady Anne. "The fairest hand I ever touched!" he cries. "O *Beauty*, till now I never knew thee!"

As the others find partners, those selected are delighted too. And to the lively music of hautboy, lute and tabor, they all dance.

The revelers applaud happily afterward. As they circulate, chattering with pleasure, Cardinal Wolsey calls, loudly, from the dais to the chamberlain. "My lord!"

"Your Grace?"

"Pray, tell 'em thus much from me: there should be *one* amongst 'em, by his person more *worthy* of this place than *myself*—to whom, if I but knew him, with my love and duty I would surrender it!"

"I will, my lord." He moves among the masquers, speaking quietly.

After a moment, Wolsey asks, "What say they?"

"Such a one, they all confess, there is *indeed!*—whom they would have Your Grace *find out*—then he will take it!"

The cardinal strolls among the colorful couples, looking at each masked nobleman. “Let me see, then . . .

“By all your good leaves, gentlemen!—*here* I’ll make my royal choice!”

“Ye have *found* him, cardinal!” cries King Henry, unmasking. “You hold a fair assembly!” He regards the many invited ladies. “You do *well*, lord! You are a *churchman*, or, I’ll tell you, cardinal, I should judge now you unhappily!” he teases.

Cardinal Wolsey smiles and bows. *I am glad Your Grace is grown so pleasant!* he thinks; tension followed the queen’s challenge on taxation.

The guests all converse together, enjoying the excitement of the sovereign’s surprise visit.

Says Henry quietly, accepting a gold cup, “My lord chamberlain, prithee, come hither.

“What fair lady’s that?” He is looking at Anne.

“An’t please Your Grace, Sir Thomas Boleyn’s daughter—the Viscount Rochford. One of her highness’ women”—the queen’s waiting-gentlewomen.

King Henry studies her, admiring. “By heaven, she is a dainty one!”

He goes to her. “Sweet heart, I were unmannerly to draw you out but not kiss you!” He does both. “A *health*, gentlemen! Let it go round!” he cries, and quaffs his wine. He again takes Anne by the hand.

The cardinal has ordered an after-supper repast—fruit, cheese, and wine. “Sir Thomas Lovell, is the banquet ready i’ the privy chamber?”

“Yes, my lord.”

Wolsey goes to the king. “Your Grace, I fear, with dancing is a little heated.”

Henry, beaming at Anne, nods. “I fear, *too much!*”

“There’s fresher air, my lord, in the next chamber.”

“Lead in your ladies, every one!” cries King Henry. “Sweet partner, I must not yet forsake you!” he tells Anne. “Let’s be merry!

“Good my lord Cardinal, I’ll have *half a dozen* healths to drink to these fair ladies, and a measure”—dance tune—“to *lead* ’em once again—and then let’s dream who’s best in *favour!*”

*“Let the music knock it!”*

A cornet sound a regal sennet as he leads the way into the smaller, more intimate banquet room.

The musicians discuss which melodies will best serve their return for dancing—and for seduction.

### Chapter Three King’s Conclusions

“Whither away so fast?” calls a gentleman this afternoon.

His friend spots him ahead, and stops on the Westminster street. “Oh, God save ye.” He points. “Even to the hall, to hear what shall become of the great Duke of Buckingham!”

“I’ll save you that labour, sir. All’s now done but the ceremony of bringing back the prisoner.”

“Were you there?”

“Yes, indeed was I.”

“Pray, speak what has happened!”

“You may guess quickly what,” is the dry reply; there has been little doubt of the outcome.

“Is he found guilty?”

“Yes, truly is he—and *condemned* upon’t.”

“I am sorry for’t!”

“So are a number more!”

“But, pray, how passed it?”

“I’ll tell you in the little: the great duke came to the bar, where to his accusations he pleaded ever *not guilty*, and allegèd many sharp reasons to defeat the law; the *king’s* attorney, on the contrary, urgèd on the *examinations, proofs, confessions* of divers *witnesses!* The duke desired to have *viva voce* brought to his face—at which appeared against him: his surveyor; Sir Gilbert Peck, his chancellor; and John Car, confessor to him—with that *devil-monk* Hopkins, that *made* this mischief!”

“That was he who fed him with his *prophecies?*”

“The same. All these accused him strongly—which he fain would have flung from him, but, indeed, he could not! And so his peers, upon this evidence, have found him *guilty of high treason!*”

“Much he spoke, and learnèdly, for *life*; but all was either pitied in him or forgotten.”

“After all this, how did he bear himself?”

“When he was brought again to the bar, to hear his judgment; his *knell* rung out, he was stirred with such an agony that he sweat extremely, and spoke somewhat in *choler*, ill and hasty! But he fell to himself again, and sweetly in all the rest showed a most noble patience.”

“I do not think he fears death.”

“Surely he does not; he never was so womanish. The *cause* he may a little grieve at....”

“Certainly the *cardinal* is the root end of this!”

Courtiers and their followers are well aware of Wolsey’s great and growing power. “’Tis likely, by all conjectures! First, *Kildare’s* attainder as then-deputy of Ireland; who, once removèd, the Earl of *Surrey* was sent thither—and in *haste*, too, lest he should help his father-in-law!”—Buckingham. The influence of an opponent sent to a foreign post is severely limited.

“That trick of state was a deep, envious one!”

“At his return, no doubt, he will *requite* it! This is noted, and generally: whoever the king favours, the *cardinal* instantly will find *employment* for—and far enough from *court*, too!”

“All the commons *hate* him *perniciously*, and, o’ my conscience, wish him *ten fathom deep!*”

“This *duke* as much they *love* and *dote* on—call him ‘bounteous Buckingham, the mirror of all courtesy’—”

“Stay there, sir—and *see* the noble, ruined man you speak of....”

The duke is being led from his trial. Walking before him are court officers; men with halberds march at his sides—and one carries an axe, its sharp, gleaming edge held facing the prisoner. Following them are several noblemen and a throng of commoners.

“Let’s stand close, and behold him,” says the tardy gentleman.

Buckingham pauses on his way to the Tower of London, where he is soon to kneel before the headsman. “All good people, you that thus far have come to pity me, *hear* what I *say!*” he calls, “—and then go home, and lose me.

“I have this day received a *traitor’s* judgment, and by that name must die. Yet, *heaven* bear witness!—and as I have a conscience, let it *sink me*, even as the axe falls, if I be not *faithful!*”

“The *law* I bear no malice for my death; ’t has done, upon the *premises*,”—given the testimony, “but justice.

“But those that *sought* it I could wish more *Christian!* But be they what they will, I heartily *forgive* them.

“Yet let ’em look they *glory* not in mischief, nor *build* their evils on the graves of great men—for then my guiltless blood must *cry against ’em!*”

“For further life in *this* world I neither hope nor will I sue, although the *king* have mercies more than I dare make faults.

“You few who loved me, and dare be bold to *weep* for Buckingham—his noble friends and fellows—to leave is only bitter to him dying *alone*; come with me, like good angels, to my end! And, as the long divorce of steel falls on me, make of your *prayers* one sweet *sacrifice*, and lift my soul to heaven!

“Lead on, i’ *God’s* name!” he tells the officer.

Says the Tower's commander, "I do beseech Your Grace, for charity, if ever any malice in your heart were hid against me, now to forgive me frankly."

Buckingham smiles. "Sir Thomas Lovell, I as freely forgive you as *I* would be forgiven!

"I forgive *all!* There cannot be, among these numberless offences 'gainst me, any that I cannot make *peace* with!—no black envy shall mar my grave!

"Commend me to his grace—and if he speak of Buckingham, pray tell him you met him *half in heaven!*

"My vows and prayers *yet* are the king's!—and, till my soul forsake, I shall cry for blessings on him! May he live longer than I have time to *count* his years! Ever beloved and loving may his rule be! And when old *Time* shall lead him to his end, *Goodness* and he fill up one monument!"

Says Lovell sadly, "To the water-side I must conduct Your Grace, then give my charge up to Sir Nicholas Vaux, who undertakes you to your end." They walk toward the Thames.

The knight has been waiting near the wharf. "Prepare there—the duke is coming!" he tells his men. "See the barge be ready, and fit with such furnishing as suits the greatness of his person!"

Reaching the river, the duke sees their activity, and smiles. "Nay, Sir Nicholas, let it alone; *now* my state will but mock me." He looks back, toward the sprawling city. "When I came hither, I was lord high constable and Duke of Buckingham; now, poor Edward Bohun. Yet I am richer than my base accusers, who never knew what *truth* meant! And I now *seal* it, with blood that will make 'em one day *groan* for't!

"My noble *father*, Henry of Buckingham, who first raised head against usurping Richard,"—King Richard III, "flying in distress to his servant Banister for succor, was by that wretch betrayed, and without trial fell! God's peace be with him.

"Henry the Seventh succeeding, and truly pitying my father's loss, like a most *royal* prince restored me to my honours, and out of ruins made my name once more *noble*.

"Now his son, Henry the Eighth, life, honour, name, and all that made me happy, at one stroke has taken forever from the world!

"I had my *trial*, and must needs say a *noble* one—which makes me a little more fortunate than my wretched father! Yet this far we are one in fortunes: both fell by our *servants*, by those men we loved most—a most *unnatural* and *faithless* service!

"Heaven has an end in all; yet, you that hear me, this from a dying man receive as certain: where you are *liberal* of your loves and counsels, be sure you be not *loose*—for those you make friends and give your hearts to, when they once perceive the least rub in your fortunes, fall away like *water* from ye, never found again but when they mean to *sink* ye!"

He looks around. "All good people, *pray* for me! I must now forsake ye: the last hour of my long, weary life is come upon me. *Farewell!*

"And when you would say something that is sad, speak how I fell.

"I have done; and God forgive me."

The guards escort Buckingham onto the barge. They soon cast off, and his supporters—mourners now—drift away.

The gentleman who attended the trial is quite moved—and concerned. "Oh, this is full of pity! Sir, it calls, I fear, too many *curse*s on their heads who were the authors!"

"If the duke be guiltless, 'tis *full* of woe!" says his friend. "Yet I can give you inkling of an ensuing evil, if it befall, *greater* than this...."

"Good angels keep it from us! What may it be?" He sees the other's fearful look around.

"You do not doubt my *faith*, sir?" He means both connotations of *loyalty*, religious and personal.

"This secret is so weighty, 'twill require a *strong* faith to conceal it...."

"Let me have it; I do not talk much."

"I am confident. You shall hear, sir." He moves closer and lowers his voice. "Did you note of late days a buzzing of a *separation* between the king and *Katherine*?"

"Yes, but it held not; for when the *king* once heard it, out of anger he sent command to the lord mayor, straight to stop the rumor, and belay those tongues that durst disperse it!"



“But that slander, sir, is found a *truth* now!—for it grows again, fresher than e’er it was—and held for certain the king will *venture* at it!

“Either the cardinal or some about him near, have, out of malice to the good queen, possessed him with a quibble”—a minor point—“that will *undo her!*”

“To confirm this: *Cardinal Campeius* is arrivèd, too, and lately—as all think, *for this business!*” To end his marriage, the king would need a reason to ask for papal permission.

The prompt gentleman concurs, sure that Wolsey requested the legate’s visit from Rome. “‘Tis the *cardinal* who has this purposèd, then—merely to *revenge* him on the emperor for not bestowing on him, at his asking, the archbishopric of Toledo!”—in Spain. The Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, King of Spain, is Queen Katherine’s nephew.

“I think you have hit the mark. But is’t not cruel that *she* should feel the smart of this?” He sighs. “The cardinal will have his will; and she must fall!”

“‘Tis woeful!” says the other gentleman.

He sees several among the lingering citizens watching—and listening.

“We are too open to argue this here; let’s think more, in *private*....”

**I**n a room at the palace, the chamberlain reads a letter he has just received:  
*My lord: the horses Your Lordship sent for, with all the care I had I saw well chosen, furnished, and ridden. They were young and handsome, and of the best breed in the north. When they were ready to set out for London, a man of my lord cardinal’s by commission and main power took ’em from me!—with this reason: his master would be served before a subject, if not before the king. Which stopped our mouths, sir.*

The graybeard subject nods grimly. *I fear he will, indeed!* The horses are now Wolsey’s. *Well, let him have them; he will have all, I think!* As he folds the paper and puts it into a pocket of his coat, two visiting noblemen enter the room.

“Well met, my lord chamberlain,” says Norfolk.

“Good day to both Your Graces.”

“How is the king employed?” asks Suffolk.

“I left him in private, full of sad thoughts and troubles.”

Norfolk asks, “What’s the cause?”

“It seems that marriage with *his brother’s wife* has crept too near his awareness.” The queen is a widow; her husband was Henry’s older brother Arthur.

Suffolk grins. “No, his awareness has crept too near *another lady!*”

“‘Tis *so*,” says Norfolk. “This is the cardinal’s doing—the *king-cardinal!* That blind priest, like the eldest son of *Fortune*, turns whatever he wishes to!” He frowns. “The king will *know* him one day!”

“Pray God he do!” says Suffolk. “He’ll never know *himself* else.”

“How *holily* he works in all his business! And with what *zeal!*” says Norfolk in disgust. “For, now that he has cracked the league between us and the emperor, the queen’s great nephew, he dives into the king’s soul, and there scatters *dangerous doubts*, wringing the conscience with *fears* and *despairs*—all these over his *marriage!*”

“And to *restore* the king from those he counsels a *divorce!*—the loss of her that, like a *jewel*, has hung twenty years about his neck, yet never lost her lustre!—of her that loves him with that excellence that *angels* love good men with!—even of her that, when the greatest stroke of fortune falls, will *bless* the king!”

“And is not this course *pious?*” His scowl conveys the irony.

“Heaven keep *me* from such counsel!” says the chamberlain. “‘Tis most true these news are everywhere—every tongue speaks ’em, and every *true* heart weeps for’t! All who dare look into these affairs see this main end: *the French king’s sister!*” Wolsey intends for Henry to marry Marguerite of Navarre, now the Duchess of Alençon—thus providing the cardinal with further potency in France. “Heaven will one day open the king’s eyes, that so long have slept, upon this

bold, bad man!”

“And free us from his slavery!” adds Suffolk.

“We had need to pray, and *heartily*, for our deliverance,” says Norfolk, “or this imperious man will work us all from *princes* into *pages*! All men’s honours lie like *one lump* before him, to be fashioned into what shape he please!”

Suffolk tells them calmly. “As for me, my lords, I love him not, nor *fear* him. Here’s *my* creed: as I am made without him, so I’ll stand, if the king please. The cardinal’s curses and his blessings touch me alike: they’re *breath* I’ll not believe in. I knew him, and I *know* him; so I leave him to him that made him *proud*, the Pope!”

Norfolk starts toward the throne room. “Let’s in, and with some other business pull the king from these sad thoughts that work too much upon him. My lord, you’ll bear us company?”

The chamberlain hastily demurs. “Excuse me; the king has sent me elsewhere. Besides, you’ll find it a most *unfit* time to disturb him,” he warns. “Health to Your Lordships.”

“Thanks, my good lord chamberlain,” says Norfolk as they leave him.

King Henry is sitting alone, brooding and impatient, when the two dukes come silently into the tall throne room.

- “How sad he looks!” says Suffolk softly. “Surely he is much afflicted....”

Henry looks up. “Who’s there?”

- “Pray God he be not angry,” whispers Norfolk.

“Who’s *there*, I say? How dare you thrust yourselves into my private meditations?” demands Henry imperiously. “Who *am* I, *eh*?”

Norfolk steps forward, bowing. “Oh gracious king that pardons all offences, malice ne’er meant! Our breach of duty this way is business of state—in which we come to know your royal pleasure—”

“Ye are too *bold*! *Go to!* I’ll make ye know your times of business! Is this an hour for temporal affairs, *eh*?” He looks to the side door as it opens. “Who’s there?—my good lord cardinal!” He quickly rises and goes to the two entering churchmen. “Oh, my *Wolsey*, the quiet of my wounded conscience; thou art a cure fit for a king!

“*You are welcome*, most learned reverend sir, into our kingdom!” he tells Cardinal Campeius. “Use us and it!”

He sees Wolsey’s fleeting look of warning; Henry’s enthusiasm might contradict the public posture of renouncing his marriage out of a painful but principled aversion.

“My good lord, have great care I be not found a *talker*,” says Henry.

“Sir, you cannot,” says Wolsey politely; but by his curtness the king is again made aware that the matter requires forbearance and delicacy, not the sovereign’s customarily abrupt, blunt manner.

Says Wolsey, “I would Your Grace would give us but an hour of *private* conference....”

Henry motions Norfolk and Suffolk away. “We are busy; go.”

The noblemen bow and walk out past the doors at the front.

- “*This* priest has no *pride* in him!” mutters Norfolk; he is amazed at Wolsey’s commanding demeanor in the monarch’s presence.

- “Not to *speak* of! *I* would not be so sick, though, even for *his* place!” says Suffolk. “But this cannot continue.”

- “If it do, I’ll venture *one* ‘have-at-him!’”

- “*I another!*”

As the doors close behind them, Cardinal Wolsey addresses the king concerning the proposed legal action for divorce. “Your Grace has given a precedent of *wisdom* above all princes’ in committing freely your concern to the voice of *Christendom*”—general consent of its kings. “Who can be angry now? What envy reach you? The Spaniards,”—under Charles V, “tied by blood and favour to *her*, must now confess, if they have any goodness, the trial is *just* and *noble*.”

All the clerics—I mean the *learnèd* ones—in Christian kingdoms have had their free voices!

“Rome, the *nurse* of general judgment, invited by your noble self, hath sent one tongue unto us: this good man, this just and learnèd priest, Cardinal Campeius,”—he nods graciously to the Italian, “whom once more I present unto Your Highness.”

King Henry embraces the visitor. “And once more in mine arms I bid him welcome, and thank the holy conclave for their loves! They have sent me such a man as I would have wished for!”

Says Cardinal Campeius warmly, “Your Grace must needs deserve *all* strangers’ loves, you are so noble!” He proffers a document. “To Your Highness’ hand I tender my commission—by whose virtue, the court of Rome commanding, *you*, my lord Cardinal of York, are joined with me as their servant in the impartial judging of this business.”

“Two equal men!” cries Henry, setting the papers on the throne’s seat. “The queen shall be acquainted *forthwith* for what you come!” He rubs his hands together. “Where’s Gardiner?”

Wolsey glances at Campeius, then says, quite deliberately, “I know Your Majesty has always loved her so *dearly in heart* as not to deny her what a woman of *less* place might ask by *law*: scholars allowed freely to argue *for* her.”

“Aye, and the best she shall have!—and my favour to him that *does* best! God forbid else!” Henry retrieves the papal commission. “Cardinal, prithee, call Gardiner to me—my new secretary; I find him a fit fellow!”

Wolsey nods and goes to the side door, apparently to call for Stephen Gardiner—but the lawyer is already waiting for him just outside. The cardinal closes the door behind him. “Give me your hand,” he says quietly, shaking it. “Much joy and favour to you—you are the *king’s* now!”

The secretary whispers acknowledgement: “But to be commanded for ever by *Your Grace*, whose hand has raised me!” He follows the cardinal into the throne room.

“Come hither, Gardiner,” says Henry.

The gentleman bows and moves forward, and he listens to the sovereign’s instructions.

Cardinal Campeius is surprised. “My Lord of York, was not one *Doctor Pace* in this man’s place before him?”

“Yes, he was.”

“Was he not held a learnèd man?”

“Yes, surely.”

“Believe me, there’s an *ill* opinion spread, then, even of *yourself*, lord cardinal!”

“What? Of me?”

Campeius nods. “They will not stick at saying you *envied* him, and fearing he would rise, he was so virtuous, kept him a *foreign* man ever—which so grieved him that he ran mad and died!”

“*Heaven’s* peace be with *him*; that’s Christian care enough. As for living murmurers—theirs a place of *rebuke*!” He means Hell. Says Wolsey scornfully, “He was a fool!—for he would needs be *virtuous*!” He glances at Gardiner. “*That* good fellow, if I command him, follows *my* appointment; I will have none else so near.

“Learn *this*, brother: we live not to be constrained by *lesser* persons.”

King Henry hands the new secretary a letter. “Deliver this, with *modesty*, to the queen.”

Gardiner bows and goes to summon Katherine to the hearing. “The most convenient place that I can think of for such receipt of learning is Blackfriars,” Henry tells the cardinals. “There ye shall meet about this weighty business!

“My Wolsey, see it furnishèd.”

He thinks sadly of his wife. “Oh, my lord, would it not grieve any able man to leave so sweet a bedfellow?”

Then he pictures a much younger woman.

“But, conscience, *conscience*! Oh, ’tis a *tender* place.” He sighs theatrically.

“And I must leave her!”

## Chapter Four Moves and Counters

Among her four ladies-in-waiting at the palace, none is more upset about Katherine's plight than Lady Anne, the lone English gentlewoman; the others are from Spain. This afternoon she has bemoaned the queen's imminent downfall. Sitting with her in the royal quarters, another lady of the household, one almost fifty, has mentioned the king's argument for separating from his wife.

"Not for *that* neither!" scoffs Anne, as they work on their embroidery. "And here's the part that *pinches*: his highness having lived *so long* with her—and she *so good* a lady that no tongue could ever pronounce dishonour of her; by my life, she never knew *harm-doing!*—*now*, after so many courses of the sun enthronèd, still *growing* in a majesty and pomp, the which to *leave* is a thousand-fold more bitter than 'tis sweet at first to *acquire!*—after this progression, to give her the '*Avaunt!*'—it is a pity would move a *monster!*"

The other lady concurs. "Hearts of most-hard temper melt, and lament for her!"

"Oh, *God's* will!" says Anne. "Much better she ne'er had *known* pomp; though't be temporal, yet if that shrew Fortune do divorce it from the bearer, 'tis a sufferance as panging as *soul* and *body's* severing!"

"Alas, poor lady! She's a *stranger* now again."

"So much the more must pity drop upon her! Verily, I swear, 'tis better to be *lowly* born, and range with humble lives in contentment, than to be pent up in a *glistering* grief, and wear a golden *sorrow!*"

Her companion nods. "Our contentment *is* our best having."

"By my troth and maidenhead, I would not be a queen!"

The older lady stops sewing to laugh. "Beshrew me, *I* would!—and venture *maidenhead* for't!" she adds—unblushingly, although her virginity is long-since gone. "And so would *you*, for all this spice of your hypocrisy! You, that have *so fair parts* of woman on you, have, too, a woman's *heart*—which ever yet affected to eminence, wealth, sovereignty!—which, to say sooth, are *blessings!*"

She regards the beautiful woman in whom the king has shown much interest. "And which gifts, your mincing aside, the capacity of your soft, cheverel conscience"—a pliable one, which can adapt like the glove-leather—"would *receive*, if you might please to stretch it!"

"Nay, good troth!" protests Anne.

"Yes, troth!—and in *troth*, would you not be a queen?"

"No, not for all the riches under heaven!"

"'Tis strange! A *three-pence, bowed*"—a small coin, bent—"would hire *me*, old as I am, to *quean* it!" Anne laughs at the jest; a *quean* is a prostitute. "But, I pray you, what think you of '*duchess*'? Have you limbs to bear *that* load of title?"

"No, in truth."

"Then you are weakly made! *Pluck off a title!*" She shakes her head. "I would not be a young cunt of *your* kind for longer than *blushing* comes to! If your back cannot vouchsafe this burthen, 'tis too weak ever to beget a *boy!*" As does the king, all England hopes for a prince, an heir to the throne.

Anne blushes. "How you do *talk!* I swear again, I would not be a queen for all the *world!*"

The gentlewoman scoffs: "In faith, for little *England* you'd venture an emballing!" She might mean receiving the regalia's royal orbs, but Anne blushes again. The older lady continues. "I *myself* would, for *Carnarvonshire*,"—rocky Welsh farm land, "although there belonged no more to the crown but *that!*"

A visitor interrupts their needlecraft. "*Lo* who comes *here!*" says the spinster, surprised.

The lord chamberlain approaches Anne smiling. "Good morrow, ladies! What were't worth to

know the secret of your conference?"

"My good lord, even your asking; it values not your *demand*. Our mistress' sorrows we were *pitying*," Anne tells him.

The chamberlain nods approval. "It was a gentle business, and becoming the action of good women. There is hope all will be well."

"Now, I pray God, *amen!*" says Anne earnestly.

"You bear a gentle mind—and heavenly blessings follow such creatures," says the royal steward. "So that you may, fair lady, perceive I speak sincerely, and that high note is ta'en of your many *virtues*, the king his majesty commends *his* good opinion to you—and does purpose *flowing honour* to you no less than *Marchioness of Pembroke!*—to which title *a thousand pound a year*, annual support, out of his grace he adds!"

Anne rises, astonished. "I do not know what kind of obedience I should tender!—more than *my* all is nothing! *My prayers* are not words duly *hallowèd*, nor my *wishes* worth more than empty *vanities*—yet prayers and wishes are all I can return!

"I beseech Your Lordship, vouchsafe to speak my *thanks* and my *obedience*, as from a blushing handmaid, to his highness—whose health in royalty I pray for!"

The lord chamberlain smiles. "Lady, I shall not fail to *approve* the fair perception the king hath of you!" He muses: *I have perused her well; beauty and honour in her are so mingled that they have caught the king! And who knows but that yet from this lady may proceed a gem to brighten all this isle!*

"I'll to the king, and say I spoke with you." He bows.

Anne curtsays. "My honoured lord," she says, nearly breathless, as he leaves them.

The older lady is peeved. "Why, *this* it is! See, *see!*—*I* that have been begging *sixteen years* in court am *yet* a courtier!—*beggarly*, could not come but betwixt *too early* and *too late* for suit of *any* pounds!

"But *you*—oh, *Fate!*—a very *fresh* fish here!—*fie, fie, fie* upon this *compellèd* fortune!—do have your mouth *fillèd up* before you *open* it!"

"This is strange to *me*," protests Anne.

"How *tastes* it? Is it bitter? Forty pence says *no!* There *was* a lady once—'tis an old story—who would not be a queen!—that would she *not!*—for all the mud in *Egypt!* Have you heard it?"

Anne flushes. "Come, you *are* pleasant. . . ." She is hardly a clever Cleopatra.

"With *your* theme, I could o'ermount the *lark!* The *Marchioness of Pembroke!* *A thousand pounds* a year, purely for *respect!*—no other obligation! By my life, that promises *more* thousands!—honour's *train* is longer than its *foreskirt!* By this time tomorrow, I know, your back *will* bear a duchess's load!"—a ribald gibe. She laughs, and looks Anne up and down. "Say: are you not *stronger* than you *were?*"

Pleads Anne, "Good lady, make yourself mirth from your particular fancy, but leave me out of it! I would I had no *being* if *that* bolster my blood a jot!—it faints me to *think* what follows!

"The *queen* is comfortless—and *we* forgetful, in our long absence!

"Pray, do not deliver what here you've heard to *her*. . . ."

The worldly lady, no fool, resumes her sewing. "What do you *think* me?" she laughs. She cannot help the queen, and would not cross the king.

Outside, trumpets blare their notice; within the hall at Blackfriars, formerly a Dominican monastery, near the palace, cornets beside the wide doors sound a sennet, and a magisterial procession enters for an ecclesiastical hearing. To be considered: the initial validity of the marriage between King Henry VIII and Princess Katherine of Aragón.

Watched respectfully by nobles as they arrive are two vergers with short, silver wands, followed by the two doctors of law who will serve as scribes; after them comes William Warham, archbishop of Canterbury, then the bishops of Lincoln, Ely and Rochester, and of Saint Asaph in Wales.

Following is a gentleman bearing a cardinal's hat—and the leather pouch containing the Great Seal of England. Then come two tall priests, each holding aloft a large silver cross; then a gentleman-usher beside a serjeant-at-arms with a silver mace; then gentlemen bearing the English cardinal's two great silver pillars. Cardinal Wolsey and Cardinal Campeius walk side by side, followed by two noblemen who carry the monarch's ceremonial sword and mace.

King Henry takes the highest place, to sit enthroned under a canopy as the judges presiding in this legatine court, Cardinals Wolsey and Campeius, take their seats on raised chairs beside his dais. Below are the scribes. The lords attending sit on benches at tables near the bishops. The observing nobles' many attendants stand along sides of the hall.

Queen Katherine takes a seat at some distance from the king.

Cardinal Wolsey rises. "Whilst our commission from Rome is read, let silence be commanded."

"What's the need?" asks Henry impatiently. "It hath already publicly been read, and on all sides the authority allowed; you may, then, spare that time."

"Be't so. Proceed," says the cardinal.

A scribe stands. "Say, 'Henry, King of England, come into the court.'"

A crier calls out: "Henry, King of England, *come into the court!*"

"Here," says Henry, tapping his fingers on an arm of the throne.

The scribe makes a note. "Say, 'Katherine, Queen of England, come into the court.'"

"Katherine, Queen of England, *come into the court!*"

Without answering, the queen rises from her chair and crosses to Henry; she kneels before the king. "Sir, I desire you to do me *right* and *justice!* And to bestow your pity on me!—for I am a most poor woman—and a stranger, born out of your dominions, having here no judge *indifferent*, nor no more assurance of equal friendship"—legal support—"in the proceeding.

"Alas, sir, in what have I offended you? What cause hath *my behavior* given to your displeasure, that thus you should proceed to put me off, and take your good grace *from* me?"

"Heaven is witness I have been to you a true and humble wife, at all times to your will conformable, ever in fear of kindling your dislike—yea, subject to your *countenance*, glad or sorry, as I saw it inclinèd.

"When was the hour I ever contradicted your desire, or made it not mine too? Or which of your friends have I not strove to love, although I knew he were mine enemy? What friend of mine that had to him derived your anger did I continue in my *liking?* Nay, I gave notice he was from thence dischargèd!

"Sir, call to mind that I have been your wife in this obedience *upward of twenty years*, and have been blest with many *children* by you! If, in the course and process of this time, you can report,"—she glares briefly at Wolsey—"and *prove* it, too!—against mine honour *ought!*—my bond to wedlock, or my love and duty, against your sacred person—in God's name, turn me away; and let the foulest contempt shut door upon me, and so give me up to the sharpest kind of justice!

"Please you sir, the king your *father* was reputed as a prince most prudent, of an excellent and unmatched wit and judgment! *Ferdinand*, my father, *King of Spain*, was reckoned one of the wisest princes that there had reigned by many a year before. It is not to be questioned that they had gathered to them from every realm a wise council that did debate this business—and who *deemed our marriage lawful!*

"Wherefore I humbly beseech you, sir, to spare me till I may be by my friends in Spain advisèd—whose counsel I will implore!

"If not, i' the name of God, your pleasure be fulfilled."

Cardinal Wolsey points to the priests who are to represent her interests. "You *have here*, lady, and for your choice, these *reverend fathers*—men of singular integrity and learning, yea, the elect o' the land, who are assembled to plead your cause. It shall be therefore bootless that you desire the court to postpone rectifying what is *unsettled* in the king—as well for your *own* quiet."

Cardinal Campeius nods. "His grace hath spoken well and justly. Therefore, madam, it's fit this royal session do proceed, and that without delay the arguments be now produced and heard."

The queen faces her opponent squarely: "Lord cardinal, to *you* I speak."

"Your pleasure, madam?" says Wolsey.

"Sir, I am about to *weep*—but, thinking that we are a *queen*—or long have *dreamed* so; certainly the *daughter* of a king!—my drops of tears I'll turn to *sparks of fire!*"

"Be patient yet," urges the cardinal.

"I will—when *you* are *humble!* Nay, *before*, or God will punish me!

"I do believe, induced by potent circumstances, that you are *mine enemy*, and *devised* the challenge to me! *You* shall not be my judge!—for it is you who have blown this *coal* betwixt my lord and me—which *God's* dew *quench!* Therefore I say again, I utterly *abhor!*—yea, from my soul *refuse* for my *judge*—*you*, whom yet once more I hold my *most malicious foe*, and think not at all a friend to *truth!*"

"I do protest you speak not like *yourself!*" says Wolsey smoothly, "who ever yet have stood for *charity*, and displayed the effects of disposition *gentle*, and of wisdom o'ertopping *woman's* power." He paces—ignoring the fact that his patronizing further irks the lady.

"Madam, you do me wrong. I have no spleen against you, nor injustice for you—or *any!* How far I have proceeded, or how far further shall, is warranted by a commission from the Consistory,"—the Church's cardinals, "yea, the whole Consistory of Rome!

"You charge me that I have blown this 'coal.' I do deny it! The *king* is present; if it be known to him that I gainsay my deeds, now may he wound, and *worthily*, my falsehood! Yea, as much as *you* have done my *truth!*

"If he know that I am free of your *report*, he knows I am not of your *wrong!*

"Therefore in him it lies to *cure* me. And the cure is to *remove* these thoughts from you—the which, before his highness shall speak on, I do beseech you, Gracious Madam, to unthink your speaking, and to say so no more!"

"My lord, my lord, I am a simple *woman!*" says Queen Katherine bitterly, "much too *weak* to oppose your *cunning!*

"You're meek and humble-*mouthèd!* you signify your place and calling in full *seeming* of meekness and humility—but your heart is crammed with *arrogance*, *spleen*, and *pride!* You have, by Fortune and his highness' favours, gone easily o'er low steps, and now are mounted where *powers* are your *retainers!*—and your *words*, domestics to you, serve your will as't please yourself to pronounce their office!

"I must tell you: you regard more your *person's* honour than your high profession's *spiritual!* Thus again I do *refuse* you for my judge!

"And here, before you all, I appeal unto the *Pope!*"—Clement VII—"to bring my whole cause 'fore His Holiness, and to be judged by *him!*"

She curtseys to the king, and turns, brusquely, to depart.

Cardinal Campeius looks to Henry. "The queen is obstinate, stubborn to justice!—apt to accuse *it*, and disdainful to be *tried* by't!" He shakes his head. "'Tis not well; she's going away!"

Henry motions to the crier. "Call her again."

"Katherine, Queen of England, *come into the court!*"

An officer stands in her path. "Madam, you are called back."

The queen scowls. "What need *you* note it?" She waves him aside. "Pray you, keep your way! When you are *callèd*, return!

"Now Thou, Lord, help!" she cries. "They vex me past my *patience!*

"Pray you, pass on!" she orders her attendants, "I will *not* tarry!—no, nor ever more upon *this* business my appearance make in any of their courts!" Katherine stalks angrily toward the doors, followed by her train of ladies and attendants.

Thinks King Henry, feeling a twinge, *Go thy ways, Kate! That man i' the world who shall report he has a better wife, let him in nought be trusted, for speaking false in that!*

He watches the proud, defiant lady. *Thou art alone, —singular— if thy rare qualities—sweet gentleness, thy meekness saint-like; wife-like government, commanding in obeying; and thy parts sovereign and pious else—could speak thee out! The queen of earthly queens!*

Tears come into his eyes. *She's noble-born; and like her true nobility has she carried herself towards me!*

Says Cardinal Wolsey indignantly, “Most gracious sir, in humblest manner I require of Your Highness that it shall please you to *declare*—in hearing of all these ears!—for where I am *robbed* and *bound*, there must I be unloosed, although not there at once and fully *satisfied*!—whether ever I did *broach this business* to Your Highness, or laid any qualm in your way which might induce you to question on't! Or ever have to you, but with thanks to God for such a royal lady, spake *once* the *least* word that might be to the prejudice of her present state, or touch of her good person!”

Instead, Henry says, “My lord cardinal, I do *excuse* you—yea, upon mine honour, I *free* you from't.” He notes the beginning of a frown. “You need not be taught that you have many *enemies* who know not *why* they are so, but, like to village curs, bark when their *fellows* do! By some of *those* the queen is put in anger; you are excused.”

Henry sees that Wolsey is displeased. “But will you be *more* justified?” He shrugs. “You ever have wished the sleeping of this business, never desired it to be stirred, but oft have hindered, *oft*, the passages made toward it.”

He rises to address the those before him. “On my honour, I speak for my good lord cardinal on this point, and thus far clear him!

“Now as to *what* moved me to't, I will be bold with time and your attention, rather than mark the inducement: *thus* it came—give heed to't!

“My conscience first received a tenderness, scruple, and prick in certain speech uttered by the Bishop of Bayonne, then French ambassador; who had been hither sent on the debating of a marriage 'twixt the Duke of Orléans and our daughter, Mary”—the sole surviving child of Katherine's five.

“I' the progress of this business, ere a determinate resolution, he—I mean the bishop—did require a *respite* wherein he might advise the king *his* lord whether, respecting this our marriage with the dowager once our brother's wife, our daughter were *legitimate*.

“This respite *shook* the bosom of my *conscience*!—entered me, yea, with a *splitting* power which forcèd such a way that many mazèd considerings did throng in!—made to *tremble* the region of my breast, and pressèd in with this caution:

“First, methought I stood not in the smile of *Heaven*—Who had commanded *Nature* that my lady's womb, if it conceived a male child by me, should do no more offices of *life* to't than the *grave* does to the dead!—for her male issue died either where they were made, or shortly after this world had aired them.

“Hence I took a thought: this was a *judgment* on me!—that my *kingdom*, well worthy the best heir o' the *world*, should not be gladdened in't by *me*!

“Then follows that I weighed the *danger* which my realm stood in, by this my issue's fail—and that gave to me *many* a groaning throe!

“Thus hulling in the wild sea of my conscience, I did steer toward this *remedy* whereupon we are now present here together—that's to say, I meant to *rectify* my conscience—which then did feel full *sick*—and *as yet* not well!—by all the reverend fathers of the land, and doctors learned.

“Next, I began in private with you, my Lord of Lincoln; you remember how under my oppression I did reel, when I first movèd you!”

The bishop nods. “Very well, my liege.”

“I have spoken long,” says Henry. “Be pleased *yourself* to say how far you satisfied me.”

“So please Your Highness, the question did at first so *stagger* me—bearing a state of mighty moment in't, and consequence of dread!—that I committed the *daring'st* counsel!—which I had to doubt—and so did entreat Your Highness to *this* course which you are running here.”



Says the king, "I then moved *you*, my Lord of Canterbury, and got your leave to make this present summons."

Henry surveys the churchmen. "Unsolicited I left *no* reverend person in this court, but by particular *consent* proceeded under your hands and seals!" He sees Wolsey's slight, approving nod.

"I therefore *go on*, for no dislike i' the world against the person of the good queen, but that the sharp, thorny points of my alleged *reasons* drive this forward!

"Prove but that our marriage is *lawful*, by my life and kingly dignity we are contented to wear our mortal state to come *with* her, Katherine our queen as before, the primest creature that's paragoned o' the world!" He is ready to proceed.

But Cardinal Campeius, quite agitated, intervenes. "So please Your Highness, the queen being *absent*, 'tis needful, in fitness, that we *adjourn* this court till another day!

"Meanwhile, an earnest motion must be made to the queen to *call back* her appeal she intends unto *His Holiness!*" The marriage had taken place with papal approval; if the queen now objects to ending it—will not agree to live in luxurious seclusion—the Church will face the displeasure of her nephew, the Holy Roman Emperor—whose military forces now control Italy.

King Henry fumes; he had thought the hearing would be a mere formality, its outcome soon and certain. *I may perceive these cardinals trifle with me! I abhor this dilatory sloth in tricks of Rome!*

As Wolsey and Campeius confer with private urgency, the monarch considers an alternative he has been fostering. *My learned and well-beloved servant, Cranmer, prithee, return! With thy approach, I know, my comfort comes along!*

"Break up the court," he orders. "I say, set on!"

He and his train are departing even as the cornets sound.

## Chapter Five Cardinals' Comfort

The queen rushes into her apartments at the palace and approaches three of her ladies-in-waiting, who are at their needlework. "Take up thy lute, wench," she tells one. "My soul grows sad with troubles! Sing, and disperse 'em, if thou canst.

"Leave working," Katherine tells the others.

The gentlewoman finds her instrument and sings, soothingly, as she plays.

*"Orpheus with his lute made trees  
On the mountain tops that freeze  
To bow themselves when he did sing!  
Under his music, plants and flowers  
Ever sprung—as if sun and showers  
There had made a lasting spring!"*

A servant comes to the door; he bows to the queen and waits for the song to end.

*"Every thing that heard him play,  
Hung their heads, and then by lay,  
Even the billows on the sea!  
In sweet music is such art,  
Killing care and grief of heart!  
Fall asleep, my hearing, or flee!"*

Calmly, Katherine asks the servant, "How now?"

"An't please Your Grace, the two great cardinals wait on the presence"—to meet with her.

"Would they speak with me?"

"They willed me say so, madam."

“Pray their graces to come *here*.” Her majesty is not to be summoned by two priests. The man bows and goes. “What can be their business with *me*, a poor weak woman fall’n from favour?” she asks, aloud. “I do not like their coming, now I think on’t! They *should* be *good* men, their affairs as *righteous*; but not all hoods make *monks* . . .”

The other ladies rise as Cardinal Wolsey and Cardinal Campeius come into the room  
“Peace to Your Highness,” says Wolsey obsequiously.

Katherine motions toward the ladies’ genteel handiwork. “Your Graces find me here in part a *housewife*!” She thinks, *I would be all, lest the worst may happen*. “What are your pleasures with me, reverend lords?”

Wolsey smiles, motioning toward an inner door. “May it please you, noble madam, to withdraw into your private chamber, we shall give you the full cause of our coming.”

“Speak it here. There’s nothing *I* have done yet, by my conscience, that deserves a *corner*! Would *all other* women could speak this with as free a soul as I do! My lords, I care not—and in so much I am fortunate above many—if *my actions* were tried by every tongue, every eye saw them—*envy* and *base* opinion set *against* ’em—I know my life so even!

“If your business *seek me out*, then in that way I am *wifely in*. Out with it boldly—*truth* loves *open* dealing.”

Wolsey begins, “*Tanta est erga te mentis integritas, regina Serenissima—*”

Katherine interrupts: “Oh, good my lord, no *Latin*!—I am not such a truant since my coming”—to England from her native Spain—“as not to know the language I have *lived in*!

“A strange *tongue* makes my *cause* more strange, *suspicious*! Pray, speak in *English*.” She looks around at the ladies. “Here are some who will thank you, for their poor mistress’ sake, if you speak *truth*! Believe me, she has had much *wrong*!”

The queen regards Wolsey intently. “Lord cardinal, the willing’st sin *I* ever yet committed may be absolved in *English*.”

Wolsey looks hurt. “Noble lady, I am sorry my integrity should breed, in service to his majesty and you, so deep a *suspicion*, where all *faith* was meant! We come not by the way of *accusation*, to taint that honour every good tongue blesses, nor to betray you in any way to *sorrow*—you have had *too much*, good lady!—but to know how you stand minded in the weighty difference between the king and you—and to deliver, like free and honest men, our just opinions and comforts to your cause.”

Cardinal Campeius moves forward. “Most honoured madam, my Lord of York,”—Wolsey, “out of the noble nature, zeal and obedience he has always borne Your Grace—forgetting, like a good man, your late censure both of his truth and him, which *was* too far—offers, as I do, in a sign of peace, his service and his counsel.”

*To betray me!* thinks Katherine. But Campeius and the ladies are listening. “My lords, I thank you both for your good wills. Ye *speak* like honest men; pray God, ye *prove* so! But how to make ye suddenly an answer—on a point of such weight, so near mine *honour*—more near my *life*, I fear!—with *my* weak wit, and to such *men* of gravity and learning—in truth, I know not!

“I was settled at work among my maids—little looking, God knows, for either such men or such business!

“For her sake whom I have *been*—for I feel the last fit of my *greatness*—good Your Graces, let me have *time* and *counsel* for my cause!

“Alas, I am a *woman*, friendless, hopeless!”

Says Cardinal Wolsey. “Madam, you wrong the king’s love with these fears. Your hopes and friends are infinite!”

Katherine concurs—as to heaven. *In England but little for my profit!* She challenges: “Can you think, lords, that any Englishman *dare* give me counsel?—be known as friend *’gainst his highness’ pleasure*?—then still live as a *subject*, though he be grown so desperate as to be *honest*?

“Nay!—forsooth my *friends*, they who must outweigh my *afflictions*, they that my *trust* must

grow unto, live not *here!*—they are, as all my other comforts, far hence, in mine *own* country, lords.”

Says Campeius, “I would Your Grace would *leave* your griefs, and take my *counsel*.”

“*How, sir?*”

“Put your main cause into the *king’s* protection; he’s loving and most *gracious!* ’Twill be much better for both your *honour* and your *cause*—for if the trial of the *law* o’ertake ye, you’ll part away disgracèd.”

“He tells you rightly,” says Wolsey.

Cries Katherine, exasperated, “Ye tell me what you both *wish* for!—*my ruin!* Is *this* your *Christian* counsel? *Out upon ye!*”

“Heaven is yet above all!—*there* sits a Judge that no *king* can corrupt!”

Cardinal Campeius backs away. “Your rage *mis-takes* us!”

“The more *shame* for ye! *Holy* men I *thought* you, upon my soul!—two *reverend, cardinal* virtues—but cardinal *sins* and hollow *hearts*, I fear ye!

“*Mend* ’em, for *shame*, my lords!”

Tears run down her cheeks. “Is *this* your *comfort?*—the *cordial* that ye bring a wretched lady, a woman lost?—between ye *laughed at, scornèd!*”

“I will not wish ye *half my* miseries!—I have more *charity!* But say I *warned* ye: take heed, for *heaven’s* sake *take heed!*—lest at once the burthen of my sorrows fall upon ye!”

Wolsey is impatient. “Madam, this is a mere distraction; you turn the *good* we offer into envy.”

“Ye’d turn *me* into *nothing!*” she cries. “*Woe* upon ye, and *all* such professing so *falsely!* Would you have me—if you have any *justice*, any *pity*; if ye be anything but churchmen’s *clothes!*—put my sick cause into his hands who *hates* me?—who, alas, has already *banished* me from his *love*—from his *bed*, too, *long ago!*”

“I am *old*, my lords, and all the fellowship I now hold with him is only my *obedience*. All your studies make me accursèd like *this!* What can happen to me more than *this wretchedness?*”

“Your *fears* are worse,” argues Campeius.

She turns away. “Let me speak for *myself*, since Virtue finds no *friends!*”

“Have I lived thus long as a *wife?*—a *true* one, a woman, I dare say, without vainglory, never yet branded with suspicion! Have I always met the king with all my full affections?—*loved* him next *Heaven!*—obeyed him! Been, out of fondness, *too* devoted to him?—almost forgot my *prayers*, to content him!

“And am I *thus rewarded?* ’Tis not *well*, lords! Bring me a woman constant to her husband, one that ne’er dreamed of joy beyond *his* pleasure—and to that woman, to what she has done the most, yet will I *add* an honour: a *great patience!*”

“Madam, you wander from the good we aim at,” says Wolsey, annoyed.

“My lord, I dare not make myself *seem so guilty* as to give up willingly that noble title your master *wed* me to! Nothing but *death* shall e’er divorce my dignities!”

“Pray, hear me—”

“Would I had never trod this English earth, nor felt the *flatteries* that grow upon it!” she sobs. “Ye have angels’ *faces*, but Heaven knows your *hearts!*”

“What will become of me now, wretched lady! I am the most unhappy woman living!” She turns to her ladies-in-waiting. “*Alas*, poor wenches, where now are your fortunes!

“Shipwrecked upon a kingdom where’s no *pity*, no *friend*, no *hope!*—no *kindred* to *weep* for me!—almost no *grave* allowèd me! Like the lily that once was *mistress* of the field and flourished, I’ll hang my head and *perish!*”

Says Wolsey, “If Your Grace could but be brought to know our ends are honest, you’d feel more comfort. Why should we, good lady, upon what *cause*, *wrong* you? Aside from our *places*, the way of our *profession* is against it! We are to *cure* such sorrows, not to sow ’em! For *goodness’* sake, consider what you *do!*—how you may *hurt yourself!*—*aye*, fall utterly from the

king's *acquaintance*, by this carriage!

"The hearts of the princely *kiss* obedience, so much they love it; but in *stubborn* spirits they swell and grow as terrible as *storms*; I know you have a gentle, noble temper, a soul as even as a *calm*. Pray, think us those we profess to be: *peace-makers*, friends, and servants!"

"Madam, you'll find it so," says Cardinal Campeius. "You *wrong* your virtues with these weak, *woman's* fears! A *noble* spirit, as yours was *put into* you, ever casts such doubts from it as *false coin*! The king *loves* you!—beware you lose it not! As for us, if you please to trust us in your business, we are ready to use our utmost studies in your service."

Katherine regards them. "Do what ye will, my lords.

"And, pray, forgive me, if I have used myself *unmannerly*; you know I am a *woman*, lacking wit to make a *seemly* answer to such persons." They ignore the sarcasm.

She thinks, sadly, of her husband of twenty years. "Pray, do my service to his majesty; *he* has my heart yet; and shall have my *prayers*, while I shall have my life."

But she knows that powerful European forces are now in contention—imperial and regal, secular and religious. Katherine intends simply to delay.

"Come, *reverend* fathers, bestow your *counsels* on me," she says dryly.

Leading them into her quarters, the queen muses.

*She now begs who little thought, when she set footing here, she should have bought her dignities so dear!*

## Chapter Six The King's Cure

**I**t is not yet dawn. In the dim throne room, Norfolk tells the other lords with him, "If you will now *unite* in your complaints, *enforce* them with a constancy, the cardinal cannot stand under them!

"If you omit the offer of this time," he warns, "I cannot promise but that you shall sustain more, new disgraces with these you bear already!"

Summoned very early this morning by King Henry, they are now waiting for him.

Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey, now back from Ireland, is also eager. "I am joyful to meet the least occasion that may give me remembrance of my father-in-law, the *duke*," Buckingham, "and to be *revenged* for him!"

They all despise Wolsey. Asks Suffolk, angrily, "Which of the peers has gone unscorned by him?—or at best strangely neglected! When did he regard the stamp of nobleness in any person other than *himself*?"

But the white-haired chamberlain is apprehensive. "My lords, you speak your displeasures; what he *deserves* from you and me I know; what we can *do* to him, though, now that the time gives way to us, I much fear! If you cannot *bar his access to the king*, never attempt *anything* on him!—for he hath a *witchcraft* over the king in's tongue!"

Norfolk surprises them—by laughing. "Oh, fear him not!—his spell in that is *out*! The king hath found matter against him that forever *jars the honey* of his language! No, he's *settled*!—not to come off from *this* displeasure!"

Surrey steps closer, alert. "Sir, I should be glad to hear such news as *this* once every *hour*!"

"Believe it, this is true!" Norfolk tells him. "In the divorce, his *contrary* proceedings are all *unfolded*!"—exposed. "Wherein he appears as I would *wish mine enemy*!"

"How came his practises to light?" asks Surrey.

"Most strangely!"

"How, *how*?"

Suffolk explains: "The cardinal's *letters to the Pope* were *miscarried*, and came to the eye of the *king*!—wherein was read how the cardinal did entreat His Holiness to *stay the judgment* on

the divorce, if it did take place—for, 'I do,' quoth he, 'perceive my king is tangled in affection to a creature of the queen's, *Lady Anne Boleyn*.'"

Wolsey, to his dismay, has no power over the waiting-gentlewoman.

Surrey stares, wide-eyed. "Has the *king* this?"

"*Believe* it!"

"Will this *work*?"—effect changes.

The chamberlain smiles. "The king by this *perceives him!*—how he coasts, and hedges his *own* way—but at *this* point all his tricks founder; he brings his *physic* after his patient's *death!*—the king hath *already married* the fair lady!"

"Would he *had!*" says Surrey.

"May you be happy with your wish, my lord," Suffolk tells him, "for, I profess, you *have* it!"

The earl is delighted. "Now may *all joy* trace the conjunction!"

"My *amen* to't!" cries Suffolk.

"*All men's!*" says Norfolk.

Suffolk has more to tell. "There's order given for her *coronation!*"

"Marry, this is yet but young," he cautions, "and may be left to *some* ears unrecounted!" The cardinal has yet to hear—and they won't tell him. "But, my lords, she *is a gallant* creature, and complete in mind and feature! I persuade me that from her will fall some *blessing* to this land which shall be commemorated in it!"—the advent of a future sovereign, perhaps.

Surrey wants to hear about Wolsey. "But, will the king digest"—accept quietly—"this letter of the cardinal's?—the Lord *forbid!*"

"Marry, *amen!*" adds Norfolk.

"No, *no*," Suffolk assures them, "and there be *more* wasps buzzing about his nose that will make this one sting the *sooner*: Cardinal Campeius is *stol'n away to Rome*—hath ta'en no leave o' the king; has *left his cause unhandlèd!*—hath been posted as the *agent of our cardinal* to second all his plots! I do assure you the king cried '*Humph!*' at *that!*"

Says the chamberlain, "Now God *incense* him, and let him cry '*Humph*' louder!"

"But, my lord, when returns *Cranmer?*" asks Norfolk.

Thomas Cranmer, a scholarly priest, has studied the new ideas being promulgated by a German monk; under Martin Luther's doctrine, the Pope would not be considered the ultimate authority on God's will. Cranmer has traveled to the great European universities seeking similar views, with regard to the English monarch's marriage question.

"He is returnèd with his opinions, together with famous colleges'—almost all in Christendom," says Suffolk. "Which have satisfied the king *for his divorce!* Shortly, I believe, his second marriage shall be *announced*—and her *coronation!*"

"Katherine no more shall be called 'queen,'" he notes, "but 'princess dowager,' and 'widow to Prince Arthur.'"

Norfolk is pleased. "This same Cranmer's a worthy fellow, and hath ta'en much pain in the king's business!"

Says Suffolk, "He has!—and we shall see him, for it, an *archbishop!*"

Norfolk nods. "So I hear."

"'Tis *so*." Suffolk spots movement at the main entrance; he points. "The *cardinal!*"

Stopping by a tall window at the far end of the dark hall, Wolsey speaks urgently with his chief secretary, Thomas Cromwell.

"Observe, *observe*," Norfolk tells the others gleefully. "He's *moody*...."

- Asks Wolsey, out of the others' hearing, "The packet, Cromwell—gave't you the king?" He had sent Henry some new recommendations.

- "To his own hand, in's bedchamber."

- "Looked he o' the inside, at the papers?"

- "Immediately he did unseal them—and the first he viewed, he did *read*, with a serious mind!—a *heed* was in his countenance! *You* he bade *attend him* here this morning...."

- "Is he ready to come abroad?"

- "I think by now he is."

- The cardinal nods approval. "Leave me a while." Cromwell bows and goes.

- Wolsey ponders his scheme. *It shall be to the Duchess of Alençon, the French king's sister!—he shall marry her!*

- *Anne Boleyn?—no! I'll have no Anne Boleyns for him! There's more in't than fair visage! Bullen?* The common pronunciation stirs his contempt. *No, we'll no Bullens!*

- Wolsey paces. *Speedily I wish to hear from Rome!* He is disgusted by the king's profitless preference. *The Marchioness of Pembroke!*

"He's discontented," says Norfolk happily.

"Maybe he's *heard* that the king does whet his *anger* toward him," says Suffolk.

Surrey prays: "*Sharp enough, Lord, for thy justice!*"

- Wolsey further considers Anne's potential—so far as he knows—elevation. *The recent queen's gentlewoman, a knight's daughter, to be her mistress's mistress!—the queen's queen! This candle burns not clean! 'Tis I must snuff it! Then, out it goes! What though I know her virtuous and well deserving? Yet I know her for a spleeny Lutheran—and it is not wholesome to our cause that she should lie i' the bosom of our hard-ruled king!*

- *Again there is sprung up an heretic—an arch one!—Cranmer!—one that hath crawlèd into the favour of the king, and is his oracle!*

"He is *vexed* at something," Norfolk notes.

Surrey mutters, "I would 'twere something that would fret *this* string: the master-cord of's heart!"

Suffolk hears, behind them, a nearby door opening, one to the royal quarters. "The king, the king!"

Walking with the sovereign as he reads a fresh document, and holds two others, is Sir Thomas Lovell; the constable of the Tower is also chancellor of the exchequer—the king's chief auditor.

Henry looks up, amazed. "What *piles of wealth* he hath accumulated to his own portion! And what *expense* seems to flow *from* him by the *hour!*" He stares at the numbers. "How i' the name of thrift does he *rake this together!*"

Coming to the waiting nobles, Henry asks, "Now, my lords, saw you the cardinal?"

"My lord, we have stood here *observing* him," says Norfolk, pointing. "Some strange *commotion* is in his brain! He bites his lip, then starts; stops on a sudden, looks upon the ground, then lays his fingers on his temples; straight springs out into fast gait, then stops again; strikes his breast hard; and anon he casts his eye against the moon! In most-strange postures we have seen him set himself!"

"It may well be!—there is a *mutiny* in's mind!" Henry tells them. "This morning, papers of state he sent me to peruse, as I required—and wot you what I *found* there?—beyond doubt put in *unwittingly!* Forsooth, an *inventory*—this—imparting the several parcels of his silver plate, his treasure, rich stuffs, and ornaments of household—which I find at such *proud* rate that it out-speaks possession of a *subject!*"

"It's heaven's will!" says Norfolk. "Some *spirit* put this paper in the packet, to bless your eye withal!"

The king looks toward the cardinal. "If we did think his contemplation were *above* the earth, and fixèd on *spiritual* objects, he should still dwell in his musings. But I am afraid *his* thinkings are *below the moon,*"—nocturnal and nefarious, "not worthy this serious considering." Henry leads the lords toward the throne and seats himself, then speaks to Lovell, who goes to Wolsey.

The cardinal approaches the king. As usual, when he bows, he says piously, "Heaven forgive me; ever God bless Your Highness."

Henry gazes. "Good my lord, you are full of heavenly *stuff*, and bear in your mind the *inventory* of your *best* graces—the which you were just now running o'er. You have scarce time

to *steal* from spiritual leisure a brief span to keep your earthly *audit*; surely in that must I deem you an *ill steward*—and am glad to have you, therefore, my *companion!*”—within sight.

Says Wolsey, “Sir, for *holy* offices I *have* the time: time to think upon the part of business which I bear i’ the *state*.” He smiles. “But *Nature* does require her times of preservation,”—sleep, “which perforce I, her frail son, amongst my mortal brethren, must give my attendance to.”

“You have *said* well....”

“And as ever may Your Highness yoke us together, I will lend you cause: my well *doing* with my well saying!”

“’Tis well *said* again; and ’tis a *kind* of good deed to say well.

“And yet words are no *deeds*. My *father* loved you: his ‘said’ he *did*—and with his deed did crown his *word* upon you. Since I had my office, I have kept you next my heart—have not alone employed you where high *profits* might come home, but *pared* my present havings to bestow my bounties upon you.”

*What should this mean?* wonders the cardinal, now sharply aware of the king’s words *steal* and *audit*.

Thinks Surrey, hopefully, *The Lord increase this business!*

“Have I not made you the *prime* man of the *state*?” asks the king. “I pray you, tell me if what I have pronounced you have found *true*—and, if you may *confess* it, say withal if you are *bound* to us or no. What say you?”

“My sovereign, I confess that your royal *graces*, showered on me daily, have been more than could my *studied purposes* requite!—which went beyond all Man’s endeavours! My endeavours, filled with my abilities, have ever come too short of my *desires*.

“Mine *own* ends have been so maimèd that evermore they pointed to the good of *your* most sacred person, and the profit of the state.

“For your great graces heaped upon me, poor undeserver, I can nothing render but allegiant *thanks*, my *prayers* to heaven for you, and my *loyalty*—which ever has been, and ever shall be, *growing!*—till death, that winter, kill it!”

“Carefully answered,” says King Henry, staring at the cardinal. “A loyal and obedient subject is therein *illustrated*—the *acing* of it *portrays* the honour—as, i’ the contrary, the *foulness* of it does the *punishment!*”

“I presumed that, as my hand has opened *bounty* to you—my heart dropped *love*, my power rained *honour* more on *you* than any other—so your hand and heart, your brain and every function of your power, should, notwithstanding the bond of duty, as ’twere,”—priestly obligation to God, “should in *love*’s particular be to *me*, your friend *more than any other!*”

“I do profess that for *Your Highness*’s good I have ever laboured more than for mine own!” says Wolsey, increasingly uneasy. He straightens to stand taller. “Though all the world should *crack* their duty to you, and *throw it* from their souls!—though *perils* did abound, as thick as thought could make ’em, and appear in forms more *horrid!*—yet *my duty*, as doth a rock against the chiding flood, should break the approach of this wild river—and stand *unshaken!* I am, and *will be, yours!*”

“’Tis nobly *spoken*,” says Henry sourly. “Take *notice*, lords: he has a ‘loyal’ breast—for you have seen him *open*’t!”

Now the king rises—glaring. “*Read o’er this!*” he demands, handing Wolsey his own listing of riches, “and after, *this!*—and break fast with what appetite you have *then!*”

The cardinal stands watching, perplexed, as the king returns to his private quarters, followed by the other nobles, who are obviously delighted.

Wolsey, alone, worries. *What should this mean? What sudden anger’s this?—how have I reaped it? He parted frowning from me as if ruin leaped from his eyes! So looks the chafèd lion upon the daring huntsman that has galled it—then makes him nothing!*

*I must read this!—the story, I fear, of his anger!* He reads.

*Tis so! This paper has undone me!—’tis the account of all that world of wealth I have drawn*

together for mine own ends!—indeed, to gain the popedom, and fee my friends in Rome!

Oh, negligence fit for a fool to fall by! What crossèd devil made me put this main secret in the packet I sent the king?

Is there no way to cure this?—no new device, to beat this from his brains?

He thinks, and soon forms an idea for obtaining help from the Church.

I know 'twill stir him strongly!—yet I know a way, if it take right, that in spite of Fortune will bring me off again!

He unfolds the other sheet. What's this? 'To the Pope'—the letter, as I live, with all the business I writ to 's Holiness!

Wolsey's hands fall to his sides, and he stands aghast. Nay then, farewell! I have touched the highest point of all my greatness!—and, from that full zenith of my glory, I haste now to my setting!

But the sun, he knows, will rise again; he shakes his head and pictures a shooting star. I shall fall like a bright exhalation in the evening, and no man see me more!

As he folds and pockets the papers, the chamberlain returns with Norfolk, Suffolk and Surrey.

"Hear the king's pleasure, cardinal," says Norfolk, "who commands you to render up the Great Seal immediately into our hands!—and to confine yourself to Asher House, my Lord of Winchester's, till you hear further from his highness!"

Wolsey challenges: "Stay—where's your commission, lords?—words cannot carry authority so weighty!"

"Who dares cross one bearing the king's will from his mouth expressly?" demands Suffolk.

Wolsey scoffs. "Till I find more than will or 'words' to do it—I mean effect your malice!—know, officious lords, I dare, and must deny it!

"Now I feel of what coarse metal ye are moulded: envy! How eagerly ye follow my disgrace, as if it fed ye!—and how sleek and wanton ye appear in everything that may bring my ruin!

"Follow your envious courses, men of malice!—you have no Christian warrant for 'em, and no doubt in time will find their fit rewards!"

The courtiers clearly disdain his piousness, but Wolsey is adamant. "That Seal you ask with such a violence, the king, mine and your master, with his own hand gave me!—bade me enjoy the place and honours with it during my life!—and, to confirm his goodness, tied it by letters-patents! Now, who'll take it?"

"The king that gave it!" says Surrey.

"It must be himself, then."

The earl stares. "Thou art a proud traitor, priest!"

Cries the cardinal, "Proud lord, thou liest! Within these forty hours, Surrey durst better have burnt that tongue than said so!"

Surrey is angry. "Thy ambition, thou scarlet sin, robbed this bewailing land of noble Buckingham—my father-in-law! The heads of all thy brother cardinals, with thee and all thy best parts bound together, weighed not a hair of his!

"Plague on your politics!—you sent me as a deputy to Ireland, far from his succor!—from the king!—from all that might have mercy on the 'fault' thou gavest him!—whilst your great goodness, out of holy pity, absolvèd him—with an axe!"

Says the cardinal, "This, and all else this talking-lord can lay upon my credit, I answer is most false! The duke by law found his deserts! How innocent I was from any private malice in his end, his noble jury and foul cause can witness!

"If I loved many words, lord, I should tell you you have as little honesty as honour!—that, in the way of truth and loyalty toward the king, ever my royal master, I'd dare mock a sounder man than Surrey can be!—and all that love his follies!"

Surrey steps closer, livid. "By my soul, your long coat, priest, protects you!—thou shouldst feel my sword in the life-blood of thee, else!

"My lords, can ye endure to hear this arrogance?—and from this fellow? If we live thus



tamely, to be thus jaded by a piece of scarlet, farewell *nobility!* Do we let 'his *grace*' go forward and *dare* us with his *cap*, like *skylarks!*"—as if they were schoolboys.

Wolsey sneers. "All goodness is poison to *thy* stomach!"

"Yes, that 'goodness' of gleaning all the land's *wealth* unto *one!*—into *your own* hands, cardinal, by *extortion!*—the 'goodness' of your intercepted *packet!*—written to the Pope *against the king!*

"Your 'goodness,' since you provoke me, shall be most *notorious!*"—revealed to all. Surrey turns to his friend. "My lord of Norfolk—as you are *truly* noble, as you respect the common good, the state of our *nobility* and our *issue*—who, if *he* live, will scarcely be *gentlemen!*—produce the *grand sum* of his *sins*: the *articles* collected from his *despiséd* life!

"I'll startle you worse," the earl tells Wolsey, "than the *scaring bell*, when the *common wench* lay *kissing* in your arms, lord *cardinal!*"

Growls the priest, "How *much* methinks I could *despise* this man, but that I am bound in *charity* against it."

Norfolk tells Surrey, "Those articles, my lord, are in the *king's* hand; but know thus much: they are *foul* ones!"

Counters Wolsey, "So much the fairer shall mine *innocence* arise—and *spotless*, when the king knows my *truth!*"

Surrey laughs harshly. "This cannot save you! I thank my memory that I yet remember some of those articles—and *out they shall!*

"Now, if you can *blush*, and cry 'Guilty,' cardinal, you'll show a little *honesty!*"

"Speak on, sir," says Wolsey. "I dare your worst objections! If I blush, it is to see a *nobleman* lack *manners!*"

"I had rather lack those than my *head!*" retorts Surrey. "*Have at you!*

"First, that without the king's assent or knowledge you wrought to be a *legate,*"—an agent of the Pope, "by which power you maimed the jurisdiction *of all bishops!*"

As Wolsey listens, stone-faced, Norfolk continues the indictment. "Then, that in all you writ to Rome, and also to foreign princes, '*Ego et Rex meus*'"—*I and my king*—"was always inscribed—in which you brought the *king* to be your *servant!*"—by naming him second, a great violation of protocol.

Suffolk contributes: "Then, that without the knowledge of either king or Council, when you went as ambassador to the *emperor*, you made bold to carry the *Great Seal* into *Flanders!*"

"*Item,*" says Surrey. "You sent a large commission to Gregory de Cassado to conclude, without the king's will or the state's allowance, a league between his highness and Ferrara!"

The cardinal is stunned by how much they know—which they must have learned from the king. He begins to wring his hands.

"That, out of sheer ambition, you have caused *your holy hat* to be stamped on *the king's coin!*" adds Suffolk.

"Then," says Surrey, "that you have sent *innumerable substances*—by what means got, I leave to your own conscience!—to *furnish Rome*, and to prepare the ways you have for dignities,"—*promotions* there, "to *the near undoing of all the kingdom!*"

Wolsey is highly distraught; such channeling of money and goods is certainly criminal.

"Many *more* there are—which, since they are of *you*, and *odious*, I will not *taint my mouth* with!" says Surrey.

The cardinal is so pale, so clearly stricken, that the kindly old chamberlain becomes concerned. "Oh, my lord," he tells Surrey, "press not a falling man too far!—'tis virtue. His faults lie open to the *laws*; let *them*, not you, correct him! My heart weeps to see him so *little* of his great self!"

"*I forgive him!*" mutters Surrey—with harsh sarcasm: the late Lord Buckingham, he suspects, would not.

Suffolk steps forward. "Lord Cardinal, the king's *further* pleasure is that, because all those

things you have done of late by your *legatine* power within this kingdom fall into the compass of a *praemunire*,”—an illegal consignment to the papacy of ecclesiastical authority belonging to the king, “therefore such a *writ* be issued against you—to *forfeit* all your goods, lands, tenements, castles, and whatsoever, and be out of the king’s protection! This is my charge.”

“And so we’ll leave you to your meditations on *how to live better*,” says Norfolk. “As for your stubborn answer about giving back the Great Seal to us: *the king shall know it*—and, no doubt, shall *thank* you!

“So fare you well, my *little-good* lord *cardinal*!”

With that, the nobleman leaves him, and the other lords go with Norfolk.

Thinks Wolsey, *So fare you well—to the little good you bear me!*

*Farewell!*

*A long farewell, to all my greatness!*

*This is the state of Man: today he puts forth the tender leaves of hope; tomorrow he blossoms, and bears his blushing honours thick upon him! The third day comes a frost—a killing frost! And when he thinks, good man, of ease, full sure his greatness is a-ripening, it nips his root!—and then he falls as I do!*

*I have ventured, like little, wanton boys that swim on air-filled bladders, these many summers in a sea of glory—but far beyond my depth! My high-blown pride at length broke under me, and now has left me, weary and old with service, to the mercy of the rude stream that must forever hide me!*

*Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye!*

And now, surprised himself, he is relieved.

*I feel my heart new-opened! Oh, how wretched is that poor man who hangs on princes’ favours! There are, betwixt that sweet aspect of princes, the smile he would aspire to, and ruin, more pangs and fears than wars or women have!*

*And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer, never to hope again!*

Wolsey’s loyal secretary comes to him and bows. But the gentleman stands in tearful silence; he has already learned of their calamity.

“Why, how now, Cromwell?”

“I have no power to speak, sir.”

“What, amazed at my misfortunes? Can *thy* spirit wonder that a great man should decline? Nay, an *you* weep, I am fall’n indeed.”

“How does Your Grace?”

“Why... *well!*—never so truly happy, my good Cromwell,” says Wolsey. “I know myself now; and I feel within me a *peace* above all earthly dignities, a still and quiet conscience.

“The king has *cured* me!—I humbly *thank* his grace!—and from these shoulders, these ruined pillars, out of *pity*, taken a load that would sink a *navy*: *too much honour*. Oh, ’tis a *burden*, Cromwell, ’tis a *burden* too heavy for a man that hopes for heaven!”

“I am glad Your Grace has made right use of it.”

“I hope I have. I am able now, methinks, out of the fortitude of soul I feel, to endure more miseries, and greater far than my weak-hearted enemies dare offer.”

He looks out through a tall window, and watches white gulls as they glide above the Thames. “What news abroad?”

“The heaviest and the worst is the king’s displeasure with you,” says Cromwell. Word has already been spread.

“God *bless* him!”

“The next is that Sir Thomas More is chosen lord chancellor in your place.”

“That’s somewhat *sudden!*” says Wolsey. “But he’s a learned man. May he continue long in his highness’ favour, and do justice, for truth’s sake, by his conscience!—so that his bones, when he has run his course, and sleeps in blessings, may have a teeming of orphans’ tears wept on ’em!

“What more?”

“That *Cranmer* is returned, with *welcome*—installed as Lord Archbishop of Canterbury!”

Wolsey gasps. “*That’s* news indeed!”

“Last,” says Cromwell, “that the Lady Anne, to whom the king hath in secrecy long been *married*, this day was viewed *in the open*, going to chapel—and the voice now is only about her *coronation* as his queen.”

Wolsey groans. “*There* was the weight that pulled me down!

“Oh, Cromwell, the king has gone beyond me!—*all my glories* by *that one woman* I have lost, *forever!*”

“No sun shall ever usher forth *mine* honours, or gild again the noble troops that waited upon *my* smiles!

“Go, get thee *from* me, Cromwell! I am a poor, *fallen* man, unworthy now to be thy lord and master! Seek the *king*—*a sun*, I pray, that may *never set!* I have told him what and how *true* thou art; he will advance thee. Some little *memory* of me will stir him—I know his noble nature—not to let *thy* hopeful service perish, too!

“Good Cromwell, neglect him not!—make use *now*, and provide for thine own future safety!”

Cromwell is weeping. “Oh, my lord, *must* I, then, *leave you?* Must I needs forego so good, so noble and so true a master? Bear witness, all that have not hearts of iron, with what a sorrow Cromwell leaves his lord!

“The king shall have my service; but my *prayers* for ever, and *forever*, shall be yours!”

Wolsey is moved. “Cromwell, in all my miseries I did not think to shed a tear; but thou hast forced me, out of thy honest truth, to play the woman!

“Let’s dry our eyes; and thus far hear me, Cromwell.

“When I am forgotten, as I shall be, and sleep in dull cold marble, when no *more* mention of me must be heard, say I *taught* thee! Say Wolsey—who once trod the ways of glory, then sounded all the *depths* in *shoals* of honour—out of his wreck found *thee* a way to *rise* in—a sure and safe one, though thy *master* missed it!

“But *mark my fall*, and that which ruined me! Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away *ambition!*” he sobs. “By that sin fell the *angels!* How can Man, then, the image of his Maker, hope to win by it?”

“Love thyself *last!*”

“*Cherish* those hearts that hate thee!

“Corruption wins not more than *honesty!*”

“Always in thy right hand carry gentle *peace*, to silence envious tongues.

“Be just, and fear not! Let all the ends thou aim’st at be thy country’s, *Truth’s*, and thy *God’s*; then if thou fall’st, O Cromwell, thou fall’st a blessed martyr!

“Serve the king; and . . .”

He falters, racked with sorrow, and grasps the secretary’s arm. “Prithee, lead me in! There take an inventory of all I have, to the last penny!—’tis the *king’s!* My robe, and my integrity to heaven, are all I dare now call mine own.

“Oh, Cromwell, Cromwell!” he wails, “had I but served my *God* with half the zeal I served my king, He would not in mine age have left me naked to mine enemies!”

Wolsey is near collapse. The secretary gently steadies him as they leave the throne room. “Good sir, have patience.”

“So I have.” He looks back. “Farewell the hopes of court!

“My hopes in *heaven* do dwell!”

## Chapter Seven Ceremonies for Queens

Spectators by the thousands throng the streets of London near the magnificent Westminster Abbey, and two among them now smile in recognition.

“You’re well met once again!” says the taller gentleman.

“So are you,” his friend replies.

“You come to take your stand here, and behold the Lady Anne pass from her coronation?”

“’Tis all my purpose.” He watches the elated crowd. “At our last encounter, the Duke of Buckingham came from his trial,” the graybeard notes.

“’Tis very true. But that time offered sorrow; this, *general joy!*”

“’Tis well. The citizens, I am sure, have shown at full their minds—as, let ’em have their rights, they are ever *forward!*—in celebration of this day with shows, pageants, and sights of *royal honour!*”

“Never *greater!*—nor, I’ll assure you, better *taken, sir!*”

“May I be so bold as to ask what that contains, that paper in your hand?”

“Yes!—’tis the list of those that claim this day their *offices* by the custom of *coronation!* The Duke of Suffolk is the first, and attains to be high steward; next, the Duke of Norfolk, he to be earl marshal—you may read the rest.” He offers the newly printed broadsheet.

His older companion demurs. “I thank you, sir. Had I not *known* those customs, I should have been beholding to your paper. But, I beseech you, what’s become of *Katherine*, the princess dowager?”—her first husband was the Prince of Wales. “How goes her...”—he can longer say *majesty’s*—“business?”

“That I can tell you too. The Archbishop of Canterbury, accompanied with other learned and reverend fathers of his order, held of late a *court* at Dunstable, six miles off from Amptill, where the princess stayed—at which she was often cited by them, but appearèd not.

“And, to be short, for not appearing—and given the *king’s* latest action—by the main assent of all these learned men she was *divorced*, and the marriage made none of effect! Since which she was removed to Kimbolton, where she remains now, *sick.*”

“*Alas, good lady!*”

They look up, startled: “The *trumpets* sound! Stand close—the *queen* is coming!”

The coronation procession passes by, moving grandly from the abbey to conclude, eventually, at the palace. First come two renowned judges, then the new lord chancellor, with the kingship’s purse and mace carried before him by servants. The king’s monks and choristers follow, singing. Marching with great dignity, the Mayor of London bears his mace of office; then comes the chief herald, wearing his own coat of arms and a gilded-copper crown.

“A *royal* train, believe me!” says the older man, watching the dignitaries pass. “These I know. Who’s that who bears the sceptre?”

“Marquis Dorset! And that the Earl of Surrey with the rod!” Dorset carries a sceptre of gold, and on his head is a demi-coronal of gold; Surrey, wearing the coronet of an earl, carries a silver rod with a dove. Their decorative collars are of silver *S*-shapes, linked.

The younger spectator points. “A bold, brave gentleman! That should be the Duke of Suffolk!”

“’Tis the same. High steward.”

“And that my lord of Norfolk?”

“Yes.”

Acting as high steward, Suffolk—in a robe of state, and wearing his coronet—bears a long white wand. Old Norfolk, a coronet on his head, holds the rod of marshalship. Both wear linked-ess collars of silver.

A tall canopy approaches, borne steadily aloft in courtly fashion by four noblemen; beneath it

walks Queen Anne, crowned and robed, her hair richly adorned with pearls. With her, one at each side, march the Bishops of London and Winchester.

The older gentleman is entranced by her. "Heaven bless thee!" he murmurs. "Thou hast the sweetest face I ever looked on!

"Sir, as I have a soul, she is an *angel!* Our king has all the *Indies* in his arms—and *more* and *richer!*—when he 'strains *that* lady!

"I cannot blame his conscience," he adds.

Says his companion, "They that bear the cloth of honour over her are four barons of the Cinque Ports!"—representatives of key shipping cities facing France.

"*Those* men are happy!" The older gentleman watches the applauding bystanders. "And so are all who are near *her!* I take it that she who carries her train is the noble old lady, Duchess of Norfolk...."

"It *is;* and all the rest are countesses!" The white-haired duchess, holding the long train of Queen Anne's gown, wears a coronal of gold, wrought with flowers; the ladies with her have plain circlets of gold.

The smaller gentleman nods. "Their coronets say so. These are stars indeed—and sometimes *falling* ones...."

"No more of *that,*" cautions his friend; there are many listeners about them.

The long procession moves past, and slowly the people disperse. Londoners return to their daily, commonplace tasks.

"God save you, sir!" says the tall gentleman as a merchant, wiping sweat from his face with a silk kerchief, joins the two. "Where have you been broiling?"

The mercer laughs. "Among the crowd i' the abbey—where a *finger* could not be wedged in more! I am *stified* with the mere *rankness* of their joy!"

"You saw the ceremony?" asks the shorter man; considering the controversy, he is interested in the participants' demeanor.

"That I did!"

"How was it?"

"*Well* worth the seeing!"

"Good sir, speak it to us."

The portly merchant nods. "As well as I am able.

"The rich stream of lords and ladies, having brought the queen to a prepared place in the choir, fell back a distance from her, while her grace sat down to rest awhile, some half an hour or so, in a rich chair of state, showing freely the beauty of her person to the people.

"Believe me, sir, she is the goodliest woman that ever lay by man!—which when the *people* had the full view of, such a noise arose as the sailcloth makes at sea in a stiff tempest!—as *loud,* and to as many *tunes!* Hats, cloaks—*doublets,* I think!—*flew up!*—had their *faces* been loose, this day *they* had been lost!

"Such *joy* I never *saw* before! Great-bellied women that had not half a week to go,"—before delivering babies, "like old *rams* in the time of war would shake the press,"—push through the throng, "and make 'em reel before 'em!

"No man living could say, 'This is *my* wife,' all were woven so strangely there into one piece!"

"But, what followed?"

"At length her grace *rose,* and with modest paces came to the altar, where she kneeled, and saint-like cast her fair eyes to heaven and prayed devoutly. Then rose again and bowed her to the people.

"Then by the Archbishop of Canterbury she had all the royal makings of a queen—such as holy oil, Edward the Confessor's crown, the rod and bird of peace, and all such emblems—laid nobly on her! Which performèd, the choir sang '*Te Deum,*' together with all the choicest music of the *kingdom!*

“So she parted, and, with the same full state, pacèd back again to York Place, where the *feast* is held!”

“Sir, you must no longer call it *York Place*,” the tall gentleman points out. “That’s *past*; for, since the cardinal fell, that title’s lost. ’Tis now the *king’s*, and called *Whitehall*.”

“I know it; but ’tis so lately altered that the old name is fresh about me.”

The short gentleman persists. “What two reverend *bishops* were those that went on each side of the queen?”

“Stokesly and Gardiner: the one of Winchester”—Gardiner—“newly preferred from being the king’s secretary; the other, London.”

The old man frowns. “He of Winchester is held no great lover of the *archbishop’s*—the virtuous *Cranmer*.”

“All the land knows that,” says the merchant. “However, as *yet* there is no great breach; when it comes, Cranmer will find a *friend* who will not shrink from him!”

“Who may that be, I pray you?”

“Thomas *Cromwell*—a man in much esteem with the king, and truly a *worthy* friend! The king has made him master o’ the Jewel House”—in the Tower, where the crown jewels are kept—“and one, already, of the Privy Council.”

“He will deserve *more*,” says the older man.

“Yes, without all doubt!”

“Come, gentlemen, ye shall go my way, which is to the *court*—and there ye shall be my guests!—something I can command! As I walk thither, I’ll tell ye more.”

The others are very pleased. “You may command *us*, sir!”

**A**t Kimbolton, sixty miles north of London, Katherine, stooping, is helped along between her young serving-woman and her household usher, who is graying as well.

“How does Your Grace?” he asks.

“Oh, Griffith, sick to death! My legs, like loaden branches, bow to the earth, willing to leave their burthen.” She groans. “Reach a chair.” Griffith pulls a tall, cushioned one forward for her. Wincing, she eases down into it. “So. Now methinks I feel a little ease.

“Didst thou not tell me, Griffith, as thou led’st me, that the *great child of Honour*, Cardinal Wolsey, was dead?”

“Yes, madam, but I did think Your Grace, out of the pain you suffer, gave no ear to’t.”

“Prithee, good Griffith, tell me how he died; if *well*, he stepped before me, perhaps, for my example....”

“Well; so the voice goes, madam. For after the stout Earl of Northumberland arrested him at York and brought him forward, as a man sorely tainted, to his *answer*, he *fell sick*, suddenly, and grew so ill he could not sit upon his mule!”—was almost too weak to travel to trial.

“Alas, poor man,” she says dryly.

“At last, with easy roads, he came to Leicester, lodgèd in the abbey, where the reverend abbot with all his convent honourably received him. To whom he gave these words: ‘O father abbot, an old man, broken with the storms of state, is come to lay his weary bones among ye. Give him a little earth, for charity.’

“So he went to bed, where eagerly his sickness pursued him still. And three nights after this, about the hour of eight, which he himself foretold should be his last, full of *repentance*, continual meditations, tears and sorrows, he gave his *honours* to the world again, his *blessèd* part to heaven, and slept in peace.”

“So may he not *rest*!—may his *faults* lie *greatly* on him!” She notes the kindly old servant’s disapproval. “Yet *thus* far, Griffith, give me leave to speak of him—and *that’s* with *charity*!”

Anger brings color to her pale cheeks. “He was a man of an *unbounded presumption*, ever ranking himself with *princes*!—one who surreptitiously *tried all the kingdom*!

“*Simony*”—taking money for preferment by clergy—“was *fair play*!”

“His own *opinion* was his *law*!

“In the presence”—before the king—“he would say *untruths*, and be ever *double* in both his words and meaning. *He* was never pitying but where he meant to *ruin*! His *promises* were as he then was—*mighty*; but his *performance*, as he is now—*nothing*!

“He *was* ill!—and his own *body* gave the clergy an *example*!”

“Noble madam, men’s evil manners live in water; their *virtues* we should write in brass,” says Griffith softly. “May it please Your Highness to hear me speak of his *good*, now?”

Katherine assents. “Yes, good Griffith; *I* were malicious else.”

“This cardinal, though from an humble stock, undoubtedly was fashioned to much honour from his cradle. He was a *scholar*, and a ripe and good one; exceedingly wise, fair-spoken, and persuasive. Lofty and sour toward them that loved him not; but to those men that sought him, sweet as summer! And though he were insatiable in getting, which was a sin, yet in *bestowing*, madam, he was most princely!

“Ever witness *for* him are those twins of learning”—colleges—“that he raised through you, Ipswich and Oxford—one of which fell *with* him, unwilling to outlive the good that made it; the other, though unfinished, yet so famous, so *excellent* in art, and still so *rising*, that Christendom shall ever speak its virtue!

“His overthrow heaped *happiness* upon him!—for then, and not till then, he felt *himself*, and found the *blessedness* of being... little.

“And, to add greater honours to his age than Man could give him, he died fearing *God*.”

Despite herself, Katherine is moved by the graceful encomium. She touches his hand. “After my death I wish no other herald, no other speaker of my living actions, to keep mine honour from corruption, but such an honest chronicler as Griffith!

“Whom I most hated living, now in his ashes, with thy religious truth and modesty thou hast made me to honour. Peace be with him!” She laughs. “*O Patience*, be near *me* still—and set me *lower*!

“I have not long to trouble thee, good Griffith,” says Katherine, weakly, as he adjusts a pillow for her. “Cause the musicians to play me the sad notes I named for my knell, whilst I sit meditating on that *celestial* harmony I go to.”

She leans back onto the cushions as he goes to summon a flutist and lutenist. Soon they come in to sit on a bench by the wall and play the solemn, peaceful music. She closes her eyes to listen.

Griffith watches for a few moments. “She is asleep. Good wench, let’s sit down, quiet, for fear we wake her.” He smiles, watching Katherine’s peaceful face. “Softly, gentle *Patience*....”

The servants take seats near the musicians, who continue playing the dulcet tones.

In a misty vision, Katherine perceives six angelic ladies, elegant in flowing white gowns, gliding, one after another, into view before her. Golden masks cover the ethereal visitors’ faces. Wreaths of laurel adorn their heads, and they carry soft leaves of palm.

The first two ladies bow before her, then dance, effecting delicate changes in accord with the music. They raise a glossy green garland over her head, while the other four make reverent curtsies, then sway in unison with the mellifluous melody. To the strand of plaited leaves is added another by the next pair, who hold them above her head as the third couple skims near.

The last two take the garlands, and all six ladies come to curtsy before Katherine.

She looks upward, inspired by the beatifying vision, and lifts her thin hands in a sign of rejoicing.

Slowly, the ephemeral figures slip from sight.

Katherine’s eyelids flutter; she blinks and sits up, looking around. “Spirits of *peace*, where are ye?” she murmurs. “Are ye all gone, and leave me here, in wretchedness behind ye?”

“Madam, we are here,” says Griffith rising.

“It is not you I call for.... Saw ye none enter since I slept?”

“None, madam.”

“No? Saw you not, even now, a blessèd troop invite me to a banquet—whose bright faces cast a thousand beams upon me, like the sun! They promised me eternal happiness!—and brought me garlands, Griffith, which I feel I am not worthy, yet, to wear.

“I *shall* be, assuredly,” she whispers, eyes glistening.

“I am most joyful, madam, such good dreams possess your fancy!”

Katherine smiles. “Bid the instruments leave; they seem harsh and heavy to me.” As the earthly musicians rise, bow, and go, she settles back in her chair.

Watching, the serving-woman grows concerned. She asks Griffith, quietly, “Do you note how much her grace is altered on the sudden? How long her face is drawn!—how pale she looks, and of an earthy cold! Mark her eyes....”

Griffith nods. “She is going, wench. Pray... pray.”

“Heaven comfort her!”

A young messenger rushes into the room. “An’t like Your Grace—”

“You are a *saucy* fellow!” Katherine sits up, eyes flashing. “Deserve we no more *reverence*?”

Griffith chides the lad: “You are *to blame*, knowing she will not lose her wonted greatness, to use so-rude behavior! Go to! *Kneel!*”

The boy does so, red-faced. “I humbly do entreat Your Highness’ pardon; my *haste* made me unmannerly! There is, staying, a gentleman, sent from the *king* to see you!”

“Admit him entrance, Griffith,” says Katherine regally. “But *this* fellow let me ne’er see again!”

Griffith, smiling by the dying lady’s private jest, sets a hand gently on the boy’s shoulder as he rises, and goes with him into the corridor. The man returns with a stately nobleman.

Katherine has seen him often at King Henry’s court; she rises, with difficulty, and smiles. “If my sight fail not, you should be lord ambassador from the *emperor*, my royal nephew!—and your name Capucius.”

He beams, quite pleased, as he kneels. “Madam, the *same*; your servant!”

“Oh, my lord, the times and titles now are altered strangely with me since first you knew me! But, I pray you, what is your pleasure with me?”

Lord Capucius rises. “Noble lady, first mine *own* service to Your Grace; next, the *king*’s request that I would visit you—who grieves much for your infirmity, and by me sends you his princely commendations, and heartily entreats you take good comfort!”

“Oh, my good lord, that comfort comes *too late*; ’tis like a pardon after execution. That gentle physic, given in time, had cured me; but now I am past any *comforts*, here, but *prayers*.

“How does his highness?”

“Madam, in good health.”

“So may he ever do! And ever flourish, when I shall dwell with worms, and my poor name is banished in the kingdom.” She turns to the woman. “Patience, is that letter I caused you write yet sent away?”

“No, madam.” She fetches it for the lady.

Katherine shows the emperor’s emissary the sealed missive. “Sir, I most humbly pray you to deliver this to my lord the king.”

“Most willingly, madam.”

Katherine looks down at the letter. “In which I have commended to his goodness the model of our chaste loves, his young *daughter*,” Mary, “may the dews of heaven fall thick in blessings on her!

“Beseeching him to give her virtuous upbringing; she is young, and of a noble, modest nature; I hope she will deserve well....”

“And a little to *love* her, for her mother’s sake, who lovèd him, heaven knows how dearly!

“My next poor petition is that his noble grace would have some pity upon my wretched



women, who so long have followed *both* my fortunes faithfully—of whom there is not one, I dare avow—and *now* I should not lie!—but will *deserve*, for virtue and true beauty of the soul, for honesty and decent carriage, a right-good *husband*—let him be a noble! And surely are those men happy that shall have 'em!

“The last is for my men—they are the poorest, but poverty could never draw 'em from me—that they may have their *wages* duly paid 'em, and something more to remember me by. If heaven had pleased to have given me longer life and able means, we had not parted thus.”

She hands him the letter. “Those are the whole contents; and, good my lord, by what you love the dearest in this world, and as you wish Christian peace to souls departed, stand as these poor people's friend, and urge the king to do me this last right!”

“By heaven, I *will*,” vows Capucius, “or let me lose the form of a man!”

“I thank you, honest lord. Remember me in all humility unto his highness.

“Say his long *trouble* now is passing out of this world; tell him, in death I *blessed* him, for so I *will*.

“Mine eyes grow dim. Farewell, my lord!

“Griffith, farewell!

“Nay, Patience, *you* must not leave me yet: I must to bed.

“Call in more women; when I am dead, good wench, let me be used with honour.

“Strew me over with maiden flowers, that all the world may know I was a chaste wife to my grave. Embalm me, then lay me forth—although unqueenèd, yet like a queen—as daughter to a king inter me.

“I can no more.”

She smiles. Her obligations have been fulfilled.

## Chapter Eight Canterbury Confronted

Walking down a dark corridor, away from the royal quarters in the palace at London, a young page carries a torch before Stephen Gardiner, recently elevated to Bishop of Winchester—and quite annoyed at having been summoned so late, then so soon dismissed. “It's *one o'clock*, boy, is't not?”

“It hath struck.”

“These should be hours for *necessities*, not for delights—times to repair our nature with comforting repose, and not for uses to *waste* these times!” He sees a nobleman approaching hurriedly. “Good hour of night, Sir Thomas! Whither so late?”

“Came you from the king, my lord?” asks Lovell, who is headed toward Henry's rooms.

“I did, Sir Thomas, and left him at *primero*”—a game of cards—“with the Duke of Suffolk.”

“I must to him, too, before he go to bed. I'll take my leave.”

“Not yet, Sir Thomas—what's the matter? It seems you are in haste; an if there be no great offence belongs to't, give your friend some touch of your late business. Affairs that walk, as they say spirits do, at *midnight* have in them a wilder nature than those that seek dispatch by day!”

“My lord, of love for you I durst commend a *secret* to your ear much weightier than that word: the *queen's in labour*—they say in great *extremity*, and fear she'll with the labour *end*!”

“The *fruit* she goes with I pray for heartily, that it may find good time, and live,” says the priest, “but as for the stock”—the baby's mother—“Sir Thomas, I wish it *grubbed up now*!”

“Methinks I could cry the *amen*,” says Lovell, also displeased with the king's less-than-royal choice. “And yet my conscience says she's a good creature, and, sweet lady, does deserve our better wishes.” The knight would start away.

But, *sir*, *sir*, *hear* me, Sir Thomas!” says the churchman urgently. “You're a gentleman of mine own way; I know you wise, religious—and let me tell you, it will ne'er be *well*—'twill *not*,

Sir Thomas Lovell, take't of me—till she, and *Cranmer* and *Cromwell*—her *two hands!*—*sleep in their graves!*”

Lovell is surprised by his vehemence—and boldness. “Now, sir, you speak of the two most *remarkèd* i' the *kingdom!*”

“As for *Cromwell*, beside that of the Jewel House, he's made master o' the *rolls*, and the king's *secretary!*—and further, sir, stands in the gap to trade for *more* preferments with which the time will load him!

“The archbishop”—Thomas *Cranmer*, newly elevated to Archbishop of Canterbury—“is the king's *hand* and *tongue!*—and who dare *speak one syllable* against him?”

“Yes, *yes*, Sir Thomas, there *are* those that dare!—*I myself* have ventured to speak my mind of him!” says the bishop. “And indeed *this day*, sir, I may tell it you, I think I have incensèd the lords o' the Council that he is—for so I *know* he is, *they* know he is!—a *most arch heretic*, a *pestilence* that does *infect* the land!

“Which they, *movèd*, have broached with *the king*—who hath so far given *ear* to our complaint—his great grace and princely care *foreseeing* those fell mischiefs our reasons laid before him—and hath commanded that *this coming morning* to the Council-board he”—*Canterbury*—“be *summoned!*”

“He's a *rank weed*, Sir Thomas, and we must *root him out!*” The bishop can see that Lovell is eager to deliver his news. “From your affairs I hinder you too long. Good night, Sir Thomas.”

Lovell bows. “*Many* good nights, my lord! I rest your servant.” He hurries forward.

“Charles, I will play no more tonight,” says King Henry, laying down his cards. “My mind's not on't; you are too hard for me.”

Lord Suffolk smiles. “Sir, I did never win of you before—”

“But *little*, Charles,” amends the king, with a laugh. “Nor *shall* not, when my fancy's on my *play.*” He rises, seeing Sir Thomas arrive. “Now, Lovell, from the queen what is the news?”

“I could not personally deliver to her what you commanded me, but by her woman I sent your message, who returned her thanks in the greatest humbleness, and desired Your Highness most heartily to pray for her!”

Henry strokes his beard. “What say'st thou?—to *pray for her?* What, is she crying out?”

“So said her woman—and that her suffering made almost each pang a death!”

“*Alas, good lady!*”

“May God safely 'quit her of her burthen, and with gentle travail,” says Suffolk, “to the gladding of Your Highness with an heir!”

“'Tis midnight, Charles; prithee, to bed—and in thy prayers remember the estate of my poor queen! Leave me alone,” Henry tells Suffolk, “for I must think of that which company would not be friendly to.”

The duke bows. “I wish Your Highness a quiet night; and my good mistress I will remember in my prayers.”

“Charles, good night.” But just as Suffolk is leaving, Sir Anthony Denny comes into the dim chamber, its walls laden with noble ancestors' painted portraits. “Well, sir, what follows?” Henry is expecting a party of clerics accompanying *Cranmer*, the priest he has just promoted.

The knight bows. “Sir, I have brought my lord the archbishop, as you commanded me.”

“*Hmh. Canterbury....*”

“Aye, my good lord.” The tone is disdainful.

Thinks Henry, *'Tis true.* “Where is he, Denny?”

“He attends Your Highness' pleasure.” At the king's nod, he bows and goes out.

Lovell realizes, *This is about that which the bishop spake! I am happily come hither!*

Sir Anthony returns, bringing the archbishop, who bows.

“Void the gallery,” says King Henry. Denny bows and goes. “*Eh?* I have said be *gone!* What?” Lovell bows and leaves—disappointed.

The archbishop finds himself alone with the sovereign. *I am fearful! Wherefore frowns he thus? 'Tis his aspect of terror; all's not well!*

Henry regards him. "How now, my lord. You desire to know wherefore I sent for you."

The archbishop kneels. "It is my duty to attend Your Highness' pleasure."

"Pray you, arise, my good and gracious lord of Canterbury. Come, you and I must walk a turn together; I have news to tell you! Come, come, give me your hand.

"Ah, my good lord, I *grieve* at what I speak," says Henry, as they walk through a narrow passage, lighted with white wax candles. "And am right sorry to repeat what follows!

"I have, and most unwillingly, of late heard many grievous—I do say, my lord, *grievous*—complaints about you!—which, being considered, have moved us and our Council that you shall this morning come before us. While I know you, lacking much freedom, cannot purge *yourself*, yet till further trial in those charges which will require your answer, you must take your *patience* unto you, and be well contented to make your house our *Tower*." The Tower of London serves as an armory and a royal residence, where noble prisoners can be held in comfort; many, though, have not left it alive, and its reputation is threatening.

"You being 'Brother' to *us*," the king tells the monk, now his confessor, "'tis fit we thus proceed, for else no witness would come against you."

The archbishop again kneels. "I humbly thank Your Highness; and am right glad to catch this good occasion most thoroughly to be winnowèd, where my chaff and wheat shall fly asunder. For I know there's none stands under more calumnious tongues than I myself, poor man!"

The king smiles. "Stand up, good Canterbury! Thy truth and thy integrity are rooted in *us*, thy *friend*! Give me thy hand; stand up!

"Prithee, let's walk." Remembering the contentious Cardinal Wolsey, Henry is surprised at the cleric's acceptance. "Now, by my holidame, what manner of man are *you*? My lord, I looked you would have given me your petition: that I should not have ta'en some pains to bring together yourself and your accusers, and to have heard *you* without indurance further!"

"Most dread liege, the ground I stand on is my truth and honesty; if *they* shall fail, I wish mine enemies will triumph o'er my person, which I'd weigh not, were it of those virtues vacant! I fear nothing that can be said against me."

King Henry, though, is concerned. "Know you not how your state stands i' the world?—with the *whole world*! Your enemies are *many*—and not *small*! Their practises"—schemes—"must bear the same proportion!

"And not always do the *justice* and the *truth* o' the question carry their due in the *verdict* of it! With what ease might *corrupt* minds procure knaves as corrupt to *swear against you*! Such things have been done! You are *potently* opposèd—and with a *malice* of great size!

"Dream you of better luck—I mean, from *perjured witnesses*—than your Master whose minister you are, whiles *He* lived here upon this wicked earth?

"Go to, *go to!*—you take a *precipice* for no leap of *danger!*—and woo your own destruction!"

The archbishop stops and faces the king humbly. "May God and Your Majesty protect mine innocence, or I fall into the trap that is laid for me."

Henry smiles. "Be of good cheer. They shall no more *prevail* than we *give way* to them!

"Keep comfort to you—and this morning, see you *do* appear before them. If they shall chance, in charging you with matters, to *commit* you, fail not to use the best persuasions to the *contrary*, and with what vehemency the occasion shall instruct you."

He removes a heavy piece of jewelry from his right hand. "If *entreaties* will render you no remedy, then deliver *this ring*, and there before them make your appeal to *us*."

The archbishop holds the ring close to his heart.

Thinks King Henry, *Look, the good man weeps! He's honest, on mine honour! God's blest Mother, I swear he is true-hearted—and of soul, none better in my kingdom!*

"Get you gone, and do as I have bid you," says Henry kindly. Silently, the archbishop bows

and goes. The king sees him kiss the ring as he leaves. *He has strangled his language in his tears!*

And now Henry is surprised to be confronted by a familiar Spanish lady; a waiting-gentlewoman. Lovell hurries in after her, alarmed, as a man's voice calls, from the distant door, "Come back!—what mean you?"

"I'll *not* come back!" cries the lady happily. "The *tidings* that I bring will make my boldness *manners!*

"Now, *good angels* fly o'er thy royal head, and shade thy person under their blessed wings!" she tells the king.

Henry beams. "Now, by thy looks I guess thy message! Is the queen *deliverèd*? Say, *aye!*—and of a *boy!*"

"Aye!—*aye*, my liege!

"But, as to a lovely boy—the God of heaven both now and ever bless her!—'tis a *girl!*—who promises boys hereafter!

"Sir, your queen desires your visitation, to be acquainted with this stranger—who's as *like you* as cherry is to cherry!"

"Lovell!" cries Henry, hurrying away toward the door.

"Sir?"

"Give her an hundred marks! I'll to the queen!"

Lovell hands her a pouch of coins and follows the king.

The lady frowns. *An hundred marks? By this light I'll have more! An ordinary groom is good for such payment! I will have more, or scold it out of him!*

*Said I for this the girl was like to him?*

*I will have more, or else unsay it!*

She hurries after King Henry. *And now, while it is hot, I'll put it to the issue!*

**M**en and boys wait in the open courtyard outside the King's Council chambers: the herald's officers, and clerks and pages, all summarily called to the palace this morning to serve at a hearing about alleged heresy.

The Archbishop of Canterbury hurries, without attendants, toward the hall. *I hope I am not too late!—the gentleman that was sent to me from the Council prayed me to make great haste!*

But he finds that the entrance is barred—and guarded. *All fast? What means this?* He approaches the doors. "*Ho!* Who waits there? Surely you know me?"

The keeper at the double doors bows—and flushes. "Yes, my lord; but yet I cannot help you." "Why?"

"Your Grace must wait till you be called for."

Canterbury nods. "So." He turns away, resigned to enduring the indignity.

Not far away, a gentleman, who has been walking across the stone pavement toward entrance to the royal residence, is amazed to see the archbishop kept waiting. *This is a piece of malice!* he thinks, *I am glad I so fortunately came this way! The king shall understand it presently!*

The priest watches him go inside. *'Tis Butts, the king's physician. As he passed along, how earnestly he cast his eyes upon me! Pray heaven he sound not my disgrace!*

*For certain, this is of purpose laid by some that hate me. God turn their hearts; I never sought their malice! To quench mine honour they would shame me—why else make me wait at door, a fellow counsellor 'mong boys, grooms, and lackeys? But their pleasures must be fulfilled, and I attend with patience.*

While he stands alone in the sun, high above in the castle Sir William Butts comes to a window of one of the king's chambers, with Henry just behind him. "I'll show Your Grace the strangest sight...."

"What's that, Butts?"

"I think Your Highness saw *this* not many a day!" says the physician.

The king looks down into the yard. "Body o' me,"—a wryly revised oath, "where is it?"

The doctor points. “*There*, my lord!—despite the high promotion of his grace of Canterbury, he holds his state *at door*—’mongst pursuivants, pages, and *footboys!*”

Henry is surprised—and displeased. “*Humph!* ’Tis he, indeed! Is *this* the honour they do one another? ’Tis well there’s *one* above ’em yet! I had thought they had shared so much honesty among ’em, at least in good *manners*, as not thus to suffer a man of *his* place, and so near *our favour*, to dance attendance on their lordships’ pleasures!—and *at the door*, too, like a post with packets!”—a rider carrying letters.

“By Holy Mary, Butts, there’s *knavery!*” He turns from the window. “Let ’em alone, and draw the curtain closed.

“We shall hear more anon.”

W ithin the Council chamber, the chancellor, Sir Thomas More, sits near the center of a wide table at the front; a high, carved chair beside him—the archbishop’s—is empty. Also seated at the table, facing the room, are Lords Suffolk, Norfolk, and Surrey, the lord chamberlain—and Bishop Gardiner of Winchester.

As the king’s secretary, Cromwell too has a place at the heavy table; the keeper now stands watch by the doors.

“Speak to the business, Master Secretary,” says the chancellor, beginning the session. “Why are we met in Council?”

Cromwell rises. “Please Your Honours, the chief cause concerns his grace of Canterbury.”

Asks the bishop, formally, “Has he had knowledge of it?”

“Yes.”

Norfolk looks to the doors. “Who waits there?”

“*Without*, my noble lords?” asks the keeper; he is annoyed that his office has been abused.

“*Yes*,” snaps the bishop.

“My lord *archbishop*—and *has done half an hour*, to know your pleasures!”

“Let him come in,” says the chancellor.

The keeper open the right-hand door. He bows. “Your Grace may enter now.”

Canterbury comes into the chamber and approaches the Council.

The chancellor begins. “My good lord archbishop, I’m very sorry to sit here, at this present, and behold that chair stand empty. But we all are *men*, in our own natures frail, and culpable in our flesh; few are angels.

“Out of which frailty and want of wisdom, *you*, who best should *teach* us, have *misdemeaned yourself!*—and not a little toward the *king!* First, under his *laws*, by teaching your *chaplains*, filling the whole *realm*, for so we are informèd, with *new opinions*, diverse and *dangerous*—which are *heresies!*—and, if not *reformèd*, may prove pernicious!”

“Which reformation must be *sudden*, too, my noble lords!” insists the Bishop of Winchester. “For those that tame *wild horses* pace ’em not with their hands to make ’em gentle, but *stop their mouths* with *stubborn bits!*—and *spur* ’em till they obey the manage!

“If we suffer, out of our easiness and childish pity, one man’s *notions*—this *contagious sickness!*—farewell all *physic!* And what follows *then?* *Commotions, uproars*, with a general taint of the *whole state!*—as our neighbour the upper Germany can dearly witness, of late days yet freshly pitied in our memories!” Thousands died during and after the peasants’ revolt there.

Canterbury addresses the Council calmly. “My good lords, hitherto in all the progress of both my life and office I have laboured, and with no little study, that my teaching and the strong course of my authority might go *one way*, and *safely*—and the end was ever *to do good!*

“Nor is there living—I speak it with a simple heart, my lords—a man that more *detests*—more *stirs against*, in both his private conscience and his place—defacers of the public *peace* than *I do!* And I pray heaven the king may never find a heart with any less *allegiance* in it!

“Men that make *envy* and *crooked malice* nourishment dare bite the best! I do beseech Your Lordships that, in this case, for *justice*, my accusers, be what they will, may stand forth *face to*

face, and freely urge against me.”

“Nay, my lord, that cannot be,” says Suffolk. “You are a *counsellor*, and, by that virtue, no man *dare* accuse you.”

The bishop scowls at Canterbury. “My lord, because we have business of *more moment*,” he says haughtily, “we will be short with you: ’tis his highness’ pleasure, and our consent, that for better trial of you, from hence you be committed to the Tower—where being but a *private* man again, you shall know that *many* dare accuse you boldly—more than, I fear, you are provided for!”

“Ah, my good lord of Winchester, I *thank* you!” says the archbishop dryly. “You are always my good *friend*; if *your* will pass, I shall find in Your Lordship *both judge and juror*, you are so *merciful*!”

“I see your end!—’tis *my undoing*! Modesty and love, lord, become a churchman better than *ambition*! With meekness, *win* straying souls again—cast none *away*!”

“That I shall clear myself—lay all the weight ye can upon my patience!—I have as little doubt as *you* do *conscience*, in doing daily *wrongs*! I could say more, but reverence to your *calling* makes me modest.”

Cries the bishop, “My lord, my lord, you are a *sectary*!”—a divisive dissident. “That’s the plain *truth* your painted gloss reveals, to men who *understand* your words and weakness!”

Cromwell objects, gently. “My lord of Winchester, you are a little—by your good favour—too *sharp*! Men so noble, however faulty, yet should find respect for what they have *been*! ’Tis a cruelty to load a *falling* man.”

“Good Master Secretary, I cry Your Honour *mercy*!” says the bishop—with sarcasm, to his next target. “*You, worst* of all this table, may say so!”

Cromwell is puzzled. “Why, my lord?”

“Do not I know you for a *favourer* of this new sect? *Ye are not sound*!”

“Not *sound*?”

“Not *sound*, I say!”

“Would *you* were *half* so honest!” retorts Cromwell. “Men’s *prayers* then would speak of you, not their *fears*!”

The bishops glares. “I shall *remember* this bold language!”

“*Do!* Remember your bold *life*, too!”

The chancellor protests: “This is too much!—*forbear*! For shame, my lords!”

“I have done,” says the bishop coldly.

“And I,” says Cromwell.

The chancellor faces the archbishop. “Then thus for you, my lord: it stands agreed, I take it, by all voices, that forthwith you be conveyed to the Tower a prisoner—there to remain till the king’s further pleasure be known unto us. Are you all agreed, lords?”

“We are!” says the bishop; the others nod.

Canterbury beseeches: “Is there no other way to mercy but that I must needs *go to the Tower*, my lords?”

“What other would you expect?” demands the bishop. “You are strangely troublesome!”

“Let some o’ the *guard* be ready there!” he calls; men already waiting outside come in past the opened doors.

“For *me*? Must I go like a *traitor* thither?” asks the archbishop.

“Receive him, and see him safe i’ the Tower!” commands the bishop.

Canterbury lifts a palm gently. “*Stay*, good my lords! I have a little yet to say.”

He moves the hand forward—displaying the king’s golden token. “Look *there*, my lords; by virtue of that ring, I take my cause out of the grip of cruel men, and give it to a most *noble* judge: *the king*, my master!”

As the other lords stare, the lord chamberlain looks closely. “This is the *king’s* ring!”

“’Tis no counterfeit,” nods Surrey.

Suffolk concurs. "'Tis the right ring, by heaven! I told ye all, when ye first put this dangerous stone a-rolling, 'twould fall upon ourselves!"

Norfolk frets. "Do you think, my lords, the king will suffer but *the little finger* of this man to be vexèd?"

The chancellor has no doubt: "'Tis now all too *certain!* How much more is his *life* of value with his majesty?" He wishes now to be done with the proceeding: *Would I were fairly out of it!*

"My mind misgave me," Cromwell confesses, "in seeking tales and informations against this man, whose honesty only the *Devil and his disciples* envy at!"—resent. He looks around the table. "Ye blew on the fire that *burns* ye! Now *have at ye!*"

Their misgivings are hardly relieved when the king himself, frowning mightily, enters the chamber and strides before them.

The bishop rises. "Dread sovereign, how much are we bound to *heaven*, in daily *thanks*, that gave us such a prince! Not only good and *wise*, but most *religious!* One that, in all obedience, makes the *Church* the chief arm of his honour!—and, to *strengthen* that holy duty, out of dear respect his royal self in judgment comes to hear the cause betwixt *her* and this great *offender!*"

King Henry snorts. "You were ever good at sudden commendations, Bishop of Winchester. But know I come not to hear such *flatteries* now; and in my presence they are too thin and bare to hide *offences*. To *me*, whom you cannot reach, you play the *spaniel*, and think with wagging of your tongue to win me!

"But, whatsoe'er thou takest *me* for, I'm sure *thou* hast a *cruel nature*, and a *bloody!*"

The king turns to the archbishop. "Good man, sit down," he says kindly.

He accepts the return of his ring as the Archbishop of Canterbury moves forward to take his seat overlooking the Council.

The king smiles at him. "Now let me see the *proudest*, he who dares *most*, but *wag his finger* at thee! By all that's holy, he had better *starve* than but once think *that* place becomes thee not!"

Surrey rises. "May it please Your Grace—"

"*No*, sir, it does *not* please me!" Henry glares around the table. "I had thought I had here men of some *understanding* and *wisdom* in my Council—but I *find none!*

"Was it *discretion*, lords, to let this man, this *good man*—few of *you* deserve that title!—this *honest* man, wait like a louse-ridden footboy at chamber-door? And one as great as *you* are! Why, what a *shame* was this!

"Did my commission bid ye so far *forget* yourselves? I gave ye power to try him as he was a *counsellor*, not as a *groom!*

"There's some of ye, I see, more of *malice* than integrity, who would try him *to the utmost*,"—death, "had ye means—which ye shall *never* have while *I* live!"

The chancellor rises. "My most dread sovereign, may it like Your Grace to let my tongue excuse all thus far, what we *purposèd* concerning his imprisonment. It was, if there be *faith* in *men*, meant for his trial and *fair purgation* to the *world*, rather than for malice, I'm sure, in *me!*"

King Henry addresses them all. "Well, well, my lords, *respect him!*—take him, and use him *well!* He's worthy of it!

"I will say thus much for him: if a prince may be *beholding* to a subject, *I* am—for his love and service—so to *him!* Make me no more ado, but all embrace him! Be *friends*, for shame, my lords!"

He goes to the archbishop. "My lord of Canterbury, I have a suit which you must not deny me: that is for a young maid who yet lacks *baptism*. You must be *godfather*, and answer for her."

Canterbury bows deeply. "The greatest *monarch* now alive might glory in such an honour! How may *I* deserve it, that am a poor and humble subject to you?"

King Henry teases, laughing: "Come, come, my lord!—you'd *spare your spoons!*" A godparent customarily gives the child a dozen silver "Apostle" spoons. "You shall have two noble partners with you: the old Duchess of Norfolk, and the lady Marquess Dorset! Will these please you?"

“Once more, my Lord of Winchester, I charge you, *embrace* and love this man!”

“With a true heart and *brotherly* love, I’ll do it,” the bishop tells him.

“And let heaven witness how dearly I hold this confirmation!” says the archbishop warmly.

King Henry is pleased. “Good man, those joyful tears show *thy* true heart!” He grins. “The *commoners’* voice, I see, is verified—which says of thee thus: ‘Do my lord of Canterbury a shrewd turn,’—a harmful wrong, “and he is your *friend forever!*”

But he is eager now to see his baby daughter again.

“Come, lords, we trifle time away; I long to have this young one made a Christian!”

He regards the Privy Council. “As I have made ye *one*, lords, one *remain*; so I grow stronger, you more honour gain!”

## Chapter Nine Welcome for a Princess

**Y**ou’ll *leave* your noise *anon*, ye rascals!” warns the old chief porter, calling through the barred doors at the palace entrance. “Do you take the *court* for *Paris-Garden?*”—a bull-baiting arena, he cries to the clamoring people just outside. “Ye rude *slaves*, leave your *gaping!*”

Claims one man’s muffled voice, “Good master porter, I belong to the larder!”

“Belong to the *gallows*, and be *hanged*, ye *rogue!* Is *this* a place to *roar* in?” he roars.

Gripping his staff of office tightly, as other porters, outside, try to drive back the surge of citizens, he tells his burly second, “Fetch me a dozen crab-tree *staves*, and *strong* ones!—these are but *switches* to ’em!”

He calls out again to the people eager for a look at the newborn princess: “I’ll scratch your heads! You must be seeing *christenings?*—do you look for ale and cakes *here*, you rude rascals?”

“Pray, sir, be *patient!*” urges the junior porter. “Unless we sweep ’em from the door with *cannons*, ’tis as much impossible to scatter ’em as ’tis to make ’em *sleep on May-day morning!*—which will *never* be! We may as well push against *Powle’s*”—try to budge St. Paul’s Cathedral—“as stir ’em!”

“*How got they in?*—and be ye hanged!” demands the beleaguered senior.

“*Alas*, I know not!” says the young man. “How gets the *tide* in?” He shows his broken wooden staff. “As much as one sound *cudgel* of *four foot* could distribute, I made no *sparing*, sir! You see the poor remainder!”

“You did *nothing*, sir!”

“I am not *Samson!*—nor *Sir Guy*, nor *Colbrand*,”—the English legend or his giant adversary, “to mow ’em down before me! But if I spared any that had a head to hit, either young or old, he or she, cuckold or cuckold-maker, let me ne’er hope to see a chine again!”—another piece of beef. “And *that* I would not wish on a *cow*, God save her!”

A voice outside loudly demands entry: “*Do you hear*, Master Porter!”

“I shall be with *you* presently, good Master *Puppy!*” calls the officer. “*Keep the door closed*, sirrah!” he orders the man with him, who has been backing away.

“What would you have me *do?*”

“What *should* you do but *knock ’em down* by the dozens! Is this *Moorfields*,” the militia’s training grounds, “to *muster* in? Or have we some strange *Indian* with a great *tool* come to court, that women so besiege us?” A native brought over from a tribe in America, and now being exhibited for money—nearly naked, and with a tomahawk—has caused a stir among Londoners, admiring or envious.

Men’s and women’s stimulating closeness perturbs the head porter. “Bless me, what a fry of fornication is at door! On my Christian conscience, this *one* christening will beget a *thousand!*—here will be father, godfather, and *all—together!*”

“Then *spoons* will be for *begging*, sir!” The younger man is glancing around, hoping,



himself, to glimpse the infant.

He describes his battle outside, after the crowd had shoved its way past the iron gates. “There is a fellow somewhat near the door—by his face, he should be a *brazier!*” The man has a very ruddy complexion. “For, o’ my conscience, *twenty* of the dog-days”—the year’s hottest—“now reign in’s *nose!* All that stand about him are *under the line!*”—at the equator. “They need no other penance!”—their purgation being tropical heat.

The young porter continues: “That *fire-drake*”—firework—“did I hit *three times* on the head, and three times was his *noise*”—loud protest—“*discharged* against me; he stands there like a *mortar-piece*, to *blow us up!*”

“There was a haberdasher’s wife of small wit near him, that *railed upon me* till her pinkèd porringer”—bowl-like cap—“*fell off her head*, in kindling such a combustion on the state!”—damning of official restraint.

“I missed the *meteor*”—the red-faced man—“once, and hit *that woman!*—who cried out, ‘*Clubs!*’ Then I might see from afar some *forty truncheoners* drawn to her succor, who were ‘the hope o’ the Strand,’ where she was quartered!” Young trade-apprentices from the district rallied to her call for help. “They *fell on!* I made good my place! At length they came within a broom-staff of me!”—moved much closer.

“I *defied* ’em still!—when suddenly a file of boys behind ’em *loosed shot!*—delivered such a shower of *pebbles* that I was fain to draw mine honour *in*, and let ’em *win* the work!

“The *Devil* was amongst ’em, I think, surely!”

The porter nods angrily. “These are the youths that thunder in a *playhouse*, and fight for bitten apples!—that no audiences but the tribulations of Tower-hill”—site of public executions—“or the limbs of Limehouse,”—dock workers, “their dear *brothers*, are able to endure!

“I have some of ’em in *Limbo Patrum*,”—in jail, he notes with satisfaction, “and *there* they are likely to dance *these* three days!—besides the running *banquet of two beadles*”—whipping—“that is *to come!*”

The lord chamberlain comes quickly down the stone steps into the entrance hall. “Mercy on me, what a *multitude* are here! They *grow* still, too!—from all parts they are coming, as if we kept a *fair* here! Where are these *porters*, those lazy knaves?”

He confronts the head porter and his deputy. “*Ye* have made a fine band, *fellows!*—there’s a trim *rabble* let in! Are all these your faithful friends o’ the *suburbs?*”—places of license outside the city.

The chamberlain is concerned; the infant is soon to be baptized. He says—with heavy sarcasm, “We shall have *great* store of room, no doubt, left for the *ladies* when they pass back from the christening!”

“An’t please Your Honour, we are but *men!*” says the porter, “and what this many may do—not being *torn a-pieces!*—we have *done!* An *army* cannot rule ’em!”

The chamberlain scowls. “As I live, if the king blame *me* for’t, I’ll *’lay ye all by the heels,*”—put them in stocks, “and *suddenly!*—and on your heads clap *round fines* for *neglect!* Ye are *lazy knaves!*—and here ye lie, debating of *bombards,*”—chatting about wine in grenade-shaped bottles—“when ye should *do service!*”

“*Hark!*—the trumpets sound!—they’re come already from the *christening!* *Go!*—*break* among the pressing crowd and *find a way out*, to let this troop pass fairly, or ye’ll find the *Marshalsea*”—a prison—“shall hold *ye* to *play* these two months!”

Boldly brandishing a heavy cudgel, the porter flings open the doors, “*Make way there for the princess!*”

The younger man pushes forth behind him, warning a would-be lingerer: “*You*, great fellow!—*stand further back*, or I’ll make your head *ache!*”

“*You i’ the camlet,*” shouts the porter, striding forward as people bunch together and edge back toward the gates, “get up to the rail!—I’ll pack you *o’er* the pales else!”

But no one waits to be pushed over the tall fence’s pointed black bars; the approaching

porters' fierce glares—and their clubs, raised and swinging—suddenly seem very persuasive.

Besides, the Londoners now see that they *can* soon watch the procession for their new princess.

Golden sunlight of a brisk September morning shines through tall windows into the throne room.

Lord Norfolk again holds the marshal's staff; Lord Suffolk and the Archbishop of Canterbury stand beside him. The Lord Mayor and two London aldermen move to their places, as knights of the king's household bring two great bowls, set on iron stands, in which will be received some of the guests' smaller christening-gifts.

Four lords march forward, holding poles to support a red-and-gold canopy; under it walks the Duchess of Norfolk, her long train borne by another lady. Following are the Marchioness Dorset, the baby's other godmother, and many smiling noblewomen of the court.

The beaming duchess holds the infant, richly clothed, and wrapped in an embroidered white mantle.

The royal herald steps to the center, facing all of the courtiers. His voice rings out in the hall: "Heaven, from thine endless goodness, send prosperous life, long, and ever happy, to the high and mighty princess of England, *Elizabeth!*"

The happy nobles and dignitaries applaud, enthusiastically and long.

Under a flourish of cornets, King Henry VIII and the officers of his guard enter the throne room.

The archbishop kneels before him. "And for Your Royal Grace and the good queen, my noble partners and myself this pray: that all *comfort* and *joy*—in this the most gracious lady Heaven ever made up to make parents happy!—may *hourly* fall upon ye!"

"Thank you, good lord archbishop!" Henry begins this part of the ceremony. "What is her name?"

"*Elizabeth.*"

"Stand up, lord," says the king. He goes to the duchess, leans down, and kisses his daughter. "With this kiss, take my *blessing!*" he says, tears in his eyes. "God protect thee!—into whose hand I give thy life!"

"*Amen!*" says the archbishop joyfully.

King Henry gazes admiringly at the child's accoutrements. "My noble gossips,"—godmothers, "ye have been too prodigal! I thank ye heartily! So shall *this* lady, when she has so much English!"

The archbishop moves beside Henry. "Let me speak, sir, for Heaven now bids me! And the words I utter, let none think flattery, for they'll find 'em *truth!*"

"This royal infant—heaven still moves about her!—though in her cradle, yet now promises upon this land a *thousand* thousand *blessings*, which time shall bring to ripeness! She shall be—but few *now* living can behold that goodness—a pattern to *all* princes living *with* her, and all that shall *succeed* her!"

"Sheba"—the queen who learned from Solomon—"was never more covetous of *wisdom* and fair *virtue* than this pure soul shall be! All *graces* that shape such a mighty princess as this is, with all the *virtues* that attend the good, shall ever be *doubled* in *her!* *Truth* shall nurse her—*holy* and heavenly thoughts ever counsel her!"

"She shall be loved and feared: her own shall *bless* her; her foes *shake* like a field of rain-beaten wheat, and hang their heads with sorrow!"

"*Good* grows *with* her! In her days, every man shall eat in *safety*, under his own vine, what he plants—and sing the merry songs of *peace* to all his neighbours!"

"God shall be *truly* known; and those about her from her shall read the perfect ways of *honour*—and by *those* claim their greatness, not by blood."

"Nor shall this peace *sleep* with her—but, as when the bird of wonder dies, ashes of the

*maiden phoenix* will new-create *another* heir as great in admiration as herself! So, when Heaven shall call her from this cloud of darkness, shall she leave her blessedness to one who from the sacred ashes of her honour shall *star-like* rise, as great in fame as *she* was—and stand so fixed!

“Peace, plenty, love, truth, and awe, that were the servants to *this* chosen infant, shall then be *his*, and like a vine *grow* to him! Wherever the bright sun of *heaven* shall shine, *his* honour and the greatness of his name shall be, and make *new nations*! He shall flourish, and, like a mountain cedar, reach his branches to all the plains about him!

“Our *children’s* children shall see this, and *bless Heaven!*”

King Henry is nearly overwhelmed by the priest’s prophetic intensity. “Thou speakest *wonders!*”

“She shall be, to the happiness of England, an aged princess; many days shall see her—and yet no day without a *deed* to *crown* it!”

Says the archbishop, solemnly now, “Would I had known no more... but she must die—she *must*—the *saints* must have her, yet a virgin! A most unspotted lily shall she pass unto the ground.

“And *all the world* shall *mourn* her!”

“Oh, Lord Archbishop, thou hast made me now *a man!*” says the king. “Never, before this happy child, did I generate anything! This *oracle* of *comfort* has so pleased me that, when I am in *heaven*, I shall desire to see what *this* child does!—and praise *my Maker!*”

He addresses the court and his guests. “I thank ye *all!*”

“To you, my good lord mayor, and your good brethren, I am much beholding; I have received much honour by your presence, and ye shall find me thankful.

“Lead the way, lords! Ye must all see the queen, and *she* must thank ye!—she will be sick else!

“*This* day, no man think he has business at *his* house—for *all* shall *stay!*”

“This little one shall make it *holiday!*”

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The player Prologue returns now, as Epilogue.

“’Tis ten-to-one this play can never please *all* that are here,” he tells his delighted audience—the long-time subjects of Queen Elizabeth, and now of King James.

“Some came to take their ease, and sleep an act or two—but those, we fear, we have frighted with our trumpets! So, ’tis clear, *they’ll* say ’tis ‘*wayward!*’

“Others came to hear the city *abusèd* extremely, and to cry, ‘That’s witty!’ Well, *we* have not done either.

“I fear that all the expected good we’re likely to hear for *this* play, at *this* time, is only in the merciful construction of *good women*—for such a one we showed ’em!

“If they smile and say *’twill do*, I know that, within a while, all the best *men* are ours!

“For ’tis ill hap if they hold, when their ladies bid ’em *clap!*”