

Jane, the Quene

Screenplay

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Abstract

This is a 109-page feature film screenplay based on the events of the short nine-day reign of Lady Jane Grey. Thrust into power by the maligned Tudor nobility, Lady Jane must cling to her queenship – not for greed, but for survival amid a divided kingdom. It is important to me that Jane’s story gets told without focussing on a non-existent love story between her and her husband, nor leaning too far into caricatures of Tudor period dramas. So, my aim for this screenplay is for it to be grounded in reality – both in regard to themes and also historical accuracy – whilst still being a compelling story.

Author's Declaration

I declare that this screenplay is a presentation of original work, and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

JANE, THE QUENE

Written by
Jasmine Smale

INT. HALLWAY, HAMPTON COURT - NIGHT

The ink splotted hands of a YOUNG GIRL (9) holding a book. Then, the body of a MAN (early 30s). We hear the SLAP of a hand against flesh - and the following childish CRIES.

The girl, LADY JANE GREY, wears a grand dress. Her cheek glows red, freshly struck. She looks down - but the man grabs her jaw and forces her to look up.

It is her father, HENRY GREY, DUKE OF SUFFOLK - a tall man in his prime with a striking full moustache and styled beard. This is all for appearances. His arrogance is a mask.

They're in a dark hallway. An upbeat GALLIARD dance plays in another room.

SUFFOLK

You are to see the King in this state?

Jane stifles back tears beneath her eyes - face red. Suffolk thumbs away any sign of tears from damp cheeks. He takes his now damp fingers and wipes them across a handkerchief.

JANE

I won't do it again.

He takes the book from Jane and throws it to the darkness. He then rubs the handkerchief across Jane's hands. When the ink doesn't shift, he spits on the handkerchief and tries again.

SUFFOLK

Good.

Finally, the ink rubs away. Suffolk sighs. Relief.

SUFFOLK (CONT'D)

Jane.

(then)

What did I tell you?

JANE

I stay quiet and to the side.

The hint of a smile on Suffolk's lips. He puts the handkerchief back in his pocket and grabs Jane's hand. He pulls her along forcefully.

INT. BANQUET HALL, HAMPTON COURT - NIGHT

The opulent comfort of a lavish banquet hall. A large table filled with an excessive amount of food horseshoes a group of DANCERS performing the Galliard.

Suffolk and Jane walk through the arched entrance. Jane steps towards the dancing, captivated, but Suffolk yanks her back. She follows him around the side of the hall.

The gout-ridden lump of KING HENRY VIII (54) - a fat man in deteriorating health - sits at the banquet table at the far end of the room. Though ailing, he is jovial. He beckons over his son, EDWARD (8), and sits him on his knee.

Amongst the dancers, the red-headed and beautiful young ELIZABETH (13) dances gleefully with a boy - ROBERT DUDLEY (14). They are in the throes of teenage love.

Suffolk and Jane reach the middle of the side walkway, a few yards away from one of the banquet tables. Suffolk squeezes his grip on Jane's hand, then lets go.

SUFFOLK

Stay here.

HENRY (O.S.)

Mary!

Jane looks around, trying to find the source of the bellowing voice, but the dancing and the crowd of COURTIERS is too thick for a girl of her height to see Henry from this spot.

HENRY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Mary - come here!

Jane creeps forward, pushing between legs. She sidles through the crowd and finds a spot at the very edge. First, she spots Suffolk addressing a few older NOBLEMEN at the opposite end of the hall.

Then, the sight of MARY TUDOR (29), Henry's eldest daughter, slowly emerging through the dancing. She is pale and dressed modestly - the only one in the room bearing the Catholic cross around her neck.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Dance with Edward.

Mary curtsies in front of Henry's table. She completely avoids his gaze as he lifts Edward up.

The little boy stands on the table. A SERVING BOY gives him a hand and Edward jumps off.

MARY
But he is a child.

HENRY
Dance with him.

A darkness casts over Henry's face.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Do not embarrass me, girl.

Mary swallows a breath and extends her hand. Edward accepts it and she leads him to the centre of the room. The eyes of the room are now on her.

Henry clears his throat. The music starts up again. An Almaine dance.

Mary's footwork is precise, perfect but void of elegance. However, Edward simply hops - no rhythm and entirely off-beat. Mary fastens a blank expression on her face.

The audience laugh, scattered. When Henry laughs - roaring, unashamed and entirely at Mary, the audience laughs louder. Jane watches from the side, still.

Edward begins to tug at Mary's hand. She tugs back, keeping him in position. Until - Edward snaps away. He continues to jump around, a child with no understanding of choreography. Mary grasps for him whilst following the dance...

Her patience snaps. She grabs Edward. He yelps. The crowd and the music goes quiet.

Mary looks to Henry. He boils red with rage. Mary hurries off the dancefloor to the side --

And collides with Jane. Mary trips slightly and glares down to Jane. Jane reaches for her to help her steady, but Mary is already away.

A hand at Jane's shoulder. It turns her. It's Suffolk. His hand at her wrist is enough to pull her away in the opposite direction, but Jane's eyes are still focussed on Mary and the path she forges away from her father and the hall.

OVER BLACK

SUPER: Upon King Henry VIII's death, his son Edward took the throne aged only nine. But after seven years, Edward grows sickly.

SUPER: But English Protestantism must be protected. Edward disinherits his half-sisters: Mary, a Catholic, and Elizabeth, a bastard. A new heir from his closest living Protestant cousin is named.

SUPER: Lady Jane Grey.

EXT. LONDON SKYLINE - NIGHT

The moon casts a weak light on a silent, sleeping city. The imposing silhouette of the Tower of London stands in the distance.

SUPER: 1553.

On a small hill at the side of the Thames: the red-brick spectacle of Greenwich Palace.

INT. CORRIDOR, GREENWICH PALACE - NIGHT

Suffolk bounds down a long corridor through the darkness.

There is deep, bellowed CHATTER at the end of the dark corridor that he follows. He holds an ornate oil lamp to his face to guide the way.

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER (O.S.)
And who are you to deprive me the
sight of my King?

ARUNDEL (O.S.)
No one is to enter.

Suffolk turns a corner. The end of this space is lined with bright wall sconces. In the light, there is a huddle of NOBLEMEN.

THOMAS CRANMER, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY (in his 60s), dressed in modest Protestant garb and bearing a long white beard, stands challenging another – the EARL OF ARUNDEL (40s). He is a stout man who stands in front of Cranmer and back pressed against the door.

Surrounding them: the weasel-like EARL OF PEMBROKE (50s), a few other PRIVY COUNCILLORS, and the much younger AMBROSE DUDLEY (23) – more clerk-like than dashing young Lord.

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER
(to Arundel)
Are these the King's words?

Ambrose tentatively steps forward, trying and failing to get between the men.

AMBROSE
My father said--

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER
--Your father.

Cranmer huffs.

Pembroke grasps at Ambrose's shoulder. Ambrose slips away.

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER (CONT'D)
It is imperative that I receive
these orders from the King, not his
brutes.

ARUNDEL
We were instructed not to intrude.

Cranmer steps forward, scowling, and grabs at Arundel's coat -
slamming him against the door. Pembroke lunges forward to
grab Cranmer as Ambrose manages to side-step.

Suffolk rushes forward to body block Cranmer from holding his
grip on Arundel.

SUFFOLK
I will not tolerate these midnight
summons if all I am to witness is
the barbarism of a clergyman.

ARUNDEL
(dully whispered)
You taunt him, Suffolk.

Cranmer fails to shrug off Pembroke.

CRANMER
(to Suffolk)
Will you let me pass?
(to Pembroke)
Or will you continue to lay hands
on a man of God?

Suffolk looks to Ambrose.

AMBROSE
The Duke of Northumberland insists
no one enters until his business
with the King is complete.

SUFFOLK

We are kin now, little Dudley.

Suffolk steps aside, gaze trained on Cranmer.

SUFFOLK (CONT'D)

He must let us see Edward.

ARUNDEL

Watch yourself, Suffolk.

Suffolk turns. Arundel smirks at him, testing, and takes a minuscule step away from the door.

Cranmer's rage sparks. He wrests away from Pembroke and bolts forward. Suffolk presses forward to push Arundel aside, but the Arundel is quick to grab him. Cranmer's hand nears the doorknob--

JOHN DUDLEY, DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND (49), hulks in the door frame. He is taller than the other men, with a muscular and imposing build. The fullness of his beard is broken by a scar that runs from the edge of his jaw down the side of his neck.

Northumberland stares down Suffolk as Cranmer stops himself from colliding with Northumberland. Suffolk steps back, as he and Arundel reluctantly withdraw their hold on each other.

Through the doorway in another room behind Northumberland, Suffolk watches a NURSE pulling a white sheet over a teenage boy laying on an ornate four-poster bed. It's KING EDWARD VI.

Northumberland spots the men's attentions focussing on the scene behind him. They freeze.

NORTHUMBERLAND

(to Arundel)

No one leaves this palace without my knowledge.

Arundel nods and begins down the corridor.

SUFFOLK

(to Northumberland, with urgency)

John.

A darkness casts over Northumberland's face as he turns to Suffolk.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Fetch Guildford and your daughter from Gloucester. Bring them to Syon House. Discreetly.

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER
What of the succession? Mary Tudor--

SUFFOLK
I will spare you no warning to say
that my daughter will not want
this.

Northumberland steps forward. His height towers over Suffolk,
now uncomfortably close to his face.

NORTHUMBERLAND
A Queen will sit the throne. That
was the King's will and mine also.
It is in our hands to ensure that
the Queen shall be a Protestant
one.

One TREASONOUS COUNCILLOR at the back of the group takes a
slow start down the corridor.

TREASONOUS COUNCILLOR
You speak of treason!

NORTHUMBERLAND
(unconcerned, to Ambrose)
Ambrose.

Ambrose manages a nod, then unsheathes his sword - pointing
it at the Councillor. The man stops.

Northumberland remains in that lurching stance.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)
(to Suffolk)
If this is to succeed, I will have
it no other way.

EXT. GLOUCESTER ESTATE - DAY

A lush green estate on a Summer's day. A modest country manor
stands a few plots of land away from a chapel. Birds fly
around the expanse of a modestly maintained garden.

SUPER: 8th of July, Gloucester

At a table beneath the shade of a tree sits an older LADY
JANE GREY (16): ginger hair tied up beneath a light blue
headdress, the hem of a delicately patterned blue dress
brushing against the grass. Jane's posture is impeccable for
a body so short and thin -- but graceful, not starved.

She smiles while passing a small book to a YOUNG GIRL (<10) sat next to her.

JANE
I was a little younger when I read
this so, if you practice well,
you'll be able to read it soon too.

YOUNG GIRL
Thank you, Lady Jane.

The young girl hops off the seat.

Jane takes a quill and writes the final line on a letter open on the table.

JANE (V.O.)
Dear Bess.

Jane takes the letter and stands, reading it through.

JANE (V.O.)
I am finally away from my father.
We can cherish my new husband for
that.

Jane heads towards the house.

EXT. COURTYARD, GLOUCESTER ESTATE - DAY

The CLASH of sword against sword. Two brothers spar at the centre of a gravel courtyard, watched by a few spectators.

GUILDFORD DUDLEY (18) is lanky, but still fair and comely of face. He strikes clumsily towards his opponent, ROBERT DUDLEY (21), and loosens the grip on his sword.

Robert's build fills out the linen of his shirt with muscle and is by far the most handsome of his brothers. He flashes a debonair grin toward the spectators and spots Jane walking across the opposite end of the courtyard.

JANE (V.O.)
I have never understood your
affections toward Robert Dudley,
but I will admit that the family
provides a certain type of charm.

Guildford reaches down for a towel to wipe the sweat from his brow. Robert lightly kicks at the back of Guildford's shin.

ROBERT
 Your wife is watching, Gilly.
 (whispering)
 Try harder if you wish to woo her.

Guildford blushes and he shoves the towel into Robert's chest. The young men tussle boyishly while Jane watches from afar.

JANE (V.O.)
 But I did not choose Guildford. His education is lacking and he oft feigns interest when I recite Plato's *Symposium*--

GUILDFORD
 (mid-fight)
 I fear she will not be wooed.

Robert pushes back - an end to the playful scrap.

ROBERT
 Perhaps if you were a book she might pay you more attention?

Guildford picks his sword back up.

GUILDFORD
 Another.

JANE (V.O.)
 -- and, though I am not one to judge dancing, he has two left feet.

EXT. GARDENS, GLOUCESTER ESTATE - DAY

Jane follows a path. The chapel lies at the far side of the gardens.

JANE (V.O.)
 I have a fair allowance, and he has granted me to time to tutor a half-dozen girls here in the parish each Sunday.

A COURIER nears the entrance to the chapel. Jane folds the letter up and quickens her pace.

JANE (V.O.)
My prayers shall speak of hopes
that your future loves be may
worthy of the poets' praise, for
mine shall not.

She passes a GARDENER. He bows his head as he tends to the flowers.

JANE (V.O.)
Though, if it is to be Robert, I
will warn you that he regularly
brags about winning at sport when
he joins us for supper.

Her light jog brings her to the last stretch of the path. She quickly catches up to the Courier and hands him the letter.

JANE
To Hatfield, if you can.

He nods.

JANE (CONT'D)
Thank you.

And she turns back toward the chapel.

JANE (V.O.)
You and your brother, the King, are
once again in my thoughts.

Jane has her back to a flock of men on horseback hurrying into the estate. Leading: her father, Suffolk, with furrowed brows. He rides past the Courier and addresses him. The Courier points towards the chapel - where Jane enters.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

A quiet and empty space. Jane wears a timid smile.

JANE (V.O.)
Write to me soon.

She approaches the altar and kneels.

JANE (V.O.)
Your friend, Jane.

She takes a candle and methodically lights another with it. Jane turns solemn.

JANE
(in prayer)
Take not from the strength of His
Majesty, the King. Take not from
the happiness of his sister, too.

Muffled SHOUTING from outside. Jane's voice shifts to fear.

JANE (CONT'D)
And if I may be so bold as to
openly desire your wisdom, please
afford me the guidance--

A SLAM as the chapel doors swing open. Jane flinches.

SUFFOLK (O.S.)
Get up.

She knows who it is without looking. Jane stands, obedient,
and turns to face her father. He hastens down the aisle.

JANE
Father, what brings you--?

SUFFOLK
You are to come to London.

JANE
So soon? But I am happy here.

He reaches for her and clasps his hand around her wrist. Jane
yelps and gives an attempt at resistance, but fails -
winning.

SUFFOLK
My daughter shall be quiet and
duteous and not waste time stuck in
prayer.

JANE
My prayers, I hope, will bolster
the health of the King.

Suffolk scoffs and drags her out of the chapel.

EXT. GARDENS, GLOUCESTER ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

They step outside.

JANE
Do not expect me to yield without a
suitable explanation for why you
are so far from London.

Jane gives one last attempt to break free... and gives up.

SUFFOLK
You always yield. It's the one
thing you're good at.

Jane stumbles across the threshold. Suffolk yanks her up.

Guildford hurries over to them and he buffs out his chest,
nervous.

GUILDFORD
You are no longer needed here, your
Grace.

SUFFOLK
Stay your ground, boy. Jane is my
blood and will do as I command.

JANE
What waits for me in London?

They ignore her.

GUILDFORD
(to Suffolk)
She is my wife and, by grace of
God, under my protection.

SUFFOLK
I will not be lectured by a Dudley
pup.

Robert lingers behind Guildford. Suffolk spots him,
intimidated, and relinquishes his grip on Jane.

SUFFOLK (CONT'D)
Unless the litter wishes to torment
their sire?

The Dudley boys throw out a quizzical look. Suffolk
straightens his jacket and his posture.

SUFFOLK (CONT'D)
(to Guildford)
The Lord Protector summons you and
Jane to London on a most urgent
matter of state.

Jane looks to Guildford, concerned.

SUFFOLK (CONT'D)
I suggest you make haste.

Suffolk leaves for his entourage. He mounts his horse and ushers for his men to follow him back down the road.

Guildford reaches for Jane gently.

GUILDFORD
Are you all right?

She shirks away. A look of horror turns into a sudden smile.

JANE
It must be the King! He must wish to have me at court. I shall need my books. His Majesty is not an avid reader, but I might persuade him to listen to a passage aloud from me.

She looks to Guildford. Then Robert.

JANE (CONT'D)
In Greek, perhaps? Or do you recall him more of a Latin man?

EXT. DRIVEWAY, GLOUCESTER ESTATE - NIGHT

Three carriages leave the estate one-by-one. Suffolk pulls the curtains close in his carriage, which leads.

EXT. ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

The carriages travel through an open field.

INT./EXT. CARRIAGE - NIGHT

Jane sits on a plush seat inside the carriage. She reads, completely enraptured.

Guildford opposite is restless. He draws the curtains back and peers out the window, looking back to the carriage on the road in front them.

Guildford returns his attention to Jane, her eyes still transfixed on the book.

GUILDFORD
Must your father escort us everywhere for out entire lives?

JANE
And disobey royal orders?

GUILDFORD
He is not good for you.

Jane pauses. She swallows, then slowly turns the page.

JANE
(timid)
I am aware.

GUILDFORD
Allow me to act. I am your husband.
It is my duty to ensure that you
are safe.

JANE
And I am grateful for it.

Guildford leans forward.

GUILDFORD
Let me see your arm.

JANE
I'm fine.

GUILDFORD
(pleading)
Jane.

They make eye contact. Jane blinks.

Guildford reaches out for her. He takes her hand and pulls back her sleeve. There is a fresh set of bruises darkening across her pale skin exactly where Suffolk grabbed her earlier that day.

GUILDFORD (CONT'D)
I can send him away.

Jane exhales. A half-laugh.

JANE
The only person with the authority
to do that would be the one who
carries the crown of England.

Guildford withdraws.

EXT. LONDON SKYLINE - DAY

The city alive. In the distance, a thick grey storm cloud brews. Merchant ships and rowboats fill the Thames below.

INT./EXT. CARRIAGE / SYON HOUSE - DAY

Guildford sleeps, sprawled across his side of the carriage.

Jane sits, patient, and watches the outline of the city in the distance from the window. The expanse of the green Syon Park separates them from civilisation.

The carriage drives onto a magnificent driveway - the sight of Syon House, a neo-classical manor, drawing closer. In front of the entrance, the HOUSEHOLD SERVANTS stand to attention.

Jane frowns and looks to Guildford.

JANE

Guildford.

The carriage stops. He shudders awake. Jane tilts her head and nods outwards. Guildford sits up and adjusts his coat.

EXT. SYON HOUSE - DAY

Guildford steps out of the carriage. He holds out a hand for Jane, but she steps out without assistance.

Northumberland approaches, determination in his steps. He meets Jane and Guildford in the middle and greets Jane with a dutiful bow.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Welcome back to Syon House.

JANE

This is not Greenwich Palace.

Northumberland gestures forward to the door.

NORTHUMBERLAND

It is best if you step inside.

Something is awry. Jane wavers before walking ahead. Northumberland waits until he is a few steps behind her to walk - the stature of a guard dog.

INT. FOYER, SYON HOUSE - DAY

A large decorated foyer. On the far end is a painting that spans the length of the wall. A intricately painted family portrait of Northumberland, his wife and his many sons - including Guildford, Robert and Ambrose.

Jane's entourage of Suffolk and Guildford follow behind her and Northumberland.

Northumberland ushers Jane forward toward a corridor. Suffolk steps forward to join.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Alone.

Jane looks back for reassurance. Guildford's head is down, unable to look at his father, Northumberland.

INT. LONG GALLERY, SYON HOUSE - DAY

A long, ornamented gallery. Two GUARDSMEN flank the doorway with pikes.

The Privy Council occupy the space, waiting in light CHATTER on small chairs and leaning on windowsills.

Northumberland closes the large doors. It BOOMS shut. Jane jolts. The COUNCILLORS turn at the sound.

They see Jane and immediately kneel before her. Jane stops, instinctively backing away. She turns towards Northumberland.

NORTHUMBERLAND

His Majesty, King Edward, is dead.

Jane freezes.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)

Long live the Queen.

JANE

No. No, you are mistaken. I--

Northumberland kneels.

JANE (CONT'D)

He was in good health. Word was that he was in recovery.

NORTHUMBERLAND

He passed two nights ago.

Jane is shaking. He waits for her word. Jane looks to and from the Councillors.

JANE

Your Grace, this is a cruel jest.

She looks down at him and understands.

JANE (CONT'D)
 I am not your Queen.
 (beat)
 Stand. If not for God's sake then
 for mine.

Northumberland nods, gentle, then stands.

JANE (CONT'D)
 (to the Councillors)
 All of you.

They stand. Shared looks are expectant of her hesitation.

JANE (CONT'D)
 I will not take this. I will not
 snatch away Mary Tudor's birth-
 right. She is his eldest sister.

NORTHUMBERLAND
 (a moment of anger)
 And defy the will of your King?

Arundel moves between the lords. He offers Northumberland a small scroll of parchment. Northumberland takes it, unfurls it, and presents it to Jane.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)
 Not long before he passed, Edward
 made a devise to the succession. In
 it, he specifies that the crown
 should fall to you upon his death.

JANE
 But I am a great-granddaughter of a
 King, not a daughter--

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER
 Mary Tudor is Catholic. Not to
 mention illegitimate. She was
 disinherited twenty years ago.
 Edward made sure to re-emphasise
 that illegitimacy.

ARUNDEL
 (to Jane)
 Every man witness and accomplice to
 Edward's devise would find no mercy
 from Mary.
 (to everyone, a cloaked
 threat)
 Every man in this room would find
 his life in danger.

NORTHUMBERLAND

(to Jane)

You are the only person who can stop this. A signature - and you are Queen.

JANE

I am no Queen.

Jane backs away, pace quickening, towards the door. Northumberland looks to his guardsmen. They slide their pikes down to block it. Jane stands, stunned.

NORTHUMBERLAND

You must be.

JANE

I will not partake in an affair so unjust. Elizabeth--

NORTHUMBERLAND

Will stand by her sister. You will have no Tudor ally.

Northumberland looks to his guardsmen and nods his head. One guard slips out the door.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)

Mary's ascension will be brutal and bloody. Protestant bodies will burn in the street. She will send for you, my boys, your family, and every Councillor witness to this and execute us for treason. If I make you Queen, no one has to die.

The guard re-enters. Behind him: Guildford and Robert. The doors close, but Suffolk barges in. He rushes over and puts himself between Jane and Northumberland.

SUFFOLK

If you lay a finger on her--

NORTHUMBERLAND

I am not you, Lord Grey.

Silence. Everyone knows of Suffolk's abuse, it seems. None more so than Jane.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)

You will not flail helpless and alone. My son will join you. This I have been guaranteed by the Council.

Archbishop Cranmer nods to Guildford and Northumberland.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)
A King Consort for the first Queen
of England.

Jane approaches Guildford, hesitant. If they were closer, maybe she'd reach for him.

GUILDFORD
Guildford...

Guildford's mouth hangs agape. He kneels, overwhelmed, and gently takes Jane's hand in his. He kisses her knuckles.

The single sound of Northumberland's FOOTSTEPS as he crosses the room and lays the declaration on a writing desk beneath the window. Above: the view of the green expanse of the park and, in the distance, London.

Northumberland uncaps the ink and sets a quill down. He looks back to Jane.

NORTHUMBERLAND
You hold the key that frees England
from tyranny and you hesitate to
use it?

Jane steels herself.

From the window, London stands before her. A moment of hesitation. *All those people... is this the right choice?*

And then she signs 'Jane' at the end of the declaration - elegant, slow.

A collective exhale across the room as Jane straightens her posture and sets the quill down.

Jane turns to the room full of men watching her. Guildford manages a smile. Jane steps away from the desk towards him, eyes wide and jaw quivering.

Arundel approaches the desk. The ink is still wet. He hovers this thumb millimetres over it.

ARUNDEL
Just Jane?

Jane halts. The gathering turns to face him.

NORTHUMBERLAND
Pardon?

ARUNDEL

(to Jane)

Just *Jane* will not dissuade Tudor soldiers storming London. She will not refrain Mary's Catholic hoard scaling the walls of the Tower to bring her your head. She is no figure, no symbol. Just *Jane* is simply a scared little girl.

Arundel picks up the quill and dips the nib in ink. He holds it up to Jane, the ink slowly dripping onto the floor. Arundel smiles.

ARUNDEL (CONT'D)

Who is Jane now?

All eyes on Jane. Silence.

Jane takes a single step and takes the quill. Arundel's smile curves into a smirk.

Jane slides the quill over the declaration once more, her hand steady, to write '*Jane the Quene*'.

EXT. WOODLAND - DAY

The *THWOCK!* of a bolt hitting bark.

A HUNTSMAN recoils from firing his crossbow. He sighs at the missed target.

A small hunting party sit on horses a few yards behind. One WOMAN huffs, nearer to a growl, and dismounts her horse. She trudges through the fern, tugging off her gloves and throwing them to the floor.

This woman is MARY TUDOR (37). Her face is just beyond its prime and more brutal than beautiful - a mimic of her father, Henry VIII. She's tall with reddish hair. A scowl sits easier on her lips than a smile as she snatches the crossbow from her huntsman.

The entourage behind watch in silence - a mix of LORDS and LADIES - some daring to dismount their horses.

In the ferns: a startled doe. Mary's jostling with the crossbow starts it running through the trees.

But Mary aims and shoots without standing still. Her eye is as good as any hunter. And the YELP of the doe follows. As it slumps, Mary hums.

The entourage clap. While her face is obscured to them, she winces slightly - pain in her abdomen. Then, she turns.

A young TUDOR SERVANT pushes through the group, clothes muddy from running a distance. He holds an envelope in an outstretched hand and bows when he reaches Mary.

TUDOR SERVANT
Your highness -- Your --
(clearing throat)
A letter from London.

Mary snatches it from the servant's hand and rips open the seal. Her eyes focus on the paper.

MARY
Kneel.

The servant does so. Her entourage hesitate.

MARY (CONT'D)
(stern)
Kneel.

One by one, they kneel.

Mary pushes the crossbow into the torso of her huntsman and strides forward. She addresses her ladies without looking at them.

MARY (CONT'D)
Fetch my blacks. The King is dead.

The entourage stir.

MARY (CONT'D)
Fetch for my sister.

Mary marches back to her horse, mounts it and canters away. The entourage remain knelt, eyes to the ground.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF LONDON - DAY

Three men on horseback - Northumberland, Suffolk, and Arundel - race through the countryside outskirts of London on horseback. Northumberland is ahead, but only just.

They rush over a hill. Northumberland pulls his horse to a stop. Suffolk and Arundel follow. It's a perfect view of the Tower of London on the other side of the Thames.

NORTHUMBERLAND
The Tower is secured?

ARUNDEL
Yes, my Lord.

NORTHUMBERLAND
So our defence begins.
(to Suffolk)
Turn your attention to Hunsdon.
Mary Tudor was last seen there.
Spare some men to claim her and my
boy, Robert, will lead.

Arundel watches from a step behind, taking mental note.

SUFFOLK
How many?

NORTHUMBERLAND
She'll scurry away.

Northumberland kicks the side of his horse and it starts forward.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)
As many as it'll take to catch a
rat.

INT. DRESSING ROOM, SYON HOUSE - DAY

Morning light scattered through windows onto an expensive dressing room. Jane stands in a plain chemise before a standing mirror.

Jane reaches out towards a Protestant bible.

A HANDMAID enters. Jane stares at her reflection, hand resting on the bible, as the Handmaid fastens a small silver necklace with a cross around Jane's neck.

Through the mirror, Jane watches as Guildford ponders a small note behind the dressing area.

GUILDFORD
This is the list of ladies you want
me to deliver to your mother?

Jane hums.

GUILDFORD (CONT'D)
And...

Guildford takes another look at the list.

GUILDFORD (CONT'D)
Katherine Throckmorton?

JANE
What's wrong?

GUILDFORD
Her cousin's a Catholic.

JANE
If I am to be Queen, I do not wish
to start by preaching division.

Jane's handmaid holds up the next layer of clothing. Jane
slips into it.

JANE (CONT'D)
Her cousin could be a goat for all
I care. She's my friend.

GUILDFORD
All right. I'll get it to her.

Guildford leaves the view of the mirror.

JANE
Guildford.

Immediately, he returns.

GUILDFORD
Yes?

JANE
Thank you.

EXT. STREETS OF LONDON - DAY

Cathedral bells RING. A magnificent coronation procession
down a London street, surrounded by a crowd made from every
branch of English life. The Tower of London stands proud at
the end of this long line.

A canopy, surrounded by four GUARDSMEN, is the centre of
attention. Jane walks beneath - dressed in golds and rich
greens, with a long train carried by LADIES-IN-WAITING.

Guildford walks beside her. He's as equally splendid in white
and gold.

The Privy Council ride on horseback in front and behind the
canopy. Suffolk bears a flag of the royal heraldry and the
Grey coat of arms (blue and grey) at the very front.

Peasants and merchants CHEER for their new Queen. But behind the front line of the crowd, a struggle SHOUTS out. Jane's attention shifts from nervous hands to the crowd of people.

One MAN leers over a YOUNGER WOMAN. He spits at her feet in attempt to get closer to the procession.

MAN

You're not wanted here, Catholic
bitch.

An OLDER WOMAN beside her shoves him aside. He falls into the mud, then is forgotten by the tide of crowd pushing forward and over him. The older woman snaps her head towards Jane, making eye contact.

OLDER WOMAN

You're not Queen Mary!

She lurches forward - her hand an inch or two from grabbing Jane. Jane flinches. Northumberland turns his horse to block the crowd from nearing Jane.

A part of the crowd swells behind this woman. They JEER and BOO at Jane.

Northumberland glares down at the crowd and they fall back slightly. He moves his glare to Jane.

NORTHUMBERLAND

They want to see a Queen, not a
child.

His stare forces Jane into a smile.

At her side, Guildford reaches out a hand - but she pulls away from his touch and instead raises her hand to wave to the crowd.

EXT. COURTYARD, GLOUCESTER ESTATE - DAY

The procession marches through the gates of the Tower and into the wide courtyard within the walls. Northumberland's guards push the public away from entering.

Jane gazes upward. The central White Tower looms over her.

A swathe of PROTESTORS push forward once the procession is fully inside. Two fall through, landing in the mud, and scramble up. The noise catches Jane's attention.

Arundel, towards the back of the group, dismounts his horse and grasps one protestor by the cloth of his shirt. Arundel shakes him, pushing the protestor back.

JANE
Lord Arundel!

He pauses for Jane.

JANE (CONT'D)
Be gentle.

A quick exchange of surprise between Arundel and Northumberland, still leading on horseback. Arundel scowls and lets go. A few GUARDSMEN guide the protestors away and the gates SLAM shut.

INT. GREAT HALL, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

The scintillating gold and silver of a decorated great hall, at the centre of the White Tower. It bears a layer of façade. This has been constructed and performed in a rush.

Jane kneels before Archbishop Cranmer at the end of the aisle, his back to her. A gathering of NOBLES stand in rows behind, bar Guildford - who fidgets with his fingers a few yards away from Jane. Expectant. Impatient.

The noise of the CROWD seeps in from outside, a horrific mix of YELLING and CHEERING. Cranmer speaks. Jane inhales, steeling herself, and all sound muffles.

Cranmer anoints Jane's forehead with oil. Then, places the robes of state on her shoulders and fastens the buckle at her neck. Last: the crown in full view. He raises it and places the crown on her head.

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER
Rise.

Jane stands. She looks over to Guildford and begins to step back. Archbishop Cranmer subtly takes her hand. He leans forward, sweating a little.

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER (CONT'D)
(whispering)
There is no crown for him.

JANE
I was assured--

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER
 No consort's crown was prepared. It
 is out of my hands.

He steps away and bows his head.

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER (CONT'D)
 LONG LIVE THE QUEEN!

CROWD
 Long live the Queen!

Jane turns, slow, recoiling from the news. At the front of the audience, Northumberland seethes.

INT. CORRIDOR, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Jane walks in tandem with a STEWARD - an ageing man in formal servants outfit - down a corridor within the Tower. They pass a line of bedroom doors and servants tucked away in the frames. They all bow excitedly as she passes each of them.

Jane grimaces a smile as she listens to the Steward and nods back to the servants, acutely aware of Northumberland raging at Guildford and Ambrose as they follow behind.

STEWARD
 The Chaplin of St. Peter Ad Vincula
 would be honoured to receive you
 this Sunday, your Majesty.

NORTHUMBERLAND
 (to Guildford)
 This will be remedied, my boy!

JANE
 (to the Steward)
 That would be most generous of him.

NORTHUMBERLAND
 (to Guildford)
 We have a traitor in our
 midst. They intend to lurk in
 the shadows and scrape the
 Dudley name through the mud!

STEWARD
 (to Jane)
 I believe your mother has
 taken the liberty to arrange
 your ladies-in-waiting--

AMBROSE
 Today is not about us,
 father.

JANE
 Forgive me, sir.

Jane pivots on her heels to face the men.

JANE (CONT'D)
 I empathise. I do. But is that our
 most pressing concern?

Guildford looks to the ground. Northumberland bites his
 tongue.

JANE (CONT'D)
 I saw that crowd. Chasing Mary into
 submission will not help if I am to
 be Queen of both Protestant and
 Catholic Englishmen.

Northumberland takes a step. His shadow casts over Jane, her
 height nothing beside his.

NORTHUMBERLAND
 Would you rather die? Guildford's
 lack of a crown means we don't have
 the support of Parliament. No
 parliament, no control of the city.
 Mary can stride in, take your crown
 and still have time to exile every
 Protestant in a thousand yards if
 she wanted.

Jane fidgets in a desperate attempt to maintain her posture.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)
 Your idle dreams amount to nothing.
 (beat)
 Your *Majesty*.

Northumberland looks between the Steward and Jane.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)
 Leave this with me.

He takes Guildford's jaw - staring him down.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)
 And clean yourself up.

The Steward tentatively opens the door at the end of the
 corridor, unable to keep his eyes off Northumberland. Once
 Northumberland is gone, the Steward bows to Jane.

STEWARD
 Your Majesty.

And scuttles off.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

A glorious bed chamber. Lounging comfortably on a velvet chair is LADY FRANCES GREY (late 30s), a woman of lavish taste - yet her expensive clothes look too grand for a woman of such meagre appearance.

Behind her stand two women. KATHERINE "KITTY" THROCKMORTON (21) is lithe, unassuming and the epitome of polite society. At her side is a nursemaid, ELLEN (60s), who proudly wears the Grey colours on her apron. Three other NOBLEWOMEN over various ages join them.

Jane enters. Her mood sours at the sight of her mother, who immediately stands from the seat - arms outstretched.

LADY FRANCES
Jane, dear.

JANE
(through teeth)
Mother. What a pleasant surprise.

Jane's attention is still on Guildford and Ambrose in the corridor behind. Lady Frances snatches her head and twists it towards her.

LADY FRANCES
I have gathered your ladies,
including me - of course. All for
you, my darling.

Lady Frances adjusts the crown on Jane's head, but Jane shrugs her off. Frances' sickly sweet smile has a layer of malice beneath it.

LADY FRANCES (CONT'D)
You must remember Mrs Ellen? Then
there's Lady Bedford, Lady Paulet,
Lady Devereux, and Lady Katherine
Throckmorton.

As she reads off the names, they all curtsy one-by-one. Kitty curtsies and frowns when Jane does not acknowledge her.

KITTY
Jane?

Jane finally sees. A small joy washes over her face.

JANE
Kitty!

They embrace.

KITTY
Your Majesty, it has been too long.

JANE
You're with me now.

KITTY
And a Queen! With all this land and
the tower...

JANE
(despondent)
It is quite the honour.

Kitty withdraws.

KITTY
(hushed)
You seem distracted.

Lady Frances steps forward, intruding.

LADY FRANCES
Jane?

JANE
Leave us.

LADY FRANCES
Pardon me?

JANE
You are dismissed, mother.

Lady Frances huffs. She gestures for Ellen and the Ladies to follow her out of the room.

Jane looks over her shoulder to a forlorn Guildford in the corridor. He catches her gaze for a moment before Frances closes the door.

JANE (CONT'D)
I have been blinded, Kitty. Most
grievously.

She takes Kitty's hands.

JANE (CONT'D)
The Duke of Northumberland spoke of
Guildford as King beside me. Yet
when the moment came, there was
ne'er even a title for him.

Kitty's smile is ignorant.

KITTY
A clerk's mistake, surely?

JANE
The Duke does not make mistakes.

Kitty squeezes Jane's hands.

JANE (CONT'D)
I cannot do this alone.

KITTY
You are Queen now. No one in
England could be less alone than
you. Look...

Kitty turns towards the room, letting go of Jane and gesturing out. There's a four poster bed draped in expensive silk. A centuries-old tapestry hangs from the walls. A small section of the room is adorned with plush satin chairs and a table full of fresh fruit.

KITTY (CONT'D)
This is yours. A home to a long
lineage of Kings and their courts.

But Jane's attention turns back to the door. A determination on her face.

KITTY (CONT'D)
Home, finally, to its first Queen
Regnant. You.

And when Kitty turns back. The door is open and Jane is gone.

INT. STAIRCASE, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Dark. Eerily quiet. Only the dull FOOTSTEPS of Jane descending a spiral staircase. She stops halfway and leans against the central pillar. A moment for breath, until --

NORTHUMBERLAND (O.S.)
And yet someone has betrayed me.
Betrayed the crown. All of us!

Curiosity piques. She slinks down the staircase.

INT. BASEMENT, TOWER OF LONDON - CONTINUOUS

An even darker corridor - the underbelly of the Tower. Jane steps out from the staircase. Candlelight spills out from a door ajar further down the corridor.

Jane creeps as Northumberland's voice echoes.

NORTHUMBERLAND (O.S.)
 Pray Suffolk's men reach the Tudor
 bitch in time, else I suggest you
 become at ease in saying farewell
 to your head. For that is what we
 now have achieved by crowning a
 Queen without a King to support
 her.

Jane inches closer, eyeing through the gap into--

INT. STORE ROOM, TOWER OF LONDON - CONTINUOUS

A store room stacked with boxes, barrels and pantry foods. Pembroke, Ambrose and a handful of COUNCILLORS are tucked away from Jane's view. In his rage, Northumberland hulks over the height of any obstruction.

PEMBROKE
 Will England not be satisfied with
 simply a Duke? A Prince?

NORTHUMBERLAND
 We struggle through unprecedented
 times, Lord Pembroke. Do you wish
 to be the man to tell England that
 risks will be taken to secure her?

PEMBROKE
 The perpetrator of the grievous
 offence to you and the crown, your
 Grace, will be found and
 reprimanded.

AMBROSE
 Which is impossible without the
 support of Parliament. Most are
 Catholic. They will be aligned with
 the Tudor cause.

Northumberland grips tight on a barrel before slamming his hand down hard upon it. He lets out a guttural yell. Ambrose flinches.

INT. BASEMENT, TOWER OF LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Jane flinches too. A breath, and then she adjusts herself and gets closer for a better view.

INT. STORE ROOM, TOWER OF LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Northumberland steps towards his audience. The snarl on his lips is enough of a threat to silence them.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Mary can grovel at my feet and God
will grant us Parliament.

(to Pembroke)

Nothing occurs in this Tower
without my knowledge, understood?

Pembroke nods. Northumberland turns, back to the Councillors.
It's Pembroke's turn to try his luck.

PEMBROKE

She will be easy enough to control
without a King.

Northumberland hesitates. His gaze wanders over to where
Jane's eye reflects the candlelight through the ajar door.

INT. BASEMENT, TOWER OF LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Jane, unaware Northumberland has spotted her, listens with
intent.

PEMBROKE (O.S.)

The first Queen Regnant of England.
A woman - alone, and malleable.

Jane withdraws. From the store room, FOOTSTEPS hit flat
stone. She steps back and collides with a MAID carrying bed
linen. Jane yelps. The maid curtsies.

MAID

Your Majesty--

Floundering, Jane holds a finger to her hips - shushing the
maid.

A CLATTER, followed by more FOOTSTEPS. Shadows follow,
emerging from behind crates in the store room.

JANE

(whispering)

Go!

The maid scurries off. Jane rushes back down the corridor
toward the staircase.

Jane tucks herself around the corner just as Northumberland
steps out of the store room.

NORTHUMBERLAND
Who goes there?

Jane catches her breath, then returns up the staircase.

EXT. COURTYARD, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

GUARDS patrol around the green of the courtyard. Arundel address them, walking alongside, in a serious demeanour. ORCHESTRAL MUSIC rings out from the Tower and a CLASH of swords and armour calls from soldier drills beside the gates.

Guildford sits beneath the shadow of a wall and is still dressed in his coronation clothes. His damp and puffed eyes survey the battlements, but again and again he distracts himself by glancing up to the Tower.

The guards continue their patrol and pass the shadowed spot Guildford lurks. He tucks himself into the corner and they CLANK by in their armour. He exhales --

-- and flinches lightly when Arundel appears beside him.

ARUNDEL
Your father will not appreciate you
hiding away here.

Guildford wipes at a tear, pretending it was never there.

GUILDFORD
He will not notice my absence, I
assume you.

ARUNDEL
You underestimate him.

Arundel joins Guildford in the shadows.

ARUNDEL (CONT'D)
Then perhaps the Queen shall notice
you?

GUILDFORD
You underestimate her.

Arundel laughs pointedly, casting back a thoughtful stare.

ARUNDEL
I have met few girls so
intelligent. Wise? No. Clever?
Without a doubt. With a man like
the Duke of Suffolk for a father,
you'd need a brain to survive.
(MORE)

ARUNDEL (CONT'D)
 To know when to say the right
 thing. To know when to say nothing
 at all.

Arundel is tight-lipped. Guildford notices.

GUILDFORD
 I fail to level with her
 intelligence, admittedly.

ARUNDEL
 (humoured)
 Few are so willing to indulge in
 books and prose as intensely as
 she.
 (sincere)
 Jane's fate was always to be Queen,
 to have all of England's literature
 at her fingertips. At least now
 it's not as England's Consort. We
 must thank God that she was not
 exposed to the ramblings of dead
 men at a more impressionable age.

GUILDFORD
 As Consort?

ARUNDEL
 Oh, yes. There was talk of Jane and
 King Edward's possible betrothal -
 an ambition of her father and
 Thomas Seymour, the King's uncle.

GUILDFORD
 But they did not marry.

ARUNDEL
 Alas, no, you are the very evidence
 of that.

GUILDFORD
 She spoke of him fondly. Prayed for
 him, too.

Arundel muses.

ARUNDEL
 I'm sure she is a noble Lady who'd
 do anything for her King and his
 honour, even in death.

GUILDFORD
 She is not a child anymore.

ARUNDEL

Who are we to understand the minds
of women?

Arundel reaches into his jacket and pulls out a handkerchief.
He hands it to Guildford.

ARUNDEL (CONT'D)

It can often prove contradictory to
be a loyal subject and a loyal
wife. Be careful Jane is not trying
to be both. You cannot guarantee
she hasn't already chosen England,
and this the memory of the boy who
once ruled it, over you.

Guild takes the handkerchief. Arundel nods.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Sunrise seeps through the windows. Jane sits at a vanity that
displays a mountain of jewellery, ribbons and lace.

Kitty stands behind her, gently tightening the laces on
Jane's stays.

INT. LIBRARY, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

A peaceful morning. BIRDS twitter past the open window. City
life bustles outside.

Bookshelves twice the height of the average man. Paintings
cover the little space unoccupied by books. Jane walks the
outline of them, pulling out books to inspect and add to a
pile she carries. After a few selected, she retrieves an
anthology of Plato's philosophies and opens it.

Jane reads and walks over to a desk, where she empties the
pile of books atop it. She pulls out the chair and sits - all
the while eyes trained on the open book. With her other hand,
she grabs at a parchment and begins to write.

Guildford, half-dressed, strides into the library. The bags
beneath his eyes are deep. He spots Jane and slows.

JANE

Guildford, you've risen early?

GUILDFORD

As have you.

He sits in an armchair, unable to properly sit still.

He watches the far end of the room. A coronation portrait of Edward hangs there beside one of his father, Henry VIII.

JANE

I'm planning on introducing Plato
to the Privy Council.

She laughs.

JANE (CONT'D)

Hopefully it will enlighten them to
not wage war against Mary.

Jane flips to the next page of her book. She looks towards Guildford. Then, a pause as she considers him. Jane stands from the desk, book in hand, and takes a turn about the room.

JANE (CONT'D)

There is a fascinating theorem
posed by Plato in reflection of
mythology. The Ancient Greeks
believed humans were originally
created with four arms, four legs
and a hand with two faces. This
form terrified Zeus as their power
was unconquerable. So, he cleaved
them into two separate parts -
condemning them to a life of
searching for their other half.

She smiles.

JANE (CONT'D)

To truly think the ancients
justified marriage this way. Two
parts of a whole. To think,
together, two souls combined could
terrify the King of Gods.

GUILDFORD

(absent)

Truly...

Jane halts.

JANE

You're not listening, are you?

GUILDFORD

Of course I am.

Jane sighs. Guildford turns to face her.

GUILDFORD (CONT'D)
And you? Would Zeus fear the
strength of your power?

JANE
Our power.

Guildford leans back in the armchair and laughs thinly.

JANE (CONT'D)
You doubt I have found my other
face? My other two arms and legs?

Guildford nods to Edward's portrait.

GUILDFORD
What about him?

JANE
Edward?

Silence from Guildford. Jane closes her book.

JANE (CONT'D)
I'm sure he had lots of limbs
waiting for him once he came of
age. After all, doesn't every
little girl wish to be a Princess?

GUILDFORD
You speak from experience.

JANE
My father used to say that I'd be
Edward's Queen. Your father came
along and changed that.

GUILDFORD
You loved him.

JANE
No.

Guildford gives her a look - doubtful.

JANE (CONT'D)
Young Jane loved the idea of him. A
childhood fancy, Guildford. Before
I knew better.

Jane watches as Guildford's expression steels.

Guildford stands - abrupt - and approaches her. He slides his hand over her book to her fingers, then kisses her forehead. Jane freezes, unsure how to react.

Guildford lingers, waits for something. Anything to prove her loyalty to him.

But Jane pulls away. Guildford scoffs.

GUILDFORD

Don't you have a Council meeting to attend?

Jane purses her lips. She silently returns the book to the shelf, collects her writings and leaves the room -- all the while Guildford's stare is trained on her.

INT. COUNCIL CHAMBERS, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

The chatter of two dozen men filling the room.

Jane sits at the end of a large meeting table adorned with multiple maps of England. The entire Privy Council surround it. However, Arundel is absent.

Northumberland stands at the opposite end to her, Ambrose at his side. He moves placeholders across one of the maps.

JANE

Thank you for attending--

NORTHUMBERLAND

Lord Wentworth has openly declared his treason and pledged his allegiance to Mary Tudor. We must act now if we wish to ensure England's stability.

JANE (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

A few councillors turn her way, but Northumberland commands the room with his voice alone.

NORTHUMBERLAND

A force should be sent immediately to prevent his men from uniting with any other noble who may join the Tudor cause--

JANE (CONT'D)

Excuse me, sir.

JANE (CONT'D)

Your Grace!

The room silences. Northumberland looks up from the map. Jane adjusts her posture.

JANE (CONT'D)

You may be accustomed to holding council in the absence of an unwell king, but I am sound of mind and fit of body. Am I not permitted to lead my own meetings? My predecessors - King Henry and Edward too, on occasion, so I am told - were given free admission and all due respect to speak their minds.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Forgive me, your Majesty, but usually royal heirs are educated since birth on matters of politics and the management of their kingdoms. You have no experience.

PEMBROKE

Let the girl speak if she wishes.

Jane and Northumberland exchange a look.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Very well.

Jane smiles, polite, at Pembroke. He gestures for Jane to continue and she unspools her scrolled up writings.

JANE

Thank you.

She gulps.

JANE (CONT'D)

(reading)

Promoting the unity of this Kingdom will be a most worthwhile endeavour - one which may be unjustly tarnished in the bloodshed of war. Lady Mary cannot be conquered.

Northumberland laughs. Jane abandons her writings.

JANE (CONT'D)

But she can be won. If fate and God decree me Queen, then I shall be a benevolent one. This begins with an active show of friendship between Tudor, Grey and Dudley.

NORTHUMBERLAND

The Tudor girls have been unwilling
to accept any acts of friendship
from our families.

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER

Not to mention, Lady Mary is
Catholic.

AMBROSE

(to Jane)

And Robert will tell you that
Elizabeth is a stubborn creature.

JANE

The two of us were tutored together
under the protection of Thomas
Seymour and the intelligence of his
wife, Dowager Queen Catherine, at
Sudeley. I would like Elizabeth to
be one of my ladies. To live with
me at court.

The council laugh. Jane shrinks.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Mary will not agree to that.

JANE

She may not listen to me or you,
that is true. But Elizabeth shares
my faith and I am certain she too
shares my wish to avoid England
fight against itself. And Mary may
just listen to her sister.

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER

You want us to rely on
hypotheticals?

JANE

Lady Elizabeth is highly educated.
Once she is here and loyal to a
Protestant England, as her faith
demands, she will be a great asset
in years to come. A rebirth of
ideas and understanding is
happening all over Europe. Our
infighting has set us behind for
decades. Women like Elizabeth and I-

The door to the council room opens, revealing a PAGEBOY who
makes an immediate beeline for Northumberland.

A quick silence consumes the room. He gives Northumberland a short bow.

Northumberland leans in and the two exchange whispers. He immediately frowns.

NORTHUMBERLAND

This meeting is adjourned.

The Privy Council follow his word and begin collecting their belongings. Jane remains in her place. Northumberland hurries out with the pageboy.

Jane sighs.

JANE

(to Pembroke)

Does even a Queen not bear enough power to wrangle her Privy Council?

PEMBROKE

I'm afraid so. Old habits are difficult to break, especially for a man like our dear Duke of Northumberland.

JANE

His anger has lessened, though?

PEMBROKE

It stokes somewhere within him, still. I'm sure.

JANE

I don't imagine you have any idea who deprived my husband of his crown?

Pembroke pauses. The room is clear. He steps forward.

PEMBROKE

Northumberland is the best living strategist in England, an esteemed veteran after out wars in France, and yet he manoeuvres court as if he were a spymaster.

He has Jane's attention.

PEMBROKE (CONT'D)

If Guildford wore the crown of a King Consort, he'd be the most powerful man in England - second only in status to you.

(MORE)

PEMBROKE (CONT'D)
 As Edward's Lord Protector,
 Northumberland was England's most
 powerful man... and power is a
 jealous mistress.

JANE
 You believe Northumberland
 sabotaged his own son on purpose?

PEMBROKE
 If that is the conclusion you have
 drawn, my Lady, my opinion is
 irrelevant.

He bows his head, collects his coat, and leaves.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE TOWER OF LONDON GATES - NIGHT

A PEASANT boy (early 20s at most) staggers into the open
 space in front of the Tower's closed gates. He carries a long
 stick of wood with a large flame at the end.

A mass of MERCHANTS and more PEASANTS alike crowd here. Some
 jeer at the GUARDS standing stoically behind the gates. A
 CATHOLIC PRIEST clutches his rosary.

CATHOLIC PRIEST
 Hail, Holy Queen Mary, Mother of
 mercy. To thee we do cry, poor
 banished children of Eve. To thee
 do we send up our sighs, mourning
 and weeping in this valley of
 tears.

The peasant boy breaks through the crowd - holding the fire
 high. At the centre: a large effigy of Jane atop a bonfire,
 dressed in an imitation of her green coronation dress.

CATHOLIC PRIEST (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Turn then, most gracious advocate,
 thine eyes of mercy toward us, and
 after this our exile, show unto us
 the blessed fruit of thy womb.

The boy throws the flame into the bonfire and the effigy is set
 ablaze.

CATHOLIC PRIEST (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Amen.

EXT. COURTYARD, TOWER OF LONDON - NIGHT

Northumberland watches the chaos from the entrance to the White Tower. He nods to a GUARD at the gate.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE TOWER OF LONDON GATES - NIGHT

The gates CRASH open and a dozen guards spill out onto the crowd. They draw their swords. Half the crowd disperses, but some remain and fight against the onslaught.

EXT. COURTYARD, TOWER OF LONDON - NIGHT

SCREAMS and colliding metal. Northumberland turns back and returns inside the Tower.

INT. CORRIDOR, TOWER OF LONDON - NIGHT

A CRASH rings out from the door to the royal chambers at the end of the corridor.

Jane hurries toward it, flinching at the loud sound. The light of a fire beams through the windows, but Jane continues.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, TOWER OF LONDON - NIGHT

Another CRASH. The clattering of jewellery. Guildford hauls clothes into a trunk on the bed, crying. A side table lies toppled on the floor.

At the doorway, Jane halts at the sight.

JANE

What are you doing?

GUILDFORD

(unusually snarky)

What does it look like?

JANE

Stop.

Jane rushes forward. Guildford throws the clothes in his hands to her feet.

GUILDFORD

Who are you to command me?

JANE

What has caused this madness?

GUILDFORD

You mock me. My mother wrote to me, saying I deserve better than this humiliation. You quote old men to demean my intelligence. You feign naivety to absolve yourself of blame. I should have never married you.

He points his finger at her.

GUILDFORD (CONT'D)

I am your inferior!

JANE

You are my inferior?

GUILDFORD

You have made it so.

JANE

Guildford, I have no control here.

GUILDFORD

You are the Queen. And loyal to a King who is not even her husband.

JANE

What has Edward got to do with this? He is dead--

GUILDFORD

You love him!

Jane freezes, the accusation catching her off-guard.

GUILDFORD (CONT'D)

You would shun me for the memory of him. Why else would you order the obstruction of my coronation?

JANE

You think I did this?

GUILDFORD

Who else?

JANE

I would not accept the crown until I was promised that you would be here with me too. You were there.

(MORE)

JANE (CONT'D)
It was your father who assured me
of it.

GUILDFORD
Do you love me?

JANE
Guildford...

GUILDFORD
Do you love me?

She approaches him.

JANE
I am a wife.

She hesitates in reaching out, just as he is hesitant to let
her.

JANE (CONT'D)
A wife who loves her husband.

She moves her hand to his jaw and he melts into the touch.

JANE (CONT'D)
You told me that it is your duty to
ensure that I am safe.

He nods.

JANE (CONT'D)
Then don't fight against your lack
of a crown. Fight against those who
will take mine from us.

Guildford weeps and falls into her. Jane slowly embraces him,
the sheer intensity of his emotion surprising her. She sits
him down on the bed.

EXT. HERTFORDSHIRE - DAY

Green English countryside. The rush of HORSES STAMPEDING
through a field.

SUPER: Hunsdon, Hertforshire

EXT. FIELD, HERTFORDSHIRE - DAY

A dozen horses race through hedgerows, mounted by SOLDIERS
wearing the Grey colours. Mixed within the group is Robert
Dudley.

In the distance: the square brick mansion of Hunsdon House.

INT. HUNSDON HOUSE - DAY

SERVANTS bustle around a long gallery. They move furniture and drape sheets over paintings.

Four NOBLEMEN stride down the length of the galley to flank Mary Tudor, all dressed in mourning black.

CATHOLIC NOBLE

The Duke of Suffolk's men were last spotted near Waltham Abbey, your Majesty.

MARY

They close in. Ready the horses. We shall convene at Framlingham.

The nobleman nods. They depart from Mary's side to attend to the frantic assembly of her belongs. Several servants duck and weave around her. Out of the window, trunks are hauled onto carriages. Mary watches.

Behind her, ELIZABETH TUDOR (19) approaches to watch the rush unfold. Elizabeth is well-postured and lacking Mary's fierceness. They are sisters in only name and hair. Above all, she is extremely uncomfortable surrounded by Catholic supporters.

MARY (CONT'D)

I fight for the Tudor claim, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

To what end?

MARY

To whatever end is necessary.

Elizabeth gulps. Mary does not beg for respect - *she commands it.*

EXT. HUNSDON HOUSE - DAY

Horses skid in the gravel as the soldiers arrive at the doorway of the House. It is SILENT and absent of human life.

Robert dismounts and walks to the door. It opens with a light touch on the handle.

INT. HUNSDON HOUSE - DAY

Robert steps into an immaculate and empty foyer. The rest of the soldiers file in behind him - swords drawn. One soldier pulls back a draped sheet, unveiling a portrait of Mary.

Silence until a TWANG outside -- swiftly followed by NEIGHING and HOOVES moving against gravel.

EXT. HUNSDON HOUSE - DAY

The soldiers hurry out the door.

A single arrow sticks out from the eye of Robert's horse. The other horses scatter.

A small fabric square is attached to the arrow. It is embroidered with the red and white Tudor rose.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF FRAMLINGHAM CASTLE - DAY

A huge infantry and cavalry army emerges from between the tree-line and the moat at the base of Framlingham Castle. The length of it is adorned with Tudor rose banners. A FANFARE announces the arrival of their Queen.

Mary rides forward on horseback, side-saddled. Elizabeth emerges, also on horseback, a few paces behind. They walk toward the castle. The army follows.

EXT. FRAMLINGHAM CASTLE - DAY

The Tudor army funnels through the gates of Framlingham Castle and onto the lawn of the inner court. Here, it is busy with life -- soldiers stood shoulder-to-shoulder with one another watching as Mary arrives.

Her pathway to the centre of the inner court is outlined by a long line of CATHOLIC CLERGY. The crowd cheering for her is far louder than any crowd has cheered for Jane.

Mary pulls her horse to a halt as she reaches a small scaffold and dismounts with the assistance of the EARL OF BATH (early 50s) - a mousy looking man of unyielding loyalty.

She ascends the scaffold, followed by Elizabeth and a line of TUDOR SUPPORTERS. Mary's soldiers encircle the scaffold.

MARY

Good Englishmen. Respected men of
God.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)
 You stand at the side of your true
 Queen, afraid of those who would
 compel you to follow a false
 pretender.

Elizabeth fidgets. She thumbs the wax seal of an open letter.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Despite all odds... My father, my
 brother, the Lutheran heresy that
 plagues Europe, the men who have
 tried and failed to snatch my
 birthright away from us... My faith
 has never faltered. And my faith in
 you, in England, shall never
 falter.

The crowd hangs off her every word.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Lady Jane is a usurper. And a Tudor
 hand shall administer justice to a
 usurper again until this isle is
 free of heretics.
 (louder)
 May God grant mercy to those who
 deprive Him of a true and Catholic
 England!

BATH
 Long live the Queen!

CROWD
 Long live the Queen!

ELIZABETH
 (hesitant)
 Long live the Queen.

EXT. ST. THOMAS' TOWER, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Jane walks alone across the battlements of St. Thomas' Tower
 and looks out toward the Thames. A beautiful Summer's day.

JANE (V.O.)
 Dearest Bess. Things are changing.
 I am making sure of it. I refuse to
 be malleable any longer.

INT. LIBRARY, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Kitty, Ellen, and a collection of Jane's Ladies-in-Waiting and other NOBLEWOMEN (wives of the Privy Council) sit on chairs and cushions. In this collection are the richly dressed LADY BEDFORD (20) and LADY TALBOT (late 20s).

Jane stands before them reading a passage from a book.

JANE (V.O.)

Ovid was yesterday afternoon's favourite. I spoke of Troy's failure to hear Cassandra's wisdom or the warning of Andromache to her husband.

At the far end: Northumberland addresses Guildford whilst watching Jane. She observes him for a second, before returning to the reading.

JANE (V.O.)

The Council may not listen to me, but they might listen to their wives.

Jane finishes her passage. Northumberland claps, somewhat sardonically. The ladies follow his lead and the library fills with applause.

INT. OFFICE, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Archbishop Cranmer hands Jane letters to sign at her desk. Northumberland lurks in the doorway.

JANE (V.O.)

Of course, not all men can be swayed.

A FOOTMAN enters with a plate of fruit. Northumberland stops him to inspect it. He leans forward to the Footman -- too close for comfort.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Would you serve this to a *King*?

The Footman shakes his head and scurries away.

Cranmer reads a paper aloud to Jane.

JANE (V.O.)

There is one in particular I have been unable to shirk.

Cranmer passes her the note and taps on a spot to sign. But Jane watches Northumberland glare at the Footman out the door. Cranmer clears his throat and Jane dips her quill in ink.

JANE
I am capable of reading,
Archbishop. May I?

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER
Of course, Ma'am.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, TOWER OF LONDON - NIGHT

Jane sits alone at her desk. She writes, illuminated by a single oil lamp and the moonlight through the window.

Behind her, Guildford sleeps alone in the bed.

INT. EAST WING, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Jane walks a few steps ahead of Pembroke and Arundel - who listen intently. She carries scrolls beneath one arm. Every servant they pass bows or curtsies profusely.

JANE (V.O.)
And thus, I come to the conclusion
that I must carry this burden
alone, void of interference.

At the end of the corridor, Northumberland greets other Councillors one-by-one as they file into the Council chambers.

JANE
My husband shall be a Duke, not a
King.

Arundel and Pembroke share a look.

ARUNDEL
Very well.

PEMBROKE
The Duchy of Clarence, perhaps?

Jane nods. They continue to walk.

JANE (V.O.)
Whatever can be done to pacify my
husband and his father, I shall
make it so.
(MORE)

JANE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I cannot afford a mutiny, but
likewise cannot risk demands
arriving in advance of me making an
offer.

Arundel stops a hand in front of Jane as they near the
Council.

ARUNDEL
May I ask what the Duke of
Northumberland has done to offend
you?

JANE
Nothing. Yet.

Jane turns to face them.

JANE (CONT'D)
I trust you will see to the
necessary arrangements.

Pembroke and Arundel bow their heads.

ARUNDEL
Ma'am.

Jane continues down the corridor. A smile.

JANE (V.O.)
Truth be told, there are fewer
people here to be relied upon than
I originally thought.

EXT. ST. THOMAS' TOWER, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Back to the walkway above St. Thomas' Tower.

JANE (V.O.)
I hope, Bess, that God permits us
to continue trusting one another
after the turmoil of all this. Your
aid in this endeavour is paramount
to its success.

Jane starts to descend the stairs. Halfway down, she stops.
Right beneath where she walked is Traitor's Gate -- the still
Thames water sitting between the mouldy wooden grate.

She looks the other direction, east. Guards work beyond the
walls to dismantle the burnt effigy of Jane from a smoky
bonfire.

JANE (V.O.)
Your friend.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Sunrise through the windows. Jane wakes at her desk - groggy. She holds an open book. There are ink stains on her hand. The skin around the stains is red, irritated.

JANE (V.O.)
Jane.

The sounds of HOOVES against cobblestone.

INT. FOYER, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Jane descends the stairs to the entrance to the Tower in her nightgown to the sound of muffled argument.

In the centre of the foyer, Robert removes a glove, rage in his expression. Northumberland looks down to him and crosses his arms. Jane's presences silences a heated conversation.

ROBERT
(to Jane)
She's at Framlingham Castle.

NORTHUMBERLAND
It's worse than we thought.

ROBERT
It's an army of thousands.
(to Jane)
I checked Hatfield on my return.
She's taken Elizabeth too.

Jane grimaces.

JANE
Is she so intent on sowing the
fields of England with blood?

NORTHUMBERLAND
Protestant blood.

JANE
Blood. English blood. Catholics
too. Any involved in the clash of
armies will suffer.

NORTHUMBERLAND
(to Robert)
When will she march?

ROBERT
I'm not sure.

NORTHUMBERLAND
Then what use are you!?

Robert throws his glove to the floor and steps up to his father. Northumberland stares down at him, unthreatened and unmoving. Robert's determination falters and he steps back.

Robert flees up the stairs, passing Jane.

JANE
(to Northumberland)
I will write to her.

NORTHUMBERLAND
You will do no such thing.

JANE
I shall.

Northumberland looms over Jane.

NORTHUMBERLAND
Do not taunt her. Or me.
(beat)
You shall not.

And he follows Robert.

INT. BATHROOM, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

MAIDS attend to Jane as she prepares for a bath. Kitty pours a bucket of steaming water into the tub as the Maids loosen Jane's stays.

Jane steps into the bath. Kitty instinctively reaches out a hand to help her in and spots the bruises around Jane's wrist. It's only been a few days -- but they are still red raw.

Kitty goes to speak. Jane wrests away her hand and sinks into the water, glaring back. *They shall not speak of this.* Jane submerges her hand in the water.

INT. OFFICE, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Jane sits at her desk. She dips a quill in ink and pulls ready some paper.

In neat handwriting she writes, '*Dear Mary*'. Then hesitates.

Jane sighs, then strikes through the words.

INT./EXT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Through the window of her bed chambers, Jane watches a guard drag out a green and gold dress from the bonfire outside the gates.

KITTY (O.S.)
Is something on your mind?

Jane's expression turns solemn. A maid works to scrub at some blood splashed across the ground near the gates. A product of Northumberland's crowd control efforts.

JANE
If I cannot talk to Mary then I do
not know how to stop this.

Jane turns. Kitty hands Jane's coronation dress from the dressing screen, admiring the needlework.

KITTY
A shame. You do talk well. Though,
I must admit, I fail to understand
the details of Socrates' theorems.

Jane laughs, plain, short, and with little emotion.

KITTY (CONT'D)
Though we all listen and some of us
will learn, in time.

JANE
(a lightbulb moment)
Some will listen, yes.

Jane looks to her desk.

JANE (CONT'D)
I will write to them.

KITTY
Who?

JANE

The nobles at her side. Even the nobles who are undecided.

She rushes over.

JANE (CONT'D)

There must be one good and loyal Englishman amongst them that will reason with logic. That this will not end easily if we escalate to violence.

Jane grabs a quill and looks back to Kitty with a grin. Kitty smiles back.

Jane pulls out the chair and begins to write.

EXT. COURTYARD, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Kitty emerges from the entrance to the White Tower and hurries through the courtyard. She carries a box.

She reaches the gate and approaches a guard, who summons a YOUNG COURIER leaning on a nearby wall. Kitty curtsies, then hands over the box.

The guard opens it. There are upwards of twenty letters folded up and sealed inside. He passes a coin to the young courier.

The courier scoops up the box and slips out the gate. Kitty curtsies again and hurries back toward the Tower.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF FRAMLINGHAM CASTLE - NIGHT

The young courier travels on horseback over the drawbridge and into the castle. The battlements of Framlingham are swarmed by dozens of SOLDIERS holding torches.

INT. FRAMLINGHAM CASTLE - NIGHT

A small room used as a makeshift drawing room - though furniture stands oddly as if hastily assembled in the sudden presence of royalty.

Even from inside, the CLATTERING of metal rings from the courtyard as Mary's army prepares for battle.

Elizabeth sits on a small chair with a book in her hand. She flinches when the door SLAMS open. Mary enters, the Earl of Bath at her heels.

MARY
(to Bath)
... She thinks their loyalties
fickle. Words will not rule them.
Faith shall. Good Catholic--

Above Elizabeth, a portrait of King Henry VIII on the wall. Mary stops. She holds a hand to her stomach. She tenses her jaw, a distraction from the pain, then points to it.

MARY (CONT'D)
I want that gone.

Elizabeth looks up to the painting, then silently back to Mary. Mary steps toward Elizabeth - then pivots to face Bath.

MARY (CONT'D)
Remove him.

BATH
I shall send for someone.

MARY
Now!

Bath gulps. A moment of hesitation. He steps outside the room and nods to someone outside. A SERVANT hurries in and unhooks it from the wall.

MARY (CONT'D)
I will not have him stare at me
while I am without a crown.

ELIZABETH
He will stare at you regardless.

Mary glares at Bath. He nods, then exits with the servant. The door closes.

MARY
I would deem you a bastard if you
continue to let your tongue speak
so sharp.

ELIZABETH
I am as much a bastard as you. Our
claim to legitimacy is the same--

Mary tenses. Elizabeth closes her book.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
But I am here at your mercy.

MARY
You stare at me too.

Elizabeth stands.

ELIZABETH
We're both his daughters, are we not?

She curtsies, low and steady - almost mocking in the time it takes - and leaves. Elizabeth looks back at Mary through the door ajar as she closes it.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Jane lays in bed, wide awake. Guildford hugs her tightly from her side.

She looks down at her hand. Her skin is even redder by the ink splotches. She rubs away the largest ones.

Guildford stirs beside her. Jane gently removes his arm and slinks out the bed. She grabs a dressing gown and puts it on.

Her crown stands on a cushion atop a chest of drawers. Jane approaches it quietly, picks it up and places it on her head. She ponders her appearance in the mirror.

A single knock at the door is abruptly followed by it swinging open. Northumberland steps in. Jane turns, fumbles with the crown and places it back on the cushion.

JANE
Your Grace!

NORTHUMBERLAND
We have word from Mary Tudor.

INT. EAST WING, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Northumberland storms down the corridor. Jane attempts to keep pace behind him. Further back, Guildford catches up -- still half asleep.

ARUNDEL (V.O.)
The once great Privy Council has disparaged the will of my father and now holds a usurper on a throne which rightfully calls for a Tudor.

INT. COUNCIL CHAMBERS, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

The Council gather around the table once again, many still in their bedclothes.

ARUNDEL (O.S.)
The realm knows and all the world
knows. God shall aid and strengthen
us, and we ourselves shall cause
our right and title to be
proclaimed accordingly.

Northumberland's grip on the edge of the table could snap it. Jane is the only one sat, staring at the Tudor placeholder as Pembroke moves it from East Anglia south toward Cambridge.

ARUNDEL (CONT'D)
This letter signed with my hand
shall be your sufficient warrant.

Guildford stands behind Jane's chair, brows furrowed, as they Council watch Arundel read.

ARUNDEL (CONT'D)
By Grace of God, Mary Tudor: Queen
of England, Ireland, France and
Defender of the Faith.

Silence.

NORTHUMBERLAND
All the world knows? Arrogant--

JANE
If she marches from Framlingham
south, then shouldn't we invest our
best efforts to ensure that no
lives are lost for a crown?

NORTHUMBERLAND
If Mary marches with an army, then
she intends to use it.

JANE
My letters--

NORTHUMBERLAND
--That you should not have sent.
They didn't work.

JANE
We can still quell her anger.

Jane looks to Pembroke. He nods, reassuring.

JANE (CONT'D)
 Invite her here to discuss a
 diplomatic compromise.

SUFFOLK
 (warning)
 Jane...

JANE
 (rebuffing)
 Father.

SUFFOLK
 She is one step ahead of us.

NORTHUMBERLAND
 There is no compromise in a divided
 nation.

He gestures to another PRIVY COUNCILLOR, who procures
 parchment and a quill. Northumberland leans forward on the
 table -- his glare substitute for daggers.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)
 The Council shall sign a joint
 reply in support of Queen Jane.
 There are not be no exceptions and
 no illusions of where your
 allegiances lie.

His face softens, preparing for humour.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)
 We are the most powerful men in
 England. Our threat is enough to
 make Mary quiet and obedient.

JANE
 I did not take you for a man to
 underestimate his enemies.

NORTHUMBERLAND
 Which is why I am not
 underestimating her. An army
 bearing the Dudley and Grey banners
 will follow a day behind the
 letter. The Duke of Suffolk shall
 lead it.

SUFFOLK
 (nodding)
 An honour, your Grace.

JANE

No.

(to Northumberland)

The only army I would ever will to
be raised would be for England.

NORTHUMBERLAND

YOU ARE ENGLAND!

Jane flinches. She looks to her side. Guildford cowers. Then to Northumberland's side -- Ambrose hangs his head low and Robert bites his tongue. No son will dare to look at his father.

Jane looks to Northumberland. The fear leaves Jane's face.

JANE

If this - *my* army - is to be
England's, then it should be
commanded by its finest veteran.

The attention of the table turns to her.

NORTHUMBERLAND

I should stay here in the Tower at
your side, your Majesty.

JANE

And place the trust of my army in
the hands of a lesser man?

Suffolk takes the slight with balled fists.

JANE (CONT'D)

You are intelligent, Lord Duke. It
is my desire that no blood may be
shed in the oncoming days. Troops
lead by England's most venerated
military commander must simply
reflect the strength of my claim
and enable you to enter diplomacy
with Mary Tudor.

Northumberland straightens his posture.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Is this an order?

JANE

Yes.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Then your will shall be done.

Jane raises her head. She looks back to Guildford -- his eyes wide and brows raised -- and offers a gentle smile.

She steps away from the Council table and crosses the length of the room. She stands in front of Northumberland. Jane waits here for a second until Northumberland turns his body and gives her a slow nod of his head.

JANE

This meeting is adjourned.

Jane exits. Guildford follows... then lingers for a second beside Northumberland. His father goes to speak, but Guildford keeps his head high and leaves.

The Councillors slowly file out of the room.

AMBROSE

Do you wish for me to join you,
father?

NORTHUMBERLAND

No.

He looks from Ambrose to Robert.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)

You will both be safer here with
your brother.

Robert leaves. Ambrose hesitates, nodding politely to Northumberland, and closes the Council chamber doors on his way out.

Northumberland slouches, hands returning to a fierce grip on the table. He sighs... Then hits a figurine bearing the Dudley coat of arms off the map of England. It strikes the opposite wall and shatters.

EXT. COURTYARD, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Pembroke and Arundel walk down the path across the courtyard toward the gates. Dozens of SOLDIERS carry long pikes, whilst BLACKSMITHS and SQUIRES hand swords to KNIGHTS. Jane's army begins to mobilise.

Northumberland addresses a STABLE HAND, who hands him the reins to a horse. He's clad in armour - battle ready.

Jane is at the entrance to the White Tower watching.

Pembroke and Arundel approach Northumberland. He looks over their shoulders to Jane.

NORTHUMBERLAND

(to Pembroke and Arundel)
Do not allow her to engage in
politics while I am absent.

PEMBROKE

She has quite the divisive approach
to things.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Indeed. But the throne is not
freedom.

ARUNDEL

No. You would never permit those
who sit it to be free.

Northumberland stares at Arundel as he slides on his riding
gloves. Arundel's expression is blank.

Northumberland switches his gaze back and forth between him
and Jane in the distance. Doubt in his eyes.

NORTHUMBERLAND

She has been sending letters.
Ensure that they do not fall into
the wrong hands. Or read them --
whichever you think best to contain
her voice.

He mounts his horse.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)

And, I implore you -- be warned of
the treasonous thoughts you men may
sow in my absence.

Arundel bows his head, slow, maintaining Northumberland's eye
contact. Northumberland breaks it, reining his horse in and
raising a hand to Jane.

Jane tilts her head forward to him - not even a nod, barely a
courtesy.

Northumberland kicks his horse to a trot and exits through
the gates. A swarm of knights on horseback follow him.

EXT. LONDON - DAY

The streets of London from above. Soldiers fill every gap
between rows of houses.

England's army. But no passers-by cheer for it.

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, TOWER OF LONDON - NIGHT

Alone, Jane rests against the headboard of the bed. She turns her bruised wrist in her hand.

The door opens. She pulls the sleeve of her nightgown down over it.

Guildford enters. Jane sits up.

JANE

You didn't travel with your father?

GUILDFORD

I want to stay here with you.

He closes the door and crosses the length of the room.

GUILDFORD (CONT'D)

I am not his anymore.

Jane smiles. Meek, at first.

JANE

We care both free of his grasp.

(playful)

Oh, great Duke of Clarence.

Guildford laughs. He perches on the side of the bed.

GUILDFORD

I let my jealousy of another man -
a dead man, for that matter - cloud
my opinion of you. I am my father's
seventh son. I wed you as a seventh
son. I will stand by your side as a
seventh son, born to inherit
nothing and destined to revere the
strength and will of his wife.

JANE

You flatter me.

GUILDFORD

You should have seen yourself
today! You can change this country
for the better, Jane.

He takes her hand. The sleeve slides down. Guildford places a gentle kiss on the revealed bruises.

Jane sighs. Relief mixed with frustration.

JANE
I'm trying.

A KNOCK at the door. Jane stands and walks over to answer it.
It is Suffolk - slightly bedraggled. Outside the door, a
GUARD looms.

SUFFOLK
About time! The guard wouldn't let
me in.

JANE
Then I must commend him for obeying
his commands.

SUFFOLK
Come. Your mother needs tending to
before bed.

JANE
Excuse me?

SUFFOLK
Northumberland is no longer here.
It is time you returned to the
duties you performed when last we
shared a household. Do not leave
your mother wanting. She is tired.

JANE
Shared? This is *my* household. I am
the Queen.

SUFFOLK
You are my daughter.

Suffolk lunges forward to grab her wrist. Jane steps back.
The Guard steps forward.

GUILDFORD (O.S.)
Jane?

Jane looks back into the room -- then to her father.

JANE
An assault against your Queen is
treason.

Suffolk tense his jaw... And lunges again! The Guard grabs
Suffolk's arm -- whose swipe to Jane is cut short by a few
inches.

JANE (CONT'D)

Seize him.

SUFFOLK

Jane!

The Guard sweeps forward and hauls Suffolk back.

JANE

Return the Duke of Suffolk to his quarters and gently remind him of what happens to men who commit treason in this Tower.

Jane shuts the door on the image of her father dragged down the corridor. She stands -- her expression melting from stern to a disbelieving happiness.

Guildford stands idle in the room. Jane immediately enters head first into his embrace. Here, they celebrate.

EXT. EAST ANGLIAN COASTLINE - NIGHT

The dead of night. A small fleet of Royal Navy ships float on black water, anchored. The flagship is careened on the shoreline of a quiet beach. A single flame marches over the deck.

EXT. FLAGSHIP DECK - NIGHT

A young SAILOR (20s) carries a lit torch across the deck. He manoeuvres around heavy artillery cargo and cannonballs. From this view, at least a dozen more ROYAL NAVY SAILORS stand guard on the beach below.

His patrol route turns him the other way towards the sea and the moon illuminating the watery horizon...

Until the UNSHEATHING of swords and YELLS sound out from behind him. He turns to see the descent of armoured TUDOR INFANTRYMEN onto the beach from the treeline and the ambush of the guards protecting his ship.

The Sailor rushes across the deck towards a small brazier sat upon the forecastle (front of ship).

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

A slaughter on the beach. A TUDOR KNIGHT slashes against a half-asleep WATCHMAN as the rest of the infantrymen collide against the Sailors.

At the treeline, Mary emerges from the shadows on horseback alongside the Earl of Bath. Behind him, even more soldiers.

She watches the light of the torch race across the deck of the flagship towards the brazier.

BATH

Your Majesty, the fleet will be warned if we don't--

MARY

They are the Royal Navy. They know who their Queen is.

The flame touches the brazier. A fire slowly grows from it.

Mary turns to Bath - smile broadening.

EXT. EAST ANGLIAN COASTLINE - NIGHT

The crews of the fleet SHOUT and HOLLER at the light of the flame. This isn't a warning -- *it's a signal*.

EXT. SHIP DECK - NIGHT

The Sailor watches the fleet wake. He stands, restless, and weakly draws a sword as the infantrymen below cleave through his crewmates.

One-by-one, the fleet raises ensigns of the Tudor rose.

Realisation dawns on him. There are FOOTSTEPS against the deck, but he has no time to look as the Tudor Knight slices a sword over his throat from behind.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Back to Mary and her sickly sweet grin. Bath's concern fades into admiration.

INT./EXT. LIBRARY, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Overcast over London. Jane sits tucked up on the windowsill, watching the city below as she scrawls across a paper.

Beneath and beyond the gates: a peasant taunts a guard entering the gates.

Then, girlish CHATTER. Kitty and the other ladies enter the library. It's a smaller group than before.

LADY TALBOT
Your Majesty, you have God's grace.

Jane laughs. She hops off the windowsill and straightens her skirt.

JANE
Do I?

LADY TALBOT
How else must you know that
regaling your husband with
mythology can spark an intellectual
conversation with him? We have been
married for seven years.

JANE
Well, I am no prophet.

KITTY
Six and ten - with such a mind.

JANE
Please, Kitty.

KITTY
And what is today's lesson?

LADY TALBOT
Yes, perhaps this one may get Lord
Talbot into my bed for a reason
beyond simple duty.

Jane blushes.

Lady Bedford scuttles in long behind the group.

JANE
Lady Bedford, there is no rush. We
have not yet started.

LADY BEDFORD
Apologies, Ma'am. But I have come
to inform you that I will not be
attending today's reading. Or any
for a good while.

JANE
Why ever not?

LADY BEDFORD
With Northumberland gone, Lord
Bedford is sending me to Devon.
(MORE)

LADY BEDFORD (CONT'D)
(to Jane)
For my protection, Ma'am.

KITTY
You are perfectly safe here.

Lady Bedford curtsies. Anxiety covers her face.

LADY BEDFORD
(to Jane)
Ma'am.

And leaves the room.

A stunned silence. Jane clasps her hands and smiles, disguising concern.

JANE
Today, I thought I'd read from *The Court of Venus*. Wyatt's poetry is quite refreshing...

The Ladies take their seats.

INT. EAST WING, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Jane walks the way to the Council chambers once more. Guildford is a step behind her. Jane holds the paper scrolled up from before in her hand.

A FOOTMAN passes them both. He does not acknowledge Jane. She steps aside, lets him pass, and continues.

JANE
(to Guildford)
Elizabeth shall be swayed by my plan, I am sure of it.

Jane taps the scroll, proud.

Another MAID passes. She too ignores Jane. Jane lets her pass, but halts after.

JANE (CONT'D)
Have I done something to offend?

GUILDFORD
I cannot think of a reason.

JANE
Two days ago, they all but kissed my feet.

She huffs and continues walking.

INT. COUNCIL CHAMBERS, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Jane crosses the room.

The attendance here is sparse. Seats are empty. Arundel sits in Northumberland's place, at the head opposite Jane. Robert and Ambrose stand behind empty chairs, seemingly as a courtesy. Pembroke, Suffolk, Cranmer, and a few others are in attendance at their usual seats.

JANE

Am I early?

Robert shakes his head. Jane gesture for both him and Ambrose to sit as she takes her own seat.

ARUNDEL

Many are headed to the country.

Jane bites her tongue and looks to an empty seat.

JANE

Lord Bedford journeyed with his wife?

SUFFOLK

Others have maligned their trust and sought the bosom of Mary Tudor.

ARUNDEL

Discharged themselves of the Duke of Northumberland's wrath, no doubt.

JANE

Very well. Let us hope they return soon. As for my proposals--

ARUNDEL

There is no time for petty fantasies.

Jane adjusts her posture.

PEMBROKE

A fleet off the East Anglian coast have mutinied to the Tudors. They hold possession of the finest pieces of English artillery.

JANE

But they are the *Royal Navy*.

PEMBROKE

The Royal Navy boasted their
loyalty to Edward. It seems that
loyalty now extends to his sister.

JANE

Must I be watchful of the army
next? The servants in my halls?
After all, they will not look at
me.

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER

You continue to have the Council's
support.

He looks around. Arundel suppresses a smile. Jane starts
picking at the skin on her hands.

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER (CONT'D)

And the support of the Church of
England. Protestant England.

JANE

(to herself)

It is not enough.

(louder)

It is not enough.

SUFFOLK

With that artillery, there is
little hope in surviving an assault
in the field, let alone resist the
will of England's people.

AMBROSE

Perhaps then we shall hope my
father is successful in his
endeavour.

JANE

He shall bring me Mary and
Elizabeth Tudor and they will be
reasoned with.

A quiet laughter reverberates through the room. Arundel tries
to conceal his.

SUFFOLK

Do you find the aims of her Majesty
comical, Lord Arundel?

(MORE)

SUFFOLK (CONT'D)
The Queen's plight should be
treated with the upmost sincerity.

ARUNDEL
I will not concern myself with the
words of Northumberland's lapdog.

SUFFOLK
Watch your tongue, sir!

Arundel and Suffolk both stand.

JANE
Lord Arundel--!

ROBERT
(to Arundel)
You speak so freely and cruelly of
your ally?

PEMBROKE
Maybe we do not act at all until we
have word of success?

Jane stands. In her haste, the scroll knocks to the floor,
forgotten.

INT./EXT. CORRIDOR, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

The muffled continuation of arguing blares out across the
Tower. Kitty stands at a window above the Council chambers,
listening in.

JANE (O.S.)
I will not sit idle!

ARUNDEL (O.S.)
You must!

Horses NEIGH and wheels SCRATCH against cobblestone. Kitty
looks out.

From her view: Lady Talbot and her LORD husband climb into a
carriage and flee the courtyard below.

EXT. THAMES RIVER - NIGHT

Fog encroaching on the Tower from the river.

EXT. TRAITOR'S GATE, TOWER OF LONDON - NIGHT

Guildford reclines along the steps leading up from Traitor's Gate. He drapes his hand into the water below and makes figure-of-eights with his finger against the surface.

Jane paces above him. Her face is red with frustration.

JANE

Half of the Council have forsaken
my side. Arundel has turned most
foul...

Jane huffs and balls her skirt in her fists.

JANE (CONT'D)

They gave me reprieve against
Northumberland's fire because I
entertained their wives and their
wives, in turn, entertained them
with the thought that I might be
someone worth listening to.

She sits down beside Guildford. He sits up, knees to his chest.

JANE (CONT'D)

But your father's fire may have
been the single reason they
listened in the first place.

GUILDFORD

He is not a cruel man.

JANE

If I had worked alongside him...

GUILDFORD

Bonds and alliances and whispers.
He used to say that's what it look
to lead, no matter the good ideas
one might harbour in their head.

JANE

You used to hate my ideas.

Guildford hums.

GUILDFORD

You are the first of your kind and
nobility loathe change. One whisper
can make a doubt boil to anger. I
am the very evidence of that.

Jane turns away. Her reflection stares back at her in the water.

JANE

I never spoke to you about Lord
Seymour's wish for my betrothal to
Edward.

GUILDFORD

Which is why I was so surprised
when Arundel told me.

Jane is a deer in headlights. She stands, swift, and hastens toward the empty courtyard.

EXT. COURTYARD, TOWER OF LONDON - CONTINUOUS

She rounds the corner, building to a run.

GUILDFORD (O.S.)

Jane?

The Tower is silent, bar the shake of a peasant at the Tower gates. A Guard prods them away with the blunt end of a pike.

Jane ascends the steps to the entrance of the White Tower. Guildford rushes to keep up with her, a few seconds behind.

A TOWER FOOTMAN stands at the doorway.

JANE

(to the Footman)

Send for Lord Arundel's
correspondence to be seized and
read. I want a copy of everything
that leaves this Tower.

And continues into the foyer.

EXT. HILL OUTSIDE CAMBRIDGE - DAY

The drum of distance THUNDER.

A lone horseman rides over a hill. Cambridge town sits in the distance. In front: a sprawling Tudor army across the field below.

This horseman is SIR GATES (40s), one of Northumberland's loyal guards. He carries the banner of England intertwined with the Grey and Dudley coat of arms.

He surveys the scene. Then returns down the hill.

EXT. FIELD OUTSIDE CAMBRIDGE - DAY

In the valley beneath the hill, Bath carries an ornate chair to a spot guarded by four TUDOR KNIGHTS. Mary follows and sits in it.

On the hill: Northumberland's army. Opposite and consuming the entire border of Cambridge: Mary's -- twice the size. Yet, the CHEER of Northumberland's men is what fills the valley.

Northumberland approaches. At Mary's side, Bath tenses in Northumberland's presence. Sir Gates and several CAVALRY stand behind Northumberland.

MARY

Lord Dudley, Lord Protector of the Realm.

NORTHUMBERLAND

(blunt)

Mary Tudor.

MARY

You should address Her Majesty by her full titles and honorifics as disclosed to you in recent correspondence.

Mary does not break Northumberland's eye contact. She waves a hand backwards at Bath.

MARY (CONT'D)

Bother not to alter this mummer's script.

Northumberland nods towards Bath.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Lord Bath. It has been a while since you have honoured London with your presence.

Bath rolls his eyes.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)

Now we are all met, it is the Queen's desire that we resolve this amicably.

Mary looks past him at Jane's army.

MARY

You approach me with a number
disadvantage?

NORTHUMBERLAND

The English have won against poorer
odds.

MARY

It is a shame, then, that you do
not lead England's army.

NORTHUMBERLAND

It is hers, as decreed by Edward in
his devise to the succession.

MARY

One that hands the crown to a great-
granddaughter of a King rather than
the daughter of one?

NORTHUMBERLAND

(musing)

You are well aware what Edward's
law enforces.

(back to business)

Your illegitimacy was declared by
your father. That you cannot undo.

MARY

King Henry rectified his mistakes
before he passed. You regard the
want of a boy over the want of a
great King?

NORTHUMBERLAND

I will not trade one amendment for
another. Stand down, Mary. You do
not want to fight me.

MARY

But I do rather admire my odds.

Mary smiles. It is sickly.

MARY (CONT'D)

In spite of all this, I must give
the girl credit for one thing.

Northumberland braces.

MARY (CONT'D)

She sent you away before your claws
descended upon her.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

My brother, dear Edward, suffered enough under your guidance.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Your father was a tyrant. Your brother had a touch of it too. You should be thankful England did not see more of it.

MARY

Is that a confession, Duke?

NORTHUMBERLAND

It is an admission... That I am failing to stop England falling into the clutches of another Tudor with self-righteousness on their lips.

MARY

They say you poisoned him.

Silence. Then fury.

NORTHUMBERLAND

You dare question my loyalty to the late King? To England?

Northumberland's hand goes to the hilt of his sword. Mary's guards unsheathe theirs quicker. Northumberland pivots and turns back to Sir Gates. He stomps, raging, over to the nearest cavalryman.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)

Give me your horse.

The cavalryman grips tight on the reins, frozen. Northumberland grasps at his armour - pulling him down and off the horse. The horse bucks as the man hits the ground.

Northumberland has one foot in a stirrup when the man's helmet tumbles off. It's Ambrose. Northumberland's breath hitches.

Father reaches for son and pulls him to his feet. There is no anger, but Northumberland's brows furrow. Ambrose's armour does not fit him. He is moments away from crying.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)

What are you doing here, boy?

AMBROSE

I don't want you to die alone.

Northumberland halts. He lets go of Ambrose with a sigh and looks back to Mary.

He picks up Ambrose's helmet and gives it back. He makes his way back to the parley spot.

NORTHUMBERLAND

(to Mary)

I have waged war for your father,
for your brother, and would wage it
against you without a second
thought. Jane - at every turn - has
argued for the defence of England
against further bloodshed.

MARY

Then she is weak.

Northumberland raises his arm. The rows upon rows of soldiers behind him unsheathe their swords and ready their bows. He holds his hand there for a second and watches as Mary smirks. He looks back to Ambrose.

NORTHUMBERLAND

That is the difference between you
and her.

He lowers his hand. The army settles.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)

She believes England deserves
peace.

MARY

If we do not fight, I will take
London. I will destroy every body
or wall you put between me and my
crown.

Northumberland turns away and begins walking back to his army.

NORTHUMBERLAND

Quite the legacy.

He passes Sir Gates back toward Ambrose.

NORTHUMBERLAND (CONT'D)

(to Sir Gates)

Signal the banners to retreat.

Mary sits - breaths heavy, expression stoic. Her army CHEERS.

INT. ST. PETER AD VINCULA CHAPEL - DAY

The tap of rain on stained glass windows. Beneath: the quaint cosiness of the chapel. The sun through the windows illuminates the space in an ethereal and kaleidoscopic dash of colour.

Pews occupied by a smattering of PATRONS, Jane at the very front of them.

She watches the chaplain perform a baptism on a baby. The parents, young and well-dressed NOBLES, stand to the side of the basin.

The chaplain pours water over the baby's head. Jane smiles, though only now can we see the lack of sleep beneath her eyes.

INT. ST. PETER AD VINCULA CHAPEL - DAY

The chapel is empty. The silence is broken only by a whistling wind.

A heavier tap of rain hits the stained glass windows. A gloom prevents the room from filling with light.

Jane kneels at the altar. Her gloved hands are clasped together in prayer. Eyes closed. She takes a long breath.

EXT. COURTYARD, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

A midsummer storm bears down upon the Tower. An older man, the RAVENMASTER, struggles through the wind and rain. A raven tugs to escape from his falconry gloves.

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC from inside the Tower is muffled by rain.

The raven tugs loose from the Ravenmaster's hold and flies outward across the threshold to St. Peter Ad Vincula. It SWOOPS over Jane's path as she steps out of the building, knocking her back a step. She watches as it flies over the battlements and out into the storm.

She braces against the storm and walks up towards the White Tower.

INT. CORRIDOR, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Onto the corridor. Three MAIDS scurry past as Jane turns in the direction of the Royal Chambers. They ignore her.

She moves on - dodging a MAN-AT-ARMS holding a pike who passes her. She moves against a slow drip-feed of people exiting the adjacent rooms and heading towards the staircase.

And then a CRASH from outside, metal against metal. Jane flinches, gulping, and nods to the Guard stood at her door.

JANE

See to it.

The Guard walks off. She opens the door...

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, TOWER OF LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Guildford rifles through the wardrobe half-dressed. He hums along to the tune of the orchestra.

As Jane enters, she removes her gloves and gently throws them onto the bed.

GUILDFORD

How was the christening?

Jane's crown sits on the chest of drawers. She takes it, hands shaking, and places it on her head.

JANE

They named the boy Guildford.

In the reflection of the mirror opposite: a loose strand of hair sticks out underneath the crown and she tucks it back into place.

Guildford bears a sweet smile as he slides a shirt over his head. Jane smiles back, then leaves --

INT. CORRIDOR, GREENWICH PALACE - CONTINUOUS

Back onto the corridor. At the far end, the Guard returns and moves through the tide of people. Jane hurries over to him.

GUARD

The gates opening and closing,
Ma'am.

Relief on Jane's face.

JANE

Anything to report on Arundel?

GUARD

No, Ma'am. He remains within the Tower.

Jane goes to leave. At the far end of the corridor, a door opens and Lady Frances shuffles out followed by Jane's ladies-in-waiting. Jane stops, confused -- then notices the Guard linger.

GUARD (CONT'D)

'Twas the Earl of Pembroke leaving.

Jane swallows. She turns back towards her mother, but Frances and her entourage descend the stairs. She follows--

INT. FOYER, TOWER OF LONDON - CONTINUOUS

A rushed walk shifts into a run down the staircase. The main doors slam shut.

Another CRASH of the gates outside, though does not interrupt the orchestral music that swells. She follows the sound to a door off the foyer's side.

INT. GREAT HALL, TOWER OF LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Entering into the great hall, still in coronation decor.

A small ORCHESTRA continues a La Volta, whilst Kitty entertains a half-dozen DANCING GIRLS at the centre of the hall. WIND whistles against the windows.

Jane steps forward - bewildered. Kitty turns in the dance and spots her. She leaves the dance formation.

KITTY

You're not joining us?

JANE

There is still no word from the Duke of Northumberland. And my mother--

KITTY

You must not stress.

Kitty takes Jane's hands and inspects them. They are red raw, and the skin is flaking and peeling away.

KITTY (CONT'D)

Your hands, your Majesty.

The recognition brings Jane's stoic concern to the very edge of tears.

JANE
(holding it in)
I did not ask for this. And those
who bestowed it upon me are absent.

KITTY
Then you must forget for a second.
Dance with us. Free your mind of
worries until Northumberland gives
word.

JANE
I cannot. I will not forsake
England that way.

Kitty steps back and pulls Jane with her into the centre of the dance. The girls spin around her to the sway of the music. Kitty smiles and laughs -- enticing but wholly blasé.

Jane yanks her hands away from Kitty's.

JANE (CONT'D)
I was blinded, Kitty.

She steps away, tripping slightly over a dancer, distracted by the whirls of movement--

SHATTER! A rock flies through a window. The orchestra halts and the dancers shriek. The wind and rain whips inside.

Kitty runs over to the rock while the other girls seek protection beneath the opposite wall. She picks it up. It's painted with a Tudor rose.

KITTY
Jane?

Focus wipes over Jane's face. She retreats back--

INT. FOYER, TOWER OF LONDON - CONTINUOUS

The main doors shudder back and forth, open, as GUARDS spill out. The ladies and Kitty scatter out from the great hall - all calling to Jane to follow to safety amidst the chaos.

But Jane ascends the stairs--

INT. CORRIDOR, TOWER OF LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Back onto the corridor again, working against a larger force of fleeing HOUSEHOLD STAFF.

She wades through and manages to find the gaze of her Guard. In the commotion he reaches her. Jane grabs onto him.

JANE
The Duke of Suffolk! The Duke... My
father. Find the Duke of Suffolk.

He nods and rushes off. Jane makes a path for the Royal Chambers. The door is open--

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS, TOWER OF LONDON - CONTINUOUS

To find Guildford, now dressed, wrestling his trunk of clothes off a CHAMBERMAID. The maid sees Jane and drops the effort.

GUILDFORD
Jane!

The maid scuttles out. Guildford rushes to Jane.

JANE
I came to see you were safe--

GUILDFORD
There was a noise... then the
household--

Jane takes his hand. She stares at him, searching for an answer.

GUILDFORD (CONT'D)
(realising)
My father.

She pulls him out of the room.

EXT. COURTYARD, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

A carriage forces its way through a hurried crowd. Suffolk chases alongside it, making space amidst the chaos for Lady Frances to climb in. He helps a FOOTMAN strap a large trunk of luggage to the back of it.

SUFFOLK
(mouthing, to Lady
Frances)

Go!

Jane and Guildford hurry out the entrance to the White Tower. She observes the crowd from the top of the steps and the gathering of citizens over the wall.

Crucifixes bob up and down, carried by the crowd beyond the walls. These are the Catholic protestors from before, but now they celebrate in far greater number and with glee.

Within, the household servants thrash against the gate. Celebration on the outside; fear spreads through the courtyard.

Suffolk pushes back against those trying to exit. The gates SHUDDER open. He spills out of the crowd as it surges forward.

Lady Frances' carriage churns through the mud and rain, crunching a Protestant cross beneath a wheel. The women inside yelp as TUDOR GUARDS infiltrate the crowd and push into the mob entering the courtyard.

Jane descends the steps and hastens towards her father. He flounders, then sinks to his knees.

SUFFOLK (CONT'D)
(weeping)
It is lost.

Jane arrives.

SUFFOLK (CONT'D)
My Jane, it is lost.

He clasps his hands and begins to mutter an unintelligible prayer. Jane huffs and snatches his wrist, forcing his gaze to hers.

JANE
What has happened here?

SUFFOLK
They say the Duke retreated at
Cambridge and your support has
routed.

Jane grips. Tighter.

SUFFOLK (CONT'D)
Mary Tudor marches for London.

GUILDFORD (O.S.)
(concerned)
Jane?

She lets go of Suffolk, her bottom lip quivering. Guildford stands at her side.

GUILDFORD (CONT'D)
We must go.

Jane looks to the chaos. The dancing girls rush past her, heading to another carriage pushed by GREY MEN-AT-ARMS. Horses buck and WHINNY. In the distance, CHEERING is mixed with WAILS.

The Tudor Guards wade closer, lifting the hoods of every man and woman that flee.

JANE
No.

GUILDFORD
We must. Mary will not spare a pretender.

JANE
Who am I -- if I run? As guilty as they paint me to be?

She gives his hand a light squeeze.

JANE (CONT'D)
I must do as England does.

Jane grounds herself. Guildford brings her hand to his lips and kisses her knuckles.

A Tudor Guard breaks through the crowd and locks eyes with Jane.

Another surges forward to seize Suffolk. They pull him up, but Suffolk struggles, wresting his shoulders forward and kicking against the guard. He laughs, still weeping.

Jane adjusts her posture as more guards break through. One motions towards Guildford and they snatch his arm with little resistance.

Last, a Tudor YEOMAN approaches Jane. She turns her gaze to face him, slow and gentle. He nods. She curtsies.

Then, and without interruption, Jane removes her crown.

With a soft hand on the small of her back, Jane is ushered away.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Sunlight dappling through trees. Northumberland rides on horseback beside Ambrose, leading a retinue of SOLDIERS far smaller than the army. He wears disappointment like a brand on his face.

SHOUTING from behind. Northumberland sighs, disheartened.

He reins in his horse as dozens of TUDOR KNIGHTS surround his retinue from behind. They draw their swords on him, completely encircled.

Northumberland dismounts. He lands on the floor and takes his hat from his head. A laughter -- less desperate, more inevitable -- accompanies a slow tear.

A Knight fastens a rope around his hands. Carrying over, as Northumberland is pushed into custody, are the CHEERS of a crowd - bringing us to...

INT. GUILDHALL - DAY

A crowd of men filling a gothic great hall. There are HOLLERING MEN, POLITICIANS and MERCHANTS in every corner. At the centre and given a few yards' berth, the only woman present: Jane.

We see the regret in her eyes and the simmering humiliation amidst the hollers of the crowd.

NORFOLK (O.S.)
The fifth defendant. Lady Jane.

Jane looks up.

The DUKE OF NORFOLK (80s) - a frail man wearing the Catholic cross on a beaded necklace - is one of a half-dozen men sitting a trail bench on a raised platform in front of Jane. He attends to a handful of papers, selects one and hands it to the man at the centre of the bench.

This is WHITE (60s), wearing a Mayoral chain of office. He takes the paper and ponders over it.

Norfolk struggles to speak over the volume of the crowd heckling Jane.

NORFOLK (CONT'D)

The crown's evidence supplies a declaration signed by the Lady in the presence of several members of the late King Edward's Privy Council.

White stands. The members of the trail bench shift, surprised. To Norfolk's side, the Earl of Bath goes to stand but a simple raise of White's hand dismisses his attempt to follow.

White crosses the back of the bench and descends to the crowd below. A small procession of ROYAL TUDOR GUARDS hold the crowd back from Jane. White nods at the first guard and approaches Jane.

BATH

Trust not her words, Sir Thomas.
Some puppets learn from their masters.

White presents the paper to Jane while he inspects her expression.

WHITE

(to Bath)

That puppet master met the block two months ago. Cut loose, the Lady's own words may provide insight on her past intentions.

(to Jane)

You may speak freely here. Is this of your own hand?

Jane looks. It is a long paper of many words. At the very bottom, it is clearly signed as '*Jane, the Quene*'.

JANE

Yes.

WHITE

Both the name and the suffix?

Jane nods.

JANE

My Lord.

NORFOLK

Witness of the Lord Guildford
Dudley claims that these words were
written under duress, though the
penmanship is steady and matches
items of recent correspondence by
the Lady.

BATH

Those words illustrate her treason,
under duress or not. That is
immaterial!

WHITE

(to Jane)

Does the Lady deny it?

Jane's gaze circles the crowd as it quietens. First Norfolk,
then Bath, then a lump of the crowd she can't quite see past -
searching for someone. Searching for Guildford.

Then, back to White.

JANE

No, sir.

WHITE

Very well.

White withdraws to the bench. The crowd's WHISPERING
crescendos in anticipation - eyes split between Jane and
White.

WHITE (CONT'D)

By the grace of Mary Tudor, Queen
of England and Ireland, and
ratified by the good lords of
Parliament and the Privy Council in
her name - I hereby charge Lady
Jane Grey with high treason --

The crowd erupts in CHEERS.

Jane holds her head up and does not move her gaze away from
White. He struggles to speak through the noise.

WHITE (CONT'D)

-- On four unique counts, in
defiance of the true sovereign?

(beat)

What is your plea?

LAUGHTER ripples through the crowd. In the distance:

LORD
Protestant whore!

Jane steels.

JANE
Guilty.

A curt CHEER from the crowd. White shakes his head, pity in his eyes.

WHITE
Then you are sentenced to death, to
be burned alive or beheaded as the
Queen Mary pleases.

Jane looks to her side. Guildford, Robert, and Ambrose are prodded forward to the front of the crowd. Then, Suffolk - who glares at White. Their hands are bound.

GUILDFORD
(mouthing)
Jane.

She raises her head so he can see her above the crowd.

JANE
(whispered)
It's alright.

Norfolk hands White another set of papers. White considers them for a moment and then looks toward the Dudley brothers.

WHITE
Following all guilty please, I do
hereby charge Lord Guildford
Dudley, Robert Dudley, and Ambrose
Dudley with high treason.

Another cheer from the crowd.

Guildford swallows. He looks to Robert and Ambrose. The latter takes this with a blank expression, but Robert still tugs at the rope bindings around his hands.

WHITE (CONT'D)
And Henry Grey, Duke of Suffolk--

MARY (O.S.)
The Duke of Suffolk is to be sent
under house arrest in his country
estate.

White looks up. The crowd turns. Mary - dressed resplendent, yet still modest now as Queen - stands at the doorway. She walks forward, steady and stern. The congress stands.

WHITE
Your Majesty.

MARY
The Dudley boys shall be kept in
Beauchamp Tower. It is vacant and
more than suitable.

The crown murmurs. Why is Mary sparing traitors to the crown?

BATH
Queen Mary, as long as they are
alive, they are a threat.

Mary, ignoring Bath, rounds the group of guards and stands before Jane. Jane immediately looks to the floor.

MARY
(to Jane)
Look at me child.

Jane gulps and hesitates.

MARY (CONT'D)
Look at your Queen.

Jane looks up. She bears childlike fear in her eyes. Mary considers her for a moment.

MARY (CONT'D)
(to the crowd)
The death of my cousin does not
please me. A child thrust beneath a
crown by malignant men.

The crowd's reaction is sporadic and unsure.

MARY (CONT'D)
(to Jane)
Her life is to be spared.

There are a thousand unspoken words conveyed in Mary's glance. Most of all, pity. Mary nods to Jane, then throws a cursory glance to the Dudley boys, and exits back down the aisle and out of the hall.

Jane draws a breath of relief.

INT. ENTRANCE, GAOLER'S HOUSE, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

One of the small terraced homes that line the courtyard of the Tower of London. Four BEEFEATERS escort Jane inside, two handling a trunk of her belongings.

Jane takes note of her surroundings. It's no prison cell. Flowers lie on the windowsill in front of an unobstructed view of the courtyard green. A Latin bible rests on a side table.

They move her, still with bound hands, toward and up a small set of stairs--

INT. LANDING, GAOLER'S HOUSE, TOWER OF LONDON - CONTINUOUS

To a landing. A beefeater unshackles Jane. He then nods towards a plain door.

Hesitant, Jane reaches forward and opens it.

INT. BEDROOM, GAOLER'S HOUSE, TOWER OF LONDON - CONTINUOUS

A well decorated room - through dull and bare-stoned in comparison to her royal apartments. A bookshelf stands at the opposite end of the room to the door.

Beside, Mary peruses the books. She carries rosary beads in one hand, the other clutches at her stomach.

Jane freezes, fear on her face. She turns, but the beefeater closes the door.

Jane and Mary, alone.

MARY

I recall little of you from your youth, but I do remember you - even as a young babe - held a penchant for literature.

Mary turns. Jane curtsies, avoiding her glare.

MARY (CONT'D)

I had these books arranged to busy that mind of yours, though they must pale in comparison to the collection in the White Tower.

Mary waits for an answer. Jane's silence is heavy. Mary hums, probing.

JANE

There are little means in which I
can show the height of my gratitude
to you on this day, your Majesty.

Mary sits in an armchair beneath the window.

MARY

Discard your flattery. You bear no
love for me.

JANE

Yet it is not hate, either.

MARY

Indifference, then? We settle with
that.

Jane breathes - then casts her eyes to Mary.

MARY (CONT'D)

You do not ask why I spare you?

JANE

I am at no liberty to query the
mercies you afford.

MARY

Northumberland spoke highly of you
in our parley. You commanded him,
somehow. Looking at you, I am
inclined to think him soft. Nay,
perhaps a fool?

JANE

He has brought me and our family
the most miserable end by his
exceeding ambition. He prescribed
me power and then forbade me from
using it until I could no longer
tolerate his control.

MARY

No. Protection of something
valuable can oft read as control
through the eyes of the valuable
item. He was a loyal dog to my
brother and would have been a just
servant to any Grey reign. You
confuse affection with affliction.

Mary takes in the view from the window.

MARY (CONT'D)

That youthful folly is the very reason old men fled your side.

JANE

Guildford, Arundel, Pembroke... My father too. I have witnessed the most sudden change believable in men, and I believe that God alone worked it.

MARY

It is not God.

Mary strokes the rosary beads between her fingers.

MARY (CONT'D)

It is simply man.

(then)

And you should not have followed their fickle hearts.

JANE

I had no choice.

MARY

We always have a choice. I may listen to Northumberland too and accept the way of things, accept Edward's will and the men who enforced it. But where then would I be? You would have come for me soon enough.

Jane pauses. *Is Mary right?*

MARY (CONT'D)

But you chose to have no choice. And for that I can only pity you. You, a girl touched by the choices of too many men.

Mary stands. There's a sadness in her eyes. It then glazes austere.

MARY (CONT'D)

Your life, and the lives of those around you, is a privilege. That privilege is mine to revoke upon further treason. Regardless if it is my faith or my crown, you must understand my duty to seek retribution on the occasion you endanger them.

JANE
Yes... Your Majesty.

MARY
Good.

Mary surveys Jane on her approach to the door, hovering at her side for a moment.

MARY (CONT'D)
You would do well to choose quiet
and obedience from now on.

Then, she looks down and up again.

MARY (CONT'D)
There is ink on your hand.

Jane looks down. There is a light splotch on the side of her palm, almost unnoticeable.

Then, Jane is alone.

She sits down on the bed and runs her hand along the fine material. Then stands, restless, to run her stained hand along the bookshelf - unable to take her eye off the impurity. Finally, she stops at the window.

Through it: the sound of boots SCUFFING against cobblestone. It's enough to pry Jane's eyes away from her hand to look out.

EXT. COURTYARD, TOWER OF LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Two TUDOR GUARDS grasp Guildford, who struggles against them. He wrests himself to the side and catches the sight of Jane isolated in a single window of Gaoler's House.

He uses all his strength to linger there... until he is forced away.

INT./EXT. BEDROOM, GAOLER'S HOUSE, TOWER OF LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Jane watches through the glass as he is dragged away. Her grip tightens on the windowsill - then brows furrow. She looks to the door and finally the writing desk. Sod
obedience.

JANE (V.O.)
Dear Father.

INT. BEDROOM, GAOLER'S HOUSE, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

A different day. Jane dips her quill in ink and slides a fresh piece of paper in front of her. She writes with precision and haste.

JANE (V.O.)
Dear Sir Thomas Wyatt.

INT. BEDROOM, GAOLER'S HOUSE, TOWER OF LONDON - NIGHT

Close on Jane writing "Dear Bess".

JANE (V.O.)
Dear Bess.

EXT. COURTYARD, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

The Yeoman leads Jane out into the green space in front of Gaoler's House.

Here, Jane strolls -- taking the time to bask in the late Autumn air.

JANE (V.O.)
I am alive, but I am not free.

Jane looks to the chapel of St. Peter Ad Vincula across the way. A Catholic priest, followed by a procession of clergy for mass, walks the path toward it.

JANE (V.O.)
And while I am kept here, neither
are the hopes and dreams of
England.

She looks up to a gate-tower -- Beauchamp Tower. She can see the figures of men in the window (Robert and Guildford, though the view is obscured).

The Yeoman keeps her moving. Jane smiles at him. He smiles back.

INT. LANDING, GAOLER'S HOUSE, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Jane paces back and forth, eyes up - head low, across the landing. She has a book open in her hand but she does not read it. Instead, Jane is deep in thought.

JANE (V.O.)
Mary will churn it through turmoil
until it rips itself apart.

The Yeoman ascends the stairs to the landing. Jane curtsies to him.

INT. BEDROOM, GAOLER'S HOUSE, TOWER OF LONDON - NIGHT

Light flickers from a single lamp at the side of the bed. Jane sits beside it, embroidering a pattern onto a veil.

JANE (V.O.)
I do not care if my legacy is
scorned.

She completed the stitch and reveals a bright Tudor rose.

JANE (V.O.)
But I may find my values shared
within you. That is: the hope of a
fair and just Queen. Free from
Rome, free of men, bound only to
England and the limit of her great
mind.

Jane's attention is brought to a KNOCK at the door.

The Yeoman steps through and Jane stands, shoulders down and hands fiddling with the fabric of her skirt.

YEOMAN
You needed assistance?

JANE
I am in desperate need of company.
Could I be so bold as to request
the momentary presence of one of my
ladies?

The Yeoman considers her request. Jane, wide-eyed as a young doe might be, performs a sigh.

YEOMAN
I will see if this can be arranged.

She smiles. The Yeoman nods and leaves. Jane indulges in a broader smile.

JANE (V.O.)
There are still yet those loyal and
ready to achieve this.

INT. LIVING ROOM, GAOLER'S HOUSE, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Another day. Jane sits perched on a small plush armchair. The fireplace CRACKLES.

JANE (V.O.)
You simply need the knowledge of
where to find them.

The door unlocks. Kitty, dishevelled and less glamorous than before, bursts through it. Jane stands to accept her embrace.

KITTY
(out of breath)
I came as quick as Mary would allow
me. How I have missed you so!

JANE
And I you!
(laughing)
I have no one to read to.

Over Kitty's shoulder, Jane observes the Yeoman.

YEOMAN
You have two minutes.

JANE
Only two?

KITTY
It was gracious of Her Majesty to
afford me any time at all.

JANE
Where are you staying now?

KITTY
With my cousin. A house in
Leicestershire.

JANE
Near my father?

KITTY
Yes!

Jane casts a careful eye of Kitty's shoulder again and watches the Yeoman look away from the girls. Jane reaches into her pocket and pulls out a wad of envelopes tied with string.

JANE
You must visit him for me. Tell him
I am well.

Jane flicks her gaze downwards momentarily. Kitty catches this and her eyes widen. She nods and accepts the envelopes, tucking them beneath her coat.

JANE (CONT'D)
And as many friends as you can on
the way home? For the
Christmastime?

KITTY
Of course.

The Yeoman clears his throat.

KITTY (CONT'D)
You are safe here, yes?

JANE
As safe as I need to be.

Kitty steps back curtsies and leaves.

JANE (V.O.)
A dead man once spoke of whispers
being the true ruler of England.

Alone, Jane ungloves her hand. Her skin is blotched black with ink.

Finally, a bittersweet smile.

EXT. BRADGATE PARK - DAY

The vista of the entrance to a stone manor surrounded by autumnal leaves.

JANE (V.O.)
So my father and I, *we whisper*.

Kitty walks across the gravel driveway. She's cloaked in servant's garb and holds a basket at her hip. It's covered in fabric, hiding its contents. She heads towards the doorway, flanked by two shivering FOOTMEN.

One raises his hand to her.

FOOTMAN
Halt. What have you got?

The footman pulls back the fabric covering the basket

KITTY

Fruits and hide from Brigstock. A
gift for the Duke from the
groundskeeper.

Out of sight, Kitty presses an envelope beneath the basket.
The footman inspects the contents and takes an apple for
himself. Biting into it, he lets Kitty pass.

Kitty enters, smiling.

INT. BRADGATE PARK - DAY

Kitty's hand in the shadows handing the letter to a masculine
one. Suffolk's.

Kitty returns to the darkness. Suffolk turns and walks down a
long gallery.

JANE (V.O.)

And, we agree that Northumberland
was right about one thing.

He snaps open the seal of the letter and hastily opens it.
His eyes flick over the words. He folds it back up...

And tears at it, ripping until the paper is nothing but
little pieces.

JANE (V.O.)

England will never be free while
Mary sits the throne.

He opens a window and throws them outside. They are scattered
by the quick wind.

INT. BEDROOM, GAOLER'S HOUSE, TOWER OF LONDON - NIGHT

Jane at the writing desk. She continues her letter.

EXT. ROCHESTER BARRACKS - DAY

Hundreds of SOLDIERS idle at a military barracks, full with
horses, weapons and armour. Rain batters them as they wait.

Mrs Ellen scuttles over a muddy path. She holds the hood of
her cloak over her head to avoid the rain. The men watch -
bewildered by the presence of this old woman.

At the end of the mud, SIR THOMAS WYATT - a bearded man in his thirties - tends calmly to a horse. He fastens a saddle to its back, but does not tighten the straps. Mrs Ellen arrives at his side before he can.

MRS ELLEN
Are you Sir Thomas Wyatt?

WYATT
Who asks?

Mrs Ellen hands him an envelope. He snatches it, reluctant and wearing the chauvinist arrogance of a knight. And reads.

EXT. VALLEY - DAY

Four thousand SOLDIERS marching north across the grass.

EXT. BRADGATE PARK - DAY

The front of Suffolk's manor again.

The two Footmen slump at the open front door. Their throats are slit.

Further down the driveway -- Suffolk on horseback, armour-clad. He wipes a dagger clean of blood with a cloth.

He's followed by a dozen other SOLDIERS. One raises the Grey colours on a banner. They march for war.

EXT. HATFIELD HOUSE - NIGHT

GUARDS patrol around the fountain at the entrance path to the magnificent red-brick house. It is dark except for the flickering torches they carry. Their clothes bear the red and blue of the Royal guard uniform.

One guardsman passes the dark gap between the wall and a hedge.

Kitty, cloaked, slips out from it and walks - close to the wall - to a smaller door on the side of the building. She opens the door quietly and slides in.

INT. HALL, HATFIELD HOUSE - NIGHT

Kitty lightly rushes across an empty dining hall.

Overlooking the breadth of it and illuminated by a spot of moonlight through the windows is the three metre long canvas painting of Henry VIII, Edward, Mary and Elizabeth.

Kitty looks up to it - a little in awe - before moving on.

INT. DRAWING ROOM, HATFIELD HOUSE - NIGHT

Kitty walks to the centre of a dimly lit room - only the flickering light of the fireplace illuminating her silhouette.

She procures Jane's letter from beneath her cloak and hands it to a figure sat in a large armchair. Kitty curtsies and makes a slow exit.

From the shadow of the armchair, Elizabeth leans forward and starts to read.

JANE (V.O.)
Let my martyred body stoke the
fires of a golden England.

Elizabeth thumbs over the long letter. Until, finally, she reaches the end. She hesitates.

It reads: "Your friend, Jane".

Elizabeth grips tight to the letter and stands. She paces to the window, catching the moonlight on her face, and breathes deep - calm.

She walks back over to the fireplace and throws the letter into the flames. She watches as it burns away, smiling soft.

ELIZABETH
(whispered)
For England.

And nods.

INT. BEAUCHAMP TOWER, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

A smaller room than Jane's apartments on an overcast day - sparse of decoration or furniture.

Robert and Ambrose sit against a wall. Ambrose works diligently with a kitchen knife to etch a near complete picture into the stone wall: the Dudley heraldry surrounded by roses, gillyflowers and acorns.

Guildford perches on the slanted windowsill. He gazes out of the window whilst running his thumb along an etching in the wall that reads "*Jane*".

ROBERT
What's with him?

AMBROSE
It's noon.

Robert frowns, confused.

AMBROSE (CONT'D)
Jane is permitted to walk the grounds at noon.

ROBERT
(to Guildford)
If you are so desperate to wet your wick, there is a hole in that wall over there.

GUILDFORD
Forgive me for bearing an interest in my wife.
(then)
Unlike others.

Ambrose laughs. Robert sends him a look.

GUILDFORD (CONT'D)
If I am to waste away in here forever, the least you can afford me is the sight of Jane a few minutes a day.

He refocuses his attention to the view from the window.

EXT. COURTYARD, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Boots crunch through snow. Jane walks alone across the grass. Her Yeoman watches a few paces behind.

Then, she almost steps on it -- a light pink flower, a gillyflower, poking through the snow. She plucks it and holds it up.

The silhouette of a hand pressed up against the pane in the window of Beauchamp Tower.

EXT. WOODLAND - DAY

A small woodland surrounded by thick snow. London and its Tower sit on the horizon, through the trees.

The dull CLANK of armour. A small, skirmishing force of SOLDIERS wade through the foliage. They bear the blue and grey colours of Suffolk's soldiers. Their breaths steam out in the air.

At the front is Sir Thomas Wyatt. The scratches and scuffs on his armour allude that this is not his first fight. He holds a sword close in two hands, ready, waiting...

Silence. Uneasily so.

And then the heavy STOMPING of cavalry rushing toward him.

WYATT
For Elizabeth! FOR THE TRUE
ENGLAND!

His infantry force charges forward--!

Only for half a dozen men to be dashed on impact by the hooves of horses running them down.

Wyatt slashes forward, slicing open a TUDOR MAN-AT-ARMS' throat. He cleaves through another -- then one more. Wyatt's men are empowered by his leadership.

They rush forward to another line of Tudor defence. But the TUDOR CAVALRYMEN commit their momentum and crash in on the flank. More of Wyatt's soldiers trampled beneath the force.

Then -- BOOM! A cannon flies through and strikes a tree a few feet from Wyatt. He turns to a bloodied LIEUTENANT readying himself beside.

WYATT (CONT'D)
What of Suffolk and the
reinforcements?

LIEUTENANT
(through the noise)
Captured, Sir. Outside Coventry.

WYATT
Then we are the last stand.

A pike strikes the Lieutenant's chest. Wyatt ducks and narrowly dodges another, but he gets a mouthful of his comrade's blood. The YELLING of the Tudor force overwhelms the sounds of the fighting itself.

Wyatt spits out the blood and hulks forward. He slashes through another man.

A horse skids through the snow and a cavalryman slides off it and onto Wyatt, knocking him onto the snow. He struggles beneath this armoured weight until the SLASH of a sword hits the ground by his face. He pushes the dead man off.

A TUDOR STRONGMAN - an oaf in size - forces another slash of a Zweihänder [16th century great-sword] downwards. Wyatt rolls out of the way in the nick of time and pulls the sword away from the Strongman's grip.

But he is not fast enough for the downward punch that follows. It hits him in the abdomen and he recoils in pain.

The Strongman stumbles back and impacts with another of Wyatt's soldiers, who he swiftly dispatches. Wyatt uses the distraction to reach for his sword.

The Strongman turns back, preparing another punch, but is met by the quick upward strike of Wyatt's sword.

Wyatt springs to his feet and sinks the blade into the Strongman's abdomen. He falls with a THUMP. Wyatt takes a breath and looks around...

To his men, one-by-one, yielding to the Tudor force encircling them.

EXT. COURTYARD, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Back to Jane. A THUD--!

Two GUARDS drag the Duke of Suffolk, bloodied and bruised, through the gates and across the cobblestone path. He splutters out blood - weak and hands bound - but makes little nuisance. The dented armour he wears suggests battle.

Jane snaps her head toward him. She drops the gillyflower. Hope vanishes from her face.

JANE

Father?

She begins to walk toward him. The Yeoman hesitates.

SUFFOLK

(murmuring)

Jane?

JANE

Father!

Jane bolts. One of the guards draws his sword on her.

GUARD 2

Stay back!

From behind --

YEOMAN

Leave her!

The guard withdraws, while the other guard pushes Suffolk to the floor. Jane approaches, kneels, and holds him.

SUFFOLK

I failed you.

JANE

Wyatt--

Suffolk grabs for Jane, but his weak hands don't find her.

A BANG then the music of bugles. The guards and Yeoman snap to attention as a flood of TUDOR SOLDIERS enters the courtyard of the tower. Suffolk and Jane are left alone.

SUFFOLK

Plot discovered... Troops routed...

JANE

And what of Elizabeth? Is she safe?

He laughs, weakly. Sincerity.

SUFFOLK

The Princess is more astute than even you.

Blood splutters. He leans forward.

SUFFOLK (CONT'D)

She will feign innocence for your England.

Jane reaches into her pocket for a handkerchief. She brings it to his hands and attempts to clean them. When the blood does not shift, she spits on the handkerchief and tries again.

JANE

Good.

Finally, the blood rubs away. Suffolk reaches for her. A gentle touch to her cheek.

SUFFOLK

Jane--

JANE

I stay quiet and to the side.

The soldiers climb the stairs to the ramparts. Some turn cannons to face outwards beyond the Thames. The gates SLAM shut.

Jane releases Suffolk, and he slides onto the ground with laboured breaths. She stands amidst the whirl of rushing guards.

Lord Arundel breaks through the movement of guards. Down the hill, he smirks up at her -- then in one fluid motion signals guards towards her.

Jane smiles back. The acceptance of her fate.

EXT. GARDENS, GREENWICH PALACE - DAY

A harsh Winter's day. Mary stands with Arundel at the centre of the Palace gardens. The Thames lies frozen beyond the pier.

ARUNDEL

Wyatt's support has vanished and Suffolk is within the Tower. He will plead innocence, of course. Ever the coward.

Mary walks downward through the gardens. Arundel follows.

MARY

I am glad of it. Does there continue to be no indication of my sister's complicity?

ARUNDEL

No, your Majesty.
(disbelief)
A rebellion in Elizabeth's name to dethrone you and yet there is no evidence to suggest she even knew of it.

MARY

She is involved.

Arundel tilts his head. Who?

MARY (CONT'D)

Jane. There is no proof, but I am certain. I told her to make a choice. She refused to choose the easier one.

ARUNDEL

I underestimated her.

MARY

You did.

They end at the pier. Here, for all of London's view, severed heads sit on spikes. Sir Gates, Sir Thomas Wyatt, more Protestant supporters of Jane's cause.

MARY (CONT'D)

The world will continue to underestimate little girls.

ARUNDEL

The Council suggests you put a stop to it.

Mary looks to him. The bags beneath her eyes are severe. She grips at her stomach. She bears the face of reluctance.

ARUNDEL (CONT'D)

All of them.

INT. BEAUCHAMP TOWER, TOWER OF LONDON - NIGHT

The Dudley boys sleep. Guildford rests still upon the windowsill. Ambrose's engraving is complete.

A SHINK--! as the lock at the door slides open. Robert snaps awake, then Ambrose. A TUDOR GUARD enters, then another. They bee-line for the window and grab at Guildford. They pull him down and out of the room.

The door locks. Robert bangs his fist against it.

INT. ENTRANCE, GAOLER'S HOUSE, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Jane glances out the window to the green courtyard. The SQUAWKS of ravens as they fly overhead.

A dull and muffled THUD followed but a guttural, masculine SCREAM in the distance. Jane moves a hand to her diaphragm and holds a quick breath.

Her Yeoman enters from behind and opens the door. He ushers her out.

EXT. COURTYARD, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

The Yeoman leads a small procession up past the houses towards the White Tower. It is almost the exact path taken before her coronation.

Kitty and Mrs Ellen follow at the rear, both unable to contain sobs and trying to stifle them to their best ability.

A DRIVER leads a horse and cart down through Tower Green to the path. On straw, Guildford's headless body lies atop. His head lies disconnected above. The face is bound in cloth, but Guildford's bloodied blond hair is visible.

Jane pauses, a greenness to her. Mrs Ellen gently moves Jane's head back to look at the path instead.

MRS ELLEN

My dear...

Jane swallows hard. She snaps her gaze away from Guildford as the cart continues.

The Yeoman prods her to keep moving.

INT. FOYER, TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Only the sound of soft, concealed SOBS. Doors stand wide open to the great hall. Jane turns towards it--

INT. GREAT HALL, TOWER OF LONDON - CONTINUOUS

A scaffold stands at the end -- a macabre replica of the stage set for her coronation. On it: a block surrounded by straw and already a splattering of blood.

An EXECUTIONER beside it. He takes a cloth and wipes some blood away - then wipes his axe.

The Yeoman escorts Jane down the aisle, splitting a crowd. Mrs Ellen and Kitty follow.

Silence hangs. Hear the front: Ambrose and Robert, heads low. Elizabeth stands dressed in black beside Robert. Her eyes are fixed forward, almost beyond the scaffold entirely.

Jane reaches the scaffold's steps. A woman WAILS. It is Lady Frances, near the back.

The Yeoman leads Jane up onto the scaffold. Here, they are met with the forlorn and pitying White. He nods and gestures for Jane to step forward.

Mrs Ellen removes Jane's coat and Kitty unclasps the French hood. Together, they work to unlace and remove her oversleeves and overskirt - disrobing Jane until she remains in only a plain white bodice and kirtle.

Jane casts her gaze over the crowd, stoicism faltering slightly. Mrs Ellen and Kitty step away.

JANE

Good people --

Robert looks up to her. He is red and puffy eyed.

JANE (CONT'D)

I have come here to die. Though my sentence of death is, I deem, unlawful --

Through the open doors at the end of the aisle, Mary walks into the frame. They catch one another's gaze. Mary's is unflinching.

JANE (CONT'D)

But done with my consent, I hereby wash my hands of innocence before God and the face of you, good Christian people, this day.

Mary tenses her jaw and moves on, out of sight.

The Executioner hands her a blindfold. Jane turns to him. Her last conversation. She indulges her self in it.

JANE (CONT'D)

I pray it be quick.

EXECUTIONER

It shall.

She turns to the crowd. Her mother, Ambrose, Robert... Then, Elizabeth. Jane lays the blindfold flat on her hands and ties it around her head.

Jane raises her hands, reaching forward. The touch of the block she expects does not come. She leans further, but her hands are still a foot or two away from it. She spreads her fingers. Still nothing.

JANE

What shall I do?

Silence. Jane's quickening breath fills it.

JANE (CONT'D)
(crying)
Where is it?

Jane weeps. Her arms flounder outstretched. The crowd idly watches. No one will help. Out of pity or of fear?

Beneath, Robert looks at Elizabeth -- whose performative and indifferent expression begins to fail. He gently takes her hands and tugs, pleading.

He bursts forward. The guards flanking the sides of the scaffold jolt forward at his sudden movement. Elizabeth lets go.

ELIZABETH
(to the guards)
Let him help.

Robert rushes up the steps and passes a frozen Mrs Ellen and Kitty - who clutch at Jane's removed clothes.

Jane flails in search of the block. Robert kneels beside her and guides her forward. Her hands land and grip tight on the block.

Robert lingers to wipe a tear from her cheek, but lingers at her side for a second too long. White lightly pulls Robert away.

Jane kneels alone at the block, then rests her head upon it.

Her breathing relaxes, though this does not stop silent tears. The Executioner adjusts her hair, exposing bare neck.

Close, on only Jane as...

JANE
(whispered)
Lord, into your hands I send my
spirit.

The executioner raises his axe...

Elizabeth inhales, sharp, to the sound of metal soaring through the air and the dull CRACK as it cleaves through flesh and bone. Jane is dead.

Elizabeth's expression shifts from shock to determination.

THE END

An Analysis of Historical British Regnant Queens in Film

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MA by Research

University of York

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Abstract

This analytical essay on film adaptations of Regnant British Queens is written to express the context for writing my accompanying submitted screenplay *Jane, the Quene*. In this essay, I discuss the problematic ways in which British Regnant Queens are portrayed in film and why historical accuracy is important when understanding character motivation and depicted historical events. The essay further evaluates the balance between historical accuracy and the purpose of historical adaptations in film, asking whether in-accuracy can be forgiven when the narrative contains a message to modern audiences. This work largely comments on the films portraying Lady Jane Grey, Elizabeth I, Mary Queen of Scots, Anne and Victoria.

Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work, and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

“Off With Her Head!”

Historical British Regnant Queens in Film

Modern audience is obsessed with the period drama. From the aesthetically period inspired *Bridgerton* (2020–) to the gritty real-time portrayals of *Dunkirk* (2017), history is captured with a grand variety – enough to satisfy the consumption of the modern viewer. Yet no niche is captured at such a frequency and reverence as that of the British royal family. Arguably, the existence of historical royal adaptation can be sourced back to the wildly popular, though Tudor propagandist, theatrical works by Shakespeare of the War of the Roses cycle and the roman histories of *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*. These seminal biopic works have inspired a gargantuan number of modern adaptations across all mediums focussed on the British royal family and its extensive history. However, it is vital to note when exploring historical biopics with a focus on female figures that there is a limited pool of examples. At last academic count, female historical figures account for only a quarter of biopics¹ and even less so biopics of British queens who rule in their own right or rule in historically disputed right, though name themselves as Queen Regnant. In this essay, there is a necessary focus on the Tudor queens – Lady Jane Grey, Mary I, Mary Queen of Scots, and Elizabeth I – Queen Anne, and Queen Victoria purely due to the surprising scarcity of adaptations in film.² Adaptations of these women set out to give an entertaining portrayal of their histories for modern audiences to consume. This essay shall analyse the way their memory is constrained by the narratives written for them and how modern perceptions of femininity, marriage, and gender prevent audiences from identifying accurate character adaptation and the true events of the period.

A King is a King, a Queen Must Be More

It is no wonder that adaptations of historical women and biopics focussed on women highlight the injustices women faced throughout history such as the struggle against male violence, seeking marriage, and the plights of motherhood. It would be amiss to ignore them when analysing portrayals of women who face these struggles regularly on screen. As Dennis Bingham suggests, these historical female biopics “[play] on tensions between a woman’s public achievements and a

¹ George Custen, *Bio/Pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992), p. 130.

² For the purposes of brevity and refraining from touching on modern/21st-century historical events, Queen Elizabeth II has been excluded from this analysis. There is only one notable adaptation of her life – *The Queen* (2006) – and the points made in this essay too apply to this film.

women's traditional orientation to home, marriage, and motherhood"³ as women face female servitude under an extremely dominant historical patriarchy. However, the extent to which adaptations of our chosen Regnant Queens focus on their relationship with men – and often their dependence on them through a romantic or sexual relationship – diminish their other historical achievements. A man can be a king and solely that, but a woman must be queen, wife, mother, daughter, lover, or simply none at all. In films centred on these female rulers, we witness only the "conflict between private person and public persona particular to female sovereignty because the Queen is both stateswoman and potential wife and mother."⁴

In the extreme case of Lady Jane Grey, adaptations remove the personality of these historical figures altogether. Lady Jane, often known as the 'nine-days Queen', reigned in dispute for nine days following the death of King Edward VI, prior to Mary I arriving in London to claim the throne and eventually Jane's execution in the succeeding months. Powerful female figures are given a disservice in *Lady Jane* (1986) in particular. The sixteen-year-old Jane Grey is stripped of her religious fervour and reduced to the subject of a romantic plot with no basis on historical fact. Helena Bonham Carter's Jane and Cary Elwes' Guildford are besotted with one another – going to such an extent that Jane's final words before her execution are a mournful utter of "Guildford" for her husband who had been executed minutes before, off-screen. This replaces her confession of guilt ("I do wash my hands thereof in innocency"⁵) and the later pious parting of "Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit!"⁶ which emphasizes both her Protestant martyrdom and her consent to reigning against Mary I's claim to the throne. In contrast, Jane and Guildford's marriage in reality was that of convenience and were ambivalent towards one another, so much so that Guildford once threatened to separate from Jane on account of her not permitting him to be crowned as king alongside her⁷. Consequently, there is a false overattachment to the romantic subplot of which Rachel Wisdom maintains that Jane's religious sensibilities are presented as "less important in her life than her love for Guildford"⁸ in *Lady Jane*

³ Dennis Bingham, *Whose Lives Are They Anyway? : The Biopic as Contemporary Film Genre* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2010), p. 213.

⁴ Elizabeth Bronfen and Barbara Straumann, 'Elizabeth I: The Cinematic Afterlife of an Early Modern Political Diva', in *The British Monarch on Screen*, ed. by Mandy Merck (Manchester University Press, 2016), p. 137. <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1wn0s87.12>> [accessed 1 March 2025].

⁵ Marilee Hanson, 'Lady Jane Grey and Lord Guilford Dudley Executions 1554', *English History*, 2015 <<https://englishhistory.net/tudor/executions-of-lady-jane-grey-lord-guildford-dudley/>> [accessed 19 March 2025].

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Hester W. Chapman, *Lady Jane Grey, October 1537-February 1554* (London: Pan Books Ltd, 1972), p. 117

⁸ Rachel Wisdom, "'God and Posterity Will Show Me Favor": A Search for the Historical Lady Jane Dudley in Light of Her Later Portrayals' (unpublished Undergraduate Theses, 2011), p. 95. <https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/undergrad_open/50/> [accessed 1 March 2025].

when, in fact, it was the inverse. This is additionally inappropriate, given that Jane was sixteen years old at the time.

How dangerous must the romanticisation of female historical figures be deemed from a modern point of view? Not only may it invalidate the achievements of a Queen Regnant, but Bretz suggests, in view of Lady Jane Grey and Mary Queen of Scots' portrayals in modern media, it enables a misogynistic framework of understanding history that eliminates feminine agency and normalizes sexual violence.⁹ This is especially prominent when analysing the portrayal of *Mary Queen of Scots* in the 2013 film of the same name which features a romantic plotline between Mary and her third husband, the Earl of Bothwell – whom IMDb states in the film's synopsis is “the love of her life”¹⁰. In most historical accounts, it is thought that the Earl of Bothwell abducted and sexually assaulted her¹¹ before their marriage in order to gain control of the Scottish throne. Admittedly, this is an event which the latter 2018 film of the same name gets correct (though neglects other instances where historical accuracy could easily be applied, such as providing Mary with a Scottish accent in place of a French one, or the idea that Mary and Elizabeth met face-to-face).

If a romantic narrative is unavailable to a Queen Regnant in film, she will instead be given a substitute to supplement the film's narrative. Most frequently, this is in the form of the care or connection of another man rather than allowing the woman to exist on her own merits. No adaptations of a queen do this more so than of Queen Victoria. Beyond films centralising its narrative on her early reign – and subsequently her romance and marriage to her husband, Prince Albert, as seen in *The Young Victoria* (2009) – both *Victoria & Abdul* (2017) and *Mrs. Brown* (1997) shift Victoria's narrative to her later life and the men she encounters during that period. Victoria herself had successfully navigated pre-determined and approved Victorian stages of womanhood – the youthful virgin queen, devoted young wife and mother, grieving widow, and grandmother of the nation¹² – and thus the modern media image of Victoria does not stray from confining her to male-dependant narrative interest. In *Mrs. Brown*, Victoria is subject to the arrival of a male figure (her late husband's ghillie, John Brown) to coax her out of her mourning, following the death of Prince Albert. Likewise, in *Victoria & Abdul*, Abdul Karim arrives to “fill the gaps that [Prince] Albert and

⁹ Andrew Bretz, 'Imposing Romance: Cinematic Representations of Lady Jane Grey and Mary, Queen of Scots', *Early Modern Women*, 10.2 (2016), p.114. <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26431399>> [accessed 28 February 2025].

¹⁰ IMDb, 'Mary Queen of Scots (2013) - Plot', *IMDb*, 2025
<<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1555069/plotsummary/>> [accessed 19 March 2025].

¹¹ Antonia Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969), p. 317.

¹² Jeffrey Richards, 'Gender and Authority in the Queen Victoria Films', in *Rule, Britannia! The Biopic and British National Identity*, ed. by Homer B. Pettay and R. Barton Palmer (New York: State University of New York Press, 2018), p. 68.

[John] Brown have left in her life”¹³ and slots in as the figure of whom she may impose her motherhood over. In both adaptations, Victoria’s age in conjunction with her female body is a further barrier to her individual prosperity. Lana Peulić describes Victoria’s unhappiness in the film is due to being old, without a man by her side and that everyone around her, mostly men, are waiting for her to be gone.¹⁴ Must Victoria’s events in later life as captured in film be limited to her relationships with men through a romantic or maternal relationship, when her other exploits – such as the expansion of the British Empire and her complex views on colonialism¹⁵ – could provide an equally compelling narrative on screen?

Exceptions can be argued for *Elizabeth* (1998) and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007), as Elizabeth I famously did not marry, and her virginity is highlighted deeply in these films. Yet there is still the overarching narrative of romance – perhaps unnecessarily so for a woman who swore off marriage after her favourite Lord Robert Dudley became an unviable political option¹⁶. Pennacchia describes this exploration of Elizabeth’s romantic pursuits in *Elizabeth* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* as a “painfully achieved sexual restraint.”¹⁷ In the subsequent film, Elizabeth grapples with jealousy when her court favourite, the debonair Sir Walter Raleigh, marries Lady Elizabeth Throckmorton without her consent. This is positioned as Elizabeth losing a potential lover, instead of the traditionally accepted notion that Elizabeth was furious with the match due to its secrecy, concealment from the Elizabethan royal court, and without the permission of the ruling sovereign¹⁸. These instances paint Elizabeth as a Queen who still desired to pursue marriage and sexual relationships and was largely prevented and constrained by the whim of the men influencing her in court.

Rejecting Femininity, Sexuality and Gender

However, *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* does present a development from the romantic and sexual Elizabeth to the Virgin Queen – though vital to remember that this is presented as a painful

¹³ Barbara Straumann, ‘Live Live the Queen! Queen Victoria as a National Icon in Film’, in *Brexit and Beyond: Nation and Identity*, ed. by Daniela Keller and Ina Habermann (Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, 2021), p. 51.

¹⁴ Lana Peulić, ‘The Representation of Queen Victoria in Postfeminist Biopics: Mourning and Old Age in Mrs. Brown (1997) and Victoria & Abdul (2017)’ (unpublished Undergraduate Thesis, 2021) p.14. <<https://urn.nsk.hr/urn:nbn:hr:186:422579>> [accessed 1 March 2025].

¹⁵ Christopher Hibbert ed., *Queen Victoria in Her Letters and Journals* (London: John Murray, 1984), p. 426.

¹⁶ Simon Adams, *Leicester and the Court: Essays on Elizabethan Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 384.

¹⁷ Maddalena Pennacchia, ‘Culturally British Bio(E)Pics: From Elizabeth to the King’s Speech’, in *Adaptation, Intermediality, and the British Celebrity Biopic*, ed. by Marta Minier and Maddalena Pennacchia (Routledge, 2016), p. 37.

¹⁸ Historic Royal Palaces, ‘Sir Walter Raleigh’, *Historic Royal Palaces*, 2025 <<https://www.hrp.org.uk/tower-of-london/history-and-stories/sir-walter-raleigh/#gs.l2bftc>> [accessed 19 March 2025].

journey of the self. In the third act, when England faces invasion from the powerful Spanish Armada, Elizabeth reconstitutes herself as the Madonna and the untouchable, divine female figure. Lantham suggests that this is Elizabeth's way of serving England simultaneously as her husband and her child – a divine being both benevolent and unassailable who reigns over a golden age.¹⁹ Her femininity is removed to make way for divinity and pull herself above the consequence of patriarchy through the replacement of her gender. The film goes as far to alter Elizabeth's historical speech on the hills of Tilbury to the English troops, erasing her acknowledgement of the patriarchal female weakness ("I know I have the body but of a weak, feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too"²⁰). Removing this integral part of the speech eliminates the context from the audience's understanding of Elizabeth's struggle under the men who wish to control her, which was likely the production's intention to maintain the late 2000's sentiment of third-wave feminism.

Elizabeth: The Golden Age is not the only instance of a film altering the presentation of a Queen's gender in order to reject male oppression. Under the rise of postmodern feminism, female trauma is veiled in its presentation to a modern audience, despite the fact that women throughout history were entrenched in patriarchy. In line with Judith Butler's gender and feminist theories, gender is a performance²¹, and films produced during the late 2000s and subsequent 2010s frequently render female figures rejecting femininity to maintain political power – regardless of preserving character or period accuracy. Elizabeth's persona throughout modern media has regularly been slotted into two versions: the Virgin Queen who managed to transcend the limitations of her gender or a painted Jezebel, one of a monstrous regime of female princes whose rule was inevitably corrupted by their femininity.²² Either way, Elizabeth's femininity is restrained, belittled, or entirely removed from portrayals to emphasise her otherness in on-screen Elizabethan society.

This is heavily spotlighted in *Mary Queen of Scots* (2018) where Mary's (Saoirse Ronan) femininity is elevated by the elimination of Elizabeth's (Margot Robbie). In history, this was not necessarily the case – with Elizabeth persistently pursuing beauty standards and was a female beauty icon for other women of the time²³. The film continues the image of Elizabeth clinging onto youth by whitewashing her face with paint (an act additionally alluded to in *Elizabeth* (1997)), although this is

¹⁹ Bethany Latham, *Elizabeth I in Film and Television: A Study of the Major Portrayals* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2011), p. 178.

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²¹ Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', *Theatre Journal*, 40.4 (1988), 519–31 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893>> [accessed 18 March 2025].

²² Thomas Betteridge, 'A Queen for All Seasons: Elizabeth I on Film', in *The Myth of Elizabeth*, ed. by Susan Doran and Thomas Betteridge (London: Palgrave, 2003), p. 243.

²³ Royal Museums Greenwich, 'Elizabeth I: Fashion and Beauty', *Rmg.co.uk*, 2025 <<https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/topics/elizabeth-i-fashion-beauty>> [accessed 21 March 2025].

a myth perpetuated during the Victorian period based on paintings made after her death²⁴. The narrative written for the film supports the caricature of Elizabeth and Mary's relationship with one another and their roles in the film as individuals. The natural historical opposition, described by DeSilva and McGuire as that of the thrice-married and martyred Catholic queen who ruled from the heart and the famously celibate, long-lived Protestant queen who ruled with her head²⁵, which has been one of popular culture's most famous historical dyads²⁶, is exacerbated in the film's exploration of what it means to simultaneously be a woman and a queen. As Mary's power increases with her choice in Lord Darnley as her husband over Robert Dudley – a slight against Elizabeth as Britain's strongest ruler, Elizabeth's appearance physically deteriorates by placing her bout with smallpox at the same point in the narrative. After this, she spends the remainder of the film with or covering smallpox scars. Galpin describes this femininity as Mary using her female body to her advantage at this stage of the film to strengthen her position on the throne of Scotland, as well as her claim to Elizabeth's own title.²⁷ Yet even Mary's feminine presentation comes at a cost to her in this film, which suffocates her with scenes on all sides focussing on Lord Darnley, the Earl of Bothwell, and John Knox. Galpin continues to note that the roles of wife and mother "draw attention to Mary's femininity [and leave] her open to the machinations of misogynistic men."²⁸ Mary Queen of Scots criticises both the feminine and women who oppress their femininity to surpass the constraints of patriarchy – meaning that no woman wins, and none stay true to themselves. Mary and Elizabeth are presented by the narrative as two women seeking sisterhood with one another – going to such an extent as to fabricate a meeting before Mary's imprisonment in England in order to reconcile – when no such cordiality between them existed.

In a variety of films, Queen Mary I is further depicted with an active change to her gender performance to emphasise her role as a villain in narratives focusing on Lady Jane Grey and, even more so, Elizabeth I. *Elizabeth's* Mary is, in comparison to Elizabeth as Cate Blanchett plays her, unattractive, overweight, and descending to delirium. These versions verge on the masculine, perhaps in purposeful imitation by filmmakers of someone Mary saw as an aspirational figure for defending a monarch's power – her father, Henry VIII. A veil across film is lain to remove feminine features to preserve her bloody reputation. Interestingly, Carolyn Colbert writes in her observations

²⁴ Steven Veerapen, 'Elizabeth I: The Myth of the Makeup', *Stevenveerapen.com*, 2018 <<https://www.stevenveerapen.com/elizabeth-i-the-myth-of-the-makeup>> [accessed 21 March 2025].

²⁵ Jennifer M. DeSilva and Emily K. McGuire, 'Revising Mary Queen of Scots: From Protestant Persecution to Patriarchal Struggle', *Journal of Religion & Film*, 25.1 (2021), p. 11. <<https://doi.org/10.32873/uno.dc.jrf.25.1.002>> [accessed 14 March 2025].

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Shelley Anne Galpin, 'Leaning in or Opting Out? Women's Choices in *Little Women* and *Mary Queen of Scots*', *Feminist Media Studies*, 23.2 (2023), p. 412. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2021.1979070>>.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 420.

of Mary I's appearances in *Lady Jane* and *Tudor Rose* (1936) that Mary is "[perhaps] considered too old by the time of her marriage or too bloody, to use the adjective most readily associated with her, to be interesting, fitting, or believable as a fictive romantic heroine"²⁹ in film. All dislike and degradation of Mary's appearance is despite the fact that she was reportedly of a fair complexion and was considered by contemporaries as pretty.³⁰ A woman who participates in massacre and bloodshed in a way that does not fit the modern narratives of goodness and justice then may not be permitted the liberty of a feminine portrayal. Perhaps this may be a fair reasoning why there are no mainstream films of other such figures like the Celtic warrior-Queen Boudicca in modern cinema?

Later in historical chronology, Queen Anne's overt sexuality in *The Favourite* (2018) and clear struggles with mental health forget to include to Anne's participation in England's shift into political and financial modernity and the union of Scotland and England in 1707. Though Anne was ill and obese, she was not mentally unwell as the film suggests. *The Favourite* provides a historical account which Sophie Gee suggests is "bleak [and] despairing" where Anne is a woman "locked in physical and emotional isolation, whose fear and anxiety teeter constantly on the brink of paranoia."³¹ Here, there is further manipulating of a Queen through her sexuality. It cannot be discounted that the manipulative sexual relationships shown are perpetuated by women in this film, Queen Anne is used in almost exactly the same way as the ones previously discussed. Her power lies within her body, the sovereign body itself, and it is consequently violated – in dubious manner too, when *The Favourite* calls into question Anne's mental state to her detriment and is treated like a child by her lovers Abigail Hill and Sarah Churchill (played by Emma Stone and Rachel Weisz respectively). And yet, despite this manipulation, the only character in the film that regards their sexual activity with emotion is Queen Anne, but only after the fact. From this, we shift from the danger of portraying only Regnant Queens as the victim but also to the women surrounding or aiding them. Gee further emphasises that *The Favourite* propagates a fantasy where "women in particular are emotionally immune to suffering, violence and hostile aggression."³² Abigail and Sarah are rendered into emotional immunity when attempting to gain access to Anne's body and consequently her power – given the symbolic significance of a female sovereign's body which embodies power and that it is not

²⁹ Carolyn Colbert, "'A Wonder Lasts Nine Days': Typology, Romance, Politics, and Religion in *Tudor Rose* and *Lady Jane*", in *Mid-Tudor Queenship and Memory*, ed. by Jessica S. Hower and Valerie Schutte (Germany: Springer International Publishing, 2023), p. 221. <https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-35688-9_10> [accessed 1 March 2025].

³⁰ Mario Savorgnano, 25 August 1531, in *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, 4, p. 682, quoted in David M Loades, *Mary Tudor: A Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 63.

³¹ Sophie Gee, 'The Favourite', *History Australia*, 2019, p. 573. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14490854.2019.1637267>> [accessed 1 March 2025].

³² Ibid, p. 575.

possible to attain power without access to her.³³ Our female sovereigns are presented to modern audiences by films as items to exert power through unless she is strong enough, in Elizabeth I's case, to erase her femininity and sexuality and exert it herself.

Rejecting Historical Accuracy

Conversely, it must be highlighted that films are first and foremost modes of storytelling. Must films have a responsibility to accurately do justice to the past when good narrative is what engages an audience? Films themselves are products of the context in which they are made and the purpose in which they are made. When films are used to explore the past, it is often to extract entertainment from our history and, as Sian Barber discusses on the subject of using film as a source to interpret history, how history is used to allay contemporary fears.³⁴ Historical biopics or films simply set in historical periods mimic an aesthetic, narrative or exploration of character in a way that can then be applied to the modern world. Thus, they often take place within the confines of a specifically imagined and lovingly recreated historical world of wealth and privilege, regardless of the activities of the characters and the development of the narrative.³⁵ Barber further writes that modern concerns are reflected in costumes, visual style, character and spectacle³⁶ to give reason for mainstream audiences to seek out historical stories. This opens up history beyond historians or period fans for profit and to spread awareness of historical events that may have an impact on our current world. Bronfen and Straumann additionally suggest that *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* exists to "sell" the narrative of Elizabeth I and the politics which she encapsulates³⁷ and not necessarily the story of the woman herself in order for audiences to empathise with, relate to, and understand progressive societal and political changes. In order to streamline this effect, films "fictionalize, trivialize, and romanticize people, events, and movements" – as Rosenstone writes.³⁸ Storytellers and production companies "falsify history"³⁹ to make history accessible to the public in this way outside traditional avenues of presenting history.

³³ Serra Inan and Ayça Tunç Cox, 'The Queen's Body', *Film International*, 20 (2022), p. 38.
<https://doi.org/10.1386/fint_00152>.

³⁴ Sian Barber, 'Film and History', in *Using Film as a Source* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), p. 9. <<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1mf706q.8>> [accessed 28 February 2025].

³⁵ Ibid, p. 13.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 21.

³⁷ Elizabeth Bronfen and Barbara Straumann, 'Elizabeth I: The Cinematic Afterlife of an Early Modern Political Diva', in *The British Monarch on Screen*, p. 138.

³⁸ Robert A. Rosenstone, 'The Historical Film: Looking at the Past in a Postliterate Age', in *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media*, ed. by Marcia Landy (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2001), p. 50.

³⁹ Ibid.

Perhaps it is not the question of whether film portrayals of Regnant Queens do enough justice to the historical figures through lacking accuracy, but that there is such a substantial lack of film adaptations of them that modern audiences are limited to forming their opinions on British Queens due to a lack of variety. After all, Mary I, Elizabeth I, Mary Queen of Scots, Anne and Victoria were not the only ruling queens of historic Britain (and Lady Jane Grey not the only woman who disputed the throne). Should major film commissioners seek compelling stories about British queens that expand beyond ones who have already had major adaptations already? Empress Matilda, Lady of the English, has no film depictions other than as a supporting role in *Becket* (1964). Though HBO's *House of the Dragon* is loosely based on the Anarchy and thus the leading character of Rhaenyra Targaryen can be attributed to Empress Matilda⁴⁰, but the connection is of inspiration at best and should not be considered a portrayal. The same sentiment of media absence can be applied to depictions of Mary II in film, where she is only portrayed as a minor character in *Orlando* (1992), *England, My England* (1995), and *The League of Gentlemen's Apocalypse* (2005) – all which involve far-fetched and fantastical plotlines whose intentions are far beyond portraying these female queens in a remotely true-to-history light. Likewise, Queen Anne is only featured in a handful of films and even less in English language adaptations with *The Favourite* standing out alone as the only mainstream modern film appearance.

So how can modern film move forward from the problematic portrayals of the past? If Hollywood does not wish to show the historical truth, then the likely best solution is to explore other Regnant Queens – e.g., Boudicca, Lady Matilda, Mary II – instead, and offer a wider range of character when putting female queens to screen. There cannot be a full move away from the narrative focus of women struggling under patriarchy as it is so ingrained into British history, though it would not be difficult to step away from the dangerous romanticisation of historical events where powerful women are predominantly displayed as victims. Especially in the case of Lady Jane Grey, who was a child during her reign, the move towards defining these women as romantic leads errs on the precarious for respecting the life of the actual reality of British history. Similarly, these women ruled for many years – so why restrict film narrative to romance or hollow drama centred on marriage or motherhood? Let our ruling queens be ruthless, intelligent, bloody and religious without stripping away their sexuality or their historical personality. And in the event that the history ends in tragedy, such as Lady Jane, the end of romance or female obligation does not have to be the reason as to why audience sympathises with the character's demise.

⁴⁰ Ethan Gudge, 'House of the Dragon's Connection with Oxford Castle and Prison', *BBC News*, 2024 <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c6pp4zg46ngo>> [accessed 18 March 2025].

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