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ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

MANY PARTS TO PLAY

by Beau Lee Gambold

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Elizabethan England

Many Parts to Play

by

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Note to Reader: England's Elizabethan Era lasted from 1558 to 1603. Because it was so long ago, many words and concepts from the era are unfamiliar to modern-day readers. In this story, if you see the symbol * next to a word, phrase, or definition, it means there is more information about it at the back of the book in the alphabetical list of Terms & Concepts starting on page 108.

1

The Village

Cordelia's father was bit by a flea
In the summer of 1593 . . .

As the rain started in over the little hut, the boy and the girl and their tutor sat quietly, staring at the ceiling. Suddenly, the girl jumped up and said, "Leak!"

"Where?" The tutor sprang to his feet, and the girl pointed out the place. He pulled his chair over, stood on it, and tried to plug the leak with thatch.

"There's another!" cried the boy, a mirror image of the girl except for his clothes.

"And another!" cried the girl.

"Wait—where?"

"And another!"

The twins fell to laughing as their tutor dashed around the little room with his chair, leaving thatch and rain in his wake.

"Your bed's getting wet!" cried the girl, giggling.

"Never mind that—just point out the leaks!"

thatch: plant material, such as straw, used to cover a roof

Soon Myles, the tutor, gave up trying to plug the holes—it wasn't working anyway—and he started sticking thatch straight up through the ceiling so that he could find the places from above later on. By the time the brief summer rain had passed, the inside of the cottage was damp to its core.

The twins, Oliver and Cordelia, helped Myles carry his sheets and a couple of books out to the clearing behind the house to dry.

"Why don't you have Jakob or one of the peasants just replace the roof?" Oliver asked.

"Because it's better to fix something rather than just replace it."

"*If* you can fix it," Cordelia pointed out.

"Yes," Myles agreed, without breaking his didactic tone. "If you can. Which has yet to be determined."

"But why not have them help *fix* it then?" asked Oliver.

Myles stopped what he was doing and gave Oliver and Cordelia both a stern look.

"Because if I teach you children anything that is going to be helpful in this life, it will not be how to translate Latin into French, to spot Orion's belt, or what

didactic: instructional

Hippocrates surmised about the four humors. It will be how to figure something out for yourself!"

"Figure it out yourself!" the twins echoed together, laughing. This was a common refrain from their tutor.

"Exactly," Myles said. "Now, I'm going to climb up on the roof. One of you hand me up some thatch, and the other go inside and tell me if you see any daylight through the hole. All right?"

"All right!"

***

As the sun fell behind the trees, the twins set out through the woods from the old peasant's hut, which had been abandoned before their tutor took it over and began fixing it up. He liked to call the humble abode his *hermitage*.

They ambled past the garden that they helped Myles keep, then over the swaying bridge they had helped him build across the creek that separated the woods from the rest of Winslow Village. The peasants were already returning from the fields, and smoke from cookfires wafted from houses in a series of thin tendrils.

---

surmised: theorized

four humors: an ancient Greek theory of medicine that says good health relies on a balance of four bodily fluids: blood, choler (yellow bile), phlegm, and black bile; the basis of Elizabethan medical practices such as bloodletting

hermitage: a secluded dwelling, often used for religious or artistic contemplation

Along the way, the minister and the alewife each pulled them aside to chat, but soon the twins arrived at the large cottage that they shared with their father and grandfather—the biggest house in the village. Before going in, Oliver pulled Cordelia aside.

"Get someone to do your chores tomorrow morning," he said. "I have a *plan*."

Oliver smiled a devious smile that Cordelia hadn't seen in some time. Cordelia was immediately excited.

When they were little, Oliver had always had plans. The plans were really adventures that inevitably ended with the twins getting into some kind of trouble, but they were always wonderfully fun. Back then, Oliver and Cordelia were inseparable; at the time, they even both wore frilly dresses, so no one could tell them apart. Then Oliver turned seven years old and had his breeching ceremony,* where he received his first pair of boy's trousers. After that, he'd started dressing differently, and Cordelia felt that he'd started acting differently, too. They were ten now, and she missed the days when she and Oliver had looked alike and gone everywhere together.

Lately, Oliver was always busy. Myles was specifically employed by their father to make sure Oliver would be ready to go to one of the universities when he was older. Cordelia got to join their lessons in the afternoons,

but in the mornings, she had chores. And when Oliver wasn't with Myles, he was often practicing with the choir of Saint Mary's Church in Luton, almost two miles away. Cordelia couldn't join the choir because it was only for boys, even though she could sing every bit as well as Oliver.

But now Oliver had a *plan*. It was just like the old days.

"What are we doing?" she asked, trying not to show her excitement too much.

"Tomorrow, we're going to walk the entire length of Winslow Estate!"

Cordelia's eyes went wide. "But . . . I don't even know . . . how far *is* that?"

Oliver laughed. "It's *so* far! We'll have to start before dawn, I figure."

"Can we ride Jakob the Second?"

Jakob the Second was an old plow horse that the twins sometimes got to ride. Their father had named the horse after his steward, to poke fun at the man's occasional stubbornness.

Oliver shook his head. "No!" he said. "Because, think about it: One day—hopefully a long time from now,

steward: someone employed to manage a large household or estate

but still—one day we'll inherit all this." He threw his arms wide. "The whole estate. You'll have a piece as your dowry, and the rest will go to me, and . . . I feel like we need to see it. We need to *walk* it. The whole thing."

Cordelia wasn't so sure. "Let's ask Father," she said.

***

Their father, John Winslow, was inside the cottage at his desk, going over accounts with Jakob—the steward, not the horse.

The two men were still in their riding clothes from the day, and they both had mud in their beards after the rain. While the adults finished their work, the twins washed their hands and faces before supper.

The cook carried their meal in from the kitchen in the back of the cottage, and Cordelia set the table in the dining room while Oliver took a plate up to their grandfather, Wakeford Winslow. The old man had rarely left his room in the last several months, and it was hard to understand what he was saying when he spoke, but he always cleaned his plate.

Myles was joining them for supper that night, and he soon came in and took his seat at the table. The twins sat, too, but no one would start eating until John, the master

inherit: to receive from a parent or ancestor after their death*
dowry: a gift of money, land, or other valuables that parents are expected to provide when their daughters marry

of the house, had washed and taken his seat at the head of the table. While they waited, Cordelia's attention was caught, as it often was, by the great painting on the wall across from her.

It was a painting of Winslow Manor, the old house that had once stood on the hill near the village. It was a beautiful house in the painting: three stories and twice as broad as it was tall, up on the hill with fruit trees and flowers all blooming along the front. The manor had burned down just before the children were born. People said it had broken their mother's heart and that the loss was the reason she had died shortly after giving birth to them. But the death of the manor had also given life to the small village that Cordelia thought of as home—all these houses were built after the manor burned. And she liked the cottage; she couldn't imagine living in such a big, imposing place as the one in the painting, though often she tried.

Jakob joined the table, then finally John, and supper was served, along with weak ale.

As they ate, Oliver told everyone his plan. Their father thought it was a wonderful idea, especially at this point in the summer—with only one week until Midsummer, the days were long, and the property could probably be crossed before nightfall.

weak ale: a beverage that is a less potent form of ale*

"We can have the carriage drop you off on the western end of the property in the morning," said Myles, "and then you can follow the sunrise for the first part of the day. If you get tired or lost and don't make it to the end, you'll at least be close to the village."

"Nonsense," Jakob scoffed. "You must start in the east, with the sun at your back! Then let the sun, as it sets, lead your way across the western fields, which are farther from the village and will be less familiar."

The two men set to arguing. The twins put a word in now and again, but for the most part, they just listened, grinning. Their father only sat back and sipped his ale and laughed.

Jakob and Myles often argued. Jakob was born a yeoman and had not had a formal education beyond grammar school; he had learned to read and write in English and in Latin, but his learning had stopped there. Yet most people considered him wise, and people from all over the Winslow Estate and beyond came to him for advice. Myles, on the other hand, was the fifth son of a nobleman from the Scottish border. He had gone to the University of Cambridge, where he studied with many of

carriage: a horse-drawn vehicle that carries passengers
yeoman: a class in the Elizabethan social hierarchy, often skilled laborers, held as higher than peasantry but lower than gentry or nobility
grammar school: a school for children aged seven to fourteen

the most important people in England. He wrote poetry and drew landscapes and scribbled little inventions. He knew French and Italian and mathematics and philosophy. But he was young and was generally thought to be frivolous. The two men, both good men, envied one another. It was rare that they agreed on anything.

The meal was over before John Winslow finally interrupted their argument.

"You will start in the east, as Jakob suggested," he announced. "But Myles will go with you tonight, and you will camp on the east end of the property. That way, he can lead a short lesson on astronomy before you go to sleep."

As John was the master of the house, his decision was final. But this didn't stop the steward from putting in a last word.

"Under the stars, eh, Myles?" he said. "Just like sleeping in your hut!"

Myles gave Jakob a sullen stare. The twins tried but failed to control their laughter.

***

That night, the twins rode Jakob the Second to the east end of the property. Myles walked alongside and pointed

frivolous: not serious
sullen: gloomily or resentfully silent

out constellations and told them about the astronomer John Dee. Dee had cast the horoscope that decided what day Queen Elizabeth would be crowned, and he also owned the largest private library in England. He also happened to be, like Myles, a Cambridge graduate.

In the morning, they set out before dawn on foot. Oliver and Cordelia sang a hymn that Oliver was practicing for choir. Myles had no skill with music, but he occasionally stopped to sketch a landscape. Jakob the Second carried their bags.

They stopped for breakfast by the ruin of the old manor, up on the hill.

"You see the two chimneys that are still standing?" Myles asked. He pointed them out, rising from the mess of brick and stonework on the lower floors, which was still intact though slowly being consumed by weeds and vines.

"I noticed last year," he said, "that on Midsummer Day, if you look from the doorway of the village chapel, the sun rises just between the chimneys. Like a pair of relic guideposts leading the light into that longest and brightest of days."

Cordelia stared up at the two charred remnants. She didn't always like it when Myles got poetic—it embarrassed her for some reason she couldn't identify.

But the idea appealed to her that there was something here, something from her family's long past, still leading them on.

"Midsummer is soon!" Oliver said.

Myles nodded. "Will you two be ready to get up and watch the sunrise with me this year?"

"Oh, *yes*," the twins agreed.

A chaffinch cut across the sky, weaving between the chimneys.

"Father could afford to rebuild it," Oliver mused, nodding again toward the ruin. "He told me he could. But he put the money into growing the farm instead, and keeping our peasants employed."

"Your father's both a smart man and a good man," Myles remarked.

The twins both smiled.

They finished breakfast and set out again. Soon, their course passed near the village, but Myles directed the children to go around the north side of the woods, a route less known to them. They would be on their own for the afternoon—Myles was going to take a cart into Luton to see a friend, then pick them up on his way home again. But before the twins separated from their

chaffinch: a common European finch (a type of bird), of which the male has a pinkish-brown breast

tutor, Jakob the steward came running from the direction of the village. He immediately pulled Myles aside, and the two men spoke for some time. Then they turned and looked at the twins.

"Children," Jakob said, his voice softer than usual. "Your father is sick."

Cordelia's heart sank. With her father sick, she wouldn't get to finish the day's adventure; it would be her responsibility to take care of him. "I'll get started with the broth," she offered, assuming her father had simply caught a chill or had a slight fever. "That will make him feel better," she called as she set off.

"Cordelia, *stop*."

Cordelia froze, then turned slowly. Something in Myles's voice had sent a shiver through her.

"What? Is it already made? They'll still need my help with—"

"Cordelia," Jakob cut her off. His face was stern and solemn and sad. Cordelia's heart began to beat wildly. "I'm sorry," Jakob said, "but—it's not just a summer cold."

"No!" Oliver suddenly cried from behind them. "No! It's not the—" His voice fell almost to a whisper. "It can't be . . ."

"It is," Myles said, loud enough that Cordelia could hear. "Children, your father has the pestilence."

***

The latest outbreak of the plague had begun the year before, in 1592. Sometimes the disease didn't come back after the winter, but it had been a mild winter, and there had already been cases in Luton in the spring. It was usually safer in the country, but no one really understood how the plague spread, so there was no way to be perfectly safe.

The twins didn't finish their journey—they went straight home that morning. They spoke to their father through the door of his room, afraid to breathe the same air that he breathed. They told him that they loved him. Then they milled around the house, uncertain of what to do.

In the afternoon, a doctor arrived from north of Luton. He lanced John Winslow's buboes and covered them with healing herbs. The doctor left instructions, and over the following week, Jakob chanced his own health to replace the herbs. Still, John Winslow died the night before Midsummer Day 1593—the shortest night of the year.

plague: a disease carried by fleas and spread by rats; called "the pestilence" in Elizabethan England
lanced: pierced or opened with a sharp object
buboes: swollen, painful lumps

The traditional Midsummer bonfire was canceled. The sun rose the next morning behind clouds, and whether the relics of the old house would have guided its coming or not, nobody was there to see it.

2

The Heir

A twist of fate, a dreadful loss:
Now Cordelia's tempest-tost

John Winslow's funeral was a week after his death. Though John had been well loved, fears over the plague kept the event small. Cordelia's aunt, Margaret North, whom everyone knew as Maggie, came up from London even though muddy roads turned the thirty miles into a two-day journey. Maggie's daughters were all at the country houses of various friends or potential suitors, keeping out of London for the plague summer. Maggie had stayed behind to look after her husband, Francis North, who had himself remained in town to look after his business affairs. For these few days, Francis was on his own in the city.

John's younger brother, Sidney, was also among the few mourners, though he did not join the others in the church. He was only seen at the edge of the village, circling the place like a hungry fox. By the time the service finished, he was gone.

suitors: men who court a woman in hopes of marrying her

"That's a dark omen," Jakob observed, when someone mentioned seeing Sidney.

"A bad sign for sure," Myles agreed. The two men, somber on the day, were for once not arguing.

Cordelia had never met her Uncle Sidney, though she had heard of him. He had been dismissed from two different apprenticeships, a thing that rarely happened, then he disappeared and turned up in Northampton, accused by the constables there of begging, as well as suspected theft. Cordelia's grandfather, Wakeford, had had to ride out and pay the fines, or Sidney might have wound up in a house of correction. To prevent further dishonorable behavior, Sidney was set up with a room on the outskirts of London. John sent money to the landlady, as well as to a tavern near Sidney's lodgings, where Sidney took all his meals. This arrangement worked well enough. They hadn't heard from or about Sidney in years. But now John was dead.

No one saw Sidney in the days or weeks after the funeral, and all took that to be a good sign. Jakob made sure that Sidney's room and board continued to be paid, and for a while, Cordelia's uncle was forgotten. It was a

apprenticeships: arrangements in which someone learns a trade by working for a person skilled in that trade

house of correction: a penal institution for persons convicted of a minor offense and considered capable of reform*

good harvest in the fall, and though taxes were high that year because of the war with Spain, more than enough grain was set aside to make it through winter. The weather cooled; plague cases decreased until there were none to speak of. A melancholy calm descended upon the village. Then, one chill November morning, Sidney reappeared.

He came walking down the hill from the remains of the old manor house. Oliver saw him first, and he ran to tell Jakob. Cordelia was setting about her morning chores when she heard the voices. Angry voices. She peered out from the cottage garden, over the fence that kept wild animals out.

"Wakeford is alive! Tell me he en't," Sidney cried. "I came to that funeral. It wasn't my father in that box but my brother. Wasn't it!"

"No need to yell, sir," Jakob said calmly.

"I'll yell if I want to! Because it's *my* farm, isn't it?"

"But you never—"

"It doesn't matter! I'm the eldest now. I stand to inherit. And I mean to keep an eye on what's mine."

That day, Sidney moved into Cordelia's father's room. She hid from him, which was easy because he

rarely appeared at meals—as far as she and Oliver could tell, their Uncle Sidney was at the tavern in Luton most nights. He would come back late, slamming doors and shouting, but by that time everyone else was in bed.

In late November, the twins celebrated their eleventh birthday with a small cake. The next morning, Myles was fired and sent away. Oliver began attending the grammar school in Luton, leaving early in the morning to walk there in the cold. Cordelia hardly ever saw him—only boys were allowed at the school, which began at seven in the morning and went on until four. When the days grew longer, class would start earlier and go for longer.

Without the tutor, Cordelia's education stopped. The maids were dismissed without warning; Cordelia saw them around the village, looking for new jobs to help their families stay afloat. Cordelia now cleaned the cottage, helped cook and serve the food, and looked after her grandfather. The short winter days dragged on drearily.

Then, at supper one cold night, Jakob sat down looking even more troubled than usual. Oliver asked him what was wrong, and he sighed.

"Your uncle is transitioning the farm—we won't be raising a crop this spring, only grazing sheep."

"But!" Cordelia burst out. "But that's what father always said he wouldn't do!"

"Aye," said Jakob. "And back then, that was a hard decision—raising sheep was more profitable once, but your father avoided it so as to keep his peasants employed.* Now wool is worth much less, but your uncle doesn't want to feed the peasants over the winter. Instead, he wants to use that money to rebuild the big house."

"What will the peasants do?"

Jakob shook his head. "What they can. Many of our peasants have lived and worked this land for generations. But they own very little—not the land nor their houses. They have no right to stay if Sidney wants them gone. And they have nothing saved. I suppose most will go to London to look for work. Or they might find another farm to work on."

"He's hurting them *and* us!" Oliver cried.

"How can he do this?" Cordelia asked, bewildered.

"It's his right," Jakob said plainly. "He's the eldest son now, and Wakeford hasn't spoken a word of clear sense in a rabbit's age." He looked at Oliver and added, "If your grandfather had died before your father, the whole

estate would have passed to you. But as things are . . ."

"It isn't right," Oliver said sullenly.

"I miss Father," Cordelia said.

Jakob nodded, but Cordelia's brother gave her a harsh look.

"Don't be selfish," he said.

"Selfish!" Cordelia exclaimed. "At least you still get to go to school! I just do chores all day!"

"There are people losing their homes!" Oliver cried. "Our peasants might starve or freeze this winter. Think about someone else, would you?"

Cordelia sulked. All three stared at their food without eating for some time. Then Jakob spoke.

"Once, Cordelia," he said, "there was talk of you staying with your Aunt Margaret in London for a while. For you to learn to be a lady."

"I already *am* a lady," Cordelia snarked. "Or a gentlewoman, at least."

Jakob laughed a sad laugh. "But you don't know how to be around other ladies. Or gentlemen who aren't your brother."

Cordelia made a face. Just because she hadn't spent much time around other people of her class didn't mean that she wouldn't know what to do.

"Your aunt has been busy with her own daughters," Jakob went on. "Finding them ladies to wait on, then husbands to keep them. I think her youngest, Anne, is still at home in London. But the way things are with your Uncle Sidney here, it might be time to write to her."

***

That night, Cordelia was awoken by the front door of the cottage slamming. Muttering echoed up the stairs from below. Soon, Sidney's hefty boots sounded, loud and uneven, coming up the stairwell.

Cordelia kept very still as her uncle's clumsy steps passed outside her door. She was about to relax and go back to sleep when the next door after hers, Oliver's door, creaked open.

There was a long pause, then voices in the hallway. The voices rose, and there was a crash as something heavy was dropped or thrown. Cordelia heard one last shout, then the door was slammed. Her uncle thundered away to his own room, muttering again.

Cordelia slipped out of bed and made her way to her

door. She waited until her uncle's snoring filled the cold, snow-dulled night. Then she crept out into the hallway and went to Oliver's room.

She found him buried in his blankets. She could see by the glow of the candle at his bedside that he was awake. Whatever words had been exchanged had deeply unsettled him.

"Oliver," she whispered. "Oliver, what happened?"

"Go away," her brother muttered from deep in his sheets.

"But *Oliver*—"

Oliver then pulled the covers down and sat up, his eyes blazing with anger. "Go!" he cried.

Cordelia hesitated, but she saw that her brother was going to yell again, and she was afraid he would wake Uncle Sidney. Reluctantly, she left.

***

Cordelia couldn't sleep that night, nor for the next several nights. She could barely even eat. Oliver acted like nothing had happened, but she could see that something had changed in him, too. Rather than becoming timid, he seemed bolder than he had been, almost looking for a new chance to confront their uncle. Cordelia, on the other hand, hid from Sidney like a worm hides from a hungry bird.

By the end of the week, she was ill from lack of food and sleep. She felt like she was sleepwalking from chore to chore, checking on her grandfather, keeping the fire stoked and the fireplaces clean, washing dishes and mending clothes.

One night, a heavy snow fell—the biggest storm of the winter so far. Though in the morning it was beautiful, it seemed like the sun never quite rose; the sky was dark and grey all day. At about the time that twilight descended, Cordelia, having carried bread and ale back to the cottage from the baker and the alewife, tripped over a fallen stick that had been hidden by the snow. She lay dazed for some time, sprawled across the cottage steps.

Slowly, as though time itself were freezing in the deep cold, she brushed herself off and began to gather her things. The ale was lost, and the bread was soggy. The wet snow smelled like a fresh pond, and the grey light somehow hurt her eyes. At that moment, a horse and carriage rounded the far side of the village. Cordelia picked up the wet bread and empty jug and stood in the doorway, staring. Something had given way in her, maybe because of the fall. She was done hiding.

When she realized that she didn't recognize the horse or the carriage, a part of her numbness was replaced by curiosity. Jakob opened the cottage door behind her and stood close, brushing some snow from her hair.

The driver pulled the carriage to a stop. The door was flung open, and out burst a ferocious bundle of elaborate London style—Cordelia's Aunt Maggie.

Maggie tore across the short yard, exclaiming, "Where is that no-good brother of mine?!"

She had already stormed past Cordelia into the cottage when she stopped, turned around, and said, "And you, child—Cordelia?"

Cordelia nodded.

"Pack your things right this instant," said Margaret North. "You're coming with us to London."

3

The City

She goes to London with an aunt
And learns that ladies shall and shan't

Cordelia's Aunt Maggie was married to Francis North, a merchant. Francis had been born a yeoman weaver, and it was said of him that he could turn a spool of sheep's wool into cloth both faster and finer than most. But when he was young, he found himself in a tavern at a table of Dutch traders. They had just arrived in London with a cargo of silk thread that they were hoping to get turned into cloth. But they had no contacts. Francis knew whole families of weavers, and for a stake in the business, he took the thread to the workers' homes, where they each had their own looms. Francis brought the cloth back to the traders, who took it to Antwerp, where there was a great demand for silk. Soon, these traders and others came to rely on Francis for his network. Before long, he was a very rich man.

stake: an interest or share in a business
looms: devices used to weave thread or yarn into cloth

In addition to working as a middleman, Francis set up his own shop near the newly opened Royal Exchange, as a clothier to the wealthy. Eventually, he invested in a pair of his own trade frigates. Then he married a woman who had once been described to him as a frigate herself: the great, undauntable Margaret Winslow, daughter of a well-to-do gentleman farmer from Luton. Maggie came with a large dowry, and Winslow was a good family name, a legacy that would help their children in society. But it was Maggie whom Francis loved; there was no one like her. No one so bold or so equal to the fire in Francis's northern blood. His own family claimed to descend from Danish and Norwegian raiders, who had settled for generations on the Orkney Islands before a second son descended on the English capital to raid it from inside. Whether this legacy was true or not, Francis, with his broad, imposing shoulders and bushy red beard, was known by both friends and enemies as "the Raider." And a Raider tunic or doublet was as good as any that money could buy.

***

clothier: someone who makes or sells clothing
frigates: light boats propelled originally by oars but later by sails*
undauntable: fearless

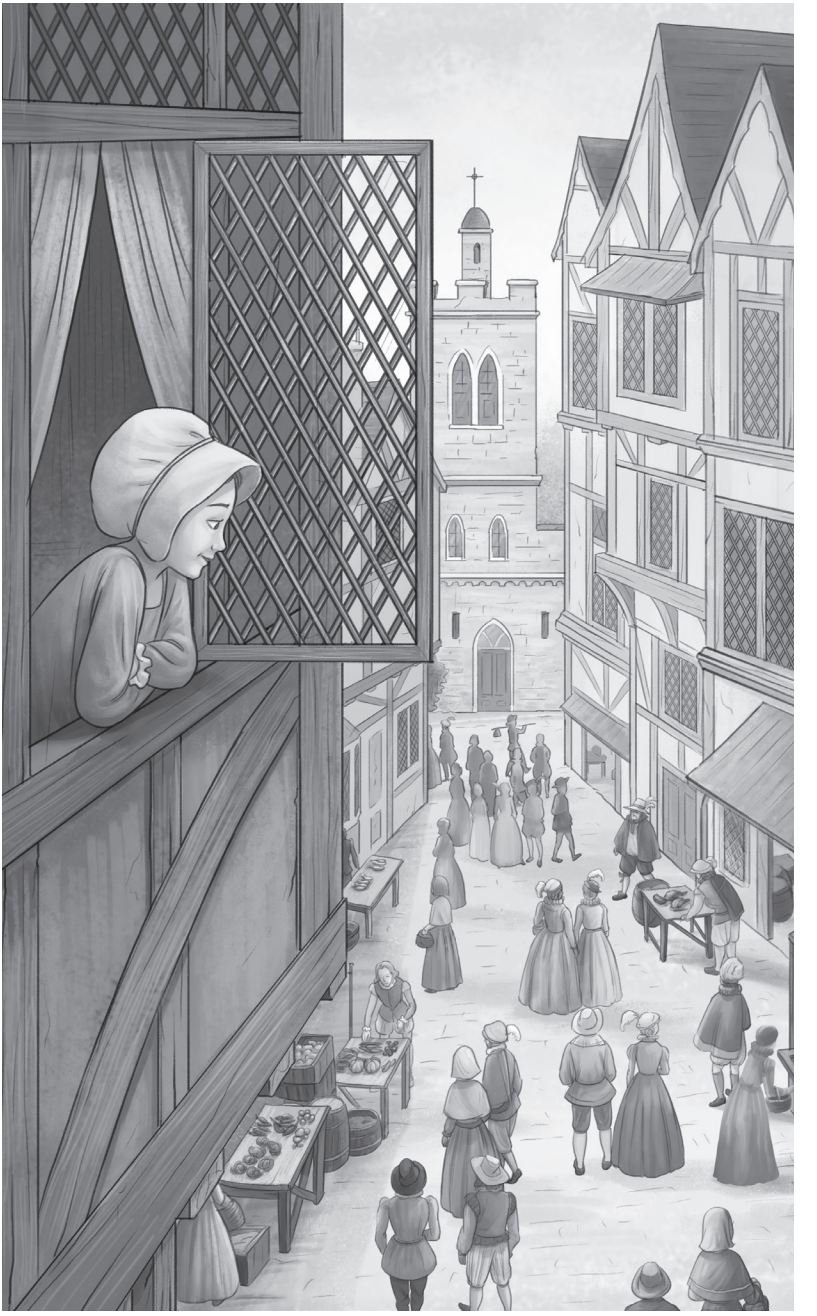
Cordelia arrived in London on a foggy, frostbit evening. Her aunt's carriage pulled up outside a decadent home, and she was helped up the stairs to a bedroom on the third floor, where she promptly took ill.

She stayed in bed for weeks, thinking of her father and her brother and of Jakob and Myles. Her aunt and several servants brought her meals and emptied her chamber pot out the window into the frozen street. In between fitful bouts of sleep, she reminded herself of her bedridden grandfather, and sometimes she was struck by a great pity for old Wakeford. Other times, she was embarrassed both for him and for herself.

When she could finally stand for any period of time, she cracked the window and watched London flowing by below like a great dirty river. It felt like the entire population of Luton could pass by on this one London street about once every hour or two. It was exciting and invigorating. It was also overwhelming. She shut the window and went back to bed.

For a couple of days, Cordelia lay and imagined all the lives that she was now surrounded by: servants and merchants and grand lords and ladies. London seemed like a place where anything could happen, and she began

decadent: lavish and indulgent
chamber pot: a container kept in the bedroom that people can relieve themselves in and empty out later



to feel a tinge of excitement, wondering which of the many, many stories that the city helped craft would be hers.

Finally, she felt well enough to make her way from the bedroom into the hallway. She'd been brought to the room in a daze, and now she didn't know which way was which. She picked a direction at random and soon reached a stairwell leading down.

Eventually, Cordelia found an elegant drawing room. A large painting of Winslow Manor, just like the one that hung on the wall in the cottage, was prominently displayed. The painting brought back to her all that she had lost, and she stood transfixed, disoriented, unseated in time and place. She didn't even notice her large uncle enter the room until he was at her side.

"You're up!" he declared.

Cordelia jumped. Once she had recovered, she nodded, though her eyes were still wide.

"I'm up," she agreed.

"Well, I'm afraid your aunt is away, cavorting with potential in-laws." He then waved a sheet of paper in the air in front of her. "And I'm off in search of someone who can read this and tell me whether I'm being swindled!"

cavorting: jumping or dancing around playfully; engaging in extravagant behavior

Her uncle turned and set off through a near doorway.

"What is it?" Cordelia called after him timidly.

The large man reappeared in the doorway and blinked at her. His sweeping red moustache twitched, and his eyebrows worked, and then he exclaimed, "You can read! But of course you can—no sister or aunt of mine could ever make more than a mark for their name, but my own daughters are all scribbling in French and Italian, just for the fun of it."

"My Italian isn't very good," Cordelia confessed.

Francis guffawed. "I dare say it's better than mine! This is in English, though," he added. "At least, I think it is."

He led Cordelia from the painting to a crackling fireplace, where he sat her down in a plush chair and then set the sheet of paper in front of her. "What's that say?"

It was a receipt of some sort. A bill of sale. It was a little hard to decipher because it was in shorthand, and she didn't know a lot of the words—they had something to do with kinds of cloth and articles of clothing. But Myles

decipher: figure out the meaning of messy or unclear writing
shorthand: a method of writing rapidly by substituting characters, abbreviations, or symbols for letters, sounds, words, or phrases

had his own style of shorthand, which he had explained to her once, and she used this little bit of knowledge to tell Francis what she could. Before she made it halfway through the page, the big man seemed to melt away from her, taking a seat on the other end of the fireplace.

"That *fiend*," he grumbled. "I didn't think it was so bad as that. He *thought* that he could . . . Well, he can't!"

"What is it?" Cordelia asked.

But Francis only slapped his thighs and stood again.

"All thanks to *you*, child. Now come. Eat something. And there are letters from your brother that Meg was waiting to give you. When you felt better, see."

The mention of Oliver drew Cordelia's attention away from the receipt, and she followed her uncle into the dining room, where he left her with the letters and a plate of last night's mince pie. But before she could settle down to read what her brother had sent, Aunt Maggie arrived home. She came through the drawing room and froze when she saw Cordelia. Then she shouted into the next room, "She's up!"

"She's up!" Francis echoed back.

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"It *just* happened."

"You've given her the letters already?"

"I thought they might cheer her up."

Aunt Maggie looked Cordelia over. "What if she's not ready?" she called, as though Cordelia couldn't hear.

"But she's up, isn't she? You wanted to wait until she was up."

"And what if the letters put her back down again?"

"They can't be so bad as all that."

"It's not what's *in* them, Francis, it's . . ."

"It's *what*?"

"Oh, *never mind*!" Maggie finally spoke to Cordelia. "Hello, dear. Good to see you're up. How do you feel about coming to a supper with me?"

Now Francis stormed into the dining room, trailed by a servant who was trying to fasten a bow that kept his sleeve on.

"You want her to go with you to *the Ratclyffes'*?" he said.

"And why not? She needs to meet people!"

"Well, it's just—nothing would make *me* want to stay in bed *half* so much as the Mistresses Ratclyffe."

"Don't be rude," Aunt Maggie declared, though she laughed while she said it.

Still trailing a servant behind him, Francis went to Cordelia and patted her shoulder. "You don't have to go if you don't want to, child."

"I . . . um . . ."

Both grand Londoners stood over her, aunt and uncle, awaiting a response. It was true that Cordelia still felt weak. But she had been peeking out a window now for days, wondering what London would be like. Here was an opportunity to find out.

"I'll go!" she burst out.

"Oh, dear!" Francis laughed.

"Excellent," Maggie declared. "Come with me, and we'll get you dressed."

"Am I not already dressed?" Cordelia protested. Her aunt only laughed.

Cordelia followed her aunt to one of her cousins' rooms—Anne, Maggie's youngest, who was the only one still living at home—and advised a servant as to

what outfit to pull from the back of Anne's wardrobe. They helped Cordelia try the outfit on.

"It's out of fashion," Maggie remarked, pulling the sleeves this way and that. "But it's the only one that will fit. And you're coming from the country, so we can excuse it that way. I'll set Francis on getting you new clothes right this minute. But now—what do you usually do with your hair?"

After Maggie and one of the maids had their way with Cordelia's hair, they smothered her face with a cake of white makeup. Then they asked her, just out of curiosity, to curtsy. Cordelia saw that the maid was trying to hold back a smile, while Aunt Maggie seemed suddenly quite serious. Cordelia curtsied.

"Oh, dear," her aunt mumbled. The maid had to look away.

Next, a black velvet hat with a flat top and a huge plume of white feather was placed on Cordelia's head. It made her feel like a giant inkwell. She tilted her head to try to see the feather dangling above her, and she lost her balance in the large hooped skirt, tight bodice, and strange, loose-fitting shoes. It was only the quick reflexes of Aunt Maggie that kept Cordelia from tumbling to the floor.

Once her aunt had righted her, Cordelia stood trembling in her cousin's room. She was already overwhelmed. Maggie shook her head.

"No," she said. "This won't do. We'll give you some practice first, before we expose you to these particular wolves—London's gentleladies can be absolutely ruthless. Get your own things back on. You're staying here tonight."

Cordelia did as she was told, nearly fainting with relief but also feeling distinctly that she had failed a test and was missing out, perhaps even being punished for not knowing what to do.

She was starting to think she wouldn't like London after all.

That night, she lay in bed with a candle and read the letters from Oliver. Construction had started on the new Winslow Manor. An image of the old house rose in her mind, but where it had seemed lovely and nostalgic before—if foreboding—now it seemed horrible. The manor house of her past and the London of her future were both crowding in on her, making it hard to breathe. Cordelia cried herself to sleep.

***

The next morning, Cordelia felt better, and she rode with her uncle the short distance to his shop, where they took her measurements. Once the tailor was through with her, Francis pulled Cordelia to the door of his office. He pointed out across the long room that made up North Clothiers.

"You see that man there, at the desk up near the front?"

When Cordelia nodded, Francis closed the door to his office.

"He's been lying to my customers—selling them cheaper fabric at higher costs, telling them it's something

nostalgic: longing for or thinking fondly of the past

it isn't. Not only is he pocketing the difference, but I'll look bad when the clothes don't last or look or feel like they should! I could even get in trouble for it."

Then a smile spread out beneath Francis's red whiskers.

"But thanks to you!" he said. "Now I know—Say! You should stay here and work for me!"

This surprised Cordelia—girls of her class didn't typically have jobs. But there was another thought that she found even more pressing.

"But what's going to happen to that man, now that he's caught?"

Francis sat in the big chair behind his desk and stroked his whiskers.

"Hmm," he said. "Well. I have a constable on the way now. And any theft over twelve pence is a hanging offense."

Cordelia was shocked.

"How much did he steal?"

"Oh, a *lot* more than that—several pounds that I know of! Half his annual wage and then some."

"So he'll be *hanged*?"

Cordelia felt dizzy. She knew that hanging was a common punishment, but she hadn't ever actually seen someone who was going to die, other than her father. And all for selling someone a different fabric!

"Well, it's up to the justice of the peace," Francis replied carefully. "They might only send him to a debtors' prison until he can pay my customers back."

"How could he pay them back if he's in prison and isn't making money?" Cordelia asked.

"I guess he'd have to rely on his family."

"Does he have family?"

Francis shrugged.

Cordelia went and cracked the office door and looked out at the thief. It was near dinner, the midday meal, and just then there were no other workers in the shop. The man was joking with a customer, laughing. He had no idea he'd been discovered. Francis came and stood behind her.

"He doesn't look like a bad person," Cordelia said.

"Well," Francis mumbled. "Just goes to show . . ."

Cordelia suddenly spun around and hugged her uncle. She was starting to tear up.

"I just—I feel so bad!" she cried. "I read that receipt for you and I didn't know what it was! And now I've cost a man his life!"

"Shhh!" Francis shut the door. "No, you haven't," he said. "He made his own decisions."

"Please, don't," Cordelia pleaded.

"The constable is already . . ."

Cordelia suddenly stopped crying. She looked around the room. "I feel dizzy," she said.

"Come lie down then." Francis led her to a long bench in his office. "Just stay here. I'll get you something to drink from next door."

Her uncle left the office and closed the door. The second the door was shut, Cordelia was up again. She ran to the door and peeked out. She watched Francis hurry to the front and out into the street. Then she couldn't see him.

She immediately sprinted to the desk where the young clerk, now alone in the shop, was taking notes. When Cordelia stopped in front of him, he smiled, a touch confused, and said, "Can I help you?"

"You've been caught," Cordelia whispered.

"What's that?"

"You've been caught," she repeated, "and a constable is on his way."

Cordelia watched the young man's smile melt. He turned white. She sprinted back to the office. Her heart rate had just slowed down when her uncle returned with a mug of weak ale.

4

New Ways

Her trials are not over yet:
Now petticoats and etiquette

The clerk was gone by the time the constable arrived. It was supposed that he'd overheard Cordelia's cry from the office and had guessed that something was up.

Aunt Maggie had the carriage, so they walked home that afternoon. On the way, Francis kept silent, but his face kept changing. Cordelia watched him carefully, and sometimes she thought that he was angry, sometimes thoughtful, at other times just tired. She wanted to apologize, but she didn't want to get in trouble. Also, she was glad that she'd saved the young man's life.

Only when they had turned the corner on their street did Francis sigh deeply, smile faintly, and say, "You know, I was a bit of a rascal myself once." He gave Cordelia a wink and then hurried up to the door.

No mention was made of the day's events during

etiquette: rules about proper behavior

supper, but this was in part because Aunt Maggie had invited a guest: Mistress Bull, who was going to be Cordelia's teacher of etiquette.

Jacqueline Bull had once been a maid of honor to Queen Elizabeth. She had also been courted by a young earl of some fortune just before the Spanish Armada swept into the English Channel in 1588. Her young gentleman gallantly took to sea to defend his country, and he was part of the effort (along with Francis North and countless others) that kept the Spanish from making landfall and invading England. Yet while the fleet was victorious against the Spaniards, Mistress Bull's earl shared the same fate as so many on the English side that year. Typhus, scurvy, and dysentery made the victory bittersweet: While only one hundred British sailors were lost in battle, more than seven thousand died of disease.

Now Mistress Bull gave lessons on etiquette. Despite her riveting past, Cordelia disliked her immediately.

Prior to Mistress Bull's appearance, Cordelia had apparently been laboring under the misapprehension that she knew how to use a knife and fork. According to Mistress Bull, she was doing it wrong. She also stood wrong, walked wrong, sat wrong, and held both her chin

maid of honor: a young unmarried lady usually of noble birth whose duty it is to attend a queen or a princess
misapprehension: misunderstanding

and her hands in the wrong positions. She didn't even know how to sip a cup of tea!

"Who raised you, child? Did they sleep indoors?"

Mistress Bull laughed at her own joke; Cordelia fumed.

"Not always!" she spat, thinking of that night out under the stars with Myles. The last night before her father had gotten sick. "And they were smarter and kinder than you are!" she added.

Mistress Bull brought out the short birch rod she always kept near and gave Cordelia a hard rap on the knuckles.

"Do not be rude, girl."

"You were rude first!" Cordelia rejoined.

Mistress Bull gave her another, harder rap.

"Do not talk back!"

Cordelia glared, tears forming in the corners of her eyes. But she kept her mouth shut.

***

Cordelia despised Mistress Bull so much that she started feeling faint whenever she knew that the woman was on her way. Just being around her made Cordelia feel sick. But sometimes, when she was able to think about

Mistress Bull's lessons without thinking of Mistress Bull, she understood why she was being taught.

Just like Jakob had said, Cordelia had been raised away from other gentry and nobles, and especially from other women. Her father had not been keen on teaching manners, only on being kind. Cordelia loved her father, and she'd had a wonderful childhood. But now, when she watched her aunt and uncle, her cousins, or any guests that came to the house, she realized that she really didn't know how to act. Everyone else in London knew when to speak, what to say, and whom to say it to. It was as though all of social life in the city was one big, elaborate ritual.

Mistress Bull enforced all of this "etiquette" by saying it was "right." This infuriated Cordelia because it implied that the way she had grown up was *wrong* instead of just *different*, which she knew in her heart to be true.

If anything, the fact that Cordelia had been allowed to argue with her brother and father, instead of just doing what they said because they were male or older or both, made her feel that the way she had been raised was actually better.

But what Cordelia *figured out for herself*—Myles would have been proud—was her own reason to learn etiquette. It was simply to make her life in this new

world easier. If she understood all the little bits and pieces of what it meant to be a lady in London, then she would fit in. Then maybe she could turn her attention to other things, instead of always being concerned about embarrassing herself or standing out for the wrong reasons. She might even be allowed more freedom by her aunt. And best of all: Once she mastered etiquette, she would be free of Mistress Bull.

And so Cordelia stopped resisting and started focusing. She kept quiet and paid attention to Mistress Bull during lessons. She studied her Aunt Maggie and Uncle Francis, her cousin Anne, and any of Anne's friends or potential suitors who passed through.

With Anne's and Maggie's help, she even began to understand how to dress and let her hair out to its full length, so that it seemed to flow out from the many hats she was given to wear. Francis had several outfits made for her in the latest styles, complete with stockings, bodices, petticoats, a hooped skirt called a farthingale, gowns with separate sleeves that buttoned or were tied on, shoes, cloaks, hats, and different-sized ruffs that went around her neck like a lace dinner plate with her head at the center. Once a maid had helped her put all this on, Cordelia did her own makeup: She painted her face nearly white, then colored her cheeks and lips red. At the end, she looked like a small version of a grand

lady, which was exactly the point—she was old enough now that she was supposed to look just like a lady. If she had been in London all along, she would have been dressing this way for years.

But there was one thing Cordelia resisted, even though she wanted desperately to please her aunt so that she could be done with Mistress Bull: coloring her teeth.

She had noticed that sometimes Aunt Maggie or Anne, when they went out, would suddenly have dark-colored teeth. When Anne was helping Cordelia practice her makeup one day, Anne wiped a finger in the fireplace and told Cordelia to draw her lips back.

"What are you doing?" Cordelia asked.

Anne didn't answer, only imitated what she'd told Cordelia to do. Cordelia reluctantly drew her lips back. Anne stuck the soot-covered finger in her mouth, then rubbed it around on her teeth.

"There," she said. "Look." Anne held up the mirror.

"It's awful!" Cordelia exclaimed.

"Well, yes . . . But the queen loves sweets, and they've turned her teeth black. And everyone wants to look like the queen, so—"

"I won't do it," Cordelia blurted.

Anne shrugged. "I don't love it either, but—"

"I *won't*," Cordelia said.

Anne smiled; her own teeth, at the moment, were white. "All right," she said.

***

Mistress Bull was annoyed, but Aunt Margaret took pity on Cordelia and didn't make her stain her teeth. It was part of her reward for learning etiquette so quickly and so well.

The rest of her reward was that she graduated, finally, from Mistress Bull. Her etiquette lessons had only taken three weeks, but they felt to Cordelia like the longest three weeks of her life so far.

For a couple of days, there were no lessons, no classes, no engagements. Cordelia practiced all the things that she had learned so that she would never have to go through learning them again. Then, one evening before supper, Aunt Maggie led Cordelia into a front parlor that the family rarely visited. Here, she found a beautiful young woman singing. This lady nodded as Cordelia and her aunt entered, but she kept on singing until the song was over.

When she finished, Cordelia and Maggie both clapped. The young lady bowed.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Cordelia," she said. "My name is Mrs. Peachtree."

"That was really wonderful," Cordelia replied quietly, suddenly finding herself shy.

Mrs. Peachtree smiled. Her teeth, Cordelia was happy to see, were not black.

"Thank you very much," she said. "Your aunt tells me that she's heard you singing sometimes, and that you have a lovely voice."

"I do?" Cordelia asked, looking up at Aunt Maggie.

"I think so," her aunt said.

"Why don't you sing something for me?" Mrs. Peachtree offered. "And then maybe, if you like, I can teach you how to sing like I do."

5

New Skills

Of singing, sonnets, silk, and sighs
Which lead—with help—to bold disguise

Over the next year, Cordelia learned to sing. It was much more pleasant than learning etiquette, but still, it was rather hard.

When she had sung in the fields with Oliver, everything felt natural. He would sing a song, and she would sing with him, simple as that. Sometimes, when she was feeling creative or just bored, she would sing higher or lower than he did—she would harmonize. She didn't know *how* harmonizing worked, but her ear told her whether she was doing it right.

With Mrs. Peachtree, she learned how things worked. She learned scales and how to read music. And she learned to *practice*.

Mrs. Peachtree found out how high Cordelia could sing, then made her practice until she could sing higher.

sonnets: fourteen-line poems with fixed patterns of rhyme
harmonize: sing different musical notes that sound good together

She found out how low Cordelia could sing, then made her practice until she could sing lower. She made Cordelia do breathing exercises until she could hold a note for an abominably long time. The effort she had put into learning etiquette was nothing compared with learning to sing.

The days grew long and hot, then cooled off again. As fall rolled in, Cordelia knew that she had undoubtedly improved as a singer. But she couldn't say that she liked singing any more than she used to. She didn't think she necessarily had a prettier voice than she used to have. What she had now, she thought, was *control*.

And now, when she heard other people sing, she could also hear whether *they* had control. Mrs. Peachtree said she had "trained her ear." But control didn't seem to Cordelia like what was important or enjoyable about singing. It occurred to her that perhaps enjoyment itself was what she liked the most about music, like the way she had enjoyed singing with Oliver in the fields or sometimes, now, when she was practicing alone and let go and let the music fill her and take her. But Mrs. Peachtree's music didn't relax—it had a straight back, just like one of Mistress Bull's pupils.

abominably: unpleasantly

If only Myles had been at all musical! Cordelia asked if her old tutor might be hired for some aspect of her learning, but inquiries turned up that he had moved to Edinburgh, where it seemed he was getting along surprisingly well in the court of the Scottish king, James VI.

Singing was on Mondays and Thursdays. On Wednesdays, Cordelia learned the virginal, an instrument that Queen Elizabeth favored. Fortunately, these lessons were with the much less serious Miss Wimple, who sometimes snuck Cordelia a treat from her sweetheart in Clerkenwell, who was a baker. Aunt Maggie also brought in a rotation of tutors in Latin, French, astrology, math, logic, rhetoric, and dancing. These were all subjects that the queen was fond of, and therefore they were important to the nobles in Elizabeth's England.

Cordelia wondered sometimes what would be important in her court if she were queen.

She continued to hear from her brother: He and Jakob had conspired to keep many of the peasants on the land by hiring them to help with construction on the

virginal: an instrument similar to a piano, but when the keys are pressed they pluck strings, like a guitar*
logic: the study of how to make good, well-reasoned arguments
rhetoric: the study of how to speak or write well

new house. But the sheep couldn't be sheared until the spring, and it had been an over-wet year on the farm; of the few crops that had still been planted, a lot of the harvest was lost. It was going to be a lean winter.

Oliver was particularly worried about the workers. Their situation seemed too susceptible to bad weather or bad inheritors. What if Sidney married? The right woman could make all these people's lives better again. The wrong woman could make them so much worse.

***

The first snow fell, and a short hush descended on the city, like it was one big stunned child. Cordelia celebrated her birthday on her own—she was afraid that if she told anyone about it, they would hold a party and make her sing. But she wrote a letter to Oliver, wishing him happy birthday, and she received letters from both Oliver and Jakob. She was twelve years old.

Miss Wimple took leave for the winter, tending to some family business that seemed to be a source of gossip, though no one ever told Cordelia what it was. Aunt Maggie filled this tiny free moment in Cordelia's schedule by assigning her daughter Anne to teach Cordelia poetry.

susceptible: easy to affect or influence

Anne was seventeen, and she was *full* of energy. Sonnets were popular at the time, and Anne read aloud sonnet after sonnet, in such rapid-fire sequence that Cordelia only caught a line here or there. Unlike when Myles had become poetic, Anne never made Cordelia feel embarrassed. Cordelia thought on this for a while and decided that it was because Anne herself was never embarrassed, while Myles seemed to become self-conscious; perhaps his favorite poems and the poetic lines that he came up with were more personal for him.

What seemed to impress Anne about poems was how verbally complicated, or at least how clever, some of them were. Cordelia recognized that sometimes the poems were beautiful, and other times they were about beautiful ideas. Once or twice, they were both. But mostly they were just intricate, and more than a few seemed designed solely to flatter the queen.

She knew there were better poems out there; Myles had shared several with her and Oliver. Ultimately, she was relieved when Anne received an invitation to spend spring at the estate of a family friend—and potential suitor—in Norwich. Aunt Maggie went along to supervise and socialize. The poetry lessons were over.

Suddenly, Cordelia had some time to herself.

intricate: having many complicated parts

At first it felt luxurious; she took naps that she described to herself as extravagant in sonnets that she would write to poke fun at Anne—it wasn't mean, she decided, because she didn't share them with anyone.

But soon she was bored and listless. Her uncle must have noticed, because at supper one night, he stopped eating suddenly and said, "Well. Let's out with it."

"What?" Cordelia said, confused.

"What's the matter?" her Uncle Francis asked. "I haven't seen a child so forlorn since Judy missed the May Day picnic because of allergies." Judy was the eldest of Maggie and Francis's daughters, and she already had three children of her own.

Cordelia hadn't meant to mope, but now that she was asked, she thought about it.

"Well. I didn't have any lessons today," she said. "And . . . and if I had been in Luton, I would have spent the day visiting all the people I know. But the only people I know in London are you and Aunt Maggie and my tutors! And I don't feel like I should wander out on the street alone, even if I had a place to go."

"No," Francis agreed. "Meg wouldn't like that. So what did you do?"

"Nothing!" Cordelia nearly shouted.

"Nothing?"

"Well, I did my voice practice, and I read for a while. I played the virginal, and I practiced dance steps . . ."

"But that sounds like a lot."

"But it's not!" Cordelia found herself on the edge of tears.

Her uncle sat thoughtful for a while, chewing his moustache. "I see," he mumbled, nodding. Then he jumped to his feet with sudden vigor. "But I know!" he said. "Are you done eating? Let's go—you can finish when we get back."

Francis led Cordelia on the ten-minute walk to his shop, through a door in the back of his office and into one of the large, locked-up storerooms in the far back. He lit a lamp—it was dark out—and then he slowly, deliberately, paced the room, drawing bolts of fabric from where they were stored on shelves and tossing them onto a long table in the room's center.

"What *I* can teach you," Francis said, as he selected cloth after cloth with his big hands, "is *clothes*. My wife and daughter think they understand fashion—and they

do, to a point. But fashion is what I *do*. And if you're going to be someone's wife in this society, then understanding fashion, for both yourself and your husband, will be invaluable."

Cordelia found herself immediately distracted. Someone had finally said it: One day, she was going to be somebody's wife.

Though she tried not to think too much about it, she knew that there were three futures open to her as a woman in this world.* She could become a nun and disappear into a nunnery; she could choose not to marry, become a spinster, and everyone would think she was a witch; or she could marry and serve a husband, whoever he may be. Only the queen was allowed to stay unmarried and still be considered a proper woman.

There was no avoiding the fact now: Cordelia had been taught to sing, to speak foreign languages, to dance—not for her own sake, but all so that she would make a good wife to a man of a certain class. She almost began to cry.

But her uncle—who noticed his gaffe, though he didn't fully understand it—drew her back out of herself by showing her the different kinds of fabric. There was

nun: a woman who belongs to a religious order
gaffe: a noticeable social or diplomatic mistake

wool, cotton, velvet, lace, linen, fustian, silk, fur, leather, taffeta, and more. Some of it was trimmed with gold or silver. It was dyed every imaginable color.

He made her touch the different grades of wool, the different leathers and furs. He held his lamp close so that she could see the colors.

"What do you think?" Francis asked when they were through.

fustian: heavy cotton fabric
taffeta: stiff, shiny fabric originally made from silk

Words failed her. "It's beautiful," she said at last, a tear coming to her eye. It occurred to her that all this beauty was something actually worthy of a sonnet. But then her sadness came back; somehow, she found herself thinking of Oliver and of the peasants back on their estate.

"I just . . . I wish that *everyone* could have such nice clothes. And could do what they wanted in their life!"

She thought of her own future again and started to cry. It struck Cordelia that she had almost sounded like her brother just then, but she knew that she wasn't thinking the way Oliver thought; if he had been there, he probably would have scolded her again for being selfish.

Her uncle was speechless, but only for a moment.

"Well. I can't give it all away, but I can at least make sure that *you* have the nicest clothes the law will allow! Now let's get home and finish supper. Tomorrow you can come back, and I'll show you what sort of sleeves the whole court will be wearing in a month!"

And so Cordelia began a small apprenticeship at North Clothiers. She had her normal tutors in the mornings, then most afternoons she walked ten minutes to the shop and learned the intricacies of men's and

women's fashion, the sumptuary laws that controlled who could wear what, and also the reason why so many of the nicest outfits had big slashes cut in them: so that the expensive underclothes and colorful linings beneath could be seen!

Then one afternoon, after a couple of weeks, Francis pulled her into his office and locked the door. He seemed worked up, like Oliver when he had one of his plans.

"I didn't get where I got by having scruples," her uncle began, as though responding to a question she'd asked. "The gentry, the nobles, they act refined, but they already have everything they want; there are so many people in this city, Cordelia, who don't have what they *need*."

He sighed. He had a remarkable sigh that blew his moustache out, and it struck Cordelia that the only other time she'd heard him sigh was that day his clerk had escaped.

Then he went on: "But the only way to get what you don't already have in this world, child, is to be bold. And so . . ." Suddenly a little timid, he pushed a box toward her. "I saw this play the other day, about these two lads

sumptuary laws: laws that governed what a person was allowed to wear based on their class*

scruples: strong moral beliefs that keep people from doing things they think are wrong

from Verona. And there's a girl in the play who puts on— Well . . . You'll see."

Cordelia found herself nervous as she opened the box. Then she was confused. Inside, she found breeches and a doublet, and all the rest of what it took to make a boy's outfit. She looked up at her uncle.

"Nice enough that you'll look class," he said, carefully gauging Cordelia's reaction. "Not so fine that they're worth stealing. Rather like I'd wear if I were your age. Try them on?"

He explained to her how to put each piece on, though she already knew most of it. Then he left her alone in a dressing room.

Silently, solemnly, and a little bit perplexed, Cordelia changed clothes. She emerged from the room to find her uncle waiting, hands clasped behind his back. He scrutinized her for a few seconds, then said, "A bit loutish, which is good. We'll have to figure out your hair—you can't cut it. With the right hat, though, we can probably hide it." He drew his hands out then and held up a looking glass for her to see herself. "What do you think?"

loutish: resembling an awkward brutish person

Cordelia looked into the mirror for a long time. It was almost like seeing her brother.

"I'm—I'm sorry, Uncle Francis," she said at last. "But I don't understand."

Francis lowered the mirror. He looked hurt and, Cordelia was surprised to see, perhaps a little afraid.

"*No*," Cordelia added quickly. "What I mean is: Why?"

She saw him slowly relax. Then Francis shrugged his big shoulders, causing the ruff to float up his neck.

"In that play I saw, there was a lady, and she dressed up as a man so she could follow the man she loved . . ."

He stopped. Then he started again. "That night I first showed you the fabric," he said, "I realized later what I'd said. And . . . then I saw that play, and what I thought was, 'What would Cordelia do if she wasn't . . . stuck?'" He looked away across the office. "I just thought that I wanted you to, well, to have something all your own. A little freedom. *I'll* know, of course, but—You probably shouldn't tell anyone else, at least not until you're well old. *Certainly* not your aunt—Meg would have my guts for garters, and no mistake! But it can be our secret. And so, your whole life, no matter what else you have to do or to be . . ." He trailed off.

"Thank you," Cordelia said. She watched her uncle slowly break into a big, broad smile. Then he laughed.

"Well!" he said. "So what's your name going to be?"

Cordelia blinked. "My name is . . . I am . . ."

"That's funny, young man," Francis said with a smile. "I thought your voice would be deeper."

"**My name is—**"

"Not *that* deep," her uncle interrupted, laughing.

"—*not* Oliver." Cordelia looked into her uncle's eyes. "What should my name be?"

"That's better," he replied. "And let's try something close to your real name. What about . . . Corin?" He held up the mirror again.

The boy in the mirror smiled back at her; he had a name.

"Perfect."

6

New World

The dreary arts her tutors prized
Are seen on stage and alchemized

Cordelia practiced being a boy until her uncle felt that she wouldn't get found out. It was just like learning etiquette: knowing how to stand, how to move, how and when to speak. Cordelia still had her natural Winslow Village–self hidden away somewhere. But now, alongside the London lady, she was learning to be a London lad.

After several days, her uncle said, "I've got a couple packages that need delivering. Why don't you take Corin out for a try?"

***

As Corin, Cordelia explored London. She noticed a few other young girls out, but she realized that if she had gone out as herself, there would have been more obstacles, more restraint, more attention. When she was Corin, no one looked twice—or at least no longer than

alchemized: transformed into something new and precious*

to give a blunt "G'day" or an even blunter "'Ere now, out of the way!" Dressing as a boy gave her the confidence and freedom to learn the city.

Delivering packages also gave her a purpose and a destination, drawing her to quarters she might never have explored: She went all the way out to Charing Cross and Westminster, and across the London Bridge to Southwark. She saw street after street of crumbling tenements, many of which were partially abandoned after the latest outbreak of the pestilence. But she also saw great houses, St. Paul's Cathedral, and the Tower of London. Then she was sent to Shoreditch.

It was only about a five-minute walk from the shop to Bishopsgate, through which she passed out of London proper. If she had thought there would be fewer buildings or people outside the walls, she was wrong.

Shoreditch was teeming with people of all sorts; they were pouring out of inns and taverns, tenement halls and fine houses, all built side by side. She eventually found the place for the delivery—it was a theater.* It was called the Theatre.

There was no one at the door, so she made her way inside. The roof covered only a big outer ring made of

tenements: apartment buildings

several stories of galleries and a large, raised stage on one side. In the center of the great round wooden building, between the stage and the galleries, there was dirt floor below and open sky above. Still she saw no one, but voices were coming from behind the stage. Cordelia found an entrance in the back wall and was soon standing at the edge of a room crowded with the most amazing people she had ever seen.

At the center there was a king and a queen! They were dressed in furs and shimmering purple robes, but they were the least of it. There were several boys only a little older than Cordelia, lounging on a pile of old wooden beams with what looked like cramped wings stretching out from their backs. They were dressed in different shades of pastel, embellished with shining embroidered flowers, and their faces sparkled just like their clothes. Another wirier figure was crouched beneath the king and queen, wearing only rags around his waist and tendrils of green winding up and down his arms and legs. Bright-eyed with mischief, he was staring up at the glittering monarchs like an animal or an insect. Cordelia looked to her side and found a man dressed in a lion costume, sitting cross-legged and petting a dog that was curled in his lap.

"Let's try it again!" someone called, and there was a hush in the room.

"Tarry, rash wanton!" the king exclaimed, suddenly furious about something. "Am not I thy lord?"

"Then I must be thy lady," the queen replied drolly.

"Maybe if you'd shaved today," muttered one of the more normally dressed people who was sitting near the lion.

A few people rolled their eyes, but Cordelia laughed—she was nervous. At the sound of her laughter, the man who had made the joke turned and saw her. His eyes lit up, and he started patting around until he found what looked like the head of donkey. He pulled the head on over his own head, stood up, then marched toward her with his knees out at strange angles.

"You, there!" he cried. "Come for a private showing, eh?"

He stopped just shy of her and looked down through the mouth of the donkey. Everyone was staring at them. No one was laughing.

"I've—I've brought a delivery," Cordelia replied quickly, using her best, or at least her deepest, Corin voice.

wanton: a shamefully flirtatious person
drolly: with dry humor

"Leave him alone, Kemp," muttered the queen, now with a rather masculine voice.

"It's for the Lord Chamberlain's Men?" Cordelia went on.

"That's us," the king confirmed. "Who's it from?"

"Francis North."

"Hang on . . ." A man dressed like a noble—maybe even an earl or a duke—stepped around the donkey and blinked down at Cordelia. "I'm afraid you're mistaken, young sir," he said.

"Am I?" Cordelia moved to flee the strange room, but her way had been blocked.

"Well, yes," the man continued. "Because I'm fairly certain that France is south."

Cordelia blinked. "What?"

"Leave the lad alone, Shakespeare!" cried the king, pushing past him and the others. "Ignore the playwright," he told Cordelia. "And especially ignore the clown." He nudged Kemp aside, who started dancing around with the donkey head still on, singing, "Sack! Sack! Now where did I leave my sack?"

"From the Raider, eh?" the king asked. "Well, I'm Richard Burbage. What've we got?"

"Um . . ." Cordelia remembered that her uncle had given her this man's name and had said something about him being an actor. But at the moment she was more concerned with trying to pitch her voice correctly. "I was told it was something Cecil rejected."

"Excellent! Let's see it."

Burbage took the package to a nearby table, and several of the others gathered around him. But Shakespeare, the playwright who was dressed like a duke, stayed with Cordelia, eyeing her carefully.

Eventually he said, "I believe you might be an actor."

"What?" Cordelia thought she was caught; she felt lightheaded. "No—No, sir, I'm . . ."

"We lost one of our boys this past week to a good-sized inheritance," the playwright went on. "Without having to work for his bread, he seems to have misplaced his zeal for the artistic life. There are others, of course, but . . . you have a look about you." He smiled at her with an open, noncommittal face. "Have you ever considered acting?"

zeal: eagerness and enthusiastic interest in pursuit of something
noncommittal: undecided; not yet committed to an opinion or course of action

Cordelia swallowed. Her heart slowed slightly.

"You remind me of my son Hamnet," Shakespeare went on. "Only you're prettier. Have you seen many plays?"

"Not recently," Cordelia replied cautiously. In fact, she'd seen only one, in Luton, when she was very little.

"You should stay today, then—I think my new one should be quite popular. My name's Will, by the way. William Shakespeare."*

Cordelia just managed to avoid curtsying; she shook the playwright's hand instead.

"I'm Corin," she said.

Shakespeare eyed Cordelia for another moment, then smiled and said, "Come on. I'll get you a seat in one of the galleries."

***

Cordelia stayed to see the show: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It was one of the first times the play had been performed for the public. The performance started at two in the afternoon so that there would be plenty of daylight to see by. And as Cordelia watched the actors perform, a revelation slowly bloomed within her.

revelation: a miraculous realization

There was singing in the play, but it wasn't *controlled* singing. It wasn't even particularly pretty—especially when Kemp sang and danced his jig at the end.

There was every kind of clothing, from finest silk to old, worn leather and rough wool, a collection more complete than Francis North could have conceived, but all tossed together in a jumble. Not to mention the wings and crowns and the donkey head and the lion!

And there was poetry, unselfconscious and as clever as any that Anne might have loved, but often funny and subtle, and sometimes melancholy and sad.

But when the singing and the costumes and the words all came together, there was *life*. Instead of being precious, self-serious, or pretentious, it was joyful and generous and full of heart in a way that Cordelia had never experienced in any of the arts she'd been made to learn. Maybe she had sensed this possibility, a long time ago, in some of the lessons she'd had with Myles. But only the possibility.

Now Cordelia laughed. She cried. And by the time the play was over, she knew: She was in love with theater.

---

jig: a song and dance*
subtle: indirect or difficult to notice
precious: artificial or flowery; overly concerned with refined behavior
pretentious: trying to seem more important than is actually the case

7

Recruitment

As a lad she comes to trouble
Then happy toil on the double

Cordelia loved theater. She wanted to see every play in London, over and over again. And what was more, she wanted to *do* theater. But like so many other things in Elizabeth's England, theater was for boys. Even the parts of girls, ladies, queens, and old nurses were played by boys or young men in dresses.

Still, she started going to as many plays as possible. Entry on the ground level was only a penny, but the tips she made from deliveries usually allowed her to take a seat in the gallery.

There were companies made up entirely of children, and though these also excluded girls, she briefly considered trying out for one of them as Corin. But she didn't like the plays that the boys put on nearly as much; they tended to be either religious or so political that she barely understood them. Also, the best children's companies were made up of boys from choir schools,

and Cordelia didn't see how she could join an entire school of boys without being discovered for a girl.

There were younger actors in the adult theater, but joining an adult company would make her an apprentice. An apprenticeship was a full-time job: not just acting in the afternoons but also rehearsing, constructing backdrops and props, and generally doing whatever odd jobs the company required during the day, including sword practice and voice practice. She didn't know how she could do all that without disappearing on her tutors, which was probably the only thing that could draw her aunt's attention all the way from Norwich. Also, again: She would probably get discovered as a girl.

Since she couldn't join a real company, Cordelia made her own. She took to memorizing the lines of plays so that she could perform the different parts in her room at home. First she would pick a play, such as Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* or Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. Then she would go each day that it was playing for several weeks in a row—usually, a company did a different play every day of the week, as they cycled through the plays in their repertory. She still found it hard to learn the plays this way, so she also got her new poetry teacher, Anne's friend Elizabeth Leaper, to bring

repertory: a collection of plays that a company is ready to perform

her some of the plays that were printed. Then, when she had memorized the play by heart, she gave whole performances to herself in her mirror, representing one character with a hat and a scarf, another with a veil, and a dashing knight by swinging a sword imagined from a long, jeweled hairpin she had discovered while snooping through the left-behind dresser of her cousin Amelia, who had married and moved away nearly six years ago.

Summer ended with two letters. The first was from her Aunt Maggie, announcing that she would be home for Michaelmas, the official end of the harvest season. She arrived shortly after the letter, in a great hoopla full of family news, and with a new resolution: Having heard good things from all Cordelia's tutors, she had decided that Cordelia would soon be ready to begin her career as an attendant to a noblewoman, preferably to someone in the queen's court if it could be arranged. "You're still a little rough around the edges, dear, but I have high hopes!" This didn't appeal to Cordelia but, fortunately for her, no sooner was the Michaelmas goose cooked and dispatched than Maggie was off again—Amelia was having her first child in November, and her mother went to be with her in far-off Exeter.

The second letter, which arrived the day after Aunt

hoopla: fuss or excitement around a certain event

Maggie left, was from Oliver.

He spoke little of himself but more of the farm. It had rained so heavily, and at just the wrong times during the harvest—similar to the year before, only worse—that nearly all the grain that year was lost. It was almost a blessing that whole swaths of land had been converted for grazing sheep, except that the wool would not be ready for shearing until spring. He joked—at least, Cordelia hoped he was joking—that they might have to eat the sheep first. The manor house was still being rebuilt, with all the singlemindedness that Sidney could scrape together. Oliver finished by hoping that things were better where she was.

For a moment, they were almost worse.

***

The Lord Chamberlain's Men had just put William Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* back into their performance repertory, but there was no printed version of the play that Cordelia could find. If she wanted to have it memorized, she had to go see it. Again and again.

One day, shortly after the Feast of All Saints, Cordelia

swaths: long, broad strips or areas
Feast of All Saints: celebrated on November 1 (also called "All Saints' Day," "All Hallows' Day," or the "Feast of All Hallows,") coming after All Hallows' Eve (part of the basis for our Halloween) on October 31

made it to Shoreditch a little earlier than usual. As she was loitering outside the Theatre, she suddenly noticed a group of men standing a little too close around her.

They were mostly big men, and they had a rough look about them; there was a distance in their eyes, like they were used to averting their gaze, especially from things that they were doing themselves. Cordelia hoped she was wrong when she started to think they were focusing on her. Then a small, well-dressed man stepped forward from the others and said, "Now 'ere's a pretty one! Come 'ere, lad."

Cordelia froze.

"I don't know . . ." said a tall, incredibly thin thug with a nose like a boot nail. "Looks scrawny to me."

"You shut your gob," snapped the small man. "'E'll make a great Helen a' Troy. Look at 'is bearing."

"I think I see it," said one of the others, ingratiatingly.

"What . . . What's going on?" Cordelia managed to ask.

Then she heard a voice from outside the circle.

"Cellan! Cellan, is that you?"

ingratiating: flatteringly

The circle around Cordelia opened up slightly, and she saw who had spoken. "Mister Burbage!" she called. It was Richard Burbage, whom she now knew as the lead actor from the Chamberlain's Men.

The circle closed up, and one of the thugs said, "What do *you* want?"

"That's Cellan," Burbage said—apparently he had forgotten *Corin*. "That's one of ours."

"Not no more he en't," muttered one of the men.

Then the smaller man stepped toward Burbage. His clothes were immaculate enough to have come from Francis North. He said, "I'm the master of the Children's Choir, and we're here collecting actors for the Chapel Royal."

"Not from the Lord Chamberlain's Men, you're not."

"We can recruit any nobleman's son in the land," replied the gang's small, well-attired leader. "Whether they—*or you*—like it or not."

An argument ensued, and voices rose. Cordelia considered running, but she didn't think she'd get very far. Then she noticed another actor poke his head out of the theater door to see what was going on. He watched for a second, then went back inside. A few moments later, the whole acting company was pouring into the street. Everyone started shouting.

There were more actors than thugs, though neither side looked ready to back down; soon the groups started to face off. But before tempers could erupt, Will Kemp came hobbling strangely through the mob, almost like some kind of dancing chimp. The spectacle was odd enough that first the actors, then the thugs, parted to

immaculate: perfectly neat and clean; flawless
Chapel Royal: a group of religious leaders and singers that followed the king or queen wherever they went*

make way for him. Everyone drew quiet as he limp-pranced right up to Cordelia, took her by the wrist, and led her wordlessly back into the Theatre.

"Ho!" someone shouted, and the argument began again, even louder than before. But by this time, Cordelia was safe.

One of the actors stayed with Cordelia in the Theatre—Reeves, the bright-eyed boy she'd seen dressed as a tendril-covered fairy that first day she'd walked in on rehearsal. They watched the standoff through the doorway, but Cordelia couldn't help but watch Reeves too. Only a little older than she was, he was probably the most talented of the young actors, and often when she imagined being in a play—when she wasn't imagining herself in the lead role—she dreamed of taking on the parts that Reeves played.

Shakespeare also stayed conspicuously back from the argument. It almost looked to Cordelia like he was studying the fracas, taking mental notes, until the master of the Children's Choir quieted his men and addressed the playwright directly.

"I expect I'll see that lad on your stage then, William?"

conspicuously: noticeably
fracas: a noisy quarrel or fight

Shakespeare blinked a few times, then said, "I don't expect I can keep you away."

"Keep me away? Oh, no—it'll be *you* who's coming to *me*."

Will smiled with his mouth but not his eyes. "Butterflies do visit sheep's droppings," he said. "But when, pray tell?"

"Why, at Whitehall in two weeks, of course. For Accession Day. Are you not already booked?"

***

When the Chamberlain's Men were back inside the Theatre, they all turned toward Cordelia.

"You're the Raider's errand boy, aren't you?" Burbage said to Cordelia. "It's Cellan, right?"

"It's Corin," Shakespeare answered for her. "I remember because I'm using it for a play soon."

"Shameless," Kemp muttered with a laugh.

"Define *shame* for me, Kemp," Burbage remarked. Then he turned back to Cordelia. "That man actually *does* have the right to make any child act in his company."

Accession Day: the anniversary of the day on which a monarch assumed the throne—in the case of Queen Elizabeth I, November 17

"He does?" Cordelia asked. "But what if you're . . . " She almost said, *What if you're a girl?* Instead, she finished rather lamely, " . . . highborn?"

"Noble, gentry, baron prince of Westphalia—it doesn't matter."

"So you owe us one, kid!" Kemp put in.

"But more importantly," Burbage went on, "we can't just intervene for no reason, and especially not just out of simple decency. So . . . do you think the Raider can spare you for a couple weeks?"

"But . . . why?" Cordelia asked, still not fully certain that she understood.

"Because you're an actor now, kid," Kemp replied, "whether you like it or not."

"Oh! But I do like it!" Cordelia burst out. "I *love* it."

The Lord Chamberlain's Men all fell quiet for a second, then erupted into laughter. Then Reeves took Cordelia by the shoulder and led her into the bowels of the building.

"Come with me," he said. "We've got a lot of work to do."

---

bowels: the guts or innermost parts

Only when she was lying awake that night did it dawn on Cordelia: Joining the Chamberlain's Men on Accession Day meant that she would be performing at Whitehall Palace. During the annual celebration of the coronation. And she would almost definitely be performing before Queen Elizabeth herself.

8

Rehearsal

A bittersweet tragedienne:
The girl amongst the Chamberlain's Men

Cordelia told her tutors that she was going to visit her brother up in Luton. She told her Uncle Francis that she couldn't help him at the shop anymore for a while—she said her tutors thought she was falling behind and that she needed to spend more time studying. She had considered telling him the whole truth, but she feared that Corin making his stage debut at Whitehall might be a bridge too far even for her uncle—thank goodness her aunt was still out of town! For two weeks, Cordelia got up early and studied the cue script with all of her lines. Each day, when her uncle finally left for work, Cordelia quickly dressed herself as Corin, then slipped out the back door, avoiding the servants, and made her way to the Theatre for rehearsal.

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tragedienne: an actress who plays tragic roles
cue script: an actor's script containing only their character's lines and and the few words that come before their lines, known as "cues"*

They were going to do *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Cordelia was thrilled: After happening upon it in rehearsal, then seeing its enchantments fill up the Theatre that first afternoon, it was still her favorite. And after first learning etiquette, then learning to present as a boy, Cordelia could already act relatively well. She also knew most of the lines, and she learned her staging quickly; the whole company was impressed. When it was discovered she could sing as well, she was given the role of First Fairy, which had more than a few lines and also joined in a song. It was, she learned, the very part that Shakespeare had meant to recruit her for when they'd first met.

She joined in one performance at the Theatre before Accession Day. It was everything she thought it would be. She loved acting! There were crushed pearls in her makeup so that her face shone in the sun. People laughed when she spoke; the poetry was perfect; the clothes dazzled. Love and longing and anger and desire and heartache all danced across the stage, and though the story had started out as mere written words, it was now so real that Cordelia could see emotion spreading out across the audience; the spectators' faces were alight with genuine feeling. This was the power of theater.

***

Two days later, they had a last rehearsal, then the company started packing up their costumes for Whitehall. Cordelia would leave home especially early the next morning and meet them at the palace gates. She was already shaking with nervous excitement.

Burbage and Shakespeare came by and offered encouragement. Kemp made a remark about the stuck-up audiences at court. Then Reeves pulled Cordelia aside.

Reeves was playing Puck in *Midsummer*. Cordelia's longest scene was with Reeves, and he had often helped coach her. They had gotten along well, and Cordelia thought he might be looking to give her some final pointers on her performance. Instead, he stood and chewed his lip for a while, then said, "Listen. I've been trying to figure it out, and then I *did* figure it out. And now I know." He shook his head. "I think I'm the only one, other than maybe Shakes. But that doesn't mean it's not dangerous."

A pit opened up in Cordelia's stomach. She tried to look Reeves in the eyes, but she couldn't quite.

"I don't know what you think you're doing," he said. "What are you, twelve?"

Cordelia nodded. Reeves sighed.

"If it weren't for that business with the Chapel Royal, I'd tell you to get out of here while you can."

The longer Reeves spoke, the more a faint hope rose in Cordelia's chest. Maybe he was talking about something else?

Then he said, "Dressing up like a boy—are they your brother's clothes?"

When she didn't respond, he took a step back and looked around. Then he said, "Listen. Ol' Queen Bess is *smart*—smarter than she appears. She might just seem spooky in the crowd, sitting there caked in makeup, trying to look half her age, teeth all falling out . . ."

Cordelia was shocked. She'd never heard anyone talk about the queen this way.

"But she *sees* everything. Otherwise she wouldn't have made it this long."

The young man studied the backs of his hands absently, then wiped away a last smudge of Puck makeup.

"I like you," he said finally. "I like working with you—you're a good actor. And I'm not going to tell anyone,

but . . . You really, *really* need to be careful tomorrow. I don't even know what would happen if you got caught—it would give the Puritans another excuse to try to close theaters, at the very least. *You'd* probably end up in the stocks, we might *all* end up in jail. It would really be up to the queen." Then he shrugged and gave a little laugh and said, "So you'd better be good, all right?"

He winked at Cordelia now. She was so scared, relieved, and generally mixed up that she almost wasn't able to respond. Then Reeves turned to walk away, and all at once she felt something like courage rise in her throat. She spoke before she knew she was going to.

"Don't worry. I can do it."

Reeves paused, then turned back with a slight grin. "Good," he said. "Then I'll see you in the morning."

Puritans: a group of English Protestants in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who were known for their severe conservative views

9

(Her) Reverence

She must to Whitehall 'fore the queen
And there perform, but not be seen

On Accession Day, the crowds in London were too big to fit inside St. Paul's Cathedral, so the day began with famous preachers giving long sermons from the great pulpit outside the church. When the service ended, the crowds broke up, and revelry began.

Cordelia missed the sermons and revels; she was a mile and a half west, at Whitehall Palace. She had arrived before dawn and found the other actors there in a clump, sitting on the chests that held their costumes. Soon, a guard came and led them in.

They secured the chests in the great chamber, where the performance would be that night, and set up some of the staging. Then Cordelia was given the morning to see what she might see before they met to get ready.

---

revelry: celebration or merriment

The palace was overflowing with lords and ladies and knights. And Cordelia had to laugh—her Uncle Francis had been exactly right about what sorts of sleeves the most fashionable people would be wearing.

She wandered in and out of rooms lined with portraits and tapestries and sculptures. The queen's virginal was out on display, and Cordelia played a few notes just to see how it sounded. She walked down one long hall lined with shields that overlooked the River Thames. Out the windows of another chamber, she saw the many flags of the tiltyard, where knights were out jousting for the queen, crowds of people yelling and cheering. She couldn't see much of the action, but she was glad for that—Cordelia couldn't stand the idea that someone might get hurt. She especially didn't like the bearbaiting that was scheduled for later. She left the window and wandered deeper into the palace.

Soon, Cordelia found herself in the biggest library she had ever seen, filled with books in all sorts of languages. It made her think of Myles and wish he could be here. Then she spotted Shakespeare, who was busy inspecting a portrait of Julius Caesar. She wanted to speak with him, but he seemed so focused that she thought better of it.

tiltyard: a place where jousts (a kind of fighting on horseback) took place
bearbaiting: a violent form of entertainment in Elizabethan times in which dogs were released to fight a chained-up bear

Overall, Whitehall Palace filled her with wonder. But also it filled her with that same feeling she'd gotten while looking at her uncle's fabrics in his storeroom, only more so: Here was all this beauty, locked away. And as Cordelia wandered through the palace, she finally understood all those times that her brother had called her selfish. Something broke loose inside her, beneath the chandeliers, beside all the elegant ladies and daring young gallants. She realized that Oliver had been right. Beyond the glittering palace walls, there were tenements, peasants, penniless beggars, and worse. She saw that the grandeur now surrounding her wouldn't have been possible without the existence of all these hard, sad things, and she knew now that this was what had always bothered Oliver. Cordelia had had to see it at its extreme before she understood. Now it sat heavy on her mind.

***

She returned to the great chamber early, where Reeves was the first to see her.

"You look rough," he said. "Come on."

Cordelia was grateful when he didn't scold her but instead helped her put her makeup on. He actually seemed protective of her now, and she realized that he was just as nervous for her as she was for herself. Maybe, it occurred to her, he was also nervous for himself.

gallants: gentlemanly or courtly men

The Chamberlain's Men finished arranging their playing space and ran through how to adjust their movements for the smaller stage. For once, Cordelia found herself grateful for Kemp's needless interruptions because they drew her out of herself. It felt like no time at all before the light outside the windows began to fade. Torches were lit. And the throne was carried in ahead of the queen.

Cordelia gathered with the other actors in a side room. Here, all the costumes and props were laid out in boxes and on tables, ready for the play. There was a splendor here, too, Cordelia saw, but it wasn't at the cost of anyone else; if anything, the performance they were about to give was a gift. A gift that she felt lucky to be able to give. She smiled.

Then a hush fell on the crowd in the next room—the queen had entered. The players took their places.

***

Before Cordelia knew it, the play was over. As she went out to the front of the stage with the others and bowed, it felt as though she were waking from a dream. For the first time, she looked out into the audience. The throne that had been carried in was now filled. The woman who sat there had ruff and fluff all around her, but in the center, she was bright white, oblong, and still.

The applause was lackluster, tentative—nothing like the crowds at the Theatre. But then the queen stood and began to clap, and the crowd went wild.

There were whistles and hollers and cries of "*More! More!*" and "Give us a jig!" Cordelia was fairly certain that she heard Shakespeare, who was beside her in a wig and a false beard, breathe a big sigh of relief. The players bowed again, then turned and filed back into the side room.

Cordelia knew she hadn't done as well as in her first performance. She had stuttered one or two of her lines, and she generally felt awkward and exposed the whole time. But the rest of the company were ecstatic: Queen Elizabeth had liked the play! Food and drinks were passed around.

Kemp danced up to Cordelia and said, "Good show, runt!" He had taken to calling Cordelia *runt*. He had the donkey head on again. "Thinking of joining up?"

Cordelia gave a laugh as an answer, and Kemp danced away.

Reeves found her next. "Not as smooth as the first run," he said. But then he smiled. "But I'd say you should stick around, if only it weren't the worst idea in history."

tentative: not fixed or committed; provisional

Cordelia laughed genuinely this time. But she was also sad. She wished that she *could* stick around. She really liked acting. And she was beginning to think that maybe she liked Reeves, too.

"Say, what's your real name?" Reeves asked quickly, casually.

Cordelia almost told him.

Instead, she dropped her voice an extra octave and said, "**My name's Corin.**"

Reeves laughed and slapped her on the back. "Alright, ***Corin***. Follow me this way—I know where they keep the backup marzipan."

***

Cordelia arrived home late. She was in such a fever of elation and confusion and mourning that it had all happened and now it was all over that she hardly gave a thought to how she would explain where she'd been all day. It almost made sense when she found everyone else in the house acting the way that she felt. It only struck her as strange when she saw that her aunt was home. As it turned out, her whereabouts were the least of anyone's worries.

Maggie came up and hugged her and said, "Oh, poor dear! So you've heard."

marzipan: a sweet dessert made of finely ground almonds mixed with sugar and egg whites, often shaped into various forms*

"Heard what?" Cordelia asked. Her mind went straight to her brother, and her heart leapt.

Then her aunt said, "Your poor Uncle Sidney. He slipped and fell. They found him the next morning."

They were in the dining room, and Cordelia took the nearest chair. After several seconds of staring at the long table, she confirmed, "Uncle Sidney is dead?"

"Yes, dear. The Lord has him now."

Cordelia couldn't imagine what God or anyone would want with horrible old Uncle Sidney. Or maybe she could. Then she noticed a strange, almost coy expression on her aunt's face, like Maggie was smiling somewhere underneath, but it wouldn't be proper to smile openly.

"But my brother is well?" she asked.

The not-smile vanished. "Oh, yes, dear! Oliver is fine. Jakob wrote to tell us. The funeral is in two days. The roads aren't too bad at the moment. If we leave first thing tomorrow, we should just make it."

coy: pretending to be shy or modest

10

Home Again

Farewell to Bard and majesty:
Cordelia still has much to see

Everything had changed in Winslow Village. At least, it felt like everything had changed. Though Cordelia couldn't *actually* point to many specific things that were different. Other than the giant building under construction at the top of the hill.

"I'm going to turn it into a school," Oliver said after the funeral, when he and Cordelia were walking alone for a moment. "Or *something*—it won't just be a house."

"So you're going to complete it?"

Oliver was now the oldest male in the family line after Wakeford, so he would be the heir. It was up to him whether the big house would be finished.

"Jakob and I agree," he said. "It would be wasteful to abandon it now. But we'll make it into something useful."

Cordelia stopped walking, and Oliver stopped with her. She smiled at her brother.

"You've grown, you know," she said.

He laughed. "Like you haven't? I almost didn't recognize you when you came in! You looked so . . . too *sophisticated* to be *my* twin sister."

Cordelia blushed and started walking again.

"Are you going back to the city?" Oliver asked when he caught up.

"I don't know," she said. "Aunt Maggie wants me to. Now that she has time, I think she wants to plan the rest of my life for me. But I haven't decided yet what *I* want."

"Take some time," Oliver said. "Then—remember what Myles used to say?—'figure it out yourself.'"

"Exactly," Cordelia agreed. "I'm working on it. Just sometimes it's not as easy as it sounds."

"I think Myles tried to teach us that too, in his way."

Cordelia thought on this as she walked through the village framed in red autumn leaves. The last clumps of mourners around the church were breaking up. The low sun in the west cast the twins' shadows ahead of them and lit the half-built manor high up on the hill. The two old chimneys had been brought down to make way for the new construction, but Cordelia found her eyes drawn more to the creek where there had once been a little bridge that crossed to an old, run-down hut in the woods.

The bridge was gone now. Had it washed away? Had it been taken down and used for materials? She could probably just jump the creek, but . . .

Time was passing; her world was changing. She knew that some of what was lost would stay with her throughout her life. She just didn't know what that life would look like.

Uncle Francis and Aunt Maggie stayed for dinner, then gathered their things to set off for the inn in Luton. Jakob had offered to make up the room that had been John's, and then had been Sidney's, but the Norths were set on leaving. Cordelia hugged them goodbye. Francis gave her a sly wink as he left.

Cordelia went upstairs to her old bedroom, sat on her old bed, and thought about all that she had experienced since she'd last been in this room. Then she tried to imagine what else her life would hold.

She would turn thirteen in a week. For a moment, the possibilities seemed endless.

Afterword

This story takes place in Elizabethan England, an era named for its remarkable queen. Queen Elizabeth I was the queen of England from 1558 until her death in 1603. Though people did not use the term at the time, we now think of this period as the Elizabethan Era.

Elizabeth's reign is considered a golden age—a period in which arts, education, and fashion flourished. But this was also a time of intense economic inequality; wealth was inherited through titles passed down in aristocratic families, and a small percentage of the population owned almost all of the country's land. There were wars against Spain and Ireland, and religious conflict led to several plots to assassinate the queen. Against this backdrop, secret messages were passed, jousts were held, knights were knighted, and theaters were crowded with commoners and nobles alike.

It can be hard to imagine how dramatically different life was for people who lived in this time. But there are four important elements that, when considered together, can help us understand Elizabethan England: the printing press, the Reformation, the microscope, and Queen Elizabeth herself.

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economic inequality: unequal distribution of wealth

A German goldsmith called Johannes Gutenberg invented the movable-type printing press in the 1430s, and by the late 1470s, his invention had reached England. Before the printing press, books were handwritten by scribes and were very expensive. As a result, few people knew how to read or write. After the printing press arrived, books—especially the Bible—became more widely available, and over the course of the next century, literacy increased dramatically. Some estimates hold that by the end of Elizabeth's reign, literacy rates in London were as high as 80 percent (though they were much lower for the rest of the country).

Some years after Gutenberg revolutionized the written word, another man in Germany changed Christianity forever. In 1517, a German priest named Martin Luther issued a public letter to the Catholic Church—and how else did he distribute it but the printing press? Luther called for an end to corruption in the Church and insisted that individuals were capable of forming a relationship with God without the Church as an intermediary. Luther's letter sparked the Reformation, in which new sects of Christianity, united under the banner of Protestantism, broke from Catholicism for the first time. Before the Reformation, the pope and the

intermediary: a person or organization that manages the relationship between two parties

Catholic Church were the center of power and religion in Europe. Afterward, groups of believers and sometimes whole countries began to break away from the Catholic faith. In 1534, King Henry VIII separated England from Catholicism and declared himself the head of the Church of England. This act had an impact on every aspect of English life: Church murals were painted over; statues and stained glass were destroyed; the Bible was translated and printed in English for the first time, which further increased literacy; wars ensued with Catholic nations; people who refused to give up Catholicism were considered traitors and were violently put to death.

Throughout this time of religious and political upheaval, scientists and thinkers in England and mainland Europe were making their own discoveries, including the compound microscope, which was invented in 1590. But microscopes did not become sophisticated enough to see bacteria until the 1670s or 1680s. (This last achievement was the work of a Dutch draper named Antonie van Leeuwenhoek, who originally set out to be able to see the individual threads in a cloth.) Because scholars and scientists in the Elizabethan era had no ability to see cells, not to mention atoms, they had no firm

draper: a person who sells cloth and dry goods
cells: the smallest units of life, which make up all living things
atoms: the smallest units of individual chemical elements, which make up all matter in the universe

basis for understanding how the natural world worked. People did not know where diseases came from, and the ways they sought to treat illness often made the illness worse. The Elizabethan era was one in which England, hovering on the brink of modern science, still believed deeply in religion, myth, and magic.

Finally, the influence of Elizabeth I is almost impossible to overstate. Not only was she the head of the state and the Church of England, but she was also the center of social life. The queen's preferences dictated who and what was fashionable, and getting on her bad side was often a fatal mistake. While committed to keeping England independent (in part by never marrying), she did very little to help the plight of the poor, often calling for high taxes to support her war efforts, then neglecting to pay the wages of the soldiers that served her. Under Elizabeth I, art and court life flourished, but at the same time, the divide between rich and poor only increased.

These four factors made for a fascinating time. The limitations of science made religion more important; diseases and natural disasters were attributed to God—or, in some cases, to capricious fairies—and professing the wrong ideas about God could get you killed. At the same time, scholarship was considered

capricious: impulsive; unpredictable

incredibly important. Writing was a new privilege for most Elizabethans, and they took great pride in their abilities to use language in beautiful and elaborate ways. A good play or poem might attract the eye of the queen, and even basic literacy could improve a person's station in society's rigid hierarchy. But if someone's writing was considered offensive, that person could end up in jail or worse. All of this was at play in Cordelia's Elizbaethan England—it was likely an exciting and dangerous time to be alive.

hierarchy: a system in which people or groups are ranked according to status or authority

Terms & Concepts

Alchemy: Alchemy was believed to be the art of transforming dull metals into gold. It was a particular fascination for Elizabethans, including the astrologer John Dee.

A woman in this world: In the Elizabethan social hierarchy, women were supposed to serve and obey men in their family, as well as other men in their class or above.

Breeching ceremony: Elizabethan boys and girls both wore frilly dresses until the boy was roughly seven years old, when he had a breeching ceremony and received his first pair of breeches, or pants. Though there was no similar ceremony for girls, at around this age, both boys and girls began to dress in the same styles as adults.

Chapel Royal: Often members of the Chapel Royal were the leaders of the English church at the time. During Queen Elizabeth's reign, the Chapel Royal included the Children of the Chapel, a prominent acting company consisting solely of young boys.

Cue script: In Elizabethan England, paper was expensive, and theater companies didn't want their plays getting stolen by rival troupes. For this reason, actors were not given a complete script in order to learn their parts. Instead, they were given a roll of paper that listed only their lines with three or four words of preceding dialogue. These were known as their "cues," so they would know what to listen for and when to speak. These rolls of cue scripts are also the reason that today, we refer to an actor's part as a "role."

Frigates: In the sixteenth century, "frigate" was a generic term for a fast, maneuverable warship.

House of correction: In Elizabethan England, able-bodied people who were caught begging were taken to a house of correction as punishment, where they were forced to work long, hard days. Houses of correction soon developed into workhouses with sleeping accommodations, where mostly poor people were forced to both live and work, often in terrible conditions.

Inheritance: Elizabethan law and custom held that the oldest son inherited everything unless the will specifically stated otherwise.

Jigs: In Elizabethan England, jigs were commonly performed at the end of a play, separate from the play itself. They were comical and often a bit rude, and their funny lyrics were paired with leaping, acrobatic dancing and suggestive playacting.

Marzipan: In the Elizabethan Era, this dessert was known as "marchpane." It was often shaped into candies or elaborate sculptures and was extremely popular in Queen Elizabeth's court.

Plague: Commonly referred to as "the pestilence," the plague spread quickly, was often fatal, and was the cause of many pandemics throughout history, including the one later known as the Black Death. The most common form of the disease, known as the "bubonic plague," was characterized by large, painful lumps at the lymph nodes, called "buboes." In Cordelia's day, people did not understand how the disease spread; this, paired with a lack of working medical knowledge, made combating the plague extremely difficult.

Raising sheep: The cloth trade helped shape England in the sixteenth century. In the middle of the century, wool cloth was the kingdom's most important and lucrative export. Seeking to profit from the trend,

pandemics: widespread outbreaks of disease
export: an economic good conveyed from one country or region to another for purposes of trade

many farmers transitioned from raising crops to raising sheep; because raising sheep required much less labor, this transition resulted in a great many peasants ending up jobless and therefore homeless. Many of these workers moved to cities, which caused a dramatic increase in urban populations; London nearly doubled in size during Elizabeth's reign, largely because of the cloth trade.

Sumptuary laws: Some sumptuary laws stated that only royalty could wear purple silk or cloth woven with gold, and only royals or the wives of knights were allowed to wear damask or taffeta. Punishments were harsh but were rarely enforced. The laws were originally designed to combat decadent spending.

Theater: Theater was an incredibly popular form of art and entertainment in Elizabethan England. The largest theaters, also called "playhouses," could hold up to two or three thousand spectators, and playing companies typically performed a different play each day of the week.

Virginal: A predecessor to the harpsichord, this instrument was a favorite in Elizabeth's court.

Weak ale: Ale was safer than water because ale was brewed, while water was not filtered and therefore

often contained dangerous chemicals and organisms. And so ale was served to everyone, of every age, at every meal, though strong ale was usually reserved for adults.

William Shakespeare: William Shakespeare was the most famous and influential playwright in Elizabethan England and still the most famous and influential playwright today. Some of his most famous plays that you may recognize are *Romeo & Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream,* and *Hamlet*.

Meet the Author

Beau Lee Gambold lived in Texas, Tennessee, Colorado, Missouri, and Mississippi all by the age of nine. In high school he was nationally ranked in karate, and after college he got to travel and work for a presidential campaign. When the campaign ended, Beau joined the Peace Corps, where he spent almost three years in Thailand. While in Thailand, Beau became a Buddhist monk for a short time, and he also fell in love with books. When he came back to America, he put everything else aside, got a job in a restaurant, and started writing. He hasn't stopped since.

Today Beau lives just outside New York City with his wife, his baby daughter, two very specific cats, and a garden overflowing with tomatoes and dahlias. His wife is a theater genius and a Pulitzer finalist, and she first introduced him to Shakespeare, often by picking a play at random and telling him all about it on long subway rides home. The love of his life soon brought him around to a shared love of the Bard, and today Beau is at work on a number of Shakespeare-related stories and books. When he isn't writing, Beau can often be found in his garden or in the woods, hiking and looking for mushrooms to eat. He usually has a camera with him—he loves taking pictures—but he almost always has a book!

Meet the Illustrator

Kailien Singson. A born artist, Kailien hails from the northeastern region of India known for its rich natural beauty that serves as a constant inspiration in his work. His passion for art began at a young age with artistic scribbles in notebooks at school, and gradually developed into a serious career that led him to pursue a degree in arts. Having explored several techniques in art through his education and professional years in publishing, Kailien specializes in using striking colors and depicting realistic forms in his work. He is equally adept at traditional art styles, taking inspiration from everyday life.

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Core Knowledge® Adventures in History™

Cordelia and Oliver's comfortable life in a quiet rural English village is shattered when their father dies and a cruel uncle arrives to take charge. Rescued by an aunt, Cordelia is whisked away to the busy city of London. But for Cordelia, there are still challenges to overcome, especially when it comes to learning how to be a lady in Elizabethan England—which seems to involve wearing suffocating clothes, silly hats, and even sillier makeup. But perhaps there's another option—an unimaginable one. What if Cordelia becomes someone else entirely? What then?

These books are suitable for readers aged 8 and up.

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