

Circle of Time

By

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From the Author

I have studied Tudor history for over fifty years; the fascination for that era and the people who made up the family of Henry VIII has never waned. I used to say to people, “When I read about Henry VIII, his siblings or his wives, it isn’t as if I’m learning something; it’s more like I’m being reminded.”

Reminded indeed – so perhaps I wasn’t that surprised when I discovered through DNA analysis and genealogy that I am a direct descendant of Margaret Tudor, and therefore Mary Queen of Scots. Henry VIII is my eighteen-time first cousin! So, I decided to visit my kin.

What fun! Within the following pages, you will travel with Bridget Littleton, a rich and beautiful young woman who, with the help of the Bermuda Triangle, is transported back in time to Tudor England.

Most of the book is fantasy, of course. Were it not, we’d all be paddling our way to Tudor times for a visit, but I have stuck to the basic facts of life in Tudor history. Yes, I have played with it a bit, but the basic facts are there.

I have also taken the liberty of using my not so royal ancestor John Lyttleton and his son Sir John Lyttleton whose wife was, in fact, named Bridget. I’m having such a good time!

So, read on faithful companion
Much mischief to beget
As we travel through the mists of time
With our wondrous fair Bridget

Debra Shiveley Welch

Pastime With Good Company

By Henry VIII

Pastime with good company
I love and shall unto I die;
Grudge who list, but none deny,
So God be pleased thus live will I.
For my pastance
Hunt, song, and dance.
My heart is set:
All goodly sport
For my comfort,
Who shall me let?

Youth must have some dalliance,
Of good or illé some pastance;
Company methinks then best
All thoughts and fancies to deject:
For idleness
Is chief mistress
Of vices all.
Then who can say
But mirth and play
Is best of all?

Company with honesty
Is virtue vices to flee:
Company is good and ill
But every man hath his free will.
The best ensue,
The worst eschew,
My mind shall be:
Virtue to use,
Vice to refuse,
Shall I use me?

To

My beautiful adopted son Christopher who, upon DNA analysis was
discovered to be my 4th and 7th cousin,

And to

Mary Polly Greentree
1815 – 1880

Our closest common ancestor

And to my beta readers Debbie Leach, Cynthia DePlonty, Janet Huderski,
and a special thank you to Crystal Easterwood for all of her hard work – thank
you so much!

Chapter One

Where to should I express
My inward heaviness?
No mirth can make me fain
Till that we meet again.

Henry VIII
From *Where Should I Express*

Bridget Littleton raised her face to the darkening sky. Stars sparkled and shone, accentuating the soft feel of the salt-scented air. Leaning against the rail of her father's luxurious yacht, she gave herself up to the gentle listing of the ship, enjoying the sound of the slap of the waves against the yacht's steel hull. To her left, a seagull flew – just at eye level, so close that she could hear it pull the wind beneath its snowy wings. Intermittently, the maritime bird would glide and soundlessly ride the air currents, like a silent phantom above the blue-green waves of the sea. Flap, glide, dip and climb, her airborne companion followed the yacht for a short time, then soared off in the quest of an aquatic snack.

She'd brought an opened bottle of red wine to the aft deck of the yacht. There comfortable chairs and couches were placed for the ease of her father's friends and clients. She still wasn't sure as to how she was able to convince her father to let her use his yacht, but she was grateful. *The Bridget*, so named by her late mother, was a large, well-appointed vessel, its primary use being for the entertainment of her father's business associates. Somehow she persuaded him to lend it.

Bridge preferred this part of the large, luxurious yacht, preferred to see where she had been rather than where she was going. Bridge had always felt that way, felt the pull of a past she couldn't quite bring into focus.

Lifting a crystal goblet to her lips, she drank of the Bordeaux she preferred, savoring the taste of black cherry on her tongue. She held the wine there for a few seconds, savoring the taste, then let it slip down her throat, enjoying the chocolate finish of the wine.

The evening was a little cool, pleasantly so, and there was a slight wind carrying the scent of salt, a briny perfume she found enticing, seducing. She loved the smell of the sea. To her, it was a fragrance that called up phantoms of memories she could not quite grasp.

The wind began to pick up, and as her hair lifted in response to its urging, she shook her head, reveling in the feel of soft hair moving against her neck and shoulders. She delighted in the wind in her hair – enjoyed the

pull of it, the slight tug as hair and wind became playmates, dancing around her neck and cheeks, then billowing upward creating a silky parachute of silver and gold. Leaning her head back, she again looked up into the vast dome of sky above her. She loved to be at sea. She felt as if someone were calling to her; the pull of the sea was as strong and as insistent as a lover.

Footsteps caused her to turn from the rail. “Ah, Liam, good evening.” She smiled in greeting as one of her guests approached her – a second bottle of wine in one hand and a shawl in the other.

“I was afraid that you may catch a chill, Bridget. The wind is picking up.”

“Please, call me Bridge. Thank you, Liam. That was kind.” Both turned to the rail and observed the wake of the boat as it made its progress.

“Aren’t we in the Bermuda Triangle?” Liam asked.

“Yes, we are. Not afraid are you?” Bridge teased.

“Nah – not really.” Liam chuckled but finally admitted, “Well, not too nervous anyway.

“Say, this is some yacht your dad has here. Who named it *The Bridget*?”

“My mother did when I was born.”

“I see. Not bad to have a whole luxury yacht named after you.” They fell silent as both gave in to the beauty of the night and the softness of the breeze. Bridge lifted her glass for another sip and Liam noticed a ring on the middle finger of her left hand as she raised it to her lips. The kiss of the moon’s ethereal rays made the stones dance with light as if the ring were enchanted.

“Wow, Bridge, beautiful ring.”

“Thank you. It was my mother’s. By tradition, it is given to the eldest daughter of the eldest son. There is some kind of mystery to it. My ancestress through my mother, Bridget Lyttleton, supposedly owned it. That is why I’m named Bridget, by the way. My father’s name is John, and he is also a Littleton, but my parents are something like seventh cousins. Anyway Bridget’s father-in-law was named John, as was her husband, Sir John, actually, and my mother thought it would be nice to honor her, especially since the ring originated with her. So Bridget I am, but of course it got shortened to Bridge.”

“Well, it certainly is a beautiful ring. The gold is exquisite and, those are rubies, right?”

“Yes. Actually, it’s a Tudor Rose.”

For the second time that evening she held up her hand. The moonlight again caressed the stones and they seemed to come alive. Set in

heavy gold, the center gem was a perfect four grain (equivalent to a karat) pearl surrounded by five slightly smaller rubies which shimmered in the moonlight. It was stunning, but Bridget measured its value by the previous owner, her mother, who wore it on the same finger until she died of cancer when Bridge was three.

“Tudor Rose?”

“Yes, it’s a rather long story, but basically, a rose bush bloomed with both red and white petals signifying the union of two royal houses. Don’t get me started or I’ll talk for hours about it. My hobby is Tudor history,” she laughed.

“Oh, this may interest you,” Bridge said. Lifting the shawl she now wore and showing him an unusual brooch which was pinned to her gown.

“Hey, that’s an interesting piece of jewelry you have there.”

Bridget glanced down at the pin and smiled.

“Yes. Actually, it has an amusing story behind it.

“Upon hearing that I was intending a cruise which necessitated my basically staying within the Bermuda Triangle, my friend Cynthia became frightened. It is superstitious nonsense, of course, but what can you do?

“So, she went to Tiffany’s and had it made for me as a good luck talisman.”

“What is it? I can’t quite see.”

“It’s a sixteenth-century ship. She knows of my love of Tudor history and this is a replica of one of Henry VIII ships named the Mary Rose, after his favorite sister. Here, dangling from the figurehead is a diamond. Supposedly representing the North Star. Here on the back of the ship, on the quarter-deck, is a woman. I guess that’s supposed to be me.

“These scrolls along the water line are waves and represent that the ship is in a storm, but the woman will be safe because she has the North Star to guide her. She calls it the ‘Storm Tossed Ship’.

“Oh!” Bridge exclaimed as the yacht lurched. The wind, heretofore a gentle breeze, was picking up, and the sea was becoming choppy. The shawl which Liam brought to Bridge rose into the air. She made an attempt to catch it, slipped and almost fell into the sea, the goblet of wine crashing to the deck with a splintering sound of shattering glass as red wine coursed down the planks in blood red streams.

The wind increased and began to howl.

“Bridge!” Liam yelled. Grabbing her arm, he attempted to keep her from sliding over the rail as the yacht tossed and pitched as though it were deliberately trying to throw her overboard. Below her, Liam watched in horror as a whirlpool appeared starboard, and like a tornado, began to draw Bridge into its depths. He held on frantically, his eyes stretched wide

as he looked into Bridge's fear-filled face. Slowly her arm began to slip from his hands until the whirlpool claimed her and she was gone.

The storm quieted and the ship ceased its tossing. Crashing to his knees, Liam covered his face with his hands and cried out, "Bridge!"

Chapter Two

I make you fast and sure;
It is to me great pain
Thus longè to endure
Till that we meet again.

Henry VIII
From *Where Should I Express*

Bridge slowly rose from the bottom of a deep chasm. Slowly, slowly, darkness turned to mist, and mist turned to light. She could hear voices, faint at first, but as she drifted up through a veil of unconsciousness they became clearer, more distinct. Something in her brain, or maybe it was her soul, whispered caution. She waited, like a small animal, not sure if it should come out of its burrow.

As she floated gradually to the surface, she listened. There was a clacking sound, which she decided was the sound of wood on wood – perhaps clogs on a floor. Yes, the rhythm of the clacking was definitely that of walking. Someone opened a window and a faint breeze wafted into the room accompanied by an odor she couldn't quite put a finger on. Her nose twitched in an attempt to ascertain its identity: something earthy mixed with the smell of rain. The clacking began again, moving closer until it stopped near where she lay. Holding her breath, Bridge waited.

"It was a miracle, 'tis what I say, him just riding along and finding her there on the banks of the Avon. Why, she could have drowned, poor poppet! And what a beauty! Imagine if some bad sort come upon her first? Makes a body shudder."

"And her shift. I ne'er seen cloth like that, and what was that she was wearing....underneath?"

"Thee knows as well as I do. The poor maid, and she but a girl not yet fifteen, I warrant. We shall bring her about, Bessie; thee can be assured of that!"

The clacking started again, this time moving away. There was another sound, like cloth on cloth, or the whisper made by limbs moving over linen sheets.

Bridge was confused. *Have I ended up in some Amish home?* She held her breath, and opened her eyes just enough to peer through the merest slit. What she saw almost caused her to sit upright.

Two women were in the room, gathering what seemed to be mounds of linen. They both wore what looked like corsets over what appeared to be white linen blouses with full skirts falling to the tops of their shoes, which were square of toe.

Aprons covered their skirts, presumably from any dirt that could be transferred while performing their duties. On their heads, they wore what resembled a stocking cap, but they were made out of some kind of cloth: linen, she guessed. They appeared as though they existed within a living Hans Holbein the Younger painting. Bridge's confusion grew and a trill of alarm began to course down her spine.

Closing her eyes and pretending to still be unconscious, Bridge waited. *I think I need to be careful here until I know where the hell I am!*

She had seen the room as well during her undetected peek. Occupying one wall was a large fireplace. The furnishings were simple, but the room wore a comfortable feel. The mattress upon which she lay was undeniably stuffed with feathers, and beneath it felt as if there were a second mattress which gave firmness to the bed. Were it not for the two women in the room, she may have been tempted to curl up and enjoy the comfort. But something here was strange. *Where am I?* she wondered, *and how did I get here? And where is here?*

Avon, she said that I was found on the shores of the river Avon. Avon? England? What happened to me?

Bridge tried to dredge up through the mists what exactly had happened, but the memory would not come. She remembered being on deck with Liam and showing him the pin. The wind picked up suddenly and...and then...and then...what?

She remembered water! Somehow she was surrounded by water and it kept spinning and spinning. It was hard to breathe and a blackness fell over her, and then there was nothing.

The women left the room and she dared to open her eyes to look around. Sitting up, she looked down at the bed and, her ring! Her ring was gone! *What happened? Calm down. They probably took it off of you and put it somewhere.*

Swinging her legs over the side of the bed, she hopped to reach the floor. Only then did she see the three steps leading up to the bed. "Wow, a new way to get high," she remarked sotto voce. She ventured deeper into the room. Passing the fireplace, the sound of wood popping and cracking filled the now silent room, the fire within its recesses casting a dancing glow on nearby benches and filling the room with the scent of burning wood. Shafts of light cast through a mullioned window fell in pools upon a solid, wood floor, covered by layers of carpets upon which was placed

plain, but solid, furniture...and no lamps. Not a single electric lamp. All she could see was candles. *Could this indeed be an Amish home?* “Wow,” she said aloud and immediately slapped her hand across her mouth.

Something tells me that I need to be careful here until I know where I am and whose house I'm in.

It was then that she noticed that she was wearing a shift of some kind. Made of snowy white linen, the garment covered her from the collar bone to mid-shin. The voluminous sleeves were gathered at the wrist by a blue ribbon threaded through sewn eyelets in the cuff. A chill, like a bucket of ice water, washed down her spine a second time.

What is going on here?



Approaching footsteps drove her back into the bed. Diving in, she barely managed to get under the covers and back into position before the door opened and the woman named Kate, if she was remembering her voice correctly, walked in with another person.

“Here she is, Missus.”

“So, how does she?” a pleasant feminine voice queried.

“I think she will awaken soon, Missus. I have seen her move about a bit, natural like, so I do not think it will be long.”

“Excellent, Kate.” *So it was Kate.*

“When doth Mister Lyttleton return, Missus?”

“Any day now, Kate. Until then, we must care for our guests. Mister John Lyttleton, my dear husband’s brother, will tarry until yon maid is able to travel.”

Bridge could hear the rustle of clothing as either the woman, whose name was obviously Missus Lyttleton, or the woman named Kate, walked over to the bed where Bridge lay and pretended to still be unconscious. A cool hand was laid upon her forehead.

“Her skin is cool to the touch. ‘Tis certain she is noble. Regard her brow, her well-kept hair and hands – and her beauty. ‘Tis not well that we offend by ill care, Kate. Perchance she is of noble blood. We must take special care of the maid. Do you take my meaning?”

“Aye, Missus!”

“Very well. Let me know of any change. I shall return anon. And close yon window, one half is open allowing a breeze to enter; the street reeks.”

“Yes, Missus.”

There was the clacking sound again followed by a creak as the door opened and closed.



Slowly Bridge slipped from beneath the covers and stepped out of bed, this time using the small stair steps provided. Looking around, she tried to orient herself as to where she was. Her last memory was of standing at the rail of her father's yacht with Liam, then a sudden storm, the whirlpool, and...nothing. How did she get here?

Walking on tiptoe to the window, Bridge gazed through one of the diamond-shaped panes which made up the aperture. Discovering the latch, releasing it and hearing a slight click, she slowly opened the window. The smell of dust mixed with mud, animals and another odor, rotting vegetation and dung, she guessed, greeted her immediately. Gasping and backing away, she closed the window, placing the latch back into position. "What is going on here!" she exclaimed. "Where am I? WHEN am I?" The opening of the door, heralded by a now familiar creak, alerted Bridge to the fact that she was no longer alone. Swinging around and facing away from the window, her back pressing against the sill, she beheld a man.

He stood approximately five-ten. Dark hair framed a handsome face from which her own eyes, the color of orchids, sparkled with intelligence. Smiling, he walked toward her slowly, gently, as if approaching a wild animal that was in danger of bolting. Bowing he said,

"Hello, Mistress. I am called John Lyttleton. I am he who found you on the banks of the Avon. I am glad to see that you have come 'round. I am here to help you."

John Lyttleton! She looked at him closely. He appeared to be in his early 40s. *Is it possible?* She examined his clothes, the room, remembered what she had seen out of the window. *Have I lost my mind? The time...the street outside...the house...he has my eyes. Other than my parents, I've never seen anyone with my eyes. I remember a John Lyttleton from my research into my family roots. Is this my twenty-times great-grandfather? This doesn't make sense. What happened to me? Was it the Bermuda Triangle? It can't be; I don't believe in that mumbo jumbo, but mumbo jumbo or not, I'm in a room without electricity, in a city with people walking around in the mud in Tudor dress with horses and carts and garbage in the street, and now here is this man, claiming to be John Lyttleton, looking at me with my own eyes!*

Bridge, because of her love of history, and her inheritance of the Tudor Rose ring, had thoroughly traced her lineage, and the name of John Lyttleton, later spelled Littleton, was found in her family tree as early as the late 1400s to as late as the 1700s where Pharell, grandson of Sir John Littleton, MP, appeared in Virginia as one of the overseers on George Washington's plantation. Amazed and confused, she backed away slightly, fumbling for something on which to hold.

She could feel her heart slamming against her ribcage and hear her breath as it escaped her lungs with a soft wheezing sound. Sweat sprung out upon her brow as she fought to not lose consciousness. This was unreal – this couldn't be!

The little maid is frightened, John thought with regret. Smiling, in an attempt to calm her, he said, "Good morrow. Prithee, little one. Let us sit upon yon bench. I am sure you are confused, and mayhap I can answer questions, which I am sure run rampant in your mind. Pray, sit ye down. I will not harm you!" he said, chuckling and lowering himself onto the bench. Sweeping his arm to the right, he indicated where she should sit.

Walking over to him slowly, Bridge continued to stare into his eyes. He did appear to be kind, and she felt safe with him. She sat down gingerly, yet still left some space between them. The bench was cool beneath her sweaty palms and as she fought to quiet the beating of her heart, she attempted to draw in a deep breath.

"You...you found me?"

"Aye, I am he what discovered you. I found you awash in naught but a shift, a wondrous garment, but alas, worse for the wear. How fair you?

"Sir, ummm ... prithee ... ummm ... where am I?"

"Ah! Aye! You would not know. As fate will have it, you are now in Bristol, and here you shall abide in the house of my good brother William until such time as I may take you thither to mine own home in Worcester."

"Bristol?"

"Aye."

Bristol, apparently somewhere back in time. Bristol – once called Brigg Stow or meeting place at the bridge. Main industry import and export...wine, wool. How did I end up here?

"Sir," *Don't give away that you don't know what year it is. Think....your knowledge of Tudor history can help you now...think....*
"That is, kind, good sir. What is the latest news of Bristol?" *There, maybe that will help me hone in on when I am!*

“Fancy you should ask! Why, Bristol is right proud, for a new grammar school has been founded and all may now boast of an education.” He beamed his joy, which began in his sparkling, orchid eyes and slipped down to a surprisingly well-preserved smile.”

Oh, my God! Let me think...1532? Really? 1532? And if this is indeed my twenty-times great-grandfather, that would make him....forty-two, maybe forty. John interrupted her thoughts,

“Mistress, where hail ye from, for I do declare, you have mine eyes. Never have I beheld such as mine in another living creature outside of mine own family. From whence hail ye? Are we perchance kin?”

Almost blurting out “Yeah, real distant relatives, grandpa!” Bridge metaphorically bit her tongue. This was going too fast. She needed time to think, needed time to assimilate all that was happening to her, needed time to figure out how to speak without drawing attention to herself or making everyone think she was looney tunes.

She had to admit that his language was seeping into her brain and becoming more and more familiar. Her penchant for reading letters from this era was turning out to be a godsend. More and more she was hearing his language as if it were modern English. That is, she understood as quickly and as intuitively as she did her own.

These were very dangerous times, and if I am indeed in 1532 Tudor England, fascinating as it may be, I will have to tread softly. There is the issue of allegiance to the Queen versus....oh, my! Anne Boleyn! Religion!

“I...I...” Taking note of her confusion, John immediately associated it with fatigue.

“By your leave, Mistress, I will leave you now, for you are quite wore out. Know this: I will take care of you. When you are strong and able to travel, we shall journey to mine home where my good wife Elizabeth will aid you in any particular of your wellbeing. I will be your protector and friend; you need have no fear. Now, allow me to help you to your bed. I will tell my sister-in law that you are in need of sustenance.”

“Thank you,” Bridge mumbled. She was tired, overwhelmed, incredulous, unbelieving, half believing and just plain frightened. Then she remembered.

“Pardon, good sir, where is my ring?”

“Your ring?”

“Ye...aye.”

“Why, Mistress, there was no ring, but ah, aye, I have forgot me, I did manage to save this.” Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out the brooch, the “Storm Tossed” pin; the diamond was still attached.

John bowed and left the room. Walking to one of the benches situated by the fireplace, Bridge sat. Cradling her face in her hands, she wept. She felt horribly alone, extremely frightened and vulnerable. To make matters worse, she somehow lost the one anchor she had to her old life that she really cared about: her mother's Tudor Rose ring.

Chapter Three

And if any person will meddle of my cause,
I require them to judge the best.

Anne Boleyn.

The air smelled of beeswax. Candles blazed, their light reflecting off of various jewels and dancing within the eyes of beautiful women. The room was warm and filled with the sounds of lutes and flutes, trumpets and drums.

The king sat at the main dais, the jewels on his fingers, and adorning his gem encrusted hat, shot flashes of fire as candlelight played within their facets. Henry sat watching the dancers, sipping a goblet of Bordeaux and absentmindedly nibbling on a Deception, a relatively new art form in which the cook in charge of all things sugar in the kitchen created edible sweets and modeled them to look like castles, unicorns, even goblets and bowls. Considered by many future scholars to be the ancestor of the wedding cake, Deceptions were very popular in Henry's court. Made of sugar icing and formed to represent a mermaid, the confection was sweet, perhaps overly so, and he decided that he'd eaten enough of the sugary treat. Besides, he wanted the main form to remain intact as it was made to honor his guest, a beauteous maiden by all reports, pulled from the edge of the river Avon.

Henry ate his main meal at eleven o'clock that morning and had feasted on a saddle of spit-roasted lamb, roasted gammon, carrots glazed with honey, a salad, roasted turkey, a new and intriguing addition to his table, porpoise, a custard with berries and clotted cream finished off with a tray of various cheeses.

The food was prepared in his own, private kitchen, each employee required to take an oath of allegiance to the king before being permitted to touch his food. Poisoning was a very real threat.

"Where is the maid?" Henry demanded, startling Archbishop Thomas Cranmer from a quite delicious doze. Cranmer was finding it hard to stay awake on this warm candle scented evening.

"Your Grace, I am sure she will come anon. She arrived but two hours ago and, as Your Highness well knoweth, it takes a maid a good bit of time to make herself, shall we say, presentable?"

"God's wounds, I am impatient to see the girl!" Leaning toward Cranmer, he winked and added, "I hear she has the breasts of a white dove

and hair the color of moonlight,” Henry said, using the term duckys instead of breasts.

“Aye, Sire, she is wondrous fair. I think you will find that she is worth the wait.”



Brushing Bridge’s hair, Elizabeth Lyttleton lingered over the task. She never failed to wonder at its texture, its color or its silkiness. It shone like the moonlight it was often compared to, and from it rose a scent of – what? What could she compare it to? Ah, the smell of a meadow when the wildflowers were in bloom, or mayhap dew kissed roses.

As she was helping Bridge to dress earlier, her thoughts turned to her husband John. She was sorry that he could not be present to witness Bridge’s introduction to the king, but the invitation summoned only Bridge and a “lady to wait upon her.”

Lizbeth, as her husband called her, accompanied Bridge. Her love for the girl had grown in the few, short weeks Bridge spent with them, and so, she made a gift of her best shift, given her as a wedding present and never worn, but rather saved as a treasure. It was made of fine linen as white and soft as a cloud. Along the hem and the gathered wrists was the finest lace. The bodice too was trimmed in the same fragile filigree cloth which formed a small ruffle below the neckline.

Fine woolen stockings held up with garters made of ribbon came next, followed by a red, woolen petticoat, or underskirt, a product of her own husband’s looms, over which was placed the kirtle.

Removing the garment from a chest, Lizbeth held it up for Bridge to admire. Across her arms lay a beautiful underdress, the front a stunning brocade in saffron and gold, touched here and there with small petals of the most tender sea green, a gift from the king, which would match her sleeves. The back of the garment was a tawny silk. The bodice was made of the same brocade as the front of the kirtle and was lined with whalebone. Laced up the back, the fabric pushed the breasts upward, giving them a pleasing “rise.” Lizbeth was proud of this raiment especially, sewn by her own hands, and wondered at the king’s gift of the material which accompanied the invitation, no the command, that Bridge come to court. Only nobility was allowed to wear cloth of gold or cloth sewn with gold thread, and even that was restricted as to how much. Next came the gown. The tawny silk gleamed in the firelight. Lizbeth acquired

it early on in her marriage and was saving it for a special occasion. That occasion had arisen, but not in any fashion she could have predicted.

As she placed the gown upon Bridge's shoulders, she marveled at the fact that she, Elizabeth Lyttleton, the wife of a wool merchant, should come to court.

All because of this maid. I do fear for her. Such beauty often brings disaster.

Lizbeth moved around to face Bridge, adjusting the coat-like garment. Cut so that the front of the kirtle could be seen, it covered the bodice except for the very top where a row of pearls and rubies gleamed and sparkled in the firelight. She tied the bodice cover of the gown and stepped back. The golden brown silk made Bridge's eyes stand out, and her hair glowed like a halo.

"Tawny is your color, Bridge," she exclaimed.

Lizbeth added the fore sleeves, which were tied to the main sleeve of the gown, made of the same tawny silk and lined with the same brocade as the kirtle. Trimmed with fox fur, they added a luxurious touch to the finished costume. A pair of square toed velvet slippers, the exact color of the gown, finished her ensemble.

How do they wear all of this every day? Bridge wondered. She turned and looked into a mirror and was stunned. *Wow! Just like in the movies. Like dress up, only this is for real.* Turning a little to the side, Bridge once again noticed the absence of her mother's ring. *How beautiful it would have looked with this gown!* she mourned, then decided to put the thought aside. She needed to keep her wits about her and couldn't be distracted by thoughts of her past, or was it now her future?

Bridge turned to the left, then the right, and rotated so that she could look over her shoulder. The gown was stunning. She was amazed at the difference in how the clothing of this era enhanced a person's look in a way no modern dress, which was geared toward comfort and not show, could make. Well, except for the panned slops, or pumpkin pants, some of the men would be wearing by around mid-century. She thought they looked like a baggy diaper and wondered how they walked in those stupid things. In her past, in the future, she often had to suppress a giggle when attending a Shakespeare play when she saw the actors strutting around in the, to her modern mind, ridiculous garb, which made her think of the commercial showing the baby walking in what the narrator called a "cowboy diaper." She knew from her reading that they weren't popular yet, and the more attractive doublet and upper and nether hose were the style at present. But fashion was headed that way, and by the time Shakespeare came upon the scene, they would be de rigueur in men's

wear. In the meantime, the men were handsome in their close-fitting hose and finely wrought doublets. In fact, Bridge found the fashion quite romantic.

Fashion reflected the sensibilities of the people in a designated era, and Bridge remembered from her studies that at this point in time in Tudor England, a man liked to show off his calves. A nice, large, substantial calf said "I can afford a lot of meat. I am prosperous. I am a man of status, a man of means." *Ah, well, people don't change, not really*, Bridge decided.

One thing that surprised her was that the people in this century were exactly like the people she knew in her past...her future. The future? Essentially the same. Whereas this period was more immersed in religion and the journey of the soul to the rewards of heaven, as a general rule not found in the twenty-first century, still and all there were religious groups who still lived their lives completely for the salvation of their souls or for personal afterlife rewards.

No, people haven't changed much that I can tell. Still, it is somewhat a relief not to see Wal-Mart fashion...

Her musings were interrupted by Lizbeth,

"You should not wear a hood for your hair, methinks. It would be sinful to cover such glory. This cap will serve nicely." Lizbeth stood on tiptoe and placed a simple coif accented with pearls and small rubies, another gift from the king, upon Bridge's head.

"You are indeed beautiful, Sweeting," Lizbeth murmured.

She had become very fond of the much younger woman, and tonight her heart swelled with pride when she thought of the reaction of the court when Bridge entered. On Bridge's part, she was afraid. No, she was terrified.

What if she slipped up and used words like mind blowing or referred to something as a train wreck. Or what if she made a pre-Shakespearean slip and said something like "Let's party," or "the game is up," or referred to someone going off half-cocked? What if I ask if a couple is dating! *My God, I have to remove all modernology from my brain! I'm terrified. They behead people here! They burn them at the stake!* Turning to Lizbeth, she grabbed her hands and held them to her bosom,

"Lizbeth, I am afraid! I am so afraid. You know what a monster he is!"

"Shhh, 'tis treason to speak so!"

"But he is! What if he tries to..." Bridge searched for a contemporary word, "What if he tries to woo me into his bed? What shall I do?"

“Sweeting, stay calm and keep your head. Oh, dear,” Lizbeth inadvertently slipped into a pun most ill-chosen. “I mean, keep your head about you. Oh, you take my true meaning! I will await you here and we will talk it over the night.” With that, Lizbeth kissed Bridge on the cheek while smoothing her silky hair. A knock sounded on the door.

Here we go! Bridge began to tremble.

Lizbeth opened the door and a small, very plain young woman stood within its entrance.

“I am come to take you to the great hall. Follow me.” Bridge walked to her slowly and smiled.

“Thank you. And what is your name?”

“Jane Seymour.”

“The hell you say,” Bridge said sotto voce. Jane whipped around, “What say you?”

“Oh, I said...say...I hope the king is well today.” Jane looked her up and down as if she’d discovered something foul. *She looks like she smells a skunk*, Bridge thought. *A skunk she’d like to have carved up and served on toast.*

Ah, now she understood the portraits of Jane Seymour as queen, with her pursed lips and chinless face. Bridge often regarded Jane’s portraits when in her studies and always wondered about it.

She knew that an artist paints what he or she sees, and it goes beyond the surface. Perhaps Holbein felt like she was smelling something foul as well, and had her chin tucked in as if to register disgust. Or maybe he didn’t like her. Holbein reportedly fell in love with Anne of Cleves when painting her, ergo the very complimentary portrait sent to Henry when contemplating his fourth wife. Perhaps Holbein felt the exact opposite for Jane as his subject. Maybe she turned him off. Bridge mentally gave her head a shake, bringing herself back to the present. Jane finally answered,

“Please God, the king enjoys good health. Follow me.” With that, Jane turned and began to walk down the long corridor.



Torches nested in brackets along the wall and did a surprisingly good job of lighting the hallway. Bridge followed meekly, terror half closing her throat. She noticed the way Jane walked and corrected her own, fighting the desire to mimic her guide in an exaggerated manner. Fear often brought out the clown in Bridge, but she suppressed the impulse and

mirrored Jane's demeanor as precisely as she could. Shoulders back, head high, hands folded in front, she walked slowly and with as much dignity as she could muster under the terrifying circumstances.

Jane Seymour – destined to be the king's third wife, came to court to attend Catherine of Aragon and was now one of Anne's ladies. *Talk about a front row seat!* Bridge concluded. *This could turn into such a mess if I'm not careful!* Knowing what she knew, Bridge would have to walk on proverbial eggshells. One misstep and she could be in serious trouble and possibly face the stake or the chopping block. She tried to clear her mind and focus on what was happening at that exact moment.

Bridge decided to concentrate on the sounds of the swish of silk fabric against brocade, the report of their wooden heels against the floor, the play of light on the jewels of Jane's cap. Eventually, she heard music, very lively and accompanied by laughter. The hallway brightened and she was there. Jane promptly deserted her.

She couldn't believe her eyes! Here she was, little Bridget Littleton, standing in the great hall of Hampton Court, and there before her eyes was none other than Henry VIII. He was magnificent! Resplendent in cloth of gold and ermine, jewels flashing as he moved his hands to eat, drink or in conversation, the first thing she noticed was how extremely handsome he was. He reminded her of someone, but in her present state of agitation, she couldn't bring to mind who it was. His portraits did not do him justice. Perhaps the painter's goal was to accentuate his stance, robes and jewels. Or maybe his mouth was made to look smaller because he was supposed to look stern, and his painted eyes, bereft of eyelashes and brows pencil thin, made his face look rather plain and porcine-like. From where she stood, she could see a well-formed mouth, the lips pink with health; she wondered what they would feel like upon hers.

Shaking herself inwardly, appalled that such a thought should speed through her mind like a bolt of electricity, she failed to see that the king was looking at her.

Leaning forward and signaling to a tall courtier with dark hair, he spoke to him abruptly. The young man turned, pinpointed Bridge and strode over.

Watching him approach, Bridge felt a moment of panic. Her heart bouncing against her rib cage like a captured bird trying to escape made her feel giddy. Her breathing became labored, encased as it was in stiffened cloth and whale bone, as the frantic organ's beats hit her esophagus, causing her to gasp and choke. Her blood, akin to a river of ice water, ran through her veins as frantic fear settled upon her, and she was suddenly very cold.

A dream-like quality settled over her, like a mantle of thick cloth,
muffling the music and laughter. The young gentleman stepped before her.
Offering his hand, he simply said,
“M’Lady, the king awaits.”

Chapter Four

I find her so bright and pleasant for her young age
that I am more beholden to you for sending her to me than you are to me.

Archduchess Margaret of Austria's comment about Anne as a maid of
honor in her household.

Taking one step at a time, Bridge walked slowly in imitation of Jane Seymour's earlier gait. Overwhelmed with fear and trepidation, she concentrated on simply putting one foot in front of the other. She knew that if she were to look toward Henry, she'd bolt, so she stared straight ahead and fixed her gaze on a lute player at the far end of the room. The courtier stopped, and confused at first, Bridge looked at him questioningly. Nodding, he bowed and walked away.

"Well, what have we here?" Henry bellowed, and leaning to his left said, "God's teeth what a beauty. Have you ever beheld such a glorious maiden, Cranmer?"

Cranmer! Oh, God save me!

"I do believe, Sire, that she is the loveliest I have seen."

"Well then, get up and let the maid sit beside me. Get you gone, you should be shuffling some papers somewhere – be gone!" Cranmer reluctantly stood and held the chair. Bridge walked around to the end of the dais, ascended and sat beside the king.

She felt as if she were going to shake apart. Visions of the tin man in *The Wizard of Oz* danced in her head. Struggling to hide her trembling, Bridge bit the inside of her lip, hoping that the consequent pain would steady her. It didn't work.

I think I'm going to be sick.

She could feel him looking at her, feel his eyes stripping away the layers of clothing in which Lizbeth had so carefully dressed her. She felt a greater trembling rising up, beginning in her bones.

"Wine! Bring the lady some wine!"

"Madame," he said, turning to her. "Are you afraid of us? But there is no need. Come, let us be friends." Henry handed her a goblet of wine.

I don't think I've ever been so happy to be handed a drink in my life. Too bad it isn't a bloody Mary....oh, good God! Are the anachronisms going to keep popping into my mind? What's next? "Hey, can I have a Long Island Iced Tea? How about some Buffalo Wings with

my drink. Got any bar food? A slider would be nice." She drank quickly, draining the cup. A hand poured more wine into the vessel.

Henry must have decided to give her some breathing room. His attention was on the dancers now. His left hand lay close to hers and he tapped out in rhythm to the tune being played, the large jewels on his fingers reflecting candlelight like multi-colored prisms. She recognized the dance; she remembered viewing it on YouTube: the Volta, performed by Cate Blanchett and Joseph Fiennes in the movie *Elizabeth – The Golden Age*, the only dance in which partners embraced. As she watched, the couple appeared to challenge each other. A lovely, young woman in shimmering yellow silk nodded to her partner, a tall handsome young man in scarlet. He in turn bowed. The dance progressed, the couple circling and appearing to taunt each other, slowly moving closer together. The man stepped in, and encircling the girl's waist, lifted her into the air, whirling as he did so. He put her down, lifting her again and again, her skirts swirling and gleaming in the soft light of the candles, she gazing down into his face, then throwing her head back in a joyous laugh.

Bridge sipped her second glass of wine and thanked it inwardly for its relaxing properties. It was sweeter than she was used to, but she was grateful for it just the same. She needed the calming effects of "wine that gladdens the heart," and noticed, thankfully, that she was no longer shaking. She began to look around.

The first thing she became aware of was, contrary to what she'd heard, the room did not reek of sweat and urine. The smell of candles and various perfumes and the aroma of fine spices filled the hall. There was an underlying scent of warm bodies, but it was not offensive.

The smell of food also permeated the hall, but she noticed that the king did not eat. Beside her sat a middle-aged man whom she did not recognize from any portraits of the time. He was busy eating a kind of meat, she guessed beef, some carrots and cheese with only a knife, a spoon and his fingers. A white linen napkin lay on his left shoulder, and he frequently wiped his fingers and his mouth with the snowy cloth which soon became stained with brown juices. He was quite intent on the job, and she felt her stomach give a little growl.

She gazed out into the room and noticed a young man with a very large codpiece reach in and pull out a ring. *Whew! Shades of Chippendales! I thought I was going to get a little X-rated entertainment here*, she mused, and then with dawning insight said to herself, *So that's why men call their genitals the family jewels!* She watched as he slipped the ring onto a finger of a young woman, probably with the hopes of sharing said jewels.

Turning, she regarded the people on the king's right and was met by a pair of very dark, almost black, hostile eyes.

Oh, boy. Here we go.

She offered a timid smile which was not returned. The owner looked away, giving Bridge the opportunity to study her more closely. Anne Boleyn!

Oh those who described her were most unkind. She is lovely. Her hair isn't black, though, more a deep auburn and her skin is like glowing cream.

Feeling Bridge's regard, Lady Anne turned and gave her another scathing look. Bridge once again offered a timid smile.

She hates me because of the king, and I don't blame her. She is a beauty; I can see why the king is infatuated. Bridge nodded toward the lady again. Jumping to her feet, Anne left the hall without a word to Henry. The action caused him to turn back to Bridge.

"The lady is fatigued and has gone to her bed." He smiled and then asked, "And how is our new friend?"

"Your Grace, Sire, um, Your Highness..."

Henry laughed. "You have indeed managed to address us most properly. Now, we do believe that we see a veil of fatigue covering your most angelic visage. Go you to your chamber and we will send a late supper. Would that please you?"

"Oh, Sire, yes! And for my friend, Lizbeth as well?"

"Ah, Elizabeth. Many a woman has been named for our dear mother. Of course, sweet lady. We will visit after you have refreshed yourself."

"Visit?" Bridge asked, inaudibly gulping.

"Visit," the king repeated.

Snapping his fingers, he hailed the young courtier who brought her to the dais earlier, gave him an order and bid Bridge farewell. "I will come anon, Madam."



Food eaten, Bridge paced the apartment appointed to her by the king. He said he was coming – what was she going to do? Lizbeth offered to prepare her for bed, at which she almost shouted "No!" *God forefend*, she thought to herself, unconsciously slipping into the vernacular of the day.

She was thankful now for the layers of clothes she was wearing, until she remembered that the Tudors didn't wear underwear. That could

be an issue. *What am I going to do? Oh my God, oh my God. I'm stuck here with the lecher of the century, unprotected by family or rank, and worse yet, no personal history. What am I going to do?*

Her studies of the period taught her enough to be aware of what she was possibly facing. According to the history books, in about a year Cranmer would finally annul the king's marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Anne, in the early stages of pregnancy, would wed the king at last and become England's queen. This chain of events could not be messed with or changed in any way! From this marriage would emerge what many people considered England's greatest monarch, Elizabeth I.

And what are they always talking about in the movies? A paradox? What if I cause one and unbirth myself? What if I, in turn, cancel out my own existence? Think, Bridge, think! She remembered the movie *Back In Time*. Pretty sure that it was, to an extent, pure farce, she didn't want to worry about any paradoxes which could occur, but what if, like the most devoted writers, the author of the screenplay actually researched time travel and paradoxes did, indeed, exist? *I could be screwed!* Bridge thought with panic. *So I not only have to worry about surviving here, but surviving then...and, well, later. God, this is messed up!*

Pacing, hands twisting in anxiety, she jumped when the door to her chamber opened. It was Henry.

Bridge, jolted into realizing what was expected, curtsied. Taking a deep breath, she murmured, "Your Majesty."

"Come sit, Bridge. You have no need to fear us. We can tell by the way your heart beats within your bosom that you are filled with affright." As he spoke, he ran his fingers across her raised breasts. Gritting her teeth, she forced herself not to jump or flinch.

"Come, Madame, sit and let us talk."

Bridge acquiesced and took a chair at a small table next to the fire.

"God's blood, we are hungry. May we sample some of your fare?"

"Of course, after all, it *is* your food," Bridge quipped. Henry chuckled in response.

"We do not eat in the great hall. The opportunity to poison us is too great. The wine we drink *after* it is poured into other goblets and is partaken of by others. Sometimes, this late at night, we do feel some hunger." He stopped, looked around and smiled. "Now is this not quieting? Almost like old friends taking wine together. Do you not agree?"

"Well, yes, Sire, except we have just met and I am unsure of why you have called me to court."

"We have heard it reported that you were found on the banks of the Avon. Is that true?"

“Yes, Sire.”

“How came you there?”

“I do not know, Sire.”

“You know not?”

“No, Sire. I have no memory of it.”

“From whence did you come to the shore of the river? Where came you from before?”

“I do not remember, Your Grace.”

“You remember naught?”

“No, Sire.”

“HMMMMM” Henry sat back and thought a while.

“I have heard of such a thing where memory is lost after a blow to the head. Perhaps you struck your head on something before?”

“Perhaps, Sire.”

“So, you know not who your family is or where they bide? Most interesting.”

Henry leaned back and regarded her. He appeared to be musing, trying to decide what to say – what he wanted to say.

The fire played on the gold strands woven throughout his red-gold hair. Fine brows arched above deep blue eyes. She noticed that his eye color changed with what he wore: they were an ocean green in the great hall. When he arrived at her apartments, he was wearing a purple robe and now his eyes were a dark blue, almost the color of a blueberry. His nose was of a pleasing size and well formed, and once again she noticed his firm, pink lips. *Why, he is quite handsome. Now I know why he was called the handsomest prince in Christendom. Amazingly enough, his eyes are quite kind and he is extremely charming. Oh, my God! He is the image of Prince Harry! They are both second sons. The resemblance, even to the color of skin and hair is uncanny! Is it possible that he as well has somehow crossed the boundaries of time? I'm confused! This is not the Henry of history. This is a completely different man.*

Henry leaned forward and took her hand,

“Sweeting, we are going to be honest with you. Word reached us of your extraordinary beauty. We wanted to meet the maid with hair like shimmering moonlight and eyes the color of orchids. Now we have seen you, and we are smitten. We can think of nothing but you.”

“But you love the Lady Anne!” Bridge said before she could think. Mentally biting her lip, she decided to let the person existing in their proper time period do the talking.

Henry sighed, “Yes, we do love the lady. But she torments us, Bridge. She will not give herself to us and we are a lusty man!”

Henry leaned in closer, grabbing her hand this time with both of his,

“Kind maiden, I beseech you, I am a man in need! When mine eyes beheld you, I knew in an instant that I must have you. I am but a simple man, with simple needs, and my heart is just as fragile as any man’s. Please consider my plea.”

Bridge noticed that he dropped the royal we in his excitement. She was confused. She was attracted to him, absolutely, who wouldn’t be. Here was a strong and handsome man, just nearing his 41st year: virile, powerful, and willing to give her anything she wanted. But there was a trap hidden here. A trap that even he did not know about.

“Sire, what if I think it over?” Bridge begged. She needed time to think!

“Call me not sire, for you are the queen of my heart and I can see that I am not yet your king. Yes, Sweetheart, think on it. I anxiously await your answer and,” Henry continued as he walked to the door, “I have decided that you will attend the Lady Anne. You will join her tomorrow in her chambers.”

“You have got to be kidding!” Bridge cried. Realizing she had once again overstepped time and space, she held her breath.

“What say you?” Henry asked, a look of confusion on his face.

“Um, I said, Sire, I am pleased to do your bidding!”

He smiled, kissed his fingers, sent the kiss to her, and left her chambers.



Bridge once again followed Jane Seymour through the corridors of the palace and again repressed her desire to imitate the woman. *Whodathunk that Jane Seymour started out as a gofer? Shut up, Bridge!*

Bridge’s thoughts kept bouncing back and forth from where she was now and the future, and the ability to stop the internal one liners gave her concern. What if she said them out loud? In addition, she kept referencing everything to the future. She had to get to the here and now. For instance, for some reason, the actress Jane Seymour popped into her head. Bridge remembered how, when she first became aware of the beautiful actress, she was amused that Jane Seymour had the same name as the plain individual now leading her to Anne’s apartments. Bridge wondered for a long time if it was really her name or if it was a stage name.

When Bridge learned that it was indeed a stage name, she was amused again and wondered at the reasons for that particular choice. They came to a carved door and Jane opened it.

The room was sumptuous, to say the least. Thick carpets, one laid on top of the other, many tapestries and pillows gave the room a warm and cozy feel. The day was somewhat cool, although mid-June, and a small fire burned in the grate. Upon her entry, Lady Anne jumped to her feet and in a shrill voice demanded,

“Leave me! All but you,” she said through gritted teeth, pointing a finger at Bridge.

All of the ladies scurried from the room, some with a look of fright on their faces – some, like Jane Seymour, with a smirk.

Anne walked slowly toward Bridge, *Like a cat stalking a mouse*, Bridge thought.

“Madame, by what misadventure do you presume to enter my chambers?”

Bridge curtsied, “Lady, by order of His Majesty the king.”

“So, he seeks to nest you in here with me so that he can keep an eye on you!” Anne whipped around and began pacing the floor. “Hah! That will be a move worth watching!” She ended with a laugh, almost hysterical. *So that is the famed laugh I’ve read about.*

Bridge observed Anne. She looked thin, even a little pale, and the stress of that which had been going on for the past five years showed in the droop of her shoulders and a certain frantic casting of her dark, beautiful eyes. Bridge observed her with compassion. She knew what lay ahead for this poor lady, but could do nothing to stop it. History must play out, but here she was, a paradox waiting to happen, dropped into the roiling waters of Henrician politics and history. Her heart reached out to the desperate woman before her. *How can I possibly reach her?*

“Madame, may I speak?”

Anne whipped around, facing Bridge. “And why should I let you utter one word?”

“Because I want to help you.” *That laugh again.* “Truly, please listen.”

Bridge walked toward Anne, her hands held out, palms up in entreaty. “Thomas Moore has just resigned. This is the first really good news since ‘The King’s Great Matter’, as they like to call it. This is *your* time, but you need to proceed with caution.”

Bridge stood, facing the iconic woman whom she’d studied for years. Bosom heaving, she prayed that Anne would listen.

"You are an intelligent woman, or you would not have advanced this far. I truly believe that you love the king and that he loves you, but you must judge your time wisely."

"Go on."

"I can help you become queen. I know of your reputation, and I know that you are a clever woman and also a better woman than many report."

"Chapuys!" Anne spat the word, referring to the Spanish ambassador to the court who was devoted to Catherine of Aragon and her cause.

"Indeed," Bridge affirmed.

"Hold!" Anne demanded. "I thought your memory was lost in the river. The king told me so this morning."

"Lady Anne," Bridge moved closer, and giving a conspiratorial look questioned, "do you always tell the truth to a man?"

Anne stared at Bridge with a look of surprise, which changed to one of curiosity and finally amusement. She gave a short laugh then offered, "Come, sit."

They walked to an inlaid table by the fire. Anne poured two goblets of wine and commanded, "Speak."

"I have been up all night thinking about this," Bridge began.

"As I said, Moore has resigned. His days are numbered. The king is close to having his way. I do believe he loves you, I do with all of my heart, but I also believe that, even if his love is dead, he will marry you just to show that he can!"

"That is a heartless way of putting it, but I agree," Anne granted.

"But, you have enemies."

"Yes, I do," Anne conceded.

"So you need an ally – a feminine ally – an ally who likes to see women come out on top, and I do not mean on top on her knees." Anne barked a laugh, catching the sexual connotation.

"Now, you are not going to like this part, and I do not blame you, but again, I have run this through my brain all through the night. Do you want the king to take a mistress who is your enemy and wants to snatch the crown for her own, or do you want a friend who can control the situation?"

"This is nonsense! You merely wish to bed the king and take my place. Do you think me a fool?"

"Lady, never. I want you to be queen! I want you to give the king an heir!"

"And why should I trust you?"

“Because I believe that you, and only you can lead the king to the true religion.”

Bridge had thought this out carefully during the countless hours she had lain awake. No other reason would have seemed plausible to a woman of this era. Religion was central to everything within Tudor society, and the passage of one’s soul to eternal bliss was more important than their earthly journey. Only through religion could Bridge convince Anne to believe that Bridge’s quest to bed the king was solely to accomplish Anne’s ascendancy to the throne and thereby bring the protestant religion to England.

Anne continued her pacing. She looked at Bridge periodically, as if to size her up, stopped, nodded her head, and turned to face Bridge.

“How do I know you to be a true friend, and how do I know that this can be accomplished?”

Bridge reached into a pocket hidden within the depths of her skirt and withdrew the pin given to her by her friend Cynthia.

She’d gone over this too in her mind, and had come up with a way to use the pin to help accomplish the culmination of what she thought of in her mind as “Mission Elizabeth.” In addition, when contemplating what to do, a chill began in the pit of her stomach and worked its way up to her heart. She hadn’t remembered it when Cynthia gave her the brooch, but the night before, when contemplating what to do, she remembered a long forgotten bit of information she’d come across in a history book. Anne had given Henry this exact pin! No mention was made of how it was acquired. Perhaps it was because Bridge was destined to give it to her. It boggled the mind and made Bridge question if this had all been a part of The Plan, but it also made her realize that she was on the right track, and this was exactly what she should do; what she was supposed to do; what she was born to do.

“Look,” she said, handing it to Anne.

“Exquisite! I have not seen gold wrought with such artistry very often.”

“Look, see the woman on the quarterdeck? That is you. The scrolls here along the hull are waves caused by a storm: storm tossed.” Anne nodded and leaned forward to regard the pin more closely. Bridge continued.

“The diamond hanging off of the figurehead is the King, your North star. He will guide you through storm tossed waters safely.”

Anne look up and straight into Bridge’s eyes.

This is so unreal, Bridge thought to herself.

“And you would give me this priceless jewel to give to the king as my gift?”

“Yes, I will.”

“Why?”

“Because I believe that you should be queen.”

“I accept the gift, and thank you,” Anne said, standing to put the brooch in a secure place. “Wait!” Bridge said, grabbing Anne’s wrist. Anne sat down.

“You must time the gift most carefully.”

“Yes.”

“In October, you and the King will journey to Calais.”

“How came you by this knowledge?”

“It is too hard to explain. You will take me with you and I will tell you when to give the jewel to the King.”

Anne stood up and began pacing. Whirling around, she challenged, “Why are you helping me?”

“I told you. I believe you should be queen.”

“And what will you gain?”

“Lady Anne, it has nothing to do with any kind of reward or advancement. I simply believe that you should be queen.”

Anne looked at Bridge, trying to decide whether or not to trust her.

She is the most beautiful woman I have ever beheld. She could easily take the king away from me, yet she says she does not want him for herself. How can I trust her?

Bridge sensed her wavering between believing her and sending her back through the door with a few, good slaps to send her on her way.

“I can control him.”

Anne swung around and looked at Bridge with intensity. “What do you mean you can control him?”

“I know how to keep a man under my control,” Bridge replied.

“Are you a virgin?”

“No.”

“Ah! That does work in our favor.”

Bridge notice the change to the plural. Anne already thought of herself as queen. She prayed that Anne could not see that she was lying. She was running on pure bravado. She had stepped into this world, whether invited or uninvited she did not know. She was either an interloper, perhaps a dangerous one, or a tool of the universe created to accomplish a specific goal. She needed to walk softly.

“And another thing,” Bridge half whispered.

“Yes?”

"I will tell you when to give yourself to the king."

Mouth open, Anne regarded her with an incredulous expression. "You will tell me what?"

"Listen, Lady Anne, please listen carefully. Your position could be in jeopardy. You are going to need to firm up your place in the king's heart. In October you will go to Calais, you will give him the pin and you will submit to him. When you are with child, your position will be unassailable."

"Yes! If I give him a child. Then why not submit now?"

"The time is not right. Please trust me, the time is simply not right."

"How do I know that you will not get with child?"

"Because I am barren." No need to tell her about the birth control shot. There was no way she could understand. Shots had not been invented yet and birth control was hit or miss at best. In the modern world, birth control, using the birth control shot for instance, was ninety-nine percent effective. She'd gotten one the day before she left on the yacht, and by her reckoning, had a good two months of safety ahead of her. After that, she'd have to wing it. In fact, if she played her cards right, she could get through this in plenty of time without getting pregnant. Once Anne was with child and wed, she could try to disappear into obscurity where she could reduce the risk of setting up some kind of time continuum fiasco.

Anne tented her index fingers, placing them just below her lower lip. She tapped her chin with her fingers while she thought.

"Let me comprehend. You will bed the king. You will control him to save him for me?"

"Yes."

"You wish to go with me to Calais, a journey of which I am not yet aware, will tell me when to give the king this jewel you have given me, and when to bed him, thereby getting me with child, and therefore wedded and crowned as queen. Is that correct?"

"Absolutely."

"Why do I believe you?"

"Because I speak without hope of recompense."

"Now there you have struck upon a thought. What *do* you hope to get from this? To what end? To what satisfaction do you do me this great favor?"

"Mayhap I like to have friends in high places. Mayhap I want to marry well without getting into politics. Mayhap I crave the life of a...say duchess...and glory in the country life."

"Is that your price?"

“Sure. Why not? That is my price.”

“Mayhap I am losing my head, but so be it.”

Bridge gave an inward shudder.

Chapter Five

“By daily proof you shall me find,
to be to you both loving and kind.”

Anne Boleyn to Henry VIII in her Book of Hours.

The scene was set; Bridge was extremely nervous. So filled with apprehension was she, that her hands shook and her stomach insisted on doing periodic flip flops. The king was coming and she was going to submit. Her plan to play him for a little while, remaining coy and demure, worked for over a month, but in the end, she decided that she must rope him in. It was time.

Her hope was to completely enthrall him until such time as Anne could give herself to him. Through the many books she remembered studying about Henry, she recalled that he tended to tire of his mistresses. Bridge was counting on that happening with her, but not before Anne submitted and consequently became pregnant.

For now, she wanted him to feel as if he'd fought hard for her and that she could at any time withdraw her favors. She knew that she must keep him with her and stop him from straying to other very willing ladies, like Jane Seymour, who was already trying to insinuate herself into his favor and could possibly wrest the crown from Anne's head prematurely, or Margaret Shelton, a lady of likewise temperament. Bridge's insertion into the equation could cause any number of what was called the “Butterfly Effect”: seemingly small changes which caused cataclysmic disruption in the future, so she must tread carefully. As long as she kept history on the correct path, she felt that all would be well.

Henry's involvement with the two ladies undoubtedly occurred after his marriage to Anne, so Bridge's addition to the cast should cause no issues as far as written history was concerned.

She also wanted to bargain. He would pay a price to have her, a price that would assure her safety, Elizabeth's birth, and the uninterrupted unfolding of history as written in her time.

She remembered one movie she saw about him: *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, in which Henry remarked on the way the crowds received Catherine of Aragon, and Catherine replied that the people were always kind to her, and that it was others who had been unkind. Henry promised that no one would be unkind to her again, word of a king, and Catherine remarked that she'd rather have the word of a Henry, to which he then

vowed. Bridge knew that it was just a movie, and those words were more than likely never spoken, but could she depend on “the word of a Henry?” She doubted it, but she knew that he could be surprisingly kind at times, and that is what she would have to count on right now.

Knowing what was going to happen – what was supposed to happen, had its advantages at times, although she realized that as time progressed, it would get to the point of being unbearable. Still, here she was, and here she was most likely to remain.

As she prepared for the king’s arrival, she once again played out in her mind the dire consequences should she cause a paradox and change the course of history. Elizabeth was the key; her birth must occur and her subsequent reign be assured.

My God, the ramifications, if I screw up, could be cataclysmic! Elizabeth brought harmony and religious freedom to England, and because of the relative peace of her reign, the arts flourished. English became an important language – Shakespeare wrote his plays. Because of her, America was formed as it is in my time, and its government built upon Magna Carta: not Spanish, not French, but English law. She showed the world that a woman could reign, could have a say in politics, could stand toe-to-toe with a man. If I mess this up, the results could be disastrous. We may never emerge from the Middle Ages; American could become a completely different country; women may never rise out of the “pink ghetto” to the degree of competing with men in business, medicine, the arts and politics, and who can begin to guess the men and women of the future who are to improve our quality of life through medicine, for one. If Elizabeth does not reign and stop the mass executions, these people may never exist. Elizabeth must be born, and my being here could well be the disruption in history which overturns what is supposed to be. This cannot happen! I must not be that butterfly.

Bridge brushed her hair one more time out of pure nervousness. She dismissed the woman Henry assigned to her upon Lizbeth’s return to her home. She wanted total privacy. She needed to think, to plan, to prepare herself for what was about to take place. One slip-up, just one dip into modern language or thinking, and she could mess the whole thing up; the results could be catastrophic. She was about to begin an affair, and the intimacy inherent in an association where sex is involved could prove disastrous, *if I screw up*, she said to herself. *I feel like a frickin’ double agent with all of this!* Bridge thought with near panic, *And not only that – look at what is about to happen. I’m going to have sex with Henry VIII! It’s mind blowing! Oh, God, and not only that, what if John and Lizbeth*

find out? It will be all over court – everyone will know, and it will get back to them. I'll never be able to make them understand.

Lizabeth will be very disappointed in me. She will not understand why I do this, and I couldn't blame her for it. I'm alone in this, and I must tread carefully.



Bridge was dressed in a soft robe that hung loose. The linen shift beneath was also loosened and revealed gleaming, smooth shoulders. She'd reddened her lips with the juice of pomegranates.

The table in her chamber was set in a buffet style. Meats and vegetables, fruits and nuts, seeds and cheeses were laid out for the king's choosing.

A Deception, made from sugar icing, took center stage. It was in the shape of a nude, reclining Lydia wrapped in the wings of a swan. Henry would not miss the implications of the ancient Greek allegory. There would be no servants to present the dishes. *Nope. Tonight is self-serve.*

Were he in his private chambers, the food would have been brought to him in courses, but his request was that they remain unattended. He wanted to be alone.

She gave the table one, last look. *Everything looks good, but what I wouldn't give for a pizza and a Coke, or a cold beer!*

A knock on the door brought her back to the task at hand. Her heart caught in her throat, the door opened, and the king strode into her chamber.



Bridge lay beside the slumbering Henry. Unable to sleep, she relived the evening over and over in her mind. Henry literally burst into her chambers, and upon seeing Bridge, hair loose and shoulders exposed, rushed to her, lifting her in his arms and carrying her to the bed. There was no time to protest, no chance to offer him food and wine first. The wine, in particular, would have been appreciated, for it would have given her courage.

There was no time to react, no time to prepare, perhaps gird herself for what was to come. He was like a whirlwind, and she was caught up in

a surge of actions and emotions like she thought never to experience again in her life.

His mouth and hands were everywhere, and in spite of how she believed she would have reacted, she found herself carried along on a tidal wave of passion. When the climax came, she was stunned. *Now I know why the French call it "le petite mort." I felt surely I would die from the pleasure of it.*

After the king bid her to rise, and they finally enjoyed the meal, Henry was in a high mood and insisted that she sit on his lap. He fed her bits of meat and she fed him as well. As the wine flowed and the hour deepened, he pulled her shift down and fondled, then mouthed her breasts. He poured wine from his goblet upon them, then slowly licked the streams of the liquid from her skin, concentrating on her nipples. Henry once again swept her up and returned her to the bed.

Ripping her gown from neck to hem, he fell upon her with a cry of passion, sucking, licking and finally entering her.

They rested and he began again.

At some point in the night, he wept.

Near dawn, Henry pulled her again into his arms. This time, his lovemaking was tender and thoughtful, as if his entire intention was to please her.

"Sweetheart, you are as tender as a dove. I vow to you my undying love. Take this small token and wear it for me, my Bridge. And by the wearing of it, all of those knaves in court will know that you are protected by me."

She felt him slip a ring on the middle finger of her left hand. They made love yet again.

Now she lay, watching light from the rising sun slowly fill her chambers, and thought over all that had happened. She had succumbed, and in doing so, hoped that she'd done her part to keep history on its path.

Its path: many will die, the Holy Catholic Church will be torn asunder, monasteries destroyed. And once Edward VI, Henry's only legitimate son, dies at age 15, Bloody Mary will reign for five terror-filled years.

Poor Mary, she is such a skittish young woman who suffers from debilitating pains in her face. I'll bet it's from grinding her teeth at night. Her bite is probably off, Bridge thought, thinking of Mary – Henry's eldest child, the only child of Henry's and Catherine of Aragon's marriage who survived.

Ah, sweetie, your fate is not a happy one. You will love and not be loved and eventually die of what many now believe was a tumor – and you will think it is a child.

Edward, not yet born, but a step in the ladder toward what must be allowed to happen, kept alive and in great pain until his conniving uncle can marry his 17-year-old daughter, Lady Jane Grey, the granddaughter of Henry's youngest sister Mary, to Lord Guilford Dudley. Both mere children really. They will die to protect Mary's reign.

So many will die, and I have it in my power to mitigate the carnage to some degree. But I dare not; I dare not try to change history. Elizabeth must be born and must reign.

Bridge brought her hands to her face and sighed deeply. As she did so, she felt the ring on her middle finger. Holding it up to her eyes, a shock ripped through her body. It was the Tudor Rose ring she thought was lost in the sea.



Bridge sat within a deep windowsill of Anne's chambers while her women worked on various pieces of needlework, read or played the lute. Since Bridge never learned these "womanly pursuits," and had no desire to read at the moment, she could not participate, and were it not for the heavy burden she carried, she would be bored to tears.

Anne was making short, jerky stitches in her embroidery. She was obviously quite agitated.

She probably knows that I've finally succumbed to the king.

She looked around the room, and her thoughts of early that morning began to run along the same line of thinking.

How odd it was – how completely surreal to be sitting here in a chamber with women long dead in her time. Women whom she'd only been introduced to through centuries-old portraits which, now that she could see with her own eyes, really didn't portray them truly.

Jane Seymour: she was plain, but did not have quite the weak chin or pursed mouth illustrated in the sketches and drawings she had seen. *Actually, I think she may be rather dim. The lights are on but nobody's home.*

Poor lady. You will marry the king and will bear him his greatest desire: the only surviving legitimate son he will ever have, and then you will obligingly die. Bridge sighed. Her eyes turned to Lady Jane Rochford, Anne's sister-in-law. Although she had seen her portrayed in movies as a

middle-aged woman, Lady Rochford appeared to be a few years younger than Lady Anne. According to accounts, she was a bitter, nasty piece of work. She got hers before all was said and done. She testified against Anne in court saying that Anne was guilty of incest with her own brother – Lady Rochford’s husband, and not many years later met her own bad end.

How jealous she must have been...are...will be? Oh, this is maudlin, but I can't help myself. You, Lady Jane, will confess your perjury during your last confession. Why did you have to make your life so difficult?

Bridge turned her attention to Anne, who was still making a mess of her needlework.

She'll have to pick all of that out and redo it. Bridge thought.

Anne, they lied about you the most. Bridge continued to regard the young woman and to wonder at the fact that, here she sat, on an ancient windowsill, regarding people she'd only seen in portraits of cracked paint and dimmed colors depicting pursed-mouthed lash less people on a flat piece of canvas. Before her was the living breathing Anne Boleyn.

Her skin was not sallow, but was what modern people would call “peaches and cream.” In the Tudor court, the English Rose, or pink and white complexion, was preferred. Her mouth was full and beautifully shaped, her brows clear cut and slightly arched, but her eyes. Oh, her eyes! Large and luminous, *now I know what they mean by limpid pools*: they sparkled with life and vitality. Framed in long, silky lashes, they were the perfect foil to her lustrous, deep auburn hair.

I can see why some would say it is black. In some lights, it does look quite dark.

Oh, my tragic lady. “Anne sans tête.” It hurts me deep inside to know what you will go through, and to know that I cannot intervene, she thought as she recalled from her history studies the pamphlet Anne found with a rendition of her shown without her head. *This is so difficult...*

“And just at whom are you staring?”

The barked inquiry pulled Bridge out of her reverie with a shock.

“Oh, um, Lady Anne, I do beg your pardon. I was wool gathering.”

“Mayhap it was of the king!” Anne threw her sewing down and, jumping to her feet, began the frantic pacing Bridge had come to know.

“Leave us!” she commanded, sweeping her arm toward the other women in the room. Bridge noticed that as they left, Jane Seymour looked frightened and Lady Rochford triumphant.

When the door shut, Bridge turned to Anne, and placing her finger against her lips, Bridge indicated to Anne to be silent. Running to the

door, she opened it and peered down both ends of the hall. No one was there.

Returning to Anne, she held her hands forward in a gesture of friendship. There was a flash of ruby red and Anne saw the ring.

"Pretty trinket, and a Tudor Rose no less! Are you now the property of the king?" Anne spat.

"I am the property of no man!" Bridge cried.

Breast heaving, Anne bit her lip.

Anne was not being over emotional in her anger at seeing the ring. The Tudor Rose was an emblem of the House of Tudor and was displayed in various forms throughout Henry's castles and palaces.

Upon the defeat of Richard III, Henry Tudor claimed Elizabeth of York, a daughter of the house of York, as his bride, thus cementing his claim to the throne, which was shaky as he was of the illegitimate Plantagenet line. When a rose bush was seen to produce blooms with both white and red petals, there was great rejoicing, and it was seen as a sign of God's blessing upon the marriage. From that day on, it was known as the Tudor Rose: a rose displaying petals which were red on the outside and white on the inside. The gift was obviously an emotional one, perchance a thank you for submitting to his desires, and possibly a gift of protection. Henry was aware of the perils a woman whom he took into his bed, and heart, faced.

Anne was furious, and Bridge could not blame her. She noticed that, as reported, Anne's skin color did not change. Any other woman's cheeks would be bright red now, but Anne's remained all of the color of peach-tinged cream. *She is magnetic*, Bridge thought, then shook her head. She had to keep her thoughts on target. She made a snap decision and sent up a prayer that she was doing the right thing.

"Lady Anne, are we safe here? That is, can we talk and no one hear us?"

"And why should I care what people hear from a friend who is no friend?"

"Lady, I seek only your safety."

Casting a suspicious look toward Bridge, Anne walked to the ornate door and opening it, looked down each side of the hallway. Spotting a page, she called to him.

"Lad, come hither. Stand you here and guard this door and see that no one enters. I will reward you well. No, don't stand there, move down the hall and keep watch. Good lad." She closed the door and turned to Bridge.

"I am listening."

Bridge began pacing as she tried to figure out the best way to reveal to Anne what she knew. *How do I approach it? Do I tell her the truth? No, I can't do that. She'll want more information than I can safely give her. I have to win her confidence.*

"Lady Anne, you know that I was found on a river bank and claimed to have lost my memory."

"Yes, I remember it well."

"And you remember that I told you that it was a lie, that I recall everything."

"You hinted at such."

"Lady Anne, I am going to ask for you to take a leap of faith."

"A leap of...what do you mean?"

"I am going to ask you to believe in that which is unbelievable."

Anne turned and walked to the table. Pouring two goblets of wine, she handed one to Bridge and indicated for her to sit. When they both were seated, Bridge placed her goblet on the window sill and, leaning in, began her story.

"Lady Anne, I know things that are going to happen." At Anne's start of disbelief, Bridge interjected, "Now, wait a minute. You have met Leonardo DaVinci, right?" Bridge asked, referring to the brilliant artist and inventor whom Anne met when serving in the French court as Lady in Waiting to Queen Margaret, wife of King Francis I."

"Yes...I do remember him."

"He could predict some future events – future inventions."

"Go on."

"So can I. Only a few, but I do know some things that are going to happen. I will tell you one now, and when it transpires, you will know that I speak the truth. I am here to make sure that you become queen."

"Anne," Bridge took the liberty of reaching for one of Anne's hands and dispensing with her title. Anne did not pull back. "As I said, I am your friend. I believe in your true love for the king and his for you, and wish to see it consummated in marriage. And let us not forget the little favor I want," Bridge said, ending with a chuckle in the hopes of assuaging any of Anne's misgivings. Anne would understand someone having an ulterior motive, but she would never comprehend someone helping her out of purely altruistic motives.

"Continue."

"This September, Henry is bestowing upon you the patents of Marquis of Pembroke. He is preparing to marry you!"

"How do you know this? How do I not know this?" Anne cried out, "The preparations must have been going on for some time!"

“Be that as it may, I am sure he will be telling you soon, but it is going to happen.”

Anne sat back, deep in thought. Who was this woman, this stranger who entered court a couple of short months ago? *She says she is a friend, but do I really have any friends? And then, there is her speech. Sometimes she sounds as normal as any of us, and then it changes, even unto her accent. Her speech is foreign, and yet it is not. It matters not. I must trust her. She is my only hope.*



Bridge could not believe her eyes. Lizbeth rolled out the yards of beautiful silks and brocades for Bridge to behold.

“Look, sweeting, such a lovely color of emerald – what it will do for your eyes! Here,” Lizbeth said, draping the end of the shimmering cloth over Bridge’s shoulder. Clapping her hands in satisfaction, she beamed at her protégé.

“You are such a beauty and a credit to mine own John.”

Lizbeth returned to Worcester shortly before the beginning of Bridge’s affair with the king. Believing Bridge to still be a virgin, Lizbeth held much hope that she could work a match between Bridge and her son John, now 19. She discussed it with her husband. “Aye, and what a match. He be at most but two years younger than she, and what is the hurt of that? The king married Queen Catherine, and she six years older than he. ‘Tis true that women live longer than men. This would shorten her widowhood.”

John laughed at his wife’s logic. *My dear, sweet Lizbeth, she so loves the girl that she will make her a daughter come what may.*

“Aye, my love, we shall see,” he responded.

Remembering her talk with her husband, Lizbeth’s spirits rose even higher. “We must make a start on the gown. The Lady Anne will be invested on the first day of September, a scarce two weeks away. We must get to work.” Picking up the glimmering cloth, she turned to Bridge. Taking her hand, with tears standing in her eyes, Lisbeth said “Thank you for calling me back to court. I am quite out of breath from it, but by your leave, I shall remember this to the end of my days!” With that, she gathered the material and left the chamber to sort out patterns and gather the women assigned to assist her in the making of the gown.



Firelight played on golden goblets and silver plate. Tapestries in vibrant blues, reds, yellows and greens shimmered in the candle light. Gold and silver threads, woven throughout, let off a sparkling display that reminded Bridge of fireflies. A feeling of homesickness shot a wave of longing through her.

This was indeed an adventure, one she could have never anticipated that she would participate in, but her task for the moment, she hoped, was almost completed, and she wished she could go home.

She missed coffee. *Oh, what I wouldn't give for a cup of coffee and an apricot Danish in the morning instead of a glass of insipid beer, a slice of beef and the upper half of a loaf of bread. It tastes and looks like the top half of a hamburger bun.* She was thinking of the bread called manchet. *It does taste good, kind of sweet. Well, at least now I know where the term "upper crust" came from.* Indeed, the top half of the manchet roll was served only to the nobility. The lower half was reserved for the servants, thus coining the adage "upper crust."

She walked slowly around the table. This time, servants would be allowed to enter and serve the meal in courses. It was almost eleven o'clock in the morning and the king's main meal would soon be served here in his chambers. She had been invited: a rare privilege.

Bridge knew that her time with Henry was running out. Soon Anne would give herself to him, she would become pregnant and they would marry. What surprised Bridge somewhat was how bereft she felt. Something had happened that she had not counted on: she'd fallen in love with Henry VIII.

What a ride this has been. Here I am, in the court of Henry VIII, meeting the people whose lives I have studied for years, a decade really, and walked with persons long dead in my lifetime – the lifetime before. I've been with Henry VIII and met Anne Boleyn, and who knows who else I will meet, talk with and get to know. And the ride isn't over. My job is not half done.

I know what is coming for them, but I wonder – what is coming for me?

Finish reading *Circle in Time*

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