

Edward

A Novel



Mike Joyce

EDWARD

A novel



From National Portrait Gallery

By Mike Joyce
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Special Interactive Edition

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The characters and events in this book are fictitious. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, with the exception of Angharad and the author's daughter, is coincidental and not intended by the author.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wife, my daughter, the memory of Angharad, and all those who have helped in its production.

Thanks to Bobbie Crawford-McCoy for “(Past)”, as it appears throughout this book. It is part of the story that visions of Edward mix with thoughts about him, and with my own life. Perhaps this will help separate them.

Thanks to “The Medieval Technology Company” for the sword image used on the front cover of printed copies of this edition.

[Contents](#)

[Brief Introduction to the Epub Book](#)
[A Genealogy of Edward](#)
[Medieval Music Links](#)
[Chapter 1 - The Beginning](#)
[Chapter 2 - Duke Henry](#)
[Chapter 3 - Edward](#)
[Chapter 4 - The Way of the World](#)
[Chapter 5 - A Kaleidoscope](#)
[Chapter 6 - The Kings of England](#)
[Chapter 7 - Marbles and Hawks](#)
[Chapter 8 - Edward and Eadie](#)
[Chapter 9 - Christmas](#)
[Chapter 10 - Peterborough](#)
[Chapter 11 - Changes](#)
[Chapter 12 - Wales](#)
[Chapter 13 - Unhappy Differences](#)
[Chapter 14 - Separation](#)
[Chapter 15 - Sarah](#)
[Chapter 16 - Penshurst and Cambridge](#)
[Chapter 17 - Abigail](#)
[Chapter 18 - Celebration](#)
[Chapter 19 - Growing Up](#)
[Chapter 20 - Father Joseph](#)
[Chapter 21 - Meanings](#)
[Chapter 22 - Goodbye](#)
[Chapter 23 - Of Life and Death](#)
[Chapter 24 - Lincoln](#)
[Chapter 25 - Endings](#)
[Chapter 26 - The Box](#)
[Note from the Author](#)
[List of Hyperlinks](#)

Brief Introduction to the Interactive Edition

In an eBook it is possible to include links and Internet devices that are not possible in a printed book. There are links spread throughout this book, some from the website www.edwardstafford.co.uk (where you will find many more) while others are new to this edition. You will find they add new dimensions to the story, and allow you to explore what History thinks of some of the characters, there are places described that you can now see. I have tested the links on my iPad and PDF reader but, if you find any fault, please report it to me. Because links require the Internet they will not work on a tablet which does not have an active Internet connection. Having clicked a link, you will have to close your browser and re-open the tablet's library to return to the page you were on (just 2 touches of the screen).

The electronic revolution has made it possible to reduce the separation between writer and reader, allowing a book to become more of a conversation. If you have any comments or contributions please email me, mikevoyce@yahoo.co.uk and I will do my best to respond. In fact, unlike the Smashwords eBook editions of Edward, I have not yet assigned an ISBN no. to this edition, in the expectation of making further changes as the conversation develops.

Although the text of Edward has not changed since I first published, the book you are about to read has acquired a life of its own. Most of the developments can be found on the website, but I have noticed subtle shifts in reality, prompting the second website, www.MikeVoyce.com and the Blogtalkradio show, Reincarnation, the Secrets of Past Lives. You are also welcome to join in these.

As to the book itself, Edward is a Love Story, an Adventure Story; it's about one of the most turbulent times in English History, and it takes you behind the scenes normally portrayed. Edward is also about me, and the astonishing way the story came to me. Most of all, it's a story from the life.

Here is a more personal video [INTRODUCTION](#) on the Edward Stafford website.

Genealogy of Edward

This can be found on the [Edward Stafford website](#) by clicking this link



The arms of Edward Stafford, as 3rd Duke of Buckingham, the royal Plantagenet arms, quartered, were bordered at the insistence of Henry VIII, the chevrons are for Stafford.

Medieval Music Links

You will need a browser running in the background to hear these as you carry on to read EDWARD –

[Medieval Chant of the Templars. Antiphona: Salve Regina](#)

(Edward's Templar connection through Andrew is yet to be explored)

[Music for a Knight – Ambrosian Chant](#)

[15th century English Music – Alleluia : “A Nywe Werke”](#)

[Quene Note](#)

[Sumer Is Icumen In](#)

Chapter 1 - The Beginning

(Past)

First there was the light, warm and scintillating, then the courtyard, with its dirty earth floor. To my right was the massive dressed stonework of the castle, in front the lower wall and the heavy oak door leading to the kitchen garden. In the village below was bustle and noise and the stench of life, I paid it no attention. Facing me, not ten paces away, stood my tutor, Sir Thomas, sword in hand.

Everything had a sharp, more than real quality, and there was something strange in me, an excitement, an exhilaration. The jerkin I wore was of the best leather our tanners could make, 't wasn't fear sent the blood rushing through my veins.

I re-balanced the sword in my own hand, trying to get the pressure grip Thomas taught me, to stop the blade flying away when I came to the attack.

Circling cautiously, that I not be pinned to the castle wall, I stepped forward - and the image faded.

My hand shook as I lit a cigarette. My whole world had gone, sliding sickeningly away, to leave me pitch-forked into the vision of that courtyard. Not a jot of the car I sat in, or anything of the Real World, had remained. Coming back was easier; at least I knew where I was.

The smells and sounds and the sharp clarity of sight of it stayed with me. I don't know how long it lasted; its power filled me all day. I kept noticing little things like the wicker basket behind Thomas. Everything stayed with me: as I started the car and drove on, as I stopped at Scotch Corner to telephone my apologies and give instructions, as I drove through the increasingly heavy traffic on the A1, and as I worked through the back-logged messages and appointments when finally I reached my office.

It must have been tiredness; maybe some strain from driving that caused such a vision, something in the harsh light of that August morning, or the previous night's wine and the effort to understand Sarah.

It wasn't like daydreaming, in that there's always some sense of unreality, so you know there's an ordinary world still waiting. This was like some vision of the saints, yet there was no hint of religion in it. I'd seen such images before, but not since childhood.

I remembered, of that childhood, one particular timeless image. I thought of that morning, lost in a dream, almost lost in time.

I must have been eleven years old; I awoke with a silent scream. All the house was in perfect stillness. My parents, in their room down the landing never stirred.

(Past)

Sharp at the front of my mind was the scene of my own death; sharp as the axe man's blade, with the trace of my blood on it. Slumped and still oozing, my torso lay over the block at the executioner's feet. My head lay face down, I could see no features. As the dull ache at the back of my neck receded, I departed, to the right, ever higher above the ground. The scene at Tower Hill remains clear in every detail, just like the scene in that courtyard.

As my spirit drifted off some whimsy caught it and drifted it along the river, to Holborn and the Law courts. There were lawyers rioting, there were gowns flapping and stones flying and buildings burning.

"They've killed the Duke! There was no pardon."

My soul smiled for I knew all had been made well.
And the image faded.

But even in my childish state, as I woke from that dream, I knew all had not been made well. There was a terrible rot that survived that day and was now eating the World. A sense of dread took hold of me, and has never quite been dispelled.

How did I know it was Tower Hill? I never questioned it. At the time the sight of my own death hadn't frightened me; it made me think death needn't be so bad. There was nothing of near death experiences, where the departing spirit leaves through a tunnel. For me there was only that gentle drifting off in the clear morning air.

I still could make nothing of it. But now it wouldn't leave me alone, spinning in my head with the vision of the Courtyard.

There was so much the same, about these two. The style of dress, the very feel of the air, even the quality of the light was the same. Isn't it strange how the mind works? I'd not thought about that dream in so very many years.

What would have happened if I left the lid on this Pandora's Box?

How would life have gone if I let the Courtyard drift away as once I let slip the vision of my death?

But I couldn't do it.

The weight and power and speed of the sword were things I touched and felt. It was an extension of my own arm, a creature in its own right, like a bird ready to fly. I've never worn a sword but it was days before I got used to not having one at my side. I even bought a cane to compensate, but it wasn't the same and I rapidly discarded it.

I was in shock, sitting in my office, the day of that vision. Please don't think me foolish, I didn't dare admit the enormity of my feelings. For this was something I really didn't understand. I had to find out, why? Why it so shook me and what it meant.

So now it's time to tell you about myself, and about Sarah.

I didn't know what to make of her, like a gypsy from a bygone age, almost mystical. Her eyes would fix on far horizons, and then she'd look at you, with that trick of opening her great, green eyes wider still.

Slim and supple, full of energy, she moved with a conscious grace, but something about her troubled me. I learned, long ago, to tell affectation; the disarranged hair perfectly placed the casual clothes it took hours to choose. When I was young I loved such a woman, a ballet student, modelling in her spare time. It was a stormy relationship and I hardly wanted to be reminded of it now. But it wasn't fair to make such a comparison, and besides, it was something more than affectation which troubled me. It disturbed me that I couldn't put my finger on it, till I realised; it was she who caused me to see the courtyard.

I'd driven 250 miles, from Peterborough to Cumbria, to see her. Then I had to drive back; nothing settled, nothing decided, my mind no clearer.

You see, I'd devised a research project,

"An Enquiry into Guilt, Motivation and Dangerousness of Serious Offenders Using Examination under Hypnosis."

I had once been an academic, but at the time all this happened I was senior partner in a law firm. In fact the project grew out of a case in my office, a very difficult, unhappy case, the conviction for murder of an innocent boy.

I undertook that project out of guilt that I'd refused to act in the trial, simply advising the boy's father how it should be handled. The defence team didn't handle it that way; all the obvious, effective things I'd recommended were left undone, and the boy was convicted. That's when I agreed to act.

But at that stage it was too late, the judge had made a good and workmanlike job of it, and you could only win an appeal if the judge made a mistake. But the boy was innocent; I proved it by hypnosis, using one of the country's most respected hypnotherapists, a Home Office consultant and a fellow of the Royal College of Medicine. It left me with a problem, my client had been fairly convicted and neither the courts nor the government would accept evidence from hypnosis.

I remembered the friends I'd known in university, I made phone calls, and took advice. Why shouldn't we create a framework, using hypnosis, to test the guilt of a defendant's mind? Even more, we could use it to tell whether convicted criminals had changed enough to be safe to release back into Society. I was sure I could prove, by research, how you can use hypnosis to do this.

Given how much it costs to keep 'lifers' in prison, the Home Office was interested. If I proved my case they might, indeed, change the rules and listen to evidence about my client. But I needed a hypnotist to help me.

It was our mutual friend Angharad who introduced us. I'd known Angharad for years, first as a client, later as a friend. I'd come to trust her opinion. I listened as she praised Sarah, giving her excellent credentials; Sarah the hypnotherapist who worked with disturbed criminals, Sarah, the bright star at the cutting edge of trauma therapy, Sarah who could meet my most demanding needs. Even then I was unsure.

It wasn't just that my mind had been so much taken up with Sarah when I saw the courtyard. There had been a crackling tension all around me ever since our dinner the previous night. It had built into a blinding headache as I drove up into the Yorkshire Dales. It had been this that made me pull the car in to the side of the road, and when I covered my eyes to shield them from the sun, it had been then the vision struck me.

We first met at Angharad's house for lunch. But it seemed Sarah had wanted to talk to Angharad privately, some personal problem, with her partner, a cinematographer. It sounded most exotic. I'm sure she resented my presence, an intrusion into their friendship. I excused myself, faining an interest in Angharad's collection of art.

When I did get the chance to explain my project the conversation strayed to many things. Lunch stretched into the rest of the day, as we adjourned to a pub.; it's not the way I choose to deal with serious subjects.

Sarah was good at her job, and at raising support, but I had to put a brake on her talk of "curing" offenders, her job wasn't to cure anyone; it was to show whether the minds of murderers and rapists can be tested, to see if they would commit such crimes in future. To see if they committed the crimes for which they were convicted in the first place.

I remember my exasperation,

"Why do you think you can do so much better than the Prison Service?"

I hadn't wanted to take the shine off her enthusiasm but it worried me. Some very good work is done by prison psychiatrists, what made Sarah so confident?

Perhaps I should have been more on my guard. I tried to keep her mind on the picture of an innocent boy, sitting in prison, a boy who needed no cure, a boy who

would only be released if we persuaded the Government to change the rules. Despite my best efforts, somehow, she just didn't come to terms with it.

Sarah needed to write up a methodology; how she proposed to test offenders, a competent assessment proposal for referees appointed by E.S.R.C. (a major research funding council), but she wouldn't do it. It left everything down to personal charisma, Sarah has plenty of that. I met her this last evening to find out why she hadn't written the proposal, to get her moving.

She took me out into the country, to a restaurant owned by friends of hers; leading me darting and skittering over the narrow fell roads to get there. We came to an old and picturesque farmhouse, in spectacular scenery and full of ancient beams and shadowy spaces. In the flickering romance of candlelight we dined excellently; but it wasn't why I'd come to Cumbria. How much better to have eaten a simple sandwich in Sarah's surgery; there I could have held her to the point of my visit.

She was evasive, yes, she would put "something" in writing, but I was left to guess exactly what. I wanted a simple set of questions for each offender, but she couldn't even do that. She assured me; each person is different and needs to be treated individually.

"Could other hypnotherapists do this work? with concepts you give them? Can we create a scheme for other hypnotists to follow with all offenders?"

"Oh yes, if they know what they're doing."

I was relieved, but it was always this way with Sarah, verbal fencing, as if there were some hidden agenda, but I was left grasping at empty air whenever I tried to guess what it was.

Angharad didn't understand why I wouldn't take Sarah at face value or, doubting her, find someone else. She thought I must be attracted to her personally, even physically. What drew me wasn't so simple. To be honest, I resented Angharad's easy assumption. Underlying Sarah's wide-eyed, extrovert appeal was a flexible mind, I really did believe she could make a difference.

That night she talked about reincarnation and past-life regression. Did she say it to startle me? I remember she spoke, as if quite casually. I listened carefully to all she said, I'm sure it was just that, I listened to help me decide about her. I'd asked, once, the hypnotist we used in the murder case, what he thought about past-life regression, and he scoffed at the whole thing. I'm sure it was no more than that, a way to help me decide.

"You've lived many lives before, we all have."

Sarah looked distracted, her long, thin fingers playing with her wineglass, painted nails making tiny chinking noises as she turned the stem.

"You won't remember them, but each time you learned something and the final aim is that you don't 'come back'..."

It was a surprise, her assurance; so diffident about procedures in the project; and now so confident over what most people feel foolish to mention.

"...You have to come back till you've learned all you need. Some souls are more developed than others and some are held back by old problems. That's why hypnotherapists are interested. I've seen many, many old problems hold people back, life after life, in the same old karmic trap..."

Her glass was still now; she set it firmly back on the table.

"...Many problems come from your current life, say from early childhood, but there are older problems. You reach these by going back beyond birth; regressing into the life which caused them."

Sarah was no longer distracted; she was looking at me directly with those penetrating green eyes. I smiled at her sincerity; it took away all the affectation, leaving a child, innocence shining in the candlelight.

“...How do you know where to look? Well, problems present themselves. The subconscious mind throws them forward - if you let it.

...Yes problems show up as illnesses or mental blocks, that's why people come to me. But you don't always know you've got a problem; people bury them - put them behind screens - so you don't even know they're there.”

Sarah was still looking at me and I said nothing. It looked as if she might be taking a professional interest in me, and that wasn't what I wanted. As silence stretched on, embarrassment made me change the subject, but it didn't stay changed.

“Problems don't just go away. That's the mistake. Problems will never be under control while they're behind screens; they'll always come back, till you've faced up to them. Once you've gone through them, once you don't need them any more, then they go away.”

As she was leaving Sarah said just one more thing to stick in my mind. Her words, as I handed her into her light summer coat, lingered in the air as they still linger in my memory today.

“If you need to enough, with practice, you can pull the screens away. Once your eyes are open you'll see.”

These last words wouldn't leave me. By some inexplicable and ineluctable association they linked Sarah, my project and the courtyard together.

I realised, mortifying and improbable as it seemed, I'd been hypnotised. Had she done it to distract me from her methodology? Surely she realised how badly I react to being manipulated?

As I thought about it later it became certain, the chinking glass, the tone of voice, yes I'd been hypnotised. But why should she do it! I wouldn't have given reincarnation a thought but for that night, now I couldn't leave it alone.

Had she meant what she said about past-life problems? If these visions were memories of a past life, very well then, let's make the first question, Who?

As to that, an immediate second question, how do you find out?

I could have asked Sarah, I felt a dark foreboding and abhorrence at the thought. She'd used her words like weapons. They'd done more than take away the pressure to explain her lack of performance. From now on I'd tread most circumspectly around her. If there were to be any more visions they would be at my choosing. Did I tell you I thought Sarah attractive? Did I say I thought her emotionally dangerous?

In Peterborough I lived alone. I used that now for quiet contemplation, going over and over that vision. Whenever I thought about it there was an excitement, a glamour. Whatever Sarah had intended, I was hooked.

The result of this was reading, a whole library of strange and arcane books; stumbling and inexperienced self-hypnosis, reading, divining with a pendulum, which I copied how to do from a book, more reading and so on..

The date was the third of September. I came back to reality with a certainty.

Over the last several weeks I'd painfully, slowly, taught myself how to meditate. More than that, I learned techniques which would help me pull visions out of my head. Now, at last, my efforts had paid off.

I wrote the following names and dates on a piece of paper, I even made a copy and posted it to myself, just to prove I'd done it.

Thomas Lewkenor	?	1497
Aletia Fowler	?	1497
Eadie (Edith) Fowler	1479	1497
Abigail	1493	1497
Edward de Stafford	1478	1521

Penshurst and Thornbury.

I didn't know who these people were. You shouldn't think it was easy to learn even this. I was amazed at it; and excited too. But beyond this was a sense of foreboding, about the year 1497. I should have left it there, but I had to know, were these people real? Had they lived at the time my meditation said they did?

'Channelling' information from meditation is all very well. How do you know if it's true? You check it. In public records offices we have nothing short of free historians. The coincidence of the name 'de Stafford' with my hometown of Stafford seemed made-up and fantastical, but it was easy to check, I could phone the Staffordshire county archivist. Eventually, a little reluctantly, I made the call.

The idea of phoning interrupted my thoughts all morning, as I dithered; what if it were true, if these people were real? What if they weren't?

I got through immediately, to a very friendly, helpful man. He was pleased someone took an interest in his love of the past. Trying not to sound foolish, I told him what I wanted, holding my breath against my worst fear, that the archivist couldn't help.

We couldn't trace Thomas or Aletia, Eadie or Abigail. Parish records only go back to the 1530s and they were all dead by then. We couldn't even trace the birth of Abigail. I gave Edward's name with my fingers crossed.

"Oh, you mean the third duke."

The archivist took it quite for granted I knew what I was talking about.

"The third duke?"

"Yes. The de Staffords were dukes of Buckingham. Edward was the third and last of that family. They had, of course, earlier been the earls of Stafford and the family kept that title too, but Earl Edmund married a princess and their son was made a duke. Of course that was well before Edward's time."

I'd already given the dates for the others, now I gave Edward's dates, still taken aback by talk of "the third duke".

"Well, you know I can't say anything for the others, but for the Duke, let me see..."

There was a pause for several minutes.

"Hello, are you there... Yes you're quite right. He was born at Brecon Castle in 1478. Died... Yes died... He was executed for treason in 1521: there are records of property for confiscation, made by the king's surveyors under an Act of Attainder. They're quite lengthy."

The archivist chatted away cheerfully.

“There are some records for [Penshurst Place](#). It’s a manor in Kent. Kent County Council might help you more, they may have some papers in the archives there; though we’ve been most fortunate, we inherited...”

The archivist babbled on for several minutes.

Edward existed!

It was quite a thrill.

Smile, if you will, at the vision of me dancing round my office. No one could see, and an awful lot of effort had gone into that meditation. It had worked!

Now I would need no one else to prompt visions for me, I could do it for myself.

Chapter 2 - Duke Henry

The next questions were what? And why?

I tackled these in the same way as before. That night, at home in my flat, I sat in my armchair, quietly, and meditated. With my mind clear of everything, I relaxed and simply took thought. It much annoyed Angharad, later, when I told her about it, but it works. In fact all I've had to do to learn this story of Edward is to sit in my chair and take thought, 'channelling' as Angharad calls it. It is just like daydreaming and sometimes it's hard to tell the difference.

The lounge in my flat is a long room. I sat in my chair, at one end of it; the door and a settee to my left, a window, another chair and a bookcase to my right: in front, a desk and television. Surrounded by soft greens and browns I'd drift off into another world. Whenever I think of meditation it's this spot my mind turns to, for it was here I sat down to take thought when first I got to know Edward.

(Past)

"I'm scared Papa, and I'm cold...

I don't like this place."

"Hush boy; be at peace. You trust your father don't you?"

"I love you Papa. I don't want those men to get you!"

"God willing, boy. God willing we both may live.

Come sit by me Edward.

Some day you may be a duke. You must listen to me now and be very grown up. I don't know if you can understand but you must try. Will you Edward?"

"Yes, Papa, I'll be good. I don't want those men to get you."

"Good, then listen.

The present king is a bad man; though I have served him well enough to my profit. Be that as it may, I have declared against him and raised our musters for that cause. The king killed his nephews, your cousins, boy, the Princes in the Tower, and now he's killed our friends whose crime was loyalty to us.

Morton taught me to raise England and I tried. Our men fought, and for me they died. King Richard is not a forgiving enemy; whoever wears the de Stafford colours is being killed.

I thought.... with Morton I thought that, with Richmond behind me, the country would rise. Not even all our own estates, who owe us loyalty. The nobles were cowards, they've seen too much blood spilt by Richard, and they kept their soldiers mewed up and quiet. Still, we might have done something but for "Buckingham's flood". Even now they're calling it after us. You saw the swollen streams, boy, we're cut off from the friends we have... and with Tudor failing to land with his army from France... Maybe, despite Bishop Morton's blessing, it is the Will of God.

Edward, it took six weeks, just six weeks, to sweep us up. That Tudor didn't land leaves hope for England and for us too if we can get away to him... If we're not betrayed.

I had to bring you with me, my son; you're the de Stafford heir. Richard killed his own nephews; he wouldn't stop at you.. Listen, Edward, I am afraid for you. If those men take me run boy, hide. Tell no one your name till you know you're safe among friends.

Whatever happens to me you are to live. Do you understand? You are to live! You are de Stafford's heir and maybe England's too.

Do you understand?"

“Yes Papa. I promise. I don’t want you to die Papa, I’m scared here, I’m frightened.”

“Hush.

Hardly anyone knows we’re here, only two or three of our own servants. We’re safer here, hiding in a storehouse, than we would be on the road. We must trust our own.”

...Said very quietly, “How can I run carrying the boy?”

“Come, Edward, we shall play a game.”

“Yes, Papa...”

“Listen Papa! I hear noises.”

“Quiet!”

Terror stalked outside with heavy boots before the door came crashing in.

“Run boy, hide!”

A cool voice spoke out of a large figure, framed by daylight from beyond the door,

“Too late, your Grace, for you and the boy.

By your Grace’s leave my duty’s to the King. In the name of King Richard, Henry de Stafford, sometime duke of Buckingham, I arrest you for treason by these officers, in execution of this warrant.”

“Your pocket to the king; your duty’s to me!”

“Take them. The King’s warrant and reward.”

“Not the boy. The warrant’s not for my boy, nor any of my kin. Take him to safety... For your duty man! The Tudors will pay, Henry Tudor, earl of Richmond... For pity’s sake!”

“Take the Duke.”

“Papa!”

I came back to reality with a sense of anguish still trailing its tattered hem through my mind. In sight of my modern furniture, in my modern room, lingered the parting of father and son.

So now you know the name of that boy I told you about at the first. Edward de Stafford, the son of a duke and a traitor, hunted by the agents of Richard III.

I saw with an adult mind, through a five year-old’s eyes, the betrayal and arrest of Duke Henry. You couldn’t know and I, who felt it, can’t tell the depth of Edward’s grief. I wanted to tell Henry how much his son really loved him; Edward never again got the chance.

There were so many things I didn’t know; how that perfidious servant persuaded the Duke into the wood store, so that he might more easily be taken prisoner, or where it might be. I do remember the smell of the sawdust and the bench facing the door, the bench Henry and Edward sat on. I remember the affection between father and son and the strength of it brings tears to my eyes even five hundred years later.

(Past)

Once the Duke had been dragged away and the soldiers departed, silence fell in that small room. Edward was left utterly alone. Shock turned to grief and that finally gave way to terror. The wood store remained in unrelenting stillness.

When Edward finally regained his voice he shouted,

“Papa!”

He rushed outside as if to see his father still standing there. All around was emptiness. In the woods and the fields nothing stirred except a lone songbird proclaiming its territory.

Edward sat down and at last he wept. Sobs welled up from the very centre of his being, a cry that could neither be controlled nor comforted. So he stayed until the first faint trace of dusk brought the first owl hoot and Edward looked around him. A sense of danger brought him to his feet and made him stumble into the woods, always looking around him for the return of the soldiers who had taken Papa.

As full night fell Edward found what warmth and shelter he could amongst the trees. The autumn cold and damp shook his body till at last exhaustion set in. When the first light of morning came he would search for Papa and for friends to guard his life.

There is a postscript to this. I wanted to know what happened to Edward, but I shall hold back, at least for this chapter, the road to Edward's feelings has painful potholes of black depression and I shall circumnavigate them as best I can. There is another route, through books. I read about the Buckingham Rebellion. It's not a well-known part of history.

Historians don't know why the [Duke of Buckingham](#) rebelled; that he blamed Richard for the disappearance of the Princes in the Tower is just one explanation. It is certain the Duke took his eldest son with him, that they went into hiding when the rebellion failed, and that, while the Duke was captured, young Edward miraculously escaped. From meditation and research, I will tell you how the rebellion came about, but not yet; for now my interest was in what happened to the Duke, and what became of little Edward.

As to Duke Henry, he was beheaded at the market place in Salisbury on Sunday 2nd November 1483, without trial and without Edward ever seeing him again. Henry asked to see the King, he admitted privately he would have killed Richard if he got the chance, but his request was turned down. The whole business was brought to an end in an unseemly rush. For any execution, let alone of a duke and a defeated rebel, to be held on a Sunday, with no trial, was extraordinary. You would expect the Duke's body to be paraded in state, it wasn't; it was hidden in the yard of a common public house, 'The Blue Boar'. When Edward became a man it gave him great trouble to recover his father's body, to give it proper burial.

There's no doubt Richard was furious at Duke Henry's treason, the House of Stafford was scattered, there were executions indeed, there was a manhunt for Edward and the Duke's estates were confiscated.

What happened to Edward for the next two years is also a mystery (albeit one I shall reveal to you) but it is recorded, on the 21st August 1485, Henry Tudor became king of England, so ending the fear for Edward's life, at least from King Richard.

After Richard's death, Edward became the ward of Lady Margaret Beaufort, Henry Tudor's mother. You will learn much more about that lady and how she abused her position. Nevertheless, Edward was cared for almost as a prince, almost, but never quite. He would hardly have understood his position, as Duke Henry's son, now Henry Tudor was king of England. Let's say the King at least seemed to honour his debt to a friend, which not all rulers do.

There are so many questions about Richard, questions that brought about the 'Richard III Society'. You may have believed Shakespeare's play, why should he lie? Yet, perhaps he would, to serve a Tudor queen or to keep his own head on his

shoulders. Maybe Shakespeare believed what he wrote; he relied on Polydore Vergil and Sir Thomas More, immensely respected figures, who told the most remarkable lies, to please Henry VIII. The truth is, the most extreme and ruthless campaign of propaganda ever mounted against anyone was mounted against Richard III, it started as soon as Richard came to throne and continued even after Shakespeare.

It wasn't until the sixteen hundreds that anyone dared speak for Richard. That first Ricardian was Sir George Buck, one time Master of the Revels in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I – in today's language, official state censor. Sir George had access to secret papers, from the descendants of the Stafford family, now lost but enough to convince Sir George. Since then, Ricardians have exposed lie after lie, yet the pendulum of doubt still swings through all sorts of opinions. It leaves you to wonder about the truth of any history.

At first it was interesting to compare scholars' accounts with my vision; scepticism assured me the truth would be different from what I saw. But as I read, and more and more points of my vision were confirmed by history, I felt a rising sense of enormity. It began to dawn on me I actually had heard Duke Henry talking to his son.

As to the Princes, little Edward's cousins, I'm sure Duke Henry believed King Richard killed them (but you'll have to wait to find out why). As to the Duke's arrest, for all I felt his fear of betrayal, I read that it was the taking of food to the storehouse which gave him away. I latched on to this as one particular, at least, in which my vision was wrong.

All I knew of this period in history, before my vision, had been year nine lessons in school, and I'd paid little enough attention to those. How could all this have been lurking in my head? Yet, everything except the question of whether Henry was betrayed or discovered turned out to be true. Every word Duke Henry said to his son, even down to "Buckingham's Flood", was exactly as the historical duke must have known it. Imagine me turning from one text to another, searching for anything to deny that vision. Never before had I cross-examined a piece of evidence more ruthlessly. Even the "[Bishop Morton](#)" Duke Henry spoke of turned out to be Henry Tudor's spymaster and later his chancellor, in effect, his prime minister. How could this be? How could I have known these things? What had I to do with this medieval lord and his family?

I was awed by it, I shied away from it. This channelling isn't like normal daydreaming, you get emotionally involved. It was painful and confusing. Having put so much effort into it, I got cold feet; I wanted to run away from it. I felt a fool.

There are lost days in everybody's life. It isn't that nothing happened, there was just nothing memorable. So life went on, with my project taking more time than I wanted, with less result. I couldn't talk to Sarah about that, any more than about Edward de Stafford. She was away on holiday in the south of France and completely out of reach.

It became clear we'd have to bring in an institute of higher education, to handle the administration it was increasingly obvious Sarah wouldn't do, and to cross check and support her work. At least here I was successful. I spent a happy time trawling through academia till I found a university which would give it a good home. I remember one delightful afternoon, lost in conversation with a professor at 'All Souls' in Oxford. I felt, if only I were to knock a little harder on their door, the academic community would let me back in, as one of their own. That is, they would if I abandoned staff and clients and all else I'd created, to work on my project. It ended,

as it was bound to do, with my business partner coming to wag a finger at my hour and a half on the phone, neglectful of fee-paying clients.

The university I eventually settled for was famous for its psychology research, but not yet for its work with criminals. It was handy for Sarah; she had a daughter studying there. But as to everything else, it seemed to be grinding to halt, not only my work with Sarah, the business in my office, everything.

Everything except Edward de Stafford.

It was at this time a strange fragment came into my hands. It happened one day when I was walking through Stafford, I found myself outside 'the William Salt,' the privately funded local history library. Why I went in I don't know, I didn't know what I was looking for. The history books left more questions than they answered; perhaps I was just looking for something more personal. I looked without much expectation, yet there it was. To me it was truly remarkable; it's about Duke Henry, see what you think.

"The plaine old Duke his life to save
Of his owne man did souccour crave
In hope that he would him releive
That late much land to him did give

Base Banester this man was nam'd
By this vile deed for ever sham'd
'It is' quoth he 'a common thing
To injure him that wrong'd his king'

Thus Banester his maister sold
Unto his foe for hie of gold
But mark his end and, rightly see
The just reward of treachery."

A contemporary ballad.

So the Duke was betrayed after all! It was my vision that was right, not the books. I pictured the figure from my vision, the man framed in the doorway, as "Base Banester". Though I didn't know what became of him, "the just reward of treachery," somehow it cheered me to think of ordinary people taking the Duke's side. Most of all, it ended my last doubt, I could no longer pretend I had not witnessed Duke Henry's arrest.

One day I went to see Angharad. She wanted to know how I was getting on with Sarah. It was difficult to hide the doubts I felt about that woman, but it was also difficult to decide whether I was unhappy with Sarah because of her lack of work or because she caused my visions. Having drunk too much of Angharad's whisky I admitted as much, at least I told her about the courtyard and about the duke's arrest. I don't know why I told her this, or what I expected her to say. She paused, looking at me for a moment; she asked me if I believed in the spirits of the past.

She exhorted me to follow my story and 'channel' my spirit guides.

"What are you afraid of?

Just because it's different, you can't look it up in your Law books, is that any reason to go into hiding?"

I bridled at that, and scoffed at ‘the spirits of the past’. Yet, when I turned to other friends, they gave me a book of ‘psychic’ investigations.

My darling daughter, aged nine, pestered almost constantly about Stafford Castle, which lies a mile or two from where she lives. It was now almost four years since the separation and divorce and the time my wife and our daughter went to live in their present home.

It was more than a month since I’d seen the vision of that courtyard and nearly two weeks since I saw Duke Henry’s arrest. I was still haunted by the memory of each of them. They, everything, drew me back.

It was said, dear reader, by [Thomas à Kempis](#), many years even before Edward was born,

“Man proposes but God disposes and Man’s destiny is not in his own hands.”

Let’s face it, I didn’t have a choice.

Chapter 3 - Edward

I'd started with the boy in the courtyard, and now I needed to go back to little Edward and what happened to him after the arrest. Again, in my comfortable chair, one evening as dusk began to fall, I did it.

In the background was a sense of the ominous presence of Richard III. Yet still I doubted that Richard was a bad man, it wasn't him I felt but little Edward's fear of the "bad king". Somewhere in the Buckingham rebellion things were horribly wrong. It was part of the whirlwind that first threw up and then threw down Richard III as king of England, and threw out of sight his nephews, Edward and Richard, the Princes in the Tower. But the vortex of evil that touched our little Edward was so much more immediate. The scenes I saw lasted long after I got up from my chair and tried to go on about my ordinary life. Somewhere in my mind a pit had opened and whenever my thoughts were idle images would arise, like foul vapours that took days to clear.

(Past)

I can see as Edward saw, almost lying on the ground, half covered by leaf mould, shivering and clinging to a tree; on that night of running from the wood store. It's as if my own little fingers were clutching into the hard tree bark, till it filled my World; silently repeating, over and over,

"Don't let Papa be gone!"

It was like a prayer, permitting no other thought all that long night.

At another time there are local men, hollering to each other, their breath hanging in the damp air. It's as if they're dragging through the woods to find me. I see it all, crouching down in some bracken, brown and dripping; I can smell the damp earth, and feel my own body shivering like a frightened rabbit. Then, eyes tight shut as they pass nearby, breath freezes in my lungs, willing them to go away. It takes ages before they go, out of sight, still hollering and calling to each other. Papa would be pleased. I can still hear him saying,

"Run, boy, hide till you know you're safe amongst friends."

A thought hangs in the air, left in place of those searching men,

'Perhaps, if I'm very good, Papa will come back.'

Who can say if they were Richard's men or friends with Papa? Just try and try the very best and the World must come right again.

Then there's an orchard full of apples, with the sun streaming into it, as the last of the morning mist curls away from between the trees. The shining dew makes it seem like fairyland and there must be elves behind every tree. Yet there's no one here and there's a tight knot of pain in my stomach. Then I think of Papa and remember he's gone.

I felt little Edward's pain entering my body, when he could no longer believe in Papa coming back; behind it washed the aches of forty eight hours in the open without sleep. He might have wept with the sharpness of it, and I would have cried with him, but by now he was too sunk in misery. You could call the drops that leaked down his pink cheeks tears of despair; Edward had no name for them. Days of wandering had left him totally lost and helpless.

He would find Papa. He would. He Would!

Some sense of purpose made him set out to search the scattered buildings in that country landscape. And some other sense told him he needed food for the searching. There was the mounting tension of fear before stealing into a farm kitchen where Edward thieved a pie. He stole it for Papa. Not till later did hunger force him to eat it himself.

The countryside was still sodden from the rains. There was nowhere to find dry shelter and the cold and damp were penetrating. Edward shivered almost constantly. I see him crouched down behind a dry-stone wall on a hillside with open grass fields all around him.

There's no one around, anywhere I look, only me. There's the pie, I tried to carry it in my tunic but it stuck to the wet wool and it's left a soggy mess in my clothes. Carrying it in my hands it's crumbled and I shan't be able to give it to Papa, and I'm hungry.

On the other side of the wall it goes downhill and you can see for miles. If I sit against the wall I can look up to the woods but it hurts my back. The stones are hard and shaking makes me bump into them. Away from the wall the wind blows me and it's cold and I feel dizzy. I wish I could lean on the wall and not bump into the stones, just sit here and think about Papa. It wouldn't be wrong to eat half the pie, would it? Papa would make me eat it if he knew.

The pie was in Edward's hand and there was torment in his whole being. Cramps knotting his stomach warred with guilt as he ate it all, knowing he'd left nothing to give to Papa. It burned in his mind as the indigestible pastry burned in his belly.

In all these scenes there was a running from all human life, and bile that was the bitter taste of fear. Exhaustion dulled the mind, from the strain of starting at every sound. It was amazing that one so young could show such wariness, like some wild animal, some hart pursued from its ground by the chase.

Edward's only thought was to find Papa. He didn't know how or where to look nor who to ask.

It must have been exhaustion that finally ended it. It's truly amazing that one so young could have evaded capture so long.

One day Edward lay down on the soft moss of a woodland clearing, stretched out in the warm sunshine, he fell asleep. He meant only to rest but the warmth of the autumn sun lulled him and time passed dreamlessly away. When he awoke a man was kneeling over him. The man smiled as he picked him up. Edward was too weak to struggle, almost too weak to cry. His heart pounded and his eyes fixed on the man's face. He couldn't speak, knowing it was over.

Later Edward was on the floor of a cart. A herdsman was sitting over him, a great big man, the leathers he wore making the small space below the sacking cover stink of animal. Edward could just see, through a flap in the cover, the man who picked him up; he was walking his horse by the side of the cart, using a whip to guide the ox that pulled them. The cart moved ponderously on, falling into every pothole along the road. Every bone in Edward's body jarred, yet he could barely feel it for dull stupidity, the senselessness of loss. The journey went on forever.

Later still there's a cottage. It's more than a cottage, a fair house, yet secluded in remote parkland. There's a large, smiling woman, she welcomed Edward with open arms.

"This is Mistress Elizabeth More. She is servant to Sir Richard Delabere."

She gave Edward a bowl of porridge. It was hot and sweet and he wolfed it. It burned his mouth and his throat as it went down. When he fell asleep she tucked him into her own bed and he slept deeply, a dreamless sleep, the first time he'd lain in a bed since Papa was taken away.

There was no sense of time, no order, in these scenes. They rose up as feelings, an image to put to fear, another to put to exhaustion and so on. I only knew such forceful feelings must be true; there was such vividness, as if every ounce of personality was stripped away and what came to me was the pure experience of being.

Mistress More was plump and reassuring. She reminded Edward of the nurse he still remembered from when he was very young. In time the strain began to leave him and he cried and began to talk a little instead of just nodding and shaking his head. The man who found him was still there, strong and kind.

I saw him as Edward first saw him, in the woodland clearing; the sun behind his head shining through his hair, highlighting the planes of his cheek. There was kindness even then. That big face looking down from just a few inches away was one of the first images. Was it Thomas? I'd seen Thomas in that vision of the courtyard. I couldn't be sure but I thought it must be him.

"This is Kynnardsley Park, whose master serves the King, but by Mistress More Sir Richard will keep faith with King Richard's enemies."

There was a twist of irony in Thomas' smile as he spoke to Edward.

"I shall leave you with her while she gives you fitting disguise."

And with that he was gone for days and weeks to prepare their escape.

For as long as King Richard lived there would be danger but it must have seemed greatest so soon after the rebellion. The news that came was of arrests and searches, of threats made if rebels were not surrendered; though little was said of it in Edward's presence.

Edward's first disguise was to have his long blond hair shaved to his head and be dressed as a girl. It was so, in long curtil and mounted side-saddle; he rode out of the park with Mistress More, in the broad light of day.

There was Sir William Knivet there on that ride; he had been one of Duke Henry's counsellors, and William ap Symon, one of Henry Tudor's agents. They had all sought sanctuary in Kynnardsley, and all rode out to Hereford now, to make their separate escapes. They went at a forced, leisurely walk, as if a family party with no business more serious than a family holiday. Every time strangers greeted them, or soldiers stopped them in the road, there was the temptation to set spurs and break into a full gallop. Even little Edward felt the tension of that journey, but Thomas would be waiting for him in Hereford.

After that there was constant movement, sometimes in covered wagons, sometimes walking, dressed as an urchin in rags. A long roundabout route was taken to come finally to a Welsh monastery, in Brecon, just a little way from where the rebellion had started.

It was just a few days after Christmas when they arrived. The pure, golden glow of the candles complimented the singing of the monks as they called the faithful to vespers.

Tell me this is all imagining!

There's nothing to these images at all like that vision of the courtyard. I started by deliberate channelling, it gave me Duke Henry's arrest; yet so much of this was just there in my head. Surely I must have made it up, mustn't I?

And yet...

I felt a sense of panic when I let myself think about it all. Yet, if I were to take the advice of friends, if I were to "pull back the screens", then I must go on, gritting my teeth and persisting, trying all the while to carry on my normal life.

(Past)

The monastery was too small to boast an abbot and there were no more than a dozen of the brothers, ruled over by a bent old father, but they were generous and gentle to Edward. The whole place was less than two acres in size, and it was sparse and worn, but it was built on a hillside and caught the winter sun. The monks took time to show Edward the healing herbs in their kitchen garden and the apothecary's shop and how to milk goats and their pride and joy, the illuminated texts in their great bible.

The kaleidoscope of these scenes, spinning between each other and shifting into each other brought every attempt at ordered meditation to confusion. There was no firm ground at all for Edward, nor for me, till he came to the monastery. Only then did the World begin to spin round his head more slowly. Some coherent sense of this place did stick to my mind, and so it should, for it is here Edward spent his time in exile, away from the wrath of a king. Here winter turned to spring, then to summer and finally to a full year, while the outside World followed its course.

Edward's exile went far beyond anything I'd imagined when first I started channelling, and still I was no nearer knowing what it meant; the monastery remained as if in a mist. Images of it receded into the distance, in stately procession.

Yet two pictures stand out. For the most part days merge into each other and images dance away from me whenever I try to catch them. They leave a sanctified reassurance, stuck like a plaster over an awful, aching loss. Yet these two remain.

(Past)

First was Thomas. He spoke little to Edward before he left; yet I remember him talking to one of the brothers.

"You will hold England in your hands.

I charge you, Joseph, by your vows.

Treat him as a brother, your own special brother."

The monk listened solemnly, but when he spoke his face lit with a smile.

"You know me. You trust our brotherhood; none here shall fail the boy or the man."

And he clasped Thomas by the hand and shook it firmly. After that Thomas left.

This monk was still very young, yet he had a presence and authority you wouldn't expect. It was as if Thomas transferred his cares to him, for Joseph gave up all other work to watch over Edward.

Brother Joseph made Edward feel a child again, indeed special, no longer alone. They would play together at marbles and he'd let Edward win. When bad dreams would shake Edward's sleep Joseph would comfort him, he would listen to all Edward's childish hopes and fears. Yet, after leaving the monastery, Edward would forget him, for a long time, like all the rest.

Second was a tall, distant and beautiful noblewoman. But before her presence there were letters between her and the monks. The brothers would argue almost for days about what they should send to her; then pour avidly over her replies. There was much talk of whether she should come, whether the danger would be too great, of diplomacy at court, and if she should come how and when.

She, herself, had run. After the rebellion she'd been captured at Weobley and taken to the Tower of London. Only now had she been released and she was still nervous of the King's men.

As further weeks passed in peace, eventually, she came. I can see her still, standing cool and tall, still in her riding habit, framed by the arch of the refectory door. There was a moment of stillness and silence before Edward ran to her, to be folded into his mother's embrace. When she left she took Edward with her.

There!

Surely the pit in my mind should now be dry and empty. I'd seen Edward on the run and what became of him.

Yet, it's such a fragment of his story.

Can you imagine how I felt, having gone through all those pictures of sorrow? There should have been relief to see the duchess, his mother, take Edward away. I could even pick out her name, it was [Lady Katherine](#). Could I at last return to real life, my work and even my project with Sarah?

Yet...

I was sure there was more to the monastery than my dull wits had shown, some meaning I missed. So little had been explained: not the vision of the courtyard, not Richard; nor what any of this had to do with me. It left me unsatisfied. I kept remembering the words Thomas spoke to Joseph,

"You will hold England in your hands."

What had he meant?

Or the words Duke Henry spoke to his son,

"You are to live! You are de Stafford's heir and maybe England's too."

I thought of the Richard III Society; all those people interested in these times, all these centuries later. It sent a shiver through me, but still there was no answer.

As Edward's rescue came to me less and less, a hush descended. It was like the tension at the eye of a storm and I began to realise there would be more to come. As the days passed, with no further sign of Edward, a sense of expectancy grew in the air.

Chapter 4 - The Way of the World

How strange to dream while perfectly wide-awake. It was late on Friday afternoon, when I got back to the flat. Everything was hushed and peaceful and I was just sitting, relaxing. I must have closed my eyes for a moment, I must have channelled all by inadvertence.

(Past)

The first thing wasn't sight but sound. Someone was calling me but there were no words.

Next there was a little girl, a toddler, maybe two years old, running towards me crying "Dada".

Behind her; at some slight distance, stood a girl in her late teens; she was slender and willowy. Her dark, thick hair fell around her shoulders in soft curls; it softly framed the pale, translucent skin of her face. But what really struck you were her eyes; startling, green eyes. She moved not at all, she just stood there watching her daughter. She possessed an ageless look, there was a tension, a sensual vitality; was it something in the curve of her mouth, the way she held her head?

The scene was in the country. In the middle distance was a large building but it wasn't the castle I saw that day on the road. This was somehow lighter, more like a large manor house. There was stonework here but brick also, with tall chimneys, and a great oriel window; the effect was altogether different. The girls were barefoot on a soft carpet of grass, there was sunlight and bird song and fresh blossom that made you think of spring.

The little girl's blond curly hair bounced as she came running towards me. Laughter lit up her face, love shone from her eyes. Her dimpled bare arms stretched out towards me, I bent down, my own arms outstretched; muscles ready to lift her as I've done so many times with my own daughter. Then the whole scene snapped shut.

It didn't fade like that vision of the courtyard; it vanished suddenly, like a bubble incontinently burst. I felt such a fool to try to touch an imaginary child. I didn't know what to do. I stood up and paced the length of the room, as if looking for that lost little girl. I sat down again, flummoxed.

This was some days after those scenes of Edward's rescue, in the lull in my channelling, which followed Edward's leaving the monastery. I shouldn't have told you about it now. I've told it when it happened, but it doesn't fit with the story yet. I beg your patience, for now I was as bemused by this little girl as you might be.

The last chapter went pell-mell, I told it without regard to my ordinary life. I kept order in that life, distracting myself with work and business meetings, letting Edward out slowly. I'd managed it, so I thought, so that no one knew what seethed inside me. I must have relaxed my guard, at the end of the last chapter, and this little girl jumped out at me all unexpected.

Now I had to put all this away, I had a long car drive in front of me. I had to be in Stafford on Saturday, and there remained the rest of the chapter to experience. It's time to tell you more about my life, and about my weekends.

Creating a business isn't easy and I'm not the first person to find it cost a marriage. When things went wrong at home, at that time I needed to open the Peterborough office, there was Frances. She was already training in the Law, I took

her under my wing and I put her into my new office. I did a great deal more than that, and lived to regret it.

She was such an apt student and I saw in her what I wanted to see, I planned to spend the rest of my life with her. When finally I was forced to accept the truth I was shocked, it was like a bereavement; Frances was only interested in her own career. After the care, patience and love I'd given, her selfishness was a slap in the face. I would have liked her to have no part in this story. For the time being it's enough that we mostly lived apart and I was determined to keep it that way.

When Frances left Peterborough she went back to our house, and my office, in Stafford. She went in pursuit of her career but she kept her place in my firm and she expected me to come to her for Saturdays and Sundays. It was difficult to avoid; there were all my other commitments.

I'd flown from Stafford, first for love and now for sorrow at the loss of the very same love. Yet there were still these weekends to pretend all was as once it had been, Frances and I would meet, each Saturday, for lunch at the 'Lord Nelson', just two doors away from the office.

Mornings were leisurely. Clients would come to see me with no particular thought of time, nor did I think of billing that time; they were like old friends and the morning would simply slide off the clock. The afternoons were peaceful, Frances would have gone home and I'd stay to read or wander round the shops or just potter. But first came lunchtime.

Sitting in the 'Nelson', uncomfortable on a hard chair and unhappy in spirit, I listened to Frances, the day after that vision of the little girl and her mother. She was telling me how she could increase my failing business.

Frances is dark haired, tall, thin and angular, a little younger than I. The more unkind of my friends called her gaunt, but it hadn't been her appearance which first attracted me, but the quickness of her mind. I'd found in Frances someone frustrated and under using her talents. Her uncle was a senior judge, but she had followed a commercial career, one that left her ill and disappointed. I'd introduced her to the practice of Law and trained her in my office; wondering, it's true, why her uncle had never done something similar. She was eager to learn.

This Saturday I sat silent, looking at a plateful of food, suddenly unwanted, as she told me how my business should be run.

"I only have to be nice to them. I'll give you more business than your little office can handle. There's a lot of money in the hunt."

I pictured her on horseback, absorbed in the trappings of chasing a fox. I saw her turning even that pastime to venal ambition, simpering to certain sorts of farmer and social climber.

"The unspeakable in pursuit of the uneatable."

I murmured it with more unkindness to Frances than to fox hunters. Mine is not the oldest profession in the World, yet. I'd no wish to prostitute it to her fantasies.

She left shortly after, bitter at my rejection. At least it was a relief when she went.

I think she resented the distracted way I dismissed her proposal. You see, I'd been thinking about that little girl at the beginning of the chapter, she so reminded me of my daughter. Was there a correspondent to Frances? If so I had yet to meet her. When first we came together I'd a sense we'd known each other always. How wrong I was; at least I was blessed with a good and loyal staff, to keep track of her.

From an easy chair, I studied the depths of a glass of whisky, turning it slowly in my hand. If only Frances could believe in the goals I took for granted. I'd given all

I could, but what when you're able to give no more or when you no longer want to? What when the one you love plays power games and mistakes giving for weakness?

It wasn't just this sucking up to these hunting friends that wouldn't do; I no longer had a taste for the game.

Everything around me had been the child of my own invention; the office, Frances' position in it and even my project with Sarah. And what of her? I wondered if her ambitions were any better than Frances'. I conjured Sarah in my mind's eye, balancing her against the shallow success Frances so much sought. She turned and turned with the whisky in my glass, her affectations weighing against her.

One of the few bright points, the few highlights of these weekends, was Angharad. It was at this time she came to take a greater, almost protective, interest in me. Her invitations took in my daughter, for Debbie has a gift for acquiring people and Angharad's daughter was about the same age. On this occasion there was a houseful, and so it was, that Sunday afternoon, I found myself debating the Universe.

A digression dear reader, if you want you can skip a few pages, for those who want the first part of the key to how all this works, read on. Here's something you don't find in a novel, it's a novel novel. The novelty is to reveal what lay in my mind.

John was Angharad's son in law, a part time university lecturer, a research physicist and altogether a bright young man, a man of hard science and facts. It pained me to hear him so dismiss Angharad's sensitive care for all living things and her abiding faith in spirit.

John actually said, if you can't touch it, or test it in the laboratory, it doesn't exist; if he so dismissed Angharad's beliefs what would he make of my visions?

"What about Art, Religion and Philosophy? Or is Religion just 'the opiate of the masses'?"

"These are just responses to what we see; Man's attempt to make sense of the World, ideas he invented before Science."

A tired answer to a tired question; but even plants and the very rocks of the Earth have souls (don't take my word for it, read [Giordano Bruno](#)). I wouldn't leave it there.

"We live in the material universe; we place ourselves in it by co-ordinates of length breadth and height. These dimensions describe all of space; together with a sense of 'When' they're our entire reference in the Space/Time continuum. And you would say that's all there is to it?"

"In ordinary Space, yes."

"But you see Space and Time are just part of our World."

John laughed. I had, after all, spoken nonsense.

"Physics gives the laws for all of space. Find something that doesn't obey these laws and you've gone outside Space/Time. Start with Entropy; Newton's law that all concentrations of energy break down."

John nodded.

"According to this rule, the more energy is concentrated the faster it dissipates. So, at the very start of the Universe, with all energy squeezed together; you have the unimaginable explosion of the 'Big Bang' when everything flew apart. This was the first example of Newton's law. Because of it, anything you can make, anything you find in nature, always loses energy. We can never put things back together again; we can never go back in time. The law prevents us concentrating the energy again as it used to be."

"Yes." - John was on safe ground here.

“We only seem to beat this by putting things together, organising and make things; we can take iron ore and turn it into steel and turn the steel into motor cars: but everything we do takes energy from elsewhere, and the more we build something up the more energy it takes and the more it decays and breaks down.”

John beamed, as at a stupid child.

“That’s right; of course it all happens on a very big scale.”

“In the end it means universal decay; personal death in the short term and cosmic death in the end. And yet this isn’t our experience in Art, Philosophy or Religion; in the mind and in nature, everywhere we’re surrounded by teeming life.

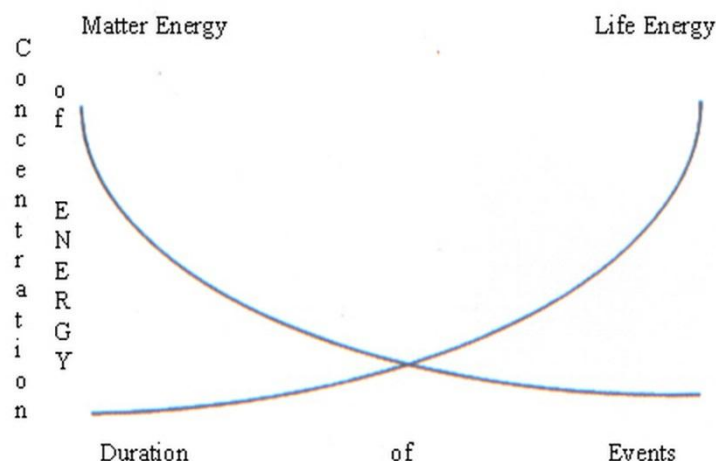
Haven’t you noticed this, John?”

I don’t know if he’d have answered, I gave him no chance.

“According to Darwin’s theory of ‘Natural Selection’, the forms of life always grow stronger. According to Tielhard de Chardin, the great Jesuit anthropologist, Life as a whole always grows more organised. It gets stronger, more organised until it engulfs the World. The very opposite of Newton’s law.

The same is true for our systems of Society, our Laws and culture, even your precious Sciences. They all grow stronger with the passage of Time. I could show you this on a graph.”

And I did, dear reader, you can see what I drew, pointing out the gradients dictated by Newton; they apply to Life as much as Matter, but in reverse.



“What you see is a pattern of symmetry.

The two axes of concentration of energy and duration of events mean we show the physical world running on the downward curve, obeying Entropy. Life and ideas do the opposite; they are in dimensions or frames of reference that can’t be defined in space. Here you find the power of the mind and the power of life.

Life, Art, Religion Philosophy, all emotions and ideas, lie on the second curve. Not only are they outside your physical laws, they’re moving ever faster and more powerfully as time goes on.”

Was I demanding too much of John?

There was a pause, not a very long pause.

“Nothing exists outside your first curve. Everything exists within the law of Entropy and anything which appears to contradict this is just a local eddy.”

These were staggering words. They stopped me in my tracks, was John really saying not just that Art, Philosophy and Religion are illusion but that his science, even

Life itself, is just a local eddy? ‘Tell that to a culture of bacilli’, I thought, but I didn’t say it. At least it wasn’t just me but all life on Earth John dismissed.

A law is a law; it leaves no room for any “local eddy”. Newton’s law of Entropy is proved by the fact that you will never, not almost never, but actually never, find pieces of pot lying on the floor which form themselves into a cup and jump up onto a table. On the other hand, the reverse is quite frequently seen (Acknowledgements to Professor Hawking).

My anger at John’s short-sightedness surprised me. It seems I was a believer in Spirit. The truth of what I said is obvious, but what it might mean for individuals is another matter. I can’t prove that you or I will survive death, though, you’ll appreciate; I was coming to think we might.

The time travel of H.G. Wells and Isaac Azimov surrounded my childhood. Only as an adult could I see the gradient on that ‘matter energy’ curve makes time travel impossible; things can never regain enough energy to go backwards through Time. The Mind, on the other hand, can. For life the future is always more powerful than the past. What about memory? I always assumed memory is something we carry with us, but maybe we don’t need to. Maybe we go back in time to pick it up, projecting images onto the screen of our minds, like a hologram. Maybe this is what I was doing with Edward. He needn’t be part of my past; my mind was simply going back through Time to pick him up. Perhaps memory is nothing less than time travel.

I hardly had time for all this. The talk with John set a train of thought running, but it was Angharad I’d called to see. Eventually I cornered her in a private conversation. I wanted to ask her about Sarah.

How long does a holiday last? Angharad knew Sarah and knew the friends she went away with. If I were invited into a major project, far from extending a holiday I’d more likely cancel it. Sarah was an enigma. Was she always this casual? Was she uninterested? Did she understand what I was trying to do? In those days she discussed everything with Angharad. I was determined to ask her. Sarah had been away for six weeks and nobody knew when she’d be back.

“You have to know her. She is, actually, treating a patient; L..... has been suicidal for years, at last Sarah got through to her, she’s taking the chance to reinforce her progress. Besides, she needs a break from the surgery.”

What could I say? L..... was one of the rich friends she’d gone to stay with. But it’s easy to be dubious about ‘treatment’ with a dozen other people in a Mediterranean villa. My face showed my thoughts.

Angharad took my arm and sat me down.

“Don’t always be so impatient. You think she’s the right person don’t you? The research hasn’t actually started yet has it? It can actually wait can’t it? If she’s the right person keep it open for her.”

I agreed. Reluctantly, I agreed.

“I won’t be a minute.”

She was off to root in a draw somewhere in another room, coming back with an armful of photographs, some in albums, some loose, many quite old.

“I want to show you Sarah.”

Angharad had collected a life story in that mass of photographs. There were pictures of Sarah and of both of them when they’d been nurses together as teenagers, of their weddings, of their children growing up, graduations and christenings. There were pictures of Sarah’s estranged husband, of cars and houses, photographs of their life histories.

There was one of Sarah's wedding in the late 1960s, showing her black, cascading curls arranged neatly under a large brimmed hat; her short, waist less coat emphasising her long legs. What I noticed was her self-consciousness.

Angharad gave me a commentary for each picture, it took quite some time. Sitting on the floor amongst the clutter, I never knew what a great deal could be contained on just so many pieces of card.

In all those pictures Sarah seemed to be trying so terribly hard. Well we all looked gauche when we were young, and it made me smile to hear Angharad sounding so protective, there was something about Sarah that made you want to protect her.

She had married young and stayed married for a long time, separating after more than twenty years. Her husband was portrayed to me as a brute; amongst all his other faults he was against her career as a hypnotherapist. This was the last straw and final cause of their separation, at least according to Angharad.

There was something about that wedding photo. I was reluctant to put it down. I listened to Angharad, but there was something in the image of that young bride, an echo of the teenager in my vision of the toddler and her mother. Was it her eyes that reminded me so much, or something in the curve of her mouth and the way she held her head? When the thought came to me I pushed it away, unwanted fantasy.

Once again the demands of others shaped the day, our privacy was invaded and the photos. were all put away. Angharad had done her best.

Sunday's the day I see my daughter and the rest of my time was spent with her. I rounded her up from some distant part of Angharad's house and we set off, to make the most of our limited time together. Debbie is such a joy; her spontaneity drove away all my cares, even John's intransigent stupidity.

The way back from her mother's house leads passed Stafford Castle. Maybe I stopped at the castle gates just to ruminate on the day. It was early autumn, the nights were drawing in and the first leaves were falling. The air was damp and cold but it wasn't just this which made me shiver.

There's a long avenue of trees leading up from the road to the castle keep and leaf mould and the demolition rubble of centuries bound the hard earth track between. The path itself has been much cleared by would-be historians from the local secondary schools. As I walked under the dripping shade of those great trees, I wondered what I thought I was doing.

Walking, alone in the dusk, I should have been walking back through Time. There was every reason to time travel in my mind's eye, with all that was spinning round my head, but too much of the present adhered to the castle drive and too much of the day still stuck to my mind. I saw the rubble and felt the damp when I should have felt for the past.

I was walking over nine hundred years of history. The original Stafford castle was part of the town but, not long after the Norman Conquest, rebel Saxons burnt it down. A new and vast military complex was built here, a little out of the town, not just to control Stafford but the whole of central England. As the danger of resistance faded it was given to one of William the Conqueror's lieutenants, the first of the Staffords and Edward's ancestor.

Over the centuries stone replaced the first wooden palisades and the military centre became a family home. As the Middle-Ages wore on it became rooted in the land and its people.

Parliamentarians demolished it during the Civil War, seeking to erase the traditions for which it stood. I remember a civil engineer once telling me what a good

job they did and what problems it made for later builders. For all that, the castle has been rebuilt and twice demolished again since then, and successive families have lived in it since Edward's time.

The present ruin has little to do with the de Staffords and no sense of Edward clung to its walls. There is no doubt he would have lived here, some times, but this was not his real home. For him you would have to look elsewhere.

I stayed long enough to smoke a cigarette and admire the commanding view of the countryside. It really is a superb site.

What else could I expect? Yet, I did come back, much later, with very different experiences. Then my mind walked back in Time to a time that seemed to be long, long ago, to the unrecognised image of a girl, her face looking down from a castle window, wistfully smiling. Maybe she was looking down at Edward. I don't know. But on this damp, September day I retraced my steps to the car and left without a backward glance, depressed and frustrated.

Chapter 5 - A Kaleidoscope

Angharad phoned me after that Sunday and invited me round for coffee. I delayed going to Peterborough just to see her, late on Monday morning, when I should have been facing the cross-country traffic. She smiled to see me, almost reading my mind; she has a talent for getting people to confide in her. I told her the whole story, even the archivist and the fragment, and my feelings about Edward. I told it to her even as I've told it to you.

I finished lamely,

"That's it really, just the imaginings of a lost soul. But it leaves so many questions."

She smiled again, knowing how I hate things left in the air.

"I wish I could make something more of it and not just leave it there."

"You can't leave it. You couldn't if you tried; anyway, how do you know it will leave you?"

And now it was that question which hung in the air.

"So, how are you going to go about it?"

After a pause, I gave her a list of the things I wanted to know. It committed me to channelling, and more than that, to telling Angharad what I found. I was to realise, it would carry me to the end of this book and conclusions I wouldn't have entertained but for Angharad's prompting. How could I have explained it to anyone else but for her?

"By the way, I've been experiencing the life of this dead prince."

Perhaps it won't surprise you that Edward was waiting for me, like that little girl at the start of the last chapter: like a series of old memories, that came slowly at first and then with quickening vitality.

(Past)

There came a day when Lady Katherine parted from her son. She looked young and slim, even beautiful, just as I'd seen her at the monastery in Brecon. Edward, still no more than seven years old, was tearfully hanging on to her hand.

Patiently, Katherine tried to explain to him why he had to go, holding back her own tears and trying to be strong. Yet she wasn't at all strong, she was soft and accepting. In all her life till Henry's death there'd always been someone to protect her, to tell her what to do. Now she had to decide for herself, and for her son.

Edward was all starched linen and new clothes, his soft blond curls framing his freshly scrubbed face. He didn't like it and he didn't understand this leaving, he only knew he was being taken away. He wanted to stay with all his heart and there was desperation in his pleading. He loved his mother, his home, his family, he wanted to stay; to be dragged away would be like losing Papa all over again.

Gentle Lady Katherine did her best to hide her tears. She was once more a duchess, now the new king had restored her lands and titles. She would act the part, no matter what her feelings. Yet she was powerless against the will of the King and that stern lady the [King's mother](#). Maybe it was an honour for Edward to be brought up a prince but the steel edge of command put all sorts of fears into her mind. Her young nephews, Edward and Richard, were murdered by their guardian. The poor little lambs disappeared only two years ago.

Katherine didn't trust these Tudors; always out to better themselves; always out to win, sounding reasonable when it gave them what they wanted, sounding dangerous if they didn't get their way. Katherine wasn't used to grasping behaviour; she thought it ignoble. Now her son was being grasped from her.

The carriage waited and Edward was handed in, by the de Stafford maid who would go with him. It cost Lady Katherine a promise to receive the King's uncle, and even so, what trust could she put in a young maid? Still, she would stay with him, she would comfort him. It was Katherine's only consolation. She watched the carriage out of sight then went indoors to weep bitterly.

Edward's dearest wish was to go home. As the days stretched into weeks and the weeks turned to months the hope of rescue faded. Only at last, with the passage of time, did acceptance cover the awful wound of abandonment. In the end he could become resigned to living his life with strangers.

Yet, there was one little girl in the household who wasn't a Tudor, who had no power, one Edward could like. In fact they came to be friends. She held the key to pass the defences he set about his soul; someone must for all else was loneliness.

These images pleased me no better than the ones before. The wrenching of that child away from his mother was a fresh pain. I sort of felt it, the loss and isolation, rather as he must have done. I didn't like it, but my questions were all still unanswered. I kept on. There's something else, really quite trivial, but it was also a discouragement from channelling. All my life I've had occasional twinges of pain in my side, for no apparent reason, and I've always ignored them; they happened so rarely it never seemed worth consulting a doctor. But after this channelling they happened much more, and sharply too. Maybe my meditations were less relaxed than I supposed, for I've always considered muscle tension the most likely cause of that pain.

Other scenes came to me, more and more easily but I needed some focus, some sort of theme, to try to make sense of them. Where better to start than that little girl?

(Past)

Eadie looked down the long hall at this new ward, another child of some great family, to be kept by Lady Margaret, here at Coldharbour. Eadie was uncomfortable in her Sunday dress and shoes; it made her resentful. She wanted to be out in the open, at a secret place she knew, it had once been a quarry for building stone, long, long ago, and now all sorts of wild animals lived there. They were her friends. It wasn't as if she was going to meet this boy, not that she was interested anyway. She liked it best when she was by herself. Who was he anyway? The servants said he was a great lord, when you spoke to him you were to curtsy and call him "Sir Edward". He didn't look much like a great lord. He looked frightened, he was small and silent, and he didn't even smile once, not at anyone.

Edward, for his part, stood in the great hall to be introduced to this great array of strangers. There were so many people here. Lady Margaret Beaufort would receive him later. She was the King's mother, she'd once been his great aunt by marriage and surely she must be very, very old. He did his very best not to let his family down, he tried to behave as he'd been taught. Inside he felt empty and lost, he longed for a familiar face. Tears were ready to betray him at any moment and he bit his lip that it shouldn't quiver.

He looked into all the faces before him and passed on from them to others down the length of the hall, to where Eadie stood. His eyes rested on her for a moment, she was about his own age. He noticed her dark, curly hair and her eyes that held his

glance. He admired her confidence. She was skinny and couldn't seem to stand still, perhaps she was bad tempered; he dismissed her and his eyes moved on.

Much later Edward found himself in the great kitchen. He'd been in the household more than a week. He'd met Lady Margaret, but still it seemed he knew no one. It was from Lady Margaret's chamberlain Edward learned about his great uncle, Sir Henry Stafford, whose kindness and care had preserved Margaret and Henry Tudor through the first ten years of Yorkist rule. They were the dangerous years of the Wars of the Roses that had finally taken Sir Henry's life. From Lady Margaret herself Edward heard nothing about his family.

At least, here in the kitchen, the great fire burned brightly, to warm an aching soul. It was a place to be away from people, for there was little bustle of servants at this time of day, if there had been, Edward would have been sent packing.

On matted rushes, at the edge of the hearth, lay Eadie. Edward was pleased he could remember her name. She was laughing and giggling at the gambolling of a litter of tiny kittens as they played on the floor in front of her. She looked up briefly when he walked in and then went back to the kittens, ignoring him.

The fire's glow was welcoming; it threw the walls, this girl, everything into soft relief; in contrast with the cold greyness of Edward's lonely life. He sat on the cook's chair, at the corner of the fire, and stayed to watch the kittens.

"You'll get scratched when the mother comes back."

"Na, I won't, the cat knows me."

Cats are creatures of witchcraft, only tolerated for keeping down vermin. The kittens would have been given a broom end if any of the servants had seen them.

Eadie carried on happily waving her shoeless feet in the air, lying on her stomach, teasing the little creatures. Edward said no more, just sat at the fireside. Eadie should have known better than to show off. One of the kittens climbed on her back and started patting at her hair. The tiny claws hurt and Eadie got up with a yelp, the kitten hanging on for dear life. Edward didn't laugh; he merely rescued the kitten from Eadie's hair.

"You're Eadie aren't you? I remember your name."

Eadie blushed, she was still discomposed as he handed the kitten back into her arms.

"And you're Sir Edward."

Eadie would not curtsy, no matter who told her to.

"They used to call me Lord Stafford, but at home it's just Edward. I don't ever remember being a knight."

"Then Edward it is."

This time Eadie did curtsy. It was the best introduction they could have had.

These were the earliest days Edward spent in Lady Margaret's house but there were later days too, when Edward and Eadie would play together.

Eadie showed him her secret places, blackbirds' nests and foxes' dens. They even went on a secret quest to a badgers' set. The days and weeks passed. Eadie asked about Edward's family, Brother Henry and his sisters and Lady Katherine. I can see the children together but I can't bring to mind what Edward said; he got up, waving his arms about as he walked up and down. He didn't want to talk about it: not even his young brother.

Eadie wouldn't say much about her family; she had no brothers or sisters, she wouldn't speak of her father and her mother, the lady Aletia, was a woman of mystery.

Aletia was companion to Lady Margaret and seemed to be in charge of the main household. Edward wasn't quite sure.

These scenes went on and on. I couldn't describe them all. Let me tell you just a few, where Time in my own life, as if to make way for them, stood still. Sometimes they made me smile. I was really getting to know Edward.

(Past)

The house was big; there was an enormous hall on the first floor, not the great hall, which was elsewhere, this room was never much used. On this particular day only Edward and Eadie were there. A grand staircase led up out of it with an equally imposing banister. The children formed a great then a greater pile of cushions and pillows at the foot of the stairs. Then they slid down the banister again and again with ever more daring and speed, landing with shrieks of laughter in the cushions. The game became more and more frenetic. It was Eadie's idea in the first place but it was finally Edward who went down with such force as to burst a cushion. It didn't so much burst; it exploded, covering half the room in feathers.

It was at this moment Aletia walked in. Aletia carried herself and looked and spoke like a lady but without the titles and fuss made of the wives of great men. She was tall and calm and capable. She was firm but gentle and kind; she was Eadie's mother. There was no scolding when she saw what they'd done, only laughter. Yes, there was love in Lady Margaret's household and at the King's house of Sheen, there and at other houses, too; Life could still be happy.

It all came at me so quickly, as if nothing should break Edward's progress. I remember an afternoon in the office, the phones always rang in the afternoon; not this day. A hush descended as images of Edward came to greet me. Afterwards I took paper and pencil, scribbling furiously, fearful I might forget. Not till I'd finished did my secretary come in. Even then nothing had happened, though half the afternoon was gone.

One thing puzzled me. Little Eadie reminded me so much of Sarah. It was strange; there could be no connection, yet it just wouldn't leave my head.

(Past)

Lady Margaret delayed the day when Katherine should visit Sheen. There was as long a time as Tudor wit could contrive between Edward's leaving home and when he next saw his mother, more than long enough for him to feel abandoned. It wasn't, in fact, till he 'settled down' that Katherine was allowed to come. The next image was the first time they met in a royal palace; it was an unfortunate occasion.

It was a day of much celebration, formality and Tudor self-congratulation. Lady Katherine had finally consented to marry the King's uncle, Jasper Tudor. It was one more link binding de Stafford loyalty and Katherine must have been under great pressure. Jasper wasn't a young man, he'd known the last days of the Hundred Years War, but he was clever and experienced and had known power and those who exercised power for many years. Katherine and Jasper were betrothed. Edward was not pleased.

Edward was so displeased, so terribly hurt, he didn't want to meet his mother. When they did meet he was surly and sullen. Poor Katherine was at her wits' end, especially amid the preparations for the King's visit and the celebrations. Edward just wanted to run away and hide. He could hardly rebuke his mother, though he would have if he could.

The other children, Brother Henry and his sisters, Elizabeth and Anne, felt no such problem. Jasper won them with stories of gallantry and court and war. Edward, on the other hand, knew no one could replace Papa. Edward still loved his father, as he, in turn, was loved in Lady Margaret's household, in particular by the many other children. They came to the opinion they wouldn't like it either if someone replaced their fathers. The result was a sharp division between the children at the celebration, the Staffords on the one hand and Edward and the rest on the other. Edward himself was discovered standing behind a curtain.

The King arrived from London with Jasper, riding on horseback; there was no entourage but for a pack of hounds. There were great comings and goings at their arrival, half the assembled company went out to meet them, it was Edward's chance to step behind the curtain. When everyone returned indoors Jasper, striking as ever, dressed all in black satin and gold, immediately paid his courtly attentions to Lady Katherine. The King had Edward brought out from hiding and would have scolded him but for the good humour of this great day.

The frost between the two groups of children was as great as between any pair of warring factions dragged to a parley. Katherine's acceptance of Jasper was an insult to Duke Henry's memory and Edward left the room as soon as the King's back was turned. Eadie followed, bidding him go with her.

There was real pain at this breach with his mother but there was duty too, and the need for some defiance of these Tudors. Edward would so like to have eased that pain with almost any compromise but what could he do? He was not yet a man. He was distracted by Eadie; it was her intention. There were no words to explain to her and soon he left off trying. Soon they ran through the house together, playing hide and seek. What cared they for grownups, there was laughter between them at least. When there were sounds of Edward being sent for they made a great joke of finding the remotest bedchamber in that great house and hiding under the bed; Eadie, her finger to her lips, trying to be solemn, couldn't stop giggling.

There were comings and goings of searchers for Edward for a long time before the stern and shouted authority of the King brought him out of hiding. He'd made his point. Dutifully, resignedly, Edward obeyed his king, as he was taught all subjects should do. The Tudors' hold was thus made the tighter. Katherine hid her tears.

I was getting more fluent now, more competent. Not only could I pick up these visions, I could even interpret them! I was getting a feel for it and I was really getting rather smug. But oh for the great deal I missed.

It worried me I should connect the image of Eadie with Sarah, and I couldn't shrug it off. All the time I'd spent trying to get her to work in an academic way her personality had dominated, now it was even tingeing these images of Edward. Yet of the real Sarah there was neither sight nor sound, since prompting that first vision on the road she had comprehensively disappeared.

It was on Thursday evening; again sitting in my armchair, back in the silence of my flat, the strongest images of that strange week came to me.

(Past)

There is (or was) a large well-lighted landing with light shafting across the broad, oak staircase from hundreds of small panes set in stone casements. The landing is tiled diagonally in a black and white chequer board. The oak balustrade and banister are beautifully carved in patterns well known to the children's fingers.

Off the landing are heavy panelled doors in carved oak frames. The total space is maybe forty feet by ten feet; quite enough for the children to play in. One of these

rooms belongs to Eadie, or Edward, it isn't clear which. They are often together making the whole house ring with their laughter. When you're only nine or ten and the house is full of people, mostly servants, whom you can wrap around your finger and who seem to like you, life is fun.

There is one aloof and distant figure. Not bad or scary, just important. You don't run or shout when she's around, you say 'please' and 'thank you' and 'yes Lady Margaret'. Everybody does, even Thomas and Aletia, maybe it's because it's her house.

She has a library - downstairs I think - with hundreds of books in it. This must mean she's very important. Thomas can read most of them. He says he doesn't like some of them which he says are 'Greek' but he says he can even read these if he has to.

Thomas has to teach Edward his letters and figures. Thomas says it's his job. He always says,

"One day young master you will understand. One day you will need all this and much more". Or,

"You had better learn well. If you ever want to claim your inheritance, learn well."

One day Thomas is going to teach Edward to use a proper sword like his own. Thomas seems to know everything.

He also teaches Eadie but not so much. It is Edward who has to read to Lady Margaret when she sits in her high chair in the great hall - he's always nervous in case he gets it wrong. Eadie would like to read all those books but not to Lady Margaret. It's alright about Thomas teaching Edward more than Eadie. Edward is older; besides, Eadie sees Thomas when he's with Aletia, which is quite a lot. He calls Eadie 'my own girl'. Aletia says he shouldn't treat Eadie like a daughter so openly but he does anyway. It makes Eadie feel very special and she boasts about it. That makes Edward sad; he wishes he had a father still. Sometimes he has nightmares about Papa being dragged away and what it's like to have your head cut off.

Lady Margaret won't speak about Papa; the others get uncomfortable and look away. They all say, "Duke Henry was a brave man, you should be proud of him" or "you should try to live up to him, Edward." But they never say any more.

One day, in the library, that special quiet place, Edward asked Thomas,

"My father was a duke wasn't he? Does that mean I'll be a duke?"

Thomas looked down, shuffling papers with his hands,

"I don't know, that's up to the King."

"The King loved my father, didn't he? Everybody says so."

"If the King had no sons and no daughters neither and if the King were dead you'd be a prince. But he has, he isn't and you're not."

With that Thomas put his work down and left the room. It puzzled young Edward for some minutes but Eadie was calling from the garden and he soon forgot.

If being a duke or a prince or a king gets you dead no wonder people don't want to talk about it. No wonder important people like Lady Margaret are unhappy. Eadie was laughing at Aletia who was making a daisy chain for her. It kept coming apart and Aletia's vexed frowns and sighs made Edward's sides hurt with laughing, till finally she got it right.

"There, child!"

How strange how my mind had run on! What was the meaning of the landing and the bedroom? I was physically tired from all this channelling. These images

trembled in my mind, all pointing back to the landing and a bedroom I wouldn't enter. I was really too tired to get up from my chair, I mused on.

Really the whole house was happy, even the places associated with Lady Margaret. It seemed to be a game to be in awe of her, she had a kind smile and was gentle; she only seemed aloof because she didn't join in the games. I guessed she had arthritis; I've no recollection of her bending down, not even in the presence of the King. She only knelt to pray, which she did often; looking back it caused her great pain.

Practically everyone else joined in the children's games, on one occasion the King himself, when he came to see Lady Margaret. It had been a game of balls and skittles along the floorboards. It was in the same, upstairs room, where the children slid on cushions. The King laughed with the children and played with them for a long time before packing them off to bed.

Most of the games with balls were played on the landing. Small balls, some made of wood by a joiner (Edward watched them being made) some were very special; there were glass ones, large marbles and a really large ball made of leather. They used to have a problem with balls, and sometimes other things, falling down the stairs. This was usually Edward's fault and sometimes Eadie would cry. Then they hit on the idea of tricking or trapping or blackmailing or bullying a kitchen maid into guarding the stairs. This made it much more exciting and everyone enjoyed it. Soon it wasn't necessary to bully the maids. Only Aletia objected, she was in charge of the whole house and all the female servants. Aletia refused to join in but even she couldn't frown on the children for long.

Eventually I dozed off and when I woke up again it was three o'clock in the morning, the flat was cold and my side hurt. Enough for one night. I went to bed, still pondering why my mind pulled away from the landing. I fell asleep.

Why should I dream of such child's toys? Somewhere, in the back of my head, was an echoing sense of importance, but I just couldn't catch it. There were other images emerging to hold my attention. It became quite an occupation, a preoccupation. I was really getting quite involved, maybe too involved.

There were so many scenes and faces rushing by, no one could hold them for long. There's so much I'd like to tell you, so much I'd like to remember for myself.

Edward didn't live in just one house. As well as all the de Stafford houses, they hardly ever went to any of these, there were Beaufort houses, for Lady Margaret was a great Lady in her own right. On top of these her husband, Thomas Lord Stanley, was himself a great lord, with his own estates. Beyond these, they often spent time in royal palaces like Sheen, Lady Margaret thinking it a needless expense to maintain a separate household at court. Yet, even in London she owned a great house. It made for much moving around but Edward accepted it, to him it was normal.

Where had all these scenes taken place? I'm sure the staircase and the cushions were at the palace of Sheen; other scenes were at the houses of Woking and Knowsley. But the first name to come to me, the house of the landing, where Edward first met Eadie, was 'Coldharbour.' The King had given his mother that grand house on the banks of the Thames, as a place to keep the sons of several noble families, for there were other royal wards apart from Edward. What a strange, allegorical name to give to such a place.

There were always many, many people both children and grownups. They changed from place to place and Edward really only knew the travelling household, its family and servants. Lady Margaret had no children except the King but, in charity,

she took in people of every age and degree, not just royal wards paid for out of great estates. She treated everyone alike with formal, distant, kindness.

There could be any number of people in the house, from under a hundred to more than twice that, Edward never tried to count nor did they stay the same for long enough. Besides the many children and wards like Edward, there were always clerks and lawyers, churchmen and noblemen, scholars and diplomats: beggars of every class, all of them dependent on Lady Margaret and her son, the King.

There was such richness and variety. Clothes were of every imaginable colour and style. They showed taste as well as rank; the character, not just of the young but of every age, every man trying to outdo every other in sartorial display. The strange, soft-soled shoes, the long, slashed sleeves, the hats wrapped round the necks of many of the men, as well as the livery of the servants. All flitted through my head, too quick to catch.

So many people carried weapons, not just gentlemen; even the children had knives, even the grey and white figures of the priests who should only have carried their bibles. Everywhere was vigorous life.

It was an age of plenty, at least in a household like Lady Margaret's, but even her hospitality was little to the lavishness of court. The King would feed any who came, on such a sumptuous scale as to draw half the capital. For all the richness of the food there were no vegetables, though many types of fruit, the centre of the feast was meat, except on Fridays, for religious rules were obeyed strictly. Tables groaned not with slices of meat but with whole animals. There was every kind of fish, fowl, pastry, bread, fruit and even comfits, though rare delicacies like marzipan were kept from the public. It would all have appalled a modern dietician.

These images were almost beyond control. It was all so bewildering. All that saved me from utter confusion was seeing it through Edward's eyes, even as he saw it. To him it was all normal, everyday life. Nevertheless, I was exhausted. I should be pleased to go back to Stafford and pause from my channelling.

This life of visions developed its own force and power and my ordinary life came tottering on behind. It was almost frightening; if I lost control over Edward would I lose control over my own mind?

It was during this week I went rummaging through a spare room, looking for a book from my childhood to bring back for my daughter. I came across something else, a book I'd not read in years. It was a strange volume, written by Wilson van Dusen, a clinical psychologist; it was called "[The Presence of Other Worlds](#)". That book couldn't have been further from my mind but as I saw it, memory came back and I picked it up, surprised.

Van Dusen told the story of Emanuel Swedenborg, the great eighteenth century mystic. He gave a good explanation of Swedenborg's life and works, his claims to have visited Heaven and Hell and to talk to spirits, claims supported by impeccable contemporary evidence. But what made this book special was not that Swedenborg channelled, perhaps much as I was doing, what mattered was the man who wrote it. Van Dusen specialised in treating schizophrenics, who heard voices and saw visions. When he compared Swedenborg's observations with the experiences of his own patients van Dusen concluded that those "delusional" experiences might actually be real. The difference between Swedenborg and the patients was that Swedenborg never lost touch with reality, whereas the patients were all too often taken over by their visions. For me it was frightening. After all, I was seeing visions and hearing voices.

Did seeing Edward mean I was mad? Ridiculous, of course it didn't mean that; but if I lost control, like van Dusen's patients?

There's no denying Swedenborg was one of the greatest men of his day. He was a man of great education, coming from the top of Society, his father was an Archbishop, and he was, himself, a consultant to the king of Sweden, having written several definitive scientific texts. No one could doubt his powerful mind; no one would dare call him mad.

Like many other men of his day, and since, he wanted to find the seat of the human soul. His search led him through a study of dreams to meditation and channelling, all this at a time when nothing beyond the visions of the saints was known in the West. His own very lengthy books describe how he learnt to talk to spirits and finally how he came to be able to wander through other worlds. Swedenborg warned against the very great dangers of doing what he had done. Wasn't he warning against what I was doing?

He had come carefully and skilfully to the study of spirits, after a long preparation. I was rushing in, after coming to it by accident. Yes, I was scared.



Lady Margaret Beaufort, from N.P.G.

Chapter 6 - The Kings of England

It was after the shock of reading van Dusen that I sat down at my desk to start this journal. I'd come back to Stafford early, for a court case, but it hadn't been booked to last beyond the morning and I went into my office expecting to find an afternoon's work. I was surprised to find my diary empty, my secretary didn't make mistakes, and she came in to my room, practically before I'd taken my coat off.

"You're looking tired; you could do with a rest before the strain gets you."

I looked at her in surprise. I never thought of myself as under strain, you just get on with the job. Of course, I hadn't told her about Edward, did the pressure of these visions show?

I'd never experienced rebellion from Yvonne; she always worked well, fitting in with my demands, no matter how unreasonable. She enjoyed her job; she was good at it, and, for some reason, approved of me. I could have been angry, but as it was I just sat there, looking at her back as she retreated through the doorway.

I did spend most of the afternoon idling, trying to make sense of what I've told you. The trouble was it didn't make sense, and all I did was resolve to write down my experiences. With my diary and such notes as I'd made, and what I filled in from memory, and the careful record of what came after this, these are the sources of this book.

Do you know much about Tudor history? I didn't, even after reading about Duke Henry and Richard III. It became an issue that same Friday evening.

I told you about my fear of insanity; I thought about it as I drove out to see Angharad. If I told her all I've told you would she think me mad? Perhaps Yvonne was right. It takes discipline not to let these visions overwhelm you, would I know it if I descended into delusion? But Angharad showed no sign of thinking me mad. I told her everything but it wasn't enough. She quizzed me about Henry Tudor, how he came to be king? Why couldn't I answer? She seemed to think I ought to know everything.

You can picture Angharad, hands on hips, telling me with gusto,

"Well, it's time you found out! You don't have to do it all by channelling, you can look it up in the library."

"Yes. And so I will."

But it wasn't just this that sent me scurrying to the library. It was as if the fate of England hesitated in the balance in these years. There was something about Lady Katherine's concern when she parted with Edward that morning.

I wanted solid facts; as a counter-weight to van Dusen's book. Edward seemed all too close to me. I needed him to have his own reality.

"Go and check it in the books. You've a critical brain; use it. If you're too close to it, treat it all as if Edward were one of your clients."

The very next morning I went to the library. It was open on Saturdays, and I started methodically, with the Dictionary of National Biography, giving the essential facts of everybody who ever mattered in English history. Working from there I searched the library. Here we go on a little journey through the most extraordinary piece of English history and the shortest account you'll ever read of the Wars of the Roses.

The tangle leading to Edward de Stafford started with Edward III, glorious king of England, victor over the French at Crecy and descendant of Henry II, first Plantagenet king of England. Edward III died in 1377 having fathered seven sons. Though two of them died in infancy, Edward of Woodstock, the Black Prince; Lionel of Antwerp, duke of Clarence; John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster; Edmund of Langley, duke of York and Thomas of Woodstock, duke of Gloucester survived to manhood; but as the Black Prince was killed in 1376, succession went to the Prince's ten-year-old son, Richard II.

When he inherited the crown, history says, Richard wasn't a good king, impetuous and bloody, listening to his friends rather than the wise and powerful. It wasn't long before Richard's uncles combined to take power from him.

The parliament of 1388 was known as the "Merciless Parliament"; it left Richard king in name only, executing or driving into exile his friends and supporters. It put power into the hands of the great lords, Richard's uncles. For a time England was ruled by these 'Lords Appellant', Richard being as powerless as any modern monarch.

Yet Richard was given a second chance. He was very young in 1388. Perhaps the great lords had gone too far. Dispute and meddling revived, several great men were condemned. Far from silencing complaint, disaffection grew. Next, Uncle Thomas was arrested and murdered. This grabbed my attention, for it was Thomas of Woodstock who was Edward de Stafford's ancestor.

It is claimed Richard struck back at a domination his uncles thrust on him over many years, that he hadn't forgiven them for what they did in 1388. There chanced to be a rebellion against some of these great lords. Not only did he forgive the rebels, he recruited from them, Richard's famous Cheshire Regiment. Towards the end of his reign he was surrounded by them, and still recruiting.

But it wasn't the murder, according to History; it was Richard's banishment of his cousin, Henry Bolingbroke, which turned the nobility against him.

After Lionel, John of Gaunt, Edmund and Thomas came a new generation. First among these was John's son, Henry, called Bolingbroke after the Lincolnshire castle where he was born.

Richard shouldn't have killed Uncle Thomas, it wasn't Thomas who was the threat; Thomas had always supported John of Gaunt, now John was dead it left Thomas exposed. John had been enormously powerful, he won Lancaster by advantageous marriage; he held vast possessions in France and nearly became king of Portugal. From him, Henry Bolingbroke inherited wealth and influence beyond King Richard's dreams.

Henry wasn't at all exposed, he was bound to win when he defied Richard and came back to England. The outcome was a foregone conclusion.

Whether Richard starved himself to death or was murdered after Henry deposed him is uncertain. I picture him sat in a grey chamber at Pontefract castle, facing the emptiness of despair,

"Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

Henry Bolingbroke became King Henry IV; he was strong and vigorous, as described in Shakespeare's plays. But he was dogged by rebellion and nervous ill health, a skin complaint that showed on his face. Remembering the propaganda against Richard III, I wondered, was it guilt that made Henry ill and turned him inwards?

Henry's son, Prince Hal, disowned his father's rule. When he became king he apologised for the usurpation. The irony is that without [Henry IV's crimes](#) he would have become king anyway, as Richard's heir.

Henry V was able. After his overwhelming victory at Agincourt, he became heir to the king of France and married the French king's daughter, Catherine. Then disaster struck. Henry died, suddenly, of a mysterious illness. He left his heir, Henry VI, still a baby.

Henry's widow sought consolation in the arms of a servant, the clerk to her wardrobe, Owen Tudor, the son of a Welsh farmer. They kept their unlicensed, unlawful, marriage a secret and there was a great scandal when it all came out. Catherine was sent to a nunnery where she died shortly after. But they kept their secret well and for a long time, there were five children; Edmund, Jasper, another son who became a monk, and two daughters.

When he came to power young Henry VI was kind to Owen and to his half-brothers; they were declared legitimate by Parliament, Edmund was made earl of Richmond while Jasper became earl of Pembroke. Henry himself was crowned king of France while still only ten years old, but he was too weak to hold it. He lost the crown and all the other gains his father made. He lost all or almost all the vast holdings in France, some of them more English than England itself. They slid away from English rule in a catalogue of incompetence and acrimony. The last straw was the treachery of the duke of Somerset, he was given almost independent charge of what was left of France but he turned Henry's subjects against him, by extortionate taxes, used to line his own pockets. He died suddenly, possibly by suicide, before he could be arrested.

Henry was a good man; some said a saint. He carried religion to extreme, but this didn't compensate a nobility smarting from French losses. On top of this Henry suffered dreadful depressions from the strain of kingship, a responsibility always too great for him, it left him unfit to rule.

This time it was the descendants of Edward III's fourth son, Edmund of Langley, who came to the fore. Edmund was succeeded by a son, a grandson and then a great grandson in the Yorkist title. This last, Richard, duke of York, was heir to both York and Clarence. As the mightiest subject in the realm it was he who was Protector during Henry VI's illness, as John of Gaunt had ruled in King Richard's reign.

The Duke and Henry's queen, Margaret of Anjou, rowed dreadfully. They argued so much that on Henry's recovery it came to battle. Poor King Henry, he might well have been nervous at resuming power and calling his first parliament; as it was, everyone else's mind was on the Duke, whether he'd be arrested and what he should do. Fighting broke out, even before he could come before Parliament. Duke Richard won and forced Henry to forgive him of all the complaints Queen Margaret made. Unfortunately it didn't end there. Further incapacity re-opened the quarrel, bringing greater and greater violence. In the end it was a straight choice between the Queen and York. The Queen provoked a battle, it was more like an ambush, but the Duke felt he had no choice. At the battle of Wakefield, in 1460, the Duke was killed and the scene set for a war dividing the whole nation.

There's Shakespeare's story of the great lords meeting in a garden, split over their loyalties, some picking the red rose of Lancaster, others the white rose of York. They were split not about justice and policy but about legal right.

Edward III's second son, Lionel duke of Clarence, died even before the Black Prince and without affecting the kingship of England. He left an only child, Philippa,

who married the earl of March; their granddaughter and heiress married the grandson and heir of Edmund of Langley. I wonder if the explosive implications of this were seen at the time. It meant that Lionel's claim to the throne passed to their son, Richard duke of York, the man who died by Queen Margaret's scheming.

When Henry Bolingbroke took the crown from Richard II, Richard had no heir. The next person in line, who was actually able to rule, was Henry himself. But the succession should rightfully have gone to the heir of Richard's eldest uncle, Lionel, not only that, had Henry's treason against Richard disqualified him from the crown? At the time Lionel had no competent heir, now, in the time of Henry VI, he did - the Duke of York.

It had been Queen Margaret who forced Duke Richard into it. By accusing him of treason she gave him little choice. Richard's answer was that he couldn't commit treason against himself; Henry IV had been a usurper, since Richard II had no heir, he, Richard of York, was the rightful king. He placed his hand on the throne and let it be known, in due time, he would take the crown. Perhaps that's what drove Margaret to the desperate step of having him killed.

If Henry VI had been a strong king he might have brushed the claim and the past aside. He wasn't and England knew it. Illness and foreign disasters were further compounded by financial incompetence and the King retreated more and more from reality. But the Queen and her supporters were determined to hold on to power, blaming York for their own cupidity. Pretence that the Queen spoke for her husband completely broke down.

The dead duke's eldest son, Edward, had no choice, he could abandon family and honour, or he could fight. Queen Margaret had laid her plans with great care; the Lancastrian armies were raised and ready. Despite the support of the earl of Warwick, Edward was perilously weak. For all that, he fell on the Lancastrians as an avenging angel; the shock of his righteous judgement and execution of the Lancastrians at the battle of Mortimer's Cross must have been shattering. Not only did Edward win against all odds and expectation but his victory was accompanied by strange astronomical events in the sky. The young duke adopted his badge, "the Sun in Glory", as evidence that his victory was the judgement of God.

Queen Margaret would not admit defeat. The Lancastrians mustered again for a last great battle, the biggest ever fought on English soil. The two sides met at Towton in Yorkshire, on a grim, wet and dark winter's day; and the supporters of Lancaster were put to the sword, the slaughter was greater than ever before or since in England.

Of course, after that, Parliament confirmed Edward as King Edward IV. Poor Henry, sometimes a prisoner of his wife's policy, sometimes a prisoner of the Duke of York, still unwell, was imprisoned in the Tower of London, his coronation denied and his life put in peril. His son, Edward Prince of Wales, and Queen Margaret fled.

Henry VI didn't conveniently die as Richard had done and there were those still loyal to the house of Lancaster. Resentment smouldered on wherever the new king was weak. For more than ten years rebellion continued.

It was at this point Angharad came into the library. Loaded with shopping, she brought the bustle of Saturday morning, intruding with the rain she shook from her hair. Yet her sunny smile was such a pleasant relief from the chore of searching references and making notes.

"My, you have been busy."

She parked her bags and plonked herself down next to me.

"Well, tell me all about it."

Other readers scowled.

“It was an astonishing time. You have to look back over so many generations to see how people thought.”

“Tell me about Edward’s family.”

“Mostly it’s not about the Staffords. Everything in this story goes back to King Edward III, the daughter of his youngest son married an earl of Stafford and from then on the eldest Stafford sons were princes. It starts when earl Edmund married Anne, daughter of Thomas of Woodstock. But when Thomas was murdered it left Edmund weak, he died fighting for Henry IV at the battle of Shrewsbury, in one of the many rebellions. Edmund was never strong enough to rival King Henry or Richard II. The greatest power runs down a different side of the family.

Thomas’ descendants rebuilt their power, Edmund’s son was made a duke, but they were never quite strong enough to control the rest of the family. They were always somehow indebted by loyalty to one side or another. Most of them were killed by that loyalty.”

Edward’s great grandfather, Duke Humphrey, did his best to hold the French possessions together, even paying the Calais garrison out of his own pocket, he stayed loyal to Henry VI. First his eldest son, then he himself, died fighting to keep the peace. Yet once the Yorkists won and Edward IV became king, the Staffords transferred their loyalty, holding steadfast to the Crown. Duke Humphrey’s second son, [Sir Henry Stafford](#), died from wounds he received at the battle of Barnet, fighting for Edward IV; while Sir Henry’s nephew, Duke Henry, was married to the sister of Edward’s queen.

Angharad patted me on the shoulder. Would I keep her bags for her while she went back to the shops? I wasn’t sure whether I was a left luggage office or if Angharad had been checking up on me. I went back to the kings of England.

Following Henry VI’s overthrow, it wasn’t the expected Lancastrians who endangered King Edward; the next turn of events is a strange one.

The Earl of Warwick had sided with Edward; in fact he made Edward’s victories possible. After Towton he worked tirelessly to suppress rebellions, throughout the north. He used his wealth and power and skill in war with great ability, constantly preventing any real threat to Edward and building up his own importance as he did so. It won him the nickname, ‘Warwick the King Maker’. Yet he’s best remembered for changing sides and it’s difficult to see why he did it.

There had to be very good reason to betray the king he helped so loyally. On the face of it, the main reason for that betrayal is a silly one.

In those days the great married for wealth and power, not for love. Edward IV married an English lady, Elizabeth Woodville. He married for love, perhaps illegally, certainly in secret, and it was rumoured, under the spell of witchcraft. The fact of the wedding came out at the very time Warwick was negotiating with the king of France to give Edward a continental marriage. The King Maker may have been made to look a fool but that’s hardly reason for rebellion.

I thought about that secret marriage, carried out by a country parson, away from court. I thought about the rumours that Elizabeth had been betrothed to a country gentleman, making marriage to the King illegal. I imagined Warwick’s reaction to the news, in the middle of state negotiations with the king of France. Surely Elizabeth Woodville could have been proclaimed queen of England without driving Warwick and Edward to war.

The real reason was hard to find, and largely ignored even today. [Edward IV was not legitimate](#); he wasn't Duke Richard's son at all. He had been conceived while the Duke was away fighting and the campaigning dates make it abundantly clear. Edward's father was a common archer, Duchess Cecily admitted it; she could hardly do otherwise.

The dates were open and easy to read, how strange historians refuse to acknowledge the fact; but when Duke Richard acknowledged Edward as his own son it made Edward legitimate, for most purposes other than claiming the crown.

I'm sure what Warwick was doing was negotiating to restore the succession, to give Edward a wife who could deliver legitimately royal sons. That's why he rebelled when Edward married a "popinjay".

Warwick's power toppled Edward but by now the Lancastrians were too weak to prop up King Henry. It was a brief restoration and it didn't survive Edward's return match. Warwick was killed at that battle of Barnet while the Prince of Wales died at the battle of Tewksbury or was, as some say, captured and summarily killed by King Edward's brothers. King Henry himself was murdered in the Tower, only Queen Margaret; the cause of so much trouble, survived.

What of the Tudors through these years? Throughout the turbulence in Henry's reign they remained loyal. In 1461 Owen fought for Queen Margaret at the battle of Mortimer's Cross; he was captured, tried and executed. Jasper managed to escape. Edmund's fate was inglorious; he had already died, in prison, in 1456, from plague.

Edmund left a young widow, very young, she was only thirteen but already she was pregnant. The widow was Lady Margaret Beaufort, and her child, Henry Tudor, was the future king of England.

At first I thought I must have misread Lady Margaret's age. Although the nobility often went through marriage ceremonies when they were still quite young, there was a rule that such marriages shouldn't be consummated, at least till the couple were fourteen. It seems Edmund hadn't waited. I imagined the trauma of that child, in the middle of civil war, bearing that dead earl's son.

So now to back track a little, to tell you about Lady Margaret and her ancestry; for everything in this story returns to the children of Edward III.

After his second wife's death, John of Gaunt finally married his mistress, Catherine Swynford. Despite the eldest child having been conceived in double adultery, their several children were legitimated by the next Parliament after the wedding; they took the name of Beaufort from a castle John once owned in France. Like the Tudors, they received royal favour. John Beaufort, the eldest child and Margaret's grandfather, was made a marquis while her father became a duke, that same disgraced duke of Somerset, who lost the last of France to England's enemies.

There was a price for all these favours; it was imposed by Henry IV when he first legitimated his half-brothers. The price, enshrined in Act of Parliament, was that neither they nor their descendants should ever claim the throne of England.

Margaret's father died when she was very young. For all her father's infamy and the bastardy of her line, Lady Margaret was the child of a duke and a direct descendant of John of Gaunt. She found herself, in the regency in Henry VI's illness, in the care of the powerful John de la Pole, who treated her like his own daughter and determined she should have a good match. Despite John's care, she was married, in a confusion of match making, to Edmund Tudor. It is said Margaret was given a choice of suitors and chose Edmund because of a dream. Yet, given her early pregnancy and Edmund's death, I cannot think she chose well.

After Edmund Tudor, Margaret married Sir Henry Stafford, one of the kindest and wisest of the last Lancastrian magnates. Sir Henry was the only surviving son of Humphrey, duke of Buckingham. Not only did Margaret receive his protection but the support of the dowager duchess, Anne, the richest woman in England and patron of both Oxford and Cambridge universities.

When Edward IV came to power Sir Henry changed sides, doing all he could to protect Margaret and her son. He negotiated with the leaders of both Lancaster and York for the sake of Henry Tudor, eventually pledging to fight for King Edward, should the need arise. His death, in 1471, came from wounds he took honouring that pledge.

After Sir Henry, Margaret quickly married Lord Stanley, a Yorkist who could best protect her during the reigns of Edward IV and Richard III. It was Stanley's protection that saved her from Richard's wrath after the Buckingham rebellion, and Stanley's inaction at Bosworth that helped her son to the throne, and it was her brother-law, Sir William Stanley's men who killed Richard III.

So there we have it, the history and scant, illegitimate line of Tudor pedigree. Bastards and dishonour on both sides; with no claim to the throne of England, indeed an express exclusion from it.

Between the death of Sir Henry and her marriage to Lord Stanley, Lady Margaret's son was without a protector; so it came about that Jasper removed him from England and the reach of Edward IV. They meant to take refuge in France but storms set them down in Brittany. Brittany was then independent, long an enemy of France but a friend of England. King Edward could expect to influence such an ally. Nevertheless its ruler, Duke Francis II, gave sanctuary to Henry Tudor and resisted all English attempts at extradition. I can only guess at the intrigue and danger at this time. However it was, Edward never succeeded in extracting him from the hands of the wily Duke Francis. Henry even settled down to domestic bliss, married, and fathered a Breton child.

A perverse thought struck me, since Henry Tudor was already married, with a child, when he came back to England, his subsequent marriage and the whole ensuing House of Tudor, as known to History, was illegal and illegitimate. That might have made a difference, if the House of Tudor had any claim to the crown of England in the first place, which it had not.

Conventional history has it that when Edward IV died England fell into the hands of his surviving brother, Richard duke of Gloucester, like a sparrow into the claws of a hawk. Shakespeare has both Edward's queen and Richard's own wife in fear for their lives. It is a fact that Richard had the intellectual Earl Rivers, protector of Edward's children, executed for no very good reason, and that he killed William Lord Hastings, in a fit of rage. But the victors write history and I was coming to question conventional views.

There were two things I didn't understand. First the arrest of Earl Rivers, it was the plan of Duke Henry, to gain control of the Princes, but why was it necessary to kill him? Second was the killing of Hastings.

Richard asked Hastings to investigate Mistress Shaw, she had been Edward IV's mistress and was rumoured to be implicated in his death; there were even rumours that she had bewitched Edward, in much the same way that Elizabeth Woodville had done many years before. Richard also believed witchcraft was being practised against himself and his family, no-one was suspected except Mistress Shaw. Hastings not only found no fault in her, he proposed to marry her. It was this that sent Richard into a fury.

My inclination was to scoff at witchcraft, until I remembered how seriously Warwick had taken it, and how he turned England upside down over Edward's marriage in 1471. Should the allegations against Elizabeth Woodville be taken seriously? And were the allegations against Mistress Shaw not so similar? Then I remembered that Earl Rivers was Elizabeth Woodville's brother. Was the fact of the matter that he was killed for being implicated in his sister's witchcraft? He certainly profited from it, and it's unlikely Richard III would damage his brother's reputation by making such claims public.

Historians do not take allegations of witchcraft seriously; still less do they think witchcraft could corrupt a king. It seems at least possible that Richard took them no less seriously than Warwick the 'King Maker' had done.

What historians do remember is the disappearance of King Edward's sons, the Princes in the Tower, Edward V and another Richard, duke of York. Their vanishing, while in King Richard's care, shook England. As [Dominic Mancini](#), reported at the time,

"I have seen many men burst forth into tears and lamentation... When they were removed from men's sight."

Did Richard murder them? Were they spirited away by witchcraft? Were they removed for their own protection? Certainly Lady Margaret backed an armed attempt to remove them.

All these events happened in such a rush, it even confused those who were there. After Richard seized the Princes, while they were still alive and well, everything proceeded for the coronation of Prince Edward as Edward V. The ceremony was actually started, in Westminster Abbey, with most of the nobility of England present, when the bishop of Bath and Wells refused to anoint Edward as king. The Bishop announced that King Edward IV's marriage had been void, as royal bastards neither Edward nor his brother could inherit. I can only try to imagine the consternation this must have caused.

The bishop almost certainly knew Edward IV was illegitimate, a sermon had been preached about it the previous day; though historians dismiss this as Richard's propaganda, I think it more likely to have come from the bishop, an explanation in advance for what he intended to do .

It is certain, it was Duke Henry who addressed the lords and commons of London, following that failed coronation, as if it were planned; calling for Richard to be crowned in place of Edward V. His speech was so moving, and brilliant, delivered with such authority, that the crowd, with one voice, shouted their approval. So it was that Richard, duke of Gloucester became king of England.

The propaganda of [Polydore Vergil](#) and [Sir Thomas More](#) paints Richard as the wickedest king of English history. The evidence is, that for the short time he held the throne, he passed good laws, ruling conscientiously and justly. There is an enormous question, what sort of man was Richard III? Still more, it left me wondering about Duke Henry, the man who put him on the throne.

Why should Duke Henry be so ruthlessly murderous to his wife's family? What could he possibly gain? What threat did he see in them? What of the talk of witchcraft that got Hastings killed? and what about Warwick's astonishing rebellion? Then again, what about the amazing pronouncement of the bishop of Bath and Wells? History is silent about the truth of these things.

Then there is the further question, why did Henry rebel? You know I'd already read about this and even found the fragment from that ballad. I shall tell you more later; but as to the history books, they are baffled. It was Duke Henry's consummate

political skill that put Richard in power and, for all it failed, the Buckingham rebellion was Richard III's death warrant. It caused many of the discontented and fearful to beat a path to Brittany and many soldiers and remarkable men went with warrants against them because of the rebellion. Their numbers must have stretched the seams of Duke Francis' court to the limit. Most of all, it gave credit to the accusation that Richard murdered his nephews.

Henry Tudor had promised to join in the Buckingham rebellion. Even though his army never landed, Richard III wasn't likely to leave him safe on England's doorstep. Pressure was put on Brittany. Duke Francis was growing old and ill and could not long resist. While the Duke lay sick, a chamberlain issued a warrant for Henry's arrest, even as Tudor was preparing the invasion that would kill Richard. Even with a warning from one of his own spies, he escaped to France with no more than an hour to spare. It was from France Henry launched the invasion the very next year.

Tudor's invasion gained little strength as it moved through Wales into England and on to Bosworth Field in Leicestershire. Even so, the Welsh preferred the grandson of a Welsh page to a noble Plantagenet, the English preferred peace to blood. Richard III had been king for only two years and two months when he was slain by Henry's army.

The house of York didn't quite end with Richard III. Although his only child died before him, Richard named his nephew, John de la Pole, earl of Lincoln, as his heir. After Bosworth, Lincoln made his preparations and finally his claim. He fought bravely against the usurper, but Fate did not accord with justice. The truth was too many Yorkists had pledged themselves to Henry Tudor for salvation from Richard III. They wouldn't betray that pledge for Richard's heir. It was Henry who defeated the Earl of Lincoln at the battle of Stoke. In the ironic way of history it was Henry who had the Earl executed for treason, not the other way round.

After Lincoln there was another nephew, Edward earl of Warwick. This Edward was the son of George duke of Clarence, middle brother between Edward IV and Richard III. George had been notoriously disloyal and unreliable and was finally executed for treason against Edward IV. Having discovered Edward IV's paternity I could understand George's resentment, it was he, George, who should have been king; not his brother, the son of an archer. But George's treason disinherited his son, a pitiful child, without power or supporters, possibly even simple minded.

After Henry Tudor came to power, Edward was kept for a time by Lady Margaret at Coldharbour, later he was sent to the Tower and finally he, too, was executed.

Like Lincoln, all other claimants were too weak to defeat Henry Tudor: all except one, the heir to the fifth son of Edward III. When Henry Tudor restored the titles and estates, which had been stripped from Duke Henry, he must have been sore tempted. They were truly vast. Over all the generations of Stafford power, the net of noble allegiances, feudal duties, and tradition in arms, lands and wealth must have made Henry Tudor look weak and poor. I can imagine Henry and his mother pondering over it.

Of course Henry kept a slice for himself, £1,000 a year, an enormous sum in 1485. Beyond that, by making his mother Edward's guardian, Henry gave her the vast income from Edward's estates and the right to sell his marriage prospects (alone worth £4,000). Henry himself would take further large fines when Edward came of

age. But most of all, in the meantime, Edward would be under Tudor control for the next fourteen years.

There were the same considerations in marrying Lady Katherine to Jasper. Henry was bound to return the share of Stafford wealth which was Katherine's by right, as dowager duchess, but by the marriage he effectively gave it to his own uncle. At the same time Jasper would keep the only adult Stafford under close control.

These devices leached incredible fortunes from the Stafford estates, the richest estates in England. It was this wealth which allowed Henry Tudor to run England out of his own pocket, without using the nation's exchequer or, for many years, calling a parliament. In every sense the success of the Tudor reign was based on the usurpation of the de Staffords.

I wondered what was in the minds of Lady Margaret and Henry Tudor. I'm sure they worked very hard to stop Edward Stafford realising how they used him. No doubt it was easy enough when Edward was first taken to Coldharbour, when he was only seven years old, but with each year that passed the risk would grow and grow. I wondered if they ever suffered a guilty conscience. Lady Margaret's confessor, the eminent John Fisher, often said she feared divine retribution, though she never confessed to him why.

I wondered if Edward might be in danger of being murdered, to stop him realising how he was being used. Then I remembered that it would only be if Edward were judicially killed, for treason; that the Stafford estates would come to Henry Tudor. Of course, the young earl of Warwick was killed in exactly this way.

Edward never did rebel or claim the crown; by holding their most powerful danger close to them the Tudors held themselves safe. I knew this from history, but what I didn't know was how Lady Margaret managed it, and what effect all this had on Edward.

As I helped Angharad put her shopping in the boot of her car my thoughts were still all taken up with this story. What had I learned in the library? Many of the kings and great lords I'd read about were unsympathetic. Yet there were two for whom I felt sympathy, Thomas of Woodstock, and that most honest and conscientious gentleman, Sir Henry Stafford, doing all he could for his wife and her child. When I explained these feelings to Angharad her answer was simple.

"You need a determination they didn't have.

If Edward had it he would have been king."

Chapter 7 - Marbles and Hawks

After the kings of England, in the library, came the real world, in my office in Peterborough.

I've never worked well under any routine. It makes me very bad at the whole mass of clerkish chores you find in any business. Believe me, I wish I were better but there it is. I'd taken on quite a lot of work, without the resources to do it, for the sake of Frances, while she still worked in my Peterborough office. It was the sort of work I don't like, petty squabbling over accidents and grasping for money, I'm not good at it, but it was part of her training, and now I was stuck with it. What to do? Negotiations began to get rid of it.

You've no idea how hard it is to sell messy, unwanted business. The man who came to buy the work was only interested in money. It was like talking to someone from a different planet. I tried very hard but how could I show my costings when money was never the point of my practice?

This Monday, two days after that work in the library, I met my buyer. We met in a pub. in one last effort to come to terms. He was a thin faced, mean minded man; his suit a combination of slight fashion and high street economy, his tie a Christmas present given by someone without taste or thought. He came into control of his own family business quite young and on little merit, with a balance sheet in one hand and ambition in the other. Now he wanted to increase his business at the expense of mine, without effort or cost to himself.

Strange, when first we met I hadn't noticed all these petty shortcomings; if I had I wouldn't have thought of selling to him. My concern was for my clients, I hardly wanted to put them into the hands of someone with one eye on the clock and the other on how much he could bill.

I'd brought all sorts of records with me and had meant to do my best to convince him about Frances' work, but now I found my enthusiasm fading away. He talked ungenerously, even as to what we ate and who should pay for it. We didn't fall out, what would be the point? The negotiations broke down anyway. I was left with my unwanted reminder of Frances. Maybe my mind was still preoccupied with Edward, so soon after seeing his ancestors. It was an altogether depressing experience.

That night I dreamt. It was a restless, constantly circling set of dreams going round and round my head with no respite. As my eyes closed they were there. As I could stand no more and looked at the darkened room they left, only to return as weary eyelids drooped again. Constantly spinning in and out of consciousness I passed the night away.

(Past)

There was a small boy, Edward, no more than seven years old. I can still see him, sitting on the floor, it was a wooden floor, highly polished, reflecting the light that flooded the room. The room was large and imposing but there was no one else there.

Edward was all dressed up in fine clothes, as he had been on that day he was sent to stay with Lady Margaret. There was a small leather bag at his side and he was playing with unset jewels or crystals, there were about a dozen of them, all different colours. He was holding them up to his eyes, to see the sunlight streaming through them, making pretty patterns. Then he rolled them along the floor and back again, finding them delightful, fascinating. A new toy he'd just been given.

There's no more to this, no other action. Yet... It's strange enough to be presented with such an image on closing my eyes but there's something else. For a young child to be given such gems is strange also, but there's some other quality, a haunting quality, almost blissful and infinitely reassuring; that's what struck me most.

There was another image of Edward, with the gems and a little girl, Eadie. They were playing with the jewels as if they were marbles; rolling them along the wooden floor. It wasn't really a good idea; the gems were roughly round but faceted, not spherical. They didn't roll quite true. It didn't seem to worry the children, they played happily enough.

(Past)

In another scene I could see them playing at the same game but this time they were jabbering away. They'd decided to play two sides, de Stafford and Tudor, each gem representing a different person. They had to search about to find suitable people for their cast list and they finished up including two dogs, a servant and a cat. Otherwise the game was very much an ordinary game of marbles. I don't remember which, if any, of the dramatic personae won the game.

Perhaps I only tell you about this because it happened. The children were happy, though I feared for the loss of the jewels. I couldn't tell the importance of these images.

There was another vision, this time the King, actually [King Henry](#) himself, played with the children at the same game. He was a normal and ordinary visitor to the household and he was amused to see himself personified in such a way. He joined in. I can't remember if he won, in any case, he was called away by more adult business after a few minutes.

It wasn't surprising to find the King as a visitor; he came to see his mother often. The surprising thing was the easy and relaxed way he had with the children, and they with him.

These visions came that night one after another. When there was no other image I saw just the gems, and I called them 'the Marbles' after the children's game. They floated, as it were, in empty space: round and round in a circle with one of them in the middle. They were always well ordered, always the centre of things.

They weren't glass, nor stone, maybe quartz, more like some other crystal. They weren't translucent, the light came through them as through nothing I've ever seen; it burst, it sparked, prismatic, alive. The dominant colour was white, but there were other colours too, all the colours of the rainbow but, on top of these colours, were others, astonishing washed out gold, shades of pink, turquoise, blood red, powder blue, there was orange and greens, almost infinite. My knowledge of physics is limited but those colours seemed to me impossible, never have I seen anything like them. The shape of all the gems was the same, and the size. They were many-faceted, there was no counting the planes in them, inlaid and underlaid, I went down and down into each one, almost to madness. They revolved around each other and around my mind, there was no peace and, always recurring, one particular damaged crystal. It had some white substance leaking from it like some liquid frozen in mid-flow.

Hanging between sleep and consciousness the Marbles pulled my mind to another vision and I can't forget it. It troubled me with the same fear of being overpowered as when I saw Edward at Coldharbour and read van Dusen's book.

(Past)

Edward and Eadie were playing. They were now older, perhaps eleven years old. They were bored, they were naughty. They were frustrated with an anger and a wildness that wasn't normal to them. They'd often played with the Marbles, more or less as marbles and even carefully, even skilfully, today there was neither care nor skill. Edward hurtled one under a door, it jammed. He tried to get it out by opening the door. There was a sickening splintering noise. The Marble came out, it was squashed and flattened. It had never been intended to take the full downward force of a heavy oak door.

Edward was desolated. Eadie turned white. She didn't know what had happened or what it meant but she could see the consternation on Edward's face. Edward didn't know why he was so appalled. He just knew something terrible had happened; somehow he couldn't make himself believe it didn't matter. Normally, when something went wrong, he pretended it didn't really matter and it always worked and sooner or later it turned out not to matter. Not this time.

They found Lady Aletia or maybe she found them, she seemed to know something was wrong. Edward tearfully confessed the calamity. Aletia went silent. She was hardly ever silent. Aletia was the one who always knew how to kiss better any hurt. Not this time. She took the Marble and all the others too. She said she would speak to Thomas and they, the children, were to say nothing. The crystals were very valuable and Lady Margaret would be cross.

Edward couldn't sleep that night, not for ages, for the worry of it. He went to Aletia the next morning, as soon as he could.

Yes she'd spoken to Thomas.

Yes it was bad and careless.

Yes she knew he hadn't meant to do it.

Sometimes it just didn't make everything right if you said 'Sorry'. Could Edward mend the crystal?

Thomas's taken them away to see what can be done. All of them.

No, Edward and Eadie could not have them back.

Somehow there was a loss of face in front of Eadie that hurt Edward. That he couldn't have them back was an undeniable admission he'd been wrong, but there was something much worse and he, Edward, couldn't put it right without the rest of the Marbles.

Edward went to see Lady Margaret. He didn't know what else to do, even though Aletia said not to. He explained what happened, finishing tearfully,

"...and Aletia won't give them back. I'm sorry, Lady Margaret. I will be careful with them."

Lady Margaret summoned Aletia.

"What's this young Edward tells me about marbles my dear?"

Aletia was silent for a moment. She looked almost as if she'd been caught out in something herself. She looked out of the corner of her eye at Edward before answering.

"They were really only play things. But I think Edward was fond of them. He had them from his father. Thomas has taken them away to see if they can be mended."

“Ah!”

Lady Margaret needed to hear no more. They all knew how inordinately fond Edward was of his dead father. It could cause difficulty and Lady Margaret certainly didn't want to open any question about Henry and Edward's family. It could be all too delicate.

“I'm sure you and Thomas did right.

Can we not do something to replace them? Perhaps wooden ones? There you are, Edward, that's a splendid idea. You shall have wooden balls in case Thomas can't get the others mended. Thank you Aletia. That's settled, Edward, you shall have wooden ones.”

Edward and Aletia trooped out of Lady Margaret's presence and so it was Edward got a set of wooden marbles and even got to watch them being made. But there were questions buzzing round his mind: he hadn't got the Marbles from his father, why did Aletia say he had and why were they all taken to be mended when only one was broken?

Edward didn't ask Aletia at the time and never got answers to his questions. Bye and bye guilt over the Marbles faded.

Why should I have such dreams? Why dream about 'the Marbles' and if they were so special why did Edward have them in the first place? Why had these images pressed themselves on me?

The next morning, over breakfast, I took paper and pencil and tried to draw the Marbles. I came back to it again that day and spent the evening pouring over what I'd drawn. Imagine a really large cut diamond, the sort you might find in some national display of crown jewels. Imagine it exactly the same from every angle. Imagine it an inch and a half, maybe more, across. Place it in the palm of your hand and look into it. There would be light in the diamond but nothing else: in these gems there was plane after plane of facets, worlds of light leading your eye as if through a maze. With such a gem in your hand it's the gem you see, not the flesh beyond.

The Marbles no more leave this story than they did my mind, as if the light drawn through the maze of the Marbles echoes my life drawn through Edward's. I even wonder if they're not more important than Edward's story itself. I've tried in vain to find anything like them in our mundane world.

There was something odd about the children playing games, though I'm sure they didn't realise it.

Something nagged at the back of my mind when I saw the children introducing King Henry to their game of marbles. Some thought of danger, of risk; it wasn't that the King would recognise their value as gems but that he might take them away for some other reason. Why did no one question a young child's possession of them?

Somehow things went well when you had the Marbles; reality followed your wishes. Was it mere superstition?

What put the thought in my head was a perfectly prosaic television programme. When I saw the children playing ball on the landing it seemed charmed, idyllic but not strange. Then, taking a break from all this, I saw the programme. It said what I already knew; before the 18th century children were treated as miniature adults, the concept of play was far from what it is today. Not that children didn't play, after all there were plenty of games for grownups: there were cards and chess and dice, most of all dancing, and several games with balls. Somehow these games on the landing were different; they were inspirational, they were only for the children centred round Edward and somehow or other they always had to do with the Marbles.

When I told you about Eadie, in the chapter before last, I thought to tell you she was a child of nature but it isn't quite true. To Aletia's despair, she hated to be confined indoors; she loved all wild creatures, she loved to be free, but she also loved those games on the landing, the games inspired by the Marbles. When the children of the household were bored, when they didn't know what to do, they looked to Eadie; Eadie would look to Edward: he held the Marbles.

Why did the other children turn to Eadie? There are secrets hid even from me. Here as, too, the mystery surrounding Edward's sisters and Brother Henry. But I can see how it came that Eadie turned to Edward.

Edward and Eadie were kindred spirits, each happy to be on their own yet each wanting quiet companionship. Edward, still suffering from the shocks of childhood, had learned to be guarded; Eadie, always with one ear and one eye in other worlds, wanted hush for her fantasies, her dreams of angels and faeries and the spirits of woodland.

The Marbles opened a door for all the children, into worlds made possible by Edward's imagination.

(Past)

There is a season for everything: Spring for new birth, summer for ripening growth, autumn for the harvest and winter for death. It was early winter when the hunter brought death with hawk and hound to field and wood alike. Edward and Eadie watched it and talked about it. One day they were in a copse not far from the hall, one of Lady Margaret's many homes.

"Shush!

It's Lady Margaret with her merlins."

Somehow there was something shocking in seeing Lady Margaret riding by, a bird of prey on her arm and servants following with other birds. The merlin is a noble bird yet she's small enough for a lady to manage. A lady, that is, who would follow the sport of kings and give little cries of delight at the kill. Though she came within twenty yards of the children she didn't see them, in the shade of the trees, intent as she was on the hunt.

Edward and Eadie watched, enthralled.

A bird was in the air, you could faintly hear its tiny bell tinkling as it circled above. Then it swooped on a quarry. Bright eyes and flushed cheeks betrayed Eadie's excitement as she clutched Edward's arm. Edward looked from the merlin and its chase to Eadie. No hawk is successful at every cast, on this occasion the merlin missed.

"Come...let's follow."

And Eadie pulled Edward after her so that they followed the chase all that morning. They followed in secret, a game to see while yet unseen. It wasn't easy; merlins like to hunt in open land, so that Edward and Eadie were pressed to greater and greater extremes to stay in cover.

There was grace in the merlins and there was grace in Eadie too. Edward stood back to look from the straining speed of the birds to the straining of Eadie's slim body as she craned to see them.

There was no inhibition in that excitement. It made Edward step back again. It was unnerving to see Lady Margaret, the faithful follower of the Gentle Christ, and gentle Eadie equal in lust for blood.

The scenes which fled through Edward's mind fled through mine also. His puzzlement was my puzzlement.

There were so many days when Eadie would devote herself to saving the life of some wild thing, wood pigeon or rabbit it made no difference. She would scold anyone for the killing of a fly. Edward had to fight because of the mockery of other children; he defended Eadie's interference. Now she was following blood sport.

Eadie was changing; there were dark waters of unknown moods, she would fly into anger and tears leaving Edward open mouthed, not knowing what he'd done, not knowing what to do. She would cry and turn away with harsh words then cling to him for comfort. Edward wanted to please his dearest friend but how can you please a girl?

Edward's thoughtfulness and Eadie's excitement came together on the walk home. Excitement turned to a new game for the Marbles. The true Marbles of my dream would hold the imprint of any emotion, any game with them would catch the interest of all the children of Lady Margaret's house; a success you could never repeat with mere wood.

It had been with increasing skill in showmanship Edward had always consulted the Marbles to inform the other children, as if he were some great master. Only Eadie could ask Edward and only his infectious imagination could ask the Marbles; all three were held in high esteem.

I realised with a great clatter of pennies dropping: Edward became angry with the Marbles the day after this scene with Lady Margaret's hawks, when he sought a game based on the birds, when the Marbles didn't give their usual inspiration. That's why he hurtled one under a door; that's why Edward was so appalled when it broke and when that one, and all the others, were taken away. Of course, no adult would understand.

Thus went the Marbles, helping Edward till that day they were taken away. I believe they charmed the childhood he spent in Lady Margaret's household. Edward never explained any of this to Aletia or to Thomas. Thank God he never told Lady Margaret or the King. Why thank God? I'll tell you later.

So much came to me so quickly. I needed help: but where could I turn? Sarah was still in France, I was trying to run the Peterborough office with only a young assistant, my friend Angharad was a hundred miles away. I felt alone.

I knew hypnotherapists and the occasional clinical psychologist; I acted for a professional psychic and had my own ideas about the powers of the mind. I'd even taken an interest in reincarnation. I remembered how Frances suffered from past-life memories in dream state, and her belief in 'the Elect', people who achieve reincarnation when others do not. I remembered telling her John Knox' famous story, told as a warning to those who think themselves special, that they do no more than serve the Devil. I'd shown her the modern literature to dispel the egotism of her special experience. Always my interest had been cool, analytical; I liked to think, professional. Who could dispel my own egotism and give me back that detachment I was now so clearly losing?

The Marbles touched on nothing short of Magic, something difficult for my rational mind to accept. I had trouble enough accepting visions of Edward but I coped with that, at least partly, the Time Travel of the mind I thought of after that debate with John. Those extraordinary Marbles and the magical success of Edward's games were something else. I noticed the time the Marbles refused to play was when Edward asked them to follow Lady Margaret into blood sports. Clearly the Marbles are White Magic, but it was my rational mind that led to such conclusions. Was I losing my own marbles as Edward had lost his?

The answer was a deafening silence.

I tried meditation, there too, no answer, just the steady trickle of the sands of life. There was nothing to explain the Marbles, any more than the extraordinary sense of excitement and recognition I felt when I looked at them.

The next image followed an idea of Eadie's. Now the Marbles were gone she decided Edward should learn to fly the hawk, like Lady Margaret.

It was approaching Edward's twelfth birthday.

(Past)

"I want a peregrine, like my lord Stanley. At least let me have a goshawk such as any yeoman may have."

These were the words I heard, starting on a new meditation. It was as if someone were in the room, speaking to me out loud.

Thomas laughed.

"You think you could handle such a bird, Master Edward?"

It was said with condescension, irony, patience, love and wisdom all at the same time. You could almost hear the twist to his smile, the smile Edward saw.

"Tomorrow we go to the weathering ground; I've a brace for you, they're both haggard and the musket's a fine bird."

Dear reader, I hadn't a clue what Thomas was talking about. I know nothing about falconry or hawking. What sort of bird is a 'musket'? It turns out there's a language to this all its own. Patience, I'll put it plainly to you where I can but the words that rang clear in my head I've left as they are.

Edward was impatient for the next day. He wouldn't despise any hawk from Thomas; it's just there were laws as to what bird a man could fly. Edward wanted nothing less than his rank required; he would've flown an eagle if he could. Yet managing any of Nature's powerful killers is no game for a novice. Thomas's wisdom was a lesson for Edward to learn.

(Past)

The next day was damp and cold, the bark of the dogs echoed in the heavy morning air. The weathering ground was wide, you could see far beyond its boundary walls and there were others here for the sport. Thomas talked all the way. This was ground for the long winged falcons, my lord's birds, the short winged hawk would follow the wall or line of hedge row to find her prey, swooping quicker than the eye could see on the creatures of the field. This was work for the dogs, keener than the eyes of a man, to sense the presence of a quarry and start the birds.

Thomas fondled the neck of the dog we brought, Bruce, a soft natured pointer, little more than a puppy. Thomas saw my look as he straightened.

"Don't doubt it, this is the dog we need; he's bred for it and worked all season with these hawks. He'll show the falconer's men where to find us game. Watch him."

Bruce gave a bark and a quiver of excitement as we came to the weathering ground, Thomas was right.

We found the master falconer waiting our pleasure with a cadge holding Thomas's birds: just as he promised, a female and a male sparrow hawk, their short beaks and yellow eyes looked murderous.

You could see the falconer and Thomas had been hatching plots. I wanted no clerks' bird but it was all strange to me. What should I say? I wanted to fly a hawk!

The falconer tested me with questions, he watched me as he checked the jesses and bells and took away the hoods. Thomas gave me the glove for my left hand; it fit so well it made me look into his eyes for the laughter I found there,

“Yes Edward, if you’re going to do so much hawking you need a good glove.”

It was a wonderful present.

The hawk came to my arm, the falconer showing me how to hold the jesses.

“Easy now, we don’t want her baiting off at a puff of wind.”

They meant they didn’t want me casting her off at nothing, out of fright. She weighed under a pound but it was a pound of sinew and beak and talon. She stepped nervously on the glove, a thin cry and my heart jumped with the thrill of it.

“She’ll take what you set her at so take care today. Better no sport at all than the wrong prey or a missed quarry.”

We walked forward, towards the nearest cover, wherever there might be game. Later I learned to manage hawk and horse together but for today I was glad to be on foot. Bruce, trotting at our side, was all eager excitement; the falconer’s men were some fifty yards ahead of us up wind.

There was a stop, Bruce had the scent; he went on point his body following his nose like an arrow. The falconer called to his men, they moved to the line, then to me; I was to cast the hawk into the air with a movement of my arm. I didn’t do it as he said but raising my arm, the jesses let go; she waited a moment, looking around, then took to flight.

A hunting hawk is a beautiful sight; she has such power and grace. The sparrow hawk takes birds from the air. In the wild she takes the blackbird and thrush but she’ll take game fowl when trained to it. My hawk went along the line to cover, up wind; she went in a great circle, flying with great speed. The men put up two or three birds; I couldn’t see what they were. She swooped like an arrow to the kill.

Thomas told me how to bring her back to the fist and she came. We were jubilant. The kill was a small partridge; there could have been none better.

We worked the ground all that morning: the little musket was game and courageous but could take nothing big. His mate missed twice. It was a good day.

“Do you still want a peregrine?”

Thomas spoke on the walk back, the hawk was still on my glove and the jesses firmly in my hand; the cadger could have taken the bird but I wouldn’t let him.

“The [Book of St. Albans](#) gives peregrines to the earl; the king gets a gyrfalcon, the duke a rock falcon: only the priest has the sparrow hawk, and his clerk has the musket. Tell me Thomas what bird should I fly?”

This time, with the little hawk on my arm, there was a smile. The cadger, whose job it was to carry other men’s birds, was emboldened to speak.

“For you, my lord, after this day, it should be the imperial eagle.”

“You know,” said Thomas, “it takes two birds to be set at heron; one alone can’t bring down the quarry. What could you do, Edward, with this hawk and her mate together?”

The question went unanswered; I never succeeded in flying them so. The quarry I might have cast them to was never served.

When I asked in meditation what linked the Marbles of that night’s dreams with the hawks of this vision you could almost feel a tension in the air. It wasn’t an answer I got but an intense hush, as if someone wanted me to answer for myself. The one word in my head was ‘Eadie’ but there’s something more than that. It has something to do with vigour and sweat and the blood of life.

This was one of the times I wasn't shown any easy answer, no evocative vision.
But one feeling I got from that meditation, I'll pass it on to you,

"It's half the sense of this book, together they're the two sides of the Quest of Life."

What on Earth can it mean? Yet it's the feeling I try to tell you in this book.
Perhaps you have the wisdom, greater than mine, to understand it.

Chapter 8 - Edward and Eadie

My flat in Peterborough was utterly empty. It was warm enough, and familiar, with the last rays of the afternoon sun streaming through the windows, but it stood so very silent. Not a thing stirred, everything was exactly as I'd left it that morning. After eating I'd determined to channel. The fear given me by van Dusen's book was now overlaid by my puzzlement over the Marbles and the hawks. There was an excitement at the thought of Edward.

That Saturday given to researching the kings was less than a week ago. Since then I dreamt of the Marbles and seen those birds, with their opaque message I so failed to catch. It was now only Wednesday, and I had this expectancy.

It all came to attention as I walked into the stillness of my flat.

The sound of silence is a rushing noise. Perhaps, in absolute quiet, you hear the flow of blood through your veins, I rather think it's the flow of events carrying the eternal moment from past into future. It was in this silence I heard the voice of Eadie.

(Past)

"I love you."

It seemed such an obvious thing to say. She'd practically been my sister for as long as I could remember. Hardly a day went by without us being together, we sometimes slept in the same bed as children; we shared nearly everything. Things would change, of course. Thomas talked about me having to take up my responsibilities.

That morning Lady Margaret asked me how I would like to go to court. She summoned me to the great hall and I stood before her as she sat, as usual, straight backed in her tall chair.

"I don't know that I've prepared you properly Edward.

You know who the great persons of England are; you've met some of them here... And they know who you are. It's very difficult. You're not interested in governance. You don't know how things work.

My son doesn't know what to do with you.

We've left things too long - look at you - see how you've grown, you're already as tall as a man. You long since learned to be a horseman and Thomas tells me you're nearly a match for him with a sword.

My son has decided it is time to present you at court.

You will have to be introduced to your position, Edward. You may even be knighted before Christmas. How does that sound?"

It was a prissy speech; Lady Margaret could be like that. She seemed to be twisting her hands in her lap, almost as if she were nervous, it caught my eye.

"I don't want to be a knight and I've met the King. Does it mean I have to go away, Lady Margaret?"

"You must see the estates which will be yours.

I've managed them all these years. You don't know how difficult it's been... And I may not have done well. It's been so difficult with your father dead... And its time you took a hand in it yourself."

Lady Margaret got up and left the room. She left such portents of impending change hanging in the air.

I didn't want to give up hunting and hawking and playing with Eadie. Even the work Thomas made me do.

Being a great person was dangerous. It killed my father. I didn't, I didn't want to run the country. I didn't want to manage my estates. I didn't even know what they were.

I found Eadie and told her the news solemn faced.

She hung herself round my neck, her body soft and warm against me. I embraced her and she kissed me long and searchingly on the lips. Our bodies moved to fit together and I felt the stirring in my lower body that had lately been happening. It was almost painful almost pleasant and something I didn't understand. We stood together for a long time like that.

There was a distant cry from Aletia in the kitchen garden,

Eadie pulled away from me with a laugh and a blown kiss and ran to find her mother.

Down at mouth I plodded off to find Thomas.

The room was untidy. It has been my bedchamber for many years, one of the rooms that let off the landing. Opposite the door there's a window, of the same design as the one above the stairs. It looks out on the formal garden and beyond that to the river. On either side of the window there is big, heavy furniture, untidily strewn with clothes. As you come in through the door the fireplace is on your left, a big bed, with curtains hanging at the foot posts and a great carved board at the head, stands on your right. There's a thick rug in between but the floor is otherwise bare, you can get splinters if you run with bare feet; I have, many times.

The bed is a great luxury; covered by an enormous, sagging mattress, it has fine linen with three embroidered pillows. I used it as a plaything for many happy hours; in its time it has served as a ship sailing down the Thames, a carriage and a castle.

Although it was not yet dark, it was late. I'd thrown my clothes off and thrown myself face down into the bed. I know I was crying, even if I would be fifteen next birthday.

Thomas could be cross, you didn't annoy him on purpose, but he wasn't often cross even when he had a right to be. Today he shouted for no reason. I could still hear the unjust words as I cried into my pillow.

"Who do you think you are?!"

I'll tell you. You're a traitor's son.

How many good men died leaving widows and orphans so you could be brought up here, to be Sir Edward, still a mere boy, so you can go on to the same folly that killed your father?

Do you think your noble blood allows you to trample on other people's lives?

Must I drop everything to squire you around the country, having you mewling at my heels?"

There was the sound of the door softly closing and the swish of a shift coming round the bed. I didn't pay attention at first, not until I felt the soft warmth of Eadie's arm across my shoulders and smelt the sweet scent of her.

I started and stammered my embarrassment - but she didn't take her arm away. Instead she slid between the covers, into the bed next to me.

"I heard you crying."

I didn't know what to say. I turned to her and put my arms around her slim body,

"Oh. Eadie."

"Do you remember the games we used to play? We'd lie on this bed and frighten each other with stories about ghosts who might jump out at us at any time?"

You used to frighten me, Edward, and then you used to laugh at my fear and say it was only a game and say you would fight all the demons of Hell for me, and you would jump out of bed as if to do it.”

“Oh Eadie, I do love you.”

I stroked my hand up and down her back. She felt so soft and warm and delightful to touch. It became a game to caress her.

We kissed and went on kissing. I think I was clumsy at first: but after each kiss we would kiss again, not wanting to stop. The kisses became longer and Eadie pushed more toward me.

My right hand was trapped under her. I wanted to enfold all of her with my free hand. Her shift was very short, for summer nights, as my hand ran over her it ran under that shift.

The thrilling touch of skin on skin and Eadie became the whole World to me. Thought evaporated in a dazzling burst of feelings. Gone were all thought of Thomas or Lady Margaret - there was only Eadie.

In modesty the narrative should stop here but the images didn't. I found myself shaken by a five hundred-year-old passion. It took time but, despite their naivety and youth, it consumed the whole consciousness of Edward and Eadie.

At the end of it they lay, tired, hands touching at their sides, thought scattered. There was no doubt they were lovers.

Oh, Edward. What have you done!

For the next few days I wanted to stay with the ordinary, real World. It was partly a matter of circumstances but the truth was I felt like an intruder in a peep show.

It was at this time I heard from Sarah. She was still in France. Someone was looking after her surgery but not the project. The project needed personal skills, hers and mine.

Did I mind? she wasn't going to be back for another couple of weeks. It was an important personal experience for her; she felt she was learning a great deal, gaining new insights, becoming a stronger person, inspired by the same Provencal countryside that inspired van Gogh. She really needed this time to think. She couldn't talk long, she was phoning on somebody else's bill.

It was a breathless conversation. We did talk for longer but what could I say? I could hardly drag her back kicking and screaming. What should I say about my own important personal experience? I hinted at it and maybe it registered in her mind, who could say. I told her it really would be nice to talk to her soon.

The call shook me a bit. You see Sarah was so very like Eadie. I'd so recently heard and seen and felt Edward's passion for Eadie and now to talk to Sarah, to have her sound just like Eadie did. It was confusing. I didn't want such an intimacy with Sarah, nor would she want it with me. Warning bells shrieked at the very thought.

Edward's love touched such deep emotions. I needed this isolation to disentangle my own sense of loss for this intense love; lost by nearly five hundred years and closer, by all measures, than my loss of Frances.

You could feel Edward was courting disaster; there was such risk in the differences between them, such powerful tension in the air, so much desperation in Edward's need for love. Yet I'd felt such true love between them.

It was with such thoughts my mind floated back to Edward; having been thinking of something else, I'd recollect memories of him, memories I'd not had before. It was so like that time after Duke Henry's arrest, when I tried to abandon my

channelling then. It's disconcerting to channel without conscious intent. Channelling put me in mind, as these days it always did, of van Dusen's schizophrenics. But after that first, irresistible burst of sexual activity I received a whole new set of impressions.

Edward discovered sexual love like a new toy.

I don't know when she left that night, when he awoke in the morning Edward found Eadie gone. He spent most of the day searching for her, constantly prevented by some chore or other. It was early evening when he finally did find her, seated on a log in the woods.

(Past)

Sitting at her side he wanted to launch straight into a renewal of their intimacy but he didn't know how.

"I love you, Eadie."

"Edward, we shouldn't, it scares me...and it hurt."

Guilt entered Edward's mind for the first time. He put his arm round her in a strangely diffident way. Eadie was the most precious thing he'd ever known and, suddenly, the most delicate. She turned to him, resting her head against his chest.

"I do love you, Edward...
and I do want you again."

She looked like a faerie, fragile yet so strong, in her true setting, the dappled light of the woodland. The urge to keep and protect her was overwhelming.

She didn't come to his room that night, nor did she every night, and it was always his room they used. Eadie's room was too close to Aletia's, the risk too great. The first several times they came together it was shyly, clumsily, not always effectually but on a rising tide of confidence and habit; it became a way of life.

Eadie's job was to help Aletia run the house. The servants, who did guess, would never dream of telling on the young couple. Eadie's midnight wanderings went unnoticed in a house full of life but where privacy was still respected.

A harder problem was their growing used to each other, to having each other there, to being a couple.

They did grow in each other's arms, no longer shy or clumsy. Their confidence showed in everything they did. Thomas twice had to drop his sword and cry "Hold!" as Edward's swordsmanship matured: no longer the gifted pupil; Edward was becoming the master. Eadie was growing too. Aletia was shocked to realise her daughter looked and spoke like a woman, and that the eyes of the men followed her.

It was Edward's growing maturity that brought the coming changes all the quicker.

I did begin again to take deliberate thought. The first time I did was to find a nervous, even an anxious Edward. The tide of his emotions was strong: it was as if his nervousness was my own.

(Past)

I've been summoned to the great hall. All day there's been unaccustomed bustle, while I've been kept away; sent on foolish errands away from the house. When I returned I was sent to put on my best clothes and receive the violent attentions of the maids who washed and dressed me. I heard the king's arrived and it's on my account. I haven't seen Eadie all day and I've a horrid presentiment: has our love been discovered and Lady Margaret, horrified beyond knowing what to do, sent for the King?

As I presented myself in the hall my heart beat fast and my throat grew tight. I've seen the King before; this is silly; whatever he might do.

Unlike any other day the door is opened for me by Jinney, Lady Margaret's own woman. There is no excuse, I must walk straight in.

The King stands in front of the great fireplace, although no fire is lit. Lady Margaret is sat in a chair by his side. There are other people in the room, whom I don't recognise. I'm formally introduced, yet I don't remember their names. One man I do know, the King's chaplain, he has a thin face and he scares me.

Of course, there's Thomas Lord Stanley, as Lady Margaret's husband, my mother, brother and sisters, and the Duke of Bedford with my mother.

The scene faded as I wondered why Edward was so reluctant to acknowledge his family, most of all his mother and brother Henry, he surely knew them very well. It isn't the first time they've been more or less wiped from the scene, nor will it be the last. I can only guess at it and if I ever do give you an explanation it will not be in this book.

"Well Edward, so there you are."

Lady Margaret surprised me by sounding nervous. I heard later there'd been a great quarrel between her and my mother. But it couldn't have been about me, Lady Katherine would never argue with my guardian except about my brother.

They both looked at me as if to be sure I was properly washed and dressed. I don't know if my looks pleased them, before either could say a word more King Henry spoke,

"Edward de Stafford approach."

I moved self-consciously to obey.

"We knew your father who rendered great service to England and to the Crown. On that account and on account of the several good reports we have of your character and bearing..."

At this point the King's stern face broke into a smile,

"I am pleased to create you Sir Edward, knight of..."

Here, my senses reeled. I had forgot the talk of knighthood, months before. I'd thought to be summoned over Eadie. I heard the King again, speaking in a kindly voice,

"Sir Edward."

I pinched myself for the relief and strangeness of it and stood straight, on the King's bidding, to receive a cheer.

Half the household must have come into the hall behind me. In the press of bodies stood Eadie, a tear in her eye. I wanted to go to her but the King was speaking,

"Well, Edward, this is a family occasion and that's why we're not at court.

There'll be other days, more than one, when it won't be a matter of past honours. But today, thanks to you, we celebrate in private and I find myself amongst family, your family and mine, eh Edward?"

Later I saw he meant his uncle and my mother but at the time I didn't understand him.

"How the Commons will mix us up, Tudor and Stafford, as if the name Henry were not enough."

Did he mean my father or my brother?

"...Tell me, do you remember your father; I've never asked you?"

All I could do was stammer,

“Yes your Grace... Yes your Grace.”

There was a banquet laid out, all unnoticed, food from the kitchen and wine from the cellar and servants were bustling about under Aletia’s eye. I was whisked, as in some dance, to meet one stranger after another.

Lady Margaret may not have brought me to court but the King brought half the court to me. There were people I’d not noticed in the room, people who smiled and nodded at me.

That night there was great celebration, with music and revels.

The memory is tantalising and almost certainly untrue. I knew from the Dictionary of National Biography, Edward became a knight of the Bath as an infant; and of the Garter when he was seventeen. Unless the story’s incomplete I can’t explain it. I’m no historian, I can’t say if there might be an unofficial ceremony, with no proper record kept, perhaps to confirm an existing honour. Perhaps the memory’s out of order. There are other points too, why did Edward so dislike his family? They all, except his father, survived the rebellion of 1483 and surely shared the same fate.

I spoke to the consultant hypnotists, the man I told you of from the murder case.

“You know,” he said, “One of the real problems is confabulation. The subconscious mind can make up stories, put unconnected things together and, in short, tell lies just as easily as the conscious mind.”

I found this reassuring, why shouldn’t you remember a dream as real? How could I know the truth of domestic details five hundred years ago? Yet, Edward’s discomfort in that celebration was very real. The momentum of his life was moving him on, he was passing out of childhood and I felt for him, but how true were these feelings?

My hypnotist said something else; something I’d already heard from Sarah,

“Of course, it’s not just that your subconscious mind tells lies. It remembers what it wants to remember; it conveniently leaves out the uncomfortable things, the things you’d rather forget.”

Once again I had doubts about what I was doing. What was I missing about Brother Henry and the family? How much trust can anyone put in this channelling? Just because Edward and some of the others really did exist could I trust it? Most of all, this confusion between Eadie and Sarah. Having felt Edward’s passion for Eadie, how could I so much as look at Sarah. The embarrassment! I didn’t have these feelings for her. How could they be so very much the same?

Sometimes, when you’re left alone too long, your mind can swing like a pendulum between all and any extremes. Last week I feared the force of Edward would drown me, with the weekend confidence returned. Now, as the weekend came back once more, I was ready to doubt everything again.

Chapter 9 - Christmas

With my doubts and the weekend came a further dilemma. I didn't quite bubble over telling my story to Angharad. I'd come to talk to her so very easily but this weekend was different, she was such a close friend of Sarah. She seemed to think any man's first concern with Sarah would be physical attraction. Ha! How much better would it suit me if she weren't attractive at all. So what would Angharad make of this bedroom scene with Eadie?

It would have been strange and churlish not to talk about Edward, what was I to say?

It concentrated my mind about our friendship, I'd come to take it very much for granted. Yes we were old friends, but this business of Edward was time consuming, and it was coming to be very intimate. I knew she admired the way my firm provided client support; she does a lot of work for charity and as my involvement with serious crime grew she came to work with several of our clients.

I suggested, once, she should be a Social Worker. She snorted. Angharad has no time for the bureaucracy of Social Services.

She is a warm and generous person, but also formidable. I was coming to treat her as a sister, and I cared what she thought.

Angharad was clearly offended to find me dull and evasive but what could I do? After stepping endlessly and delicately round it I realised she was out of patience.

"Your trouble is you don't read enough romantic fiction.

There was something of a pause while my thoughts went through a series of revolutions:

"Mm... Before we get to that, I've got problems.

I went over what my hypnotist said about confabulation, my problem over the knighthood, concerns about details. I didn't once touch on Eadie and Sarah.

There was a lot else to tell her about Edward, most of all there were the Marbles. Angharad allowed herself to be side tracked. We talked of what we knew of crystals and magic, of children's games and even of hawks. We even talked of the pains of growing up.

If she did leave the love affair unspoken I couldn't leave it from my mind. Back in Peterborough I still needed time to think. Perhaps more of the story would show me the answer.

(Past)

The World of Edward, my World, was changing. Christmas was almost upon us and Lady Margaret took her devotions seriously. During Advent the whole household was expected to attend matins daily, only Thomas was excused, by reason of his duties. Lady Margaret would shake her head, saying some people were beyond redemption. But she would do it with a smile and a sly look at Aletia.

Thomas did have work to do, especially at this season.

My riding lessons were part of his routine. I'd ridden horses for as long as I could remember and we hunted often, but now it was time to learn how to control a horse in the lists and for battle. This was different altogether.

I've never known Thomas so finicky. The horse had to be schooled just so, he was made to put his feet down right on the spot where you wanted them. At first I thought it impossible and foolish but Thomas said,

"Nobody knows how much a knight depends on his horse.

If the horse steps wrong in the list you shall miss.

If he swerves you'll be grounded.

If he stumbles in battle you'll be killed."

This was repeated to me over and over till I swear it burnt into my soul.

We spent hours in the courtyard till I could make the horse step just so, where and when I wanted it. We spent further hours in the field going from walk to trot to canter to gallop and back; switching between them, horse and rider learning to work as a team. I learned to change speed and direction smoothly, just on the signal from my knees and heels.

These were memorable mornings. The first frosts were on the ground and, some mornings, the horses' breath would hang in the air. There is an echo to the air in winter that changes the sound of everything. The grass was soft and lovely, even to fall on, thick with dead leaves from autumn, with moss and the morning dew. Thomas said he loved the autumn but for me it was this early part of winter before the ground froze hard and everything held its breath for spring.

As Christmas approached the kitchen servants were working full-time, preparing for the feast which would last for weeks. It was also at this time I first became aware of money. Christmas Day is a quarter day, one of the four days in the year when rent is paid and the payments are entered in the great rolls that make up the accounts.

I always knew there were clerks whose job this was but never, until now, paid any attention to the scribes and secretaries and lawyers who came to see Lady Margaret. But this year was particularly busy, not with tenants but with long discussions between the clerks and Lady Margaret. One afternoon I saw her in the library. Thomas had sent me for a book for my studies, and I saw Lady Margaret, surrounded by open court rolls spreading over the table and down to the floor, the knobbly fingers of one hand tracing the entries on one roll while the other hand held to another, a frown of concentration on her face.

This was the first time I realised being rich wasn't only dangerous but also hard work and I left her in peace as soon as I could.

My breast swelled with family pride when the tenants each came to stand in line and pay their small coins. These were our people and we looked after them, they paid us. It was a matter of duty. But now I saw this did not happen all of its own accord. The estates were hard work in right of themselves and the source of many men's livings.

When I went back to Thomas with the book, I asked him about it. He smiled as he always did when he anticipated my questions; he said,

"Do you think a great house like this is supported by the few tenants you see?"

As the king's mother, Lady Margaret has great estates of her own beyond Coldharbour, Woking and the other houses. She also holds your estates, which are amongst the greatest in England. There will be clerks coming and going through January and beyond."

When Thomas said this there was a frown on his face, a look almost of worry. I didn't want to think about Thomas being worried, nothing was ever a problem he could not solve. I listened as he went on.

"Lady Margaret has lately made William Bedall your new receiver. He is studying the accounts of your estates and examining your records, it is a great task.

Your estates cover hundreds of miles of England; they're divided into circuits, the Central Circuit, the Welsh Circuit and so on that the rent receivers travel round.

The stewards and lords of each manor are accountable to a receiver and he, in turn, accounts to Master Bedall as your receiver general. It is he who pays the cofferers. Each year's collections are compared with the last and the estate rolls audited. Some of the circuits earn more than £1,000 in a year and some of your clerks and lawyers are great men of their own right."

Thomas paused, for this was becoming a lesson to prepare me for being a lord.

"Have you ever seen your muniments, Edward?"

Thomas knew I hadn't, I wasn't even sure what muniments were; but he was in a mood to tell me and I listened.

"There are vast storerooms here and elsewhere, full, just with the deeds and titles of your lands and rents, the tenants and their terms of tenure. Nobody could know all your domains, though may God guide her aright, I believe the Countess must try for they have been rich to her many thousands of pounds these years. Let us pray Lady Margaret will do her duty. Now, the errand I sent you on..."

I tried to press him but Thomas had long been wise to my schoolboy diversions. He raised a finger of admonition.

"I cannot say how justly your guardian keeps your lands. All I will say is this; there are some great lords who rely on their stewards and chamberlains entirely. Those who do deserve to be robbed, for all their clerks may be honest fellows. It's hard enough to keep up when you keep charge yourself.

There've been so many changes of fortune and changes of ownership; the honest man doesn't know where he stands and the dishonest takes what he stands on, while his betters squabble. It's been like that all my life and who knows if the present king can change it... yet, I think he can if he keeps his head.

They say there is no man wiser than the King at gaining money. And you, young Edward, just hope Lady Margaret will keep your tenants loyal to their lord."

I'd known about the circuits and the manors and lesser holdings, which made them up, since I was small. I'd played with lists of them, conjuring the place names in my mind. The Welsh Circuit pleased me best, it had wild and strange names I struggled hard to pronounce. Thomas said this was the most difficult Circuit, needing skill and determination to manage. It was mysterious and exciting; I promised myself to do great things with the Welsh Circuit when I grew to be a man.

Until this day the estates had been no more than names, talismans of our good fortune. I knew that owning them was part of our family greatness but nothing more, not till Thomas explained it.

Christmas came and went. It was somehow poignant as a closing of the happiest chapter in Edward's life. It was a memorable season.

Jan van Wynkyn brought two of his newly published books; printed books! Master Wynkyn took over the press in Westminster, and the royal favour that went with it, when his master, William Caxton, died. A book is something sacred to carry the word of truth. Imagine having a book made for you, a book for others to read and know your truth! Here were two books written under Lady Margaret's own commission. Master Wynkyn brought them especially for her that Christmas; the house of [Wynkyn de Worde](#) owed much to the Countess and, as I thought of it, she to him.

Stray memories from that Christmas came before my eyes:

of the happy, flushed faces of servants and everyone in the great hall, of the horse Edward had been schooling and tack presented to him by Thomas, gruffly, on

New Year's Morning, of the sword presented to him by Lady Margaret and which she said had been his father's.

Unaccountable tears stung my eyes with the reverie of that sword. It pulled at me; I had to know more about it. With a breathlessness of expectation I found it.

(Past)

It was New Year's Morning, the day presents are exchanged. Christmas Day is a day for devotion, feasting comes later, or so it is in Lady Margaret's house. This morning I was standing indoors, in one of the passages, waiting for Eadie, when I was summoned. I was feeling all self-conscious and awkward in my finery, masses of starched, snowy white linen, too big for me at the cuffs. It was Lady Margaret who waited for me, standing there in the library with Thomas.

"Edward, we have something special for you."

She showed me a parcel and a stained letter with the de Stafford seal.

"But before you take these I want you to hear what we have to say.

It was Thomas who took up the story.

"I know you have not been told much about your father, perhaps you should have been told more. But perhaps you partly remember, from when you were small. At all events you know of the rebellion and how it was defeated."

"For Heaven's sake, Thomas, get on with it."

"At the end of January, just before your fourteenth birthday, a man came to visit your mother. He would speak to no one but Lady Katherine. She recognised him from years ago; he had been a captain of your father's men at arms. He gave her these things and this is what he told her.

Thomas paused.

"The old Duke called him to do a duty. By this time it was clear the rebellion was lost but the Duke was not yet taken. The duty was to carry this parcel and this letter to Lady Katherine, to be given to you as the Duke's heir when she thought the time was right, but on no account was he to go to Lady Katherine till you were fourteen. Until then he was to keep his charge safe from public knowledge.

Your mother brought these things to us. She told us this story and put the trust she had been given into our hands."

Lady Margaret interrupted, she seemed nervous,

"I called for Thomas. I have not broken the seal on that letter Edward; if I had you would have known it. As to what it says, I have prayed and I trust in God. As to what comes next, I relied entirely on Thomas. You see, Katherine and I looked into the parcel and it has given me agonies to know what to do."

"I set you a test. You damned near hurt me."

I was proud of the feeling Thomas put into his words. It must be true, Thomas was proud of my swordsmanship. In fact, I could still remember the day of that test, when he put me through every combination of attack and defence. Afterwards, warm with sweat falling off me, I heard Thomas declare I was good enough. Did he truly think I was? for my father's sword! There was no doubt that was what must be in the parcel.

"We decided you should be given these at Christmas. Edward, receive Duke Henry's present."

It was Lady Margaret who put the things into my hands but it was Thomas who put his hand on my shoulder and pushed me to the door.

"Go up to your room. You shall want to be alone to read the letter."

I looked at the sword, studying every inch of it; I tested its weight, its balance and its suppleness. The sword fascinated me. All the same, all the time I had it in my hand, I was impatient to read my father's letter, for all I put it off until I knew, or thought I knew, the sword. The letter was a very precious thing, I told myself, no matter what it said. It came from my father who died more than nine years ago. He'd written it more than nine years before in the expectation of my reading it now. Whatever it said it would be my most prized possession; yet I had a thrill of expectation it would say something unexpected, something important to me, I so hoped it would.

Nervously I broke the seal and unfolded the letter. I have seen my father's hand, since his death; often enough to know this was his letter. This is what it said,

My Son, Edward.

I am writing this letter to you in the expectation I shall shortly die and by the time you read it you may barely remember me.

I have come to terms with this grief and I have pictured in my mind how you will look and how you will be now you are entering into manhood.

It is my sorrow I cannot know you as you will be then but I have bowed to the Will of God as I must shortly bow to the will of Man.

The Sword which you have with this letter is something very special and you must treat it as you would treat no other sword.

You must know that it was venerated for centuries before it came into de Stafford hands for reason of its associations and the powers it was said to have. I think you will believe me foolish that I tell you this, and I have always rather disbelieved it myself, yet there is a persistent legend in our family; the Sword was blessed by the blessed Lord Jesus Christ himself.

I am half afraid of the blasphemy of believing and half afraid of the blasphemy of not believing, even now. I earnestly pray you, my son, therefore; do not take this Sword lightly but always keep it safe so it may forever pass down from heir to heir as a talisman and protector of our House. It is all I have left to give you, together with the story of how it came to us.

At the time of the Crusades, in the year of Our Lord 1212, there existed a brethren of holy men dedicated to keeping safe certain venerated relics, relics it is said which were brought to these shores by the first Christians, brought by the saint, Joseph of Arimathea, who washed and tended the crucified Lord himself. The Sword was one of these relics, the Hallows of Our Lord. The Sword with other sacred things came into the hands of one of the brethren, a pious and wise man named Father John.

After he became keeper of the relics, Father John had a vision and whether God or the Sword spoke to him he came to believe the Sword has powers which enable its holder to bring justice and united rule to England. It would make the man who should be king ruler of all of these islands, and just to his people, happy and beloved by them. The question for Father John was who should have the Sword.

Further visions told the good father to bring it to our ancestors. But also, they told him it would remain unused for centuries. Until the time was right it would lie hidden and waiting.

The brethren disliked this vision of the good father and were much perturbed. These brethren were members of holy orders but the trust they held and the duty they kept sacred, each in his own heart, was greater than the obedience they owed to any abbot. Though Father John was old and much venerated for his wisdom, he could not compel his brothers and he and they argued earnestly and long amongst themselves.

In the end they were honest men and true to their faith, as a noble act of trust they allowed the Sword to come into the hands of our family.

In remembrance of Father John, and to keep faith with the brethren, you must always protect and keep the Sword in de Stafford hands.

As for its power, my son, it has not come to me and I fear me that my faith is all too weak. The fault of my downfall is in myself not in the Sword; the Sword must now be yours. Maybe the power of Father John's vision will be yours too, if it is, use it wisely.

May God and you, my Edward, forgive me my sins and may God stand over you to protect you as if you had a father still in this life.

Your loving, devoted father,

Henry Buckingham

The letter touched my heart. I can't say what I felt. I could not disbelieve my father's word, and his wish must be obeyed, but there had to be something more than this. How could I believe in a sacred sword when it let Papa die? There had to be something to tell me what to think. The letter was such a mixture of hopelessness and joy, I felt such a child faced by such a gift.

Nothing in my schooling, nothing I learned in Lady Margaret's house, nothing prepared me for this. Lady Margaret often spoke of God and Faith but it was always of duty and obedience; no warmth of Love as my father's letter gave to Father John. Lady Margaret would allow no talk of faith or magic or trust such as these Brothers had. What should I do? What should I make of this precious gift?

I was a long time in my room, sitting on my bed with tears in my eyes. As time passed there came the sound of Eadie coming and I rushed to hide the letter. The first thing ever hidden from her.

I had another gift come from my father once, I'd had it many years ago, but I kept it still. It was a book by Sir Thomas Malory, '[Le Morte D'Arthur](#)', it was about the knights of the Round Table and the [quest for the Holy Grail](#). In it Sir Galahad was given a sword and also a shield, both shrouded in mystery and magic. They, too, were supposed to come from Joseph of Arimathea. These things, too, were relics of Christ. I read again Sir Thomas' book, on my own that Christmas, it gave me comfort.

In the story of King Arthur's knights great gifts came by clear magic means. Sir Galahad's sword was stuck in a stone floating on the river which flowed past Camelot and Sir Galahad had to pull it out when no-one else could. Then there was a magic shield, presented to an abbey by a strange knight. The knight suddenly appeared, demanding Sir Galahad fight him for it, when Sir Galahad won the mysterious knight disappeared, leaving the shield behind him. The Sword from my father lay quiet and still where I left it. There was nothing to remark, no knight, no stone, no shield; just the letter.

No, I didn't believe in Christ having blessed my Sword or in Father John's vision. If it had been true King Richard wouldn't have killed my Papa. I felt ashamed of the simpleness in that letter, and guilty for not believing it.

I was given another token that Christmas. Any gift from Eadie would be full of charm but this, like the Sword, was something special.

I remember the shy, quiet way she gave it to me. Eadie was hardly ever bashful, and I loved her for the joy she had in living. But she could make a moment magic, she

could shut out the whole World, just by looking at me with those big green eyes; still and quiet. It was so she gave me the Bible. It was really just the New Testament, in Latin, with some pages missing. It was quite small and bound in green leather: it had a red rose pressed in to it from the summer. The Rose and the Book were the most precious things Eadie could have given me; and we kissed and I loved her for it. I thought the Book must have come from Aletia, in fact there was an inscription so, but the Rose was from Eadie and it was the gift of her own heart that I loved.

My Latin grammar, well tutored by Thomas, was growing true, it gave me a faith and a pride in my own learning and I promised to read a passage with Eadie every night. The thought of this simple pleasure brought a glow to us both.

Eadie and I were still lovers but more careful now. When she gave me the Bible I so wanted to take her in my arms, take her to me and hug her and kiss her, as I might once have done. Instead we were strangely shy and held our Christmas in the bedroom that night.

I can't let the gift of the Sword pass as easily as Edward did. As to the riding and the estates, let them unfold as they will, I will tell you later how Lady Margaret had taken political and financial benefits from the estates, for herself and the King, much to the jeopardy of both Edward and his inheritance. But nothing of this struck me as immediately as the Sword and the letter; the reason I can't let the Sword pass is my own vision on the road, coming back from Sarah. You remember, the vision was strong enough to start me on this whole story and its power has never lessened. I don't know if it's fanciful, and you can say I'm right to fear being like van Dusen's schizophrenics, but the lesson with Thomas, when Edward was tested to see if he was fit for the Sword, is surely what I saw in my first vision.

He passed the test and opened a door for me. Now I wondered, was his disbelief about to cause him to fail in a second test? I didn't know, I didn't know what to think, any more than Edward.

Lady Margaret's anxiety over the letter struck me. She hadn't broken the seal or read the letter, but what was she afraid Edward would learn from it? And if she was afraid, why hadn't she broken the seal? I guessed how much she would have liked to read that letter, but what would she have thought if she had done? Some force had stopped her and kept Duke Henry's secret, I would learn more of it later, but Edward never suspected Lady Margaret would be tempted, or what power restrained her.

As to the Sword, what was I to think? At least Edward held the reality in his hands, for me it was speculation on a meditation, with nothing further to go on.

(Past)

I remembered another night that season. Looking around the faces sat together in the great hall. The candles were burning bright, as always, but there were still great pools of darkness behind the great company at table. The play of light and darkness cast flickering shadows to blur all the faces. I took more to eat and drink than usual, especially to drink, and I watched all those happy faces and heard all the laughter and the talk as it washed about my head. Across from me was Eadie's smiling face, full of love and a subtle expression of knowing, bewitching like some faerie, rarer and finer than any human being.

Relaxed, at home, complete in perfect happiness, I knew how much I loved this place, these people and this time.

There was such power in the vision of that dinner I cried for the loss of it as the cold solidity of my lonely flat came back to me.

Once more the power of this channelling swept me up in a sense of not quite being in the Real World. There were waves of power; a power of feeling, a heart-rending pull at all my emotions so I can't tell you what they were. If ever there were meaning to the word nostalgia this must surely be it, to cry for the loss of what?

How else could I deal with parting from such happiness and such a chimera? My mind ferreted round for the meaning of the Sword and the letter and Father John's vision while my heart grieved for Eadie and the book and the rose and all the happiness of long ago.

Chapter 10 - Peterborough

This is nearly the shortest chapter in the book. While Edward's story covers years of his life, it only took months of mine, certainly the time taken for these last two chapters wasn't much. The whirl of Edward made the ordinary World seem dull and it always amazed me how the flow of real events opened to make way for him. Yet my life wasn't quite static.

Decisions were pressing, what should I do with my office? The Peterborough property market, which I'd first come here to serve, was in a severe slump. Other firms were closing or amalgamating and the source of business that had drawn me here had all but dried up. I had a business base of a mere two years of goodwill trading in the city, the Development Corporation, which had been so helpful when I first came here, was being wound up and I judged my capital simply inadequate to carry on. The fact is I could have decided to stay and fight to keep my firm in business in Peterborough, but I'd devoted so much of the last four months to the project, I couldn't do both.

The main concern at closing the office was my remaining assistant. It was a difficult subject to broach; she'd joined the firm with such enthusiasm. In the end she raised it with me, she had an offer from the book trade; from the employer she left to come to us; it was a relief.

The office building was leased, but it was on a prime site, in the centre of the commercial district, it still had value. At the height of the property boom I'd thought to get rid of it at a truly exorbitant price, the landlord didn't want to pay. Now I went back to him with a much more reasonable figure; to my surprise he accepted it. I could walk away with at least some sort of cheque in my pocket; not really in my pocket, it would go to supporting the rest of my business.

The files would come back to Stafford, much of the work was done there anyway, and I could set the wheels in motion to bring things to an end.

People are harder. What do you do with a failed romance? If I closed the office it meant a return to Stafford, and to Frances. She even sounded pleased at my coming back to her. To avoid this cloying falseness I even put off closing the office. The truth was I couldn't any longer face living with her, pretending all was well. I deferred closing, at least till after Christmas.

This time was like the closing of a chapter.

When Frances left Peterborough there was an almighty scene: furniture was broken, I was drenched in bath water, a ring was shied from an upstairs window and there were all the usual tokens of love and affection between the parting couple. We didn't speak again for some time. It left our relationship an empty shell, and it left an emptiness in me. I tried to fill that space with my project with Sarah, but this, too, was proving fraught with difficulties.

I half think Angharad introduced me to Sarah because of the troubles I faced. She came to the office, not many days after that scene, for no particular reason. She has a telepathy for people in trouble, and it was about a month later she introduced me to Sarah. You may remember; Sarah was having problems with a romance of her own. It made me suck my teeth slightly, had she introduced Sarah to me as a hypnotist or a potential girlfriend? I very much assumed she would have known better than to confuse the two, but had she? In asking Sarah to join me in the project I'd relied more than I cared to admit on Angharad, had she been disingenuous? The question was one more cause for depression.

The project had become a real possibility from just an academic discussion, yet everything had been encouraging. It had kept my mind off emotions and business. Then came the lack of progress with Sarah and this business with Edward, you can't ignore Edward, it was like trying to ignore a storm, a storm when I was all at sea.

Now the desolate prospect of return to the Midlands threatened to drop my spirits further. The delays from Sarah's absence brought our project to a halt and the confusion between Eadie and Sarah turned difficulty into an incalculable web. The mystery and magic of Edward, and the strangeness of it, left me lost, out of sight of dry land. Yet I couldn't let go of any of it.

The chapter closed on my certainty in my own skills. You don't admit these things to anyone, only to you, dear reader, yet I would have run away from all these problems, would have let go, if I could.

There was this time to think, I should have talked more to Angharad, of course; eventually I did, she's very hard to resist. If she had been match making between Sarah and I this romance with Eadie would certainly come as no surprise. I disliked the thought. It would be bound to call into question the genuineness of my passion for the project and my honesty over the visions of Edward. All for a supposed attraction to a woman I judged unreliable. I wanted to think it out myself but when you're in such a complexity it's so difficult. You've no idea how much emotion can cloud our thoughts.

Sometime before all this, one of our insurance company contacts invited Frances and I to a lavish entertainment. It was held at Peterborough cathedral. The music was by a symphony orchestra, it was exquisite, and the dinner afterwards, in the mayor's parlour, the whole evening was quite a civic occasion.

The date was in December of the year before this story began, and the Christmas lights of the town and the cathedral combined with the music and gently falling snow to make an evening of pure enchantment. Ever since I've paid occasional visits to the cathedral.

It was here that I brought my confusion. Who knows what I expected to find, for certainly religion played no part in my life, gave me no confident faith to fall back on; I only wish it did.

The church buildings of England are remarkable, so many are so very old. We take them for granted. Most of the present [cathedral of St. Peter at Peterborough](#) is eight hundred years old; it dates from the reign of Richard the Lion Heart; as every Law student knows, the beginning of Legal Memory. Yet it still stands, solid and impressive. The glass and concrete offices that fill the rest of the city can never drown it; you feel they may come and go, but the cathedral will go on forever.

To touch the massive stone work is to draw your mind back over the centuries, to picture the thoughts of those who built it, when the World was so different. There's a trembling progression of humanity, a tide of emotions of the countless thousands who've lived their day and passed on. A cathedral is an excellent place for human devotion.

I came to pray in one of the little side chapels. It was almost like taking thought about Edward, but this time I was taking thought about my own life, as if I was asking God for help. I wouldn't even know how, yet I prayed in earnest.

Did I expect a message from God? Did I receive one? Sitting in that chapel, words came to me with such clarity and force, it took me aback.

“DO MY WILL, DO YOUR OWN.”

The power of those words burned into my memory.

For some time I was afraid to repeat them.

They were the words of the maniac, believing he's heard the voice of God, giving unlimited licence. How many times has some serial killer, or some schizophrenic, claimed to hear something like them? Surely they must be blasphemy, leading only to disappointment, failure and madness.

What did they mean?

Of course they may be merely a message from my own subconscious. But from my own mind or from Christ himself, what did they mean?

The problem was I didn't know my own will.

I thought about it.

When I was still in my twenties I'd been offered a partnership in the richest practice, per capita, in the county. I accepted a job as an assistant and did everything possible to avoid the partnership. The prospect of spending the next forty years doing the same job, in a small market town, filled me with horror. I was quite right, while I was there I saw the senior partner kill himself through over work. When he died the Law Society's obituary got every detail of his life wrong, forty years of devoted service to the community and the Law Society's reporter couldn't even be bothered to record his name correctly.

Yes I could shelve the project and forget Edward, defend my business and stay in Peterborough. I would finish up reasonably well off and respected and have done nothing with my life, or I could stick to the project and Edward. Even if it meant a return to Stafford, even if the choice of Sarah was hopelessly in error, there was really no choice.

If I did anything else I would always wonder; and why had such rich and feeling visions been given me? I would go on with Edward.

Taking the words in the cathedral as, "have faith", I would act on them. It was only later I came across something to cast light on "Do My Will, Do Your Own".

To understand Edward better I took to reading books from his time, including Malory's 'Le Morte D'Arthur', the medieval theology of Thomas à Kempis, and [Julian of Norwich](#). In the year 1373 Mother Julian, the great anchoress of Norwich, experienced some remarkable revelations, so remarkable she spent the next twenty years writing about them.

Of her fourteenth revelation Mother Julian wrote that God revealed these words to her,

"I am the ground of your praying.

First, it is my will you have something,

and then I make you want it too;

then I make you beseech me for it –

and you do beseech me.

How could you not have what you ask for?"

This rocked me back; it said at length what had been summed up for me in just six words. I'd asked for the situation I found myself in, it was up to me to work it out. Whatever happened would be my choice and God's Will.

My state of mind was not an easy one, I was more used to believing in the power of my own reason than having faith in God; and false certainty in 'God's Will' has always been the excuse for such terrible actions. All I could do was hope.

I phoned Angharad; I told her all the story of Edward and Eadie. She wasn't contemptuous or cynical, I remember the conversation.

“If you make me a promise I’ll make you a promise. Tell me the story as it all comes out and I won’t make any judgements.”

“But there’s just so much of it.”

“I haven’t got a job, except with some of your clients; I don’t have a business to run. I can do pretty much what I like.”

It was agreed there and then. I would be open with Angharad.

After that I phoned her often. She complained if I didn’t phone her almost daily. The phone bill grew enormous.

I told her about the presents Edward received at Christmas, about how he felt. I told her about Edward’s book of King Arthur, that his father had given him.

If anyone listened to our conversations what would they have thought? Few love affairs could be more intense, yet we spoke of Eadie and Edward, of history and magic. Angharad was enthusiastic as to everything. Above all she didn’t think me foolish. Perhaps, but for her, I would have put it all away.

It was Angharad who took the Marbles seriously and encouraged me to go over that dream and tell you about it. She was interested in the Sword, too, and made sketch after sketch until I could see the exact likeness of the one Edward received that Christmas.

When I saw that Sword, and Duke Henry’s letter, I was admittedly excited. But I felt Edward’s reaction, and then my own cold reason set in. It’s one thing to indulge myself with visions of a boy who undoubtedly existed, but where does fantasy step in? We’ve already had the dubious dubbing of Edward as a knight, am I to swallow a mythical sword?

I told Angharad about it in much those words; I remember her reply was stinging,

“Did you channel it honestly? or did you set out to tell yourself a lie?”

“Of course I did it honestly!”

“You can judge evidence can’t you? You always said you could.”

“I saw the Sword, it was as if I held it in my hand, as Edward did, I read the letter in exactly the same way. The only reason to doubt it is the legend of Father John.

My voice sounded tired even to myself, Angharad spoke softly,

“And you verified your channelling against historical facts.”

What could I say? Angharad extracted a promise, over the Marbles, the Sword and anything else I was inclined to doubt. I promised Angharad that I would, at least, suspend disbelief.

She wanted me to tell her Malory’s tale of King Arthur. We went through all the Arthurian legends I could find, stuck away in odd corners of the house. There was Tennyson, of course, Geoffrey Ash and even an abridged version of Malory from my childhood. She pressed me to read them to her, pointing out how Edward himself connected it to Malory.

One thing struck me about King Arthur’s knights, they were all terribly aggressive. They didn’t only save damsels in distress, they fought each other, at the drop of a hat. They were often ‘sore hurt’ but recovered miraculously, usually ready for another fight.

The thing that really laid these knights low in great numbers, before the last battle, when they slaughtered each other, was the peril of the quest for the Holy Grail. This danger appeared from their own minds. Were their delusions themselves dangerous or being possessed of an impure mind to imagine such things?

One night I walked into town, it was only three or four miles from my flat. It was damply cold but the rain and wind had stopped some hours before and it wasn’t at

all unpleasant. My thoughts were in complete chaos, to be soothed by the mindless effort of walking. I found myself, as it were all unexpectedly, in the centre of the city and headed for the cathedral. The time was late, after midnight. There were no pedestrians but for the occasional nightclub reveller: no traffic but for two or three young men in their modified production cars, with wide wheels and 'go faster' stripes, racing their engines and screeching their tyres round the corners. It crossed my mind they would have made good knights at the court of King Arthur.

The cathedral close was all quiet but for a slow, steady drip from the trees overhead. Floodlights showed the West front in imposing relief, elsewhere there were only holes in the blackness, receding into the depths of unrecorded history. Your eyes were free to make the landscape of your imagination but my mind was too cluttered to make anything happy.

At least and at last, Sarah was coming back, according to Angharad, in the next few days.



Peterborough Cathedral

Chapter 11 - Changes

When next I looked to Edward I found a mirror to myself.

(Past)

The New Year was dismal. The weather was raw and wet so that it was difficult to stay warm.

There were comings and goings of strange people.

Even life with Eadie was not peaceful. We argued, sometimes, and hurt each other in ways we never had before. We would see the hurt each did to the other and we would make up and cling to each other, almost desperate. Underlying all we did was an uneasy and nameless fear. Can God grant such happiness in life or must all be taken away? It was as if some great force waited to strike down the presumption of we poor mortals to feel such joy.

One of the new visitors was a foreigner, from somewhere in Spain. He was standing by the fire when Lady Margaret called me to the library. A dark, hooded sort of man with the shaved head of a priest. Lady Margaret gave his name, which was a long one, I don't remember; he might be a priest but he was also a nobleman. I wondered what to call him.

He spoke in Latin,

"The Countess tells me you are her ward?"

"Yes, father."

"You like it here in England? It feels so cold. In Spain when it is cold it is dry. You can keep warm. Here the cold strikes your bones.

I come to see your King Henry. Have you, yourself, met him?"

"Edward, the Reverend Father comes on an embassy. We shall entertain him tonight and you shall dine with us."

It was a small affair of State but the first time I met an ambassador, or spoke Latin outside my lessons and the evenings when Eadie and I secretly set to read the Bible.

On another occasion a short, squat man with a strange accent came from the estate at Caus. I guessed him to be a yeoman farmer for he had the muscles of an archer. In the years with Lady Margaret I've been parcelled about many times, mostly to see my mother, but never before has a tenant come to see me. He came well over a hundred miles, by road, on estate business.

"Master Welch, this is your young lord.

Sir Edward, Master Welch is a tenant on your estate. They have very fine farmers in your part of the World, Master Welch."

The stranger bowed and called me "my lord" and "Lord Stafford," which made Lady Margaret frown. No one ever called me that; it was always Edward or Master Edward, at most Sir Edward. I found it uncomfortable, and I didn't trust him.

From my modern flat, I pondered what might be waiting to happen. Something hesitated on the brink of entering the World but was it Edward's nameless dread or some quite unexpected success. It wasn't at all clear.

Edward was still wrapped up in Christmas and those presents. He still didn't know what to make of the Sword and the legend. Neither did Angharad or I. The Sword was specifically given to the Staffords yet, when a de Stafford tried to use it, everything went disastrously wrong. Then again, 281 years had elapsed since Father

John's vision and the Sword was said to be centuries old even then. How did it look so modern and unruined when it came to Edward? Duke Henry was one of the cleverest men of his generation; would he be taken in by old superstitions? Why should he put his last efforts into a fairy-tale about an old sword?

The talk of rents that Christmas was something I could look into. There's precious little recorded about Edward's private life but there are records about his finances; I even found an entire book devoted to the financial management of the Stafford estates. Mostly it's tedious, a mass of place names and figures, but this much emerges; there was fraud, placemen had been allowed excessive latitude in return for supporting the Tudors, a storehouse, full of property records and deeds, muniments as Thomas called them, had been deliberately burned to ashes. Bad as it was, Jasper Tudor had even worse handled Lady Katherine's estates; tens of thousands of acres of prime woodland had been deforested for the value of the timber on them. Vandalism and waste had gone almost completely unchecked. With Tudor approval, estate officials had winked at poaching and theft, themselves joining in the plunder, till by now the thieves believed that it was theirs by right. Above all, some of the placemen had come to terms with tenants to agree that rent should not reach the estate receivers. No wonder Thomas was worried. The despoliation was such that it could even have come before parliament, if one were ever called.

There really was a William Bedall, possibly appointed to bring order out of the chaos that gripped Edward's inheritance. It was something we would come back to, but for now there was still time before the course of Edward's life was to change forever.

(Past)

My birthday approached. There would be no special celebration but I was excited. It would be my fifteenth birthday and a step nearer manhood. It seemed very old.

The beginning of February is always like the end of winter. Eadie and I searched for the first snowdrops and other signs of coming spring. As always, nature was slower than our impatience but we searched and played in the woods. It was too cold to be comfortable but we made loud cries to drive away the winter hush and startle the birds that stay over the cold months.

In the past, Eadie made a pet of a robin, by feeding it from her hand; we had no such pets this year. The winter damp deadened our adventures and we were left to cling to each other. Holding on to each other, pretending to be an old married couple. The days passed.

There was another visitor that winter, another priest, but this time an English one. He was a wise old man of some forty years, not as old as Lady Margaret. He came from the university at Cambridge to test me on my letters.

He had me read to him in Latin. He asked me questions from the Bible and had me quote to him from my readings with Eadie. He spent hours with Thomas, looking at work I'd done, all unconsidered at the time. Thomas had taught me from the Classics and from Gildas and Langland and from much else besides; he showed it all to the priest. The old man seemed neither pleased nor displeased but changeless in his courtesy. Thomas was delighted, he grinned from ear to ear, and he called the priest "doctor".

I thought Thomas wrong to be so flattered but he wouldn't listen.

"You'll be going away to the College, Edward - to be a real scholar."

I was struck dumb with consternation. To leave my friends, to leave Eadie! Objections took on the force of rebellion.

“Don’t look like that, boy. You shall not go yet, not for months, and when you do go you’ll be treated as a graduate, you shall study with the learned scholars in the college founded by your grandmother. It will do great honour to your name.”

It was one of the few times I saw disappointment in Thomas’ face.

I rushed off to see Lady Margaret.

“Edward, I don’t know what Thomas has been telling you but there shall be no question of you going to Cambridge - certainly not yet.

Your father made a great mark with such scholars but you shall not take up his cause. The estates must come first. There are responsibilities.”

As to myself? I don’t know what to say. You’ve already heard how my life was changing. Edward was taking it over, with all the dilemmas this brought. Edward took the place of any sort of a social life, except for my talks with Angharad. You could feel there was some sort of emotional link between the way things were with him and the way they were for me. This, above all else, was frightening.

If Edward did badly in his life, as I feared he had, how would it affect my life? A ridiculous thought, but I couldn’t drive it away. As the visions moved on, I just watched helplessly.

How was I even to understand why it came to me? I wasn’t happy with a past as Edward, heir to the duke of Buckingham. It’s all very well, and far from stretching credulity, if I had been ‘John the plough boy’, but to claim a dukedom smacks of self-aggrandisement.

You remember I mentioned reincarnation, and then found a way out of it in time-travel of the mind. But that didn’t explain why I was seeing these visions. I’ve thought about van Dusen’s schizophrenics and the voices they heard, if Swedenborg was right might there be real people in another world? Maybe Edward is a real person, talking directly to my mind. I found yet another answer.

I remember reading, years ago, of the [Akashic Script](#), a record imprinted on the fabric of the Universe of all that’s happened in it. In my reading of medieval literature I found a trick, a meditation, which the Knights Templar had used long before Edward’s time. According to this Templar adepts would go, in their minds, to a great temple. Down in the crypt they would meet a clerk who would conduct them through a great library to exactly the book holding the information they wanted; anything they wanted to know, past present or even future, anything in the Universe. I’ve tried this trick myself, without success.

If I could bring visions of Edward to mind, could I eavesdrop on those around him? Could I find out from them what caused these visions? First I would have to become much more of an adept than I yet was. I talked about it to Angharad.

“Yes, of course you can, why shouldn’t you?”

Angharad’s answer was immediate, but then there was a pause.

I asked, with eyebrow raised,

“How?”

The answer was so simple I didn’t consider it properly.

“You focus your attention on Edward, try thinking about other people you want to talk to instead, they’ll come to you.”

Perhaps, but it’s not as easy as it sounds.

So why was Edward’s life being thrust at me? And, if it wasn’t true, why would I invent such a story? It’s easier to believe it really did happen.

Clearly I was missing something.

I looked for parallels. Not between myself and Edward, but in relationships between people Edward knew and people I know today. I was surprised to find there are such parallels. First, of course, between Eadie and Sarah; this was my most acute embarrassment! But I also found parallels for my daughter, my parents and even some of my friends. This is running beyond the story, yet the more I looked the more I found. It's all too uncertain a guess; it added such a burden of responsibility to those others and their counterparts alive today.

Sometimes even the images I got seemed to make no sense. What should I make of this next one?

(Past)

It was at my lord Stanley's house of Knowsley. We'd gone there for my lord's rents and for sport. I was day dreaming. Perhaps it was the thought of returning to London, most of the household was there already and Lady Margaret was impatient for our return before spring thaws made the roads heavy with mud.

Our party was packing this afternoon but Thomas kept me at my lessons. Before me was spread Master William Langland's "Vision of Piers the Plowman", the hand written Passus lay about the table between Thomas and I; and the first lines caught my eye.

"In a somer sesun, whon softe was the sonn,
I schop me into a shroud, as I a scheep were;
In habite as an hermite unholy of werks
Wente I wyde in this world wondres to here;
Bote in a Mayes morwynge on Malverne hulls
Me bifel a ferly, of fairie, me-thought.
I was wery, forwandred, and went me to rest
Undur a brod banke bi a bourn side;
And as I lay and leonde and lokede on the watres.
I slumbrede in a slepyng hit swyed so murie.
Thenne gon I meeten a mervelous sweven,
That I was in a wilderness wuste I never wher;
And as I beheold into the est an height to the sonne
I sauh a tour on a toft, tryelyche I-maket;
A deop dale bineoth, a dungun ther-inn,
With deop dich and derk and dredful of sight
A faire felde full of folks fonde I there bitwene,
Of alle manner of men, the mene and the riche,
Worching and wandring as the worlde asketh..."

"English will never be the language of scholars. We spell words as we sound them. In Latin, even in Greek, there is a clear right way. In English every man writes as he speaks; Master Langland was never of the court, it leaves his Latin good but his English weak."

My thoughts ran on Master Langland's story of how to live in the World and of his perfect hero, Piers the ploughman.

"What should I think of 'Do-well', 'Do-better' and 'Do-best'? Could a ploughman, living his life in such purity as 'Do-best', really enter the lists to joust with the Devil, even for the souls of the Damned?"

The image conjured before me of Piers, the white knight, uttering the unthinkable challenge and conquering the Lords of Darkness, almost gave me courage for my own journey.

“Yes Edward, even a ploughman.”

Thomas looked rueful,

“But Lady Margaret would tell you no, like the Jews of old, do as ‘Do-well’, look to your own and profit your family. But Master Langland tells us, if you can be a saint and a knight of true humility, you can look beyond yourself, to God’s Will, and Do-best. As for Master Langland, he wrote against the sins of Man and to make good the Church. He gave his vision to all Englishmen, and you shall learn it all before nightfall.

In all humility I lowered my eyes and asked no more. I did not want to open a dispute between Thomas and my guardian. Yet, when I thought of it later, I was touched by an excitement. Piers, the humble knight, was like Sir Percival and the other knights that found the Grail in my father’s book of Sir Thomas Malory.

In the generation following the Black Death, with a third of the population dead, amidst all the horror, grief and stinking bodies, order and morals were shaken to the ground. Throughout Europe the next generation struggled on, probably far better than we would today. It was in these times Langland took the fabric of his own experience to make a hero fit to set beside Christ himself, and the knowledge of it was set before Edward in those days at Knowsley. The “Vision of Piers Ploughman” is still in print and you can read it for yourself, in modern translation if you like. Even after six hundred years it still has the power to inspire. What a pity it came to Edward as mere schoolwork.

Sunday came round again and I took my darling daughter Debbie to visit Angharad. Debbie was packed off with Angharad’s daughter to watch videos and Angharad sat me down with a glass of whisky. The deliberation, with which she poured my glass and hers, lit a cigarette and made everything straight, made me expectant.

“Are you in love with Sarah?”

No doubt I should have expected it but the directness of that question took me off guard. Surprised, I examined my emotions yet again. It seemed I’d done nothing else since that vision of Edward and Eadie. Now I had to face it openly for it was important to me to be honest with Angharad, my hesitation was long.

“No... That is I don’t think so... yet, maybe I ought to be.”

Was this the meaning of these images, somehow a second chance to make good a relationship which had gone wrong? That’s the highest I was prepared to put it. My reluctance wasn’t just based on doubt of these images, or distrust of what I’ve read of reincarnation.

Angharad insisted that any man would find Sarah irresistible. I tried, gently, to tell her; my first love was very like Sarah, but she had had the fresh bloom of youth and the gifts of an actress and a trained ballet dancer. Surely it isn’t likely I’d be so easily impressed by Sarah. I didn’t want to hurt Angharad’s feelings, or see her question my sincerity, but it still vexed me.

Angharad didn’t believe me; she looked patient and even accepting, but not believing.

“Sarah doesn’t need a lover, just a friend.”

Dear reader, I’m not used to being questioned, with anyone but Angharad I would have shown my displeasure. As it was, she only saw my frustration. I don’t

know if Sarah's lovers get any more of her attention than I do but, if not, God help them. If only Sarah had the patience and constancy of Angharad; here at least was true friendship, whatever she thought, I would trust her confidence as I never could trust Sarah.

The conversation ended, the girls came in to invade our privacy, Angharad's daughter was going back to boarding school and there was her trunk to pack. Debbie and I would have to go and find our own amusement. Before we went Angharad told my Debbie about a "brilliant" adventure park, in Telford, that she'd read about; she made it sound very exciting, much to my annoyance. I'd promised to take Debbie out that day, wherever she wanted to go, I was trapped. Very well, I'd take her. I did, we couldn't find it. It was all part of the day, from Angharad's vague directions we'd both half expected not to find it. We spent a superb afternoon in Iron Bridge instead.

It was in the car on the way back the conversation arose.

Debbie, was reading "The Witches", setting her mind on the Supernatural. Her mother, no doubt, told her of a 'cold spot' at White Ladies Priory and when Debbie saw a signpost to the priory nothing would do but that I stop the car and we go there.

It was cold, it was late, it was dark and I refused to go. I promised to tell her about it instead. It so happens there's a rather unusual book, "The Green Stone" by Graham Phillips and Martin Keatman; full of supernatural events that have their climax at White Ladies Priory. There's an evil force which is trapped there and defeated. It's thrown through the cold spot into some other sort of space, destroying it forever.

Debbie, as a bright nine-year-old, was full of questions.

What's a cold spot? - Well it's a sort of doorway.

Between where and where?

To give a sensible answer to that was a good game to exercise our minds. More for my benefit, I'm afraid, than hers.

You read my elaboration of what must be at least a six dimensional model of the Universe, for John that Sunday: three dimensions of ordinary space and three dimensions of super ordinary space (please don't ask me to go into the dimensions of life just now). In the case of each set of dimensions you also have to add time to make a continuum. To this I added a third set of dimensions to make a third curve called 'Motive/Time'.

Now we have the continua 'Space/Time', 'Life/Time' and 'Motive/Time'. The dimensions in 'Motive/Time' run from evil to good, from isolation to togetherness and there's a dimension of energy from indifference to obsession.

Never under-estimate the mental powers of children. Although it sometimes pleases Debbie to consider me quite mad, she easily followed the idea, as many an adult would not. It let us play a new game, converting the story of "The Witches" to my new terms.

The White Ladies doorway led to evil, isolation and obsession. We couldn't go through it because of being locked into our 'Space/Time' bodies. Just as well really, in view of what might lie on the other side.

It was easy to chatter about such things, and what might come from moving through such doorways, rather like a game of snakes and ladders. It helped us pass the journey in laughter.

My daughter was 'into' ghoulish subjects so, when "The Witches" ran out, I told her what I'd heard on the radio, just a few days before, of Rev. Manchester talking about the Highgate vampires. By way of balance, there were miracles at

Lourdes, and, of course, King Arthur and the Holy Grail. All of which I related to higher dimensions.

Bright as my daughter is, it wasn't the sort of conversation any child would retain for long. But I did find it useful with all this confusion over Edward.

One thing I didn't tell my daughter; since all dimensions must, by definition, be coextensive, that is all present everywhere at once, you don't need a 'cold spot' to get into them, we're already there.

(Past)

As the afternoon with Debbie moved my real life pleasurably by, so time passed for Edward; spring was coming into the air. You could feel it in the longer days and an almost a tangible rustle in the ground. The flowers and the bird song and a brightness to the light lifted everybody's spirits.

Eadie and I went out walking, to a special place we visited sometimes. It was late when we got back, tired and happy.

The house and stables were full of bustle and Aletia was fussing round Thomas.

One of the servants said Thomas and I were to tour my estates, to collect missing rents. He said we would be taking one of Lady Margaret's lawyers and we should be gone a long time.

Leaving Eadie, pale faced, I went off to find the Countess. Yes it was true!

"I've spoken to Master Bedell, he is insistent. He and his predecessors have all had trouble with your Welsh circuit and I have received this letter,"

She showed me a letter bearing a seal with a de Stafford device,

"From John Corbett in your Welsh lands. To tell you the truth I've had very great troubles with Master Corbett."

Lady Margaret sighed; for once she looked no greater than her own slight bodily frame. I felt sorry for her.

"You can't get blood out of a stone... and I believe him. He thinks nothing will get the money out of your tenants unless they see a de Stafford. You, Edward.

I've done more, I've written to your receivers myself, and to my son's auditors. They all agree."

There was a ring of finality in those words.

"Can't someone else go?"

I had other relatives, I knew, actually living in Wales.

"You Edward. These are your father's estates and you are his heir. When your father rebelled many in Wales sided with Richard; he forgave many fee farms in thanks for it. It's you they want to see: to show that we have the true power in the land."

"But..."

"This isn't Kent or Staffordshire, Edward. There are parts of Wales that do not take kindly to an English lord, particularly one they've never seen.

If you were younger I wouldn't send you."

Lady Margaret's voice sounded softer and tired.

"There will be those who accuse me of wrongdoing, there is no remedy but that you go and see for yourself. Your presence may silence some discontent.

I do not lightly admit weakness, Edward, do not press me. With your father's death... even the Tudor name will only go so far on such a matter.

If you don't go we will lose lands like Master Corbett's. Many of the rents have been owing for years, and he's not the only one who's written the same way. These things can spread like fire."

There was no further discussion, only settling the arrangements. There was to be a party of thirty two of us, Lady Margaret's lawyer and his servant, Thomas and I, two dozen body guards, two servants, a groom and a priest. The priest was to be Father Joseph. He was a distant cousin, though I don't know exactly how we were related, I faintly remembered him from being a small child. My childish memory painted him as mysterious and important. It was a surprise he was even in London. I should be pleased to see him.

Out of doors, blacksmiths were hard at work, the farrier too. The fussing round, the packing, the bustle all made this sudden departure more real.

"Oh, Eadie!"

"How long?"

It was still in the public part of the house where we hugged and clung to each other. No one cared.

Any separation was unthinkable but who knew how long this would be; days, weeks, months. We both privately knew it must be months. It might take weeks in the journey and who knew how long once we arrived.

I only thought of homesickness for Eadie and this house and the tediousness of wrangles over rents and accounts such a long way from home. I hated accounts.

Eadie's first thought was fearful. Why should we need men at arms? Surely Lady Margaret wouldn't send me into danger, would she?

"Er... I don't know, I don't know how long, she didn't say. I think there is trouble with rents in several of the manors."

Eadie turned, suddenly furious, anxious to blame anybody for this parting.

"Oh, Eadie, I shall miss you."

We held each other until I began to fear the eyes and comments of those around us.

We did our best to console ourselves all that evening. I tried to reassure her and I did all I could but, who can understand women. Clearly the whole thing was my fault and it was my fault she wasn't coming too. It never seriously crossed my mind that Thomas, or Lady Margaret, or Aletia would let her come and, no, I hadn't asked.

I expected Eadie to come to my room that night. She didn't. After what seemed hours it was I who stole along the passages, passing Aletia's room I stopped, the door was partly ajar but all was in silence, the room empty. I went to Eadie, in the next chamber.

Gently closing the door behind me I found Eadie, huddled up in bed, crying.

My heart went out to her and I was at her side in a moment.

"Oh, Edward, I don't want to lose you."

"You never shall my love. Not now, not ever, not in all eternity. Not beyond the grave, not beyond whatever lies after that."

"Oh, don't say graves; it sends shivers through me. Hold me, Edward; I'm so frightened of losing you."

There was a fire still burning in the fireplace, sending its warm glow and flickering light across the room.

We lay there, naked, the warm firelight caressing every soft curve of her body.

We talked.

Then we kissed and clung to each other.

Of all the emotions of my life this moment was the most tender. The feeling of Eadie was the most overwhelming and I blush to recall the strength of its passion.

If time could measure the importance of the moment then, in that night, we should live forever.

How do you reckon eternity?

By the warm glow of the firelight playing on the walls?

By the soft, enfolding glow of that so human flesh?

By the softly murmured sounds Eadie made?

By the fulfilment of our hearts?

Or our oneness with God and all Creation, and the peace that came between us?

We neither moved nor spoke, frightened to break the spell. As long as that warm glow could last we held the flux of Time, we were still one together.

After every such moment the World is changed. How could we be parted now?

Chapter 12 - Wales

(Past)

The next morning dawned with the traditional cold light of day. The fire was out and a tangible chill gave the light a brittle feel, shot through with gold shafts of sun light. There was the promise of a fine day, once the Sun warmed the cold Earth. It must still be early.

Jinney had drawn the curtains; she was shaking me awake with a giggle.

“Wake up Master Edward, quickly now! Master Lewkenor’s astir; it wouldn’t do for you both to be found abed.”

Intelligence rushed into consciousness to discover an agony of embarrassment. I could do no more than sit bolt upright, pulling the covers around me, making the greatest utterance,

“Er...”

“‘T ain’t nothing Master Edward; everyone’s got to say their goodbyes.”

And she left with a flounce and a wink; she was older, somehow provocative.

Eadie’s mood once more underwent a sea change. Not helped by my embarrassment. It was now that, if I acknowledged our love, I wouldn’t have to go, or else she could come too. This was silly and I said so.

“I hate you! I don’t want to see you ever again.

After last night, the confusion and pain of those words cut the ground from under me and left a chasm at the pit of my stomach. It was my turn to weep, though I hid it, and Eadie did come to see me off.

The horses stamped their impatience. Thomas was leaving his conference with Lady Margaret. He attended the Countess indoors to receive his instructions and the bags of gold she proffered - but not all of them,

“No, by Our Lady... I’ll be bringing back more money than I can carry without taking this with me.”

“You really think so?”

“Aye ma’am, they pay out of love or fear. With no lord and no soldiers they’ve had neither.”

The serious tone of his words had stopped all levity but the humour that creased his cheeks, as he finished, left nothing to be said.

I sat my horse in starched new clothes, my father’s Sword at my side. The household had all been afuss to make me presentable.

Aletia attended Thomas as he mounted, worn and comfortable in his surroundings. I admired him beyond words.

Aletia and Eadie might have been sisters, the same look of annoyance and (oh, let it be) love. They were too taken up in themselves to see.

Soon the party moved. The groom bringing up the baggage horses at the rear. Behind Father Joseph, in his cream robes, rode twenty-seven men in de Stafford livery, twenty-four of them soldiers. It seemed strange to see Lady Margaret’s servants bearing Stafford badges.

What a shame the King curtailed such display when he restricted the use of retainers. The noble houses had always been able to show off their following. Now it was cut down almost out of sight. Perhaps we should have brought more men? The King would hardly punish his own mother. I only had to look at Thomas for the

thought to die before it could come to my lips. Thomas would think me a childish, strutting, peacock.

Master William Gibbons would meet us after some distance. As a clerk he already knew these estates, from his service to Lady Margaret and William Bedell. He would be Judge in Lady Margaret's courts and clerk to our expedition. There would be other retainers making the journey to Wales. Aside from Master Bedell himself, there would be an auditor, John Gunter, and Lady Margaret's most senior minister, [Sir Reginald Bray](#). Both these men were in the King's service as well as service to me, they would bring that authority to our venture, but we shouldn't see them till we came to Wales, to the house of [Sir Rees ap Thomas](#), my receiver for Brecon and Hay.

William Gibbons waited for us by pre-arrangement, with his servant, at Martin's Cross. It was a broad, open place, marked in the middle of the thoroughfare with a large stone monument, dedicated to the saint for whom it was named.

We entered a nearby alehouse to discuss our campaign, leaving the groom to water the horses. Master Gibbons introduced his servant as Andrew, his clerk, he would keep our records. Andrew was a shy, unhealthy looking boy, just a little older than I. Master Gibbons was serious faced and quiet but when he spoke, like Lady Margaret, he was used to being heard.

"It is a sorry business on which to bring a boy, pardon me Sir Edward, and such a small party, a matter of rents. It would have been better to introduce my lord on a more glittering occasion.

The titles to many of these lands haven't been well kept and lordships have stood idle. In all these last ten years little has been done. Yet the attainder under which the old duke was put, voiding his titles and effectively bringing them under the crown, was reversed on the accession of the present king, that would be... nearly eight years ago. In the two years Richard held them some titles changed hands and confusion and resentment can be expected. Yet the ffeofees know well enough who is their lord. Dispositions by King Richard were specifically revoked by King Henry and no further evidence is needful.

Of course, title vested in Lady Margaret, the Countess of Richmond, on her guardianship and as such rests there until Sir Edward achieves livery of his inheritance, or failing you, Sir Edward, it would pass to your heir - your brother Henry.

We shall be taking over the authority of stewards and receivers wherever we go, it cannot be helped. The receipt of John Gunter shall excuse these officers and he in turn will recast the accounts with Sir Reginald and Master Bedell.

I am appointed judge for legal causes touching the estates and I have the Countess' attorney on this and other matters, I may speak for the lordships. No vacancy arises; soacage and service are owed now as they have always been."

"There, Edward, our cause is lawful." Thomas smiled.

"It may be, but I understood not a word of it."

The company laughed, we were all in harmony.

The journey passed as quickly as we could make it, speeding our horses from a pilgrims' canter, sometimes trotting, sometimes slowed by obstructions and bad roads. We missed many of the large towns to follow the most direct line, hiring guides at the inns as we needed. Thomas, Master Gibbons and Father Joseph consulting at night to plan the next day's route.

On one of these nights I gave voice to a thought that troubled me. Now I was older I had learned a little of the rising which killed my father. We were nearing Wales and Thomas and Father Joseph had begun to discuss how we should deal with tenants.

“I want to visit to the [Vaughans of Tretower](#).

We have the men to pay them as they should be paid.”

I knew what they’d done. When my father and I set out to face King Richard, they sacked Brecon Castle and kidnapped my sisters, Elizabeth and Anne. We’d left them behind thinking them safe with the Vaughans and our loyal retainers.

They’d done it as much out of envy of our family as loyalty to King Richard and they’d never been punished. They still held land of the Stafford estates and here were rents to collect indeed. As our journey progressed the thought had grown in my mind.

“And if they don’t pay duly, let’s set a torch to their childhood home as they did mine.”

The last words were out before I could curb them and they opened a grave silence. When Thomas and Father Joseph spoke it was as if I’d said some terrible thing.

“And what of Sir Walter Vaughan, who serves you loyally?”

“Would you make war in the West, with just twenty-four men?”

I was taken by the shoulders and much was said that passed as if in a dream. I’d never expected them to find justice so appalling.

“Never let any man hear you speak so. There are those who would rather see the Vaughans inherit these lands than that you should.”

Finally Father Joseph stood over me and it’s his words I remember, as he told me I must,

“Vengeance is mine saith the Lord.”

It was a long ride, for we were to start in the north, with Master Corbett’s estates. There was little chance to write to Eadie and no one by whom to send a letter. The separation was fretful. Sleep wouldn’t come, with my mind suspended between the memory of our love and the hard words Eadie used that morning. There was nothing to be done. Thomas consoled whatever loneliness he felt with reading. I cherished my Sword, the bible Eadie gave me, and the little rose inside, touching them often.

Soon the country changed; and changed again as we left England and rode through the Marches. This could be wild country and it was wise to pay court to the lords of the manors through which we passed. To remain on good yet discrete terms called for circuitousness and ingenuity. Courtesy was paid here according to station and on the several nights we were so entertained my confidence rose; I was no mere piece of baggage on Master Gibbons’ tour.

We came at last to the house of my steward, Master John Corbett. Thomas sent a servant ahead to warn him of our coming and we were well received, if plainly. Master Corbett eyed William Gibbons with concern and the two spent a long time closeted together. “Well”, said Thomas, “if John Corbett is lining his pocket it isn’t obvious from this.”

I didn’t understand him but I was certainly surprised at this bare and mean house, it was little better than a tenant’s farmstead. No one would guess Master Corbett more important than his neighbours.

Our host went to bed and Master William appeared.

“The problem’s not here.

Our squire has trouble enough getting in what’s due to him, and it’s not that his tenants are poor. They sound insolent and complain of their landlords. I have power as Lady Margaret’s Justice and I’ve instructed your steward to summon the worst offenders before a manorial court. They shall present their cases before me tomorrow. Messengers were sent out within the last hour.”

The hall was bare except for the table at which Master William and Andrew sat. There were court rolls and quill and ink before them and saddlebags, yet unpacked, at Andrew’s side. Half our men at arms were stationed round the room.

Master Corbett fidgeted.

“Be at ease sir. If they do not come we shall have an example to set before their neighbours.”

“You wouldn’t try to turn them out?”

John Corbett sounded horrified, but William smiled his reassuring, lawyer’s smile.

“There is nothing like a threat of eviction to concentrate the mind.”

Time passed, we were all conscious of it.

“They’re not coming. I told you they wouldn’t.

So now you have to fight a pitched battle on their terms, with half the county behind them and no one behind us, or you have to sneak back to London leaving me here.

It was wrong to call for the most difficult first.”

William looked at Master Corbett for a full minute before he spoke.

“I have sufficient authority to bring such force as I need. But you’re wrong, they’ll come.”

Barely minutes later, the door opened to admit a party of maybe thirty men. They were led by a thick set, red-faced man. Around him hung an air of rude strength and his men looked arrogant, even disdainful, at our party of “foreigners”. Their leader walked up to William Gibbons, truly standing over him.

William didn’t look up.

“I am Dafydd Pwyll.”

William leant back, throwing his arms back to rest his hands behind his head.

Thomas spoke,

“Your rents are due.”

“Ha! I heard they sent for the boy, to see what he could do.”

Pwyll turned with a smile to look at his fellows then back to Thomas, no longer smiling.

Thomas slowly, leisurely drew his sword, it couldn’t be considered a threat against so many Pwylls, all armed, and he placed the point at his feet and leant forward on the hilt. When he spoke, by way of contrast, his words rang with the steel of command.

“My master, your lord, will receive your humble duty which you have so long withheld.”

Master Pwyll found no comfort in Thomas’ steady glare; his own eyes reflected the shock.

There was an eagerness in me to take part; I leant over to speak to John, one of our men at arms. He and another slipped quietly to the back of the room to stand by the door, the only way for anyone to leave.

Thomas' eyes flicked briefly to me but now they rested firmly on Master Pwyll. Even his own party waited for him.

"The Duke was attainted."

All Wales knew by what process of Parliament Duke Henry lost his lands, confiscated by King Richard, they also knew what William explained at Martin's Cross.

"Tush man, you know better than that."

William sounded good humoured, even indulgent.

Master Pwyll was not here to be humbled by any English clerk.

"My lands are my own like they were my father's before me and his before him."

"Well now, that's what I'm here to decide and before I leave this manor, Master Pwyll, I shall make an entry in the court roll on behalf of Lady Margaret Beaufort, countess of Richmond, and in the presence of my lord Stafford whose lordship and right it is. If you have not paid your duty you are landless and bondsman to the estate."

There was just a hint of damp at Master Pwyll's forehead, and horror in his eyes.

"I'm no bondsman. The people here know me and mine and our place here for generations."

"The Law knows the lordship and if you have abandoned your duty you've abandoned the land that goes with it."

"Why should I pay a..."

Whether it was William's encouraging smile or the re-balancing of weight of twelve men at arms which caused Master Pwyll to break off, his next words were lost forever.

Pwyll's down cast eyes came as a surprise to me, suddenly he sounded weak and lame,

"Master Corbett never collected it."

"Well now, you may pay what you owe to my clerk."

William's voice caressed like charm itself.

"I've no money here."

Thomas nodded to the youngest Pwyll,

"We shall all wait while your son here fetches it."

I held my breath, but I could see Master Pwyll was shaken and it was I who'd trapped him, John would let none of the tenants' party pass the door without Thomas' word. There was a moment I expected violence, but slowly, that time was passing away. Whatever William and Thomas were feeling they showed nothing of it.

There was a side-show of gestures and a muttering amongst the Pwylls in the Welsh language, a debate, with many a glance at the soldiers and at me. Which view was winning I couldn't tell, not until the mutterings died out. With an angry wave Dafydd Pwyll sent the boy away, the soldiers making room for his passage. It eased the tension but then came the wait.

Everybody waited, the de Stafford party not moving, not speaking. The Pwylls were fidgety. You could tell what the soldiers thought of them from the hint of expression around their eyes; no discipline. The tension in the room rose, it became unbearable. Several times Dafydd Pwyll made to go and thought better of it.

These days the nobility were allowed to retain few men at arms. Those who were left were the best. John had been in Tudor service for many years. He'd been in Brittany in those dangerous days before the present king came to power, he'd seen many campaigns. Edmund, at his side, was younger but built like an ox. With ten other soldiers in the room, not counting Thomas and I, and the door blocked by my command, the odds were not favourable to the Pwylls' leaving.

Time passed and further time. Finally Master Pwyll made to speak to William.
“‘T isn’t that we’re disloyal, ask anyone in these parts. ‘T is just we want to know where we stand. That’s all.”

William gave him no answer.

“Are you going to turn us off our lands?” The man sounded desperate now, not cocky.

“Ask your lord.”

Master Pwyll looked at John Corbett, who’d taken no part in all this time.

“This young lord’s my master.”

Pwyll finally looked at me. I didn’t know what to say.

“Will your son bring back the rent you owe?”

It was a simple question, I’d asked for information, but Pwyll took it badly.

“Yes, and you’ll turn us off if not.”

There was no answer I could give without showing weakness. I felt truly uncomfortable.

Further silence, sullen and unhappy, ended at last with the return of the boy. He came in weighed down with bags of coin, it was beyond my belief he should carry so much. These were dutifully handed to his father. Clearly loath, Dafydd Pwyll handed them to Master William, to be counted by Andrew.

“You’re short Master Pwyll.”

Pwyll’s look showed amazement.

“There’s six years rent there!”

William looked at the note handed him by Andrew.

“There remain one back quarter and the quarter now due.”

William sounded bored.

Further demands had never crossed Pwyll’s mind, surely if he did pay, these foreigners would simply take what they were given. Slowly it came to him; these soldiers were here to break him.

Two further bags were produced by the Welsh party, coins changed hands, counted out under Andrew’s eye. By turns the Pwylls’ mood had changed from insolence to despair and now to smouldering resentment.

“Your honesty and loyalty this day will be remembered, Master Pwyll.”

Thomas had intervened before mounting anger could break into the open.

“That you paid of your own free will when you saw my lord will be remembered by him and by your neighbours.”

The whole family were reminded of their choice; they could either be mocked for their weakness in paying at all or respected for paying a just debt.

When they’d gone William complained,

“He was still short, by all the small and disputed sums arising over all the years, he’s remembered and deducted every one. This quarter’s payment is the first that man’s ever paid without deduction.”

Thomas shrugged his shoulders.

Over the next week and a half a flood of further summonses brought more payments. There were even payments coming in voluntarily. John Corbett showed his bewilderment and relief. Nevertheless, he came away from an interview with William, on the night before we left, pale and shaken. He had a pile of coins. He also had strict instructions on management, if he were to keep his stewardship.

We heard later that a neighbouring land agent was murdered a few days after, it was said for breach of his word, but nothing was said to me that could connect it to Master Pwyll.

The tour proceeded, there were many more stewards to see than Master Corbett. Thomas tried to make the exact timing and order of each visit uncertain. This was something taken increasingly seriously as the weight of our saddlebags increased. The final tally in those bags far exceeded what even a rich man might expect to see in all his life.

Ours was not the only venture at rent collecting. Villagers and their stewards could be dealt with thus, not the rich and powerful, who would well know how to resent such treatment. Noble tenants were left to my receiver general. Master Bedell had been working all this time with Sir Rees. I think Master Gunter found it a relief, to turn from their work and the difficulties of fee farms, to sign receipts for what we brought him.

I saw Sir Reginald's relief; he explained to me how he could recalculate upwards the values of my holdings, based on the money and intelligence we brought.

"Estates are valued by the rents they receive. None save the King's reach their owner as full as they left the tenants but yours have failed for other reasons. Your receivers have not been dishonest men, they have faced opponents in their work, and your presence with Lady Margaret's servants has shown the justice of your right.

Payment of rent confirms the title of the lordship and it pleases me your house should now receive that justice."

I saw little of Sir Rees, so much was done through his deputy, John ap Griffith ap Maurice, and by John ap Thomas in Hay. I loved the town of Hay and spent many hours there, down at the banks of the river Wye. But there was one day Sir Rees called me to see him in private. He called me into a small room, comfortable in dark panelling.

"It is a long time since I was at court, Lord Edward. Forgive me that we have not met before this visit."

I was surprised for he seemed to mean something more than mere courtesy.

"I should have come to see you before, but you were only a baby when the Countess of Richmond took your estates."

Sir Rees looked hesitant. He offered me a chair and I took it. He was clearly unsure how much to say.

"It has been difficult to know where my loyalty should lie, and many other good gentlemen in this county have been as unsure as I.

I have no trouble to serve the King as a true subject, but it is not always easy to serve truly both the Countess of Richmond and your estates."

There was a further pause.

"I have known the people living on these estates and the towns round about all my life. There are good and bad, but, believe me Lord Edward, no worse than anywhere else.

When they are given a certain understanding of how her ladyship will view rents and manorial perquisites, if they give their support as her ladyship pleases, your officers are unlikely to ignore it. Very little has been said openly, and I for one have no need to profit, my love is for the land I've lived on all my life. But you may notice who has risen and prospered over these times.

Now it seems, in the presence of the King's own auditor, Sir Reginald is trying to bring things back to where they were when I was a boy. I wish God may prosper this work and your estates; but remember, when simple people are given something,

and are grown used to it, and see it snatched away, they are more resentful than if they never had it in the first place.”

I looked at Sir Rees. He would plainly say no more, but he looked in full earnest and it seemed to me he meant me well.

“What would you have me do, that you tell me this?”

“Why nothing! That is for your servants. But remember, Lord Edward, when you come to deal with the people of Wales, deal with care and gentleness.”

Sir Rees’ whole mood seemed to change. It never occurred to me the fear that speech had cost him, but now he had said what he had set out to say.

“And now my lord, I must tell you that it was the courtesy of my office, when your father was at the Castle, to provide sport fit for a duke. You shall have my hounds and my falcons whenever you please.”

The interview was over and the sense of it faded from Edward’s mind. The voyage of diplomacy and complex negotiations; dealing in loans, bonds and paper forfeiture Sir Rees was concerned about passed him by. There was embarrassment and awkwardness whenever Edward tried to enter into it, and all parties conspired to turn away his questions. These were not the quick raids of enforcement William Gibbons and Thomas made. It was as if Edward were explaining himself to me, as the picture moved on from Sir Rees, back to Edward’s own tour.

(Past)

We were playing the role of sheriffs, escheators and bailiffs. A rude introduction my tenants had to me, but at least these people could learn to treat me as a man, even if the high servants of my estates did not.

The fame of our party spread quickly. Having the people forced to guess where we may next be, and guessing wrong, came to be a game with real zest to it. It was in this I first realised the value of Father Joseph. He made it his business to make contact with certain of the religious houses, with people he knew. These good men of the cloth were invaluable. Twice they acted as night guides when Thomas deemed it prudent to make a rapid move. We slept in their houses more than once.

At the time I quite took it for granted the good men of the Church would give us such special help. Since then I’ve come to think it was something special about Father Joseph.

On two occasions we found stewards who defaulted in paying what they actually received from the tenants. Interviews with these stewards were conducted by William. I came to admire and respect the sharp brain of this man, trained as a lawyer but without titles, who could command the respect of people like Lady Margaret. I also learned to respect the importance of the records William made. When he had not the records himself he demanded them from the stewards, when they were missing completely he investigated of the tenants themselves. He never took anything at face value. He had a knack of putting people in the position of explaining themselves, a knack I never quite learnt.

There was one day Master Gibbons declared a holiday. Truly a great burden fell on him for there were many petty squabbles and arguments for him to settle. The conflicting testimony before William’s courts was the source of much valuable information, to supply missing titles and gain acknowledgement of the lordships’ rights. But it wasn’t always easy for him to end these squabbles favourably to the estates. The previous day we’d seen him worn out. Rubbing his eyes at the yards of writing and endless complaints, I heard him excuse a tenant’s rent in a way he’d never

do normally. We were amazed. So this day I had a holiday, I was allowed to ride out alone.

The country was rough and hilly and scarcely inhabited. For all it was green and well washed by constant rains the soil was light and stony and would blow away in dry weather. The ride didn't lift my spirits, as I looked in vain for amusement. Perhaps it was the lack of people that made me bored. It made me notice the little girl by the roadside. She was sitting at a place where a narrow track joined the main way I was travelling, she could have been no more than nine years old. When she saw me she jumped up, she went on jumping up and down and waving to me in excitement till I stopped. Before I could speak she called to me by name.

"You're Lord Stafford. My great grandma sent me to fetch you."

My mouth hung open, truly. No one knew me here. Thomas was most careful not to let me ride alone anywhere where I should be known.

I let myself down from the horse's back.

"Who are you, little girl? Where did you hear my name?"

"Come'n, great granny sent me to fetch you. She's very old."

The second part was said very confidentially but the girl would say no more. She just grabbed my hand and pulled me up the track after her. I laughed, at least it was diversion, and I swung her up into my saddle. Walking beside her we went up that narrow lane that so clearly went to her great granny's house.

I started out light of heart and easy of spirit; I don't know why for I wouldn't normally obey such a little girl's summons. As we went the track became more and more oppressive and I turned about me looking for ambush; it was silly for there was nothing there to fear, just a weary slog on foot.

It must have been over a mile, up a hill and down into a valley. There wasn't a soul to be seen, we might have fallen off the edge of the World for all anyone would know. I regretted the coming; I wouldn't have done it if I'd known the distance. All this to see some cottager and at her bidding too. Why in the name of God should I want to hear this old crone?

Doubts and fears assailed me, what bewitchment brought me into such a wilderness? This dark haired little girl could truly be a witch's weird. Why did I come with her? It was all done in a moment, without a thought. My sober mind nearly turned me back before the little girl waved our arrival.

At first you couldn't see the house. It was built low against the hillside, made of the same roughhewn stone that made the field walls. The roof was an ancient dense thatch, full of moss and decay.

The little girl jumped down with a cry and ran indoors. I followed slowly, stooping to get inside. There was a smell of sheep's wool, damp and cooking and a bent old woman standing by a kettle over the fire. You could barely see for the poor light from the window and the steam from the kettle.

She spoke without turning, the years hanging heavy on her. I've never seen anyone who looked so old.

"Sit down young master. That's all little Mair, you can run along now."

And she went back to her ministering over the fire; speaking not another word.

I sat as I was bidden and looked around me. There was little to see, just the sparse trappings of a cottager's life, and some signs of the healer's art. They made me nervous; they were the mark of witchcraft. Time stretched out in silence till I made to speak to her, but it was she who spoke first.

"You wonder that I know you? Young people are always in a rush, too quick to know anything."

More time passed and I bided in patience.

"I was born long, long ago. I frighten people by my age. They say 't isn't natural.

I was born in the reign of the first king Henry; he whose son killed Lord Hotspur and fought Owain Glyn Dwr. My own father was killed in the fighting, before I was even born and I was sent to be brought up in a nunnery. What do you think of that? The nuns christened me Mary and brought me up and taught me book learning before I ran away.

"T is all long, long ago when I was a girl."

The ancient woman still stirred her brew over the fire. It was long ago indeed she'd been a girl. Thomas had taught me about the Welsh princes and Owain Glyn Dwr, who rose against the English. Glyn Dwr fought for the king but Henry Hotspur died with the rebels at the battle of Shrewsbury, fighting against my great, great grandfather, Earl Edmund.

How could any soul live so long in this World?

She turned and looked at me, her bent old back somehow straightened.

"I've lived these years to speak now. Mark my words for Old Mair will be gone by tomorrow morn. 'T is time I saw my family, all long gone.

If a prince would do God's will let him first come to his own."

There was a pause before she went on,

"I mean you, Sir Edward,"

For a time it had been as if Old Mair, for that is the Welsh for Mary, was young and firm. Now her straightened back bent again and she collapsed onto a chair, overtaken by a fit of coughing. I made to help her but she waved me away.

"Go now with God's blessing or stay and be cursed. 'T is my time."

Much as I would help there was nothing to be done and I went the way I came. It wasn't the day I'd intended. What did Old Mair mean to call me a prince?

This, like all the rest, I told to Angharad, first over the phone, and then when Debbie and I went to see her that weekend. She and I agreed, Sir Reginald's obscure words and the nervous admission from Sir Rees confirmed my own conclusions about the management of the estates.

"If I'd been Edward I'd have wanted to meet all the estate officers, the ones on the ground. I'd have wanted to talk to them privately."

Angharad pursed her lips, waiting for me to say more.

"Maybe Edward didn't see what was going on; maybe he couldn't have done anything about it. I think the truth is, he didn't care.

I think Sir Rees' advice was right, if he showed the same boldness against other tenants directly, that he showed against Dafydd Pwyll, he could easily have Wales against him. But if he showed himself to be their true good lord he could have brought those responsible for fraud out into the open."

Angharad put her drink down. She crossed the room to me; she even patted me on the shoulder.

"My, you have learnt something."

I didn't quite know how to take that, and after it, I didn't know what to say about an oddity like Old Mair. I glossed over what I couldn't explain, not wanting to say,

"I don't know."

(Past)

Eventually, when we'd been away from home for three months, Thomas declared our enterprise no longer safe. Master William agreed, we'd done more than we set out to do and further returns would be less and less. The truth was we were all tired. Early one morning we turned our horses on the first leg of our homeward journey. It was not yet dawn, we wanted to make as much distance as we could before the rest of the World roused itself.

There was such varied force of the vividness in these images. There must be some reason why some images are totally compelling while others are vague and some just will not come at all.

Apart from Pywll I can't bring the names of any tenants to mind; I suppose, to Edward, they didn't matter. I can't remember the names of the farms nor the manors. I think even Edward lost track, as events whirled by him. It's maddening not to be able to give you more details. This Welsh trip ought to be worth a book in itself, if only I could grasp it!

What of the old crone who gave Edward her dying words? What did she mean? I worked out she must have been 89 years old; extraordinarily old for the times but not supernaturally so. How did she know Edward's name? How had she known he would pass by the end of her track on that particular day? Why did he go to see her?

Christmas 1492 was such a happy time for Edward; he was among those he loved. This spring was so very different, the need for touring estates was prompted by a "whistle blower", possibly even more than just John Corbett alone, a tissue of abuse was being revealed that ran all the way from tenants to Lady Margaret herself. Yet Edward didn't want to see it, this tour flicks in and out of consciousness leaving only a sense of wasting time. Yet if Edward had wanted to see, there was so much for him to learn, how feudal tenure worked, how the loyalty of those his family had ruled for centuries could still be rekindled, if only he'd wanted to see.

There's a trace of memory, of Edward watching William struggle with a complicated case of a broken duty to keep a fence, it cost the loss of a pig. The details are gone in laughter at Master Gibbons' discomfort, the only time anything really got the better of him. There are flavours, impressions of that tour, almost a taste, of the places and people. The different smell of the soil, the different quality of sound in the hills of Wales, the feel of plain, unpolished furniture and the taste of the beer, these things all remain.

Chapter 13 - Unhappy Differences

There's something odd in this chapter. You see, where tension surrounds my channelling I know something special is about to happen. I had that feeling now, but important information just would not come. I trawled for it, but the silence remained obdurate. Even talking to Angharad, I couldn't work out why, but if events had only gone differently so might Edward's life, and mine.

The tension was an energy built up by emotion, like that night Edward and Eadie first became lovers, yet here there's a difference, it concerns someone else, someone very powerful in Edward's future. He must have known about her, but it's as if he shut her out of his mind.

(Past)

From somewhere I caught a snatch of conversation between Lady Margaret and Thomas, before the departure for Wales.

"I want you to go on there on your way back, even though it is a great distance from your route."

Lady Margaret was almost thinking out loud,

"But it is needful. If your expedition is a success, as I pray God it will be, you shall have cause to fear robbers. You will be expected to make for one of our houses and we would have further arrangements to provide for you from there. This way, no one will know what to think.

Though mind me, Thomas, you are to bring the money here, yourself, as quickly as you can. Leave Edward there, the change will do him good and it's high time he looked to his future.

...The matter is settled. I have already written, they are to expect you before Whit."

Thomas didn't like anyone interfering with his arrangements. This time he had no choice. Through his annoyance I missed some of the words, something about honouring a contract made for Lady Margaret's benefit.

I'm confused about this destination. It might have been the home of my lord of March or one of the Marcher lords. No name, not even a hint, will come, with Edward's vague sense of geography, it's difficult. Nevertheless, the visit was paid.

(Past)

The castle looked like a fortress, sufficient to protect against a besieging army, but its solidity was there only to impress. Not like Stafford, designed skilfully and scientifically with fields of fire in mind, the haven for a substantial force capable of fighting back. Nor was it like Sheen or Coldharbour, built with no thought for defence at all. This place was like a massive prison, yet inside it was roomy and luxurious. There were rich tapestries on the walls, beautiful carvings on chests and tables and vivid frescoes in the staterooms. All the living rooms were richly furnished, making an effect much grander and more glittering than Stafford, for Stafford hadn't been a seat of power for many years.

My lord greeted us in person. He directed for the needs of horses and servants himself and allotted the private chambers. Mine was princely, more luxurious even than the public rooms; it had light on three sides, it was impossible not to be flattered.

There were dispositions to be made and business to be transacted. Master Gibbons had letters from Lady Margaret, he took these to my lord (Percy?) in private, Thomas and Father Joseph each had their own concerns, I found myself alone.

In my imagination the castle was a magical place and the chance to explore it not to be missed. It amazed me so much life could be got into the space of the castle and yet leave room for such wealth.

The castle drew Edward in, as if bewitching him, and under it tugged a sense of danger. As I meditated, tension snapped me into Edward's senses, to see what happened through his eyes.

(Past)

I found myself in the armoury, eyeing a rack of swords. It came about by chance, just by wandering about.

"Well boy, what do you think?"

The voice belonged to a tall, thin man of about twenty years. I hadn't heard him come in.

"Do you see anything you'd like to try?"

On matters of arms I am simple in my enthusiasm. The swords in the rack weren't dress swords, nor yet practice swords; they were there for the muster in time of war. General issue swords are not the best swords, they're not tailored to the height or weight or hand of the swordsman, but they are for serious business all the same.

"Why yes."

Without turning or thinking I selected a sword and drew it from the rack. Turning then I faced my questioner.

"It would be a shame not to put that sword to the best test. Come with me!"

There was a smile, even a smirk on his face, as he led the way, along passages, down stairs, through an open courtyard to an enclosed space, a flour store, still within the main buildings of the castle. I didn't question his smirk, I didn't even think about it.

"Now boy; let's see what you're made of."

For the first time I looked into his eyes. What I saw, with dawning horror, was nothing less than pure hate. Suddenly I was confronted by a dangerous enemy, sword in hand; no general issue, very much tailor made. What made me look into his eyes, to see that look, I don't know. There was an eagerness about him, like a bird of prey, about to fall to quarry.

He chose the place well, no one would see, no one would hear, no one would come. It was between us.

My sword was a good choice; it was well made and had good balance. Many swords in these days, stored against the retreating risk of emergency, are clumsy and difficult, never intended for real use. I slipped my cloak from my shoulders to hold in my left hand, I remembered Thomas saying, "An empty hand is a dead hand".

The stranger advanced, his sword held before him. This was surely a gesture of arrogance. In such a stance there could be neither attack nor defence.

I attacked obliquely, taking his opposing sword to the side. With my left fist, hindered by my cloak, I gave him a punch. It was a blow as hard as I could make it but not one to hurt. Had I a knife in my hand and been prepared to use it, it would all have ended then. I leapt back smiling, expecting his praise and acknowledgement.

But this stranger didn't smile.

"You shall pay for that."

And he drew a deadly looking knife for his own left hand; it was too long for a dagger, too heavy for a throwing knife, a vicious thing for our encounter. My cloak was thin, no protection against knife or sword. Now my chances were unhappy, I took a step back.

“Now we shall see.”

This time I waited, ready to go right or left, poised on the balls of my feet, needing to stay clear of that knife.

The attack came and I parried, stepping smartly to the left, to avoid the knife, to gain space.

An attack again and again the same defence. We had now changed places. I knew the next attack would look the same but it would be differently balanced, if I played the same game again this time I would have that knife between my ribs. I looked in his eye and beyond all doubt I saw his lust to kill, and a cunning that said he could.

What could I do? I'd been several times through the choices for sword against sword and knife, all of them called for some redeeming advantage; I had none, yet he had height and reach. I moved slightly, to encourage an attack one way not the other, and let my sword point drop.

A thrust again, my sword point flicked up to block and I rushed in with a shoulder charge. Had we been equally matched he must have gone down, as it was he staggered back. I had to leap away before he could recover enough to use the knife.

In the pause which followed I reckoned furiously. I can't remember being scared, though I should have been. He was better armed, taller and stronger, stronger beyond measure; if we went on like this I must surely lose. You could see him recover confidence for the second time. I wanted to bring this folly to an end. The man looked out of his senses. I wanted to cry out,

“Stop. You're frightening me. It isn't supposed to be for real.”

I could of course, I could have said that, but it would've been dishonour. I could try to force my way out of the flour store: I'd have to work him back and left some twenty feet with no clear way to get position on the door and yet not be pinned to it. Unhappily the door was shut. I attacked and attacked again each time breaking away before our swords could lock.

Would he have learned to guess the change or was he too pleased with himself? I took my chance, praying to God. The third time my attack looked the same but it was sloppy. Not a thrust but a broad swing against his sword. It must have looked like a gift and he smiled broadly. It was child's play to block and gave every chance in the counter-attack. I waited for the blocking move; it was late to come but if he'd struck all would have been ended. As it came I dropped my sword point, bringing the hilt and my elbow up, as if it were backhanded, to reverse the swing. It caught the edge of his sword, unbalancing him, turning him around. Now behind the stranger, my left hand grabbed frantically for that dangerous knife.

With my knee in his back we went sprawling and staggering. I found the knife blade and the hand holding it and I pulled with all my strength. The knife went clattering away across the floor and the stranger went staggering on in the direction he was facing. It left him no chance to recover the knife, while I was miraculously still standing and ready to fight.

He turned to face me, in the uncertain light I could not be sure, but now the stranger looked pale and frightened. Was it guilt? That I might serve him as he tried to serve me? He hesitated; then went for the door, I didn't try to stop him.

A minute or two went by when nothing happened. Then I began to search for the knife. As I came out into the daylight, with that rich blade, I felt like an old man.

At the table that night I was seated next to my lady, her lord on the other side. The stranger of that afternoon was a little way off, diagonally opposite me. Father Joseph and Thomas were there with some dozen or so newly met strangers.

I recounted my tale as soon as I could to Thomas, that afternoon. I told it to Thomas and Father Joseph both. Thomas turned pale but it was Father Joseph who acted, before Thomas could say a word.

“Edward it’s time I spoke to you. I know Master Lewkenor will forgive me if I borrow you for a moment.”

I was led away into a side chamber; by chance it was the castle’s family chapel.

“I know our host will not mind if we use this holy place for a little worldly talk.”

The hand which guided my elbow fell to Father Joseph’s side.

“There is business between the Church, your family and this house. It is business about your future and it is now long overdue. It is about a contract made by Lady Margaret with the full blessing of the Church. I do not want his lordship embarrassed.”

Father Joseph sighed.

“Tales of breach of courtesy within these walls would have a very bad effect just now.

Were you at any time in certain peril?

Now look at me, and tell me truly, can you swear this man would have killed you?”

I dropped my eyes. Had it, after all, been a childish fear?

“No Father.”

“I think I know the man who fought you. He’s a nobleman and he’s of this house. You will certainly meet him again but do not fear. I doubt he’ll cross swords with you again.”

My expression must have spoken for me for Father Joseph smiled.

“You may be proud, you acquitted yourself well. It’s no more than Thomas taught you.

Do you agree it may have been no more than sport?”

I had no choice but to agree.

“I will tell Master Lewkenor so; he will be pleased to hear it.”

But now, this evening, at table, surely the fight couldn’t go without something being said.

“I’m sorry, Edward, my niece, Alianore isn’t here.”

It was my lord speaking.

“She’s a wilful girl, for that matter the whole family, Eh?”

He spoke as if I should know and I tried to show my agreement without being rude.

“She’s taken it into her head to be ill tonight. Pity, you haven’t had the chance to meet her.

Still, you have met my cousin’s boy.”

My lord pointed at the same stranger of the fight.

“He and she practically grew up together; they’re as close as peas in a pod.”

The stranger might have been full-grown but he blushed to the roots of his hair. It showed off his general good looks.

“Indeed, my lord?”

I’d been toying with that knife, it was still about me.

“I believe I have something of his.”

The words and the knife were out at the same time and before I could give them any thought. As soon as they were some sixth sense made me regret it. I went on with as much humility as I could find but having started badly I only made matters worse.

“I believe, sir, this is yours.”

It was passed down the table, but he refused it.

“No, Sir Edward, it’s none of mine.”

The knife was passed back and I was left holding it, nonplussed, until Thomas took it.

“A fine blade, speaking as a soldier. I shouldn’t like to face it, nor, as its owner, to lose it.”

Thomas mused aloud as he turned it in his hand. He let both me and the boy down the table know he remembered my story.

“Perhaps my lord should keep it safe till it be peaceably claimed.”

With that it was handed to our host and the incident closed. Closed but for the look of hate in the face of the knife’s owner.

I did not know what more to say or do or how to act but to remember Thomas’s words as we left the hall.

“Careful Edward, you’ve made an enemy.”

Several things puzzled me about this. First was Alianore. I’d heard her name before, or rather Edward had, but I didn’t know who she was. I knew it was she who was important, not the man in the fight, but, with nothing to go on, I couldn’t say why. It struck a jarring note, somewhere things were going on beyond Edward’s control.

I had, in fact, read the name before, but history books spell it differently and I had not recognised it. I went back to the local library and the Dictionary of National Biography confirmed, this was Alianore Percy of whom you will hear more. I hope, dear reader, to vex you in this for I shall not tell you. Edward didn’t have the Dictionary so why should you? You’ll just have to wait until he finds out, unless, of course, you want to go to the library yourself.

There’s a second unsettling point. I’ve tried that sword manoeuvre which saved Edward’s life (and, yes, I’m sure it did save his life). Of course, I used a walking-stick rather than a sword, but no matter how I tried, it is impossible to achieve what Edward did. Yet, not only did I watch him do it, it’s as if I was him as he did it. There’s a paradox, it happened yet it couldn’t be done.

The next time I slipped into Edward’s life the contrast between his life and my armchair couldn’t have been greater.

(Past)

Thomas left the following morning. A messenger arrived from Lady Margaret and Thomas went within the hour. He didn’t say what it was about and nobody knew.

It was one more thing and I didn’t like to lose Thomas; he was a link with home and Eadie, so much more to me than you could know. Everyone said it would likely take much more than two weeks before he’d be back. It left me little joy and no entertainment but for the kindness of my lord.

So my thoughts ran as I let them idle, walking my horse down this stony road towards an inn, crouched in the valley, promising shade from the sun baking down from a clear blue sky. It was one of those rare hot days that presage an early summer, with the buzz of insects and the breath of nature.

There was still nothing to be seen of the Lady Alianore and I thought she must be a sulky child or wilful indeed. In all these days she's appeared not once, not for hawking, nor for riding, not even by my lord's coaxing. Perhaps there's something greatly wrong with her that she's scared to show her face. My lord's embarrassed and has been generous but, at last, I took to exploring the countryside on a borrowed horse. Thomas took mine as part of the string carrying the treasure of our rents.

The ale-house suits the day. I looked around it with the same idle curiosity I had for all this strange country. Yet the bright light made every detail sharp and vivid. It made solid bars, with dust dancing in them, to fall in shafts through the windows. The fields and road and woods beyond had all been freshly washed in that light and hurt the eyes to look on.

The greatest sense of the inn was wood. With oak and elm in the floor and the beams and the panelling of the walls, only in the middle of the room, carried between great oak beams, was there any relief, given by the clean white of a plaster and lath partition, that and the dull brick of a rich fireplace on the end wall. It was all the very spirit of a country inn: unlike the city by its clean air, and bird song in place of hawkers' cries.

The room was full of tables, chairs and stools, with an enormous dresser to my left, carrying most of the landlord's plates. I sat before a small table with a window to my back and the open door before me. There was a doorway to my left leading to the private rooms of the house and, to my right, on the other side of the partition lay the fireplace, now spread with flowers.

Everything was comfortable and the timbers of the inn stretched and groaned with me as I ate. There was a leather tankard of beer at my side and I was at peace after the morning's ride.

The maid who brought my beer had just left when five men came in. They were framed against the sunlight as they walked through the doorway, only to be lost again in the soft light of the room. They were armed and confident and didn't look like farmers, though they clearly knew the place. They caught my attention.

Two stayed by the door while one went behind the partition, to my right. The other two came straight towards me. It looked like the action of soldiers and I expected the one out of sight to come at me from behind the partition. There was no doubt their business was with me.

The two coming towards me started a conversation.

"Well, what have we here?"

"D'know. Looks like a young lordling, look at them fancy boots."

The tone was insolent by intention; it thrust contempt at me like a challenge.

"I 'spect he has that horse outside...I'd like a horse like that."

I picked up my beer with my left hand and moved my stool back. It was as well to be on a stool, not trapped in a chair; it saved the need to rise until they were on top of me. It was comforting to feel the weight of Duke Henry's Sword at my side; since the flour store I'd hardly been anywhere without it. But the truth was I felt a sick feeling, a feeling I'd felt only once before, when faced by that man in my lord's castle.

The one on the left pulled the knife he'd been toying with out of his belt.

It was time to rise.

I threw my beer in his face as the other started to draw his sword. I stepped back. Turning, the one who'd gone behind the partition was coming from my right, sword in hand. I'd carried my stool with me as I rose; now I stepped into him, jamming the

stool into him, taking his sword with the blow, knocking him backwards off his feet. He must have cracked his head on a table's edge as he fell, for he lay there, stunned.

I vividly remember leaping onto a table and drawing my own sword. Stepping from table to table, sword and knife in hand, trying to fly, going round the partition to come to the door from there.

I was confronted by three of them, the one from in front, who'd not been able to reach me, and the two from the door. The one with beer in his face was coming up from behind, still rubbing his eyes. They were all standing on the floor, I above.

The one to my left couldn't wield his sword well for the beam holding the partition. I kicked at his face and he stepped back.

There was no time to think, only to keep moving. I thrust at the middle one, jumping down from the table as I did it. The thrust went clean through his guard and my sword point sank deep into his chest. I know a sword is made to do exactly what my sword did, but to see the blade disappear inside your enemy and hear the dreadful sucking noise as it comes out, and see the welling life flow and the look of shock in the man's face. Once it's done you're helpless and it's no good that you didn't want it.

I had to pull the blade out with both hands, and do it in a moment, with all the force I could. I had to bring the sword hilt back, with all my might, to smash backhanded into the face of the one on the right. I had to, with all speed, to stop his sword swing slicing through my middle.

I watched consciousness leave his eyes before he fell backwards, against the wall. There had been my entire weight behind the quarter of an inch of metal which hit him, just above the bridge of his nose. I thought I heard bone crack.

There were two still standing on my left. I turned to face them. We all paused for a moment before any attack could be made on either side. Decision wavered, and then they fled, the one at the back still shaking beer from his hair. I confess to my own shaking as I watched them go.

There were sounds from the back of the room. The one I'd hit with the stool now stood, undecided. Time passed in stillness, then he, too, scuttled round the other side of the partition and out. I let him go.

I remembered what Thomas had taught. The use of the sword is about speed and balance. Speed and balance are everything; against a soldier you need balance, against a farmer, speed. Duke Henry's Sword knew its place in my hand, it had been bloodied, and all I'd needed was speed.

There was an anti-climax. No one had shown me what to do next. It all happened so suddenly, so quick. In God's Mercy I don't know what prepared me for the attack of those men. Why I'd even taken notice of them as they came in. Perhaps it was Thomas's training always to expect trouble.

My trembling legs would hold me no more, I sat down heavily.

Had I done too much? Had it been just?

I couldn't sit for long and got up and recovered my knife from the floor, needing to move.

I looked out through the doorway. The survivors were gone. My horse stood, still and tranquil, for her nothing had happened. Back inside stood the serving maid, stock still and ashen. Behind her came mine host, summoned by the maid's cry.

"He's dead,"

The innkeeper pronounced it as a matter of fact, as he bent over the man who'd taken my sword thrust.

He seemed almost bored. I'd never seen a dead man before. He couldn't be dead, there was so little blood. It was difficult to speak. I tried to steady myself and make my voice firm.

"Who is he?"

"Oh! Don't worry yourself, he's a troublemaker. He would have got himself hanged last sessions for a man what died in a fight but nobody'd bring the charge.

He lives on his own, about five mile from here, by doin' what he can. Some say he's a thief."

"Here,

Said the innkeeper, bending over the other. The man still had his back propped against the wall, eyes and mouth open but empty of all his senses.

"This un ain't dead yet but soon will be." Rising, with the weariness of his years the innkeeper turned his eyes on me.

"So who are you?"

I put my sword and knife away and gulped. I was a stranger here; I'd brought death to this innkeeper's house. He might look kindly on these people's relatives, for all he seemed not to care.

"Edward Stafford, guest at..."

I tried to think of the place name but I didn't have time to bother.

"I know your sort. Well, you made a good butcher's job, young as you are."

"I'm sorry."

I sat down once more, trying to keep a sob from my voice and trembling from my body.

"They came at me. Those and three others; no one else was here."

"Yes, well... You did right to defend yourself against the likes of these."

There seemed to be some expectancy in the air and I pulled open my purse.

"Let me pay for my food.

I don't know what's to be done about these men, and I pointed at the two still figures, as I handed over two coins, I remember, they were two angels.

I should give you money to take care of them."

He looked at the angels but whether enough or too little I couldn't tell. He put them away without comment.

"Don't worry yourself, I'll send to his lordship when I have the time."

I went back to the castle; there was nothing else I could do.

I went straight to our host, what else could I do?

His lordship was concerned and considerate throughout my whole story and when it was done he sent for Master Gibbons. William was given a potted history; he held my eyes as I retold it. At the end he asked some pointed questions and I was dismissed to my room.

I thought and thought going over that fight endlessly in my mind before Master William summoned me to him.

"Master Gibbons, I've killed a man!"

"Very possibly two."

There was a thin smile on his lips as he went on,

"At least you've proved yourself in arms.

It isn't good for the nobility to brawl with commoners.

Oh! I know it's done. But everyone works in the belief they'll leave you alone if you leave them alone. From many years painful experience they've learned to stay out of noble fights and you owe them the same.

But have you no idea what it was about?"

William seemed pleased I honestly didn't know.

"His lordship has sent out to enquire about these ruffians: but I think you'll hear no more. Indeed, it's better you should not.

I shall limit you, Edward, by the power I have from Lady Margaret, you shall go no further than one mile from here without my leave."

Howbeit Master Gibbons' smile was kind there was no more to say, and so it was.

There are two footnotes to add; first, I was struck by the "two angels". They turned out to be coins minted by Edward IV, worth 6/8d., one half of a mark and one third of a pound; they were very useful coins. A whole mark was many times too much for the price of a meal but surely not enough for the price of a life. What a strange name for Edward's blood money.

Second was the question of where all this took place, I couldn't be sure from channelling. My guess, which is mere rational thought, puts Edward in the Scottish marches, not those of Wales. The castle might then be that of [Alnwick](#), in Northumberland; if it was, Thomas could have returned to London by sea, a much safer course than travel by land.

Chapter 14 - Separation

I've been through the next scenes with the help of Angharad, for the first time using someone else's mediumship. I needed advice and understanding; first, we have the puzzle of the last chapter's fights.

The next two days of Edward's life were filled with the consternation of what happened. Edward guarded his emotions with care. No one else saw that fight, on top of being amongst strangers, there came a fear of not being believed.

Edward himself couldn't credit that he beat an attack by five men, in so many seconds, killing two (for the second did indeed die) without taking a scratch himself. How could anyone be expected to believe it? He checked himself to be sure he was still alive. How could these awful complexities have come about?

The afternoon, two days after the attack, came to me with great vividness.

(Past)

The afternoon was sunny, almost summer. A dog in the house befriended me, his name was Zeus and he was growing too old for work with the huntsman. I knew how he felt; I too had no one to turn to. We went out into the woods to be alone. I played with him, and threw him sticks and made him run and kicked at him if he didn't run. And I cried out and beat my chest when we were safe alone, deep in the woodland's peace. And when this did no good I sat down and I wept.

It wasn't just the guilt of killing or the sickening memory of death.

It wasn't just the unfriendliness, the dislike of nearly everyone I've seen since leaving home.

The tenants I so fondly thought of as my grateful subjects had to be compelled to pay their just debts, sometimes fearful, always resentful. This Lady Alianore so disliked me she wouldn't even meet me. She'd rather stay a prisoner in her own room, even though she knew nothing about me. Her cousin hated me. These ruffians tried to kill me. Even Thomas deserted me. What had I done to any of them? Why should they all use me so?

My mind ran round and round like a cornered animal. I was driven back, back in my mind, into my forgotten childhood when people wanted to kill me then. When we were on the run, when Papa was killed, this is what it felt like now.

Why should people hate me?

Why should anyone want to hurt me as these people did?

It was as if I were caught in a spider's web of malice.

I cried out.

I frightened the dog. In avoiding my anger he hurt himself and now crouched down, whimpering. He brought me back to the World. I wanted no one hurt, not even this dog. First in concern and then in relief I searched for his injury; there was nothing worse than a thorn in his paw.

The woods made me think of Eadie. Woodland was always so much her home. I wished and wished I could go home to her.

I was heart sick for want of Eadie, yet, on the morning I left, even she said,
"I Hate You!"

She was half my life. For as long as memory would stretch there was hardly a day when she wasn't there. When I didn't know what to do or say I looked at her and often she giggled and we'd burst out laughing.

There was another day I remember, at Sheen, with another dog and with Eadie. We walked through the woodland, and the hound wouldn't obey; he kept chasing

rabbits. It finished up with the dog chasing rabbits, me chasing the dog and Eadie sitting on a field gate, laughing at both of us. It didn't matter the dog didn't catch the rabbits, nor I the dog. We were all happy.

I know we exasperated Aletia and half the household but they loved us, didn't they? Why should anyone want to keep us apart? I fell to picking the woodland flowers, thinking of other days I'd done the same thing in woods like these, with Eadie.

Tears kept rolling down my cheeks, I couldn't stop them. Hours passed, I don't know how many.

Eventually I had the sense it was growing late; alone, apart from Zeus, in the woodland stillness, quiet, but for my sobs. I pulled myself together and looked around, I was entirely lost.

At one time, with Eadie, this would have been a great adventure. We would have felt it marked our lives and talked about it often. Now I just looked around me, not trusting Zeus' sense of direction, at the shape of the land and where I thought the sun might be and where I might expect to find a path. Sooner or later we would find a way home and so it was we came upon a path, we walked along it, hopeful it would lead back to the castle.

After a time we came to a clearing with a small log building at the centre of it, a curl of smoke came from the smoke-hole in its roof and horses were grazing outside. As I watched three men came out from that cottage. It was a long way off and maybe it was a trick of my mind, yet I'm sure they were the men I met in the alehouse!

It was too far away for me to do anything. By the time I rushed up they'd ridden off. Just as well, since I'd nothing better at my belt than a hunting knife. I went up to the building, quietly. For what reason it couldn't be said but I didn't try the door. Instead, like some sneak thief, I slipped round the side, to a window. There was no glass, whilst nothing could be seen through the sacking, I heard well enough.

"Why didn't you kill him! The murderer!"

It was a woman's voice, it sounded young and quavering with emotion. It was answered by the firmer voice of a man,

"You think I didn't try?"

And you did no better! And what if we're found out? Suppose those men tell?"

"You think they would, after what I said I'd do to them? I'm harder than you, remember?"

The vividness of the image faded. No longer did the scene move as if through Edward's eyes. Just leaving vague impressions.

There were sounds of movement and the owners of those voices must have gone. After that all was quiet.

Edward, too, went in due time.

He was puzzled, was the man's voice that of Alianore's cousin, the man in the flour store? Edward didn't know what to make of it. At least it diverted him from self-pity and he pulled himself together on the walk back to the castle, Zeus trotting obediently at his side.

By the time he got back he was almost cheerful.

Angharad and I didn't shrug it off as Edward had done. And now it's time to tell you how she helped me, it was very strange. I phoned Angharad and we'd discuss my visions, but first I'd describe them. To start with I thought my descriptions must

simply be marvellous. She'd pick up on them right away. Then I realised something else was happening.

Angharad would listen and my quiet words would send her into trance. As I carried on talking, she'd follow me into seeing Edward herself. She followed me into the actual scenes. She didn't just hear me; she saw it with me, sometimes ahead of me. She has amazing sensitivity.

It suddenly became clear when Angharad told me something about this last scene, a thing I'd not told her. It would have been easy to miss it but I stopped her, it brought both of us up short.

All she would say was,

"But I know there was sacking at the windows, one at the back and one on each side."

We were silent for a long time, thinking about the implications of what she said. Finally I told her, "Go on."

She took up the story where I left it, describing that queer little woodsman's hut; she even told me what the conspirators said.

Since then we've looked at Edward together, sometimes she's even looked at things I couldn't find, but that's leaping ahead, almost to the end of the book.

At first I was huffy; my descriptions were so scintillating they were putting her to sleep, well, of course, not quite.

Our debate, about that eavesdropping and Edward's despair alone in the woods, was animated.

We agreed, the woman's voice was that of the missing Lady Alianore, and the man was indeed her cousin. It was easy to guess he was her lover, why else would he risk his life with a perfect stranger? And the men who left? They were assassins hired to succeed where the young man failed.

I've tried to identify this man, he was Alianore's cousin; it should have been easy. I've tried but failed; we shall have to spare his blushes and he shall stay anonymous.

What threat did Alianore see in Edward that she wanted him dead? Just as I will not yet tell you Alianore's place in history, so you'll have to wait for her reason to incite men to murder.

Eventually we returned to Edward.

(Past)

In the courtyard there was bustle; one of the servants stopped me.

"Master Lewkenor's back, he's in the stables, in the tack room."

I let out a whoop and raced for the stables.

All was darkness in the tack room and at first I didn't see Thomas, but there he was and I let out a loud, heart-felt greeting. I could see him now, standing at the other end of the room. In his hand the handle of a long horse-whip, the sort used for schooling in the ménage.

I started to rush towards him; then something made me stop.

"So, I find you're a killer!"

My jaw fell, aghast.

"I taught you to stay alive on the battlefields of Europe, to fight against your peers, nobles and knights with advantages equal to your own.

How do you repay me?

By killing ploughmen!"

The whip suddenly twitched in Thomas's hand. Suddenly it came alive. The whole length of it lifted from the floor and the metal tang curved in at my eyes, singing as it cut through the air.

My left hand went up by instinct, just in time to catch the whip's edge round my wrist, I bear the mark still, just in time to save my eyes.

Thomas threw down the handle and stalked past me into the courtyard.

I sat down on a bale of hay, shaking.

I wept,

Openly and in despair.

Nobody came.

It was dark when I left the stable and went back to the living quarters. I wanted nobody to see my blotchy face or hear my unsteady voice. Never in all imagination could anyone be as homesick as at this moment.

When I got to my room Master Gibbons was there.

He had the room brightly lit and I could see a kindness and, perhaps, pity in his face. He sat me down on the bed and stood before me.

"After he saw you Thomas came to me. He explained what he heard about your fight and how he tried to whip you.

I told him your story as you told it to me.

You must understand, Edward, the countryside is rife with the story and not everyone takes your part. That's why I kept you by the castle. No doubt Thomas heard some malice.

Having heard me, believe me Edward, Thomas is heartily sorry and begs your forgiveness."

I looked up at this and smiled thinly but Master William was not yet done.

"There is more Edward, first something I do not understand.

Thomas requires me to remind you: the sword you have at your side is not for common use. Thomas seems to think it isn't even to be used for your own necessary defence; but he allows, you might not have understood, and I am bound to add, for myself, neither do I."

Master Williams's hand was on my shoulder, he was doing his best to comfort me, I know, but I just couldn't make sense of what he said.

"The other matter is something I do understand but have promised not to tell you. No doubt you will hear it soon enough from other lips. There is a matter which concerns you and about which Thomas has been put to much trouble. It may be you have not guessed and I will not tell you by speaking further."

William sat down on the bed beside me.

"Now Edward, I fear you must be grown up.

I believe you have grown up a great deal since I first saw you at Martin's Cross. I may tell you, you've pleased me by the way you've borne yourself. Now you must add patience to your virtues.

I believe you are homesick and miss your loved ones in Lady Margaret's household. You must wait longer to see them. Thomas brought your guardian's clear instructions; I'm to take you to Stafford.

Thomas is to go elsewhere, on other business. Indeed he's already left. I'm to give you his regrets."

I was bereft of all the people I loved in the World. Thomas gone again before I could know if we were truly reconciled; and further absence from Eadie - for who

knew how long. Thomas was as a father to me, Eadie was the only woman I should ever love. I couldn't speak.

Master William patted my hand.

"Sleep now, we shall leave in the morning. The sooner we're away from this place the better."

I was entirely alone.

It was William who persuaded Thomas to leave without speaking. After the dreadful scene in the stables Thomas couldn't be trusted not to tell the boy the true cause of his anger. If Edward knew the truth nothing could have stopped him rushing home, flying on the wings of angels. He felt pity, too, for Thomas who clearly loved the boy as his own, another honest man. With such people as Thomas and Edward there'd soon be no room in the World for lawyers, truly he, William Gibbons, was growing old.

The images of Edward on the journey to Stafford aren't intense. It's as if he'd given up and was living in a dream, in a sort of numbness. Impressions of Master William are a good deal clearer. Angharad and I wiled away that time arguing about what he said. What had Thomas meant that the Sword shouldn't be used?

(Past)

William Gibbons couldn't detain Edward at Stafford for long. There was no real reason for being there, and anyway, his heart wasn't in it. He couldn't help feeling sorry for the boy, such an innocent.

Whenever he thought about it William mentally shook his head; Edward would have to be a good deal harder and more devious if he were to fill his inheritance. Indeed he tried to teach Edward his own worldly wisdom; the wariness and carefulness of the man who has nothing to live by but his wits.

"Listen to me, Edward, if you remain so open and honest, if you continue to be ruled by your heart instead of your head, it will lead straight to the block."

But it did no good.

It was right for Edward to be at Stafford. His ancestors had come over with the Conqueror and made this their home. Since then sixteen generations of the family were associated with the town.

It was this last century which really threw the family to the top, really by chance. The bloody struggle between Lancaster and York wiped out practically everyone of English royal descent and left young Edward one of the very few old nobility remaining. His father's claim to royal blood undid him and it was only by good fortune, according to the popular tales, that Edward himself survived.

What a thin thread Edward's fortunes would hang by but for the guardianship of the King's mother and the chance of a good and safe marriage.

William would shake his head again. The boy didn't want to, wouldn't, hear any of this. He spoke from the heart and, if at all, could only be distracted by things of the moment; by arms of which William knew nothing, and hawking, for which he cared little. And yet, the boy did love books, perhaps there was hope.

In those days an armoury stood by the east gate in the town of Stafford. One night, many years before, the armourer was attacked by robbers. He'd been on his way home from the alehouse. He got as far as his workshop door when he was set upon from behind and his purse ripped from his belt. They stopped his cries with a knife blade and left him, bleeding on the ground, dying of his wounds. He left his

widow and family penniless. Duke Henry himself gave alms; it was part of de Stafford tradition.

The armourer and his wife had no children but they had taken in his sister and her boy when the child's father was killed in the wars between Lancaster and York. The boy, Adam, was put through apprenticeship to his uncle's trade and given the old workshop when he came of age, by Duke Henry's own order.

The Duke gave his patronage until the fateful rebellion and even after that young Adam had work from Lady Katherine. In these later days there was less repairing of arms and armour, Adam turned his hand to all sorts of smithing. Watching Adam at work was always part of Edward's visits to Stafford, a pleasure and a treat. Adam was more than a tenant, not quite a servant, he enjoyed his special relationship: indulging Edward as he had been indulged by the Duke in years gone by.

This time Edward's visit was like none before. This time he needed a friend. It was difficult for Edward to ask and, for all his greater years, Adam found it as hard to give the help Edward needed. They talked as friends over great leather bombards of beer, at Adam's workshop. There was nothing in Adam's experience to help him with the problems of the rich. It troubled him and he lay in bed, awake at night, asking his wife what he should say. Adam gave more help than he knew, for it was true friendship to care, so much better than the ready answers which were Master William's stock in trade.

Edward slowly recovered from the shock of his Welsh tour.

[Stafford castle](#) was old and cramped. It was built by Earl Edmund in the thirteen hundreds. The very building of this stone keep was testimony, in its day, to the power of its builder, but times had changed. Security was no longer painfully built up by generations of labour. These days, things moved so fast it was hard to keep up. Even so, if Edward would only listen to the shades of Stafford there was much for him to learn.

(Past)

"Explore the castle, Sir Edward. It's all your inheritance, the castle and everything in it."

Master William spoke in vexation with my pestering. I knew his feelings for we both fretted at this stay. I took him at his word.

Stafford castle had once been the seat of power. Montville, grown up around it, was full of industry, the outer bailey of the castle full of every craft, of war and peace. These days Montville was derelict, all but disappeared back into the town, and the outer wards of the castle itself stood deserted.

There are passages and stairs and dungeons in any castle. Places kept from view where no one goes in these days of neglect. The east tower has never been used in all my lifetime. Many years ago it was struck by lightning and partly ruined; I was kept from it as unsafe. This day there was no one to say me nay.

Never before had I entered the tower. I had the keys in my hand and it was easy to open the tower door. But I hesitated a long time, half way up the winding stone steps, before going on. I didn't know what lay above my head. As I did go on I was breaking out of the bounds set round me, which had limited me all my life.

At the top of the tower is a small room, it leads to a bed chamber hardly ever used and now reached through other parts of the house. As my foot touched the top stone of the tower stairs my breath caught at the realisation the room was there. There was a tremble of excitement at knowing what I should find, yet I didn't know what I

would find, just the weight of the years hanging hushed and expectant. My face was flushed from the climb.

Sun light streamed in golden shafts through shattered windows. Thick dust and the rubble of masonry and plaster covered everything so as to make you pick your way with care. I paused a long time on the threshold before venturing in. It wasn't fear for my footing which held me, but reverence for the hush of the room, where nothing had moved in all these years. There was no sound of animals, no noise of wind, and no bustle of Mankind.

A high backed chair stood against the wall, white with plaster and lumps of mortar; beyond that a partly fallen beam cut the air, fallen from the roof but wedged before it reached the floor; beyond that still, a pile of rolled up tapestries lay heavy under stone blocks fallen from above. The rich colours of a knight depicted in a window caught my eye and drew me across the room to look more closely. Only the head and part of the arms remained. I scrabbled in the glass on the floor to make out the rest of the picture.

Elsewhere lay the massive folds of the Cross of St. George draped carelessly where they'd fallen, mixed with some strange colours of France. My great grandfather had been Captain of Calais in the days of the last Lancastrian king. I pictured these colours rallying an army to the cry, "God and St. George!"

Pulling them aside, I found a box lying underneath. No one could have known it was there, shielded as it was by those great colours fallen together. With much heaving at the box and pushing at the cloth I pulled it clear. It was a plain thing for such massive weight and I thought it must be full, though full with what I couldn't guess.

It was simple work to open the box, to discover disappointment. Inside were several sealed scrolls I didn't trouble to open, the broken shaft of a spear, a single plate, a candle-stick and the only thing to catch my eye, a broad and shallow cup. For all its plainness the cup had a simple beauty that made it difficult to put it down. I found myself filled with a great happiness, sat on the floor and dreaming of France in the days of Duke Humphrey and the last King Henry.

Even in ruin, the room had a serene beauty of long ago. It strengthened my heart. Sitting there I vowed to return to Eadie without more delay. William should not stop me. I rose in the power of my resolve to bring about our departure. I left the room, putting everything back as I found it, but the room didn't leave me.

It's amazing how William gave way under my pressure. Arrangements were put in hand for the journey. Yet the next day and the day after, beyond my joy in leaving, there was a sorrow at leaving the sunlit room in the tower.

Two days after I saw it, and bound now to our journey, a strange and foolish idea came to me. I remembered my book of Sir Thomas, 'Le Morte D'Arthur'. It described the Grail Quest and the Grail Knights going to castle Carbonec. The things in the box in the tower were as like the Grail Hallows described by Sir Thomas as they were the relics of a military lord, the ruined tower room was as like the Grail Castle as any I could imagine.

That night, the first night of our journey, I had a strange dream. It was of the Grail Knight Sir Percival at castle Carbonec, watching the Grail procession go by in silence, not speaking the words he should have said. I saw the stately Blanchfleur go by, as if a dream within a dream, carrying the sacred cup. The next morning it pulled at my heart for leaving the Tower Room, yet for me there'd been no Grail Maiden, no Blanchfleur to be the flesh and blood embodiment of Christ's love.

It was such foolishness; the present castle of Stafford was eight hundred years in the future when Sir Galahad, Sir Percival and Sir Bors held the Holy Grail. I puzzled over it. I puzzled also over an inscription in the shattered knight's window; I'd made it out in the glass still left. There were letters I couldn't place but some of the pieces made out the words,

“...for [the Knight of the Swan](#).”

I promised to find out who that knight might be and the meaning of it all. It couldn't be done now; there could be no hiding the contents of that room except where they lay. They and I made a pact to keep each other's secrets till the time should come for them to be revealed.

William sighed. Edward couldn't be held here longer, William himself was anxious to return to London and this diversion was only putting off the moment. Still, he'd been true to his duty, it was Edward's defiant ultimatum, threat of King, Parliament and force that made William finally agree to return. The de Stafford heir could hardly be held in Stafford physically against his will.

Master William managed to send a fast messenger before they themselves set out, warning Lady Margaret of their intended arrival. But, such was Edward's present urgency; it was still in doubt which would get there first.

Chapter 15 - Sarah

These last two chapters took all our attention, Angharad and I. That she could channel, and the mysteries of the Tower Room! How we speculated; had Edward seen the Holy Grail in Stafford Castle? had he really survived two assassination attempts? Angharad was sure it was so, she was cross that I hesitated, yet I needed so much more proof to believe the extraordinary.

It brought our friendship the closer, yet there was a dark side to our plaything, that reached me when I was left alone. There was no controlling the rolling force of these visions, we tended to forget Edward's difficulties and the year 1497; then there were my difficulties, first with Frances, and the business, and then with Sarah.

There came an evening when I sat down on my own, left to think of all this.

You know I feared the happiness between Edward and Eadie would somehow never be recovered? Separating Edward from Eadie would be like divorcing the night sky from the stars. It was impossible for me not to identify with Edward. I was living his life; I actually felt his emotions as my own.

And still there's something more.

There's a resonance between Edward and I. It's as if when things went well for him then so they went for me, but if they were to go badly? Locked in the grip of this senseless fright I would have changed Edward's story. But I saw it as a passenger unfolding in disregard of my wishes

Several things conspired to stretch my philosophy.

First was a great deal of whisky.

It's rare for me to drink; but there was in the flat, left over from Frances' father's stay with us, a bottle of good Islay whisky.

The last time Sarah and I spoke before that day in August, we hadn't exactly argued but there had been a difference between us. We disagreed on priorities, hers of treatment and mine of assessment. I told her frankly, the game is to make a difference to the system.

Had it been foolish to phone her, from my office, now, after Edward and the Tower Room? I'd done it anyway, with that whisky in my hand.

She greeted me warmly, with lightness and unexpected familiarity in her voice.

"I got your messages. I'm sorry I didn't phone, I've had the sweating sickness."

"Really?"

After all this time of frustration over Sarah, I'd expected her to be difficult.

"So what have you been doing, apart from leaving me messages?"

"Going over a few old things."

I was falling into her bantering mood. It wasn't what I meant.

"So, do you want to come and see me again?"

"What I need is a methodology. I need ..."

I gave her a list of serious academic points that needed to be made clear. By the end of it the warmth was missing from her reply.

I wanted to explain to Sarah about government, responsibility and scientific method, how E.S.R.C. works. But her coolness grew.

I did my best to put it all simply. Maybe it isn't so simple. Maybe she didn't understand. She turned back again to the argument we had even before the start of this story. She still wouldn't see; it's not our job to cure prisoners. I wonder if it would be right to 'cure' crime even if we could.

When I put the phone down my mind turned to government; remembering my days in university. The course had been designed for future third world leaders, but it actually attracted English misfits like me, wanting a higher degree outside our mainstream careers. It taught me a great deal, how the English secular civil service, necessitated by Henry VIII's destruction of the Church, became the World model for government.

That World model wouldn't have come about but for the English Reformation, and that would not have come about but for the Tudors. The one person, who could have stopped them, even in 1530, if he'd still been alive, was Edward Stafford.

This was the second thought to come out of that bottle. What a jolly whisky it was, but for dark nights only.

You can look at Edward and see what he might have been. What would he have done with power? Do individuals make a difference to the way history unfolds? I have to tell you, I don't think so. Would the World be so different today without, say, Napoleon Bonaparte? The great forces within society roll on, throwing up great leaders to express them, but it's the forces that make the leaders, not the other way round. No doubt there are exceptions, but once they're gone the great forces of historicity take over and lead us back to where we always would have been. Would Edward have been different?

If the universe unfolds according to the model I gave John, that distant afternoon, the growth of Mankind is as governed by universal laws as matter is by entropy. Where then can any of us make a difference? And yet we do.

Accurate prediction of the weather is impossible, yet countless hours and sums of money are spent on it. Nobody finds this unreasonable. Why then, oh why don't we do the same with society?

By this time the bottle was gone and so went I also, away to bed. For all the joy Angharad and I found in the Cup and the Tower Room, Edward's misery still haunted me. It came to focus my own loneliness and frustration, merging with the pain that I hadn't trusted Sarah in that phone call, that I couldn't talk to her as I did to Angharad. That was the last thought as I fell into exhausted sleep.

(Past)

For days I was left in the pit of a depression, making it hard to find Edward. The one vision that did come to me came as a dream. It's one of those images which doesn't fit with the story, if it has a place it's right at the end of the book. It was a burial party, which must have happened sometime after Edward reached manhood. No body was buried, no Christian interment and no priest was present. It was done in secret, in woodland, at dead of night. Edward came with several trusted riders, leading two horses with a heavy box slung between them. Some men held spades and torches while Edward stood a little way off, trying to fix the place in his memory. It was the strangest dream to contrast with normal sleep.

This was all I could make of it. Ever since Duke Henry's rebellion Edward had known position and fortune could evaporate like morning mist. I felt this was his way of putting something away from him, lest it fall into the hands of his enemies. There's a sense of loss and of fear. He was protecting something, protecting it from some grave risk, though what I couldn't tell.

The burial was hauntingly symbolic. It was as if some force was guiding me; for I found that burial place, in this life, quite by chance. I found it while wide-awake, merely days after seeing it, asleep in my bed.

Imagine my shock, driving down a country road, to be confronted by the scene of my dream. I stopped the car, got out and walked around. No one could describe the

sensation; it brought prickles to the hairs on my back and tears welling to my eyes. Five hundred years haven't erased the emotion that still clings to the very earth and hangs in the menace of the trees, trees which surely can't be the ones which stood sentinel five hundred years ago.

My present life was standing poised and I didn't know what to do. Finally I consulted a professional medium, recommended to me by Angharad, truly herself, a far better medium.

What prompted me was the dream of Edward burying that box, that and the vision of the Tower Room. What was I to make of Edward finding the Holy Grail? It was all so fantastical. I needed someone outside all this to guide me; I should simply have relied on Angharad.

I found myself visiting this very nice, practical, down to earth woman called Mary. She lived in a very ordinary modern house in Derby, surrounded by very ordinary and normal things. Everything about her was 'no nonsense' even down to her flat, North Country vowels. She sat me down with a cup of tea and endless, down to earth counselling.

She probably thought I was off my trolley, one grape short of a bunch.

I tried to hide my frustration and keep my courtesy. What I needed was clairvoyance not counselling. In the passage of time I've picked up a fair knowledge of psychology. I could have taught Mary to handle other people as she handled me. Obviously I'd been over the same ground for myself; it wasn't what I came for.

At one time Sarah worked with Mary; at least that caught my interest, the insight it gave to the attitudes and beliefs they shared. If Sarah saw life as Mary did, it wasn't surprising I was having such difficulty with her.

I was at a crossroads in every way. I remember telling Mary so. I was as honest as I could be with someone who knew Sarah.

No matter how I framed my questions, I got no answer but good counsel. The more I explained the more foolish I sounded, even to myself. It seemed as if the fund of my knowledge was being carefully rationed. It was as if everyone were waiting for me to make up my own mind. At least Mary meant well.

In the project I did what I could. I arranged a meeting between our university, in the person of William Gregson, Sarah and myself. I liked Dr. Gregson, a consummately modest man of immense knowledge and experience. It was becoming urgent for someone, to help Sarah, and I knew of no one better to do it. To be honest, presenting her with such a fait accompli didn't seem a good idea but what could I do?

Sarah arranged to stay overnight with Angharad, killing two birds with one stone, to catch up with the gossip. I didn't see her the night before our meeting but picked her up in the morning, just a little before William's train. There was a frost on the ground that morning and a frost in the air. Expecting Sarah to be difficult had become a self-fulfilling prophecy, but even Angharad spoke little.

There were issues to go through and I set about them with Sarah, as I would have done with a class of students. I might as well have been talking to my self; no response, no enthusiasm. I really did wonder if it was all an entire waste of time.

We met William at the station. Our conference was arranged at a hotel, in comfort and away from the distractions of the office. The hospitality was routinely excellent and it was getting on towards four o'clock when we got William back to his train.

No doubt it was all pleasant enough, but this wasn't why we were here. It greatly concerned me Sarah had so little to say on any subject. We chatted of academic psychology in general and of visual aids and teaching techniques. But what Sarah contributed and what she learned from it all was zero.

There had to be some reason. Had Angharad spoken about Edward? After we put William on his train I tried to flush it out.

What a fool I was to fall between two such stools as Edward and my project. How foolish to play Sarah at her own game, yet she was one of the very few people who might be able to unravel the meaning of Edward. The problem was how to present it when it was so enormously difficult just to talk to her.

Sarah's own train wasn't for another two hours. There was a sort of desperation that she simply couldn't be got into the right frame of mind. Somehow I had to shake her.

There was something else. It pressed in on me that people in Edward's life are the same as people alive today. First this made me fear I was fantasising. Common sense said I was inventing Edward and the others, projecting on to them the characters of people I know. It's like writing a novel. Surely this must be reason to think the whole business of Edward a pure nonsense.

I need no psychologist to point out such things. After my failure with Mary I talked to an expert, suggested to me by the Society for Psychical Research. He was a retired canon of the Church of England and I phoned him one bright October afternoon. I can still picture him, leaving off pottering in his Sussex garden, still in his white cotton jacket and Panama hat, to deal with the most arcane problems of existence. I remember his comfortable warmth and easy authority. Group reincarnation was, he said, his pet interest. He heard me patiently and gave his advice; I must talk to the others. He'd be delighted to see me and as many of 'the others' as I could bring but first I must talk to them. He took everything I told him as a matter of course. I asked if these images really could mean what I've said, here in this book.

"My dear boy, why ever not?"

"I remember reading the Greek classics as a boy, and what Jung said about them. Didn't the Greeks have this gift of projecting their inner minds, onto the outside World? Isn't that where their stories of heroes and gods came from?"

"Ah, Jung. I wouldn't worry about that."

You could hear the chuckle in his voice,

"We project what's actually there. It's not that we see things that aren't real; we filter out a good deal which is real. You wouldn't want to see monsters and demons would you? Of course we miss out on seeing angels at the same time.

As to projecting personalities, you don't need to. You're already imprinted with the people around you, it's how group reincarnation works. It's frightfully common, the difficulty is to break away from a group, not to keep reincarnating with one."

I promised to think about it, and haven't spoken to that reverend gentleman again to this day.

If these images might really be true didn't I have a duty? To Sarah, who at least had the talent to recognise it.

After our meeting with William I needed a change of air, a change of scene. We got into my car and drove. I meant to take her to a restaurant I sometimes used, when tired or bored, on the way back from Peterborough. It was less than ten miles away and we could have swapped one piece of civilisation for another.

We talked about the use of [Ericksonian metaphors](#). This was an area of Sarah's work I boned up for the project and I used it to draw her into talking about assessment. The problem is that these metaphors are very personal. This was, she said, why she couldn't create a simple list of questions for prisoners; it makes her work an art, everything depending on her right use of metaphor.

But according to Jung dreams can eventually be reduced to certain basic patterns, what was to stop Sarah using universal symbols in her metaphors? I'd already been over this with her, now I coupled it with my burial scene.

"What do you make of a dream, horsemen coming in the middle of the night to bury a heavy box in deserted woodland?"

"Tell me more."

I did.

"Imagine a young man under some sort of pressure, it might be to do with a forbidden love affair, it might be to do with politics or something mystical in the box."

I knew that should be enough for Sarah, but she wouldn't commit herself.

"Do you think that relates to the dreamer's present problems?"

"Oh yes. But I'd have to know what they are."

"Do you remember talking about reincarnation and old problems? Could it be something to do with that?"

Sarah didn't answer.

I made as if to change the subject.

"Now, suppose someone comes to you with a series of visions. If they're true at all they have to come from hundreds of years ago. They contain precise detail. Would you think they were metaphors for current problems?"

For once her reaction seemed careful, even measured. She looked around the scene outside the car before answering.

"What you remember from the past certainly does relate to the present. Why else would you remember it? But such visions are rare. You do better thinking of the present."

"Lots of things have associations, names for example, ordinary names like Thomas, Henry, Eadie or Margaret. Do names like these have significance?"

"Those names don't mean anything to me. I can't help you with it. I'm sorry; it really isn't anything to do with me."

I painted her a little story, the merest thumbnail sketch, it's part of my job to be a reasonably good advocate. It would be disappointing if I couldn't get even a reluctant audience to hear me. But you always know the difference between a willing audience and one that isn't.

At the end she told me what she thought, who knows, maybe she believed what she said.

"It's probably fantasy. I really can't tell you anything about it. You'll have to deal with it yourself."

Fantasy! But what about the dreams of her patients and the metaphors she used with them every working day?

There was still time before Sarah's train and she told me about her French trip. Now she started to bubble, she even used an age-old metaphor from Jung's race memory, the god of cornucopia offering the 'Horn of Plenty', to describe the luxury. She talked of the wealthy people she mixed with; what they ate, what they drank, how much they spent. When I was a student I thought seriously of dealing in fine wines and met many such people. I wasn't impressed. I refrained from mentioning the luxury of Lady Margaret's household, still more, the court.

Driving her back to the station, I deliberately took Sarah past the place of that burial. She even described to me what took place there. She did it without intending to, almost absentmindedly, like Angharad when she goes into trance, following my words as we drove, with only half her mind on what I said.

I pointed out a group of trees standing some way from the road. At this point the woodland comes down into the valley and the trees make a natural landmark. I asked her to picture them in her mind, as they'd stood in that place for so many, many years.

“What happened there do you think?”

I watched Sarah from the corner of my eye, slowing the car imperceptibly, so she should have longer to look at the trees.

“Oh, it's just a feeling of sadness; terrible sadness and great pain. There are riders, coming at night. They're carrying something heavy; one of them's a tall man, fair-haired, he's a giant; the others could be soldiers.

The tall one, he's wearing a very rich cloak, it looks like fur. He's lost someone very important... more than one person.

There's a great light, it's very powerful, it's coming from the box. I can't see any more.”

There was a pause; I waited with my fingers crossed.

“It's very powerful.., but it's nothing to do with me.”

Sarah came to a stop. While she spoke she'd seemed not quite conscious, almost as if she were distracted, but very clear.

When she came to herself I asked her,

“Well?”

“Oh, I don't know. Maybe there is something there, but I can't help.”

Even then she didn't connect it with what I'd told her of the burial or with Edward. I hadn't told her Edward, like so many of the Plantagenets, was a blond giant. I hadn't told her about the Grail Hallows in the Tower Room. I don't even think she was aware of what she'd said.

What a loss there was in that rejection!

Chapter 16 - Penshurst and Cambridge

Several days passed. I didn't give up after that day with William; instead I organised a set of tasks for Sarah. I was quite open with William, setting out what I thought E.S.R.C. and the Home Office would insist on. William couldn't write the methodology but he could set the limits in which Sarah would have to operate. These I organised for Sarah, the only problem was I couldn't now get hold of her.

More days passed as my frustration grew and still nothing happened but then came Edward, in a rush.

(Past)

It was late afternoon when I finally came home, rushing in, shouting for Eadie, Aletia and Thomas. They weren't there. The whole house echoed their absence.

"They're not here, Edward. I thought it best to send Eadie away."

It was Lady Margaret speaking.

"Why?!"

"Edward, Eadie is with child."

The welling jumble of my feeling left no restraint, making me almost dance on the spot.

"Where is she? Where is she? Lady Margaret."

"Edward!"

"Do you know what you've done?"

Lady Margaret was stern, with all the power of her great determination. She, of all people, couldn't approve of such young motherhood. She said so. Edward's shock, turned to delight, turned again, this time to fearful questions.

"She's expecting a child? She really is? She's going to have a baby?"

"Edward, she's barely fourteen. You've got her with child!"

Edward's back straightened with the realisation, the assumption of manhood.

"She's with child; my child?"

"I want to see her Lady Margaret, where is she?"

The interview became mixed up. Master William, who was also present, and Lady Margaret, would each have their say. Between them they restored order. Edward was made to feel he was being treated as very young; he did not hide his impatience.

William and the Countess made it clear; it wasn't a proper relationship, it was a breach of Lady Margaret's hospitality and a breach of trust, they were too young, and most of all the great distance between Edward and Eadie's stations in life. Edward should not love someone he could never marry.

"But I do love her Lady Margaret and I'll not let her go."

"It's my child!"

Lady Margaret rose from her chair,

"You will do my bidding."

It was the voice in which Tudors pronounced death sentences, but it was doubtful it could quell Edward. Before he could speak William sent him out of the room.

The next bits are jumbled. I followed Edward and yet reached past him to listen to Lady Margaret. I shall give you something that he never heard.

Edward could not stop still in his excitement; he couldn't even stay still in one room. They'd always known there'd be trouble if Lady Margaret found out. They'd expected a dreadful scene but there hadn't been one, certainly not with Edward. He should have been there when she found out; perhaps Eadie had had to take all the anger. They hadn't expected Eadie to be sent away. It was a great and terrible ache; they could have faced anything together. Where was Eadie!

The proceedings in the hall were more orderly. The tone which so failed to disturb Edward frightened Master Gibbons. He spoke nervously as the Countess regained her composure.

"Youth, Lady Margaret.

I suppose they do love each other."

Lady Margaret's anger was now hidden, as if it had never been.

"I'm afraid they do, they're such children."

"Any number of noble young men have bastards; it's part of their growing up."

It was the measure of William's discomfort to have made such an incautious remark. The reply was huffy.

"Oh, I know the prerogative your sex thinks it has to blight a girl's life.

I'm afraid they do love each other. That is the problem. Much as I love Aletia, Eadie is not a fit companion for Edward. If only he were anyone but Henry's heir!"

For once Lady Margaret let slip the calm certainty of habit. William was careful to hide his surprise, was it really possible for Edward to ruffle the Countess?

"Tudor safety depends on managing Stafford and I must know rebellion in this will never turn to rebellion in affairs of State.

Do you think me fearful William?

He is my ward and I have to see Edward into a safe marriage; it's already contracted and paid for and the nobility expect it.

If he would treat Eadie as his whore I should be content, but I'm afraid he won't. I've already had questions on the marriage contract; Edward's marriage must be noble, in England and away from the Crown. If Edward refuses the contract I made there will be calls for a parliament. There will be questions about his inheritance, questions not heard since his father was alive.

I believe he would be happy with Eadie, she would jeopardise the marriage I am determined he shall have. God help me."

"Surely Lady Margaret..."

The Countess' anger was back in a flash.

"Edward is a Plantagenet. Do you think he can be diverted by threat or fear? Could you get him to the altar now, with a bride almost as reluctant?"

Master Gibbons was shocked and wary, this incautious outburst could well displace him, should it be remembered what he heard. He slid into the safety of duty, as a counsellor, with all the ease of accustomed habit.

"You must discourage and make life hard, Lady Margaret, but not forbid.

Patience and time will serve your ends. You have plenty of chances to put them apart, without seeming to. There is his education.

You should not forbid him his child, particularly if it's a son. Provide difficulties and distance and they will grow apart. Give him no cause to defy you and time will make a virtue of inaction."

"It's a burden to me, Master Gibbons, particularly if it costs me Aletia. I'm sure it wasn't so difficult with the king."

William relaxed. The risk of violence against Edward or Eadie, which could so easily have brought down a humble Law clerk, was passed.

“How did Thomas take it?”

“Oh! He was furious; I’ve never had so much fun, the old hypocrite.

The memory brought one of those rare times the countess of Richmond permitted herself an unforced smile.

So things were settled, putting Edward and Eadie on a slippery slope they would never quite see.

Edward wasn’t able to contain himself indoors and went out into the courtyard. Here he met Jinney.

“You looking for Eadie, Master Edward?”

I reckon you know by now what’s happened.”

There was a pause while the servant gave Edward an appraising look. Without any elaborate words she came to the same opinion as Lady Margaret.

“They sent her to Penshurst with Mistress Aletia. She’ll be fine Master Edward.”

Thomas had truly been furious.

Despite the heavy saddle bags and string of horses, he’d made all hast in answer to that summons.

“.....There is a problem with Eadie. I need you here, come at once with the gold. Leave Edward, the chance to meet his future will do him good.

Margaret R.”

When he heard, Thomas’ face turned white with anger.

Lady Margaret did indeed remember it.

“Don’t look like that. Do you think I don’t know you’ve been playing the ram with Aletia all these years? Do you think I don’t know whose child Eadie is!”

It had not stopped him, Thomas was the only living soul, besides Edward, the Countess could not overawe.

“Aye and I know whose ward Edward is. She’s just a child, not yet out of her cradle.”

“Nonsense, she’s older than I was when I gave birth to the King!”

They stood face to face, if Thomas had been born with titles he’d have been the one living man who could match her.

“Oh, you remember madam. I was with your son at [Bosworth](#) when we hacked a king and threw him, naked in the paupers’ grave, none of us quite believing what we’d done.

The measure of the great is how they save others from misery, not the misery they cause.”

Margaret would have patted his arm if she could. Poor, honest Thomas who could never threaten her power.

“I know, Thomas. I know you love them both don’t you?”

I shall send Eadie to Penshurst, it’s a small de Stafford estate, well away from things but comfortable enough. Aletia shall go with her, of course. You must decide who needs you most. They all do, I fear.”

Edward was allowed to go to Penshurst. After William’s words it was certain he would be.

Further time had passed, Lady Margaret spun it out as much as she could but Master Gibbons was right. If she didn't give way, if she didn't give him something to hope for, something for her to bargain with, Edward would rebel indeed.

How could a fifteen-year-old be so difficult?

It was the long vacation in the courts and Edward went with Andrew, Master Gibbons' clerk. The two very different boys became friends in Wales and Edward was pleased to have his company; even if it was on William's order, and that Andrew should send regular reports to London. Andrew admired Edward's confident energy so much it was doubtful what use he'd be as a spy. Lady Margaret intended a long enough leash for Edward.

There were only four who made the journey; Edward, Andrew and two servants. To Andrew it was luxury.

Penshurst was a manor house, not a castle. The great hall had stood since the time of Edward III and it first came into Stafford hands in Duke Humphrey's time. But it was Duke Henry who put the buildings in their present state, turning Penshurst Place into the sort of house appearing more and more in these days of peace. Isolated in the country, it was most like a very large farmhouse, having stone at its centre and for its chimneys but elsewhere making great use of brick. With no thought of defence there was scope for extravagant glassed lights. They made the whole house wonderfully airy. Though for Edward its brightness was mostly because it held Eadie in it.

When Edward arrived it was with needless trepidation. Thomas was out to greet him with a hug, Aletia, hanging back slightly, enveloped him in tears and smiles. Andrew, being introduced, felt out of place in the presence of such emotion.

Edward was soon alone with Eadie. It was in the great hall, fresh with sunlight and flowers. It had been five months since they'd seen each other and Eadie was now visibly with child. She looked lovely and well and nervous.

Edward should have taken her in his arms straight away, but somehow he delayed. When he did embrace her, their shyness still lingered. The instant childish fun had been lost in these months. Yet, he held her tenderly and she smiled. Eadie was the most precious soul in the World, whatever happened, he would always be loyal to that love.

Eadie doubted and feared; how could she; when her love was as true as his, not know his heart.

Edward held her clumsily; he would not let her go till somehow all was righted. It had been so long a time and he needed the reassuring touch of her, not realising Eadie needed it too. It made her smile, and at last relax.

As they let each other go, they almost resumed their old banter, but not quite. Now there was to be a child, they could no longer be children themselves; while Edward twice faced death and once the wrath of Thomas. Yet they didn't quite know how to be adults, and their awkwardness showed.

They didn't quite know how to act in front of Thomas and Aletia. Did they but know it, this caused the greatest amusement. Didn't Thomas and Aletia know what it was like to be in love? They were just happy to see the couple together.

Tension eased with Thomas' jokes, and following the sly suggestions of Aletia they go off by themselves. The only one truly out of place was Andrew and he was used to being alone. Edward was at pains to include him, as if to show the adult world he and Eadie had nothing to hide. This annoyed Eadie, who did want to hide and express her intimate love - in private.

It was late summer. The days were not so long but still warm and lazy and time passed as in a dream. They quite often went fishing and sometimes made a catch. Edward would jam the baited rod into the river-bank and they would lie in the long grass just talking or making love or doing nothing at all.

Andrew envied their happiness. They would sometimes take him with them on expeditions; in shared exploration of the countryside, Eadie learned more of it than she'd done in months before. It wasn't their having each other Andrew envied. Though they did seem to have their own secret ways that made it impossible to argue with them. What he envied most was their confident and easy success. When they were together nothing seemed impossible for them. Whatever one couldn't do the other could and each under the other's approving eye, somehow, never failed to do their best.

It was as if they read each other's minds, Edward and Eadie, they were so complete together it won Andrew's heart. If ever he loved, this was the sort of love he wanted.

One day they went on an expedition, riding across country, right across the estate to its very edge. There was a village there, much of it de Stafford. It was a long way by road but not so far across the fields, you could almost walk it.

Andrew took the horses to the smithy. He got on well with such tasks and such people, an attraction of opposites. He could be relied on to spend upwards of an hour with the smith.

Eadie heard there was an old woman in the village; who made potions and cures. It was the reason for their visit. Eadie wanted something for a hound in the manor. It was old and lame and hung round the kitchen hearth for warmth and comfort. Eadie nursed it, looking after it with tit-bits of food; she gave it a new name and its own blanket.

Edward was somehow acquired by the church warden and the verger. They huffed and puffed around him wanting him to see this and to do them that favour. It was well over an hour before he could escape protesting he, too, must see to the horses. Andrew was still there and Edward explained his escape and the need of it. They took themselves to the alehouse, Edward uneasy and restless. Andrew would rather have stayed with the smith. They noticed Eadie's absence and neither was good company.

After a time Edward set down his unfinished beer and set out to find her. Mother Megg's house wasn't hard to find. It was more than a cottage and spoke well of its tenant's importance, standing four square in the middle of the village.

Eadie was in the kitchen at the back of the house, sat on a low stool before Mother Megg, eyes intent. Mother Megg was lost in an old rocking chair and covered in shawls. Neither noticed when Edward came in, lost in some mystery, it was several minutes before they realised he was there.

It was Mother Megg who greeted Edward first and when Eadie turned to him her eyes were shining, not for him but for what she heard from Mother Megg. Her excitement pleased him, as she rehearsed all the mysteries she'd learned. The old woman smiled at this young nobleman, who obviously understood not a word of her art.

As they rode off and for long after, Eadie regaled her companions with the wonderful tales of healing she learned from the old mother. More, if possible, than she had time to hear at Mother Megg's knee. On she went, pell-mell in her enthusiasm, on and on until Andrew and Edward teased her about being a witch. Even so the

impressions of Mother Megg still filled Eadie's mind hours later as they lay in their old place at the river bank.

The bottles she'd been given lay in her saddlebag and as soon as the horses were stabled; off she went to treat her hound. Edward and Andrew joined her later.

"See? It's doing him good already, poor thing."

"Aye and poor thing it will be indeed," quoth Andrew, "if ye deprive the Grim Reaper and cheat yon hunter of a rest from his labours."

Eadie was not to be mocked. Nose in the air she sniffed and waved Andrew away. With exaggerated despair, and hands held high, he went.

Edward laughed and bent and kissed her and they held each other.

The last days of summer passed quickly. Andrew was due back in Master Gibbons' chambers and Edward was due in Cambridge.

The prospect of being sent to [Buckingham College](#) had crystallised around Master Gibbons' advice. Some noblemen were sent to Cambridge younger than Edward, as undergraduates, and Edward would join in some of their studies, but Buckingham College was a strict monastic school, not for lay students, and it was made clear to Edward he would live within the rules of the house.

In those days the universities of England served the Church and no scholar learned save through the Grace of God in His Church. Yet the scholars depended increasingly on noble patrons, seeking immortality through learning. The College had been called Buckingham, its Prior told Edward, in honour of his family. In their prayers the monks of Buckingham remembered the late dowager duchess Anne, Edward's great grandmother, who founded and named the College.

Thirty years before, the teaching monks of St. Benedict had been in need of a new home. When they moved to the north of the river, to where the present college now stands, it had been the Staffords who found them land and money and gave them protection.

Maybe some of the fine, brick buildings round the college's new court were paid for by Duke Henry, but the great chapel, the monks' hostel and the land they stood on came from the dowager duchess, and her daughter-in-law, Lady Margaret Beaufort.

Edward didn't care for all this. Though it concerned family history and pride, his thoughts were for Eadie. Edward missed her already, at the mere thought of Cambridge. There was an autumn chill in the air, the smell of wood smoke and mists and damply brown leaves were everywhere.

There was a timeless bustle about the College; its tenements crammed together like those of the town, straggling out between the 'pondyards' and the road. The pondyards still fed fish to all the learned monks of Cambridge and the road carried all the traffic from Ely and Huntingdon down to Great Bridge. There had always been bustle in Cambridge, but greater now, with its modern buildings; as other colleges came to replace the inadequate, decaying church houses, as other noble patrons followed Buckingham's example.

Buckingham College obeyed the Statutes of Pope Benedict XII, and lay within the rule of the great abbey of Crowland. This much Edward was truly told, and would not be allowed to forget.

I remember my welcome by the Prior, as he had me stand before him while he warmed his backside in front of the fire.

“I have instructions from our Abbot; he has discussed your case with the Bishop of Ely and studied the statutes of St. Benedict and this College. He has asked me to set before you the terms of your membership of our College as a lay brother.

You are to be accorded your titles and the College will allot you servants.

You shall have a room of your own but you shall bring no one into it without my approval unless it be you appoint a private chaplain who may hear your confession.

You shall keep no servants of your own,

You shall address full fellows of this College and all others, who teach you, as ‘sir’,

You shall obey all the rules of this house as any other brother would and especially you shall obey our rules of chastity and poverty.

Should your position require you to give any entertainment it shall be done under my licence and in my presence.

I hope, Sir Edward, you shall join in or life of humility.”

The University was where learning and belief met. It was there for learned monks to gain the wisdom to teach their brethren and their flocks, Buckingham College continued to pride itself on this divine purpose. Edward’s room was more than a monastic cell, but still part of a monastery. In those days the teaching staff and all the students, save Edward, were monks and religious observance was strict.

In the university as a whole, over the passing years, more and more wealthy men came here to put their trust in knowledge and the new learning of the Renaissance. I cannot believe these students lived the austere life demanded by Buckingham College, yet still no one doubted, all truth came from the hand of God and many would have praised Lady Margaret’s piety for sending Edward to a school of such purity.

Edward was given a servant, Peter, whose wife Trim also served the College and did his laundry. His tutor was Father Tobias, a cheerful, lively man. Older students stood in awe of his rude humour but Edward never heard him tell a lewd joke. He believed in God and work and God help those who didn’t.

Thanks be to God for Thomas’ care and scholarship. As a member of a graduate community; in addition to his undergraduate studies of humane letters in Latin and Greek, Edward was expected to attend graduate lectures in Theology and Mathematics. By Lady Margaret’s strict order he was spared the disputations his College fellows held in Great Saint Mary’s Church, but to the Prior’s mind it was a loss, where better to school a future member of the King’s Great Council than in University debate?

For all his hard work there were many older boys in the University who had to work harder still, and some of them left, ‘sent down’. Latin wasn’t too difficult, it was Greek, the language of the philosophers, Edward found hard. Latin was the language of the Church and of the Bible. It wasn’t till Father Tobias told him that Edward learnt the Bible had first been written in Greek. For this to be so seemed almost a heresy.

Here there was no learning of arms or horsemanship, all week was bookish. Sundays were divided equally between church on the one hand and drinking, gaming and brawling in town on the other. These two lives only interfered with each other when some unwise student suffered injuries that couldn’t be disguised. The penalty for brawling was close confinement in lodgings at the College.

Edward was a lonely student. Peter and Trim; good people though they were, were no substitute for Thomas and Aletia. There was no possible substitute for Eadie,

nor for the friendship of Andrew; certainly there was none to be found among the serious minded fellows of Buckingham College. Edward applied himself determinedly to his studies and such escape as could be found in the Bible, but for his heart there was to be no release till term's end at Christmas.

Homesickness was for Eadie. There were letters, of course, as witty and clever and important as they could be made. There was pleading too, to Lady Margaret, for release from Cambridge or for the presence of Eadie and release from the rule of chastity that this would involve.

“...I am a Christian but not a monk. Neither my rank nor my will fit me to be a priest and this pious community strives for nothing other, in me as in themselves. I beg your gracious leave to live as God and Nature willed it, if it please your Grace, away from this priestly rule and amongst my friends and loved ones...”

It did no good.

The wrench away from Eadie was terrible; it would have been such delight just to see her face. She wrote just once, a long letter, she said she could feel the baby move.

There were other letters too, never has there been such an enthusiastic correspondent. There were letters to Thomas and to Aletia, and even to William. Master Gibbons had taken over Edward's personal finances and paid the customary allowance. This correspondence was all business-like but William remembered his own time as a student, at Oxford, and Edward admired him as a man of learning.

This was all the life of this first term at College. The beauty and excitement of Cambridge might just as well not have existed. For Edward Cambridge was hard, cold and lonely. Home was with Eadie.

The little I know of Cambridge from my own life; the University, Library, museum, bookshops and pubs, paints a warmer picture. Many other buildings and purposes have overlaid the Cambridge I saw through Edward's eyes, though the bustle is still there. I tried hard to reconcile Edward's life with the Cambridge I knew.

(Past)

Christmas eventually came for Edward and he arrived at Penshurst laden with presents. He racked his brain for weeks before to think of tokens he could give to show his love for Eadie, Thomas and Aletia. Little of the substantial sums sent by Master William, in defiance of the College Rule, were spent on anything else. As Edward got back to that manor house the speed and tempo of my images, quickened. I found myself involved in Edward's life again as I hadn't been for all his months in Cambridge.

It was frosty and growing dark when at last I came to the house. It was two weeks before Christmas. There was no one to greet me! No one at all but for an old woman who didn't recognise me. She was a servant who worked on a neighbouring farm all summer and came indoors at the manor for the winter. She lit candles for me while I attended to the horses, one to ride and one for baggage. The old woman was impressed by the baggage; she'd never seen a rider carry so much. I laughed my embarrassment but really what was in my mind was concern and annoyance at the state of the household, for there was really no one here.

Eadie returned first. It was both joy and relief to see her. She'd been at Mother Megg's house and was flushed from riding.

Nobody had known I was coming.

"You should have sent word."

"I did, weeks ago!"

"Oh. Edward."

We kissed.

Eadie talked constantly of Mother Megg, Mother Megg this and Mother Megg that. I wanted to hear about the baby and about Eadie. I reprimanded her for riding in her condition. For, unbelievably, she had ridden. It wasn't fair to the child, what if she had fallen? She waved me aside, she really wasn't listening.

In the candle-light it wasn't possible to see expression. It wasn't the homecoming I'd expected. Their lives had gone on without me. Where was everybody?

Aletia and Thomas, on their separate returns, greeted me warmly. Eadie and I were in the kitchen, it was the warmest place. Aletia looked drawn and haggard and tired when she came in. The brightness she put on was for my benefit. Eadie admitted Aletia had been ill, I worried, she'd never ever been ill. Thomas, too, looked drawn and care-worn, I think for Aletia. He, too, put on a smiling face for me.

We made a happy showing of it. I brought out the presents I'd bought for them and there were hugs all round. We talked of memories of the summer and times past. We made a good evening of it but I wondered at the lack of servants.

I spoke to Thomas about it in the morning.

"Master Gibbons thinks them an unnecessary expense."

"Does he!"

I was horrified, amazed and angry.

That morning I wrote my first letter of what I hoped was ducal command. I required my house to be properly kept and I regretted the insult to my name. I was so angry, at times; I had to break off from writing because my hand would shake with emotion. I wrote that not all the King and Lady Margaret's ancestors had been born in wedlock. What if the duke of Lancaster's Beaufort children had been treated so? Should Stafford honour any more tolerate such Godless usage?

I assured Master Gibbons I would take all needful action to mend my guardian's neglect and do all in my power to provide for Eadie. I called on him to make immediate provision for the future. God knows what I thought he would make of it, or Lady Margaret, when he showed it to her.

No reply could reasonably be expected before Christmas, despite the letter, I had to make my own remedy. Fortunately there was much left of the allowance William had sent to Cambridge, to maintain my station there. It wasn't there I wanted to maintain it! There was still smouldering anger at the poorness of my homecoming.

Thomas was almost diffident when I broached it the same morning.

"But this house needs servants. Aletia is tired and so are you.

We can't even send out for the hire of them, we'll have to go ourselves. What shall we do?"

He made no protest at the need for us to ride round the neighbourhood, only at the cost. I waved my pile of coins at him.

How long did I think that would last?

Oh, but I could do more! These were Stafford estates; I was the de Stafford heir, only kept out of them by minority. There was a rent day coming, I would receive my own rents as we had done in Wales.

Thomas was horrified.

I was determined.

I was bound by my word to see Lady Margaret this Christmas; I would tell her myself what I had done, over-ruling the local stewards and giving my own receipt. I would tell her, but only after it was done.

"Even next birthday you'll be five years short of your majority. The rents aren't yours, they belong to Lady Margaret."

True, but it was, perhaps, the realisation Thomas was growing old as much as the sense I was growing up that prompted my stubbornness.

"I shall do this with or without your help."

We set out accordingly, on both errands; rent notices and hire of servants.

Hire of servants is no straightforward business. Service mostly follows tradition and tenure. Little hire of labour in the country is just for money. It was not easy to get the servants I called for without interfering with the rule of others over my estates. Thomas would have stopped me bribing servants to break contractual oaths and I did my best to defer to him, even so, in the mood I was in, I would have ridden roughshod over every petty lord in the county. Howbeit, and thanks to Thomas' skill, we finished up with servants enough to make some sort of household: there was a carriage and coachman for Eadie, three grooms and stable boys, a general manservant for Thomas and six others, a lady's maid each for Aletia and Eadie, a cook and an assistant, two kitchen boys and scullions, there were indoor maids and dairy maids and others besides. I could have wished for more.

Thomas looked tired when we got back and Eadie flew at me when I proudly told her what we'd done. I was, it seems, in love with my own importance. Maybe she was right.

"Edward, the family's not in residence!"

I was shocked.

"Yes it is. We are here, you and me, Thomas and Aletia. We are the family."

Aletia, who heard, smiled her thanks and relief and love. I don't know if I was wrong but if I was that smile justified me in everything I'd done.

Talk of family prompted thoughts of Mother; Brother Henry and my sisters, Elizabeth and Anne. It was true; I had little family other than these people here. How long was it since I'd seen any of them, or even thought of them? I felt a spasm of guilt. Particularly for the remembrance of my mother; for her soft and gentle, loving embrace when I was very small. Thoughts of them occasionally stung my eyes; yet it was quickly over-laid with a fierce will to protect the people under this roof. I had no doubt my relatives would want for nothing this Christmas.

I felt very alone and responsible. The reason I was singled out, the only reason, was that I was the heir; though Henry would inherit enough, titles and land, in all conscience. Very well, to be Duke Henry's heir I should be true to my blood. My mind hardened on this idea and Eadie seemed to sense it. I had her attention and all was quiet as I spoke.

"Eadie, when I am a man my will shall be done next only to God and the King. It is time I should practice."

There was a look of surprise in Eadie's eyes. Perhaps she had never seen me so determined; not angry, just sure. She looked almost scared, then the moment passed and she smiled.

"Very well then, thy will be done."

It was a good Christmas. There was game in the district and farm produce without limit. The new cook was set to her kitchen right away. She was good at her work and proud and fell-to with a will. There was more than a household could eat

and with a certain noble connivance and a nod and a wink she set about a festive season the whole county would remember.

The neighbours were called upon. Consternation ran round the local gentry. It wasn't a grand festival like those of Lady Margaret, but it was let be known Sir Edward was in residence.

The villagers and tenants turned up in large numbers, confused about rents but pleased for our hospitality. On Thomas' strict order the rents we took were limited to what we needed, for household expense only. For the first time in ten years a Stafford gave his own receipt. William would be furious.

The people of Kent marked their young lord's presence well. This wasn't Wales, full of resentment and suspicion, this was honest merry England. Many of the tenants had met Edward in the summer; they were pleased when he recognised them now. It was a happy time, full of admiration and pleasure.

Somehow Thomas seemed to swell back into his former self, in his role presiding over everything. Aletia was busy, her illness forgotten. Eadie was big with child and had to limit her merriment. But any joy lost to her was made up for by Edward. These were his people and he their lord.

Parole had been given, time and duty beckoned. After just three and a half short weeks the time came to honour the promises, the road onwards and such reckoning as there might be. Eadie was still undelivered of their child.



Penshurst Place

Chapter 17 - Abigail

(Past)

Master Gibbons delivered his mind.

When Edward came at last to pay his respects to his guardian it was William he saw first, but he was not alone. Sat in a corner of the room, resplendent in the livery of his office, was Sir Reginald Bray, Lady Margaret's oldest and most senior minister.

It was Master Gibbons' office to speak to Edward and he discharged it straight away.

Sat at his high desk, in his rooms, I stood in front of him; no chair was offered.

"You disappoint the Countess.

You're late.

What if arrangements had been made to present you at court?

Lady Margaret will soon retire from public life. By your failure to attend her you injure your own interests. Your need is to do your duty at this time.

I think you have no idea how much you owe to Lady Margaret.

I read your report from Father Tobias, that too is disappointing. You're doing well enough in your studies, in fact very well, but you entertain no one. Father Tobias finds you withdrawn, avoiding company; here too you fail to live up to your name, your station or Stafford traditions."

Master William was speaking in measured tones but giving no room for interruption or I would have challenged his point.

"And this letter!"

He showed me the letter I had myself written from Penshurst.

"This is nothing but scandalous!"

Suddenly the air cracked with tension. It came as a shock, as I remembered the angry words I'd written. Were they to be called treason? Was this where Master Gibbons was leading?

"Turning to your pretensions to be a great lord, let me advise you as a lawyer.

I must tell you, until you achieve your majority and have livery of your possessions; you are not, in fact, entitled to them. Quite simply Sir Edward your rents are not yours to take and it is criminal to do so or incite others to do so. Indeed, Sir Reginald Bray has had inflicted on him the loud and justified complaints of the steward of the manor you raided for rent and servants, inciting them to break their solemn oaths and contractual duties. Never mind if the estate will be yours one day, a large part of its income is his now! You've stolen directly in receiving your own rents and indirectly in taking another man's servants: all without the King's licence.

Did you know, in Kent of all counties, what you've done is expressly against the King's own order? Not only have you gone beyond yourself, Edward, you've actually exceeded de Stafford perquisites, even Lady Margaret has no right to act so."

There was a pause and I relaxed slightly, but not for long.

"If that's not enough you've involved an honest man in your wrong-doing.

Thomas Lewkenor stands in peril even to his life because of you and because of this letter. In becoming accomplice to your theft he is accomplice to your slander."

Master William must have seen me go white. He must have seen I was about to speak for he raised his hand before I could do so.

"Have you any idea how close you are to the Tower? from here it's only a short boat ride.

Have you no thought for Master Thomas or Eadie?"

The words I would have said dried in my throat.

"Do I have to tell you on what sufferance you stand after this letter? It is only by your obedience to the King and Lady Margaret you may hope to win any tolerance for this girl you love."

There was a pause before Sir Reginald spoke.

"As to the letter; you have hurt Lady Margaret, and if your intemperance is known it shall hurt you and your mistress worse; before ever we come to Master Lewkenor and the rents.

Men's heads are lifted from their shoulders for such words.

As to the rents, the greatest damage need be little more than £20. I am willing to intervene with Lady Margaret's purse, but there is a price.

For the monies you have taken and loss of service you have caused you are to sign an indemnity. It calls on you to be of good behaviour on pain of severe penalties both to you and to Thomas Lewkenor."

There was another pause.

"It also means there shall be no more outbursts, in public or in private. If you break its faith your bond shall be forfeit and the whole case will come before the King's judgement."

A paper was handed to me. It must have been the deed of indemnity, but I could not see what it said.

"Will you sign?"

I took the pen Sir Reginald offered me but before I could sign he spoke again.

"Mark me, the sum forfeited, should you break your bond, will be twenty times the sum you stole. More than that, you confess your treasonable words against the King and your guardian. Will you still sign?"

I went on as if I had not heard him and signed as if to bring an end of that interview, or almost.

"Shall you make your proper apologies to the Countess and leave all with her?"

"If you please, Sir Reginald, no."

Lady Margaret's chief minister didn't expect me to go back on the promise I'd only just signed, but I suddenly found the words coming out of me. I'd started; I was bound to go on.

"Aletia is not well.

Eadie is about to be confined with my child.

I expect a de Stafford child to be properly born into the World. The reduction of Eadie's household is a threat to her and my child and an insult to my House; I remind you that child will have royal blood."

Not in all the time in Wales, not till now, did I see William lose his temper, I didn't know he could. But now it was his turn to change colour. Did he think I was only prompted by vanity, the sense of my own importance? Discomfort grew to be intolerable; finally, as if what I'd said were not enough, I went on.

"Thomas is as a father to me, he is a proud man; you left him no means to provide for Aletia or Eadie."

Surely this was the point. I was relieved to see some relaxation in the angry faces before me.

Silence drew out again and I cast my eyes down at the floor. This time I would say no more.

Sir Reginald cleared his throat,

“I shall see there is a proper household for Eadie’s child to be born into; it shall be maintained for her and her child as long as they are there. Thomas need have no fear. Is that the end of your concern?”

I nodded, eyes still downcast, standing mute in front of them.

There was a sigh and Sir Reginald went on,

“But remember, Sir Edward, your indemnity shall remain.”

I looked up to find their expressions greatly softened. Sir Reginald must have seen my face for he added an even greater surprise.

“Edward, accept my apology.”

Then he left, leaving me with Master William. Even he seemed to have softened from anger to concern.

“I will serve you as best I may, but for the sake of those who love you, I beg you Sir Edward, keep faith with your promise.

With that the interview ended.

With the inexorable turn of the calendar, within days, came return to College and the hated life of exile.

Sir Reginald kept his word and the household at Penshurst was replenished.

Edward received a letter from Aletia confirming it, thanking him over and over again.

At the end of January Eadie gave birth to a baby girl and both were healthy. Edward was overjoyed. To the laughter of his peers he couldn’t contain himself, he ran round everybody to general disruption. That night, the night he got Thomas’ letter announcing the news, there was a great and wild celebration. It went on all the next day, it was as if Edward made up for all his temperance all at once, he got very drunk. The day after that the World seemed a very fragile place.

Thus went the images of Edward.

At least this last news pleased me. Yet Angharad was still unflattering about Edward. She called him weak and vacillating, she thought he should have stood up to William Gibbons and Sir Reginald Bray. Somehow I dreaded this condemnation. It upset me and I protested; we exchanged heated words. I told her what might have happened, remembering the fate of the young earl of Warwick, if Edward had taken her advice.

“Suppose Edward hadn’t signed that indemnity. What do you think Sir Reginald, or some less honourable Tudor agent would have done?”

Lady Margaret wouldn’t have to dirty her own hands. Law suits, against Thomas as well as Edward, for sums completely beyond Thomas’ means; prosecution for illegal retaining, and what about the treasonable words in Edward’s letter?

Edward wrote that Lady Margaret’s ancestor, John Beaufort, was illegitimate. Illegitimacy, no matter how old, was always a total bar to the throne, mere doubt about Edward IV’s marriage cost his son the crown. Edward actually denied Henry Tudor’s right to be king. Anyone would have called it treason. Why do you think Sir Reginald warned Edward about the confession in that indemnity?”

Angharad couldn’t answer.

“Do you think William Gibbons was joking about the Tower?”

She still couldn’t answer.

Beyond even that, it could be all too tempting to replace a troublesome Edward with his easily manipulated brother. The Stafford heir could be changed in a moment, just another name to add to the list of convenient noble deaths.

Angharad was wrong, at least about this scene. For the sake of Eadie and Thomas, Edward needed the favour of Sir Reginald Bray. So why did she disapprove?

I could see it clearly, from that day in the library. It is possible to forgive a false accusation, what the Tudors would never forgive was the truth, especially a truth that went so directly to the root of their power.

I tried to avoid arguing about this as I tried to avoid being sucked in to Edward's life. It's very tiring being Edward, although my side hurt less often after channelling, no doubt from practice.

(Past)

"Eadie has called her Abigail. The letter says she's as pretty as a picture."

It was the very next day, the day after my night and a day of celebration; after I'd done all that drinking, and my head still hurt. I was outside the College, in a common room full of twenty or thirty other undergraduates, all waiting to hear a lecture on Cinna the poet. I was still telling all who would listen about Abigail.

There was a voice from the back of the room,

"Is that Abigail Stafford or Abigail Bastard?"

I know my colour changed and I froze to the spot. The words had rung out clearly. The words that might have been an idle joke: horseplay and casual bullying were commonplace, though nobody ever tried to bully me.

I made no conscious decision. What happened was without thought. I heard myself saying,

"Fetch me a sword!"

Students are not allowed to bear weapons, monks and gentlemen or no, it would do too much damage in the town.

"FETCH ME A SWORD!"

I was shouting now, pushing through my fellows to the back of the room, to the author of that remark. I pulled a knife from my belt, most students carry them. Usually above the size allowed by the Colleges. They give some protection in a tavern brawl; mine was in my hand now.

I had to knock down or knock away restraining hands. My own hand was shaking as I held my knife hard to the fellow's throat, the first drops of blood running as I pressed the blade harder still. I saw fear in his eyes.

"Repeat that!"

Before I could do any more the room reacted. There was uproar, many hands pulling me away, I was helpless.

Whatever the violence outside, there could be no killing in school; we would all be 'gated'.

Anger is a terrible thing. It was minutes before I could speak, or even think of anything besides that insult.

My fellows looked at me strangely and asked if I was well. After a time I came again to myself but the look in their eyes, which first answered my wildness, never quite went from them.

The incident passed, at least no life was lost, but no friends were made either. There were reverberations, Father Tobias wrote to Master William and Lady Margaret pursed her lips when she heard of it.

This incident summed up my feelings for Cambridge. I didn't like it and, even if I tried, it didn't like me. Now I was a father my homesickness and preoccupation were

worse. I couldn't eat, despite all Trim could do, I couldn't think, despite Father Tobias' best efforts. I'd always been on my own, now the other students actively avoided me. Word spread about my temper and they thought me aloof because of my rank. I wasn't, I honestly wasn't.

If only Eadie had been there, how different it would have been. She was too delicate to travel, even if she had been allowed to come, but how quick she would have come if she'd been asked. Having given his word, in that indemnity, Edward could no longer ask, and how could he, anyway, bring her to share this misery?

The blessed holiday came again at Easter. William and Lady Margaret tried to keep him from Penshurst but again they failed.

(Past)

There were daffodils and freshness and fluffy white clouds and sunshine taking the chill from the land. The World smiled at Penshurst. Everyone was well and happy. This time there were plenty of people and there was a baby for them to fuss around. Abigail was an angel, Eadie a Madonna, and Edward was mostly kept out of the way.

He was practically obsessed with Abigail, and truly she enchanted all who saw her. Edward expected her to be able to do everything, at once, even talk. There is a vivid memory of her holding his finger in her tiny hand. He stayed there for ages, long after his arm had gone from pain to numbness. Of course, he was allowed to do nothing, with all those females to bustle him out of the way.

Eadie smiled at Edward but she couldn't hide her disappointment as it came time for him to go. Her disappointment that she wasn't going, hadn't been asked to go.

Of the summer term there is little good to be said. There is no clear recollection although there is a certainty that work fell badly into arrears. Edward knew it would be a weapon in the hands of Lady Margaret but if he did badly enough maybe next term would be the last. In the meantime would come summer and Penshurst.

This term, before release for summer, is memorable for just one thing. You remember Edward's initial surprise at the absence of schooling in arms, when first he went up to Cambridge? Scholars and Churchmen seemed to think chivalry came out of books not warfare. It was disappointing to Edward. It was also a denial of a large part of life, on which survival of noblemen and soldiers alike depended. Edward made enquiries but the University was as surprised at Edward's interest as he at their indifference.

It was in this last term of the year that Edward discovered Father Francis. He belonged to another college though, in these later years of his life, he hardly taught at all. What he did do was to take a great interest in the welfare, indeed the survival, of the students.

There were many young sons of merchants and even gentlemen, besides the young monks, who had no idea even of the rudiments of arms. But they were not immune to the effects of drink, nor injuries from reckless fights when they had not the wisdom to avoid an argument. They fell easy prey in brawls and to cutpurses in the streets. Father Francis did his best to teach such innocents the basic skills to keep them alive.

The authorities did not approve; men of letters and of God should not teach violence. Counsellors of both commerce and school argued that violent death in Cambridge was no greater than might be expected amongst so many young men. It wasn't the business of the Church to teach killing. Father Francis met all criticism

with heat. With the passion of a Christian he taught not how to kill but how to stay alive.

When Edward first came to him Father Francis was doubtful. This young man needed no help to defend himself. At very first glance Edward looked confident, powerful and quick.

Edward explained how he used to be schooled by Thomas; at least he would like to keep up with the sword. He needed the practice if he weren't to forget what he knew. It was a strange idea to Father Francis, you were either capable or not; what was this need for practice? He was suspicious.

Did students not forget their grammar if they left off classes? This was the same. Father Francis allowed himself to be convinced, not because he believed it but because he liked this earnest young man, maybe he could help with teaching. Edward joined the classes: gaining the only official student's access to swords in the University. Though, by official edict, all Father Francis' swords were kept under lock and key.

There was a problem finding opponents for Edward, there was no one Father Francis could put forward to stand against him, even for practice. The poor swordsman can easily be hurt; Edward well remembered the buffets he'd taken from Thomas. He had to use great care with these novices. Father Francis watched, interfering with admonitions,

"No, no, softly my boy. The mother duck doesn't bring her chicks to the raging torrent."

Father Francis was fearful and Edward impatient but they both persisted. Edward's fame spread, no one could stand against him. Bets were made he could disarm anyone; when this ceased to be in doubt bets were made on how long it would take: the times wagered on became ridiculously short.

There are memories of afternoons spent in a half-covered, half-open enclosure; Father Francis' home-made lists. There are memories of pallid youths, whose weapons could be knocked out of their hands with one confident stroke; memories of remembering not to move too fast, remembering to take some of the weight out of counter-attacks, remembering not to attack at all: trying to be respectful and encouraging. Not always succeeding. There are memories of these boys' talk of fear of injury, it took away their courage, and it stopped them defending themselves. It seemed nothing could encourage them, a true demonstration of skill wasn't inspiring to them, they found it frightening.

The authorities were fearful sword fighting would become a challenge sport; neither they nor Father Francis would permit it. They needn't have worried, no one in Cambridge wanted to challenge Edward. Nevertheless, his teaching and his patronage were valued. They would have been more so had Edward the patience of a teacher, to Father Francis' disappointment he had not.

Only once was Edward of really great use. One particular student caused trouble, both in the town and to Father Francis. He believed in bullying as a substitute for study and he preyed on two of Father Francis' students. It led to conflict with the good father.

I was surprised when Father Francis spoke of it. I noticed a tremble in his hands and he seemed not to be his normal self.

"God places many trials on us.

If I had the youth and vigour I try to teach our brothers, Edward, I should know how to answer his threats."

It was said with a shrug.

“As it is, how shall I answer him when he does come to my door?”

I know it wasn't for himself Father Francis feared but for the two student monks this bully threatened with hurt, even death. My anger grew with the thought of it.

“Let me answer for you Father.”

We agreed he should be summoned to Father Francis' chambers and it was there I met him, in Father Francis absence, so no man of the Church should know what passed between us.

Everything was quickly settled, and there was no more trouble. To Edward's credit there was also no lasting injury.

Yet, even with the relief of Father Francis' school, it was intense joy when the term ended and with it the first year in Cambridge.

All this of Edward came in a great lump.

You're not missing anything of my story, right to the end of this chapter nothing worth telling happened in my life, nothing but the echo of my own frustration. But I'm going to interrupt Edward now for something odd, something which rings with the rest of this chapter, it's no more than a dream.

Even though it was Friday I wouldn't be travelling today. Tomorrow I should be going to a wedding not far from Peterborough and so this evening I had a break from the road and from Edward. I just sat and watched T.V., mind dull and body slothful. It was still early evening and the programmes were boring. Much as I tried to enjoy indolence, I merely fell asleep. When I awoke it was with a fragment of a dream.

The light was strange, a sort of pearly grey, but shot through with beams of incredibly yellow light. There was no feature, no background, no foreground but in the middle one figure, constantly turning. The figure was Eadie. I could only see the upper part of her body and her hair but there was no mistake, it was Eadie. Then, gradually the face turned into view, it wasn't Eadie but Sarah.

There could be no doubt. And there could be no doubt of my shock either. You might think I shouldn't have been shocked. From what I've said it should be no surprise, but there's one thing more. As the figure turned it stayed absolutely still, it was as if I were moving or her unmoving head were fixed on some turntable out of sight. As Sarah's face came into view I could see it had the grey colour of lifeless granite. Not a hint of expression; no warmth or life touched it.

This dream troubled me. I remember the warm glow of recognising Eadie suddenly replaced by the repulsion of Sarah's blank face. It was as if I, and Edward too, were somehow losing touch with Eadie, for her to be replaced by an unreachable Sarah. Pondering that dream, in the first phase of waking, I thought, if only the figure would turn the other way I should see Eadie's face, full of vibrant life.

It was the effect the rest of this chapter had on me and it made me want to turn away from my bleak present to wish and wish for the impossible.

Edward didn't so much feel he could be denied his time with Eadie and Abigail but if he were profligate with it Lady Margaret would find ways of parting them later. If it was to be, so let it be, for Edward was desperate to be with them. He spent much longer than he should have done if he were to stop his guardian from plotting.

The summer was idyllic, at least the time spent at Penshurst was, but two other periods were not. First, Edward was required to spend time with Lady Katherine, his sisters and Brother Henry. This time will simply not come to mind. Perhaps I'm just

not interested enough. I can imagine Edward fretting the time away with ill grace, failing to hide his desire to be elsewhere and offending all around him. In any case his family don't come into this story, no matter how hard I try to make them.

The other episode I'd rather forget. Edward hadn't wanted to go but Master Gibbons insisted, reminding him of his indemnity and promise of good behaviour; that decided it. He was to visit Lady Margaret at her new house in the country. She would have someone with her and this was the cause of Edward's reluctance.

He felt strongly enough for me to see it through his eyes.

(Past)

I was in Lady Margaret's house, not near London, where I spent so much of my childhood, but in the quiet Northamptonshire countryside. Lady Margaret has retired from public life and stays away from it more and more. Travelling causes her pain and she seldom tours. It's rare even to see her at my Lord Stanley's house. Aletia comes to see her and she still has company around her, the house is comfortable enough, as much as any noble houses may be.

There were two strangers there. Alianore, the same girl I should have met on my way from Wales, and her guardian, also with her. Alianore was tall, dark haired and dark eyed. She had some secret way of looking at the World, you could call it shyness. She was about my age in looks or not very far from it, I've never been good at judging girls' ages.

Lady Margaret introduced us together. She seemed both nervous and obsequious, I couldn't tell why. There was a sly glance at the guardian when she introduced Alianore, I couldn't understand that either. She went on to me,

"Alianore is coming to be a great beauty.

I want you to get to know each other."

As understanding came I don't know if my mouth fell open. I was given no chance to escape for Alianore came towards me without waiting,

"Come Edward, we're supposed go away while the Countess and my guardian talk."

It wasn't the language of a shy girl; she almost dragged me from the room after her. I was speechless, Alianore's guardian laughed openly.

I showed her the house, yards and grounds for something to do; I didn't well know them myself. She wasn't impressed with anything but I think it was I that failed to impress rather than Lady Margaret's estate. She sat down on a garden seat.

"I suppose you should tell me about yourself."

I did; briefly, there wasn't much to say, or at least not to be said to her.

"All I know about you is your father. Are the stories true, about you being in hiding, an outlaw Edward? Did your father really lose his head against King Richard and why was he so easily beaten?

Didn't he have the courage for it?"

I stammered in amazement.

She was prying and at the same time she insulted the father I barely knew.

"He wasn't beaten easily. He was beaten by bad luck, a flood and the King not keeping his promise. And Richard was a tyrant who scared everyone except my father."

She laughed as the colour came to my cheeks. She put a familiar hand on my knee.

"Be easy, Edward."

It was more like condescension for my bad manners than apology for hers and I stood up to avoid her touch.

I was to learn she was like that, always finding apology difficult. I also found she only valued success; she didn't understand people's hearts at all. For all this Alianore was attractive, perhaps it was her confident manner, perhaps also the strange air of mystery she carried with her.

When I was alone with Lady Margaret she importuned me for my feelings. I gave no satisfaction for her curiosity till she was out of patience.

"Well? What did you think of her?!"

"I don't know Lady Margaret."

The pause was a long one while I tried to work out what I did think, and what I dared say. She was rude, confident, exciting, attractive, disturbing. I told the truth.

"I don't like her."

The storm clouds gathered on Lady Margaret's brow.

"Whether you like her or not you will be seeing more of her. Not just me, Edward, the King thinks it suitable.

One day you and she will be married."

Caught by that awful prospect I took my leave as soon as I could and heard no more about Alianore for a long time. As my fears faded and time passed I almost forgot her.

Meeting Alianore made Edward unhappy. His family was Eadie and Abigail. The very idea of being forced to marry this arrogant, distant, woman, a stranger, was horrible. Even more so now there was Abigail. To be forced out of Eadie's bed into the arms of another was dirty, wrongful, and inhuman. The purity of his love for Eadie was made a real, living thing in the bright young innocence of Abigail. She shone and sparkled like an angel to the enchantment of everyone.

It amazed Edward how quickly a baby could grow. She was growing bigger and stronger, she was nearly walking; she could almost feed herself. Never a day went by but she seemed to have learned something new.

On his return Edward took a secret vow, kneeling in the family chapel at Penshurst, in all the fervour of his love, and all his fear of an arranged marriage. The memory of that unhappy boy bent low before the altar, eyes tight shut in concentration in the golden glow of the candlelight carries a solemn swell of all the shades of remembrance.

(Past)

"Oh God, never let us be parted as I will be faithful. Keep us together I pray you.

I swear on your sacred name and all that is holy I shall never marry Alianore or any other, so long as Eadie and Abigail shall have life. May God help me, I swear it on my soul, my honour and on all my family, in the name of the Living Christ."

The empty chapel received that oath in hushed silence. It was as if the Great Spirit heard and noted it.

Chapter 18 - Celebration

I told Angharad all this last chapter, but most of all I told her about the dream. I needed to know what she thought and I phoned her straight away; it must have been eight o'clock that evening. For the first time in months Frances was coming to Peterborough, she'd arrive at any time, and I needed to speak to Angharad before she arrived. Frances and I were to attend a friend's wedding, together, the next day; it would be in Huntingdon, not far from Peterborough, and Frances was going to stay overnight. I'll tell you more of that shortly, first my phone call.

She received my news in silence...

When I pressed her she asked about all the things I told you in the last chapter, about Abigail and Alianore.

Having wrung from me what she could, she came back to what I told you some time ago, about correspondences.

"Debbie and Frances are in the story aren't they?"

My answer was guarded, to hear what she thought.

"Yes."

"These correspondences you talk about, it's not just Sarah and Eadie is it?"

"No."

"So now Debbie is Eadie's child and Frances is this Alianore."

I hadn't said it. It had more than crossed my mind but Sarah's rejection, that day of her visit, left me full of doubts. And yet... Angharad had never liked Frances. Just one meeting had been enough for both of them; she forms very instant and emotional opinions.

"So does Edward have to marry this Alianore?"

She wouldn't leave it alone. It was moving too quick and I couldn't answer. It would be like trying to turn to the end of this book, before it's even been written. Anyway, it was she who made the connection.

"It wasn't Frances Eadie turned into, it was Sarah."

Angharad wasn't to be hindered by facts,

"Maybe if the head had turned the other way, it wouldn't have been Eadie, it would have been Frances."

How could I answer that? I just sort of spluttered.

"Make sure the head doesn't turn the other way."

She knew well enough Debbie and Frances don't get on. They've both tried for my sake and Debbie has never complained about Frances to me but she's very unflattering when describing her to anyone else.

"You know Frances and I are going to a wedding?"

It was, after all, the reason for my still being in Peterborough. Angharad wasn't impressed; there was something other than banter in her tone.

"It may not be your wedding but take care all the same..., seriously, I mean it."

I suppose I felt vaguely insulted by that, as if I couldn't manage my own life.

Abigail was so like my own daughter when she was little. Though not for any reason of correspondence; of course I could understand Edward's feelings.

It wasn't her fault. Little Abigail was born out of marriage; she couldn't expect the courtly upbringing and expensive wedding the children of Edward's future wife

would have. No titles, no manors to support them, only that part of Edward's life he could keep for her. He would let no one threaten that inheritance.

It did make me think of Debbie, my feelings for her and the divorce from her mother. At least there were no riches for her to lose. I've none to give.

I wouldn't have encouraged anyone to get married at this time; yet there was indeed a marriage to celebrate.

It was Martin who brought me to Peterborough in the first place. Sent there by his own company he gave me so much work I couldn't refuse, but it had taken me a full year to accept the offer and finally open an office. Still, I'd done it of my own choice and partly for the reason I told you before. For a time all went well but Martin's career took a nosedive long before the coming of the slump. He'd been the company's rising star, the blue eyed boy who could do no wrong: we all knew it wasn't true but I liked him and thought him loyal and honest. His rise had made enemies but I didn't think it fair the way those enemies exploited his weaknesses. It hit him very hard. Many a time he came for sympathy and advice, and to drink the office whisky.

A year, two jobs and a broken marriage later he declared himself on the mend. The new job was the best ever, the new car the biggest, fastest and flashiest yet and, most of all, a new wife.

It wasn't just me he asked to the wedding, he asked Frances too. I was surprised; she didn't like him and never hid the fact. Sympathy and tolerance were not her strong points. I was even more surprised when she accepted. Apart from anything else, attending a wedding in Huntingdon pretty much meant staying in Peterborough. Apart from collecting her things, Frances hadn't been near the flat in months.

It crossed my mind this might be some sort of move to reconciliation. I didn't quite know how I felt about that, there were too many unresolved differences. Neither of us was likely to give in, no hint of regret, no olive branch, no warmth or understanding; there was only our agreement we should both celebrate Martin's wedding. It promised to be a very strange occasion.

It was indeed late when Frances finally arrived and I gave her dinner: most of my cooking is done in the frying pan, it's quick and easy; it's bad for your health you say? cooking in wine uses no fat.

She brought a present (bought on an office account cheque) and I wrapped it. As wedding presents go it went. In fact Frances has quite reasonable taste. She brought our camera also. Everyone's heard about the Kodak prizes she won, or nearly won, getting the light just right on Alpine snow fields (she also reckons herself an expert mountaineer). Of course, on these things I couldn't comment, she did them all before I met her. Anyway, Martin's fiancée decided to put her to the test, Frances was to take the wedding photographs.

There were no scenes that night, we remained civilised. There also remained a polite distance, not only because of Angharad's advice, nor even because of Edward's emotional vow at the end of the last chapter.

The wedding was to be a small affair at Huntingdon district registry office, really no guests. A pity, I knew Martin's father, I'd done business with him, a gentle, quiet, decent man. Martin didn't mention his parents' absence, I didn't comment. There were no personal friends, no business friends there; strange. I knew Martin kept up with such company friends he still had from Peterborough. Altogether it would be a very quiet affair.

The bride, Pam, I didn't know well. They met in a nightclub some time before and she gave him the comfort and sympathy no one else had. She turned to me for advice, once or twice, mostly about Martin. Most people seem to do that, a pity I can't advise myself better. She was a pleasant, pretty woman, quite bright; I saw no reason why they shouldn't be happy, I told her so. What else could I say?

We were to go to their house first. A modern suburban house in one of those many villages that used to be pretty and full of character; before they were swamped by new building. The house was full of the electronic devices Martin loves so much, a computer in every room. Pam's kids liked it but I noticed the lack of art, ornament and books.

We were all determined the day should be a happy one. Maybe it was my own depression that made it such hard work. The brightest part of the occasion was the female registrar who believed in bringing to the day all the gaiety she could.

Frances duly took her snaps, with fake professional seriousness. I took some also with different composition, light exposure, etc. just in case. If only there were something to see through the viewfinder but two strained people in a civic office. No doubt we both wished them well; I just wished them a better occasion.

The wedding breakfast was exactly that, would you believe it? We went to a restaurant for ham and eggs. At twelve o'clock midday the dinning room was quiet. Had we all been twenty and full of the bright expectations of youth maybe it would have been a bright day, nothing would have mattered but happiness. But all four of us were jaded. I felt very old, seldom have I experienced a happy event as such hard work.

Anyone can sustain some sort of conversation if they really try. But jokes sounded hollow, I could hardly wish them the same happiness Frances and I'd found. Romance, philosophy and faith also failed. We were left only with the materialism of Martin's new job.

The only sense I have left of the day is of silent desperation. Gosh, I hope Martin never reads this book! For truly you couldn't wish those two souls anything bad. As I drove Frances back up the A1, through the afternoon traffic, there was only one thing in my mind and I sang it,

"We're poor little lambs,
That have lost our way,
Baa, Baa, Baa.

We're little black sheep,
That have gone astray,
Baa, Baa, Baa."

And truly I felt,

"God have mercy on such as we,
Baa, Baa, Baa."

My singing voice isn't the best, maybe the song wasn't in the best possible taste, just my depression speaking.

We were both pleased to get back to the flat, even in its cold emptiness there were books and music.

Frances left as soon as she could; really there was nothing to say between us. I think we were both relieved the day was over.

There's a little post-script to add. It was several weeks before Frances got those wedding snaps developed. Maybe she should have done it sooner. When they came back they were all horribly under exposed. The battery in the camera was flat. It may have suited that dull day but it fell to me to make our apologies to Martin.

Left on my own I fell to thinking.

Bright jazz played in the background; I could hear my own thoughts echo round me.

I haven't told you much of Alianore. It's something I've wanted to skirt around; that marriage should be no part of this story, and yet... Neither she nor Edward were consulted, Edward had been barely twelve years old and she was no more willing than he. Typical of the Tudors, once the contract was made and paid for, Lady Margaret took no further interest. The children went their own way with no thought, no counselling or advice.

I thought of Edward's future wife, no she wasn't unlike Frances; the same self-willed energy, the same inability to believe she might be wrong. The same dark ancestry, the same stark view of the World, it made me see them alike.

What did I want in a woman?

Too much optimism has turned to disappointment. Good looks, intelligence, love of life; none of these things have brought me happiness yet, at times, I've loved women with each of these. What you really need is someone who returns your love, with a pure heart and a true spirit.

No, there was no future with Frances, as I touch the edge of such a woman in Edward's life that much was plain: yet what of my future alone?

As I sat amongst my dismal thoughts the phone rang; it was the wife of a client, God knows why she phoned me. Her husband had locked her out of her house, she was pregnant and homeless. They'd only been married five months; they even invited me to the wedding, though I'd been too busy to go.

She blamed the fact she was working when, since his business collapsed, he wasn't. On top of that he'd three children by a previous marriage and she has two, we were still fighting through the courts over her two. Since I've known them it's been one problem after another. A surprisingly common story.

I phoned the client of course, as a friend, who could say if it did any good. I phoned his wife back and kept my fingers crossed; I asked her to ring later, to say how it went.

Can you give the answer, to stop such tight strung nerves straining to breaking point? Neither can I.

As I idled away my time, I got out the notes I've made of Edward. For some reason what caught my eye were the notes on my meditations about Christmas, the notes on Malory's book of King Arthur, I'd marked them with asterisks and question marks. I hadn't known what to make of them, then any more than now. I flipped on to the notes of Edward in Stafford, of the Tower Room and Edward connecting the things in the box with Malory's story of the Holy Grail.

The flat brooded, cold and empty. Was there some link between Edward and the Grail? Of course, I could have great faith in my ability to make such a connection, couldn't I? Look at the great success I had in managing my own life; witness the emptiness of the flat I sat in.

Yet again I fell into reverie.

There was a voice sounding somewhere,
“Remember the nine worthies.”

In the preface to Malory’s ‘Le Morte D’Arthur’ there are singled out, from all the World’s history, nine great men, ‘the nine worthies’:

Hector of Troy,
Alexander the Great,
Julius Caesar (the Roman general who became a god)
- all from the Classical World –
Joshua,
King David,
Judas Maccabaeus (the ‘Hammer of the Syrians’)
- all great leaders of Israel –
King Arthur,
Charlemagne,
and Godfrey de Bouillon (the first crusader king of Jerusalem)
- all great medieval heroes.

I really don’t know why they came into my mind. Sometimes channelling this story of Edward sets me problems I can’t solve. Maybe the nine worthies all had trouble with women, I know at least some of them did.

A further fancy came to me. This time it was words direct from Malory, ringing in my head.

“Yet some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord Jesus, gone into another place; and men say that he shall come again, and he shall win the Holy Cross.”

Maybe, someday, I’ll reconcile this with that day of the wedding.

For want of something else to say, I told Angharad about this from Malory. Her response was that of surprise,

“You know, what Malory means is that King Arthur will be reincarnated.”

“And the nine worthies?”

Angharad didn’t answer, just leaving a silent question mark; she knows I haven’t quite accepted the idea of reincarnation, pursuing this could so easily have brought us into argument.

There’s a footnote, let it stand for the end of the chapter.

After the first time I mentioned Sir Thomas Malory’s book Angharad actually went out and bought it for me, I remember her coming to see me to thrust it into my hands. The first thing you notice is on the cover, it was first printed in 1485 by [William Caxton](#). Do you remember, in the ninth chapter of this book, Edward remembered his Papa giving it to him? Yet Duke Henry was executed in 1483!

Such points worry me. I’ve hit several in writing this book, mostly I’ve resolved them without bothering you, but this time I’m not sure.

Please read ‘Le Morte’, it’s one of the finest tales in our language. When you come to the end of it you’ll read Malory’s own note,

“Here is the end of the whole book of King Arthur, and of his noble knights of the Round Table...”

There follows a request to pray for the life and, after death, for the soul of Thomas Malory. Then these words,

“For this book was ended in the ninth year of the reign of King Edward the fourth, by Sir Thomas Malory, knight, as Jesu help him for His great might...”

The coronation of Edward IV took place on Sunday 28th June 1461. In other words the book was finished between June 1469 and June 1470, well within Duke Henry’s lifetime, but the point doesn’t end there.

The preface to ‘Le Morte’, I’ve referred to in this chapter, was written by Caxton, presumably in 1485. What can you make of it?

Chapter 19 - Growing Up

(Past)

Surely it was in the autumn term I hoped to be sent down, in that happy band, too poor, too stupid, too lazy or too wise to stay longer in Cambridge. It would have been so, but for Lady Margaret's intervention with excuses for my poor performance; the duties of rank.

The first of these was upon me almost before I was back at Cambridge; the investiture of the King's young son, Prince Henry, as Duke of York and it took place on All Hallows Day, the 1st November, in the tenth year of King Henry's reign. I was sixteen years old and the new duke was just three.

The first thing which came to me was a letter from Master Gibbons; you shall see what he said,

“...The King and the Countess think it unwise that the dukedom of York, held by Prince Richard Plantagenet before his disappearance, should be left vacant. It is the wish of the King that his son Prince Henry shall be invested in the title.

When you inherit your own titles you shall be the senior duke in England next after Prince Henry and the King has ordained you shall acknowledge his right by your presence at his investiture and in the weeks of tournament and celebration which follow.

As clerk to your wardrobe I shall make all arrangements on your behalf and send servants to you in Cambridge to make your preparations...”

Next came the attentions of a cloth merchant from London, sent to me especially for the occasion. Clothes have always been made for me, but never such fine clothes. He and his servants were determined I should be the finest gentleman in Westminster. There was bolt after bolt of the most exquisite materials; satins, silks, velvet and jewels, with yards of cloth of gold.

There were hats and hose and boots and belts, swords and daggers; adornments of all kinds. At swords I drew the line; I had Duke Henry's Sword and wanted none other. There was a spirited argument, the clothier had no wish to be a sword-smith and appearance was all. But I meant to wear the sword I would carry to the tournament. The merchant was indeed no sword-smith and I had my way.

Teeth were sucked and heads were shaken at my simplicity, my unadorned hands; my unwillingness to play the peacock. I was flattered. I was amazed at the extravagance of it all. It was made clear, difficult as I was; there were limits to the merchant's patience. I was his shop window; it was worth more than £100 a year to him! It took many days to make me the duke Lady Margaret painfully reminded me I was not yet become.

Of the days of celebration I should see little, beyond the part I played myself. There would be a holiday for the whole capital with all that meant.

There was the press and jostle of people in the streets, the side-shows, the noise and cries of hawkers, the vivid colours, all different, on every back. The press and stink of the population. I've never caught the smell of mankind so keenly; it made me gag.

No one could walk the streets in the clothes I wore, nor even ride on horseback. I travelled in Lady Margaret's carriage.

The cheers were loud, Henry was a popular king. Whether people care for the opinions of their lords and priests I don't know but they care for firm government that keeps the peace.

"God save the King.

God save Prince Henry!"

The streets resounded everywhere.

Some of the cheers were for us. I even heard cheers for Buckingham when the crowds caught sight of the red and black of my servants' livery.

There were tumblers and jugglers, the music of strolling minstrels playing for farthings. Everywhere there was giddy jollity and gay display.

The King's elder son, Arthur, was old enough to look the prince he was but Henry was just a baby. It was strange indeed to make such an infant a duke, second in line to the throne. What will befall England if the King and Prince Arthur should miscarry?

"It is important for us to be seen together, for you to support the House of Tudor."

It was Lady Margaret speaking as we travelled on towards the Abbey.

"Margaret of Burgundy calls her puppet the duke of York; she claims he's one of the Princes in the Tower, young Richard. She pledges her faith he has a better right to the throne of England than the King. My son shall show them! It's my grandson who shall be duke of York and all England shall kneel to him."

It was an unaccustomed outburst and we travelled in silence for a space.

"It is for this you have all this finery you hate so much.

I hate it too. I hoped to have given up all this but, if it's got to be done, the sooner the better, before I get any older. There is so much in manners, Edward, every detail must be right. If it isn't, there can be great offence. Wars have started on less.

Your being here shows the compliance between the houses of Stafford and Tudor. There are many who remember your father, as others remember Prince Richard. There shall be an end to the discontent my son's had to face from that Burgundian upstart!

It is important you be seen to be well, and that you be loyal."

For a moment it put me in mind of the poor, simple boy, the earl of Warwick. He was imprisoned in the Tower lest the discontent and ambitious used him to challenge the Crown, in memory of Edward IV. There had been an impostor pretending to be the earl of Warwick, put forward when Tudor enemies believed the original to be dead and out of the way. That rebellion had collapsed when King Henry displayed the real earl to the King's detractors. Now there was a merchant's boy, Perkin Warbeck, travelling round the courts of Europe pretending to be the young Prince Richard, the younger son of Edward IV.

Lady Margaret was apologising to me. She was making excuses for our shared discomfort. It was a thing she hardly ever did. My formal reply was self-conscious, for this occasion of state.

"Lady Margaret, you are my guardian. I'm loyal to you and to the King who's been kind to me, and so I am loyal to his heirs. I am honoured to be here, to show my respect for you and, for you, the new duke."

Trumpets blared as Prince Henry was led into the great hall, looking lost as he sat alone on a mighty courser. He sat as still as he could while Henry the king knighted him and thirty three men with him, all mounted on horseback.

It was my job to fix the right spur to his tiny boot, while the Marquis of Dorset did the same at the left. When it was done the King lifted him down on to a table saying,

“Be a good knight.”

The crowd cheered as the King kissed his son and held him up to acclamation.

After came High Mass, at the Chapel Royal, with eight bishops attending.

All the ceremony cost Lady Margaret great effort but she would stint none of it, neither then nor at the tournament and banquet that followed. The Duke's reception wasn't comfortable, though the King's hospitality was lavish as ever. The confection of royal entertainment was only out done by the measure of food and drink.

I was impatient for the tournament,

“To run well at the tilt,

To leap on horseback at every side,

Without stirrup or other help,

And being therein expert,

Then armed at all points.”

It was the dream of every boy who ever lived.

The first day of tournament was glorious. All the knights wore the green and white of the King. The pavilions were brilliantly plumed in tawny, black, light tawny and scarlet. The young prince watched from a cot and the Princess Margaret judged the honours.

I was frustrated, that day, to ride only twice. But I lashed and swung with my blunt sword with the best in the tourney. I still sat my horse at the end when many a good knight was fallen.

Lady Margaret would have restrained me,

“You are here to show your rank not your skill. My son would not have you a hero, but living life quiet and tranquil.”

Lady Margaret pointed to the real dangers of the lists but I would have none of it.

“I fight for honour, the King's as well as my own.”

There was credit for me in jousting with the lance, one against one, as our horses thundered down on each other along the rails. The shock of collision and the shattering of lance against shield thrilled me every time. But there was also fury, when I found my opponents were all chosen by hidden hands that denied me the highest honours. My anger was just, for I wasn't defeated in any contest.

Of the masks and revels which followed each night the memory that stays with me isn't of pomp and richness or flattery for knightly success, but the sense of power and excitement and importance that lay behind it. Most of all was the greed for these things glittering in the eyes of everyone. I wondered what that little boy made of it all. He seemed frightened by everything, as would I have been in Henry's young place.

I haven't caught the whole drama, but it struck me less for the vision and more for its sense of history. This was the investiture as duke of York of the future Henry VIII. He was never intended to be king and never trained for it. He had an elder brother, the Arthur Edward mentioned. Arthur was the prince who carried Tudor hopes for England. It was a tragedy when he died young. It was strange to see Henry VIII, that most notorious of English kings, as a small boy of three.

But there was something here much closer to Edward, the threat Lady Margaret mentioned, of Perkin Warbeck. His claim to be Richard duke of York was a thorn in the side of King Henry for many years. The King devoted immense effort, devoted all foreign policy, to forcing Perkin out of one European court after another, when he did come to England he was captured, tortured and forced to confess. Eventually he was executed. Perkin never held any real power, never commanded any proper army. Why were the Tudors so afraid of him?

I found the answer in “The History of Richard III” by [Sir George Buck](#). Sir George was, you remember, Master of the Revels in the time of Elizabeth I, a post which gave him access to private papers. While he wrote to exonerate King Richard of the murder of the Princes in the Tower, he also concluded Perkin Warbeck was indeed Richard, duke of York, smuggled out of the Tower in King Richard's time and kept in disguise for fear of Tudor assassins. As the son of Edward IV he had a better claim to the throne than Henry Tudor. If Sir George was right I could well understand Lady Margaret's fears and why a three-year-old child should be made a duke.

Young Edward knew none of this, but he must have known the Princes were denied the crown because of illegitimacy, that the Tudor claim was also illegitimate. He must also have known that his own ancestry was lawful, as Richard III's had been. I wonder if he remembered his interview with Master Gibbons, I wonder if the fierce determination of Lady Margaret's words in the carriage made him uncomfortable. After Richard's death, Edward Stafford, as lawful heir to Thomas of Woodstock, was a truer heir to the throne of England even than Richard, duke of York.

As the autumn term wore to an end, then Christmas, with more time spent at court than Penshurst, and on into a new term, Edward became more and more desperate. How could he live longer this lonely life, suffering for want of friends, for want of Eadie?

His pestering of the prior increased,

(Past)

“I have a daughter and family my studies keep me from. I need them here. They have a right to my protection. If they cannot come to me I should go to them.”

The prior's answer was always the same.

“Neither the Abbot nor the Pope will break the Rule of the Order of St. Benedict for your convenience Sir Edward.

As to your going, you are a sworn brother of this College, your duty, your honour keep you here. Your inheritance makes you an example to others and binds you to your duty. You may not go.”

In defeat Edward's pleading changed. If he could not have Eadie, could he have Thomas?

“I need a private tutor.

I learned well from Thomas.

Thomas could teach me what distraction stops me from learning.

I need a secretary for my courtly duties.

I need a body guard for the envy my rank causes.”

Perhaps it was true; perhaps Thomas could help with the arrears of studies. Perhaps even William or Lady Margaret thought so. It was a compromise that might silence demands for Eadie.

However it was, the delirious day came when Thomas arrived in Cambridge. Dispensation was given to live out of College and lodgings were found in the town. Whether Thomas was pleased to be sent playing nursemaid is impossible to say; he'd become distant and somehow older since that dreadful tour for the Welsh rents. The joy at seeing him, the only real friend in the World and bearer of news of Eadie, couldn't, I think, be resisted. Poor Thomas was given no peace.

Friendship was reborn, tuition was renewed and work improved.

(Past)

There is a short image of Thomas' words of praise.

They were sitting by the fire, the candles burned bright, Trim, who came with them from College, was pouring wine, mulled with a hot poker.

"T is all your work, Edward. It's well over my head and you set me puzzles you solve for yourself."

Edward's cheeks glowed in that praise but he couldn't have done it without Thomas.

So much of Edward had come at me it's amazing my own life went on at all. Yet in the midst of Edward, under pressure at work, Sarah telephoned.

It came at a time I could barely keep up with telephone messages, Sarah pitched some questions at me. They were about a past life, if they could help me with Edward, or Sarah herself, I had to know.

Did a certain name mean anything to me? A name half familiar, half unknown, God knows from where she dredged it. Who was he? Sarah would say little:

he lived in the 14th century,

he was a political reformer,

he came before some sort of Star Chamber court for his pains.

I asked Sarah if she thought he'd been important, she assured me he was.

In all this there seemed to be a strong Jewish connection.

Armed with a name it was fairly easy to check it out.

I already knew Star Chamber didn't exist in the 14th century. I remembered from school days, it was a sort of court of Criminal Equity, taking its name from a design on the ceiling of the room where it met. It was set up, I thought, by Elizabeth I in the 16th century. In fact some historians trace it back to a statute of 1487, passed to enforce the laws of Henry VII. Sarah was still a century out.

I searched the Dictionary of National Biography for the name Sarah gave me. There were three entries, two were reformers, both religious, neither of whom I'd want to be associated with and neither of them alive in the 14th century.

As to the Jewish connection; the expulsions of the twelve hundreds and early thirteen hundreds made it highly unlikely these people were living in England at the time.

Of course, an hour or so of research proves nothing. All the same, it was a disappointment. I phoned Sarah, once again she was unavailable; I left a message about my negative findings.

Sarah was impossible to get hold of after that.

Maybe something of my irritation came across in my message, "In view of your idea's lack of promise...", but I had offered to have it professionally looked into by the contact I'd made in the Society for Psychical Research.

One thing I have in common with Edward is a detestation of practical jokes. This goes back to my school days and I've always felt they're a pure expression of malice. Yet I didn't think Sarah was malicious. Was it some sort of game she was

playing with me, or a test, or had I really missed something? I pondered what she meant by it. I still don't know today whether my impatience caused me to miss something important.

Edward's life was pressing in again, with all the confusion of seeing scenes through him; I lurched into the very middle of his thoughts.

(Past)

I think, by now, I've come to know Thomas is Eadie's father, we talk often of my love for her and how I wanted news of her; just to talk about her and what she might be doing.

I don't know if it is by Thomas's efforts but I started to get letters from her. They come by the regular commerce between Cambridge, London, Penshurst and by Northamptonshire, where Lady Margaret now lives. It is certain Master Gibbons must respect a seal and I trust him for the understanding we reached after that time he rebuked me for hiring servants. Now I've priceless letters from Eadie and news of her and Abigail to show to Thomas.

Sometimes Thomas and I talk about my future. I told him I can't see how I can fail to attain my freedom with my titles when I come of age. I shall live the life I please, whether at Court or Penshurst; and who shall deny me Eadie then?

Thomas shook his head.

"The World doesn't run that way.

You owe your obedience to your king and must do his bidding. You must be able to meet your peers and your servants all with their expectations and you must satisfy them all.

The greater your estates the less your freedom. The less your estates the less your means to use your freedom."

In 1495 it was revolutionary wisdom but, at all times, a timeless verity.

It had been such a fleeting moment of Edward's thoughts but Thomas's words are as appropriate to me now as they were when he spoke them. Their truth should be marked.

When I was young, a good friend and I would debate Free Will and Predestination. We shared a room as fellow apprentices in those distant days of leisured and gentlemanly professions, and we debated often to pass the time. His Eastern background, he insisted he was a White Russian, still loyal to the Tsar, disposed him to fatalism. He shared Thomas's opinion. It's a consolation for the misery in the World if you know there's nothing you can do about it. On the other hand, I railed against injustices and demanded of Heaven and Earth my sovereign right to amend what didn't please me. What a sick joke does that same human misery make if we have the power but not the wit or the will to change it?

Philosophy is for the leisured. Mostly we're too sucked in the details of living to think about it, only now was Edward drawing me back to these enormous questions. Those years ago my friend had quoted Spinoza and I replied with Jean-Paul Sartre. The truth is the Universe is so vast that anything we can think is somewhere, at some time, true.

(Past)

At some time in 1495 the King's agents became nervous that Perkin Warbeck would find support in England. Pretending to be Perkin's own agents they started to

ask delicate questions of prominent people. They asked Lady Margaret's brother-in-law, [William Stanley](#), would he support Richard, duke of York?

Sir William's answer was dismissive; he didn't want to get involved, neither for the King nor for any pretender. But it wasn't dismissive enough, he didn't tell the King and he hadn't said he would fight against Perkin. He was arrested for treason.

The trial was a show trial, a political event, with the decision made before a word could be said in Sir William's defence. Part of the show was to put Edward Stafford on the panel of judges, without training or any guidance except this,

“A loyal subject would find Sir William guilty.”

It was said to Edward darkly, all threats left unspoken, but it was clear; duty to the King was not justice to Sir William.

Edward had been enthusiastic to be a judge but as he began to realise what it meant enthusiasm died. There is an echo of a plea to Sir Reginald Bray,

I meant to see Master William but he was on estate business in the North. Sir Reginald was in London and I went to see him, that night, during the trial.

He met me in a private chamber and I told him my fears as we sat by the fire.

“Sir William is my guardian's brother-in-law, he is a loyal servant to the King and I find no fault in him. How can I condemn him?”

Sir Reginald examined his fingernails.

“Was not treason proposed to him, and did he not do nothing?”

“That is my point. He did nothing.”

“Did he say he would fight for the King?”

Did he inform on the villain who tried to suborn him?”

“That villain was a king's agent. And as to his loyalty, it was Sir William's men who saved the King at Bosworth when King Richard threatened his life.”

Sir Reginald steeped his hands as if in prayer.

“It does not become a judge who has not yet possession of his own lands and titles to give judgement against the will of those set to guide him. Your duty is to the King. If you deny your sovereign it will be to deny your honour and to your own jeopardy.”

You cannot save Sir William. Do you remember your indemnity Sir Edward? In it you admit treason. If you speak for the King's enemy now it will be taken as furtherance of that treason and complicity in Sir William's own offence.

Your choice is simple; you can do your duty or join Sir William at the block. As you say, he is your guardian's brother-in-law; it may be the King will spare him, if you do not exacerbate his crime.”

There was nothing more to say and I rose to leave, but before I could go Sir Reginald stopped me,

“I will do you this service, Sir Edward, I will forget this conversation.”

I stumbled away from Sir Reginald's chambers and through the dark streets of the city, reckless to my jeopardy from the dark alleys but in agony for Sir William.

William Stanley was condemned, his property was confiscated and he himself was executed. It caused hardly a ripple in public life but it gave Edward bad dreams. The dead Sir William and the living Lord Stanley haunted his sleep, their phantoms accusing him of murdering innocence, their presence threatening revenge.

If I close my eyes I can conjure those two faces, Sir William and Thomas, Lord Stanley, appearing to Edward as he lay in the dark. I can see him turning his head to cry into his pillow.

(Past)

There's just one more scene of this sorry episode; it came mere days after the execution, when William Gibbons and Andrew returned to the capital. Andrew found Edward in a tavern, drinking, morosely in a corner, away from the bawdiness of other patrons.

Andrew greeted him,

"What ails my lord?"

"Don't mock me. It's a great loss to give away innocence and honour in one day, and a greater calamity still to kill the life of another."

And Edward told the story of Sir William's trial. A story Andrew already knew from William Gibbons.

"And ye think ye are to blame?"

Sir William had to die, he knew the King for a coward.

He was there at Bosworth and he saw how King Henry shied away from King Richard, white faced and unable to meet him.

I heard it from Master Gibbons, and he from others who were there on that day.

It was Sir William's men killed King Richard, did you know that? While the present king cowered behind his body guard."

Edward didn't know what to say; uncomfortable that disgrace should be lifted from him to be given to the King.

"Small men cover their dishonour with acts of wickedness while greater men face themselves squarely. Why man, did ye not know this?"

Edward just looked at him, impressing Andrew with his total lack of guile.

"Aye and there's a thing more. Sir William had to die now, for 'tis rumoured Perkin Warbeck is the true duke of York and a man that honour could follow."

The subject ended there for neither of them wanted to pursue treason further.

It is ironic how the next image contrasts with what we've just heard. 1495 was such a year of contradictions; Edward was tossed in every direction but that of his own wishes.

(Past)

To be a knight of the Garter is not like being a knight of any other order. Its honour goes to the most powerful men, a badge for the rich. Perhaps that's why I was chosen. But there's more than this, it's the most glittering order of chivalry in Europe.

The memory of it isn't of sight or sound, it's of feelings. Of the dazzle of the candles, the great gathering of knights, the richness of the ceremony, the King's sword, the robes and the colours all with unearthly opulence.

A Garter Knight stands in direct relationship to all that the crown means to England. It's to be defended in blood, to the last drop. It is nothing less than the honour of England. As such it is not as the duty any subject owes his lord; it's a personal badge of belief. Betray that trust and there is nothing left.

For the first time I saw my father, the great lord, as the Conscience of England. It was he who challenged the king when the king did wrong. Someday I too should shoulder that burden, to be the Conscience of England and do what I know to be right.

I left London in my fine clothes and with my new sword, bound to turn my feet to Cambridge, with only a short stop at Penshurst. Just the same, I left touched to the soul.

I went with Thomas. He attended me at all times except in the ceremony itself; fussing around me, somewhere between a father and a servant. We turned our horses first to Kent.

“Well Sir Edward, what would you now?”

I made him little answer with less thought.

“Do you fancy you're above mere mortals, your birth and privileges justified in that ceremony?”

I answered him “No.” but, still distracted, without the warmth of my boyhood. I tried to explain, the ceremony called me to a higher duty. Words stumbled over each other in lame vainglory. I fell silent under Thomas's unsympathetic eye.

“As I thought.”

I hope from the bottom of my heart his words were too soon said. I meant no lack of humility. All England has watched generations of noblemen destroy themselves in pride and arrogance. Was I like that? I didn't mean to be, yet Thomas was right, duty and position set you apart.

The journey to Penshurst was cool, long as it lasted.

Despite the point I won long ago about servants, the buildings at Penshurst were unchanged and Eadie and Abigail and Aletia were still there. Despite other de Stafford properties in the neighbourhood, properties including a great house of Duke Henry's day, not ten miles away, the home of my little Abigail was old and out of fashion. My father's house was now in disrepair but surely something should be done.

I looked over that cosy, loving place with a jaundiced eye. I knew it wasn't yet time to call for the house I might want, Lady Margaret would never agree, yet the day should come when no one would refuse me.

Abigail was pure joy to see. She won the hearts of all who saw her, we were so proud of everything she did. She was toddling now and came up to me as soon as she knew I was back, arms outstretched, crying “Dadda.” She took hold of my finger and led me away. We were all powerless to resist her.

I staggered back at this last scene; it's the scene I told you about before, when it came to me all out of context.

Now I can place it, the love of that little girl. The knightly Order of the Garter was taking Edward away from his little daughter; distance replacing familiarity. That wasn't its purpose: what stupid mistakes Edward could make!

(Past)

'Uncle Jasper' was the King's uncle, not mine. As ['Jasper of Hatfield'](#) he was a respected soldier and served his nephew well, but as a duke? He married mother not just after Papa's death but after King Richard's, after the restoration of her jointure, when she was again rich. I've always thought Jasper married for position. Even the house he chose is a Stafford house, Thornbury has been in our family for more than two hundred years. The marriage will still, one day, have to be paid for from Stafford estates.

Now 'Uncle Jasper' is dead. He always looked so dramatic, all in black satin and hung about with gold. He was like some devil in a tale of Dante Alighieri, the black to show his soul.

Is it a sin that I've been a stranger to my mother since she married that man? For all she's fond enough of my sisters, she and I are truly like strangers. I didn't want to come to this funeral, nor would I but for this Christmas season. Trust Jasper to die at the festival of Our Lord's birth.

Faith in God seems set aside in every church his body is brought to, all along the way from Thornbury to Keynsham. All for the twenty shillings paid to each

church to receive him. The funeral alone is to cost one hundred marks, more than enough to keep many goodly tenants and their families all year.

Even the monks of Our Lady of Keynsham are ready to pay homage to his dead body. And I doubt not there shall be chantries in perpetuity hereafter, pledging the monks in prayer and song forever for the relief of his soul.

Funerals are serious occasions. A soul has departed. It is for us left behind to speak well of the dead and forgive his sins, for the sake of our own salvation. The departed soul must now face the Judgement of God alone. An awful prospect for any mortal man but one to fear indeed for such as Jasper Tudor, duke of Bedford.

It's right we should speak well of the dead but should we not speak honestly? When a man of great titles and power dies the eulogies in his praise are endless and not an opportunity is lost by any man living to add to them. Are there no men of great position who do no great deeds?

This, to me, false grief makes me restless.

I blame Mother for the pomp and show, to impress tenants and retainers. I don't believe she loved Bedford. How could she after my father? She looks well and rich and even attractive. No grief worn widow, only delicate, polite tears after the fashion.

If you talk to her you hear a different story,

“Oh my dear, you don't know the pain.

After Henry, with the poverty and danger, and now this...

It's more than I can stand.”

And she cries more soft tears.

Henry, all sympathy and berating me for my lack of feelings. I can see he was moved, even taken in. Why had she not fought to keep her sons if she were so loving; most of all one who loved her as much as Henry? Yes, it's all very well for Henry, mother did take him back.

It was a joy to see Anne and Elizabeth, my dear sisters, but what was I to say to them? It's so long since we lived together in the same house, in those far off days at Brecon, before Papa was killed, when we were all tiny children.

When time came and I could, barely into the New Year, I left. Staying only to the extent of my promises, to return to Eadie and Abigail as soon as I could. More even than this, I did not care, as Duke Henry's heir, to be used as an ornament to show off Tudor grief.

This recollection made me realise, Edward didn't understand something so obvious; I don't think it occurred to him at all.

Edward and his little brother weren't taken in by Lady Margaret because Katherine didn't want them! They were taken in for their money and as political prisoners.

Edward's memory of the young earl of Warwick came to me. He was sent to Lady Margaret's house at Coldharbour, like Edward, in 1485, before being taken away to the Tower. There were other children too, some taken in for the value of their estates, some to hold as a threat against their parents, some, like Edward and Warwick for the threat posed by their names. In no case were the children or their families given a choice.

Little brother Henry was released, quite early, in pity for Katherine's pleadings but Edward, never. So skilful was Lady Margaret Edward never realised. Katherine did indeed lose a son, poor Lady. Her own position compromised by marriage to Jasper, what could she do? In some real sense Edward and young Henry were the new Princes in the Tower. It's just that Edward didn't realise it.

I still don't know what to think of reincarnation, but guilt for Edward's ignorant, stupid and cold treatment of his mother mortifies me now, as I think of it. Edward simply couldn't forgive her for being a faithful wife to the man she was forced to marry.

Frustration mixed with my own feelings in a dream. I seldom remember dreams but this one recurs over and over, ever since the Christmas Edward received his father's Sword.

I see the Sword as it first lay, in its scabbard on a table in Edward's room. I see it carried sometimes, as it was at Jasper's funeral, fitting snugly at Edward's side. Then a breathless excitement catches in my throat, fading to disappointment as nothing happens. I see it increasingly seldom drawn, laid aside, forgotten. Then the dream troubles me and I see the Sword hanging in the air before my sleeping eyes. Sometimes the hilt is turned away from me, sometimes towards me, as when I saw the truth of Edward's wardship.

Chapter 20 - Father Joseph

I told Angharad the scenes of this last chapter. She became more than ever critical of Edward. Yet, she was unfair to judge him so harshly; what could I say to make her see him as I did? All I could do was offer the truth, as I offer it to you.

One thing most perplexed me; Edward did his best to insist on bringing Eadie to Cambridge, even though, eventually, he had to give up. Why was the College so obdurate? Surely there were other noble and gentlemanly students who actually did have mistresses. Lack of an answer to that question was the ground for Angharad's strongest criticism. Eventually I found the answer.

When I found that Buckingham College was under the rule of Crowland Abbey it caught my interest. The abbey ruins lie close to Market Deeping, a town I've visited on business; together with surrounding villages they all fell within the medieval lordship of Deeping. A manorial lordship was a powerful thing; it not only decided rights to land but many local duties as well; whoever held the lordship could exercise considerable power, even over an abbey. Guess who held the lordship of Deeping. Well? It was Lady Margaret Beaufort.

Some abbey records survive; I was able to piece together a picture. Lady Margaret worked assiduously to gain the favour of the monks. Not only was she an accomplished Bible scholar, but there was hardly a dispute over land, money or rights the abbey didn't win. There was great resentment amongst the local people; it almost came to pitched battle. That too, Lady Margaret resolved favourably to the abbey. The monks were grateful; they made her the highest member of their community to which a layman could aspire.

Something about this worried me as an academic, about our knowledge of History in general. You see the monks of Crowland wrote the Crowland Chronicle. It's one of the very few primary sources we have for this period of history, especially about the short reign of Richard III. I wondered how, ever again, I could think the sources of History reliable.

With this trick Angharad encouraged me to use, of eavesdropping on people around Edward, I found a conversation between the Abbot and Lady Margaret,

(Past)

"You know we are grateful in the Abbey.

We find no error in looking favourably on the House of Tudor. God's blessing on your deeds, as you work as a fellow servant of Our Divine Lord. I cannot think my prior would fail in his duty to serve your will."

"It cannot be ungodly to enforce the Law of a Pope ...strictly."

Lady Margaret was, as is sometimes said, 'pushing on an open door'.

"Indeed my Lady. Bishop Morton has much influence in the see of Ely, between us we shall find the University speaks as one."

Edward was under the monastic rule of the College, it was controlled by the Abbot of Crowland and Crowland Abbey served the Countess. The tight web of Tudor power was never obvious but I think the Abbot was right; the University would not defy its patrons.

It's easy to guess how Edward might have rebelled against his guardian but would he have rebelled against University, Church and the Law of the Pope?

Whatever power Lady Margaret used may have been hidden from Edward, it was certainly hidden from Eadie. It helped to make matters worse between them. As the next difficulty arose it was as if Edward were excusing himself to Angharad and I.

(Past)

Lady Katherine is to be married; hasn't she had enough with Jasper?

Invitation to the wedding came in a long letter full of brightness. The man she's to marry is without titles, virtually a pauper, hardly ten years older than me, a favourite of Court Society: really, mother!

It's to be a private wedding, away from London, but there'll still be days of entertaining and being polite, smiling at Brother Henry. At least the season is favourable, there'll be hunting and hawking enough.

Lady Margaret and the King expected a longer mourning for Jasper. Why should they? Yet, they don't approve of this marriage and it's to be done without the King's licence. There'll be a heavy fine to pay to compensate Tudor dignity, for all Sir Richard's silken tongue. I know nothing of this [Richard Wingfield](#) that mother should marry him, except, they say, he pleases those in fashion. I never knew mother was so impetuous.

Eadie wants to come too. How can she when there shall be enough strain under Tudor gaze? Mother's letter pleads for good behaviour, that I might let her seek happiness in the last years of her life. What can I do?

It was increasingly difficult to keep the strands of Edward's life running smooth; no matter how he tried to put the will of others before his own. His consternation was a tangible thing. I tried to shut away the depression these visions of Edward beckoned me to but this desperation and powerlessness, more than anything else, rocked my own emotions.

(Past)

"Where's my invitation?"

"I'm sorry; I don't think mother even thought of it."

From all the petty squabbles we have these days I knew this would be the cause of another scene. There was nothing I could say to stop it.

"So I don't matter anymore, Lady Katherine wouldn't even think of it.

But you'll go, won't you Edward? You don't care either."

The heat of Eadie's words stung like wasps. Here was spite not sorrow. And where, oh where, had gone the good humour of our childhood when we'd accept the whims of the adults with a shrug. I almost cried at the remembrance of it.

I looked at her as others would see her. These days she's always brightly dressed but in the plain styles of the country. Her thick hair hangs loose and falls over her shoulders. She still looks the gipsy. Why can't Eadie be the lady of Court? I can hear how Lady Margaret's servants would report Eadie's shoeless feet on the marble floor of my mother's chapel.

"There's nothing else I can do."

If only she'd wait till I should be my own master. It shall not be long till I shall be free from my wardship. Eadie never could hide her feelings from the Countess, and she could find reasons enough to deny me Penshurst. Added to all, Lady Margaret would do it now to hit back at Stafford forgetfulness of Jasper's memory.

Eadie must have heard the defeat in my voice. As I stood there, not knowing what to say, I saw her mood change again. Anger abated and she came to me softly, she put her hand on my arm,

"Go, Edward."

She smiled at me with tears in her eyes; turning away, as if there was nothing more to say. What a world of feeling there was in that leaving. What a world of guilt in my impotence.

Edward did indeed go to his mother's wedding. I next found him there, diverting himself as best he could, on the day of his arrival.

(Past)

'The falconer's a good fellow and good company to lend me his time and his birds.'

The thought was comfortable as we rode through the parkland, green and pleasant, dotted with copses and watercourses as Jasper had planned it. Typical of the Welshman, acceptable for hawk and for hound, perfect for neither, but then you make profit out of the grazing and the timber.

The dogs have worked their best, the falcons too; even as we watched, my peregrine was about to make a kill. The falconer knew his birds.

I was about to say so when the dogs barked.

A single horseman came from the woods to our left, seventy yards across the meadowland. The horse seemed to start at the sound of the dogs; then it checked.

The falcon hadn't killed cleanly, the quarry fell from her talons. It dropped like a stone at the horseman's side.

The horse reared, it panicked; and then it bolted.

Surely it was too far to see but it looked as if one of the saddle girths was broken; the rider slipped sideways, only hanging on by gripping the horse's main.

He must recover or fall at the next ditch; though I didn't like any man's chances of staying on so far out of the saddle.

I set spurs to my horse anyway. We made up two thirds of the distance by the time the horse reached an open ditch and fence. It was easy enough if you met it in the saddle, but this rider fell as it was sure he must.

I jumped past him and collected the horse. I found the rider still sitting in the ditch and he thanked me with such courtesy, it turned irritation to remorse that it was my sport which unseated him. The man was handsome and more collected than his horse. He even knew me, though we never met before, and he refused all help but for my promise to meet him again at the house.

"You must let my groom see to your saddle."

"No need Sir Edward, it's already done."

These first words, exchanged as we met in one of the large public chambers of my mother's house of Thornbury, were so like all our later dealings. He had set out a game of chess on one of the tables and we played all evening. He played, as I was to learn, as he lived his life, with such quiet confidence I never knew if he were proud or humble. But I was forced to respect his play as I was forced to respect him as a man.

These were my first meetings with Sir Richard Wingfield. It was well into the evening before I learned who he was. As we met in my mother's porch he had all the advantage of me and I none of him. In all the time I knew him he gave nothing away, but with such manners and courtesy he was never mean.

Sir Richard asked after the tutor and the priest Lady Katherine told him of. As to the tutor, he meant Thomas and I thanked him, as to the priest I shook my head, there are many priests in Cambridge and I didn't know who my mother might mean.

I told Sir Richard he should be a diplomatist. He smiled, as well he might, for in the years after he became one of the greatest ambassadors of our time. At least Mother was to marry a man of grace, which is more than she'd had in Jasper.

Sir Richard's words drew me on. But before I come to that, there's something else about Lady Katherine's wedding. It wasn't just the way Eadie dressed which showed her casual attitude to the Church; it was her attitude to marriage itself. I'd have missed it entirely but for the shudder of memory it brought, as Edward thought how it would be if Eadie came to Lady Katherine's wedding.

Edward had tried to show off his love. He was proud of her, and there had been a time he would take any excuse to bring Eadie into the company of the rich and powerful. These days he was more guarded, ever since John Morton, bishop of Ely came to dine at Penshurst.

(Past)

Eadie asked the bishop what he thought of marriage and he gave a harsh answer, I had seen from his eyes he hadn't liked my Eadie on first meeting and this was a chance to say so.

"The holiness of the sacrament and the blessing of God alone save our sinful souls from what else would be mortal sin of the flesh."

Eadie's reply was shocking,

"Whether marriages are made in heaven or not, it takes a man and a woman and neither priest nor bishop can touch the passion God put between them. That is what makes children, a sacrament greater than any known to the Church of Rome."

The bishop crossed himself. Henry Tudor's spymaster was no simple man of the Church; he knew how to tailor the Law of God to the power of the World. But, whatever he did for his king, he did believe in the Laws of the Church. He admonished Edward and Eadie and never returned to their house again. Edward pleaded with him, as he was leaving, that no report should reach Lady Margaret.

I wondered if even the diplomacy of Sir Richard Wingfield could have helped Edward in these difficult scenes. Sir Richard's mention of a priest made me wonder just how much he knew about Edward, I even wonder if he knew what I'm about to tell you. It's almost as if his words opened a door in my mind to the next scene. It's a strange scene and it takes the rest of this chapter.

(Past)

I came home from College. The lodgings we've taken in Old Street are warm and bright. They have their own garden, full of the scent of hollyhock, lupin and foxglove. Albeit the house stands in the old town, the buildings are new and there's an air of space and light; oak used before it's time creaks under your weight and dust dances in the beams falling through the fine leaded windows.

Thomas was already home, with a visitor, I heard them talking, even before I came into the room. Our guest rose, it was Father Joseph of our Welsh tour, resplendent in white robes, contrasting with the black, Benedictine habit of my teachers.

We met each other warmly. Even if I have no fond memory of Wales, Father Joseph is a gentle and Godly man. I hadn't known he and Thomas were such friends. Thomas never spoke of him before Wales and hardly ever after, yet here they were like brothers.

“Well how are you Master Edward? You’ve grown to manhood since last we met.”

I thanked him, still not knowing why he’d come, he didn’t say what he was doing so far from home.

“I hear Lady Margaret’s retired from public life, you’ve a friend now, not a guardian.”

A question or statement? As to Lady Margaret she will never retire.

We talked of easy things. The Father was from the religious house in Brecon that gave me refuge as a child. His order had once been Stafford tenants, but for centuries past they’d been excused all rent, I hadn’t known that.

Thomas and Joseph talked of bygone days. From such recounted snatches I learned of the relationship between the Brothers and my family, our common heritage. It was like a lesson, why had no one told me these things before? Yet, much as I would learn, so much came at me so fast I barely remember a part of the long history Father Joseph told. All this time they watched me quizzically, from the moment I came in. It was as if he and Thomas were testing me, like that day the doctor of letters came to Lady Margaret’s house.

Thomas had dismissed the servants before I came home. There was a cold table laid for us, cold meats, cheese, bread, oat-cakes and wine; most of all the wine, a strong claret from France. We ate as Father Joseph talked.

There came a time when there was some signal in Thomas’s look, it was for the Father, not for me. By and by it came as it were to a change of subject.

“Tell me Edward, do you remember some trinkets you had as a boy?”

I looked at him, my lack of understanding clear on my face.

“Thomas tells me you called them your Marbles. You and Eadie played with them when you were small.”

I smiled at the remembrance of those sunny days and the games we played; yes I remembered, we were truly such naughty children.

“Edward, they were taken off you I think.”

“Yes they were too! I remember; I broke one. Aletia went white with anger, I’ve never knew anyone full grown make such a fuss over such a toy.”

My head wasn’t clear; I’d drunk freely of the wine, out of thirst. My habit is to drink only small beer and this was the strongest liquor I ever had. Father Joseph was solemn.

“Edward, those were no toys but precious things, to be used for very special reasons. They were desecrated in Lady Margaret’s house.”

“A foolish child, even a naughty one, but I hope ~ not foolish now, to be upbraided over past trifles.”

Why I spoke so uncivilly I don’t know. The Marbles were always special to me; it broke my heart when they were taken away. I’d have done anything to have them back and undo the damage and the guilt I felt.

A look of consternation passed between Thomas and Father Joseph. It was Thomas who spoke next.

“Edward, listen; not only is Father Joseph a friend, not only did he save your life in Wales, though you didn’t know it, it’s a duty to your inheritance.”

“My inheritance? My inheritance, sir, has caused me nothing but grief!”

I could have bitten my tongue a second time.

“Patience Thomas.”

It was now Father Joseph’s turn,

“Edward, what would you say to the return of the marbles?”

I looked at him blankly.

“There are many old things we keep in our Order, though the public accuse us of despising such artefacts: there are some forgotten trifles, we value greatly.”

He sighed and looked at Thomas.

“How do you explain the centuries of piety to the young? All these so very many years of keeping faith even against despair.

Edward, do you believe in the power of relics?”

It was an amazing question, as odd as it was unexpected. I tried to give a sober answer. What was I to make of all this?

“I know the late [King Louis](#) of France scoured the World for relics to save his life. Even the Holy Father in Rome helped him. The good king still died when God intended. Though truly Father, I know nothing of relics save to doubt the piety of those who call on them.”

“Was Louis not pious?”

I couldn't answer Thomas's question nor his tone, I wanted no argument. Nor, it seemed, did Father Joseph, his smile was broad.

“There are those who believe most devoutly in relics and, believe me, Edward, we are not all impious.

As to Louis, I'll not judge a king. Maybe he was impious; it's the fate of kings to fall into dilemma and in them to lose sight of God. But I speak of what I know; the right relic in the right hands may work the Will of God. My brothers and I seek nothing more for this land of ours. We have done so since before our records began and in that time the greatest virtue demanded of us has been patience. For many, many generations there has been nothing we could do but hope to preserve the trust we hold for the future.

We do not hope, we do not expect miracles, we trust in the Will of God. It was so when a predecessor of mine gave the Sword to your ancestor.”

Both Thomas and Father Joseph were looking at me oddly, what did he mean?

“Thomas tells me you keep your father's Sword near you. Do you know its story? Do you know the story of Father John's vision?”

I cast my mind back. It was years ago that I got the sword. It was given me by Thomas; there'd been a letter from my father. I kept it as a precious link with Papa but I hadn't read it for years. It spoke of a Father John in the distant past but it really said very little. My face must have mirrored my uncertainty.

“You're somehow something to do with the Father John in the letter? With my father's Sword?”

My amazement brought smiles to both their faces.

“And 'the Marbles' too and certain other things besides. They're very sacred and very special to Britain.”

'Britain' was an odd word to use, it was the name used by the Romans for England but he didn't say England, nor Wales, nor even Scotland. Father Joseph was still speaking.

“We try to keep an eye on them.

It was a great and sad loss when your father failed. We mourned for him and for this land for two years. It wasn't just that our order has been linked to the house of de Stafford for so long but your father tried to fulfil Father John's vision and it was in doing so he died.

My brothers' wish is that you know our sorrow over that loss.”

I was deeply touched. Father Joseph meant what he said and it gave me a very warm feeling to know he meant it. I understood very little of this conversation apart from that. Something seemed to be expected of me.

"I don't know what I should say. My father did fail and one day I shall take his place but I don't know what I should do then. King Richard is dead and all the wrong that he did is ended. What should I do?"

"Follow your destiny."

I could only look blankly at them.

"What is my destiny?"

I looked from one to the other for the help I'd always been given. They could see I was at a loss. It was Thomas who spoke.

"Did you know I was a friend of your father's? I knew him from being a boy. I couldn't help him when he was agonising over defying Richard. It was clearly time to act; he should even have done it before, in his own name, without attaching his cause to Tudor. He was torn by loyalty and uncertainty. He was frightened of the great wrong of arrogance, of putting himself first when doing it would be named treason. When he did act it was in an unprepared rush. I was sent to strengthen the musters and to fetch him those 'Marbles' of yours as good luck talismans. By the time we could raise the Duke's forces he was cut off by the storms and floods that came. I couldn't reach him. You won't remember receiving those trinkets from me, you were just a baby and I was gone to save my own life to Tudor and to Brittany.

I've thought about it a great deal since. Father Joseph and I have talked. Yes, I knew the story of Father John from your father's lips. To make the vision come true you have to believe, to work miracles you must have faith as well as the Will of God on your side. Henry didn't have that faith; I think he knew it himself. He thought he could clear his doubts by joining with Henry Tudor. You see what happened, Tudor is indeed king and your father dead and gone."

"Thomas is right; Father John's vision didn't put Henry Tudor on the throne. It's been a lesson in humility to us. We can't give you your destiny, Edward. Only you can do that, from what you believe for yourself."

My mind was reeling from these blows. How could I not have known all this? What did it mean, what should I do?

"Father John's vision was about my father's rebellion. He thought it would lead to him, not the King, reaching the throne of England and the just rule he expected my father to give is why the Sword was given to our ancestors all those years ago?"

As I spoke I looked from one to the other but I didn't know which to ask. I think I was almost talking to myself.

"Yes."

The word they both spoke together was emphatic, almost with a sigh as one who has finally got an instruction into the head of a particularly stupid servant.

"But the rebellion failed, my father's dead and Henry Tudor is king so it was all for nothing."

"Oh!"

Thomas got up from where he was sitting and paced up and down the room, once.

"Give me strength!"

He came and leant over me one hand on each of the arms of my chair.

"Edward, I have not taught you to be a dullard. Think boy! If we'd been so very content with Tudor would we be telling you all this now?"

Thomas stepped back. It was Father Joseph's turn.

"Father John's vision didn't put the present king on the throne. It didn't say when it should happen but it put the crown in the hand of some member of your family. It didn't have to be Duke Henry; it's simply that it could have been him."

They were both looking at me.

"You mean I should be king?"

Now it was Father Joseph's turn to be out of patience.

"I can no more tell you your destiny than we could tell Duke Henry's. It depends on your own will and your faith and the Will of God."

There was silence for a time.

"And the Sword will help whoever has it to be king?"

Father Joseph nodded.

"Relics do have great power when used in faith for the right reasons at the right time. The Sword, as you know is an instrument of great power. It is a relic of the land itself."

"And the marbles?"

"They and other things too are all part of the trust we hold."

There was silence for a further time. Then it was Father Joseph who spoke again.

"You can imagine Lady Aletia's consternation when she saw you'd broken a relic of Britain. But now you're older. Thomas believes, whether you're ready or not, it's time you must hear our story. If you wish to accept them I can return to you your childhood Marbles. Aletia gave them to Thomas and he gave them to me. I can now return them to you."

Father Joseph paused to wag a long finger of admonition at me,

"If you wish them, knowing what they are."

A thought had been running round my head and I realised it made me a little cold in my thoughts towards Father Joseph.

"You remember, on our way back from Wales, I had a fight. A young man tried to kill me, Father Joseph. You persuaded me to do nothing. And you, Thomas, when I was set upon in an alehouse you attacked me for defending myself. Why did you do that?"

There was genuine puzzlement in my voice.

It was Father Joseph who ended the long pause that followed.

"No man can die before the purpose of his life has begun. Many indeed do die young, I cannot know the ways of God but I think such children either have no purpose or it is fulfilled by only a short stay in this life. Happy are those who die having served the reason for their living.

There are many who die having never fulfilled their destiny. They had the chance and failed to take it. It's my belief they continue to live, by the Grace of God, until it's clear they have turned their backs on their fate or on God.

You, Sir Edward, are only now setting out on your destiny. You still have to make the choices which will shape your life. I cannot tell what you will do. Maybe you will fulfil Father John's prophecy; maybe that is not God's Will, maybe you will fail in your duties to God, yourself and Man. I don't know but I do know that God will not permit your death until you've made your choices. Your purpose, and that of any de Stafford heir, cannot be ended by a mere brawl. Your life was safe and continues to be so until your course is clear or your destiny fulfilled."

It was an astonishing statement of faith but there was no doubt in Father Joseph's quiet tone. He believed it completely.

“You attacked me, Thomas; you could have hurt me with that whip, when all I did was defend myself in an alehouse.”

The memory this meeting revived could not just be dismissed, even by Father Joseph’s faith.

Thomas looked sheepish.

“That you took no injury proved your innocence. Believe me Edward I am heartily sorry and bear the burden of my rage to this day. You used the great Sword in a private fight, it is the very use from which it must be spared and, I am sorry Edward, please believe me, something had to be done to test your purpose.”

The sadness I saw in Thomas made me change the subject.

“What about the danger in Wales, the danger Father Joseph was sent to guard against?”

Thomas answered for the Father, a smile returning to his face.

“You mean the danger from resentful tenants. Joseph moved us so around as to make them dizzy. There was only one serious ambush laid and that on our way home. They lay in wait all nervous of the wrath of God while we passed peaceably down the next valley.”

Thomas’s amusement at the memory wasn’t matched by Father Joseph.

“ ‘T is the one time I practised deceit, and involved others too, in my dishonesty.

Edward, you were safe. Each of us may be if we will trust in the Will of God. If we will but do so we must know nothing but good and right and our just fate may befall us. And all this is true and has been preached by the Holy Church for every man. You and your family have a special fate. God’s earnest of that fate is given you in the Sword and your ‘Marbles’ and in certain other things of which you will know soon enough.”

Father Joseph’s faith moved me, but I tried like a man to hold on to my wits as all this reeled round my head. Then I found an anchor for my doubts,

“Thomas said you saved my life in Wales.”

There was a long pause while Father Joseph and Thomas looked at each other. When Father Joseph did answer he seemed hesitant, as if there were things he didn’t want to tell me,

“Thomas was speaking of your soul. If you were to do injury to that it might truly threaten your life.

Do you remember, on the way to Wales you wanted to visit Tretower, to pay back the Vaughan family for what they did at Brecon when your father rebelled? Had you held to that purpose the infection of hate would have threatened your life indeed. Thanks to God you returned to innocence, which protected you through all our journeys.”

I shook my head, not understanding, but I begged Father Joseph to go on as before, that I have time to think of all this.

“If you are to fulfil your destiny you shall need courage. Wherever there is special destiny, there too, is special danger. This is why the Church talks of the Antichrist. You need fear nothing if you stick to the path of destiny. If you dare to climb a mountain path you may look down into the danger of the abyss. Yet the mountain path may be as safe as the broad high road.”

It put me in mind again of those dangers coming back from Wales and also that old crone Mair, who spoke so strangely in those distant Welsh hills,

“If a prince would do God’s Will let him come first to his own.”

“Why did anyone want to kill me, those ruffians or the Lady Alianore’s cousin?”

“Surely you understand young love, Edward. A certain contract made long ago pleases her no more than it pleases you. Yet be careful, for while some may disbelieve destiny there are others who let nothing stand against them. They’re ready to condemn those who oppose their will, yet see no fault in themselves.

Everything seems to find its opposite. Great destiny breeds great envy and, hear me Edward, you must not be fooled by the will of others into your own weakness.

There is one more thing I must tell you about our relics; the Marbles are held safe by my brothers, they shall be honoured in our hands, but the Sword is in your hands and cannot be taken from you. Remember Edward, the Sword also has two edges; as it does good in your hands good will come to you, as you use it ill it will use you ill. This was why Thomas was cross at your fight with the assassins in the alehouse. Since then you have used the Sword not at all, but some day you must, and before that day you had best decide which way you will go.

Do you understand Edward?

To tell you these things is why I came. But I must charge you with one solemn duty. Were a king to hear what has been said today, or to know the purpose of our Order, we should be counted guilty of treason, even as your father was. I charge you therefore Edward, on your most solemn word that you shall never speak of this in your lifetime; unless, of course, you become a king yourself.

The World believes we are dedicated to making bells and so we are and so it must remain.”

My mind rounded on that word ‘treason’. It was as a traitor my father was killed. I was branded a traitor by Sir Reginald Bray and duped into killing a man. I could believe no ill of Thomas, and Joseph was a man of God. What should such people have to do with treason?

My mind reeled still. It was all too much too fast; I didn’t understand any of it. I had drunk too much and my head spun. I begged in a pretty speech to be allowed to think about it all.

Looks were exchanged between Father Joseph and Thomas; it was as if they were assessing the answers I made to their questions, all the unconsidered things I’d said in this strange meeting. At last Father Joseph came up to me and took me by the shoulders, staring deep into my eyes with a clear, unblinking gaze, he said some odd things to round off the whole of our odd meeting.

“Edward, listen to me. Edward. Now listen to me and know what I say is true.”

He was speaking in slow, measured tones that seemed to make my head swim still more. It was difficult to concentrate on anything but what he said.

“If, out of the love of this land and its people, you will to take the burdens of kingship then remember all you’ve been told. If you lack faith or will, forget all that has been said today, save that we met and that I and my brethren will help you if you are ever in need.”

As I came to my senses, I begged to be excused and stumbled off to my bed. That night I dreamed of my childhood Marbles; I can’t think why I should for I wasn’t to see them again for years. Surely it had been the oddest meeting. The oddest thing of all was that in my classes, the next day, I could remember nothing of what I’d only just learnt that previous day, the day of meeting Father Joseph.

After the visit I asked Thomas more about the good father. He would say little or nothing. But this much, I remember, he did say,

“Father Joseph and the Brethren guard that one of the ‘Seven Pinnacles’ which lies at Brecon. Their wisdom is ancient but there are many who would envy the White Friars, if they knew the truth.”

Chapter 21 - Meanings

It's some time since I told you about my own life; I shall come back to it at the end of the chapter. First I must tell you more about Father Joseph and the 'Marbles'.

I went to see Angharad early that Sunday. I told it as I've told you.

"Edward failed a test. He had the chance to get the Marbles back and completely failed."

I told her everything about the meeting in Cambridge but Angharad went straight to my first point.

When I first saw the Marbles, in that strange night's dreams in Peterborough, you remember, I felt they were important. Father Joseph offered to return them but he hadn't handed them back.

At the end there was something really quite strange, as if Father Joseph put Edward into a trance. It really did seem that Father Joseph hypnotised him, to remember nothing.

"It doesn't surprise me."

I was momentarily stung, but Angharad didn't mean to put me off. She went on,

"So, why do the Marbles matter so much?"

"You remember how Edward called them relics, the others accepted it. He talked about Louis XI, who was king of France at the time Edward IV was king of England, historians call him the architect of modern France. He did indeed become obsessed by collecting relics, as Edward said. He believed they could keep him alive.

Edward called him 'good' King Louis; I think that was said in irony. Louis was anything but good; he may even have murdered his own father. I think Joseph admitted it in acknowledging Louis' impiety."

But the Marbles aren't Christian relics, they're much older.

Angharad had read about 'druid glass' and 'serpents' eggs', she'd told me the emperor Claudius, according to Pliny, once had a man killed for secretly bringing something like them into court. That was nearly two thousand years ago. But really research had let us down; I hadn't been able to find anything in Classical descriptions that came close to 'the Marbles'.

The very best I picked up from Edward were childish games. Yet Father Joseph made me think the Marbles were so much more.

"It seems Edward's ancestors, and Joseph's monks, were more assiduous collectors even than Louis XI."

Angharad gave me a disapproving look, for the topic was not flippant. Dedicated individuals had taken it most seriously through countless generations, at least according to Father Joseph.

We could take it no further, and Angharad declared we should channel: she closed her eyes in meditation. I waited.

"Someone says Joseph of Arimathea."

I knew little about Joseph; just snippets of him begging the body of Christ from Pontius Pilate, of him trading with the tin miners of Cornwall and of his staff becoming the Glastonbury Thorn, flowering in winter.

I shrugged.

Angharad believed we should try again. If ever channelling were hard work, this was. I'll draw a veil over our efforts, which were exhausting, but for this summary.

The legend is that Joseph of Arimathaea collected the blood of the crucified Christ in a cup and this is the Holy Grail, written about by Malory and by many others. It is difficult to keep such a resonant conscious image out of our heads, maybe the cup Edward found was the Grail; we thought so, but I just couldn't trust our objectivity.

As to the Marbles, we saw Joseph receiving them from a group of holy, men on a hilltop, the wind was blowing and you could see across the countryside for miles around but neither Angharad nor I could say for certain where it was. Angharad guessed it was Wearyall Hill, near Glastonbury.

(Past)

There were a dozen or so people with Joseph, they were together all as followers of Christ, they had been granted sanctuary, here, by a British king.

The holy men were separate; they were of a different and older religion. You felt that, even then, they belonged to the past. Their flowing robes and strange language marked them as different and put me in mind of the Druids the Romans would drive from the World in the years to come.

We strained to hear their conversation. Neither of us could catch more than a few words,

"First came Julius Caesar, then the emperor Claudius, now there is you; who are still free of them.

We give you these to defend the Spirit and to defend the Land."

Angharad looked hesitant, something unusual for her. I prompted her,

"Well?"

"It's just the Marbles. Before now I've seen them through your eyes. Just now I saw them for myself, they looked simple, just glass and enamel."

She stopped and I encouraged her to go on.

"Well, for you they're incredible, intricate jewels, beyond price, beyond human construction. I don't think anyone else saw them that way."

That was right, and I waited again.

"Remember you wondered why Edward was allowed to have them as a small child? I think they protected themselves, only Father Joseph knew what they really were."

"So you think they could look like the Druid Glass Pliny described?"

Angharad just nodded.

(Past)

The scene changed and we could see Joseph and his companions on the isle of Glastonbury, for then it was an island, cut off by marshes and limpid pools. Closer to the isle were open stretches of clear water, some of it quite deep, and currents that went out to the sea.

There were frequent fogs and rolling mists and sometimes you could see the Tor, more like a ship than an island, carried on a carpet of white, and the cry of the birds would be transmuted to a strange invitation. It was easy to be lost in the marshes, as landmarks shifted and substance merged with insubstance but the waters teemed with fish and the marsh lands with wildfowl. It was without human life till the Christians came for the British called it 'the Land of the Dead'.

It seemed to us, the British avoided Glastonbury out of reverence. The marshes had once been crossed by roads, and people lived there, the British called them 'the Old Ones', but the rising waters had brought a rising spirit of strangeness, carrying the land and its memories into the past. There were many holy places in the Land of the

Dead; places of great power that the Old Ones had understood. But as the World grew older the timelessness of Glastonbury almost sank into the sea. The World left this strange land behind, a place where Reality trembled so uncertainly you could see through the mist, as if through a glass, into other worlds, the World of the Old Ones, the World of the Dead and beyond. Its very strangeness touched even Joseph.

We knew we were privileged to see these visions; they made me wonder whether the holy men with Joseph were anything as ordinary as Druids. What on Earth had they to do with Edward or the Marbles?

I argued with Angharad, this was all fantasy. We were departing from anything I could allow as being about the historical Edward Stafford. Without some material proof we could not entertain it.

Was I simply echoing Edward's disbelief? But if I was, was I not right to do so? Angharad accepted what I said, but clearly didn't agree.

In one thing Father Joseph must have been right, how you used them decided how well the marbles worked. Edward and Eadie proved that in their childish games.

"They're not relics at all!"

Angharad was speaking after our channelling, while we were discussing relics, and whether Edward was right to call them that. All religious relics were supposed to focus the power of faith, it's only in modern times we see them as works of art or museum pieces.

Angharad meant the Marbles were somehow different; they were deliberately made, not just powerful because they came from a saint. They were made to do something. I simply shrugged, I could take it no further, and I was tired.

There is one nagging doubt from this channelling. Did Father Joseph know about the Grail Edward found in Stafford? When he spoke of 'other things' it's easy to assume he knew, but did he? He certainly never mentioned it.

That was my conclusion from all this channelling. I was exhausted from looking for any other explanation, and finally I admitted it. I'd been shown Marbles whose origin was lost in antiquity, a sword of power and the cup with Christ's blood. Each of these had figured in Edward's life. The Marbles were still withheld from him and the Holy Grail was locked up in Stafford Castle, all that remained to him was the Sword.

I would go home; I would meditate at my leisure in Peterborough. Only then would I channel again, and when I did it would be Duke Henry and the Marbles.

It disappointed Angharad, but she was as tired as I. She wouldn't say it, but what concerned her was that the burden falling on me would cause me to reject these images.

I told her with a smile,

"I'll look at them honestly, but I'll also look with a good heart."

(Past)

Henry kept the Marbles with him nearly always. He twined them between his fingers in the privacy of his personal chambers. It made me smile as I watched, thinking of my own habit of fiddling with things.

I tried to hold channelling to the Marbles, but no effort could take me further at this time. In the end I just relaxed, letting my channel take me where it would, hoping for the Marbles. Instead, I was given Duke Henry's rebellion.

(Past)

I saw the Duke's return to Brecon. After King Richard's coronation he accompanied the new king on the first stage of his royal progress, but then he left to attend to his own affairs.

When he arrived home he was greeted by John Morton. Morton had been imprisoned in Duke Henry's care for treason against Edward IV. If he hadn't been a priest I think King Edward would have executed him, but, over time, he had been given a great degree of liberty within the castle walls. I wonder if Duke Henry had forgotten how dangerous Henry Tudor's spymaster could be.

"How fare the Princes your Grace? I have been concerned for young Prince Edward. Tell me, did he seem pale at his coronation?"

"Why yes. As well he might, it was an astonishment to all of us."

"I have concerns for him, for other causes, since he was torn from the sanctuary of Holy Church."

Bishop Morton pursued it no further, but he came back to it the next day and the next.

There came a feast day when the Bishop was asked to bless the family meal. Almost as soon as he sat down he asked the Duke,

"Your Grace, have you received news of her ladyship's nephews?"

Lady Katherine looked to her husband, he was by now annoyed at this pestering.

"Why, should I?"

"My agents report they are no longer to be seen in the Tower; that is all."

"Henry."

Lady Katherine caught hold of her husband's arm. It was the tone Morton used, rather than his words, which made her fearful.

"You had better tell me what you know."

"It may be nothing but it has almost been my second profession to know the minds of men even before they know themselves. For my former master I had ears everywhere. Those ears still inform me quicker than the ears of any man in England."

Duke Henry would have made a joke of it.

"Your agents have fast horses then."

Bishop Morton would allow no joke. He looked at the Duke for a moment in solemn silence.

"Yes my lord."

The Duke and Duchess were about to take the bate.

There had been a Tudor attempt to take the Princes from the Tower by force. King Richard had feared it was an attempt at assassination and had ordered his nephews to stay more securely indoors. Morton painted the Tudor attack as a rescue attempt; the Princes withdrawal into hiding was painted as imprisonment. He claimed to have reports that made him believe the King would murder the Princes on his return to London.

Lady Katherine gasped in horror but Duke Henry was less credulous.

"Why should he?"

"King Richard sits on the throne by the decision of my brother, the bishop of Bath and Wells. If my other brothers in the Church persuade the Pope he was wrong what will then become of King Richard's coronation?"

"They won't do that!"

Morton looked at the Duke with just the right measure of condescension and confidence.

"Your Grace may know the will of the Holy See better than I."

"Oh! Henry."

Lady Katherine was hooked.

It took many days more to convince the Duke. Morton resorted to instructing Tudor agents to inflame certain of the Duke's retainers and minor officials. Fighting even broke out and there were protests at the Princes' murder. Reports reached the Duke from his own agents. When they did Morton expressed further concern.

"These are black days your Grace. It is reported to the King, by your instruction your men are stirring up feeling for the Princes. Even I cannot say the sources of these rumours but if Richard believes them he may think you a traitor.

It may be others have heard what my agents have told me. Those loyal to your household would cry out for the Princes, for they know how close you stand to the throne yourself."

Reports were coming in daily, made up reports from Morton and genuine reports from the Duke's own men.

Morton reminded the Duke of every hasty or violent act Richard had ever committed. He reminded Henry of Lord Hastings. He even invented,

"I cannot remember, your Grace, was the King at Tewkesbury? It is said that he killed there Edward, Prince of Wales, after the battle was finished."

In fact Richard had fought at Tewkesbury but left before the Prince was killed, Duke Henry hadn't been there and it's unlikely he would have known. Strangely, Morton's lie is still told today, in Shakespeare's play.

What finally decided it was that the Princes did indeed disappear. The population of London became increasingly anxious about it, but Duke Henry was never to know by what contrivance they were whisked out of sight, or how close to his own home lay the cause of it. It was enough.

"Brecon is too far from London. Shall I trust your agents? Will you keep me in their confidence?"

The Duke was hooked. He was now in the hands of Tudor's most dangerous servant.

"Your Grace, I will now confess, I still have communications with the Earl of Richmond. He is as concerned as any honest Englishman for the honour of England."

Duke Henry suffered agonies of doubt still. It was impossible not to listen to Morton but he needed time to think. It had been his habit to toy with the crystal gems he kept when deciding almost any matter. Now he chanced not to have them, he had left them behind. He sent a servant to fetch them but it would be many days before his return. It was mere superstition, he had to decide now.

He was almost absolute ruler in the west, he could act now, by joining with Henry Tudor; the quarrel then would be the murdered princes, not Stafford claims to the throne. He had to decide, he had to move, his mind turned through all the labyrinth John Morton set for him; the Marbles were elsewhere.

Henry sent Thomas, the same Thomas of our story. His uncle was a Kentish knight and landowner and had served the Staffords in his time. Thomas had natural ability, and power of the mind such as to make it natural he should come into Duke Henry's service, he almost grew up in the Stafford household and was singled out by the Brothers. While giving him no high office, Henry depended on young Thomas more than he would admit. It was Thomas who was sent to supervise the musters, the

raising of an army from the widely scattered Stafford lands and, most important, to fetch the Marbles.

There was a hasty timetable planned, it left no room for delay. Thomas would have to fly like Mercury, the messenger of the Gods. Things started well; then the weather turned. Roads became heavy then impassable. Reluctant yeomen and knights found true difficulty in reaching the muster points. Eventually Thomas had to abandon the raising of the army to others, to get back to Henry, carrying the Marbles in a leather pouch inside his doublet.

He rode through sheets of rain, scarce able to see the way in front of him. Horses and rider went days without seeing dry shelter. Roads, thick with mud, made dangerous by disguised pot-holes, were abandoned for travel over the fields, fields made slow, heavy going by standing water. Horse after horse failed under him from cold and exhaustion. At river crossings fords were impossible. Bridges were unapproachable for the water swirling round them or else swept entirely away. Eventually Thomas heard the news, Henry had been taken, from hiding, not ten miles away. It was over, the rain stopped.

Hearing Edward wasn't yet captured, Thomas started to search. It was dangerous with Richard's soldiers in the area, every enquiry carrying the risk of arrest. In the end he did it, carrying the boy to safety in Brecon as you heard in chapter three. He returned only briefly to Lady Katherine before making his way to Brittany and the court of Duke Francis.

It was no accident that Thomas returned with Henry Tudor, nor that he earned the new king's trust serving in the bodyguard which stopped King Richard's wild charge at Bosworth, and again no accident, when Henry decided to bring Edward into his mother's care, it was Thomas he appointed tutor. It made sure Edward would receive the Marbles. Lady Katherine needn't have worried; there was always someone to protect her son.

Thomas was in touch with Father Joseph throughout this time. It was Father Joseph's idea that the Marbles be given to Edward. Young as he was, he was not only the heir but they, too, would protect him.

Please believe me, at the end of this channelling I was as exhausted as Thomas at the end of his ride. I've never received so much, so well summed up. The next morning I overslept, I was late for work and came in to see clients with eyes still unfocussed. It took me days to recover.

What of the tide of power into Stafford hands, the power of Duke Humphrey and the sudden rise of Duke Henry when he brought King Richard to the throne? Why should such power end in Duke Henry's abysmal failure?

I asked myself, and I asked Angharad. She said a very wise and sensible thing.

"When you're talking about magic you have to remember the importance of the magician.

A Stradivarius will only make beautiful music in the hands of a good violinist. The Brothers hadn't found a good enough violinist. The Marbles didn't fail Duke Henry, he failed them."

The question was could Edward do better? I believe he could, the childhood games with Eadie prove it. But I can't blame Father Joseph for not believing in him.

That, in the end, is the truth about the meeting in Cambridge.

I think the Brothers worked on the Marble Edward damaged, not just to repair it but to study how it was made. It was the only one laid open for inspection and no chances could be taken with the others. Edward's accident let the Brothers see into it.

I believe the Brothers also had a problem matching materials: yet their patience lasted years, for years they sought to copy them. They were still reluctant to return the complete set when Edward came of full age.

So much has gone into this chapter already, now I'm going to add to it. In and amongst all this, Angharad and I debated that short, unhappy scene when Edward left for his mother's wedding.

Edward wasn't weak as Angharad insisted. Open defiance of the Tudors caused people to lose their heads. On the other hand Edward wasn't prepared to give up; Lady Margaret was right, he wouldn't treat Eadie as his whore, but Eadie wasn't helping.

As Aletia's daughter Eadie was of gentle but not noble birth. The distinction was important, but even King Edward IV had married for love, why shouldn't Edward Stafford? He walked a fine line; if he insisted on his right to Eadie he would be prevented. If defiance went further either or both of them would be in real danger. But I don't think even Edward realised how much money was at stake. Lady Margaret had been paid £4,000 for the marriage contract; it was the equivalent of several million pounds today and it was a payment that belonged to Lady Margaret herself, she'd very probably spent it.

The irony of the short scene between Edward and Eadie, over Lady Katherine's wedding, was that Edward was losing her, not because of Lady Margaret but because Eadie herself understood this no better than Angharad.

Eadie's feelings were as I told you, feelings of loss and rejection. Angharad didn't think Eadie could expect anything better from Edward. Yet he'd promised it and he'd meant it. Eadie loved him and believed him, he was letting her down. She didn't understand talk of danger, she didn't see Edward was fighting to keep her, to Eadie Edward was just unfeeling, grown away from the boy she loved.

I found an extension to that little scene. When Eadie left Edward she went indoors, Thomas found her crying. He reacted first with anger and then with understanding. He could see the problem of each that neither could explain to the other. His solution was to try to breathe life back into Edward. It was this that made him finally try the visit of Father Joseph.

I promised, at the start of the chapter, to tell you some more of my own life, though that was some pages ago and so much has happened since. I'll keep it brief.

In my life I felt the storm clouds gathering, with great forebodings for the failure of all my projects. With all this of Edward, I was gaining an almost mystical sense of things and I feared everything would now go wrong for me in my own life.

I admit I tried to tinker, Sarah could accuse me of interfering; she had a word, 'invasive', that's exactly what I was. Since Sarah has real talents how could I not? I didn't know what would happen but it was an honest effort, for her good and for others.

I used every contact I had or could make to steer Sarah toward work in our project, people interested in the reform I wanted, people in Education, grant funders and professional bodies in hypnotherapy. It wasn't difficult to light fires of enthusiasm in these people; I aimed them all at influencing Sarah. Sarah was moving house at this time and I even talked to her mortgage broker, supporting her application for a bigger mortgage by pointing out what she could earn from my research project.

I remember the broker observed,

“It’s a pity she was so ill when she came back from France, I could have done her a much better deal at that time. Do you know what was wrong with her? It was something more than just flu.”

It was a casual remark but it stuck in my mind. I remembered Sarah saying she had the “sweating sickness”.

I looked those words up in a “Concise Oxford Dictionary”, perhaps, you might say, almost idly. Would I have put myself to any trouble if I hadn’t had a dictionary to hand?

The definition was as follows,

“Epidemic fever with sweating, prevalent in England in 15th - 16th c.”

My curiosity was aroused.

Further reading told me Henry Tudor found another enemy besides the King when he killed Richard at Bosworth.

“The attacker against the armed but helpless force was the Sweating Sickness... It made its first appearance here among Henry’s soldiers after the battle which won him the kingdom and spread so rapidly all over the country that it delayed his coronation.” - From a modern textbook on the Tudors.

The illness was and is a mystery. It was unknown, anywhere in the World, until it struck at Bosworth. It was taken by many as a visitation from God against the killing of a lawful king. There were four further outbreaks, in 1507, 1517, 1528 and 1551, the last coincident with Henry VIII’s death. With that death, the illness disappeared, as mysteriously as it had come, never to be seen again.

What was I to make of it? What was I to make of Sarah complaining of an illness that hadn’t been seen in more than 400 years?

As I could make nothing of ‘[Sweating Sickness](#)’ so I could do no good in tinkering with Sarah’s affairs. With all the mystery and magic of this chapter, how could I be so devoid of progress in my own life?

Chapter 22 - Goodbye

What do I say now? The events of this chapter brought my life almost to a total stop. I look back at my notes and for weeks there's a complete blank. Nothing recorded. It's a time I'd rather forget, yet this, too, is part of our story.

I heard a soul scream.

I sat in the bath, still shocked and unhappy, and just a little rueful. I was thinking it served me right for believing people think like me, when I heard a soul scream.

It was long, agonised and ear splitting in its soundless despair. I thought everyone in the World must have heard it. The soul that screamed was my own. As long as I live, I want to hear no other sound like it.

I was ever more vexed with Sarah's failure, her refusal to explain her methods and do her groundwork. I should have allowed reason to convince me, she simply wasn't capable. Yet, if Sarah would only follow my instructions, we'd have certain success. She'd been continuously unavailable, ever since that episode of the spurious reformer.

I tried everything to reach her. I put everything on hold, pleading illness to William Gregson and postponing our bid to [E.S.R.C.](#) to the next funding round. I asked Angharad to help, but Sarah wouldn't even explain to her. Eventually I left an ultimatum with Sarah's receptionist, what else could I do? Even then further time passed till finally there came a promise; Sarah would phone me at Angharad's house that Sunday.

It was a day of high tension; there were all sorts of domestic pressures around Angharad herself. I felt in the way, that weekend, sitting there waiting for a phone call that might not even come; a call which could far more sensibly have been made to my office during the week.

We talked about Edward, of course, but Angharad really didn't have time, today, for the implications of what we saw together in the last chapter. She didn't have the time, either, for the scenes I'd not yet told her of Bishop Morton pouring poison into Duke Henry's ear. Reality came crashing in on the wake of these images. They were momentous, quite apart from the Grail and the Marbles; you see most people, believe Richard III killed the Princes because Duke Henry believed it. They didn't see the tissue of lies Morton so skilfully weaved around him.

Today Edward was pushed to the back of my mind. Somehow Sarah had created a real sense of drama around herself and I was left to work out what she was playing at. She wanted to do the work, it would make a major difference to her career, and all she had to do was put in writing to the funding council how she'd do it. What was the problem!

I phoned her. I phoned both her surgery and her home, even Angharad tried. Sarah had a friend with her, we were told, she was undergoing some sort of crisis, she couldn't come to the phone to speak to either of us, and this friend wouldn't say what the crisis might be about.

I think Angharad was quite concerned.

Sundays are always busy at Angharad's house and there was my daughter to consider. There had to be an end to this eternal mucking about.

When the call eventually came, from Sarah herself, what she said was simple enough, she withdrew from the project. She might have done it in a way which left doors open. Most of all she might have offered some sort of explanation.

“She always was a drama queen.”

Angharad was angry, and upset for me.

You may think I over-dramatise; as it happens I did look for a replacement, without any success.

I’ve told you pretty fully about my images of Edward. Now I must tell you there’s another aspect to this business.

You remember I went to see Mary, the medium. In fact I went to see her twice. The second time her boyfriend was there, also a medium. They got me to do a meditation with them. This was no good to me, despite my images of Edward. Unless I put something in my head it stays empty, and so it did on this occasion.

Mary told me she met my ‘spirit guide’. She gave it all the trappings of a ‘table turning’ mystic and you may think it all very fanciful; actually Mary was painfully honest and down to Earth.

There are those who hold we all have a spirit guide, perhaps several; the trick is to learn how to communicate. Angharad told me Sarah used to speak quite freely to her ‘guides’. Anyway, I started trying to get in touch with my guide as Mary told me to do. She gave me a name, unpronounceable and unspellable though it was. It turns out I have an ancient Greek guide, what else?

My powers of visualisation, judging from Edward, are quite good. My power to summon up [spirit guides](#) turned out to be pretty poor. My greatest difficulty was distinguishing my guide from myself; I don’t know if this is a common problem, I expect it is. As a result it’s actually easier to contact other spirits, say somebody else’s spirit guide. I found myself, really without meaning to, in the company of an American Indian (what else!). He was, as I’m sure you’ve guessed, one of Sarah’s spirit guides.

One night I lay in bed, quiet but not asleep. I became aware of a presence. It came and stood before me. There was no material shape, but its personality had the clearest form and so also did its opinion. This American Indian didn’t approve of me. The censure was as strong as the whole thing was unexpected. Frances, asleep at my side, never stirred.

Afterwards, I asked Angharad, she made no secret of it; it was Sarah’s spirit guide. It was somehow embarrassing to have Sarah’s guide come and inspect me and my girlfriend, is there no privacy?

Thereafter, by fancy if you will, in meditation or some form of imagining, I could contact this spirit. We held conversations. I say fancy partly because all this sounds fanciful and partly because this Indian fellow hasn’t stood good to his word. Maybe I’m wrong, it’s certainly more charitable to think I deceived myself than that a real spirit misled me.

I believe there was a conflict between what this spirit thought was good for Sarah and what I thought was good for her. Our disagreement left us pulling in different directions.

I remember a debate between us. It was a very strange affair and it happened over two days, in front an audience of other spirits. It was related to Edward and Eadie and to ‘life plans’; I very much wanted to get the basis of our discussion agreed. If I needed any confirmation of their relationship, I was given it in that debate, Sarah did stand in the shoes of Eadie. The debate itself was mostly about the purity of motive, which seems to be of the very greatest importance and explanations of cause and effect. It was as if there was a wager; the prize for that debate, if the spirit won, was that I should drop my project, on the other hand, if I won, I would receive the co-operation I needed.

It's big headed of me, but it seemed I won the argument.

I confidently expected, as a result, this Red Indian would remove a block to Sarah's co-operation. It wasn't clear what this block was, something to do with plans or destiny, but nobody properly explained it to me.

This all happened just a few days before Sarah withdrew from the project, undeniably, in the concrete, real World.

Things weren't as I'd have them.

I lost all of that slight contact I had with spirit guides, my own or Sarah's.

It was clear my project was lost and with it the great deal of good Sarah and I could have done.

I was convinced the cause of this Native American's objections was to do with Edward Stafford; I, too, felt he owed Eadie a debt, and how should that be paid now?

I was convinced what I've described in this book was shown to me for good reason, a reason I'd defeated by my handling of Sarah.

There was nothing Angharad could do, for all she knew the story and knew Sarah so very well.

There was no one I could turn to.

All the relationships I thought I'd found with people close to Edward, people who had very close correspondences with those I know today, all went for nothing. It was just as I told you.

I had a sense of having invited a great many people to a party and when we got there finding the door slammed in all our faces. It was a very real and concrete image and very embarrassing. I could see no other point in us all being here, so close was I to Edward and my project.

With each moment that passed my feelings knotted themselves further. There was no way passed these thoughts.

My soul screamed.

What remained of that Sunday was a parade of empty events. With all the enthusiasm left to me, I took my darling daughter to a garden centre. She's in love with all growing things and with fish, of which they had many, spectacular and varied.

My daughter held a correspondence to someone in Edward's story, I could neither hide nor reveal this to her. Surely I'd failed her also.

"It would be better for the World if you didn't exist."

"At the end of this life you will no longer exist."

This was the first message I received from my spirit guide when, after much effort, I managed to make contact again. I went white with the shock of it, from he who was supposed to love me.

I set my mind to dealing with even this extreme circumstance. I'd been given no reasons. With some sort of contact once more with these spirit guides what should I do but seek guidance? What caused this awful problem, why did Sarah back out, what could I do about it?

My resolve to take further thought painted me as some sort of Orpheus in the Under World and I entered Hades sitting comfortably on a large settee, in my office in Peterborough.

I found myself ushered into a large, impressive office, through heavy double doors, leading from an equally impressive anti-chamber. I remember the polished wooden floors, the beautiful Regency furniture, the high ceilings and white, Georgian

plasterwork of both rooms. It reminded me of nothing more than the Whitehall offices of someone very important.

I found myself standing before a large oval table. I was on one side of it and five, seated, middle-aged and sober suited individuals ranged round the other side. The usher at the door assured me of their very great importance, after all, I required people with the necessary authority. These had that avuncular, urbane, almost soft manner you find in powerful people with nothing to prove, as you find in army generals and High Court judges.

“My dear boy, do sit down.

You wanted to see us?”

I sat, as indicated, in an elegant rosewood carver.

“May I smoke?”

They assured me I should be at my ease.

And so it was, sitting in my office in Peterborough, I lit a cigarette, inhaled deeply and, in that other office, launched into an explanation of what I thought had happened. I told these spirits why I thought it necessary, in the general good, that the block on Sarah and on myself be lifted, why changes should be made, and quickly, and why it was dreadfully wrong for things to stop as they were now.

Try smoking and at the same time advocating an appeal to discarnate spirits in another place! You have to be on two levels of consciousness; it was like a juggling act. I was quite proud of my dexterity. Funnily enough I enjoyed it.

The spirits were ‘the Board’, whether a [board of judgement](#) I don’t know but I treated them as I expected to find them, as a tribunal.

When I finished, the spirits, the members of the Board, seemed to confer, though not a word passed between them. I was asked a few questions but I don’t remember, now, what they were. The Board seemed satisfied. I was almost disappointed, it had been so easy. The chairman rose and came round to me, he ushered me out through those same doors as in I came, leading me cordially by the hand, and he assured me everything would be all right; it would finish where I wished it to be. The chairman warned me some time would be needed to set matters right.

It was so easily done. Had I missed something? The Board had seemed to find in my favour. I’m certain they tested the truth of my motives and arguments. Would they not have told me if I’d overlooked something important? It was such an anti-climax to walk out through that anti-chamber.

I expected a reversal of the state of affairs with Sarah, in just a few days. I waited in patience and in vain, it most definitely did not happen. In fact quite a long time passed before anything happened. I can tell you now; I wouldn’t want what I wanted then! I’ve come to fear the thought of letting Sarah loose amongst so many potential psychopaths, in her determination to cure them rather than assess their danger.

I haven’t spoken to Sarah in all the time since this happened, though sometimes I think of her and wonder what she’s doing. The pain of my lost hopes slid towards its proper place, yet how can I forget that vibrant link between Sarah and Eadie? the lost hopes of my project and that poor young man, the client I told you about in *The Beginning*; still in prison for a crime he didn’t commit? Most of all, how shall I forget the sound of that soul as it screamed its pain to the World?

It hasn’t occurred to me to do anything more about the Board or their decision. I haven’t meditated about it or talked to Angharad. If that Board was merely fantasy then nothing will come of it, if it was true then changes will come in their own way.

Still, it would be nice to peep into things once more. The members of the Board were such charming, reassuring people.

Chapter 23 - Of Life and Death

Life goes on even when you half expect it not to. Nothing clear happened to confirm or deny the expectations given me by the Board,

“Most potent, grave and reverend seigniors,
My very noble and approv'd good masters.”

I don't know what I should have expected. One incident, however, makes me wonder, it may even be my talk with the Board saved my life.

You know I travel back to Stafford from Peterborough at weekends. I came back one Friday night, frankly, as late as I could make it, only to find I'd left something behind. I'd promised to lend my dinner jacket to a friend, for a function the next day. I'd forgot; the clothes were still in Peterborough. I got straight back in the car to fetch them. At least, at this time of night, the roads would be quiet.

In the past I've driven that road fast but my present car wasn't built for racing, big and ponderous it sat heavy on the road. The secret of a quick journey isn't to brake and accelerate a great deal but to keep the highest average speed you can and this is what I did.

The weather was foul. It had been raining for hours past so that heavy vehicles threw up walls of water, it made over-taking difficult. Running through the villages coming to Market Harborough I came up behind a courier's van, one of those 'express' delivery container lorries that promise overnight service at an average speed of less than forty miles an hour. There was just visibility beyond the lorry's wall of spray and the road was clear, I pulled out.

What caused the car to loose grip I don't know. Whatever it was, the back of the car slid. Surely it took something more than a little rainwater to move a ton and a half of motor car across the road.

The lorry was travelling at maybe fifty miles an hour when I pulled out and I must have been going at seventy-five when the back end 'broke'. It first started to slide in towards the lorry; we would hit it in front of the rear wheels and behind the tractor unit. It seemed clear I should do something.

I had much simple pleasure in the past from the sort of cars they don't make any more, where you can throw the back end out in a 'drift'. It means you can steer just on the brake and accelerator. I've not seriously driven like that in years. Now was a good time to try.

There was a matter of four feet or so between my car and the lorry and only a few feet between me and the far side of the road. Even so I had to steer into the skid, really quite sharply, aiming my front wheels at the tractor unit, my only hope of avoiding it. This inevitably put me into an opposite skid, even though I brought the wheel back sharp before the car straightened. Now I was heading for the grass verge. At this sort of speed there was really no chance of staying on the tarmac. All I could do was reverse the wheel again, trying to keep the car parallel to the road. We left the carriageway still doing, I guess, around sixty miles an hour; such things happen, if they happen at all, very quickly.

The grass was long and the ground soft and wet. The car lifted onto the right-hand wheels but it did indeed slide parallel to the road. It stopped remarkably quickly on the soggy ground.

There comes a point in a road traffic accident when you know you're not going to die. That's when you start worrying about damage to property. It took a moment for the World to steady itself before I got out to inspect. Stepping back, along the side,

in the darkness, I fell into a ditch. It must have been something like five feet deep, the back wheel was nearly level with my head as I stood up. In fact the back wheel was overhanging the ditch, just about teetering on the top of the bank. It was so far over, although the engine started, I couldn't drive the car off the verge.

The lorry driver stopped, he came back to see what had happened. Denying he had a towrope he went his way, simply relieved not to be involved in a serious accident. It's amazing how your wits come back to you. The Rover had automatic transmission; with a little sensitivity and crossed fingers I pushed the car from outside, one hand on the steering wheel, the other on the accelerator and my shoulder against the doorframe. Slowly I managed to drive it off the verge. There was no sound of broken exhaust, no sound of damaged transmission, no resistance from bent wheel mountings. Fingers crossed the car was drivable.

I drove it to the first garage in Market Harborough with a well-lit forecourt. I checked everything most thoroughly, wheels, tracking, suspension, everything. The only sign of the accident was a great deal of dead grass jammed between the tyres and the wheel rims on the right-hand side of the car; I never did get all that grass out.

The verge I drove along was approximately seven feet wide, it was dotted everywhere, except where I left the road, with sundry dangerous obstacles. To have turned the car over or driven directly into the ditch would have been fatal. But what really made me thoughtful was this: my car came off the road at sixty miles an hour without so much as sustaining a scratch.

You can take this as an advert. for Rover motor cars if you like, or a testament to my driving skills. I think there are other reasons; maybe my time's not yet come. Of course, something put me off the road, even if it did no injury.

I completed the journey and fetched back the dinner jacket. The next day I was completely exhausted. On a good day the round trip takes a full four hours.

After that little demonstration on the road you'd think I'd take more notice. Looking back I should have lived life more boldly. The failures of my project, business and home life dragged me down. They permeated everything, to tell me I shouldn't let things get me down is such an easy counsel. It's all so very easy for those safe and secure in the verities of their lives. If you're depressed your energy's sapped, there's real difficulty in seeing anything positive in life. I just gritted my teeth and stuck it out as best I could.

Over the car, whatever I may think of spirit guides and Boards of Judgement, it was depression put me off the road. It was confidence in driving and wish to live which saved me from injury. Yet, still I see, in my mind's eye, the chairman smiling as he guided me out of that room; it's as if he's saying,

"See, there are still reasons to live."

Ironically, the car was written off in another accident, again without injury, less than a month later. I was disenchanted with the car's poor performance but no one was hurt and I had the insurance money in time for Christmas.

How great a part do expectations play in our lives?

(Past)

There's one dismal scene I wasn't able to place till after this incident. It was a funeral.

It was Andrew who died. He'd been struck down suddenly by the plague. Once ill he didn't last long. Master Gibbons was terribly upset. Even then, the wise man linked plague to poor housing and Andrew lived in lodgings found by William. The

letters he sent to Edward and Eadie betrayed his remorse as well as his sorrow. The one sent to Edward was almost a summons.

“My dearest Edward,

I know how close you have been to Andrew since first you met. It is my solemn duty to tell you that on Tuesday the fifth Andrew died of plague.

As you know, under his service to me, I stand in loco parentis. He has no parents living and it falls to me to make the arrangements.

I cannot tell you how inexpressibly sad this untimely death makes me and how much I feel for that young man who was in my care. I know you will obey my request. I would find it a great comfort and favour if you would attend me immediately in London that we may both pay our respects at his leaving. There are few others to call on. I have written to Eadie and you may wish to bring her with you.”

Thomas was away and Edward had nothing to do but make his apologies and leave. He was in the saddle within two hours.

It would be strange not to see Andrew again. He stood for summer to both Edward and Eadie. They had taken his presence so for granted till now.

The journey to London was sombre. There was sadness for Andrew, yes, but there was also a distance between Edward and Eadie, neither any longer sure of the other or what they were thinking. Edward had a tendency to drift into a new found formality; he used it to protect himself against the hurts of the World. Eadie had grown resentful, always looking for slights. They were both glad to get to London and Master Gibbons’ rooms.

William greeted them warmly, embracing them both and ushering them indoors. To Edward’s eye he looked older. His true age was possibly forty but his energy and confidence had always made him seem younger.

William was skilled in conversation; there was no situation of which he wasn’t master. You couldn’t judge his discomfort by any admission or awkwardness but rather in the way he sought to charm them both, and the way he abhorred silence.

“The truth is I shall miss Andrew very much. He was almost like the son I’ve never had. I’d hoped, in time, he would take over from me; serving you, Edward, as I, in my time have served your guardian. Andrew had skill enough and good sense and those qualities you need in such an office. Perhaps you are still too young to judge but believe me Edward, it’s the greatest need to the place you will hold, you shall need good counsel and true as a man.”

William led us out into another room, away from the fire’s glow, into a cold office.

“Come; I’ll show you the estate Andrew left in this World. I was his father’s executor, his mother died in childbirth and Sir James followed his wife to the grave when Andrew was thirteen. Sir James made enemies in Scotland, they cost him such lands as his family still had. The boy was sent south and I’m afraid by the time he’d finished his schooling there was nearly nothing left. I took him in as my clerk and hoped to make him my successor. Now, of course, he’ll never inherit either from his father or from me. There are no other relatives I care to contact and no friends here save only the two of you. There is only one, doubtful, claimant, an idiot daughter of Sir James, born out of wedlock. She’s kept in Edinburgh; her guardians regard her malady as afflicted by God in punishment for Sir James’ sins. Andrew sent such remittance as he got from me for her upkeep.”

There, lying on a bare table in the centre of the room, was the sorry collection of personal property William showed us, all that remained of Andrew's life in the World.

Aside from one good suit of clothes, an engraved silver box and a serviceable sword with its harness there was little enough.

"What will become of Andrew's sister?"

The question was Eadie's but I echoed it in my heart, waiting solemnly for William's answer.

"There's not enough here to provide for anyone."

"No my girl; least of all one who can't make her own way in the World."

Edward and Eadie returned to William's words privately that night. It was Edward's idea the girl should be brought to England, that she be supported by de Stafford revenues. Eadie agreed.

The next day was the day of the funeral. It took place at the old [Templars' church](#), between Fleet Street and the river.

That hallowed building that stands to this day, is still owned by lawyers of the Inns of Court. I've visited it myself and wondered, as I've gazed around, as everyone must who ducks out of the harsh light of this century into the mists of the past.. It's an odd church and had an oddness even in its own day.

To celebrate Mass in a round church was very strange; Edward wondered if this is what it was like in Jerusalem at the height of the crusades.

The sense of those old knights carrying the Cross of Saint George pressed in from all around. The Templars were disbanded and persecuted in the years following 1307, but they were more generously treated in England than abroad. They were still more mercifully used in Scotland. How strange, neither Andrew nor William ever mentioned this Templar tradition.

"Sir James' will was very clear. He himself was buried according to certain ancient rites and the lore of his family. He provided that if Andrew should miscarry before he attained full age, he was to be buried here. He was to be given the epitaph which is even now with the stone masons and I was to send certain notices to Scotland, all done. Had Andrew lived I was to give him certain heirlooms of the Order, with a copy of the Liber Ordinis Templi once kept in the Great Priory, they have passed down in Andrew's family for generations. I still have them; they're not amongst the things I showed you yesterday."

They saw Andrew buried in the graveyard, a good Christian burial though the blustery wind pushed at the priest's vestments and Eadie declared herself blue from the cold.

On their return to Master William's rooms, William made a little speech.

"I'd like to give to each of you a remembrance of Andrew. You saw for yourselves, there's little enough to give.

I told you this morning there are heirlooms. I am again bound by Sir James' will as to these. However, there is one finger ring which I cannot clearly identify: this, Edward, I give to you."

The tone of William's words suggested he chose not to identify it. A shocking thought, Edward couldn't make the accusation and he couldn't refuse. The ring was plain, without any inscription and set with a medium sized greenish, bluish stone. It was a man's ring and fit Edward's hand easily.

William went on without pause, now addressing Eadie.

“To you, my dear, I can offer no ring but something as precious. I know Andrew worked long hours at night to fashion this as a gift for you this summer. I reprimanded him for it some three weeks ago and he reminded me, he’d nothing else he could offer you. This, my dear, is for you.”

William produced for Eadie a most exquisitely carved model of a rose stem and flower, exactly life sized, in wood, glowing with the warmth of much polishing.

William had to call the servants for strong drink such was Eadie’s grief. There were tears and a great access of emotion. Andrew, who didn’t show his feelings, would have been most embarrassed.

The next scene concerns the arranged marriage, neither Edward nor I wanted to think of, but now I must tell you more.

It happened just before Edward set out on his first commission in the King’s service, a military command following in footsteps trodden by de Staffords since before the Norman Conquest. A letter arrived from Lady Margaret.

(Past)

“My Dearest Edward,

I know you have been avoiding Alianore and the two of you spit so much in each other’s presence your mother and I think there must be warmer feelings, each of you, than you pretend.

While I am still your guardian and God spares me for this duty, I shall see you both brought together.

Alianore has the fine fiery spirit of her forbear, Hotspur, and the Percys are a family as ancient and proud as your own. I have never understood, since that day in this house when you told me so, why you do not want her. I blame myself you have not been living as man and wife and she bearing your children long ago.

You know you are contracted to each other by my hand and there shall be a heavy penalty for default. It is high time this contract was consummated. While I am in London this season I expect your attendance and I am summoning Alianore likewise.

This is no polite request, Edward; I expect and require you here.”

There’s no need for the rest of the letter. It was a summons that Edward was bound by, although he kept it secret, hidden without mentioning it to anyone, for days, almost weeks, before he obeyed.

It was true Edward had been committed to marriage with Alianore when he was twelve years old but even Lady Margaret hadn’t pressed it. I suspect Father Joseph, knowing what happened on that journey back from Wales; spoke to Lady Margaret’s chaplain. The Church had great power, especially with one as devout as Lady Margaret. The sanctity of holy matrimony is not to be mocked by forcing so reluctant a couple. Yet marriage between families such as the Staffords and the Percy earls of Northumberland was both policy and commerce. Pressure couldn’t be withheld forever.

There was something more than this, I believe there’d been a sea change in Alianore herself. She had hated the thought of marriage as much as Edward. While he thought only of Eadie, Alianore had had her own lover when Edward visited her in 1493. But so much had changed over the years. Alianore had grown to despise her cousin’s weaknesses. She’d turned to others who failed again to please her. Now the

pride which had made her willing to kill made Alianore want what Edward refused to give.

Whether she wanted just his hand or actually his heart is another matter but certainly, Alianore now wanted to marry Edward. To be thwarted by his coldness made her angry. It was she more than money or policy which prompted Lady Margaret to write that letter. It was Alianore, not Lady Margaret, who would be waiting for Edward to answer that summons.

Edward went, he had no choice.

Alianore was there.

She did her best to charm him, to allure him, aided and abetted by Lady Margaret.

Temptation lay in the coldness grown in Eadie's love. It lay more there than in the flattery of Alianore's skilful attentions; in the shape of her lips, in the provocative movements of her body, in the soft tones of her voice, the caresses her hand would give his cheek whenever she could. In private she grew bolder; Edward, blushing his awkwardness, was not quite able to resist. Power slipped steadily into her hands.

Certainly Alianore played the best game she could but the real danger lay in the steel trap of Lady Margaret's words. Edward put off and evaded talk of a wedding but he made one fatal mistake: still reluctant to defy her, Edward half admitted the validity of Lady Margaret's promise, the contract to marry made those many years before.

Edward said little about the episode to anyone and I shan't break his confidence. Being wooed by the lady who was to be his wife made Edward feel guilty, even sick and soiled. It remained secret from Eadie, so Edward supposed. Edward made, both of the fact and the secrecy, something shameful. He'd been caught between defiance and almost acquiescence. He left pleading the urgency of military duties, after many days, uncommitted but ashamed. Even to entertain Alianore's embrace at all betrayed Eadie and the simple purity of Edward's heart was the loser.

I'd missed a step in Edward's life. What military duties? Yet, on leaving Cambridge he had indeed taken the King's commission; should need arise. That need had now arisen. The King's summons had been delivered to Lady Margaret's house and relieved Edward from staying further, his words to Alianore and Lady Margaret were excuse without untruth. Now I had a time and a place for the next scene, for Edward was being taken up by historical events, the year was 1497 and Edward was nineteen years old.

(Past)

"I'm a captain. That is by rank.

But when I order out a patrol of these West Country 'gentlemen' that I command they're full of excuses. I have to go myself, and the truth is I'm no more than a 'dogsbody' without real authority at all. At least these men with me serve me well, just a dozen de Stafford men, come with me from my own estates, they on foot, me on my fine horse. Rank but no responsibility.

There is danger here, in this country that none of us know, but my men have firm hearts and I have Duke Henry's Sword at my side. 'T is only discomfort makes my men silent as they trudge along.

Travelling on narrow, empty lanes in the drizzling wet is not war or glory. But there is a wooded bank on our left and a gurgling stream somewhere on our right and the morning air is full of bird-song.

We're here for the [Cornishmen's revolt](#). It is a poor affair, but a chance for me to command. Or it would be if there was any command to give. Why ordinary peasants and miners should revolt I don't know. They must know there can be no chance for them against the King. The people I've met, in the villages say they come to petition the King, not to fight; but they come with weapons and killing bailiffs. Some of the rebels say Perkin Warbeck is truly Prince Richard and they'd rather him to be king than Henry Tudor. They'd rather him than a Tudor, even if he isn't Prince Richard.

The rebels say the King's tax is starving them into ruin. They come from the King's own lands, with no lord between him and them, maybe they're right. I've heard the King's servants say all peasants' revolt, but that's the jest of the court, not the country.

Suddenly; from around the next bend, coming towards us, there's a large party of armed men. How did we not hear them! There must be twenty or more, some with armour, some with swords, and some with bill hooks. We've taken them as much by surprise as they us.

I don't like it. There are more of them than us.

We can't run, I could, the men no.

"Charge!"

The word is out of my lips and my heels into the horse's side before I can think. Sword drawn as I ride.

They're too closely packed in the road. Jump or swerve I can't get through them. I'm carried into their midst and at a standstill.

Remember Thomas' training.

Reins in left hand, pressure with left knee and right heel, slowly walk the horse round to the right, push his rump out to the left, holding his head back with the hand - "Steady boy!"

Swinging, slashing down on my right, again and again. The sickening jar of sword and sound as steel strikes bone. Swing and slash and turn slowly; now standing in the stirrups as the men come up and the Cornish run.

There are five corpses, prone on the road. None of ours; thank God. I'm told they're all my work.

The men look at me strangely. Is it awe? Do they think me a hero?

I have to dismount and walk into the woods to hide my shame and tears and shaking.

I didn't think. I didn't have a choice. One expensively trained rider, with every advantage, on a carefully schooled horse, against miners dressed up as soldiers. They didn't have a chance.

How many fathers and lovers have I slaughtered?

My hand hurts from the jar of the Sword. I feel sick.

Oh! Thomas, how would you disapprove! This isn't the honour I came for.

It is ironic that Frances, the woman I, your author, sometimes still live with, wants me to ride. I was on the back of a horse once and found it a damned unstable thing - even if it was more interested in grazing than throwing me off.

I know now the purpose of dressage and why Thomas schooled Edward so thoroughly. If a cavalier fights infantrymen stood stock still he will do well enough on his right, with the advantage of height, but he'll have a blade between his ribs on his left in seconds. A shield is nearly useless. The only answer is to walk the horse round to the right, simultaneously taking the target away and pushing at attackers with the

horse's hind quarter. The horse is controlled by the rider's legs and left hand. Under pressure, the horse can be walked forward or back... The correct speed of turn is essential because the horseman must leave no one standing on his right. If he does, that man can get under the horse's neck, to the left, leaving the rider blocked and a blade in the belly inevitable. On the other hand, go too slow and the protection of the horse's rump is soon overcome.

I can still dream about that crazy right-hand waltz on nights when I'm restless. Turn too quick and a blade from the left in front; too slow and a blade from the left behind. Somehow I've always known this.

How could I want to make these warlike moves in some sort of effete middleclass pass time, for no purpose but the relief of boredom? I still see Edward's newly made corpses where they fell in the road.

The memory of the whipping from Thomas still burned in Edward's mind. These, too, had been enemies too easily defeated. These, too, were not proper soldiers. They were, no doubt, fighting out of desperation for the lot of their poor wives and families. Now they were dead and what would become of those poor families? These rebels were from the King's own lands and it was his high taxes against which they rebelled. What would happen to them now?

Edward knew he must have been open to attack. Against proper soldiers he must have been hurt. As it was, he was untouched and ashamed. It was like that day in the alehouse, but this time Edward was older, he had his men to think about. The King's men could still be taken in a counter-attack. None came.

It was part of the hardening of Edward.

The shock of these scenes fell on me like further blows. First Andrew's passing, then Alianore and this fight. They resonate with my own brush with death, the loss of Sarah and my project.

I think the estrangement which arose between Edward and those he truly loved, who truly loved him, made him unsympathetic. Maybe I've listened to Angharad too much. She saw him as dazzled by his own importance while I saw him as only fulfilling his duty; yet see what awfulness it drew him into.

I can only sit in my lonely flat and brood. Alas, poor Edward. Alas for those who loved him.

Chapter 24 - Lincoln

It wasn't Angharad's fault I'd not quite got the heart for Edward. Debbie and I still called on her but now she put almost as much energy into encouraging me to revive my project as she did into channelling Edward. Angharad did her best but it took a trip into my boyhood to revive my spirits.

Work often takes me out of the office. It can be a great nuisance or a chance to escape. This day the affairs of a client took me to Lincoln.

Lincoln is an ancient city. It was there even before the Romans. I spent years of my childhood there, they were happy years and gave me such a sense of nostalgia as I drove past the familiar landmarks; places I'd not seen for thirty years. It was like coming home.

My business was at offices on the bank of Brayford Pool. Few people realise, looking out over the old Roman harbour basin, inland Lincoln was a thriving port till the Middle Ages, when the Black Death swept it away. Ever since, the lifeblood of its waterways has stagnated in silt, the only boats today are pleasure boats. Yet the glory of Lincoln still hangs in the air.

The city wrapped itself around me as if to heal the wound of Sarah and Edward with the balm of centuries. I drove 'Up Hill', above the Stone Bow to the [cathedral](#), one of the grandest in Europe; before it lost its spire it was the tallest building in the World.

Wandering through the queer, crooked streets, between cathedral and castle you're overwhelmed by history. It's more than eight hundred years since the civil war between Empress Matilda and King Stephen: their soldiers faced each other here; one army camped in the castle, the other in the cathedral. A good arrow shot would almost carry between. Standing in those little streets you can almost hear their cries of battle and the clang of sword against stone.

King Stephen was the last of the Norman kings; his successor was Henry Plantagenet, the first Plantagenet king and maybe the greatest. Henry had that charisma of all the Plantagenets, it certainly impressed Stephen.

Between the castle and the cathedral is the White Hart Hotel. It was there, as a twelve year old boy, I was taken for dinner one January, when my mother and father decided to leave. I remember the gently falling snow flakes, as we came out into the dark of the night, giving everything a hushed magic. Everything was then right with the World and we set out from our brightly lit haven on a great adventure. I wonder how life would have gone but for that decision.

The hotel hasn't changed, so little has in that part of the town.

When you go into the cathedral, you're greeted by volunteer helpers, cadging money for the restoration fund. I fell into conversation with one of them, he loved the place. There was a whisper here of an alternative life, a wise and quiet orderliness. For the first time in weeks I relaxed, simply enjoying the beauty around me.

Maybe I could have got back to the office that day, if I rushed. Instead I left Lincoln as night fell. The time wasn't wasted.

My car's well-sprung luxury comforted me as the city had done. On the radio was a series of programmes, one I remember, was about forecasting the weather and the 'Butterfly Effect'.

The programme and the warmth of the car merged into reverie.

I told you about the audience with the 'Board' and about the chairman's reassurance. I still haven't spoken to the Board again, but I did try something else, I divined with a pendulum.

One of the books I read after that first vision of Edward with the Sword was by J. Havelock Fiddler, an agricultural scientist more used to calculus than words. It had been a diversion to follow his explanation of resonances and how to use a pendulum.

Through that medium I got some sort of answer to the question of what blocked Sarah, the reason she withdrew.

Yet you remember my appeal to the Board. If I had won my case they should surely lift that block. But how soon? When I was told that everything would be put right but it would take a little time I thought the chairman meant days, he may have meant lifetimes.

Spirits have a different sense of Time from the living. Our sense follows Newton's law of Entropy, if you had no material existence this sort of Time really wouldn't matter to you. The sort of Time that would matter would be a measure of change of mind. How can I guess how much Sarah or I have changed since the chairman spoke to me?

Travelling back from Lincoln, listening to the radio, my mind turned over these thoughts.

The words that struck me, over and over, were,

"Have patience."

Enter the 'Butterfly Effect'.

The Butterfly Effect is the idea on the radio that a butterfly fluttering its wings somewhere on the Great Canadian Shield will have a tiny effect on the air around it. That effect may be so magnified by countless trivial factors, by the time the air reaches Europe it can disrupt major weather systems. It's an accepted principle.

Here science breaks down. All the mathematician can say is, at some point, error factors become so great that long range forecasting becomes impossible.

What do any of us do but flutter our wings at the tide of history? That's what Sarah and I were doing with our project.

Have patience.

But.

The many importuning questions that follow that word would not be silent.

If the butterfly's wings were bigger would it have a greater effect?

No, unless it was already influencing something in the first place.

If the butterfly moved its wings more vigorously would it be more likely to have an effect?

Not unless it was causing an effect anyway, it would have to be in the right place.

If the butterfly moved around a lot wouldn't it be more likely to be in the right place?

No, there are so many trillion places to be the chances are always random, what if the right place is the one the butterfly just left?

How does the butterfly affect the weather?

By being the right butterfly.

How can you be the right butterfly?

Have faith.

For some reason Malory's book came into my mind, the 'Nine Worthies' I told you about. Did they change History? No, most people don't make history, yet some of

us do; the '[Nine Worthies](#)' did. Were they the right butterflies, in the right place at the right time? Maybe Edward could have been one of the right butterflies.

That night images came afresh, I no longer had to struggle and tease out what my mind half caught. What I saw were Edward's last days at Cambridge. They belong before the last scenes of the last chapter, yet I won't take them back to put them earlier, there's something of the peace of Lincoln that brought them to me.

(Past)

The time draws near when I may leave, thanks be to God. Further study should only lead me to ordination and the priesthood's no more fit for a noble heir than is it suited to my inclinations.

There are many of my fellows will leave this term; there's much banqueting and revelry and swearing of undying friendship. There is no place for me in this jollity and I shun it as much as duty lets.

Master Gibbons has given me little peace; as the study of my books falls away the study of court rolls begins. It started with the day Sir Reginald Bray summoned me to him, you may hear his words,

"I came into Lady Margaret's service from Sir Henry Stafford's house. I've held de Stafford estates these many years and there shall be no de Stafford go in ignorance of the truage he be owed."

Between Sir Reginald and John Gunter I've had no peace from the care of rents and valores. Is it not enough to know true reckoning that I must be taught the arts of service as if I were some steward on my own lands?

Study the value of land to take ancient tenures and turn them into copyholds, to be let for fixed terms, to take fines on the entry of new tenants, again and again. Search out bondsmen that they pay for neglect of their feudal lord. All is clerkish care to take modern advancement from ancient right. What a tired World am I heir to where the commerce of trade takes the place of courage and chivalry?

It caused me to plead for military office that I might become a soldier.

With the term end, if I get no post of the King, it will be to the estates and the care of rents entirely.

I'd almost departed from my lodgings, Thomas left long ago and this very morning I made my farewell to the good servants Peter and Trim. This day shall be the last time I see Father Francis. If ever I loved anyone in Cambridge it's these fellows in Father Francis' school, I shall miss them. The bright sun in the sky and the scents of summer in the air lightens the whole World. It was with true gladness I came to our little lists.

The place was packed with a great press of people.

"Today is their last chance, Edward; they've come to see you."

I looked abashed at the good father, should I be bated like some Roman gladiator?

"My boy, you may be better loved in this place than any other in Cambridge. Come, you must meet someone you already know.

It was a stripling boy, older than me and nearly as tall, but his height had outgrown his strength and his arm bore little power. We'd met several times before and Father Francis and I did all we could to teach him but he never pressed any attack or put me in any danger. His name was Sir John Bradleigh and he was a gentleman of good family.

“Sir Edward, let me try once more, just one more chance to prove what you taught me.”

There was pleading in his voice.

I joined battle with reluctance; I hadn't come to fight but to pay my respects to Father Francis. As for the crowd, I'd gladly disappoint their wishes, but not Father Francis, nor Sir John.

We met just with swords; wearing no more than light helmets and leather jerkins, for the day was hot and work with the sword is warm. The crowd called in rude demand; they wanted us to use edged swords, not our blunt and safer tourney swords. It angered me. It seems they did want a Roman circus. Father Francis was all confusion, trying to still the crowd. My temper got the better of me, we would use edged swords, they were still hacked and blunt by the standards I remembered with Thomas. Sir John went white but my look of reassurance settled him, he must have known I wasn't here to hurt him.

Sir John came at me again and again and I blocked him again and again. Today he defended my attacks with all the spirit in him; they only made him redouble his strokes. Something no one could tell before, he had excellent breathing. When most men would have tired he fought on as if he were still fresh. At the end I gave him such a buffet on the helm as to make his ears ring, just that I might catch my own breath.

He didn't stagger away as I'd expected, he came on at me, yet that blow must have made him see the ground reel. He gave me such a swing past my raised sword as to slice through my jerkin. I felt the warmth of the blood running down my side. Sir John stepped back, ashamed at hurting me. Father Francis always forbade body blows with the edge; he would allow only the flat, for just this reason.

I looked down at my wound and at the silent people all around. It seemed everyone was waiting for me. I called for a cheer for Sir John.

“Never, since my tutor, has any man drawn blood on my body.”

And I held out my hand in a gesture of praise to Sir John.

The crowd cheered and stamped their boots on the wooden boards, it went on and on. They cheered for Sir John warmly, and they cheered for me too.

We went to sit on straw bales to watch others of the school but the show was over, people drifted away and many came to congratulate Sir John. Father Francis dressed my wound himself while a potboy brought us ale. I bid the Father be quick; I was already faint from the effort and loss of blood. That cut was two inches deep and eight inches long, all around my side.

“Do you know you fought upwards of half an hour? If I took payment like a theatre, or laid wagers like a nobleman, I'd be a rich man now.”

For all his words and his flushed face Father Francis' hands worked with speed and skill, finally pulling shirt and doublet over my tightly bound middle.

All this while Sir John had been talking. There was a pride in his face as he made a confession he'd never have made but for that victory.

“My grandfather served the Duke of Buckingham: he was lieutenant under Duke Humphrey in Calais. My father is a soldier; ever since I came here I've wanted to tell him I've matched swords with you. Until now I've been too ashamed.”

“And right well you can fight as I know to my pain.”

I smiled, for all my side was hurting now, and I had to bite my lip to concentrate on courtesy.

I pictured Sir John, boasting of our meeting. He came to Cambridge pale from lack of sun and lack of spirit. His fellows mocked him. He dropped his sword from sheer fright at our first meeting. For all he had dogged diligence in practice, he was

never bold. Yet, he'd shown more courage today than I ever saw in Cambridge. He'd earned his boast.

I thought of his father and his family. Now his father had a son to make him proud.

I thought of the Tower Room at Stafford and the trophies of Duke Humphrey I found there. The Duke, too, would be pleased.

We talked till it was time to go, though I still hadn't paid my respects to Father Francis. He'd left us as soon as my wound was dressed, but at the end he came back, with a gift all wrapped up in a packet, and with the Prior of the College and with the Abbot of Crowland. I hadn't known the Abbot was here.

Since taking my leave I couldn't now be gated, but the Prior made no complaint at our fighting. The Abbot was kindness itself.

"You did well to give the fight to Sir John."

There was a smile all over his face. I was even more surprised at what he said,

"Father Francis has persuaded me the College should support his lessons in chivalry. I've come to see for myself, it's made me feel quite young again. But I'm glad I didn't meet you, Sir Edward, when I was a young man with a sword in my hand."

The Abbot made the rule for the College as the Prior gave it effect as our master. I was amazed they should take such interest in what I had done. The Abbot offered me his carriage and the Prior's Lodging till I should be well enough to ride. It was a true relief, for I did not care to leave on a litter and Father Francis forbade me, at risk of my life, to mount a horse.

The Father gave me his gift and a speech, before all the people there; I had to make a reply and receive a cheer and nothing ever moved me so much in all my days in Cambridge. It was then I took my leave, in the Abbot's carriage. I walked to it as firmly as I could for by now my legs were weak and my side was stiff.

I begged to be let out in the fields behind the town, to hide the tears that threatened to come rolling down my cheeks. Somehow I stumbled onto the meadow land at 'the Backs', it's little used pasture behind the colleges, where the long grass was thick with poppies and daisies and the butterflies spent their lives. There amongst the shade of the trees I opened the packet Father Francis gave me. Inside were a cross and a letter.

The cross was simple and exquisite, carved in wood and beautifully polished. It glowed with inner warmth as I turned it in my hand. The letter was also warm, with praise and thanks for my time spent with Father Francis' school. It ended with words I kept in my heart.

"..When you are rich and powerful remember your days with us in this little place. Remember our good fellowship and kindnesses are worth ten times those riches. If you will use the World as you've used our fellows I shall go with pride to my grave.

Remember me, Sir Edward, as I shall remember you in my

Prayers, and I shall commend you to God for you will hold more than most men the happiness of the World in your hands."

The letter went into my pocket and I paced up and down as much as the ache in my side would let me. The letter affected me in ways I cannot describe. My tears could no longer be hid and I cried openly now and all I could do to ease the ache in my heart was to take my sword and fall to beheading the poppies.

When I came to leave it was a relief to find the coach where I'd left it. My side was once more sticky with blood and I was put into bed as soon as I was brought in doors.

The Prior's physician would not let me stir from my bed for five days. Yet the salving of my cut, by Father Francis as well as the physician was good and I took no fever. It was a vexing time and a maid was stationed at my door, to stop me moving as much as to wait on my needs. I was permitted nothing other than rest and reading and I bore it with such grace as I could. Yet finally, when I had the liberty of my feet but not yet the freedom of my horse, I still did not know what to do with the hours.

I would sit in the garden, soaking up the warmth of the sun and the scent of the flowers. I thought over my life here and my terrible loneliness without Eadie. When frustration got the better of me I would walk up and down, supporting my weak side with a stick. Sometimes the fellows of the College and others, even the Prior, would come and sit with me; sharing my sorrows and flattering me with their company.

It was more than another three weeks before my condition was declared safe enough for me to ride and I was free to make plans to go. By now I'd fallen into talking with the Prior as I'd never done as a student. It helped me to see Cambridge through the eyes of the men of learning and the men of God through whose hands I'd passed these years. I found there were chances I should have taken and duties I'd left undone. It made me wonder if I'd been as unkind to Cambridge as it to me.

The Prior hinted at the policy of the Abbot and the monks of Crowland, cautiously guarding the tradition of centuries. They need not be unfriendly to the Stafford heir, though they had learnt to be wise to royal wishes.

Was there some apology in this, for all the years I'd been alone, without my Eadie? There was a time I should have seized on those words, as I might have seized on another man's neck. But the Prior was all conciliation and sympathy and I could find no fault in him. He had many laudable plans for the College and I even began to wonder, what might I do as its patron?

The night before I was to leave a banquet was held for me. I was honoured by half the learned men of Cambridge. Father Francis and Sir John Bradleigh were there and many of my fellow students who'd been cool in their friendship for so very long. It surprised me and I gave as much flattery as they gave me. After all the painful days and hopeless nights at last, on my leaving, I came to hold warmer thoughts than ever I had before. It was strange that it should take the hurt given by Sir John to make this night of fellowship.

Just an after word on the fight with Sir John; ever since seeing this duel, the pain I sometimes get in my side has completely gone away. I wonder if there is any connection.



Lincoln Cathedral

Chapter 25 - Endings

After all this, I just couldn't get into the tragedy of 1497. No matter how I tried, even after Lincoln and that last channelling. Through Angharad's encouragement, in the end, I found a way. She was there as I channelled it and I very much needed the whisky she offered me when it was finally done.

What happened at Penshurst was never far from Edward's mind, towards the end of his life I caught him reminiscing to himself. By now he was a man in his forties, increasingly under pressure and threatened by a king ever more out of control. The king was Henry VIII, whose tyrannies were to become more famous than those of any other ruler in English history. This is the only way to give you the fate of Eadie; it shows how it affected Edward, even after more than twenty years had passed.

Words came to me as if Edward had spoken them aloud.

(Past)

"I should love this place, for the whole of [Thornbury](#) is my own work. It was Mother's home with Jasper, you could feel their presence in it; too mean for the glory of a duke. Now that's all gone and what stands in its stead is of my own grace and for the glory of Stafford.

It will be the greatest house, working palace, if needs be, armed citadel of any private family in the land. The very centre of prestige and power. People shall see the power and nobility of Edward Stafford, duke of Buckingham. Whatever the King may do, or Thomas Wolsey, England shall know there is still a private order and service, and it is magnificent. Let it be so, unless God wills otherwise.

I never knew what work it would be, building this great house, still unfinished and I wonder if it ever shall be finished. Every vista must be splendid, every capacity ample, every need met and more than met so none shall doubt de Stafford piety and purpose.

I never knew what loneliness there could be in this great building. Alianore hates it; she doesn't like to be here. The children are married and gone and this winter is no season for entertaining. The passages and staterooms echo to my tread. It sets me to thinking of those days, oh so long ago, with Eadie and the other children, a world away at Lady Margaret's house. Then everywhere would echo to our laughter. We cared nothing for anyone's rank. We'd rather play with the scullion than my brother Henry for Henry was a cry-baby and spoilsport. Yes, I may smile at that memory, now I'm dread lord of all I see. More powerful, here, even than the King.

Who, in my household shies from me as I did from poor Henry; who would sport with me as Eadie did? And whom should I trust, or should I trust, as my father did, only to be betrayed?

I never knew what effort there could be in building perfection, and how hollow it may seem. This great house, but great for whom? Who can fill its great space?

I grow old and tired. Am I just in awe of the splendour of my own position? There's nothing I can do for I am who I am. Need my life lead me to these arid lands, having known the sunlight? A chill runs through me, there, for no reason.

Oh, for music, for distraction. A little ditty keeps running through my mind, about my father..

'The plain old duke his life to save,

Did of his own man succour crave...'

It keeps running round my head and I worry why.

My father's lands were confiscated when I was five years old. Restored indeed, but when I came into them, when I was just twenty, there was such disorder, titles missing, my guardian lax, stewards dishonest, all in chaos. Recovering Duke Henry's domains absorbed me like the labours of Hercules. Of course I've devised strategies, of course discipline, of course Law suit against the lazy and corrupt. I had to, to protect the estates. I'm not always popular. Does anyone understand these things? Does no one see the work, on top of service to an ungrateful Crown? The King used to be like a nephew to me, where did it go wrong?

Am I not fair? Am I not pious? Do I not support the poor clergy from my own pocket? Is there any one of my tenants, servants, friends who can say I use them dishonourably, any worse even than their merits? The Lord shall judge whether I've been generous but I stand on my life I have always been just! God help me but I've tried to be a Christian.

So why am I so tired and lonely?

Why do I feel defeat hanging round me like a cloak?

The King, I know, no longer loves me as I might expect he should. Maybe I speak my mind strongly but as the leader of the lords is this more than my duty? I know the King's mind is turned against me by the Great Cardinal. You see! Even to myself, I cure myself of what I used to call him, 'the butcher's boy'; for so he was no matter what great heights he reaches. I did wrong to remind him so often. Perhaps, if he but thought, I have more cause to envy him than he me.

If only Wolsey knew how, as a boy, I wished to be Eadie's equal, not her better. What would I not have given for his humble beginnings? My poor Eadie, she was dead before anyone heard of the Great Cardinal - that wretched Wolsey.

The fire sparks and I drift this winter's afternoon away. In this chair, in my own great hall in my own great house; all folded up by these winter snows. It's unhealthy to be mewed up. It should be good to go hunting. To see the keen breath freeze before your face, to hear the brittleness of wood snap in the cold, to have the deer start and the warmth of the chase. Yet I know the real thrill is to have your lady welcome home the hunter with admiring words and warm arms and looks full of promise.

I haven't the stomach for the hunt when it means a return to this. So I sit still, my boots on the fire irons, my soul in my boots and my sick heart in my mouth."

The fire basket is large, as becomes the room. The fire breast is grand, all decoration, and inside, as Edward sat musing, all cleanly dressed light stone. The near white was a symbol of purity. The truth is it repeated inside the sterility of the snows without. Oh, it was clean and well swept, as if no hand ever touched it.

The logs burned hot and bright, their flames leaping up into the darkness of the chimney. They draw your eye and the warmth of the fire lulls you as it did Edward, dreaming in front of it. Further and further he sank into the depths of the chair and the depths of his reverie, eyes open but not seeing.

"There is Eadie in my mind's eye; young and willowy and beckoning, smiling. I wasn't there. I wasn't there!
I should have been.

I see it now, I dream it as it must have been. As if I was God looking down on this mortal, sinful world. A tear shaken from His eye at de Stafford stupidity.

I was on my way from fighting the Cornish. I had persuaded my betters I wasn't needed; better a show of loyalty in Kent. I could go home to Eadie. If I'd not been

delayed by celebration and flattery and paying court, if I pressed to go earlier, I would have been there in time. I had a premonition to hurry.

Damn Mother Megg! Why did she have to die? Leaving my poor little Eadie to take over, all unprepared, all unready.

Brave girl she tried. Keeping secret to herself her doubts and uncertainties, smiling at Aletia, yet another of her patients. Every cure a minor miracle, every new patient a new chore, a new worry.

No one to confide in, no one to talk to save young Abby, who would hardly understand. I was never there, what a grief it must have been, and when I was, puffed up with my own increasing position.

And lurking in the alehouse, Malice on two legs, with a sack of gold. Always someone to criticise, to pour scorn on success, resentment on disappointment. To cry witch!

Was he an agent of Northumberland, that dark figure in the alehouse, which I and my agents searched for so long? Agent of Alianore, or perhaps of Lady Margaret? The Tudors did not use me well, though I thought they did at the time. 'T is still hard to believe the villainy I received from Lady Margaret; she put her own son before all honour justice and Law, and with all her piety beguiled me as she did to all the World, may God protect us all against such a good Christian.

Was it [Alianore](#), truly who killed a rival? She could do such things.

I think first of one and then the other and still I don't know, I don't know!

But I see that figure of discontent, a dark cloud over my dear little Eadie.

So, they said the day came when a patient died. Witchcraft was rumoured and it couldn't be silenced. The people inexorably turned; hope and petition turning to distrust and hate. Eadie shocked and not understanding, retreated, unable to answer.

Rumours that Eadie should be taken in charge, the Sessions or even Assize. The stirring of the mob that her 'high friends' not be let help her cheat justice.

Oh, horror!

I see it as if I were there.

The alehouse I knew. I see seated at the furthest corner of the darkly lit room, tankard before him purse always at his hand, the agent. For so I must call him, I don't know his name. Truly, he can have no name, never part of any act, always behind those who do act; strong in conversation but absent when the strength of blame is to fall, like drunken courage in the light of next day.

I searched for that man long. After Eadie's death I combed the county. Alianore laughed at my efforts, perhaps because I never thought to search her household. No one knew his name nor from whence he came nor his calling. The villagers thought him a traveller. I guessed him a local man with a grievance against Eadie or Mother Megg.

Tall and thin with quick, long white fingers on the one hand God had left to him. He had long hair held in a queue, roughly shaven and dressed like a clerk. Even now, though he may be long dead, if I ever see him he shall feel my steel.

I see the alehouse filled, faces eager with excitement and beer.

"Why did the woman die if not by the witch?"

"'T is true she ailed nothing before."

When some kind soul ventured to speak for my Eadie,

"All the worse if she had no reason; she that pretends to cure.

Which of us shall be next?"

I see the alehouse empty. 'T is still light and they head for Penshurst over the fields. 'T is still light yet some of them carry torches.

The march cooled their ardour; some were as shameful as they should have been, when they finally arrived at the door. Their appearance was foolish and unsure, the agent close to defeat. Thomas was away but Eadie was in safety behind a stout oak door. The household determined. The mob should not have her.

Some of the villagers called for Eadie to come out but the contemptuous rudeness of the housekeeper sent them away. Dispirited, they go, they're actually on their way back when they find Abigail! All innocence, she was playing by the pond. No one thought she would be in danger. Nor would she have been from simple villagers. Someone, the curs'd agent, stopped them and cajoled them and harangued them to take her for ransom for Eadie. They took her, my pretty innocent, calling out for her mother.

What a home coming for Thomas.

When Eadie heard about dear, sweet Abby she rushed out. There was nothing Aletia could do though she tried all she could; made strong by her fear.

Eadie rushed down the lane, over the bridge by the stream where Abby so often played, calling out Abby's name in desperation. By this time there was no one there. She rushed on through the now silent fields, calling, always calling about her for our dear daughter, hoping against certainty for a tearful Abby to come rushing to her. Exhausted, she came to the edge of the village, still no one there, she sank down and wept.

Thomas returned to find Eadie and Abby gone and Aletia distraught. He heard the story and I can picture his serious face turning white with fear and anger. Out to his tired horse, still in saddle, I can see him setting spur for the village.

Had he been there before Eadie all could still have been stopped and saved. If any man of his own strength and wit could have saved that day Thomas was the man.

Eadie, courageous girl that she was, didn't wait. As soon as she was a little recovered she made straight for the centre of the village, looking for our child, no longer calling out, still proud and erect. I think she gave Thomas no thought at all, only Abby and her own duty. Faces peered from doorways as she walked down the centre of the street, she didn't go unnoticed, but none would acknowledge her or come out to her as she walked the length of the village. She went directly to the alehouse, towards the sound of raised voices.

Inside was indeed a noise and press of bodies arguing over poor Abby. Some sanity prevailing argued the kidnap was wrong and, too, there could be no answer for the high wrath at taking de Stafford's daughter - for so she was always acknowledged to be. All the while the landlord's wife held a tearful Abby in restraint. Shame to the whole company for the pity of her cries.

When Eadie entered, the room fell silent. Eadie held the moment, till it was lost by Abby breaking free and rushing to her. As they held each other the room returned to itself.

"There she is! How dare she mock us in this house!"

Both were taken into restraint.

As the triumphant villagers made their plans for death, Abby's joy turned to fear. As her young mind began to understand the grown-ups' talk - terror.

They talked of burning but the villagers were not as eager as they'd been before. Many held the next day would do. Others that it was wrong to do more than take Eadie in charge and it was wrong to keep the child,

"Let the courts do their job, 't is not our work."

The agent held delay put them all in danger. He needed quick action, a swift end made here so none could go back, to take thought for pity or any soft feeling. The soft tears of Eadie and Abby's reproach could quench any man's resentment.

Many said they feared the Countess and de Stafford as well as the Law. The agent grew desperate.

Were they cowards?

Were they fools?

"What spell has the witch cast to hold Sir Edward in her hand. Besides, he's fighting for the King.

'T is service to Edward and the Countess to do God's will."

Mutterings or no, it stood undecided when Thomas came.

The door flew open. By some sixth sense the agent moved, as if like lightening. By the time Thomas's eyes adjusted to the dim light he was at Eadie's side with a dagger at her throat.

"Come near and the witch dies."

It was enough to stop Thomas and the agent saw it.

"Now Master Lewkenor, unbuckle your weapons and hand them to the landlord."

Thomas saw no choice.

There were further instructions and another man tied him securely to the roof-tree. It wasn't till all this was done the agent relaxed; his visible tension, betrayed by a throbbing vein at his temple, subsided. Then a smile came to his lips and then something new, which hadn't been there before, the swagger of victory.

"How now Master Lewkenor? Come to watch our judgement?"

"You'll pay my friend. Release my daughter and her child, meet me on the green or these people will hang with you."

"Gag him."

But it wasn't so easy to gag Thomas Lewkenor, even when tied as he was. The agent left Eadie and came over to where the struggle was, up to Thomas.

"Farewell my fine soldier."

And with that he slipped his dagger between Thomas's ribs and into his heart.

The room was stunned as Thomas slumped in his bonds. Eadie cried out in her loss and despair.

"You're committed now. You're with me and the witch has made us kill. We must be absolved, we must kill her."

The dagger was still in his hand and the look of the Devil in his eyes. There was no more argument.

It was falling dark when the torch was set to the tinder piled high round Eadie. She had been tied to a stake planted in the centre of the village green and the while this was going on the ale-house had served freely, so those who took part would remember little after.

Some few of the villagers cried out against it. Answering the pleas of the curate, they tried to stop it. They were knocked down or pushed out of the way and threatened to silence.

As Eadie's execution drew nearer, poor Abby's screams grew more hysterical. As the torch was set she could be restrained no longer. She rushed to her mother clambering up the wood. Eadie, in horror, tried everything to send her away but could not. Soon poor little Abby, aged just four, was trapped by the flames.

They watched throughout, those villagers, they raised not a finger, not even at the last, at mother and daughter's death screams. They hung their heads and went their way. The agent had gone long before."

Edward, much older, sitting by his fire at Thornbury moved restlessly at his imaginings. After all these years they still tortured him. He remembered how he had discovered it all.

"It was early next morning I arrived at Penshurst, on a surprise visit, full of love and contrition at my absence and, yes, with pride at my deeds as captain and with longing for Eadie, Abigail, Thomas and Aletia. True we'd fought the Cornish but there'd been attempts to raise Kent and I was both reassurance and protection; for all wiser heads than mine had stopped a Kentish rising weeks before. I wanted to show off my command, for all it numbered only a dozen men with me.

The servants had kept Aletia in doors, in her room, despite her anxiety and distraction. Maybe all would yet be well. Reassuring Lady Aletia we set our horses round. I knew the way over the fields well.

Nothing could prepare us for what we found.

The blackened corpses were unrecognisable. The night's rain had damped the fire so now only wisps of smoke curled upwards and a sickly smell hung in the air. No one was yet about and we banged on the alehouse door till it was opened

The innkeeper came out to us rather than letting us in. He answered our questions so nervously, so fearfully my men pushed past him and we found Thomas still hanging in the bonds where he died. The rest of the story came out of the man at knifepoint. When it was done I went out, back to the green, in a daze. I heard a short scream. I suppose it was my men carrying out summary execution. I know not. I know they carried Thomas's body out and laid him on the ground.

I sat down on the green, my useless sword in my hand, full of horror and stupidity. I couldn't go up to the corpses of my love and my daughter - I was afraid they would fall apart in my hands. I sat silently and cried and cried.

What drew my eye to it I do not know, there in the grass, just a yard in front of me, lay one of little Abby's shoes. I remembered it, it was all embroidered in different colours on green silk. I remember Abby first wearing them. She'd been so proud of herself, showing them off to everybody, her happy face dimpled with smiles. I picked it up and held it to me, rocking back and forth, cradling that shoe as if it were a baby, my dear little Abby!

My men fetched a wagon and sheets for Eadie and Abigail and for Thomas too. They were reverent and kind; they had heard many stories from me of Abigail and Eadie's perfections, and they knew me.

Before we went, silently and implacably, my men set torches to the village. As it had murdered in fire it died in fire, every house. Although there were two hundred souls in that village no one could have raised a hand to stop my men and lived. Only the curate and the church were spared. How many died as the King's firebrands went from house to house I don't know. I did not care then and I do not care to know now.

I took no notice, no part in what was happening round me, I just sat there clutching Abby's shoe to me. It must have come off in some sort of struggle, it had mud on it. It was all I had left. I sat, pressing that shoe to my chest, rocking back and forth, eyes not seeing, wondering if the World had yet ended.

My men led me like a child to my horse, the entire village was ablaze and the villagers who could were fleeing as we rode away. I could not begrudge the few bottles my men took from the alehouse, there was no other plunder taken that day.

We came, at last to Penshurst. Aletia must have seen our sorry burden as she looked out from her window. Her frenzy more than the ride brought me partly back to myself. I had to try anything I could do. I had been useless to the others, I must comfort Aletia. I hugged her and she clung for such comfort as there was but her staring eyes did not see and then she screamed and struck out as in a fit. I do not know what she would have done if she had not been taken by a seizure. She was carried off to bed and I was sat down in the hall. Thank God for the household that moved in round us, even taking care of the soldiers. I sat by Aletia's bed nearly all the time over those next days. She spent her time screwing her pillows in hers hands, screwing them into tight crumpled balls, her knuckles standing out white. She could not talk but when she cried and when she screamed I think it relieved her a little, it made her tired so she could sleep. It was no sound sleep, I do not believe she truly slept in all this time, rather she collapsed and fell still.

Nothing anyone could do would help Aletia. I sent for Lady Margaret's physician with a letter to Lady Margaret; explaining, as best my grief would allow, what had happened. It would take far too long for him to arrive and we scoured the neighbourhood for apothecaries. They had killed the only physician who had ever eased Lady Aletia's illness. We gave her potions and sleeping drafts, nothing could ease Aletia's heart. She couldn't eat, she could only drink with the greatest difficulty.

The days passed and eventually word came from Lady Margaret, no physician, but two ladies in waiting; those creatures who hang round great ladies to flatter them in the hope of advancement for themselves or their husbands. Lady Margaret, it seemed, was too ill to travel herself. Aletia put a brave face on it, it was the only time, in this time of horror, I saw her smile. I realised she had become, in all her long life, too used to smiling at adversity. Apart from the life she made with Thomas, Aletia's had been a life of graceful decline and disappointment. So it was now, when finally she could master herself, she would smile and thank me for all I had done. It made me weep the more when I was alone in my room. Then Aletia's anguish was mine too; they were dead, all of them, by my neglect!

She had to be carried to the funeral and sat in a chair during the service. It was a bright sunny morning and the birds sang. I fancied I could hear Eadie and Abigail in that bird-song. I mentioned it to Aletia and she said she could hear Thomas, too.

Aletia could still eat nothing. I did my best to persuade her but the once or twice she tried to take thin broth it made her dreadfully, retchingly sick. She became weaker and weaker till all she could do was damp her mouth with water from the spoon I would hold for her. I was with her all through this time till at last she, too, died. I got to know her better at the end than ever I had as a child at her knee.

I did not tell Lady Margaret of the funeral, nor anyone outside the parish nor stayed for condescending answers. The ladies in waiting had long since gone back to places more profitable to their ambitions.

Once more the morning was bright and all of nature in good spirits. The little family plot containing Thomas, Eadie and Abigail now held Aletia also, it was my home and all that I could want if only I were allowed to join them. Does it sound strange to say it was beautiful? When Aletia died all my strength of purpose gave way. I remember nothing but weeping till my red eyes could cry no more.

It is strange, as I walked away from that sweet grave, now no more tears would come; no feeling, no will of my own remained after this second funeral. What was I to do, where was I to go? I had no place and no purpose in living; nothing was left to me but bitter obedience to Lady Margaret and the expectations of the World.”

Even after so very many years Edward’s reverie was painful to him. To me it was hammer blow after hammer blow, the whole Universe colliding to shatter every atom of hope. But I would not, could not, let go of that contact. Surely, there must somewhere somehow be some hope, some redemption. Though how, in God’s name, I didn’t know.

Edward stirred again and once more I was in his mind’s eye; but differently, almost as if he knew I was there and he was talking directly to me.

(Past)

“Sometimes, these recent days, as I lie in my bed, I think I hear young Abby’s sweet, piping voice as I used to do, once, long ago. Then it seems I see Eadie and Thomas and Aletia and Abby too; standing at the end of my bed, as if they were a picture on the curtain, and yet real and moving and smiling at me.

I believe I shall be going home to them, perhaps one day soon. God pray, this time, I may be worthy of them.”

Chapter 26 - The Box

After channelling that last chapter with Angharad, and drinking her whisky, I don't remember getting up, or saying goodbye.

There's just a hazy impression of walking round in the wet, of shop lights as night fell. The next thing I do remember is sitting in my office, in the dark, tears rolling down my face.

There was emptiness at the pit of my stomach so that for days I couldn't eat. The horror of the last chapter filled my mind, but when I did finally turn away from it, I thought of the Sword though Edward hadn't used it at Penshurst.

Then I remembered what Father Joseph said in Cambridge,

"..The Sword has two edges... as you use it ill it will use you ill."

In the service of King Henry, Edward had killed those Cornishmen with Duke Henry's Sword; now Eadie, Abby, Thomas and Aletia were all dead.

Is there such a thing as coincidence? When I mentioned it to Angharad I remembered Edward left five bodies on the road, there were only four deaths at Penshurst. Angharad told me no,

"Don't you realise?

There were five deaths, Edward died there too."

Surely the last chapter should finish the book, yet it doesn't. Aside from the 'might have beens', if Edward hadn't used Duke Henry's Sword, or if he'd gone home earlier; something else nagged at me.

Finding Edward reminiscing was like overcoming a barrier, something awakened; you remember, at the end of my channelling, I had a sense he was talking to me. Duke Edward reached across all these centuries and a part of him stayed with me.

Silence tolls out of emptiness, yet there was one night, when Edward did speak. It was late but I couldn't sleep. It was a restless night, full of nameless fears and tensions. It was a night for my thoughts to run wild in fretful expectation.

It was Duke Edward who wouldn't leave me, and the silence crackled with tension. At first there was neither sight nor sound, only shapes forming in my mind. I imagined, as it might be, Edward as I'd seen him at Thornbury. I imagined him as he was, more than forty years of age, every detail slowly clearing, even the fine stitching of his doublet and the heavy embroidery on his shirt, the white of it poking through the slashes in his sleeves, his seals, his purse, the dagger dangling at his waist, all became clear. The Duke was a big man, in his day, a giant. No room could hold him without every eye turning to him. Now I was his only audience and his presence penetrated from every side.

"Tell them about the Grail."

Then again,

"You neglected the Cup."

As his presence faded the words remained. These were such strange thoughts to have me scrabbling through the draws of my desk at three o'clock in the morning. Yet I did find the notes I made as the story unfolded, I poured over them, looking for what I'd missed.

You remember the Box Edward found in the Tower Room at Stafford, holding the cup and the other treasures; the box he supposed came from France with his great

grandfather, Duke Humphrey? The burial I didn't quite bring into this story? That too, was about the cup and the Box.

I looked through my notes, remembering Edward, thinking about Malory's book and the Holy Grail. It must have made an impression, I've read that book and thought over Malory's charismatic heroes, remembering that sunlit Tower Room with its hush out of Time.

I thought about the burial, telling Sarah about it even before I knew how Eadie died. It was the Box which was buried there, under those trees. I even told Mary about it, trying to engage her skills as a medium instead of a counsellor, my words came back to me,

"Also there's buried treasure.

It isn't gold and silver - though some of it has great money value. It's really a sort of gateway... Or like an insurance policy, a way of passing on an inheritance."

Talking to Mary I'd stumbled to find the right words. I didn't know what was in the Box; there was only a sense of its purpose, a purpose that defied explanation. My meaning hadn't been clear. Perhaps what came across to Mary was my own unsureness. Anyway, she was dismissive, as she was of all else, as Sarah had been.

Why did Edward bury the Box? I puzzled over it and meditated, asking for the Duke's help. It was tantalizing, always just out of reach. Yet I knew the answer must lie in the death of Eadie and the others. He returned from Penshurst to the nagging pressures of his life, demands of rank and pressure to marry Alianore. Something in Edward must have rebelled, something that knew the meaning of the Cup; that would not let Margaret or Alianore get their hands on it.

Was that all there was to it? I could have gone round digging holes all over the landscape to try and find it but, despite the words I heard that night, it just didn't seem right. Funnily enough, not long after this, I met just the man who could do it.

Terry came to me with an investment system. He showed me yards of computer printout by way of proof that it worked. Yet the system was a logical impossibility, you could never have all the information it called for. Trying not to dent his faith, I gently probed the man. I was sure, if you actually put money into it, the system would fail. We tested it. The results were mind bendingly bad. I'd more or less expected it, all the charisma and psychic power Terry put into getting impossibly good results suddenly went into getting impossibly bad ones. You see Terry wanted his system to work but he didn't, he really didn't want to make money.

We fell to talking and met several times. Terry's psychic powers were amazing, so great they'd become a burden. When he was young his childish experiments led him into a confrontation. Terry met his worst fear, it still so appalled him that he couldn't speak of it. He was a mere boy, the experience terrified him. His distracted parents sought help from doctors and psychiatrists but finally it was the Spirit World which rescued him, on condition there be no more experiments. He's spent the many years since avoiding all psychic contact, lest he renew that confrontation.

Unfortunately all success has some measure of psychism, in it. Terry so thoroughly avoided using his powers he's condemned himself to a life of material mediocrity.

His story moved me to sympathy, I told him some parts of my story; I told him about the Tower room and the burial. He was very interested, asking many questions.

I remember him saying,

"You know you could still find that box."

I didn't altogether like the idea, it might mean digging up a lot of private property.

“No, really. If it’s as powerful as you say it should be quite easy. It must stick out like a sore thumb.”

“Psychically you mean?”

Terry smiled.

“But you promised never to do that sort of thing.”

“Oh, there’s no risk. All you have to do is ask and look and there it is.

Really. I should do something, after spending your money.”

I ought to have accepted, I realise now that he offered for his own benefit as much as mine. It would have made up for decades of dreary survival and redeemed the childish misuse of his talents. But I didn’t accept; I changed the subject instead. Somehow I didn’t believe it could be possible to lay hands on the Holy Grail by digging it up.

A few days later Terry telephoned me with a compass bearing on the Box. He’d be happy to help me look for it. I told him no, I still didn’t believe it would be possible.

There was one other loose end I worried at.

The death of Eadie was such a full-stop, but I still wanted to know about the agent who provoked the mob against her; who prompted him to do it? The villagers were punished, burnt out or killed, but the Agent got away. Edward didn’t even know his name.

His name I found, by my own meditations, was Anton Fowles, yet I could take it no further. I turned to Angharad; she’s helped so much already.

I think the effect this story had on me affected Angharad more than the story itself. It’s all taken so much of my emotions.

I asked Angharad to find the Agent. I painted again the picture of the man, as I saw him in my mind’s eye. I invited her into a trance but my description didn’t trigger any scene at the alehouse.

(Past)

The scene was a garden and its focus was an oak tree. Under the tree was what looked like a wooden seat. There was a man standing by it, a man answering the description of the Agent but in different clothes, he seemed to be a gardener. There was a woman also, simply but richly dressed, not tall, not strong, and no longer young. Angharad thought there might be a castle nearby, or some great house with heavy stone walls.

The lady wanted the seat moved, it was obviously difficult, the seat was very heavy. Despite his one arm the gardener was instructed to bring it indoors. Angharad and I were perplexed. It was then we realised with excitement, it wasn’t a seat we were looking at, but a very strong, very large, very plain wooden box.

I was disappointed when Angharad found the gardener; I’d asked her to look for the Agent, yet she insisted this was the scene we should look at, now we had the Box.

With straining expectations Angharad looked inside it. What she saw was stunning. The things Edward found at Stafford were still there, excepting only the Cup, and besides these were family jewels, the Marbles, the Bible and the rose Eadie had given him that Christmas and, on top of all these, was poor little Abigail’s shoe.

I was in tears. It was a very emotional find.

The Cup had been taken away within hours of our seeing the Box. There was something of the Agent about the gardener after all, it was he who had taken it. That

single loss was to make a terrible difference as you shall see. The lady never even knew the Cup existed.

Quickly we made an inventory in case anything else should disappear. What we found was bizarre. Somehow it all made more of an impression now, with Angharad, than when I first saw these things through Edward's eyes. Maybe it was just so hard for me to believe what I had seen.

There was the Spear. It was very old and broken so that it naturally fell into two pieces. Yet, oddly the point was covered in red blood, it was wrapped in a cloth and the blood on the cloth was dried, brown and old. It was a puzzle young Edward hadn't seen, for he never unwrapped the spear in the Tower Room. I don't know what a Roman spear would look like, maybe this was the very spear Longinus used to plunge into the side of Christ, that Malory has Sir Balin use to strike King Pellam the '[dolorous stroke](#)' in 'Le Morte D'Arthur'. If so, the constant fresh blood was just as Malory described.

There was a seven-branched candlestick, gold or gilt, it was hard to say. Angharad criticised me for calling it Jewish, though the candleholders were all in a straight line, the centre one was slightly raised above the others. She insisted this was important.

There were three scrolls bearing large, imposing seals with symbols, one was broken. We didn't know what to make of the symbols though they weren't heraldic, they were far too simple and bold. Although one might have been the de Stafford chevron, it's hard to say.

Besides these, a cloth, almost an altar cloth, maybe it was. It bore motifs in the colour of the blood on the spear cloth; they were Staffordshire knots and more chevrons.

Then there was the plate, embossed and set round the edge with small jewels, each a different colour. In the middle was a geometric design, maybe the Star of David or the Legs of Man. It was the hardest to see, Angharad felt the impression of a head surrounded by blood and she turned away from it.

It was with these things the stolen cup belonged. They made us feel certain the Cup was the Grail that I saw in meditation. Surely the Cup was the same Sir Thomas Malory declared to be the Holy Grail. Could these things really be part of my meditation about Edward Stafford?

Following after these were other things of value in mere money. First were de Stafford jewels, including a great ruby Edward wore in a finger ring, I remember how he played with it, sat by the fire, recalling Eadie's death. Besides this there was a bangle, set with black or dark blue stones, I recognised it as one worn by Alianore and there were other jewels I didn't recognise. I guessed they all had personal meaning, today they'd be fabulously valuable.

Second were the Marbles we've heard so much about already. My heart was in my mouth at the sight of them. If only Edward had had them in his hands for the last chapters of this story!

The last group of things, which at first sight only had curiosity value, were the most exciting of all. You remember, the little Bible and the rose Eadie gave to Edward that Christmas, and poor little Abby's shoe from the village green, still with the mud on it, they were there in the Box, with a journal in Edward's own hand.

Angharad tried her very best to open the journal and read it in her mind's eye. She knew how much it might mean to me. Have you ever tried to read an old manuscript? I have, it can be very difficult. Edward's Gothic script and the strange

abbreviations he used to make words fit on a line all made it worse. No wonder Angharad couldn't read it.

The reason these things were so exciting was, you remember, it was Angharad who described it all. I never told her Edward kept a journal, I haven't even told you till now. I told her about some of the other things, of course, but never in the detail she gave me. She described them so accurately, even to the colours of the fabric in Abby's shoe. It was all so emotional; it reduced us both to tears.

These were the contents of the Box as Angharad and I looked into it, but it isn't quite all we saw. There was a sword. It had to be the Stafford Sword, it was a little separated from the Box and Angharad described it as large and badly rusted, she made it sound like a broad-sword from an earlier time, yet we were assured it was the same Sword which came with Duke Henry's letter. This caused me doubts, I knew what Duke Henry's Sword looked like and it wasn't this. Can a sword change size and shape, even if it is magical? Angharad insisted it could.

After our inventory the action began again, but with many a pause for our frequent discussions; the lady took the Sword indoors, and placed it on the grate, in a fireplace, looking down at it in despair.

We think the garden and the building were at Stafford Castle. It's a place we both know, the ruin is now open to the public.

Who were the people of this vision, when and why did it take place and why should it come to us so unbidden? This is no detective story; I'll tell you what further channelling brought us.

(Past)

The year was 1643, one hundred and twenty two years after Edward's death. Stafford Castle was still in the hands of Edward's descendants but by now the World had moved on. The English Civil war was in progress and the Royalists were doing badly. Stafford and the Stafford family were loyal to the King but the Royal cause was stretched very thin, there was no proper garrison and there was all too little Royalist force to come to Stafford's aid.

The woman was Lady Isobel Stafford, who commanded the town and such forces as there were when the news came. A large, well-equipped force, an entire Parliamentary army, was moving against them. It would be servants and farmers with pitchforks against soldiers in armour with artillery at their back.

Imagine the despair of that courageous woman. What could she do? It's in these circumstances she called on the Box, barely hours before we found it. How she knew of it, or where she found it, neither Angharad nor I could say. But our meditation went on to show what befell when the aid of the Box was called on.

Isobel could hardly lift the Sword let alone fight with it. Perhaps the Parliamentarians could be won over by Justice, perhaps by Love. Yet, to save Stafford by Love would have needed the Cup that had been stolen by the one armed man.

Lady Isobel prayed for help. She prayed kneeling with her arms on the Box and when she finished she kissed the Sword. She put both away, hiding them so no Parliamentary soldier would ever find them. The pain we found in our meditation almost expanded from this point, as if it were a shriek of anguish as something was torn from its rightful place. It made me retreat into works of local history to find much of the rest of the story.

A Royalist army did come to the defence of Stafford. It was a large force, making up for lack of the Roundheads' terrible discipline with confidence and enthusiasm. It was led by the earl of Northampton and I remember a snatch of what he said to Lady Stafford.

“Have no fear lady. As long as I live you may be safe here and all the town with you.”

Isobel believed him, fear visibly falling from her shoulders.

When the Roundheads finally arrived there was a mad scramble to get soldiers billeted on the wrong side of town mustered and ready, finally they made it. The two armies came together at the [battle of Hopton Heath](#). The Royalists fought well, their enthusiasm driving down and putting to flight the King's enemies. But in their joy came neglect and disaster; where the Earl was engaged there was a large rabbit warren, the Earl's horse put a foot in a rabbit hole and broke a leg. On foot, the Earl was surrounded by Roundheads; they called on him to surrender but he refused. With the honour of a knight of the Grail he fought on to the death.

The victorious Royalists, now in mourning, negotiated the return of the Earl's body and sent him home for burial. Lady Isobel's joy at the victory vanished as she heard of his lordship's death, remembering his words of comfort; that now filled her with foreboding.

Without the Earl, the Royalists protected the town badly. Capable soldiers were needed elsewhere and those that remained grew lax. Although the people of Stafford were loyal to the King, other parts of Staffordshire were not. The town was taken by surprise, by a small group of Roundheads, led by a turncoat Royalist who'd known its defences. Lady Isobel was besieged in the castle; retreating Royalist soldiers came to her rescue and, it is said, persuaded her to leave before a larger Roundhead army could get there.

The castle fortifications were demolished by solemn order of the rebels and the castle keep was blown to bits. To this day there is instability in the castle mound from that vengeful force of Parliament. The town had always been too weak to defend itself, the damage and demolition done there was to open fields of fire against a Royalist counter-attack that never came.

What became of the Box? Perhaps in the castle mound, smashed under thousands of tons of rubble. Perhaps removed to a new place of safety, perhaps to the old. There, I've told you of another failure and yet I didn't mean to. What we found in the Box was something much more stunning.

When I looked into the Tower room the date was 1494, when we saw the Box again, in Lady Isobel's garden, the year was 1643. You'd expect to see signs of ageing. There were none. Even Abigail's shoe was as fresh as the day I saw it on the village green. How could this be?

I thought of the letter Duke Henry sent his son, the letter Edward received nine years later with the Sword. If Duke Henry was right the Sword was 282 years old, at least, when Edward got it. If Father John's tale was true it was much, very much, older. It looked modern, undamaged and serviceable when it came to Edward.

At last I began to understand, it was the state of the Sword itself which was the magic Edward looked for and failed to find, when first he held it, sitting on his bed, reading his father's letter in Lady Margaret's house. When it came to Isobel it looked as you'd expect it to be. Why else had it not rusted for Edward yet turned to rust for Isobel?

Edward hadn't put the Sword in the Box, he'd buried it separately; that's why it had aged when the other things had not. Is that why Lady Isobel's prayer for help in arms succeeded only so partially?

The Shoe came off little Abigail's foot 148 years before Lady Isobel's time. For most of that time it was buried in a box in damp earth. It was a silk shoe yet its

colours and fabric were still fresh, still bearing the mud for which Abby would have been scolded in happier times. The Book, the Rose, all the perishable things were intact and unaged, as we saw them in Lady Isobel's garden.

The Box will preserve whatever is in it from the corruption of reality. How else could these things be so?

Since it came to light, under Isobel's hand, the Box has haunted Angharad and I. At times we've even thought we could pluck it out of thin air. At times we've even tried it, to pluck substance out of insubstance.

Perhaps this was just reaching too far. Should we have known better than to pursue myth and mysticism? Certainly this channelling was unlike any which had gone before. I said as much.

"I believe what we found when I can verify it from history, I believe it when it's plausible. But you can't verify magic, all this is doing is making me doubt what I know is true."

Angharad's feelings were hurt.

"After all the time I spent going through this with you!

Why do you think I did it?"

She paused. Whether it was for effect or whether she was in danger of saying too much, I waited.

"Well?"

I still waited.

"You know Sarah thought you were after her, I don't think she believed in your project. I think she might have wanted you to be interested in her, not your precious procedures. We talked about it before you met that psychologist from London, do you remember? In the end we decided it was more likely you were after me. It's me you talked to, not her."

I think the colour must have drained from my face.

Angharad has a fierce independence and it never occurred to me she would be attracted to me except as a friend. It hadn't occurred to me that Sarah would be either.

"Don't worry, I'm not after your body.

Don't you understand!"

I didn't understand. And my face showed it.

"You're the Grail knight!"

This was all making matters much worse.

"Why do you think you've been shown all this?

And I've tried to help you but it's up to you to see it for yourself."

I moved to comfort her, to be honest I was stunned, it all made matters very much worse. Angharad hadn't finished.

"Eadie and everybody else are dead. I don't know what more there is for you to see in Edward. I know it's high time you looked at your own life.

Will you do that?"

"Ah."

My life was indeed in a mess. There were a great many practical things I should have done over these last few months.

"Will you meditate?"

"You mean about me and the Grail?"

Angharad nodded.

After she'd gone I thought through this remarkable outburst. I pulled a half empty packet of cigarettes from my pocket and set myself to resolve the problem by the time I finished them. I spent the time walking up and down, smoking furiously.

I'd seen many factual events from Edward's life confirmed from history books and learned things that proved to be true, even though they were difficult to find from books.

Mixed in with this, the Marbles, the Sword and the Holy Grail. While any of these might be real they are also undoubtedly mythical.

On top of this I had seen things which plainly couldn't be real.

The situation with Sarah and now Angharad seemed to be tangled with emotions I couldn't begin to fathom.

I sat down.

I got up and tried again; and again.

On the last cigarette I came to a certain conclusion. I should have to meditate again. If this was about the Grail I would go to the source; to Joseph of Arimathaea. Angharad had persuaded me that any spirit could be reached in channelling and I conjured in my mind the figure I'd seen on the hilltop, the figure administering the sacraments in the Land of the Dead. In my candlelit office, at dead of night, he came and stood before me.

"Tell me the reality of the Grail."

"It is as you have seen it, as many others have seen it. Why do you doubt?"

And the Sword?"

"It was a gift of love even before me."

"And the Marbles?"

"They belong to the Land. Did you not see and hear?"

A strange question came into my mind, one I had not thought to ask,

"Who is Edward Stafford?"

"Had you not better ask these."

Joseph motioned behind him and for the first time I caught sight of a number of figures standing there.

"The Nine Worthies."

This was not what I expected and my thoughts raced to catch up. One of these shadowy figures seemed to stand forward for a moment.

"Edward is of us and we of him."

"But you changed the World, what has Edward ever done?"

"Did we change the World?"

Another figure spoke,

"Has he not changed the World?"

Yet another came forward.

"Each of us changes the World to the limit of our wish."

"What became of the Sword?"

"It belonged in the Box. Edward should have put it there."

Yet another stepped forward.

"Once there nothing leaves. There is no time for the Box."

The shadowy figures faded, having settled nothing. Only Joseph remained.

"You have not asked about yourself."

With that he, too, faded and I was left alone.

I was simply at a loss.

Edward put the symbols of his great love in the Box. That's how his love could come to me these centuries later. Edward and his true feelings are preserved as living things. They're not in ordinary, three dimensional space, obeying the Entropy Angharad's John so believes in. According to John anything you can't see or touch doesn't exist and all Creation is bound by Entropy. I was right those months ago, there are higher dimensions; these are the dimensions of the Box.

I needed another cigarette.

What an irony John should insist there's nothing beyond the limits of Physics. Yet, there is a higher science, one known to the ancients, transcending all the dimensions, one on which John and all his colleagues long ago turned their backs. In this science things have different meanings at different levels, often contradictory; you can sail in different directions on different planes, like a balloon high in the air, and get lost in the welter of correspondences. Its very name rings with magic, deception and trickery, holding great promises and driving men mad in pursuit of them, its name is Alchemy. For thousands of years, and still after Edward's death, 'the great work' was the study of Alchemy. It's no surprise Edward possessed alchemic talismans.

That the Marbles were alchemic there is no doubt. By moving between the levels of dimensions is exactly how they work and why they belong in the Box. But it's not enough to leave it there.

Did Edward understand all this, enough to add his own symbols? How stunning that the childish gift of Eadie's rose, and Abby's shoe, could be placed alongside the Holy Grail! That Edward could hold the Box, that he could use it to raise his own loves towards Eternity.

How the Box came to be in the Stafford Tower Room I don't know. I only know it came to Edward not he to it, just as it came, those years later, to Lady Isobel. Maybe, one day, it will come to me.

Was Angharad right to call me a Grail knight?

I remembered those words in the cathedral,

"Do My Will, Do Your Own."

Why had the Nine Worthies linked with Joseph in that last meditation?

I wondered if the power of Edward's emotions would have rung down the ages without the power of the Box. Under its influence I've been compelled to suspend my ordinary life to write this story. In the dimensions of the Box the power of those feelings go on unabated. The love and compassion are overwhelming; for it is compassion, that Angharad has so much of in herself that she gave to me throughout the unfolding of Edward.

At last I thought of the Butterfly Effect, leaving the words hanging in the air,
"Be the right Butterfly."

Writing this book has been a catharsis. I never did reach a conclusion from the meditation following that last cigarette, and this story has never ceased to haunt me. Perhaps now I shall be able to make up my mind.

I see the Duke stood by my side, he's nodding, he seems pleased, but I seem to hear him say,

"But not, by all butts, the end of my story, it's yet but the beginning."

Here endeth the first book of Edward.

If you have enjoyed it,

If it has provoked questions or feelings,

Please leave a comment at www.edwardstafford.co.uk

With my best wishes and regards,
Mike Voyce

Note from the Author

If you read [Joseph Campbell](#), “The Power of Myth”, you will see that “Edward” breaks all the rules. But, and for all of that, the power of Edward is irresistible.

From Classical times to the present, writers have credited inspiration for their work; never has this been truer than of the book you have just read, and I have had no choice in setting it before you.

Believe me, many of the scenes were not of my choosing; many of Edward’s actions would have been different, and the form of storytelling, also; if they were in my choosing. Most of all, I’d have given Edward a happy ending if I could.

I have always believed, before you speak, you should have something to say. The Truth of Edward demands to be told, and now you have it, and in some sense it has you, the errors of the last 500 years can start to be corrected.

I have been at pains to tell “Edward” as honestly as I can; the characters around Edward are as they were, without idealisation or amendment. For the characters around me, I give them my grateful thanks.

Of the characters known to History, little more need be said, the propaganda has been fractured and you can see to the truth.

Of those less well known, let me say such people lived, and their spirit is in this book as much as the great and noble.

Mike Voyce

List of Hyperlinks

Brief Introduction to the EBook

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www.MikeVoyce.com

[INTRODUCTION](#)

A Genealogy of Edward

[Edward Stafford website](#)

Medieval Music Links

[Medieval Chant of the Templars. Antiphona: Salve Regina](#)

[Music for a Knight - Ambrosian Chant](#)

[15th century English Music - Alleluia : "A Nywe Werke"](#)

[Quene Note](#)

[Sumer Is Icumen In](#)

Chapter 1 - The Beginning

[Penshurst Place](#)

Chapter 2 - Duke Henry

[Duke of Buckingham](#)

[Bishop Morton](#)

[Thomas à Kempis](#)

Chapter 3 - Edward

[Lady Katherine](#)

Chapter 4 - The Way of the Word

[Giordano Bruno](#)

Chapter 5 - A Kaleidoscope

[King's mother](#)

[The Presence of Other Worlds](#)

Chapter 6 - The Kings of England

[Henry IV's crimes](#)

[Sir Henry Stafford](#)

[Edward IV was not legitimate](#)

[Dominic Mancini](#)

[Polydore Vergil](#)

[Sir Thomas More](#)

Chapter 7 - Marbles and Hawks

[King Henry](#)

[Book of St. Albans](#)

Chapter 8 – Edward and Eadie

Chapter 9 – Christmas

[Wynkyn de Worde](#)

[‘Le Morte D’Arthur’](#)

[quest for the Holy Grail](#)

Chapter 10 – Peterborough

[cathedral of St. Peter at Peterborough](#)

[Julian of Norwich](#)

Chapter 11 – Changes

[Akashic Script](#)

Chapter 12 – Wales

[Sir Reginald Bray](#)

[Sir Rees ap Thomas](#)

[Vaughans of Tretower](#)

Chapter 13 - Unhappy Differences
[Alnwick](#)

Chapter 14 – Separation
[Stafford castle](#)
[the Knight of the Swan](#)

Chapter 15 – Sarah
[Ericksonian metaphors](#)

Chapter 16 - Penshurst and Cambridge
[Bosworth](#)
[Buckingham College](#)

Chapter 17 – Abigail

Chapter 18 – Celebration
[William Caxton](#)

Chapter 19 - Growing Up
[Sir George Buck](#)
[William Stanley](#)
[Jasper of Hatfield](#)

Chapter 20 - Father Joseph
[Richard Wingfield](#)
[King Louis](#)

Chapter 21 – Meanings
[Sweating Sickness](#)

Chapter 22 – Goodbye
[E.S.R.C.](#)
[spirit guides](#)
[board of judgement](#)

Chapter 23 - Of Life and Death
[Templars' church](#)
[Cornishmen's revolt](#)

Chapter 24 – Lincoln
[cathedral](#)
[Nine Worthies](#)

Chapter 25 – Endings
[Thornbury](#)
[Alianore](#)

Chapter 26 - The Box
['dolorous stroke'](#)
[battle of Hopton Heath](#)
[www.edwardstafford.co.uk](#)

Note from the Author
[Joseph Campbell](#)