

*The bedchamber of Elizabeth of York, the Royal Court, London, 27th October 1485, afternoon We can hear Tudor Court music or similar sounds of the time and place*

*The Wars of the Roses have raged for thirty years between the houses of York and Lancaster (whose heraldic symbols were the -white and red rose respectively) for the English throne.*

*Following the defeat and death of the Yorkist King, Richard III, at the Battle of Bosworth, the conquering hero, and Lancastrian heir, Henry Tudor, ascends to the throne as King Henry VII of England. Nieces of the defeated King Richard III, Elizabeth of York, and her younger sister,*

*Cecily of York, reside at Court in anticipation of the coronation of their new King.*

*The door of the wardrobe opens, CECILY, sixteen-years-old, climbs inside. She closes the door behind her, pushes aside the hanging robes and sits. She scowls. After a moment, the door opens and ELIZABETH, eighteen-years-old, enters and closes the door behind her. Bright daylight filters through the ornamental holes dappling them -with light.*

ELIZABETH. There you are. Move aside.

*ELIZABETH sinks down beside CECILY.*

ELIZABETH. Well, tis official: a letter from the King was published in the Parliament house just this mom. Shall I read it to you? *(Holding the parchment up to candlelight and reciting)* "Henry, by the grace of God, King of England and France, Prince of Wales, and Lord of Ireland, ascertaineth you that Richard Duke of Gloucester, lately called King Richard, was slain at a place called Sandeford and there laid openly that every man might look upon him: God have mercy on his soul. And, moreover, the King, our Sovereign Lord, shall wed the lady Elizabeth of York to the pleasure of Almighty God, the wealth, prosperity and surety of this Realm of England." *(With sarcasm)* Oh Cecily, how it puts to shame the greatest love poems!

*CECILY giggles*

ELIZABETH. He has no intention to share power, thus his coronation will occur afore marriage. Can you believe your ears, Cecily? I've eaten partridges with a stronger royal lineage. Besides, he's so old.

CECILY. He's thirty.

ELIZABETH. Exactly, he's ancient. And he has such a long face. I do not care to look at my husband and think of my horse. Henry Tudor. He'll insist we name our firstborn son after him. What shall that make him? Henry...the eighth. How tedious! No, I shan't have that. I'll start a new fashion: Barnaby the First.

CECILY. We cannot have King Barnaby.

ELIZABETH. Why not?

CECILY. It sounds absurd.

ELIZABETH. Humphrey.

CECILY. No.

ELIZABETH. Arthur, then.

CECILY. King Arthur?

ELIZABETH. In honour of the legendary King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. On this I shan't negotiate. I am the daughter of King Edward the fourth; sister to King Edward the fifth - if I weren't a woman, Cecily, no one would question my right to rule my country. But because I have a womb and breasts he'll not share his crown with me, only his bed. I've half a mind to deny him.

CECILY. He'd confine you to the tower.

ELIZABETH. So be it.

CECILY. Oh hush your ridiculous brabbling! You know not how lucky you are. One day they will write books about you, plays about you: Elizabeth of York, the White Princess, who married the Red King and thus ended the Wars of the Roses. But what of her sister, Cecily? Who ever heard of her? I expect she died alone in a convent!

*CECILY attempts to exit the wardrobe. ELIZABETH stops her and produces a silver spoon.*

ELIZABETH. I have found a spoon. I think it is silver. Six points?

*CECILY snatches the spoon and gnaws at it with her teeth.*

ELIZABETH. Cecily!

*Her gnawing reveals some other metal underneath: it is only silver-plated*

ELIZABETH. Oh. Three points? One point.

CECILY. Half a point.

ELIZABETH. Half a point! Fine. Have you done any better?

*CECILY digs in her pocket and retrieves a jeweled dagger.*

ELIZABETH. Wherever did you find that!

CECILY. The Courtyard.

*CECILY unsheathes the dagger. She cuts the air with it. The light glints off the blade.*

ELIZABETH. Well. Ten points?

CECILY. Ten? These are rubies. One hundred. At least.

ELIZABETH. Very well then.

*ELIZABETH prizes open a board in the base of the wardrobe and hunts underneath.*

ELIZABETH. Oh yes. He said something else. If I die, he intends to marry you.

*CECILY looks at the dagger in her hand and then at her sister's exposed back. Still with her back to her sister, ELIZABETH retrieves a box from the base of the wardrobe and opens it. She takes out a scorecard and a stick of charcoal. She writes.*

ELIZABETH. Half a point to me. One hundred points to you.

*CECILY looks between her sister's back and the dagger*

ELIZABETH. *(Still with her back to her sister)* He had Uncle Richard's body stripped naked and tied to the side of his horse. They paraded the horse in town. Richard

killed Edward; Henry kills Richard; who will kill Henry? It is a game of death, Cecily, and we have no choice but to play it.

*ELIZABETH turns to CECILY in earnest. CECILY lowers the dagger.*

ELIZABETH. They thought nothing of killing our brothers. We, too, must be prepared to do things of which we never thought ourselves capable.

*Again, ELIZABETH turns her back on CECILY to rummage in the base of the wardrobe. CECILY raises the dagger to plunge it into her sister's back. Suddenly ELIZABETH swings into view a short handled axe. The girls face each other with their weapons.*

ELIZABETH. I do not know what I would do without you. You are my best friend. I will see that you are always provided for. You will marry a gentleman and have many babies. I promise you this: you will never die alone in a convent, not while I am alive and we are sisters.

*ELIZABETH uses the edge of her axe to slice her hand and spill some blood.*

ELIZABETH. And while the same blood courses our veins, I solemnly swear, here and now, that I will do everything in my power to see that you never come to any harm.

*She offers her hand to her sister for shaking.*

*CECILY slices her hand on the blade of the dagger, she cries out in pain. ELIZABETH quickly presses her bloodied hand to her sister's mouth to silence her and unintentionally smears blood all over her face. CECILY pulls ELIZABETH'S hand away.*

CECILY. Urgh!

*CECILY spits ELIZABETH'S blood from her mouth.*

ELIZABETH. Oh frothy boggarts, I am sorry!

CECILY. Urgh, your blood!

ELIZABETH. Sorry.

CECILY. You just made me eat your blood! Urgh!

ELIZABETH. Well I did not mean to. It was supposed to be a...symbolic moment.

*CECILY wipes her tongue on her dress*

ELIZABETH. Sorry. We can still shake on it.

CECILY. If I have to eat yours, then you have to eat mine.

ELIZABETH. What?

CECILY. It is only fair.

ELIZABETH. Well that is not really how you are supposed to do it.

*CECILY shoves her bloody hand over her sister's mouth and holds her nose.*

*ELIZABETH has to open her mouth to breath and gets a mouthful of her sister's blood. She throws her hand off and coughs and spits.*

ELIZABETH. Urgh. Pleurghh!

*ELIZABETH coughs and coughs before regaining her composure. The two girls stare at each other with bloody faces*

CECILY. You look like a witch, a child-eater!

ELIZABETH. You look like a child-eater!

They crack a smile and laugh. The laughter trails away. They look at one another with sadness.

ELIZABETH. I don't want to marry him.

CECILY. I don't want to marry him either.

They embrace tightly and urgently.

ELIZABETH. He says I'm to leave my belongings. He'll buy me new clothes and a wardrobe in which to hang them.

*ELIZABETH touches a hand to the wall of the wardrobe.*

ELIZABETH. It belonged to our brothers'; then 'twas mine; now 'tis yours.

*CALLING FROM OFF. Elizabeth!*

*The girls break apart*

ELIZABETH. Oh God's death!

CECILY. *(Grabbing the axe, dagger and spoon)* Go, go, I'll put them away. Go!

*ELIZABETH wipes her face.*

ELIZABETH. How do I look?

CECILY. Tired.

ELIZABETH. You are supposed to say, "Like a Queen." And then we're supposed to have another "symbolic moment."

CECILY. How many "symbolic moments" do you want to have, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH. *(Scoffing)* Very well then.

*ELIZABETH kisses her sister and exits.*

*CECILY returns their stash of stolen goods to the secret compartment. She hesitates on the dagger, staring at it a moment, before burying the thought along with the dagger below.*

*She exits the wardrobe.*