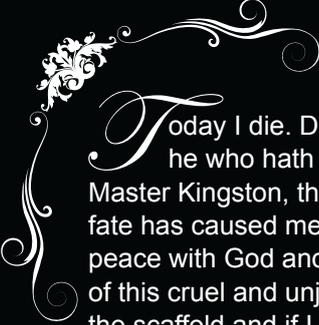


Prologue

The Tower of London

8.30am, May 19, 1536



Today I die. Do not grieve for me, for I no longer fear death; he who hath stalked me for so long now. It is not, as I said to Master Kingston, that I desire death, but the grim inevitability of my fate has caused me to become reconciled with it. I have made my peace with God and my spirit yearns to be free of this body and of this cruel and unjust world. Within the hour, I will gladly walk to the scaffold and if I am lucky, I will not feel the cold steel of the Sword of Calais cleave my head from this sinful body. Yet I have not sinned as they say I have – at least not in this lifetime. I have been convicted of treason, adultery and incest. This suits their purpose. Cromwell to save his own skin by annihilating not only me, but my brother, and those who lived and loved for the name and honour of Anne Boleyn; the King so that he may indulge his changing passions and take Mistress Seymour for his new wife. Yet to my God, I confess different sins.

In this lifetime I have been cruel and spiteful to the previous queen, Katherine, and the Lady Mary, the King's eldest daughter. In my wild and unbridled jealousy, I lashed out making their life a misery, encouraging Lady Shelton to degrade and humiliate Mary for her defiance of me and my marriage to Henry. I did not honour her high birth or her loyalty to her mother. How could I have blamed her, when I could no more dishonour my own mother if our situations had been reversed? They deserved my compassion and for this cruelty, I truly repent. Yet there is more than even they know.

As one of my ladies, pale from the stress of preparing her mistress to die, holds up a mirror for me to see my reflection, I adjust the necklace that was once a gift from the King; a cipher with my initial, 'A' set with diamonds that adorns my slender neck. I pause for a brief moment and catch my eye, and know that I carry a secret that no one in this world knows. This is indeed a strange story beyond all imagining. You see I no longer truly know who I am. Time, and my true identity, has become distorted. I have been caught up in living a dual reality that has spanned time and lifetimes. In the mirror, a convicted traitor, I see myself as Anne Boleyn, Queen of England. Yet in consciousness, I know that I have also been living another life, in another time. I do not know how this has been happening or why me. Is it possible that souls in their immortality can exist in multiple realities at once? I do know this though – I have been living a life 500 years in the future, and in that life I am just plain Anne.

Yet even this modern Anne has sinned wretchedly. I have watched both lives become inextricably entwined, each reality reflecting and shaping the other. I have tried, oh dear Lord, I have tried to stop it all, to change the outcome; but it has been a fruitless quarry, and I have witnessed both my lives hurtle headlong toward disaster. I have tasted the cup of poison that is fate and now I surrender to her will. Surely now with my death I will atone for my sins. God forgive me; Jesus Christ have mercy upon my soul.

Take me now; I am ready to be free.

A Novel of Anne Boleyn

Le Temps Viendra

