

THE REFLECTIONS OF MARY BOLEYN

ANNE BOLEYN'S CORONATION/WESTMINSTER HALL June 1st 1533

The silk of my crimson gown feels cool in my hands, as I arrange my kirtle about me. I sit up a little straighter, elongate my neck and make my face smile, as if I am genuinely happy.

My family has of recent been elevated to one of England's leading families. With them, I, Lady Mary Boleyn, will again stand close to the crown, although in a manner I never had anticipated, but I should look as if it delights me.

I glance over at my younger sister, who as of today is the Queen of England and much the cause of our rising grandeur. Queen Anne Boleyn of England, our little Anne, the bright, graceful one who always could draw attention to herself, as easily as honey can draw a swarm of bees, is now spoken of through continents.

She sits but a few feet from me, a Queen in Westminster Hall, poised under the Cloth of State at her banquet table on her coronation day. In her belly lies the King's hope for the realm, and at her feet are all the Lords of the land paying homage to her that people have come far and wide to see on this day.

On the day before this, she was presented to the King's subjects in a grand procession through the streets of London, where there was much revelry to honor her.

At Fenchurch, children greeted her with a grand display, dressed as English and French merchants. At Leadenhall, she delighted in a castle adorned with roses, seeing that the white falcon of her badge was crowned by an angel of the heavens.

She graciously received a purse of 1000 Marks in gold from the Recorder of London at Cheapside, and along Honey Lane she reveled in the Judgment of Paris, where Troy himself presented Anne with the golden apple meant for a goddess. There was much joy and feasting throughout the City of London, and ballads were sung from the rooftops in her honor. The town's people and nobles alike gathered closely as she spoke kindly to them and thanked them for all they had done for her, curious to see the woman for whom the King had given so much.

Now the dark eyes that captivated the King, are glowing. She looks ethereal in shimmering cloth of gold, and for someone who has spent days in processions and ceremony; she shows no sign of fatigue.

I know the King is watching her from afar. I know the look in his eyes when he beholds her. I know it because he looked at me like that, or almost like that, not so long ago. I was once his darling, but he didn't tear his Kingdom from the clenched fist of the Pope, or dispose of his royal born Queen, to conquer me.

What is different about her, why is his love for her so fierce that he would change the world for her, and yet so tender, that she can reduce him to tears if she even pretends to slight him?

I smile a little more, hiding my thoughts behind the folds of my face that are starting to ache as much as my heart.

Many wonder if my golden-haired son, Henry Carey, is the king's son, but those who value their lives will speak nothing of it. I will be forgotten as the Royal mistress, evident from the King's brotherly regard for me now. He looks upon my mother with more affection than he has for me. The passion we shared has vanished

from his memory, as if it never was at all, and I no longer recognize my lost lover's gaze.

My sister holds up her glass to me and to our mother, seated at my side. She winks, and I hear my mother sigh. It is the sigh of joy beyond reason, a joy that can make a heart hurt. The Dowager Duchess of Norfolk sits beside her, also in crimson, as we are all the Queens ladies, and she too smiles.

The Duchess carried my sister's train when she walked into the Abbey today, an honor that would have been bestowed upon my grandmother, Lady Elizabeth Tilney, the Countess of Surrey, had she lived. It would have given my mother great pride to have her with us to see our Anne seated in the Coronation chair, adorned in purple robes lined with ermine, as the Crown of St. St Edward was placed on her head. She bore the weight of it with the dignity of every King and Queen crowned in that seat for centuries before her. She is a marvel my sister, to whom none can be compared.

Much will be expected of me now. I will be in my sister's service, I will obey her in all things, and my livelihood will depend on her. My son has already become her ward with the death of my husband, and she has much influence over my daughter Catherine as well. I must forget the touch of her husband's hand, and the delight of basking in his attention as I watch his adoration for her.

I will be expected to marry well, and at her command, to someone who will strengthen her faction and stand against those who still support the previous Queen.

My thoughts escape to William Stafford, and my smile is no longer difficult to bear, for he soothes me. Nothing gives me more joy than the kindness in his eyes and the love he has for me. Although he is low born, and my sister would never approve, I want him to take me away from here, from her, from the King who no longer desires me, from the madness of court, and to the countryside where we are beyond reach, where we can live free.