So Sure of Myself in This Hour: The Women of the Tower of London

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Abstract

The Tower of London and its role as a prison have become the stuff of legend, particularly in regard to the women who were imprisoned there, such as Anne Boleyn and Elizabeth I, and who were forced to be strong in the face of an oppressive culture. Additionally, the Tower’s heyday as a prison coincided more or less with the Elizabethan and Jacobean golden ages of drama in England. By using drama to examine some of the women who found their lives entwined with the Tower, we are forced to ask why their lives landed this way in the first place, and what drove them to keep fighting until they either succeeded or were killed. Here, I use historical research and the medium of theatre to imagine the defining decisions of five of the Tower’s most intriguing women. I ask the audience to reexamine the way we view women, and what power we have, even when it seems that all is lost.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Tyler Smith, for his insight, open-mindedness, and encouragement through the course of this project. His guidance held me to a high standard of work and asked me to push through insecurities to create something I had never attempted before. I also want to thank Sarah Paradise, Melody Ekstrom, and Holly Ruth and John Gale for being an inexhaustible brainstorming contingent, for reading drafts, and for giving endless support.
Artist’s Statement

Application of knowledge and judgment: overall

I consider myself equal parts artist and scholar, and my goal is that Honors Thesis reflects that. For my Honors Thesis Creative Project, I chose to create a product that required me to synthesize my creative and academic energies. This could have been accomplished in many ways, as arguably every project I’ve taken on as an Acting Major has proven to require both creativity and scholarship; however, I also wanted this project to take me beyond my comfort zone, which is why I decided to write a play. Playwriting was something I had never before attempted.

In the play, I tell the stories of five women who were either imprisoned in or had their lives greatly influenced by events at the Tower of London. I use four distinct scenes, which are plays within themselves, and a framing device, which serves as a through-line. Each of the four scenes (there are five main characters, but share a scene) also gives a subtle nod to the theatrical conventions of the actual time period: the morality play, the use of verse and iambic pentameter, and a lighthearted sentimental drama/farce. The frame around the four scenes is unapologetically theatrical, and it draws attention to the fact that this has also been an exploration into the use of historical theatrical conventions.

Application of knowledge and judgment: the process

I decided to pursue this project in the spring of my junior year. After running the idea by several of my mentors, parents, and trusted peers, I began to develop a timeline. I planned to spend the rest of the semester doing preliminary research on the Tower of London, when I would compile a list of all the possibilities for subjects. I would continue this research into the summer, when I would have access to resources right in the UK and at the Tower itself. I
would also start narrowing down my list of subjects. By the end of the summer, I would start writing. I would continue writing into the fall and have my project mostly finished by the beginning of the spring 2014 semester. For the most part, I followed this timeline as planned; however, the actual writing of the play took longer than I expected, and I did not finish it until April of 2014.

When I started the research, in the spring of 2013, I began by looking at histories of the Tower of London, both online and in book form. I made a brainstorm list of all the women whom I found interesting. At this point, I didn’t know what overarching story I wanted to tell with the women, only that I wanted to explore their lives. During the spring semester and into the summer, I narrowed down that list. Over the summer, with a smaller list of women to consider, I started to go into more depth. I read everything from contemporary historical fiction to letters the women themselves had written.

I spent the summer in the UK, so when I had my list of women finalized, I took a trip to London to revisit the Tower. I had visited the Tower twice before, but this time I went with the purpose of feeling out the specific places each woman would have been. I was able to be in exact cell Anne Askew was kept in, and see the instruments of torture that might have been used on her. I went through the different exhibits and tried to imagine that lived in each of these time periods, and these weapons, coins, outfits, and furniture were the cutting edge of technology. Outside the Tower walls, cannons were being fired for the Queen’s official state birthday. They were close by and seemed to rattle the very air. I felt what it was like to be in the Tower when it was being used as a true defensive fortress. In this way, my trip to the Tower ended up serving as research from an acting perspective as well as from an academic perspective.
Over the summer and into the fall, I began writing. My goal for my initial drafts was simply to get the facts on paper, while staying within historical staging conventions. I felt that, by simply putting the words on the page, I could start really forming the stories I wanted to tell. I started by writing each individual scene. I let myself write without judgement of my work, and I didn’t try to make the pieces connect together. While enduring grueling layovers at the Manchester and Copenhagen airports, I started my first draft at framing the play.

When I first wrote each historical scene, I tried to follow historical staging conventions to an extreme. This proved immensely challenging, especially as I was trying to recreate not only one, but four to five separate styles of theatre. By the product you see here (I refrain from using the term “final”), there are only remnants of these original staging conventions left. I ended up using those original conventions to construct the plays and guide my writing, but ultimately, in order to clearly tell the stories I wanted to tell, I had to move more into twentieth/twenty-first century realism, with only touches of the original conventions remaining. I do want to one day explore creating another work that really does follow these conventions, but I realized that this was not the place. This was one of the hardest aspects to give up, though, because I so enjoyed the idea of recreating a historical dramatic practice.

Over the course of this process, I went through three different framing devices and countless total drafts. As I revised and rewrote and reviewed the individual scenes, I considered what message and story was emerging. I also realized that, in writing the early drafts, I got so caught up in the conventions and getting the history across that I had created characters without much of an arc. The characters and their stories had become dramatically uninteresting but the characters and their choices are the crux of this work. In order to return the characters to their rightful place, I had to relinquish my grasp on the historical conventions I loved so much. For
instance, the early drafts of the women from the medieval ages originally held to some form of
time, and they incorporated characters who were blatant allegories. As the work progressed, I
toned down the meter and the allegorical characters, and I eventually removed them almost
entirely.

Additionally, the frame used to tie all four scenes together changed. The original frame
was based off the literal circumstances I was in in when I drafted it: enduring a six-hour wait at
the Manchester airport. While this first frame was quirky, it didn’t do a lot to tell the stories of
the actual historical women. One of the biggest challenges was finding a vehicle to tie these
stories together that didn’t end up becoming too much of its own play. In the end, I decided to
play up the fact that there is an inherently theatrical element to each of the scenes, and to frame
the play I chose to use a small company of actors who play all the roles in each of the scenes.
They change sets and costumes on stage. Each scene includes a maid and her mistress, and the
same two actors play all the maids and all the mistresses. The other four actors fill in the other
roles. Before and after each scene, the actors directly address the audience.

Determining an ending was also a difficult process. I knew that I wanted to leave the
audience with the theme of making our own choices in whatever situation we find ourselves in,
and to have a respect for the women whose stories they had just witnessed. I didn’t want to hit
the audience over the head, though. I also wanted to point out the universality of the themes in
the play as well as the fact that there were lots of women during the time periods, and on to
today, who have faced similar issues. In the end, I decided to start telling the stories of all the
women who had ever been held prisoner in the Tower. These stories, told by all the actors in the
company, would overlap to the point of cacophony, ending with one actor giving a real-life,
thematically appropriate quote from an actual inmate.
How to approach the product

To say that this play was not written with a specific group of people in mind would be untrue, even though I hope that ultimately this play will be accessible to any audience. As the play is about women overcoming obstacles that are directly related to their gender, and as it was written by a young woman, the demographic that would relate most to this piece is other young women, probably within an age range from 16-30. Even so, I hope that anyone can still approach this play, regardless of theatrical background or historical novel. Making the work universally accessible has definitely been one of the challenges for me, as I know I have written a play that appeals to my own interests and tastes. I also know and enjoy the history so well now that I forget what details need to be included and which are superfluous. These stories would not have stuck out to me, though, if they were not universal, and ultimately the themes are more important than the details.

When reading or watching the play, it does help to be aware of its inherent theatricality.

It also helps to know that I do not consider this play a finished product by any means. True development of a play takes months or years of writing, and then it enters a period of subjecting the work to read-throughs, outside eyes, trial productions, etc. The play presented here is still technically a “first draft,” since it hasn’t been vetted publicly yet. In order for this play to be considered a more finalized draft, it will need to go through a cycle of public readings for varying audiences, feedback, and rewrites. This process can take years, in some cases. I don’t say these things to apologize or make excuses for my work, though, merely to point out that in its assessment it is should not be considered as ready to stage, but rather as ready to present in a public reading.
Personal meaning of the product for my educational experience

Perhaps the biggest challenge for me in writing this piece was discerning the difference between what I found interesting and what would resonate with a broader audience. Some of these eras, for instance, I have been reading about and studying since I was in elementary school, and, as I said earlier, with the added research I took on specifically for this project, I forget what is and isn’t common knowledge. I also had to figure out what would be universally interesting. While I personally find dry facts about dates, political appointments and battles, and interconnected relationships interesting, I have found, through feedback on this play, that other people seem more interested in personal relationships. I had to take notes such as these into account. This project has been an excellent exercise in creating art, because I believe that art, in order to actually be relevant and beneficial, has to find a way to resonate with more people that simply the people making the art.

Another challenge I faced was dealing with constraints and goals that were probably past my current ability as a dramatic writer, although those challenges have undoubtedly helped me grow. I wanted to tell five separate stories, and make each one well-rounded and complex, while adhering to theatrical constraints that inhibited how I could tell some of the stories. It isn’t easy to get a point across using only descriptions of mansion wagons, for instance! While I eventually opted to write each scene in more contemporary realism, approaching each one first through a particular historical lens made the realism rewrites much easier. For instance, I originally wrote the scenes set during the Tudor era in iambic pentameter. This gave me a much better appreciation for Shakespeare’s long, rambling speeches, because it is so difficult to write characters that have an arc and are complex this way. Certain key points wouldn’t fit within the
meter, so I had to take several lines rephrasing a statement until I could get the particular point to fit in. The alternative to this was to write a scene in which the characters had no complexities or depth at all. When I decided to write most of the scene in contemporary realistic prose, I was able to write more complex characters more concisely. I would compare this experience to running with weights.

Undertaking this project has given me a newfound respect for dramatic writers, and I now understand why playwrights often work on a piece for two or three years. At one point, I had planned to put on a staged reading of this piece. The mere writing itself ended up being such a challenge, that I decided it would simply be enough to present my advisor with a finished play! Had the reading gone through, though, I realized that I would have to face newly discovered insecurities about having my words read to other people by other people. I don’t usually face the fears other people have about performing or presenting in front of others, of meeting new people, or being a little different. These feelings, then, were new and even scarier for me.

From the moment I chose to be a fine arts major, I have been fighting a battle of reconciliation between the part of me that is an academic and the part that is an artist. Of course, there’s absolutely no reason why the worlds of academia and art cannot mesh, but, for some reason, it took me a little longer to learn this. This project is the culmination of my undergraduate experience because I have finally proven to myself that I will never have to abandon one for the other. In fact, I should never abandon either academics or art, because they are both who I am, and have been who I am for my entire life. I hope that this Honors Thesis is only the first of a life full of projects that incorporate both scholarship and artistry. My goal for these future projects is to get rid of the mindset of “merging” two worlds entirely, and to truly learn that one is impossible without the other.

Anne Askew kept a written record of her experience in the Tower, which was published by John Bale not long after her death. Although it is possible that Bale altered some of the text, it is still as close as a primary source to what actually happened to Anne as we may have.


Since I wanted to at least give a nod to the different theatrical conventions of each woman's time, this book, known as the "bible" of theatre history, helped me get a better understanding, especially of some of the more obscure theatrical eras.
This book provided historical essays about three of the women featured in Philippa Gregory’s novels about the Wars of the Roses. They provided succinct biographical information about Elizabeth Woodville, Anne Neville, and Jacquetta Rivers. They were useful in fact checking against the historical novels I read, and they also provided a clear timeline as to how things happened, targeted toward the events about which I was specifically writing.

This novel, by Philippa Gregory, told the story of Anne Neville, Richard III's Queen Consort. It gave another angle into the dynamic of Elizabeth Woodville’s family and rise to power. It helped me get a feel for handling history artistically.

This historical novel, by Philippa Gregory, told the story of the life of Margaret Beaufort, up until Henry Tudor's success at the Battle of Bosworth. It gave a different angle into the story of the Princes in the Tower, and helped me get a feel for handling history artistically.
This historical novel about Elizabeth Woodville helped me get a feel for managing history artistically while also provided essential detail about the Princes in the Tower. Although it is historical fiction, Gregory makes sure that all the facts that are accessible on record are implemented, and the only fiction happens where there is no documentation, such as characters' motives.


This history of the Badlesmere family lands provided some of the hard-to-find information concerning Lady Margaret DeClare, Baroness Badlesmere, and her events leading to her imprisonment. It also detailed the information I used to follow up her story, as it continued with the family history through the 18th century.


This is the official website of the Tower of London. It served as an excellent starting point for research, and provided links to further resources. I used the maps, site descriptions, and
historical information, and I consider it the authority on all things Tower of London. Also, it has a really cool Beat the Gaoler game (which I have proudly mastered).


This book calls itself "A treasury of true stories about the extraordinary people...who made Britain great." As a general resource, it provided good contextual information. The chapter on Lady Jane Grey in particular gave a concise history of the events of her brief rise and fall to and from power.


This historical novel also served as a biography of Anne Askew. The parts of the book that were actually factual helped clue me in to the possibility that her servant helped distribute Anne's writings about her experiences. It also gave me insight as to handle history artistically.


This publication, an official publication of the Tower of London and the Historic Royal Palaces, offered a concise glimpse into life as a prisoner and who the most notorious
prisoners were. It located where specific prisoners were held as well. It featured information about the Countess of Nithsdale, Lady Jane Grey, Anne Askew, and the Princes in the Tower.


This fabulous source provided lots of the inspiration for the text around the Nithsdale escape. I tried to incorporate Lady Nithsdale's own words when possible, and to use her lively style and humorous tone when creating original dialogue for the characters.


This article was an argument against transubstantiation. I used it as a beginning place for developing the exchange between Jane Grey and John Feckenham.

*The Real White Queen and Her Rivals*. Perf. Dr. Philippa Gregory. BBC Two, 2013.

This documentary, released to supplement the TV movie *THE WHITE QUEEN*, featured author and historian Philippa Gregory. She discussed her research and rationale for making certain artistic choices in her novel of the same name.
This website provided the final quote of the piece, which was supposedly stated by Elizabeth I. I felt that this statement was the perfect cap to my piece.

This short film, presented by the authors of Shakespeare's Words, a book I highly regard, discusses how English was actually pronounced in Shakespeare's day. I used it as a reference when choosing dialects for the different characters.

The Tyndale Bible is credited as being the first English Bible to translate the scriptures directly from the Latin and Greek. It was likely that this would have been the translation that Anne Askew and Lady Jane Grey would have learned (if Jane Grey was reading a translation other than Latin). When I wanted to include Biblical translations in the scenes about Anne and Jane, I used the wording from this translation.

This book featured a brief excerpt about the exchange between Queen Isabella and Lady Badlesmere at Leeds Castle. Information about Lady Badlesmere was hard to find, so the few brief lines in this book did a lot to establish the women's personalities and their dynamic.


This historical novel detailed the life of Lady Jane Grey. It helped me get a feel for handling history artistically, as well as providing certain details about Lady Jane's life. Weir is a historian as well as an author.


This book provided a wonderful comprehensive history of the Tower. It served as excellent preliminary material in determining which prisoners I wanted to focus on, and in determining the different historical contexts surrounding events at the Tower.

A brief biography about Winifred, Countess of Nithsdale, and the event of her husband's escape from the Tower. This provided a concise overview of the Countess' history and the political events surrounding her husband's escape.
So Sure of Myself in This Hour

Lights up. Five actors, three women and two men, all in white undergarments, except for one woman. This is the Maid, and she will play all of the major Maids in each scene. There is another woman, who wears a gold comb (or something similar—indicative of affluence) in her hair. We will call her the Lady, and she will play four of the five women of nobility. The other three actors, the Woman, Man 1, and Man 2, will play any other characters. If any cleaning up has to be done in changing the scenes, it should probably be done by the Men. The men should be the least active member of the cast. He should also be beautiful. Possibly this venue is in the round. This would make it more theatrical, and it needs to be theatrical to work.

The Woman quickly slips on a maid’s garment, circa 1300s. She begins to help the Lady into the costume of Margaret De Clare.

The Maid steps forward.
We hear someone fuming in the background.

The Maid (As Destiny, she speaks with almost Received Pronunciation (RP), a sign that she is ahead of her time. The other maid in the scene, Prudence, will speak with south-England dialect. Margaret will speak in Original Pronunciation (OP), flavored by Irish.)

Leeds Castle, Kent, England, 1321. Edward II is King, and – temperamental, fiery, selfish, nasty, backbiting Isabella is Queen.
That person you hear muttering in the next room is the woman I’ve just been hired to serve, Margaret De Clare, Baroness Badlesmere. Margaret, they say, is as feisty as they get. I think I’ll like her. In all honesty, though, she needs a little guidance.
Her husband is steward of the King’s household, but he has become disenchanted with the King. He is away, meeting with the disgruntled, loudmouthed, imprudent Contrariants, planning a
revolt. It is not going to do well. I can tell. BUT, as I’m a mere maid, I must keep my mouth shut.
I was warned against accepting this position, you know. Margaret is very—well, you’ll see what Margaret is like. It doesn’t help that her pimple-faced husband is an ass. (She smiles.)

*Lights up on the Lady and the Woman as Margaret and Prudence. The Maid, now Destiny, “listens” on the other side of the door. When the time is right, she makes her entrance.*

*(Transition into scene)*

**Margaret DeClare, Baroness Badlesmere**

*(She slams her fist down on a table. Or kicks something.)*


**Prudence**

Patience, my lady, please.

**Margaret**

Prudence, silence! I cannot stand him! How can I stand to be so ill-used?!

**Prudence**

My lady, he is your *husband*—

**Margaret**

What *right* does that give him to treat me so—

**Prudence**

My lady!

**Margaret**

The vulgar, hateful, belittling—I only stay with him because he is the father of my children.
Prudence

Margaret!

(The use of her Christian name startles Margaret)

Margaret (cold as ice)

I beg your pardon?

Prudence (realizing she has overstepped her bounds)

No, I beg your pardon, my Lady. I don’t even know what my Lord Badlesmere has done to irk you so.

Margaret

(in a mocking tone) “Now, don’t let anyone in o the castle, my good little wife! We don’t want any strangers creeping in among all of our lovely things and our lovely children, now, do we? We never know who might be trying to hurt us, and you sweet little women only have fluff and sugar in your brains, so best you stay on the safe side, and let no one in!”

Idiot.

As if I don’t have the judgment on who is or is not dangerous to my family.

As if Bartholomew doesn’t consult me on a regular basis about household affairs. About political affairs. I was starting to think we were becoming partners.

Prudence

Then why did he suddenly demean you?

Margaret

To make a show, of course. In front of the tenants and servants. Since I am apparently so damn belligerent that he has to treat me like a child in hopes of proving that he’s “tamed me!”

I HATE him! (kicks something)
Prudence

Well, I highly doubt anyone will try to gain entrance. He’s only gone a week, and we’re far out away from any towns that surely no one will be soliciting us.

Margaret

I swear it, though, the first person who asks for entrance will get it.

If only to show my husband that I can handle making judgment calls.

Prudence

Be careful, though, my Lady.

Margaret (turning on her)

Careful?!?! Who are you to tell me how to behave, servant? Maid? Who are you to know how to advise the smartest Baroness in all of England?

Prudence (saving her job)

I beg your pardon, Lady Margaret.

(Suddenly, Destiny dashes in)

Destiny

Lady Margaret! Lady Margaret! A visitor at the door! A traveler.

Margaret

Ha! See, Prudence? Here’s my chance.

(she is all warmth and kindess)

Let the poor traveler in, my all means! Did you catch his name?

Destiny

... um, her. name, My Lady.
It is the Queen. Isabella.

*(the smile drains from Margaret's face)*

Margaret

What?

Destiny

Queen Isabella. She returns to London from a pilgrimage, and seeks lodging for the night.

What shall I say to her?

*(a beat. Margaret is frozen.)*

Prudence

Lord Badlesmere instructed to let no one in.

...(Margaret does not respond)

However, I'm not so certain that ultimatum applies to the Queen...

Margaret

The Queen... the Queen cannot come in.

She will have spies. They must suspect my husband of treason. She will have spies. She will want to see where our treasure stores are...

Prudence

Will there not be repercussions, though, if you lock her out?

Margaret

Oh, yes. Oh, yes, there will be. Imprisonment, certainly. Death, even, who knows... *(Margaret slips off into a reverie.)*

Destiny
What is the matter, my Lady?

Prudence

I think it might be best to let the Queen in. Your husband will surely understand. Besides, you’ll be showing him that you can use your own judgment...?

(a beat. Suddenly, Margaret roars out of her reverie)

Margaret

I HATE THE QUEEN.

Prudence

Oh...

Margaret

And the Queen hates me!

She is the most hateful, deceitful, vile creature that has ever walked this earth, and in no way will she be allowed into this castle.

Prudence

My Lady, what has she done...?

Margaret

Why, just last season in court she completely, utterly, ignored me! I had put in a request for a position for my cousin, and she utterly ignored my petition!

Prudence

Possibly she simply had no sway with the King—

Margaret

And she put her word in for SOMEONE ELSE!!!!!! Someone completely inept!
Ohhhhhhh, and you should have seen the smug, satisfied sneer she had when she saw me next. She is a calculating, callous, cow, and I hate her!

Destiny

So, what shall I say to her?

Margaret

Say that “I would not let anyone in without the approval of my husband.” of course.

Destiny

What? You’ll use that?

Margaret

Why is that a problem?

Destiny

But you just ranted about how much you hate him!

Margaret

You heard that?

Destiny

You were rather loud...

Margaret

But you are right. I can’t, I can’t give him the knowledge that I blindly obeyed him. If I turn away the Queen, even if I’m punished, Bartholomew will be so pleased that he has tamed me to be so obedient to him that I will follow his orders at no matter what cost. The ingrate.

Prudence

So you will let her in?
I do think that’s most wise.

Besides, there are whispers that she herself is planning her husband’s murder, so surely she wouldn’t be spying on you for treason.

Margaret

Oh, you don’t know her. She would do anything to take another woman down.

I can’t let her in. I know she’s only doing this to make me subservient to her. Or to spy, especially if they suspect my husband as being part of the Contrariants. (Destiny makes a face at the audience.)

(Rhetorically, although the maids will take it otherwise:) What do I do?

Destiny

...Are you actually requesting our advice?

(Margaret does not answer. Again, she is caught in a reverie. It’s almost as if she’s a little bit manic/depressive. After a beat:)

Prudence

You ought to let her in. That is definitely the wisest choice. Surely your husband will understand, not that you care. And, you can still show him your good judgment by hiding the stores of treasure and any treasonous evidence.

Margaret

I suppose I could, but—

Destiny

But that’s not what you want to do, is it? What you want to do is show the Queen that she is not always the one with the power.

Margaret

Even if it’s only in one instance, yes. How, how did you know?
Destiny

I’m really good with people.

Margaret

Come to think on it, I don’t know your face…?

Destiny

Destiny, my Lady. Newly hired.

Margaret

Ah.

Destiny

My Lady, if I might be so bold, I might propose a different way of viewing the situation.

Prudence

You step out of your place.

Margaret

Hush, Prudence.

What is it, then, Destiny?

Destiny

Well, what if you consider the larger implications of whatever you do?

What if you think about the future? Hundreds of years from now?

Margaret

What difference will this choice make hundreds of years from now?

Destiny
How will you be thought of in history?

Margaret

History will not know of me. I am a woman, and I am not a Queen, criminal, or a martyr, and I don’t plan on being any of those. I will not go down in history.

Destiny

Well, then, what about how your daughters will think of you? While you’re still in living memory?

Margaret

My daughters?

Prudence

They ought to see their mother as a practical woman, who either obeyed her husband or at least obeyed the crown. That is what is right.

Margaret

Silence, Prudence.

I remember watching my mother. She was silent, and often chided my sister and me for speaking out of place. It was important to her that she do her duty, which she believed was to support her husband, give birth to obedient children, and be beautiful. And I couldn’t stand her. I couldn’t stand how she let my stepfather treat her. I couldn’t stand the way she let my brothers treat me.

I remember one night, much like this, when my stepfather—my own father had died when I was a baby—came in from his own travels. This was during the civil wars in Ireland. My father had been gone away, and his old ally, Brian Ruad, had come by to ask for lodging. He was a dear friend of the family. There were messages of some bandits in the area, and mother felt better having Brian in the manor with us. But when my stepfather came home, and saw Brian there, he threw into such a rage. He and Brian had just had a falling out—he later had Brian hanged for treason—but my mother didn’t know that! What I remember—I was only about nine—was how
he beat my mother. He kicked her and hit her and called her words I cannot repeat. And she
didn’t let out a sound. She never even mentioned it. I asked her why she didn’t ever approach my
stepfather and explain things, but she simply said it wasn’t her place. She said she simply needed
to spend more time in prayer, in perfecting her looks, in perfecting the smiles she would continue
to shine on her husband.

I wish my mother hadn’t been such a model of female perfection. I wish that, sometimes, she had
gotten a little messy.

Bartholomew is not as horrible as my stepfather was, which means that I can be strong with less
consequence. So strong I must be.

I do not like the Queen. I think the Queen is a cruel, heartless woman, and I deserve revenge for
her slight to me and to my family.

Destiny, tell her Majesty that she must seek some other lodging, (thinks for a second.
Mockingly.) for I would not admit anyone within the castle without an order from my Lord.

Prudence

So you are going to use your obedience to your husband?

Margaret

Hardly.

Destiny, after you speak with the Queen, tell my guards to send a volley of arrows after her, just
for good measure.

You know I will be imprisoned for this. If I am, Destiny, you’re coming with me.

Destiny

As you wish, my Lady.

(she exits)
As the scene comes to a close, The Woman begins to change into her neutrals again. Man 1 begins to don an outfit of a manservant. The Maid goes to help the Lady out of her current costume. As she works, she speaks.

The Maid

Next thing we knew, the King and Queen were laying siege to the castle, Lady Margaret was arrested and imprisoned in the Tower for a year. Sure enough, I had to go with her. Oooh, what an adventure, I thought. (She gives us a look.)

Her husband surprisingly stood by her, saying that he had indeed given her orders not to let anyone in. Finally, his wife had obeyed him. When Margaret heard him bragging about his “success” to his men, she almost had a fit. Yet she never approached him about it. At first, I thought she was doing exactly what she had despised about her own mother, but it seemed that she had had a moment of clairvoyance: The idiot joined a rebellion in 1322, which failed, and poor Bartholomew was hanged, drawn, and quartered. Honestly, he deserved it. He was not a particularly useful member of humanity. But really.

Simple-minded Prudence was right: Queen Isabella did participate in a plot to murder the King. But that’s another story.

Little did she know it, but Margaret had made her way into the chronicles of history. She soon became the talk of London. Rather than being gossiped about as a belligerent, angry woman, she became an example of womanly strength, especially when Isabella split away from the King. Every time I saw her daughters again, they had developed minds more and more of their own. When she was finally allowed to retire to a convent, I pretended cajoled one of the guards into pretending we were engaged and stayed behind.

The Maid and the Woman switch places now. The Woman helps the Lady into the costume of Elizabeth Woodville. The Maid continues speaking.

The Maid

London, 1483.
Oh, my heart is splitting in two! I must face a mother who has lost her children. I lost my own baby, Grace, when she was three, and the last thing I want to do is face another grieving mother. But I must.

At the gates of the Tower of London stands Elizabeth Woodville, the widow of Edward IV. My fellow workers never liked her—they were jealous of her beauty and her rise to power, and claimed she was a schemer who used witchcraft to ensare the king and that she used her children as pawns. She was a schemer, but she was scheming to secure the best for her family; she was scheming in order to navigate this hard, cruel world!

Elizabeth’s son, young Edward, should have been King, you see. But after her husband died, her two young sons were taken by their uncle Richard—or King Richard, I suppose I must call the man—under the claim of safety—away from their mother into the Tower. Elizabeth allied herself with the Duke of Buckingham and the Lady Margaret Beaufort, whose son, Henry Tudor, also has a claim to the throne. She should never have trusted those two. They staged a siege upon the Tower a week ago, but it failed. I was caretaker to the young princes, but when the siege happened, they were snatched away from me, and in spite of my pleading and trying and sneaking, I have found no sign of them.

I think Buckingham and Beaufort had their own causes to push. You would think schemers would recognize other schemers! But perhaps Elizabeth was blinded by a mother’s hope. And now here comes the poor woman! She has been stripped of her title and her lands, and now two of her children! She sneaks in by night. It’s going to be a rough job, but it must be me who confronts her. No one else pities her here. No one else understands the lady, really.

Transition into scene. Man 1 plays the first servant. As in the previous scene, the Maid waits until it is time, and then she goes to meet Elizabeth.

(Elizabeth Woodville speaks in OP, hardcore. The Male servant speaks in whatever the cockney version of that is. Hope will also speak in OP, but more on Elizabeth’s level.)

Elizabeth Woodville

(She is speaking to a servant. Elizabeth holds herself regally, gracefully, and with control, but
there is desperation behind her words and actions."

Elizabeth

Really. It is not as if I can change what has happened now. I simply wish to see the room. The spot.

Male Servant

I cannot let you in, Dame Elizabeth—

Elizabeth—

"Your Majesty." I am both Queen Dowager and Queen Mother, no matter what Richard decreed.

Servant.

--

I cannot let you in while the King is away.

Elizabeth

Why not?

It has been two months since I have seen my boys. We will be with the angels when I see them again, all I ask is that I can see the room where they were kept.

I want to know that they were well-treated.

(Another servant, Hope, arrives.)

Hope

I can attest, madam, that they were treated only as the sons of a king should be treated. (To the other servant:) Let me attend to Dame Eliz—Her Majesty, the Queen Dowager. (Elizabeth reacts, almost imperceptibly, but positively, to this title.)

Servant
But you know the orders—

Hope

Orders never apply to grieving mothers. Really, now. (Servant nods assent. Hope grabs the servant’s arm.) Speak of this to no one. (Male servant departs. To Elizabeth:) You know you cannot enter here. It is dangerous. Your enemies will think that you are trying to find evidence against them.

You are a famous schemer.

Elizabeth

I know. I have played this game long enough that I know exactly what my enemies will think. I just, just want to see where they were. Of course I want to tear whoever killed my my sons limb from limb, but there is nothing that can be done now. I know that well enough. I entreat you, let me in.

Hope

Your Majesty—

Elizabeth

I can come back in a disguise, and no one will know.

Hope

Yours is the most famous face in the kingdom, your Majesty. You will be recognized even in a disguise. Believe me when I say that your boys were treated very well.

Elizabeth

Did you even see Edward, while he was here? And his brother Richard. I don’t know that I can trust you. Perhaps you were the one who ended their lives and sent them—hid them away for no one to find.
Hope

Ha! Hardly. If anything, I was the one who kept them alive. I tended to the boys. “Nanny Hopey, they called me.” That is how I know that they were treated infinitely well. (Pointedly) I also know that the poor things were all too used to being hidden away from the world.

You would have thought they had never seen the sun, the way they liked to scamper in the courtyard.

Elizabeth

I did not try to keep my children away from society. It was the ever-restless gentry who forced me to hide my family away in the Abbey time and time again, who snatched my children’s childhood from them.

Look, if I had more power, you would be paying dearly for speaking so boldly to a Queen. But you know as well as I that I have no power. I have nothing to lose.

Hope

Exactly. Then how do I know that you aren’t trying to find one last piece of evidence to indict someone?

Elizabeth

Because I need closure.

(A tactic shift.)

You knew my boys. You knew how wonderful they were, so you must grant me entrance.

(Another tactic shift.)

At least tell me what happened! No one claims anything, no one fully denies anything. No one will tell me anything. But my sons are missing, and I am heartbroken.

Hope
During the rebellion, the boys were taken into inner rooms. I gave them both one last hug, and that was the last I saw of them. Truly, I do not know what happened.

Elizabeth

Did you try to find out?

Hope

Of course I did! The next day, I did! But the guards to those inner chambers kept saying that no one should enter for the princes’ safety. They would not let me pass, in spite of all my efforts. And I get my way here in the Tower. I knew something must be up. So I sent a messenger to you.

Elizabeth

It was you who told me? I thought surely the message must have been from Lady Margaret Stanley.

Hope

(flatly)

It wasn’t.

(A beat.)

Elizabeth

Thank you.

Hope

Ha! You’re welcome.

I knew you would want to know.

Elizabeth
You are sympathetic to my plight; why will you not—

Hope

Even though I made sure the boys were treated infinitely well by everyone, I still heard and saw other things. I don’t know everything (sadly), but I know that you have bitter enemies who are watching you closely, and they will try to find any reason to hurt you and yours. I know you have other children to keep safe still. I know you have promised your daughter Elizabeth to Margaret Beaufort’s son, Henry Tudor, should his bid for the throne prove successful. You don’t want anyone to think you suspect Margaret or Henry.

Elizabeth

What do you mean? Why would I suspect my allies of anything? They have only tried to help me. It was they who staged the assault on the Tower to save my sons—unless did not Richard order my sons’ murder? Was it someone else?

Was it Margaret Beaufort?

Was the rescue attempt—the siege on the Tower she and the Duke of Buckingham staged—a guise?

Hope

I know nothing for certain, nor will I claim to know anything. But I wonder, Elizabeth, I wonder if your allies are as true as you think.

Elizabeth

My boys are gone. In order to survive, I will have to make sacrifices and forge alliances with people I hate, perhaps even with the people who killed my (she chooses the word) children. In spite of the stories they tell about me, very rarely have I been allowed to do anything for my own heart. So I ask this one thing. You must let me in.

Hope
Well then, for your daughter’s sake! and for the hope of your future line, it is not wise.

Elizabeth

Why are you so insistent?

Hope

We may be of different rank, but you and I are both women who have so far survived in this hard, harsh world. I have grown up working in this castle. My mother and her mother before her served here. We know the ins and the outs. We are the confidants of prisoners and gaolers alike. The very walls speak to us, it seems.

This is a dark time, Queen Elizabeth, but I believe that you have the strength to carry on. I wish I could let you in to see where your boys—or boy—last lay, but there are spies who would use it against you, who would fabricate tales of you trying to infiltrate the Tower and have you imprisoned or killed. You already have much against you. I promise you, that, until they were taken away from me, I treated your children as I would have treated my own.

Elizabeth

I will come again, and I will try again. I have persevered this long in this tumultuous life, and I will continue to do so. I will not stop. I will find what clout I might still have here. I will have you dismissed.

Hope

No, you won’t. I have heard the news: you are leaving London and going in to house arrest.

Elizabeth

It is not house arrest—

Hope

You are to be guarded at watched at all times, and you are not allowed to leave the grounds without express permission from the king.
(Elizabeth is silent.) When do you leave?

Elizabeth

You will grant a desperate woman her final wish.

Hope

You will be seen. Your sincere love will be misconstrued. I will not let you in.

Elizabeth

(Barely a whisper)

Tomorrow morning.

Hope

For your daughters, Your Majesty. Think of your girls.

Elizabeth

(She takes a minute to bring herself to say it:)

Please.

Hope

Elizabeth, I know that you are hurting, but I know that things will be better for you soon. I cannot grant you entrance today, or tomorrow, or ever, while your enemies still live. I will pray in the Tower every day for you and for the souls of your boys.

(Elizabeth starts to plead again.)

If you ever want young Elizabeth to have a chance at being Queen, you will do this.

(A beat. Elizabeth nods.)

Elizabeth

Henry Tudor will be successful. He will be the next King of England. You speak to the point: I
must not tarnish Elizabeth’s chance at marrying him. Even if, as you seem to imply, his mother was the one who… who...

For my girls’ sake. For young Elizabeth’s.

Tell me your name.

Hope

Hope, Your Majesty. Simply Hope.

(A noise from within. Hope looks behind her.)

Oh dear. You’ve been spotted. You must leave.

(The noise gets louder.)

Go, now!

(Elizabeth steals away.)

As the scene comes to a close, the Maid dresses Woman 1 into the outfit of Anne Askew. Man 1 changes into the outfit of an Tudor-era gentleman. Man 2 into the outfit of an Abbot. Woman 2 helps the Lady out of her current costume.

As the Maid changes the Lady’s clothes, she speaks.

The Maid

Poor, poor Elizabeth. She was never to return here, although she would see the walls again. When Henry Tudor defeated Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth Field, he took Elizabeth’s eldest daughter as his Queen, and, as Henry VII, began the reign of the powerful Tudor dynasty. Elizabeth was treated as a Queen Dowager, but she and Margaret Beaufort, the new Queen Mother, never seemed to get along after the tragic events of the Princes in the Tower. Not wanting to draw attention from her daughter, the new Queen, or, perhaps, in order to evade the suspicion of Margaret Beaufort, Elizabeth quietly lived out the last years of her life in an abbey, never choosing to return to London, or to the Tower.
In 1674, two small skeletons were found under a staircase in the White Tower. Although they were not the first children’s skeletons to be found in the Tower, nor the last, many considered these the remains of the two lost princes. Other men of learning surmise that perhaps one or even both of the princes escaped. We may never know. I certainly don’t know, and it breaks my heart.

*The Maid goes to help redress the Lady as Lady Jane Grey.*

*(The Maid’s dialect now becomes a mix of OP and RP, since Faith is more entrenched in her time. Hosanna will speak with a Lincolnshire dialect. Anne speaks with a more subtle Lincolnshire dialect, and Lady Jane Grey will also speak in OP and RP, but bordering on the RP side.)*

**The Maid**

London, 1554.

**The Woman**

London, 1546.

**The Maid**

I don’t know how to handle this. I am only just sixteen! And my best friend, my childhood playmate and now my mistress, Lady Jane Grey, is imprisoned in the Tower of London! And I, of course, am locked away as well, for I must attend to her! My poor, innocent friend is absolutely devoted to the Protestant cause. She has remained as steadfast and devout and pious and serious as ever, in spite of a forced marriage and forced situation. She is *such* an example to me, and I strive to be like her!

**The Woman**

My dear mistress and friend, 26-year-old Anne Askew, daughter of the landed gentry, is imprisoned in the Tower on charges of heresy. Anne is a devout Protestant, and together we have slaved to open schools in London to teach the poor to read. She’s even taught *me* to read! But King Henry VIII’s scheming Catholic bishops do not approve of her using English translations of
the Bible to spread the word to the people. And King Henry cannot make up his mind about religion. Now, my Anne is caught up in the struggle between the traditionalists and the reformers!

The Maid
If only the rift could have been solved ten years ago, when we were still little girls! But this awful, bloody battle between the Catholic and Protestant forces that devoured poor Anne Askew has not abated.

Honestly, the politics of it are so dense that sometimes even I can barely follow.

I was in attendance when, on his deathbed, young King Edward VI, son of Henry VIII, named his cousin Jane as heir to the throne, instead of his own Catholic sister, Mary. It was not easy for Jane to take on the crown, but she took on her duties with all the seriousness she has put into her studies. After only nine days, though, Mary returned, overthrowing the court and imprisoning Jane. Queen Mary has been inclined to forgive Lady Jane and her husband, and Jane—and I—can only wait with hope.

It is all I can do to remain calm for Jane.

Transition into the scene. During the scene, the Maid is both Hosanna and Faith. She will go back and forth. If it gets to be overwhelming for either her or the audience, that's totally fine; in fact, that's idea.

A scream.

Lights up, in a spot, on Anne Askew. She is tied to the Rack, in the torture chambers of the Tower. Two men are with her, pulling on the rack.

Rich
Do you refuse to give us any news?
Pull tighter still. We’ll surely break her yet.

*The rack is pulled tighter.*

*Anne screams again.*

**Anne**

No! I’ll tell you nothing; but I pray

With ardent fervour for you souls—

*The rack is pulled again. Anne screams.*

**Wriothesly**

Will you tell us now? Will you give us names?

We know there are Protestants in hiding

Among the king’s own courtiers; who are they?

Surely, Anne, you know of whom we speak?

Surely you know that we suspect certain traitors?

**Anne**

No!

**Rich**

Tighter.

*The rack is pulled again.*

**Anne**
You may break my body, but never my soul!

Lights down on Anne. Lights up on Jane.

We are in Jane’s apartments at the Tower. Jane has her Bible open, but it staring vacantly out, as if she is imagining the scene we have just witnessed. There is a knock at the door. It snaps Jane out of her reverie. Faith gets up to answer it. A moment, and then Faith returns.

Jane
What news, Faith?

Faith
My lady, Jane, most awful news. Sir John Brydges, Lieutenant of the Tower, came to give us word. Just as Queen Mary had nearly decided to set you free, there was another uprising. The rebels used your name, my lady, saying it was to put you back on the throne. The Protestant cause, they claim... I know you did not want this; I know you don’t care about the crown, but still, it seems they cannot learn.

Jane
Who led it, Faith?

Faith
Sir Thomas Wyatt, my Lady.

Jane
Only he?

(Silence.)

Only he, Faith?
Faith, speak to me.

Faith

My lady, it will hurt to say—

Jane

It was also my father, wasn’t it?

Faith’s silence is her answer.

Jane

Oh, Faith, you know as well as I that my parents only love me for the power they think they might gain through me. But the Queen has been made aware that I had no desire for the throne! Surely she knows that I had nothing to do with this latest uprising. Does her opinion of me change?

Faith is silent.

Jane

What is is, Faith? What else does Sir John say?

Faith

That even now Queen Mary’s councilors press her to—to execute you and your husband.

My lady, prepare yourself; Sir John quoted their words as being that you “be burned alive on Tower Hill or beheaded as the Queen pleases.”

Jane takes a moment.
Jane

Oh.

Poor Queen Mary. Councilors pulling her every which direction. *(A quick prayer:)* Heavenly Father, be with Mary, even if she is a Catholic.

Faith

Jane, did you hear nothing of what I just said? Your execution has just been ordered! And yet you pray for the Queen?

Jane

There is nothing else for me to do! I must try to forgive.

*(A knock at the door.)*

Faith

I’ll be right back.

*(She exits.)*

Jane

Oh, what have I done to deserve this? Why have I been used, so? Dear Father in Heaven, I have never done anything of my own accord but what I felt was good and pure. Any actions that I have done that were sinful were forced upon me against my will. I have been a victim of my parents’ plotting! Please, please deliver me. Or give me the grace to accept my victimhood in peace…

*(Faith returns, with John Feckenham, an abbot.)*

Faith

Lady, John Feckenham, Abbot of Westminster, chaplain and confessor to the Queen.
Jane

Good morning, Father.

Feckenham

Lady Jane.

Jane

Good sir, if the Queen has sent you to give me last rites, please know that I will not take them. You can do nothing to convert me.

Feckenham

Sweet child, I beg you hear me out a moment.

Jane

Yes, of course. I’m sorry. I don’t mean to be rude, I just…

Feckenham

You are a victim, dear girl. Both Her Majesty the Queen and I know this.

Jane

You do? Then why am I to be—to be—

Feckenham

So long as you can be seen as the figurehead of the heretical Protestant cause, you are dangerous. Your name and your claim to the throne will be used to muster rebels for months, maybe years.

Jane

But I haven’t claimed the throne!

Feckenham

You already have. They are already calling you “The Nine Days’ Queen.”
Jane

But I never asked for that! I never wanted it! Please, surely the Queen knows that. Can’t I just go retire somewhere in the country, away from all this?

Feckenham

That idea has been proposed. But so long as you are even alive, you are a danger. It will not save you.

Jane

… I see. Then why are you here?

Feckenham

Because I offer you a chance to save yourself.

Jane

But you just said—

Feckenham

The only thing that will persuade your people to stop using you as a figurehead, and the only thing you can do to persuade the Queen, and more importantly, her advisors, that you in earnest do not seek the throne, is—

Jane

To convert.

Feckenham

You are quick, my Lady.

Jane

I should have guessed.
Feckenham

So I am here to discuss with you—

Jane

(Sharp) I don’t want “to discuss.” (A beat.) I do beg your pardon, good Father. But you have to know it will do no good.

Feckenham

So you choose to be a victim?

Jane

That’s not what I mean—

Feckenham

I give you a very special power, my Lady. I give you the chance to have a say in your fate. Something you’ve never been able to do until now.

Hear me out.

Jane

...Alright.

Feckenham

I do wonder how one so young can be so certain of her opinions.

Jane

I wonder how one so learned can be certain of his.

Feckenham

(A moment.)

I see you hold your beliefs with much conviction. You ask me why I, having been so long a
student of the Lord, can accept everything that comes from Rome without question. I tell you that it is because I have had many years to question fully my beliefs, and I have come to know that they are true.

I hope to offer you the chance to do the same.

If you will but accept Her Majesty’s offer and recant your faith, then your life will be spared, and you will have many more years to learn and to question and to fully develop your beliefs.

Feckenham

I have an idea. Since you seem to enjoy good theological discussion, would you like to enter into a debate with some learned masters of religion? I will try to make it a fair opportunity for you to express your beliefs as well as to hear the Catholic side. I might note that you have been inundated with your heretical thoughts since you were a child. You only know what your parents taught you.

Jane

Well...

Feckenham

Lady Jane, I am not just an agent of the Pope, or of a power play, as much to the contrary as it may seem. It breaks my heart to see one so young be put to death, especially when she has had so little choice. Will you please give me the chance to try to help you?

Jane

Well, alright. I accept your offer to attend this debate; for there’s little I love more than a good discussion about religion. Although Faith is well-read and intelligent companion, I do long for more opinions!

Feckenham

I’ll see you tomorrow, then.

Please know that the Queen cares greatly for your soul. Please don’t pass up the power you now
have to change your fate forever. God bless you, my child.

*(He exits.)*

**Jane**

Oh, I do disagree with his theology, but he speaks much to the point, Faith!

**Faith**

Indeed, my Lady, it brings me such hope for you! A chance to live! Please say you’ll take it!

**Jane**

I don’t know, Faith. I’m so scared. This *is* such an easy way to add years to my life, to live a full and happy life. And I’ve been just a pawn up until now...

**Faith**

Indeed, my Lady! I’m sure God would understand!

**Jane**

Do you think? I am so afraid I’ll be damned forever!

**Faith**

Perhaps not. Perhaps there will be a chance, in the future, for you to return to the true beliefs. We can always keep them in secret, even though outwardly you might attend Mass, take Communion, go through the motions of Catholicism.

**Jane**

It would be so easy to pretend that the good Abbot and his visits and this debate have converted me... and I’m sure that God would understand, in the end, especially if I used my deceit for furthering the true faith...

*Lights up on Anne Askew again, now back in her cell.*

**Jane**

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But certainly, I am not the only person who has faced this problem. So many others have been executed as heretics.

**Faith**

Yes, but you have the choice not to be one of them!

**Jane**

Indeed… but I’m not sure. Oh, if only I had *chosen* to take a stand against the Queen myself! If I had been a man, and could have joined the uprising, I would then feel that less injustice had been done to me. As it is, I am so conflicted. I am so afraid, and I am afraid that my fear is clouding my judgment!

**Faith**

Because you are so young, as the good Abbot said! Give yourself the time to search and learn more!

**Jane**

(*A thought.*)

Faith, do you recall Anne Askew?

**Faith**

The woman who was burnt as a heretic when we were girls?

**Jane**

Indeed, just the one. She held so strongly to her beliefs, and would betray no one. She knew the Bible better than most priests, and worked to bring it to the common people, so they could read God’s word for themselves, and not just rely on the Papal interpretation of the Latin and Greek. She had the disposition of a martyr! She stayed solemn and silent, even when the king’s men stretched her body beyond limits any human should bear.

*Again, it is as if Jane is envisioning what happens to Anne.*
Anne is with her maid, Hosanna.

**Anne**

I’m sure what I have done is right—

I know what I believe. I will not falter—

**Hosanna**

What was it they wanted, Anne? Whose names were they after?

**Anne**

In truth, I think that they suspect the Queen.

Sweet Katharine Parr, of being Protestant,

And therefore in stark contrast to the law.

It’s true; she is a Protestant devout.

Which means that, all the more, I must protect,

That lady dear, from being taken in.

**Hosanna**

Then write the Queen, and tell her what has passed.

She is the truest friend that you have to your cause.

If she found out that you’ve been tortured so

She would feel so badly and would want to help.

**Anne**

That is why I cannot let her know.
She would try to help, and thus indict herself.

She is the greatest asset to our cause.

She funds the schools that teach the poor to read;

She gives us the English translations of the Bible.

I must suffer silently.

**Jane**

She was practically a saint in her steadfast martyrdom!

**Faith**

But surely you cannot think that she didn’t at all question what she decided to do? Maybe she had a similar choice to yours?

**Hosanna**

But is that right to do, Lady Anne? The edict is the pyre for you.

A heretic’s death, a foretaste of the flames of hell.

**Anne**

No papist will sway me from what I know is right

And yet—

I’ve given my whole being to my cause

To teach the poor and bring the word of truth

To those who could not know it otherwise
And sway them from those certain heresies.

But I am young! If I recant I can longer live,

Perhaps by somewhat surreptitious means

I can continue to spread the work I know

Is right.

Jane

I’m sure she knew what she was doing.

Faith

But was she right? Maybe she could have continued her work in secret, as you could.

Hosanna

Anne, I have seen you slave and work for this.

Of course I don’t want you to recant your beliefs.

But as your lifelong servant—as your friend—

Could your soul rest, to know you had, in fact,

Completely given all things up, and died?

But do what you believe is true and right.

Anne

Hosanna, the rack has ruined my body for good.

Look at my limbs. I cannot walk, nor move.

I will be in pain forever more. What life is that?

I have no choice; I cannot longer live.
I’ll be too weak to do anything of substance.

I’ll be a living symbol of what happens

When a person stands for what she thinks is right.

If I could only walk, or even write!

I’d find a way to keep my work alive.

But I must die; there’s nothing I can do.

And better to die in truth than live a lie

Hosanna, I will be a martyr!

I will be a symbol for them all!

For the other reformers, and for those whom we

Have taught to write and taught to think virtuously.

That’s all that I can make it; the only way to justify.

As poor and worth forgetting as I’ll be.

Jane

I think she must have realized that she would become such a powerful symbol for her cause.

Faith

But that was several years ago, and things haven’t gotten better. Do you think her actions did any good? They certainly haven’t saved you.

Jane

But what if it takes me, and my martyrdom, to finally end it? What if I can be yet another symbol? Anne had been defying the crown for much longer, and more actively. I, however, am just a pawn. I am a symbol of the innocent lives lost in this political bloodbath.
Faith

But the Abbot said you now have a choice! You don’t have to be a pawn!

(A beat, as Jane realizes something.)

Jane

Exactly. The Abbot gave me the power to change my status. He said it was the first time I’ve been able to have any say in my life, but he was wrong. The nine days that I was Queen—during that brief time, no one could go against me. I proved that I would not be a political puppet, and it frightened the men, the Duke of Northumberland and my father, even. It wasn’t easy, but now I know that I am strong. This is another chance to make a statement.

Faith

(Anticipating, but in denial) What do you mean, Jane?

Jane

I mean that, just as the Abbot said, I now have the choice whether to live or die. And I choose to die.

I choose to make myself a symbol. The people will see me as an innocent victim. Let them think that; it’s better for the cause. But you and I—and the Queen’s people, now—will know differently.

Hosanna

I wish there was a way, my sweetest Anne,

To save your works and propagate your cause.

Your legacy will live in all the students you have taught.

And in me, too, I’ll tell always share your story.
Anne

Yes, yes!

Hosanna, you’ll tell my story! You’ll write my story!

My stretched-out wrists can barely move themselves.

To write is but a long-lost dream for me.

But still my heart and brain are strong and true.

I’ll dictate all I have to say to you!

The memory is painful, but I’ll do my best,

To write a diary of sorts about my test,

Here in the Tower, and then so

When others read it, then they’ll know

The story the court tells paints me as evil,

But really it’s the crown that is deceitful.

The words we write will outlive you and I

Perhaps they’ll be forgotten, but we should at least try.

Will you do it?

Hosanna

Of course, Lady Anne!
Anne

So I hope. Then, Death,
I do not fear you, for I know God will
Protect me and bring me eternal life.

Faith

Oh. Jane! Please don’t!

Jane

I could never live with myself if I knew I had given in. I would be put under house arrest and under a tight watch. We are coming to the turning point in our battle. The people don’t like Mary’s Spanish marriage; surely, with all the massacring going on, they’ll turn against her soon.

I’ll go on with the good Abbot’s debate. He seems like a kind man, in spite of his beliefs. I will use that chance to show how steadfast I am.

I’ll die knowing that I made a bold choice; that I wasn’t just a woman who took the safe route out.

I know that I have made the right choice, Faith. I know that I am not wrong.

Anne

Amen

Hosanna

Amen

Jane

Amen
Faith

Amen. So be it.

As the scene ends, the Maid goes to help the Lady change out of the Jane garb and into that of Lady Nithsdale. The Woman changes into Mrs. Morgan. She picks up a life-size dummy, Mrs. Mills. Man 1 changes into the Gaoler. Man 2 changes into Lord Nithsdale.

The Woman
My best friend in the world, Anne Askew, is the only woman on record to have been tortured in the Tower of London. On July 16, 1546, Anne was publicly burned at the stake as a heretic. I can barely—she had to be carried to the site, because her joints had been torn apart from the rack. She was so brave! She didn’t make a sound until the flames reached her chest. I did spread her story. Together, we created an account of those horrific experiences. I managed to get a manuscript to John Bale, who published our writings as The Examinations not long after Anne’s death. Her writings are revolutionary! The fact that a woman thought them up is astonishing, even to me, who knew her almost her whole life.

The Maid
On February 12, 1554, my darling Jane, only sixteen years old, was beheaded on Tower Hill. John Feckenham, the kind chaplain who became Jane’s friend, and mine, over the course of the days he visited her, accompanied her to the scaffold. Of course, she remained staunchly a Reformer until the very end! I accompanied her to Tower Hill—we have known each other since before I can remember, and I wasn’t going to desert her at the end—but Jane asked that I stay below, and not come up to the scaffold. I watched her right up until the axeman brought the axe down, and then I had to close my eyes.
But Jane was viewed as a Protestant martyr for centuries! She got what she had hoped. Not that that brings me any peace. But I certainly hope her soul is at rest. I like to think that it is.

The Men begin setting up the prison where Lord Nithsdale is held.
Have I a to-do for you!

It’s the awful, gloomy, smelly Tower of London. February 23, the year of our Lord 1716. The Lieutenant’s Lodgings (which is the best place to be, by the way. POSH.).

And BONNY good news: My master is to be hanged first thing tomorrow morning!

Ha! Oh, don’t look like that! I tease, can’t you see!

Well, about the news being good news. Not about the hanging.

My Lord William Maxwell, fifth Earl of Nithsdale, is a silly wee man. He joined the Jacobite rebellion, you see, in an attempt to regain the throne for the Roman Catholic House of Stuart, and keep Parliament from interfering in the succession! The cause was doomed from the beginning.

Then Willy got himself captured. And now he is to be hanged tomorrow.

Petitions have been sent to Parliament, of course, but to no avail. Obviously. The paunch-bellied House of Lords sees these petitions (sent, of course, by the grieving and desperate wives of the ill-fated) as brainless, fluffy pieces from brainless, fluffy women who aligned themselves most unfortunately. Already, some of Lord Nithsdale’s peers have been killed. Tomorrow, the Earl himself will join them.

But not if my lady has anything to do with it.

Ha! All this for the sake of bagpipes and kilts.

Ach! I tease again! I am as much for the cause of our highlanders as any, but if you ask me, the Stuarts aren’t going to do anything at all to help our people at all. But no one ever asks me.

Really though, if you ask me, Winifred is doing all this as much for the chance of demonstrating the Power of Petticoats as anything.

The Maid leaves the scene.
The Men go into their places as the Gaoler and Lord Nithsdale. Transition into the scene. During the scene, Mrs. Mills, the sobbing lady, is played by a dummy. Woman J, who will be carrying the dummy that is Mrs. Mills, has quite a job ahead of her!

(A woman, obviously distraught, exits from a cell. The gaoler opens the door to let her through. He is resigned/exasperated. This has obviously been going on for hours. She comes back. She comes out again, this time with another lady. They exit. The other lady comes back. Poor gaoler. Enters the cell. She emerges with yet another lady from the cell, both sobbing and in a flurry. One of the ladies is sobbing profusely into her handkerchief.)

Lady N.

(Emerging from cell) My dear Mrs. Mills, you must stop weeping and moaning! You’ll turn your face all red.

Mrs. Morgan.

I beg your pardon, madam; it’s too much for her to bear! (Mrs. Mills lets out a massive sob.)

Gaoler:

Stop that prating! I’ll lock you up soon myself!

Lady Nithsdale.

Nay, good sir, hold awhile! Ladies, come back into the cell, be my strength. (The two women enter the cell. Lights up on the cell. Lord and Lady Nithsdale are sitting inside, speaking. Behind Lady Nithsdale stand two of her companions. There is a stiff formality to the husband and wife relationship, but something about the stiffness lets us know that this is not the usual case for them.)

Lord Nithsdale.

How are the children?

Lady Nithsdale.
You would think to ask after them first! John and Catherine are both well.

Lord N.

And how were your travels here, my dear? From Terregles.

Lady N.

The snow is so deep that the stage coach could not set out for London! However, I took horses and rode to London, though the snow was generally above the horses’ girths. (Mrs. Mills exits into the outer room, apparently sobbing. The Gaoler rolls his eyes. She is soon followed by Lady N. and Mrs. Morgan.)

Lady N.

Oh, go take the poor dear to get some air! (The women exit. The gaoler looks relieved.)

Lady Nithsdale.

(Returns to cell) My maid, Amity, is so late! She certainly cannot have reflected how late it was getting! I am to present my petition to have you released to-night.

Lady Nithsdale.

Mrs. Morgan and Mills are gone for a moment, my lord. We may talk of more personal matters.

Lord N.

They are true friends, and honest. You are indeed a woman of great spirit.

(Amity Evans enters. She goes to the Gaoler, maybe coyly. They begin to speak softly to each other. Amity always keeps an eye on the main entrance, though.)

Lord N.

My dear... are your companions alright? They do seem desperately distraught...

Lady N.

What? Oh, that’s just Mrs. Mills. She’ll be fine, soon. She does worry for me, so, though.
Lord N.

Why? She’s never met you bef—

Lady N. (cutting him off)

But let me tell you about home, about Terregles. About Dumfriesshire on the whole. (She tries to shoot him a conspiratorial look. It may or may not succeed.)

Lord N.

If you wish...?

Lady N.

I do it for you. my dear! Yes well, as I said, home is all covered in snow. The old ruins of the Abbey are as beautiful as ever in the snow. Evans took the children out a few weeks ago to play in it. I was so afraid they would catch cold, especially little Catherine, you know, she gets ill so fast, but fortunately they were both in the best of health when I left them. They will be sad when we have to leave our pretty tower house.

(The two women from before enter again. One is weeping so much that her face is buried in her handkerchief.)

Lord N.

I think we may keep the house, my dear, even if I lose the title.

(The two women enter the cell. They start to pull out clothing from beneath their petticoats.)

Really, ladies, please don’t worry yourselves—

Lady N.

Mrs. Morgan and Mills! I you are back, I see. Has Mrs. Mills composed herself at last?

(Mrs. Mills heaves a HUGE sob, and the ladies exit again. Lord Nithsdale begins to question again, but his wife cuts him off.)
Lady N.  

*(returning to the previous conversation)*

Indeed? Well that at least is decent news. Oh, and brace yourself, for I have tragic news indeed: Cook retired.

Lord N.

What?
Why, that is a tragedy!

*(The women enter again.)*

Lady N.

Hello, sweet friends. What good friends they are, aren’t they, my dear?

Lord N.

Ah, yes, indeed—

*(One of the women tosses Lord Nithsdale a gown. He looks at his wife.)*

Wha—?

Lady N. *(grabbing the dress and putting it on over his clothes.)*

They are, I say, the BEST of friends!

Lord N.

*(It’s dawning on him.)*

Yes... indeed!

*(They continue the conversation as before. All the while, Lord Nithsdale is putting on a dress, a shawl, a bonnet, etc. The woman who was crying from before continues to weep.)*

Lady N.

63
Well, you must appeal to Cook yourself, my dear, for she retired with a vengeance. As soon as I announced my intention to come to London, she came to me and said, “Well, my Lady, this is as good a time as ever to tell you, but I am afraid I must quit.”

(The non-weeping friend exits the cell. Amity sees her.)

Amity.

Ah, Mrs. Morgan! How fare my Lord and Lady?

Mrs. Morgan.

(Who is very bad at keeping a straight face) They hold up bravely in the face of his Lordship’s impending doom!

“Quit?!” said I, all in astonishment, for I had not even had an inkling of this all before! Apparently, Evans said she had been planning it for the past five years.

Lady N.

(Putting a wig on her husband) Perhaps I am a shambles as a mistress of a house, but she had kept it from me well enough.

Mrs. Morgan.

Mrs. Mills, I’m afraid, takes it very much to heart though. It pains us both to see our dear friend lose her husband!

Lord N.

(A wig pin hurts his head.) Aaaahhh! (recovering) Never say that! My dear, no servant could ask for a better mistress.

Amity.

Wasn’t she supposed to present a petition to have him and his friends freed, though?

Lady N.
(Putting makeup on her husband) You do flatter me. Anyhow, “Yes’m,” said Cook. “I am getting old in the bones, and all the steam and smoke in the kitchen has gotten to me lungs!”

Mrs. Morgan.

Yes, yes, but it didn’t go through! The Duke who promised to present it to Parliament on her behalf failed to show up! And now Lord Nithsdale’s friend, the Earl of Dentwater, has been executed!

Amity.

No!

Gaoler.

(Intervening) Now, now, ladies, no talk of those things here, not in front of me. I don’t like to hear people talk their politics; it gets too close to treason sometimes.

Mrs. Morgan.

Well. I best be on my way. Good evening, Evans.

Amity.

Evening, Mrs. Morgan.

Lady N.

And she went on to complain about one of the footmen and also said that she wished to spend time with her daughter’s three children. I told her you would be distraught, and how should I break such distressing news to you in your time of trial, but she almost seemed not to care!

(Lord N. laughs. By now he is completely disguised as a Lady.)

Lord N.

You speak to comfort me, but truly I begin to miss home all the more.

Lady N.

65
If Amity Evans will ever get here, I shall present my petition to release you tonight.

Lord N.

You seemed certain it would have been presented already.

Lady N.

And I have done my utmost, my love.

(As she continues speaking, she nods, and Mrs. Mills suddenly stops sobbing, shoves her handkerchief into Lord Nithsdale’s hands and pushes his hands to his face. She wraps her arms around him in sisterly consolation, and they begin to exit the cell. They get a few steps, but he remains silent, so Mrs. Mills kicks him.)

Lord N.

Oww!

Lady N. (Looking at him pointedly.)

Now, Mrs. Mills, don’t weep, for heaven’s sake! Please, do go and get some air!

(Lord N. takes the cue, and begins weeping. Together, he and the real Mrs. Mills exit the cell. Lady N. turns to the empty room, and sits herself down. As if continuing the previous conversation:)

But I am quite put out with the Duke of St. Alban’s, for he promised my Lady Derwentwater to present the petition to have you and the other prisoners pardoned, and still he has not.

Gaoler:

Your lady does prate so!

Amity:

Nay, nay, let her talk her troubles away! That is the way of women.
Indeed, it must be! That and sobbing.

(As the conversation between Amity and the Gaoler continues, Lady Nithsdale composedly sits down and begins talking to herself. She emulates her husband’s voice. Her speech is to be below the interchange of Amity and the Gaoler. Every now and then, we may catch a few phrases.)

**Amity.** Aye, sir, think: the lady says she has hope that her petition will get through, but what do we know? We know that her husband will lose his life, and she will lose her heart! Let her have her final outpour of womanly affection to him!

**Gaoler.** Good lady: I see this every week of my waking life. If I can stand it, so can any fluffy, feather-brained woman.

**Amity.** Now you quit your prating! Indeed, I am astonished that you have not sunk into a depression after all these years! How do you manage it? You must have no heart!

**Gaoler.** Now now, that’s unfair, that is! I do indeed have a heart; ask Matilda any day! I listen to her weeping and wailing with nary a complaint!

**Amity.** Matilda?

**Gaoler.** (sheepish) My wife.

**Amity.** Your wife! Well, I am certain then, that you have no heart! *(She pinches his bum.)* To be carrying on with me like this, when you

[The following all under Amity’s and the Gaoler’s banter. Can cut off whenever Amity goes into the cell.]

**Lord.** And now Earl Derwentwater is to be beheaded as well! Poor James.

**Lady.** Indeed the St. Albans has failed me, so I have engaged the Duke of Montrose and the Earl of Pembroke to take of the case. They have behaved toward me with greatest civility, my dear.

**Lord N.** As I was sure they would, my dear.

**Lady N.** You are always right, my lord. I cannot tell a lie, however, I stay strong for you, but it is hard, with my womanly weaknesses! *(Lady N. finds her facetiousness in this moment quite clever, and giggles to herself.)*

**Lady N.** Really, though, the chief of the debate was whether the king had the power to pardon those who had been condemned by Parliament. Of course he does; he is the king! He could have no standing if he cannot have the final say, especially when it is a matter of
have a wife at home, and no doubt wee bairns, too!

Gaoler. Stop! You, with your colloquialisms. You make me blush!

Amity. Mmmhmm. (beat) So. If you have a heart, as you so boldly claim, how do you keep your spirits up in a place like this? Drink?

Gaoler. Nay.

Amity. Other women?

Gaoler. Nay!


Gaoler. (snorts) Never!

Amity. Do you play cards with the prisoners?

Gaoler. Nay.

Amity. I am all out of ideas. I am quite spent. I have no more guesses to give.

Gaoler. Oh, come, come! It’s not so difficult to figure as all that. Quite simply, I write.

Amity. … You don’t read, but you write.

Gaoler. Indeed, I do, and, what’s more, I write (whispers, proudly) poetry.

Amity. (shrieking) Poetry!

such benevolence and Christian forgiveness.

Lord N. So one would think.

Lady N. Well, as it happened, Lord Pembroke’s speech had carried it in the affirmative, when one of the lords stood up, and said that the house could only intercede for those of the prisoners who should approve themselves worthy of their intercession, but not for all of the indiscriminately. This salvo blasted all my hopes, for I was assured that it was aimed at those who should refuse to subscribe to the petition.

Lord. A thing I would never submit to.

Lady. I know, my dear! That is why I said all my hopes were blasted.

Lord Nithsdale. They still remember my grandfather, you know, who defended Karlaverock to the last extremity! Now that they have me in their power, they are determined not to let me escape from their hands.

Lady. You do take it all so personally. Perhaps Karlaverock was an ordeal in its day, but surely the ones who truly remember your grandfather are very old. Maybe it’s a blood feud. (An actual realization.) Oh Lord, I hope not...
Gaoler. Shush! The men will hear! And they may be behind bars, but I guarantee you that there is no man so vicious with teasing as one who has no hope.

Amity. Why, I don’t believe you write a thing. You must read me some of it.

Gaoler. Here: I’ve just finished some verses to my Matilda.

Amity. Oh, her...

Gaoler. (Clears throat) Matty, my darling my dove,

You come from heaven above,

You have angels wings,

And when you sing,

My heart doth explodeth with love.

(a beat. Amity takes it in that the Gaoler has just recited, not the moving verses of an Alexander Pope, but, in fact, a limerick.)

So? (We hear the last part of the Nithdales’ speaking.)
Lady N.

Well! Where is Evans! She is always most punctual even in the smallest trifles; I wonder what might have made her negligent!

I must see if perhaps she is outside.

Amity.

…the I best attend to my lady. *(She crosses to cell door, but met by Lady N.)*

Lady N.

I have faith, my lord, I confide in Almighty God, and trust that he will not abandon me even when all human succours fail me.

Ah! But it is so late! Something more than usual must have happened to make Amity Evans negligent on this important occasion. She is always so punctual in the smallest trifles.

I see no other remedy but to go in person.

*(Lady Nithsdale, emerges from the cell.)*

Evans! Where have you been this whole time!

Amity.

Attending to other… matters…my lady. *(The Gaoler snorts. Amity and Lady N. share a look.)*

Lady N.

I am quite put out with you, Evans. You have left me to do everything myself. Run along home; I don’t need you here now. *(Amity curtsneys, a twinkle in her eye, and exits, slapping the Gaoler’s bum on the way. Lady N. hides a laugh. She turns back into the cell, speaking through the door, but holding it closed enough that we cannot see into the cell.)*

Lady Nithsdale.
I bid you farewell for the night, my lord. If the Tower is still open, when I finish my business, I will return tonight. You may be assured that I will be with you as early in the morning as I can gain admittance into the Tower. I flatter myself that I shall bring more favorable news. Goodnight. (She pulls the string of the latch of the door so it can only be opened on the inside. To the Earl’s servant:) You need not carry in candles to your master until my lord sends for them. He desires to finish some prayers first. (She smiles to herself. She exits quickly.)

(Lights up on the rest of the cell. It is empty.)

(The gaoler looks into the cell. He abruptly turns back out.)

Gaoler:

Aghghghghghghghghgh noooo!!! (Shouting out) Oy! Oy! There’s been an escape!

As the scene comes to a close, the actors begin transitioning back into their neutrals. The Maid, of course, does not. She continues to address the audience.

The Maid

After this, things became quite the riot! Winifred and I had to go into hiding until my Lord “N” was safe on the Continent! But of course first we made a trip to Scotland to make sure the household was in order, even though Winifred wasn’t allowed to show herself in England or Scotland. Ha! Oh mercy, when the King found out about the escape he was utterly incensed and demanded that she leave the kingdom! An order, of course, both she and I were most happy to oblige. Oh—but oh! Before we left, though, my Lady went in person to present another petition to the king, barging straight in to his receiving rooms past all the other Lords about him, and she had to be literally dragged from the room! The king was all red and flustered and angry and spitting when he tried to speak and it was altogether incredibly unflattering and I am most glad that I was privy to it all. The king despised her. So it was, I suppose, most prudent for her to join my Lord Nithsdale in exile. They lived out their years in Rome. Which is a much better climate anyway, and with much more attractive gentlemen.
The Maid looks about her. By now, all set pieces and props are back to their starting places, and the other actors are in their neutrals. The stage is, in essence, empty.

(The Lady begins to don the costume of Flora MacDonald. One of the Men begins to sing “Over the Sea to Skye.”)

**The Maid (in a heavy Scottish dialect)**
London, 1746, and Flora MacDonald has just been imprisoned for aiding Bonnie Prince Charlie cross “over the sea to Skye.” These Scottish lasses do love their disguises! For Miss Flora dressed the Prince up as a woman to shuttle him across the Hebrideans...

(The Woman steps forward as Anne Boleyn)

**The Woman**

London, 1536. Anne Boleyn. *(Hysterical.)*

HENRY! Henry! You will not do this to me! Think of our young baby! Think of how I saved you from that old witch, Catherine of Aragon! You *will* not do this to me! I am your lawful wife, the Queen! I have done *nothing* wrong! I have no “frail and carnal lust,” as they say, for anyone but you, Henry! Henry! Please, please! I will not leave without a fight, Henry.

(As the next stories begin, they start to overlap. Man 1’s first speech can start halfway through the above speech by the Woman. Each piece begins sooner and sooner after the previous one, until all the actors are speaking at once. Each continues speaking until all his or her stories are told.)

(Man 1 steps forward.)

**Man 1**


Your Holiness, is there *nothing* we can do to help my mother? To help Margaret Pole, the daughter of a Duke of Clarence! She is 68, for goodness’ sake! King Henry is holding her prisoner, I am sure, because I did not support his break from the Church. Holy Father, is there...
nothing Rome can do to intercede on her behalf? I warned Henry that a French embargo on England might happen, and I have been successful in persuading the Emperor to do that, but I still fear for my mother. I fear they are holding her hostage. I fear that one wrong move, and she will be executed.

(The Woman steps forward.)

The Woman
London, 1471.
My son should have been King. Edward is just a pretender to the throne, the murderer of my son, murderer of the King! He has slain two rightful Kings of England, and places the crown upon his own head, and brings his whore of a wife and their millions of children with him.
I must write to Louis of France. I must have his help. I will not stay the rest of my life in this godforsaken fortress.

(Man 2 steps forward as William Seymour)

Man 2
Let me see my wife! Let me see Arabella! She is dying of malnourishment, they tell me. She is going insane. Please. We will not try to escape again. But I must see her. You don’t know the strength she has! She went on without me when I was delayed. A woman, out there all alone. And now she has lost her freedom. When we chose to marry in secret, we did not choose this. Please, please let me see her.

(The Maid steps forward again.)

The Maid
London, 1561. I am here to help my mistress, Lady Catherine Grey, sister to the Nine Day’s Queen, meet her husband. Both are imprisoned, you see, for marrying without permission of the Queen! But My Lady has a secret to tell her new husband: she is with child! It is so dangerous for them, to meet, though. I wonder where she finds the tenacity to press onward!

(Man 2 steps forward)
Man 2
Sir Walter Raleigh. 1612.
Bess, my dear. You will be fine. You have stayed with me these ten years. You have acted as head of our household while I have lived as a prisoner! It breaks my heart that you must leave, but the Queen demands it. You will be so strong for our children. You will succeed on your own, my love.

(Man 1 steps forward as Rudolph Hess.)

Man 1
I tell you, this woman is my wife. I, Rudolph Hess, swear to it, and though you think I have done terrible things, I am a man of my word. Here. You will not mistreat her. You hold me here, not her. She will be treated well. She chose to accompany me.

(The Lady steps forward, as Elizabeth I, when she was still a princess.)

The Lady
Oh, Lord! I never thought to have come here as a prisoner! And by my own sister, too! But bear me witness, I, Princess Elizabeth, come in no traitor but as true a woman to the Queen’s majestic as any is now living. I tell you, I did not try to stop my sister’s marriage. I would not stoop so low. You may imprison me, but you will not break my spirit. I will come out of this alive and well. Neither my sister, nor none of her advisors, will find anything other than complete loyalty and purity of action. I dare you to try.

(The other voices die away, she keeps speaking:)

Though the sex to which I belong is considered weak, you will nevertheless find me a rock that bends to no wind.

(Lights down.)