

In Mem'ry of the King

Richard III – the murderer of small children, or unjustly maligned by his successors? But what if he had won at Bosworth?

Richard III reigned for less than three years, 1483 to 1485. However, millions of words have been written about him and he has his own 'fan club' – the Richard III Society. We all know all about him, don't we – hunchback, murderer, usurper?

Or do we?

The reign of Richard III was among the shortest, and at the same time, the most researched of English monarchs. Millions of words have been written about him and he has his own 'fan club' – the Richard III Society (of which I am not a member). A great deal of what we 'know' about Richard is hearsay or unproved.

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The Beaufort Solution

Chapter One

In 1485, at the Battle of Bosworth, Henry Tudor defeated Richard III and became Henry VII of England.

Richard III has always been blamed for the deaths in the Tower of his two nephews, whose elder sister Elizabeth Henry married when he became King.

But what if Richard had won?

And what did happen to the Princes in the Tower?

Wounded, bloodied, but victorious, the king sat astride his horse and surveyed the now silent battlefield. He watched, his grey eyes hard and tired but not entirely lacking in pity as the body of his erstwhile opponent was dragged before him. His mouth tightened and he looked down at the corpse and the flatness of his tone did not entirely hide his emotions.

"See he is given a decent burial, and a stone in the churchyard." Tiredly he shook his head. "He fought well."

Beside him, Lord Stanley spoke almost hesitantly. His indecision and that of his brother might have cost Richard the battle, but they had both finally opted to put their strength behind the king.

"He would not have honoured you thus, sire, had victory been his." He continued, his voice low. "My wife, his lady mother, will weep when she hears what has happened." Clearly, he did not relish having to be the bearer of such tidings. Margaret Beaufort, although tiny physically, was an intimidating woman, especially where the welfare of her one much idolised son was concerned.

But Richard cared little for Henry's mother and her grief. The woman had been a thorn in his side for a long time. He brushed aside Stanley's concerns.

"Had victory been his, I do not know how he would have behaved. Victory however is *mine*. Courtesy and honour to a dead foe cost nothing. As for his lady mother, your wife, it will be better for her if she does not ever again present herself at court." His voice became edged. "This time, my lord Stanley, see she is kept away from matters that do not concern her, or I shall not be responsible for her fate. Now ensure all is done as I have commanded."

And Richard III, King of England, wheeled his horse and rode away from Bosworth Field. Behind him Henry Tudor lay dead, his army scattered in defeat. Now the last – no, not quite last – threat to his sovereignty had been removed, and he had a kingdom to rule. There would be peace now he had time to rule the country as it should be ruled, with fairness and honour to all. He would see England left a fruitful and peaceful land, but nonetheless a strong land.

Left? Left to whom, he asked himself bitterly, and the chronic frown settled itself upon his face again. He had to sire children, sons to take his place. Therein lay a problem. Then he sighed. Time enough for that on the morrow.

"Dearest and most beloved niece, I have come to inform you that your betrothed is dead." He swallowed, his gaze intent upon her impassive face. "He died honourably on the field of battle."

She lifted her face to return his look and he continued, his voice gentle. "He would have made you queen. I – am sorry."

"But I....I am *not* sorry." Elizabeth of York rose and came forwards to face him. She was almost as tall as he, but neither of them backed away. "I did not wish to be queen to Henry's king. No. No, that is not true. I wished it once. I wished it heartily when I believed it was you who had ordered my brothers' deaths...."

"And all of England still believes that it was I...."

"But I know better. I know that you did not, could not, have done that."

"They stood between me and the throne." He looked straight at her, his eyes hard. "Did you not consider that?" But she merely laughed.

"They – and others. Others who still live. No, my dearly loved Uncle Richard, I do not believe now that you had a hand in their deaths." She hesitated. "Are they dead?"

He looked back at her, pain in his expression. But his mouth tightened as he spoke flatly.

"Yes."

"Then you are truly the king. But you are without heirs, Uncle dear, until you wed again."

"That is true." She didn't, he noticed, ask how he knew for sure that the two princes were dead. And with his niece, the topic of his necessary marriage was one he did not wish to pursue. Had she not been his niece, he would have been very pleased to discuss it with her. She would have made an ideal wife. He cared for her, always had, but the tie of blood was too close between them.

William Catesby was a brave man. However, facing the king to insist upon his remarriage was more terrifying than facing the Tudor and his followers in battle. The fact that there were so few contenders for the position of wife to Richard III and Queen of England made it no less difficult.

"You *must* wed." He was prepared for rage; Richard had been short tempered and irritable since the battle and the several public executions which had followed it.

There were still those who would have wished to see Henry Tudor on the throne. Without him, they were lost but still had the potential to make trouble for the kingdom. But the king was more tired and dispirited than angry. He had never been able to sleep well, but since the final battle his dreams had been peopled with so many lost and dead faces he dreaded closing his eyes at night. He needed sleep, rest and security but none of these was yet possible. Finding a wife, he knew, would be the start of a long road to recovery, but it was a joyless task. He balked at Catesby's suggestion for his bride. Had Elizabeth not been the child of his elder brother he would have taken her unhesitatingly. But he could not allow himself that weakness. He *would* not.

"Not my niece! It is wrong. It is incest. With or without dispensation from the Pope. She is too close to me in blood. I shall not marry her."

"For the sake of the kingdom, sire, it is imperative that you wed soon, and father a son. Many sons. You are still young. The Lady Elizabeth –"

"– is my niece! I cannot marry my *niece*. The idea is monstrous. Inconceivable."

"Aye," Catesby said dryly. "Inconceivable indeed. As is your heir, my lord, until you are wed again."

Richard turned away from him, pain and anger in his face. "Anne. Anne...."

"My lord, forgive me. But your wife Anne is dead. Now you *must* marry again. England has a King; she must now have a Queen, and a Prince. Now the Tudor menace is no more, it is imperative that you wed and give the country an heir. It is your duty." He bowed. "Think on it, my lord, I beg of you."

"But not my niece."

"Who then, your grace?"

"Who then indeed?" Richard's laugh was low and bitter and totally without humour. "Who in her right mind would wed me?"

"It is not as difficult as you think. We will find someone –"

"Without any ties of blood. A lady of high birth if not of royalty, and of impeccable background." Richard was sour again. "A lady who will wed, or more like be *forced* to wed, the usurper of England, murderer of Henry Tudor and reputed murderer of little children." He shook his head. "Leave me in peace for a while, I beg of you. Go away now."

Joanna Llewellyn had been newly betrothed less than a month before Bosworth, but she had not loved the man she had been chosen to wed. When he died on the battlefield she could not, in all honesty, grieve for him. She wept copiously however, for her cousin's son, whom she had loved since they had been but children together.

He had chosen to fight under the banner of the dragon, and had died alongside his master Henry Tudor. She would never know where he had been laid to rest.

Not four months after the battle, Joanna was given more reason to weep, but in fear and dread this time rather than sorrow, when she was told another husband had been found for her. A man already wed and widowed, who was rumoured to have killed his first wife because their only son had died and she could not bear him another. It was not an honour at all, she decided wryly, to be given in marriage to the king of England.

There was however no way for her to resist. Her father failed either to see or understand her dread, and she had no mother against whom to rest her head and cry. Joanna's mother had borne three children who had lived, two of them girls.

Useless girls, as her husband had made plain to her. He wished for sons, and as many of them as she could produce. Trying to appease him, she died in childbirth, leaving only a puny girl child who also died, probably of neglect, less than three days after her own death. Now Joanna was being treated as her mother had been. Her future was being decided for her, as it always had been, by men who had no conception of how it was to be considered simply an object to be given or taken or ignored.

What was more, they had no interest in knowing how it was. Some of them would have raised polite and disbelieving eyebrows at the mere suggestion that any woman would have had feelings worth considering. Her father was such a man. To him, women were chattels, to be bought and sold like cattle. Valuable cattle, but cattle, nonetheless. Her tears were pointless, and produced from her father only the threat that he would personally beat her if she did not desist. And she would, he told her clearly, bear the king *sons*. Else he would know the reason why.

Reluctantly, yet knowing it was his duty and never shying away from that duty, Richard had sent out discreet envoys to find himself the wife his council insisted he have. Joanna Llewellyn proved the most suitable. She was descended of minor royalty of England on one side, and the nobility of Wales on the other. Nowhere in her ancestry was there to be found any suggestion or taint of bastardry. Although she had been betrothed, the marriage had never been consummated and her husband had died fighting for Richard at Bosworth. Her father was keen for her to be wed and removed from his responsibility. Altogether a most ideal choice, the king's advisers had decided.

Privately, all Richard desired was a wife, who would do her duty as he planned to do his, and present the country with an heir. With as many children as it took to silence his council, who continued to harp on the need for a prince. A prince with lots of little royal brothers and sisters. Not all babies grew to adulthood in fifteenth century England. By the time he was betrothed to Joanna Llewellyn he would not have cared if she had been hump backed and cross-eyed. Her ability to bear children was the only characteristic of any importance.

The facts that she was still young, still a virgin and, if not beautiful, of a certain grace of bearing, were minor factors. When he set eyes on her he realised he might not find it so onerous a task to do his duty for his country after all. He realised also, that to Joanna the idea of marriage – to him – was distasteful and horrifying.

Joanna in fact dreaded their marriage with all her soul. It was that dread that caused her to listen to one of her attendants. The woman whispered to her that an extremely important and high born lady, the Countess of Richmond in fact, wished to speak with her as soon as possible. She would, the woman continued, be able to assist Joanna and maybe even alleviate her horror at her fate. To reinforce her words, she produced a letter for Joanna. In it the countess requested the presence of the king's betrothed.

To Joanna, as to many people, Richard was a monster, responsible for the death of the man she had loved, although she had been forcibly betrothed to another. Just as now she had been forcibly betrothed to the king.

For this reason she listened to the maid, read the letter carefully and refused to allow herself to be offended by its peremptory tone. Shortly afterwards she paid a visit to the convent in which the countess had chosen to conceal herself in her grief. Joanna listened to what she had to say but departed feeling chilled with horror. No one, it seemed, was interested in her for herself, only for the use she could be. This lady whom she had thought would help had been no different from anyone else. It was not to help Joanna that she had wished to see her, but to help her own self. She was cold and ruthless and had terrified Joanna totally. But simply by going to see her Joanna had become enmeshed in her snare and was forced to agree to give her assistance to Margaret Beaufort's plan for revenge.

Unable to avoid her fate, six months after the battle of Bosworth Joanna Llewellyn became the second wife of Richard the Third of England.

Chapter Two

The ceremony was a nightmare Joanna lived through in a numb haze. She repeated her vows, ate mechanically at the celebratory meal and drank only a single goblet of wine. The words of the countess never left her, and she was afraid to look at the man to whom she had been so unwillingly wed.

When at last they were alone she was trembling with fear. Her ladies had undressed her from the heavy and elaborate gown she had worn for the ceremony, and she lay in her wedding bed dressed in a nightgown of fine white linen and lace. After the king had dismissed his men he came and sat on the edge of the bed and looked down at her. His grey gaze was cool, almost gentle, and he reached out one hand to touch her face and turn it so she had to look up at him. There was an expression in his eyes that bewildered her even more.

"My poor lady Queen, you are afraid of me." He tilted his head at her. "Is it marriage that frightens you so, or is it me?" She did not answer and Richard shook his head and rose to walk around to his side of the bed. Joanna tensed as he climbed in beside her. He lay still, not attempting to touch her, and she stared across at him with something like bewilderment.

"My lord?"

He raised himself and bent to place a brief kiss upon her lips. "Sleep tonight, Joanna. You are my wife but I will not force you. There will be time enough for us later." He lay still and quiet beside her until, in spite of her terror, she slept. Richard however did not sleep for a long time, and even then his rest was not sound. Finally he slipped from the bed, pausing to look down on the sleeping woman with an uncharacteristic softness in his face. She was not Anne and never could be, but to him she resembled nothing so much as a frightened child. Although he ached to take her in his arms he forced himself to be patient. Half of England still loathed him, he

thought bitterly. No need to make the woman who had been wed to him also hate him. Although, he decided, chances were she did so already.

Joanna woke during the night to find herself alone. The room was dark, but she could see him across from her, seated by the window, a goblet of wine in his hand. Frowning, she rose quietly from the bed, wrapped a robe around her, and crossed to him. He turned slightly at her approach and looked at her gravely.

"My lady Joanna?" His voice was low but clear.

"I do not please you?" She was confused at her own response to his lack of action. Now he shook his head and smiled at her. It was an odd sort of smile, very self deprecating and with a shadow of both grief and bitterness in it.

"I believe it is more likely I who do not please you," he said, his voice still very low.

Joanna sat on the floor by him and stretched out her hand. "I am thirsty. I beg you, let me share your wine."

He lifted the glass and shrugged. "It is empty, my lady. Wait while I refill it for you." She sat where she was, watching as he crossed the room and returned with the goblet full to the brim. He held it out to her and she drank deeply, then handed it to him. The wine encouraged her to speak.

"This marriage," she said, "was not of my doing. I was betrothed before, you know that?" She swallowed. "Only betrothed. I am still a virgin."

"Yes. I know." He smiled at her. "Both facts." There was a hint of amusement in his voice and she stared at him. She had been told the king was a monster; not only was that untrue, but he clearly had a sense of humour. No one had ever suggested to her that he might laugh with her. Unkind taunts she had anticipated; this shared amusement was unexpected. She went on.

"I am your wife, my lord. If I do indeed please you, then you must take steps to ensure I become your wife in fact as well as in name. I am no longer young." She was in fact twenty three, ten years his junior, but by her age many women had borne three or four or more children. "We must have heirs. I have been told this –"

"And I also." He chuckled. "My duty, I have been told."

She nodded, and for the first time since setting eyes on Richard, she smiled at him. It was a genuine smile, without fear or dread, and it changed her face, making her almost beautiful.

"I also have been told this. Perhaps, Richard my husband, it is time we did our duty."

He stood up and held her close in front of him. "You must learn to call me Dickon, my lady Joanna. I thought you were afraid of me." He traced his finger down the side of her face and throat.

She swallowed. "I *am* afraid of you. But –" She gave a little shrug and then smiled at him again. "You are – forgive me – not the monster some have claimed you to be – and my father has threatened me with terrible things if I do not bear you a son." Richard looked at her and laughed. "My father," she said sombrely, "was not making any kind of a joke."

He put his arms around her and tilted her face up to his. Her mouth was soft, and tasted of the wine she had drunk. Her hair was soft and thick and she smelt of the perfume with which her women had anointed her. It was their wedding night, and he, as the king, had a duty to give his country heirs, as he had been told more than once. Joanna sighed and relaxed against him and he took her by the hand.

"My *wife* Joanna. Come to bed."

Later, she lifted herself onto one elbow and looked across at him. "My lord?"

"My lady Joanna?" His voice was low, almost gentle. She sat up, her face grave. It was time, she decided, to tell the king what had happened before their marriage. About her encounter with the countess in the convent.

"I must tell you something of great importance."

"Go on." He did not smile but looked at her with an intent grey gaze.

"Before our marriage – before we even met, I was prepared to hate you. I *did* hate you. I really did."

His mouth twitched but his eyes darkened with pain. "And many of my subjects still do hate and loathe me, my lady. You are not alone there." His voice was grave. She swallowed before she went on.

"I believed you a monster –"

"Twisted and misshapen of body and soul." He shook his head. "Believe me, I have heard all of this before. And the murderer of small children, too, I daresay?" But there was no anger at her, merely great tiredness, in his tone. He looked straight at her and was surprised to see her mouth twitch.

"Misshapen not at all of body, my lord. Not where it matters." They shared a brief smile and she continued, the words spilling from her quickly. "My betrothed fought for you, but the man whom I truly loved fought against you. Both died at Bosworth. They are in the past and there is nothing I or anyone else can do now to change that. You are my lord, my king and my husband. I swear to love and serve you, Richard, till the day I die."

He swallowed and reached out to touch her gently. "Do not speak of dying, I beg of you. Too many people whom I loved and needed have died." His grey eyes met hers and he smiled, a warm and genuine expression that lit up his whole face. "My lady, I am yours."

She gave a little smile, then shook her head slowly, sitting with her hands clasped under her chin. "There is more. Maybe after you hear all I have to say you will not want me to be your queen and bear your children."

He tilted his head, concern in his face. "More, Joanna?" He took her hands between his. They were cold and he frowned and wrapped a woolen robe around her shoulders and arms, nestling her against him. "Go on. Tell me."

"Lady Margaret Beaufort – the Countess of Richmond – sent me a letter requesting – no, more than that – *demanding* – that I visit her, before our marriage. She told me I had a solemn duty to her and to her dead son."

Richard's mouth twisted. So even in death Henry Tudor would continue to be a cause of grief to him. But he did not let go of Joanna, although she could feel the tension in his body at her words.

"Why?" he asked. "Why did she feel you should be indebted to her, and hers?"

"I am of Wales," Joanna said simply. "She told me that to wed you, willingly, and allow myself to be yours and to bear your children, would be a betrayal of all my ancestors. She forced me to promise I would obey her." There were tears in her eyes. "I agreed to do as she had said, but I have no intention whatsoever, my lord, of obeying her. I never had, I swear that to you now, by all I hold sacred."

"And why is that?" he asked gently, and she smiled and shook her head.

"She tried to buy me through threats. You have not tried to buy me at all. You did not even try to force me. You treated me kindly and have promised to love and cherish me. I am your wife. I hope to bear our children. If you will have me after this. She has...connections with many people and in many lands. One of her most trusted and loyal messengers traveled to Italy, and brought back poison." Richard's mouth twisted. The Italians were recognised as the masters of the art of poison, knowing of many which were totally untraceable. "Lady Margaret gave it to me, and made me swear I would ensure, personally, that you drank it." She shook her head, the tears spilling down her cheeks. "She told me that if I did not do as she said within a month of my marriage, my younger sister would die. She would see to that herself. And if my sister dies, my father will not care enough to even try to discover the cause."

"Your father – would not care?"

"No." She shook her head. "He has no use for girl children. Only sons." There was the tiniest suggestion of malice in her face. "He has only one son." She knew, but did not say, that if Lady Beaufort had threatened the safety of that child, her father would either have had the woman killed, or had that proved impossible, he would have personally made sure Joanna obeyed her.

Richard nodded slowly, his face grave. "She wanted you to help kill me? That is treason. On her part – not yours. Do you still have the poison with you?"

Joanna nodded her head, and rose gracefully from the bed to move to a chest across the room. She lifted the lid and took out a package in a velvet bag. Inside, there was a wooden casket wrapped in linen. She sat on the bed and carefully

unwrapped it, then opened it cautiously. Inside, cushioned in thick velvet padding, lay a small glass vial. Her eyes met his over the casket.

"I swear to you, Dickon, that I would never have used this – not even to save any other lives. She said I should ensure you drank it, and that within a short time you would sicken and appear to die from natural causes. She said there was no way I would be suspected. But when you do not die – do not even sicken – she will start to wonder why I have not done as she told me. What are we going to do?"

Richard sat and stared at the casket. Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond. The saintly, ambitious mother of Henry Tudor. The woman who had devoted her life to causing his death. The woman who.... He silenced his thoughts and looked gravely at Joanna. "You could have done as she wished. As you say you would not have been suspected. Your sister would have been safe and you would have been free of me."

"No." She shook her head and her eyes met his. "I do not wish to be free of you, my lord king. Not ever."

Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and wife of William, Lord Stanley, was devastatingly unhappy. After the death in battle of her son she had considered it prudent to retire, as the king had wished, to a convent. However she had no intention of staying there. Even from seclusion she had schemed to have her revenge. Since the marriage of Richard and Joanna Llewellyn she had waited, with growing impatience, to hear of his death.

No such news had reached her. He was not even sickening. In actual fact, in the three weeks since his marriage the man had thrived. With the advent of peace to the land he had begun to throw himself whole heartedly into plans and schemes to overhaul the justice system, the tax system and the trade between England and the continent, to name just a few.

Sequestered in her convent, the mother of the Welsh invader had hoped to remain out of the king's mind and thoughts. For as long as he lived, that was. She had held high hopes that that would not be for very long. Now she was beginning to be not merely impatient to hear of his death, but concerned that she might never do so.

Surely Joanna would have had opportunities and plenty to proffer the poisoned cup she should have to the man. Why had she not done so? Why had she failed a grieving mother? By now Richard should have begun to sicken and fail rapidly in health. But there had been no signs of any such sickness.

She did not consider the possibility that Joanna, resenting the tactics she had used to acquire her cooperation, might have divulged her plot to Richard. Margaret had not considered the young woman capable of such an act. Clearly however she had not done her part as she should have. It was definitely time to remind the high and mighty Lady Joanna Llewellyn of Wales of her responsibilities to her young sister. If she failed, the child would pay for her failure. With her life. She did not know that the young girl had by now been taken into the protection of the crown and was in fact safely out of her reach.

Carefully, Margaret Beaufort drafted a letter to the queen and sent it by a trusted messenger.

The response, an invitation to court, was unexpected but nonetheless welcome. Margaret Beaufort looked forward with anticipation to her visit. She hoped to be there in person to grieve at the death of the king.

Chapter Three

"She lies." Margaret Beaufort held herself erect and stared coldly back at the two people who confronted her.

"I think not, my lady." Richard III returned her gaze courteously, but there was ice in his expression. "You have plotted treason against the crown. Not content with working with your son to incite rebellion against the properly crowned king of the country –"

"That is a lie!" Margaret snapped angrily. "You betrayed your brother by claiming his children to be bastards and them having them foully murdered." She was white with rage now and rushed on. "It is no treason to depose one who has acted in such a manner. And as for my son – I know you had him murdered most cruelly, as you did your wife's first husband and then the lady herself when she was no longer of any value to you."

"Shame on you, my lady." For the first time, Joanna stood and responded to the older woman's furious accusations. "You tried to make me poison the king. That is treason."

"What?" Margaret was appalled to realise Joanna had not merely failed to do her bidding, but had obviously betrayed her.

"And you will pay for it with your life," Richard added, his voice soft but deadly. "You have lied, Lady Margaret. You have been plotting against the crown since before the death of your son. You attempted to convince your husband and his brother to betray me on the field of battle –" It was largely due to the fact that the Stanleys had chosen to remain loyal to the king rather than to change sides during the battle that Henry Tudor, the would-be king, had perished there. "– but they showed more loyalty to the crown that you had expected."

"My husband and his brother are fools!" Lady Margaret spat, her face contorted with rage. "So are you – and so is she! She is a traitor to the Tudor cause, and may she live to regret her actions as your wife herself did –"

"Don't you dare speak to me of my wife!" Richard's face was now pale with suppressed rage. "She was the mother of my son and I loved her dearly. You are not worthy so much as to speak her name." He forced himself to stand still, recognising the anger that would have caused him to raise his hand against a woman old enough to be his own lady mother. He turned away backwards towards the throne and did

not see Margaret's hand reach into the sleeve of her long gown. But Joanna did, and she leapt forwards, screaming aloud.

"Dickon! My lord! Beware of her!"

His fast reaction saved him, as the dagger the woman had raised to strike at him missed its mark, and he caught her wrist, forcing the weapon to fall to the floor. There was now no escape for her. Attacking, even attempting to attack, the king was treason in anyone's eyes. Although the trio had been at the end of the room there had been many there present who had been witnesses to her action, if not to the words that had preceded that action.

As she was borne away by the guards who had also rushed forwards the shrill and hysterical imprecations of Lady Margaret Beaufort carried back down the corridors of the palace to curse him and all his offspring for ever. The iron control under which she had held herself for so long had finally shattered.

"My lord king." The low voice of Elizabeth Woodville, his brother's widow, broke into the silence that had settled over the hall. "I would speak with you and your lady wife." The beautiful, but coldly haughty woman looked into his face and inclined her head slightly. She and Richard had never liked each other, but what she had just seen and heard encouraged her to believe the man was not as evil as she had come to imagine. "Where other ears may not hear us, I beg of you."

Richard returned her gaze and nodded slowly. "My lady. Joanna." He indicated a curtained doorway behind them and then turned back to the room full of courtiers and attendants. "Hear me, all of you. The countess of Richmond will be tried in a court of law for her various acts of treason. Until then she will be held securely and under guard in the Tower." His face was still pale but his voice was firm. "At her trial we shall all hear what she has to say in her own defence. I bid you all a good night."

He turned and walked from the room, his bearing erect and under control.

Elizabeth Woodville awaited him, her face streaked with tears. Joanna sat by her side and looked up at the king as he approached them.

"My lady Elizabeth?" he asked courteously and she lifted her head.

"Margaret Beaufort has always plotted against you, my lord king. Since even before my husband died. She wanted to see her Henry on the throne."

"Yes."

"She asked me to have my daughter betrothed to him. Even when the truth about Eleanor Butler was known he still wanted her hand." She looked up at him and smiled gently. "I knew about *her*, you know. Edward told me, just after we were wed. But neither he nor I believed anything would ever come of it. He did not imagine you or anyone else would ever find out that they had been betrothed. And when she died we thought it would not matter anymore."

"My brother always did have an eye for a beautiful woman," Richard said softly and she nodded and continued.

"*She* knew. Do not ask me how, Dickon, but she found out. She had her spies everywhere. After – when my sons were both in the Tower I feared for them. Not just for what you could have done to them –"

"They were my kin. My brother's children. I swear to you, Elizabeth, that I never intended for any harm to come to them, to either of them –"

"I know that." She looked at him candidly. "Tell me, just what *did* you intend to happen to them?"

Richard pulled a face and moved around restlessly. "They were bastards. But high born ones. I – planned to keep them safely, and to arrange for them to be taken quietly into other families, where they could live in peace. Your elder son – he would not have lived long, in any case. He had a disease of the bones and even when they were in the Tower he found movement increasingly painful and difficult. Richard – your younger son – he would have made a good king, if only my brother had had the good sense not to have entered into that marriage agreement with the Lady Eleanor all those years ago." He fiddled with the rings on his fingers as he spoke. "Our brother George knew, and he would have betrayed you both."

"Only he died," Elizabeth whispered and Richard looked straight at her.

"Yes. At your husband's order."

Joanna had been listening to them both and her face was pale.

"And the boys?" she asked, almost whispering. "What happened to the boys, Dickon?"

He rubbed his face and turned away from them. Both women watched him with pity and concern until he swung back to them. He spoke flatly, but with pain in his eyes.

"They were poisoned, and buried in the Tower."

Elizabeth Woodville looked up at him, grief and pain in her eyes.

"And – who did this thing?"

"Will you believe me, my lady, if I tell you what I know?" His voice dropped. "Do you need to know who it was who did it?"

"Yes." She looked straight back at him. "*I must* know." He did not look at her and she jumped up and ran to him. "My lord, if you know you must tell me, and now! Then I can sleep at nights, knowing the truth of what happened, and why and how. Do you understand what it is like for a mother to lose her sons and not know what fate befell them? It is agony and pain every day of my life. I do not know what happened to them and I must know. I must know everything!"

"I was responsible." The words clearly cost him an effort, and having said them, he swung away from the both.

"What?" Joanna ran to him, touching his shoulder. "No! No, Dickon, I do not believe you did this thing."

There was a bitter expression on his face as he turned back to them. His voice was flat and hard. "You misunderstand me, Joanna. I did not say I *did* it. I did not even cause it to be done. I am nonetheless responsible for what happened. The boys were in my safekeeping and I failed them. I told Buckingham that they were a complication. I said I would have to think long and hard about exactly what to do. For their safety and mine. But *their* continued safety was not in his best interests. He was in communication with Henry Tudor –"

"Via Lady Margaret, I presume?" Elizabeth said, her voice now cold and deadly, and he nodded.

"Always, always, that woman has plotted against me and mine. Ever since she first came to court and probably before that." He was angry now, but the anger was directed at himself for having allowed her freedom for so long. It would have been a wise and politic move, he now knew in hindsight, for him to have quietly had the woman strangled or otherwise silenced. It would have gone against all he knew and believed in, to have done such a thing to a woman, but he now regretted he had not done so when he had had the opportunity.

"Yes, my lady Elizabeth, she sent the communications between them all. Buckingham arranged for the boys to be poisoned, and he plotted with Henry Tudor to overthrow me. But he was beaten in battle and executed before he could speak to me. I knew what he was going to tell me, you see, but I didn't want to have to listen to it. I knew what they had done between them. It worked out so well for them all. Everyone else believed – and they still all *do* believe that it was I who had the boys killed."

He sat then, his face dejectedly in his hands. "I was betrayed by those I thought close and true to me."

Joanna touched his shoulder gently. "My lord, we both know you speak the truth. And at her trial Margaret Beaufort will speak and tell the whole country that truth. You will be vindicated and known to be innocent, I promise you."

He looked at them, from one to the other. "Thank you." He raised an eyebrow in wry self mockery. "That you both believe me."

"You are the king, and my husband," Joanna said simply, and behind her Elizabeth Woodville nodded in agreement.

"Richard, I and mine have never liked you, and I doubt I ever shall. But I do trust you, and I do believe what you have said here. I thank you." Turning, she glided from the room, her face now more serene and calm than it had been for a long time.

The treason trial of Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and wife of Lord Stanley, was a sensation. She screamed imprecations and abuse at Richard, Joanna, her own husband and all of the court officials. Clearly, she knew she was doomed and had decided therefore to admit the duplicity of which she had been

guilty over the years. In her eyes, her actions had however been not sins or crimes but her right and proper obligations to ensure her son became king. She did not so much confess as boast, claiming her God given right to do all she saw necessary to bring her son Henry to the throne of England.

Richard sat and listened impassively, until her final shocking admission. Margaret stood erect and stiff and regarded him with a smile. It was a smile Joanna hoped never again to see on any human face. She, like everyone else present, had become horribly aware that the woman was speaking the truth and not merely making idle boasts. There was deadly earnestness in her face and voice.

"The king's wife Anne also died at my bidding."

Richard half started out of his seat, his expression white and murderous. If she had been within his reach, he would have killed the woman unhesitatingly. Joanna put her hand on his sleeve and he froze, then turned to her, enraged.

"My lord," she whispered, "I beg of you, allow the court to deal with her." She swallowed. "There would be no honour, I swear to you, in the king of England dispensing revenge – not justice – with his own hand. Allow it to be done properly, and legally."

He nodded at her, let his breath out in a painful sigh and took her hand in his. "Thank you, my lady." His voice was very low and only she heard him. He turned to the court and nodded abruptly. "Continue."

"How can that be true?" asked the head of the council. "The Queen Anne, surely, died of a disease of the lungs? Her doctors said that."

Margaret's mouth twisted in disdain. "The Italians, as you are all aware, have devised and perfected poisons of all kinds. One mimics the lung disease of which she died. It was simply a matter of having her partake of it on frequent occasions. Being often at court myself, I was able to oversee the matter." She gave Richard a truly evil smile. "Personally."

The remainder of the trial was mercifully brief. Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond, was sentenced to be executed two days hence. Richard listened impassively, scarcely aware of Joanna's hand on his.

When Lord Stanley begged an audience with the king Richard agreed to see him but merely sat and regarded him coldly.

"If you have come to ask for clemency for your wife I suggest you do not waste either your time or mine."

"I had hoped –" the man began but Richard cut him short.

"Your lady wife has been responsible over the years for any number of plots against the crown. She intrigued with Buckingham and with her own son to displace me. Not content with having the sons of King Edward murdered *and* in such a way as to throw the apparent guilt upon me, she caused the death of my wife." His face was white and bitter. "For that alone, Lord Stanley, I would myself personally and happily see to her death. Rest assured, she will die quickly and with the minimum of

pain. Nonetheless, she *will* die. If you had controlled her better she would never have come to this."

Stanley looked at his king, and bowed his head, seeing the pain and anger in the other man's face. "Sire. I – shall retire to my estate in the country."

Richard nodded. "It will be well, my lord, if you do not come to court again for a long time." They nodded at each other and Stanley withdrew, leaving his wife to her fate.

Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond, died bravely, firmly convinced that she was bound for heaven and her just rewards. Everything she had done had been for the glory of her son. She could not logically see how God and the saints could judge harshly a mother's love. After all, was not one of the cornerstones of the religion she followed a shining example of the love of a mother for her son? She walked to the block on Tower Green without a tremor, removing her sombre black and white headdress and handing it to her attendant. To the headsman she offered a small purse of silver coins and when he begged her pardon she willingly gave it. Smiling, her serene and certain anticipation of heaven and her loved son in her eyes, she rested her head on the block, praying aloud. She had reached '*Forgive us our trespasses*' when the axe fell.

Watching from a latticed window, Elizabeth Woodville let her beautiful mouth curve in satisfaction. Behind her, her daughter Elizabeth and Queen Joanna were grave and silent as they held hands. In the king's favourite niece Joanna had found a faithful and trusted friend who never by so much as one word or action betrayed her envy of the queen. The younger Elizabeth never married, but spent all her life in the royal household. Her sisters were either wed or retired to a convent, but she wished for neither of these lifestyles.

In all the years she lived at court she never again either touched Richard or was alone with him. Elizabeth of York, who might otherwise have been the mother of royalty, found all her joy in seeing the firm and happy bonds between him and Joanna.

Eleven months after her marriage Joanna gave birth to England's first prince, whom they named John Edward. When Joanna, still fatigued from her labour, blinked at him in query as he held the baby to him Richard smiled in that wry way he had.

"There has not been a King John of England for over two hundred years." His mouth twisted slightly but there was humour in his eyes. "Our son's namesake was not a good king, but maybe this John will live to bring honour to the name. I, after all, have been fortunate enough to have lived to see the honour returned to my own."

Joanna smiled and nodded at him. "So be it, my lord. But our *next* son should be named for his father, do you not think?" He sat down beside her and took her hand, smiling into her face.

"And how long do you imagine it will be, my wife, before our next son arrives?"

"Maybe a year. Not much longer." She smiled broadly. "Sooner, if my father has any say in the matter." They shared an affectionate if brief embrace and he left her to the ministrations of her women.

Young John Edward Plantagenet ended up with four siblings; three sisters and a young brother named Richard Edmund Arthur. His sisters were Joanna Cecily, Elizabeth Rose and Kathryn Anne.

When John was sixteen he and the Infanta Katherine of Aragon were married. Richard and Joanna survived well into the sixteenth century to see the birth of their first granddaughter Elizabeth.

Interestingly, the name Margaret was never again given to one of the daughters of England.

Chapter Four

A Right Royal Frame-up

Up until the time I encountered Josephine Tey's novel *The Daughter of Time*, I doubt I could have given you three facts about Richard the Third. I suppose I must have heard of him somewhere along the way but, casting my memory back I don't think I ever learnt much about the man. We tended to Australian history – long lists of explorers, where and when they explored and discovered (and often perished). As for English history, I can remember trying to memorise dates and inventions regarding the Agrarian and Industrial Revolutions for my Junior Exam, and deciding firmly to drop History and Geography in fourth year high school. (This, by the way, was back in the 1960s.)

As for Richard the Third, I knew there was a Shakespearian play about him, and I had heard, albeit vaguely, about the 'Poor Little Princes in the Tower', but that was about all. My knowledge of this English king, I confess, was zilch. I knew a little more about Richard the First – the Lion Heart – due to my interest in the Robin Hood legends.

However, when I read *The Daughter of Time*, I was fascinated and impressed and wanted to know more about the *third* King Richard! The book, for those who have never read it, is written as a detective story. A policeman, immobilised in hospital with a broken leg, is brought pictures by a friend and starts trying to find out about Richard and the deaths (presumed murders) of his nephews. The evidence

brought to light tends not only to clear Richard, but to suggest there is, in spite of History, no case against him at all.

A visit to the local library provided me with very little more; the encyclopedias tend to inform one of only the bare 'facts' – or *are* they facts? – that Richard usurped his brother's throne and had his poor little nephews cruelly done to death – and then got his own just deserts, when Henry Tudor defeated him at Bosworth and became Henry VII of England, and eventually father of Henry VIII, of whom I *had* heard. Well, who hasn't?

Well, that really wasn't much use. I consulted one of the enormous volumes that listed books in print and found lots available on Richard III. Weeding out the texts on him from those on the play, I then requested the librarian to get hold of some for me. Here a word of praise to the local library staff, who accepted my orders without batting an eye lid. Well, I suppose when I have asked for books on such diverse people as Yuri Gagarin and L.M. Montgomery, wanting to know about Richard the Third is not at all strange.

I also had a chat with one of the librarians who had read *The Daughter of Time* and she mentioned several other books she had encountered. I ordered Paul Murray Kendall's biography of Richard and also the novel *We Speak No Treason* (by Rosemary Hawley Jarman) and went away, deciding to dig out my Shakespeare and read the play myself.

Obviously, Richard the Third was *not* one of Shakespeare's heroes. Actually I have the distinct impression that any word of praise for the man would have, in Tudor times, been asking for the axe – literally! Brilliant playwright as Shakespeare was, his play is a *fiction*, with a depraved, but oh so fiendishly clever Richard! And Sir Laurence Olivier did him so well.

There have been many historical novels written about Richard and the disappearance of his nephews. I have read that his was one of the most researched but least documented of reigns. He was King for little more than two years, and then fell at Bosworth Field, the last English King to die in battle. The main question about his rule – and one that appears never to have been answered to everyone's satisfaction is – what *did* happen to his nephews?

They were the two sons of Edward IV, elder brother of Richard. Upon Edward's death his son Edward V would have been King, but he was still a child and Richard was named Protector. When Edward IV had married Elizabeth Woodville, who had been married before and had children from that previous marriage, there had been dissension and unhappiness in the royal family. Some of them viewed the woman as nothing more than a gold digger. She and Richard never did care all that much for each other, but he never treated her harshly, even after Edward's death. Consideration of Richard's lenient – compared with what it could have been – treatment of Edward IV's mistress Jane Shore indicates he might even have been somewhat of a softy where women were concerned.

Shortly after Edward IV's death, evidence was produced to indicate that the marriage between him and Elizabeth was bigamous as he had earlier entered into a marriage contract with a lady (Eleanor Butler) now conveniently deceased. But as she had been alive at the time of his marriage to Elizabeth, the children of that

marriage were declared bastards and ineligible to ascend the throne. (They didn't mince their words in the fifteenth century.) So Richard became King. The children of his elder brother George had earlier been declared ineligible to rule, due to his previous treason. Young Edward V and his brother Richard of Shrewsbury disappeared into the Tower.

So...did they die there? Or were they spirited away somewhere for their own safety? What happened to them?

No one knows for sure. Bear in mind however, that in those days the Tower of London was not merely a prison; it was also a Royal residence.

One theory is that the boys were disposed of by Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, either at Richard's orders or on his own initiative. Later Buckingham rebelled against Richard and was executed. Reasons for his rebellion have never been clear. It has also been suggested Henry Tudor, later to become Henry VII, may have had a hand in it. Possible suspects include John Morton, Lord Stanley or his wife Margaret Beaufort (the mother of Henry Tudor) and of course Richard himself. Many history texts simply state the 'fact' that he was responsible.

The accusation against Richard did not come for many years, until after the death of the person presumed to be a prime suspect for the actual murders (if they were murders, that is). This man (Sir James Tyrell) was however executed for quite another crime. There was no specific contemporary accusation of Richard, no, not even by Henry VII, who acquired the throne of England primarily by virtue of having defeated Richard in battle on Bosworth field. Henry did have claims via his ancestry to the throne, but they were quite distinctly tainted by illegitimacy. Once King, he married Elizabeth (Plantagenet), sister of the boys who had disappeared in the Tower. *He* said it was to unite the Yorks and Lancasters, who had battled on and off for a number of years in the War of the Roses. This Elizabeth was to become mother of Henry VIII and grandmother of Elizabeth the First.

Don't you find it odd that it didn't bother Henry to marry someone who, with her brothers, had been declared illegitimate? (Although she was legitimised in order to be married to Henry.) Maybe he knew they were dead; had absolute and certain knowledge of the fact. If so – *how*? It is interesting that during his reign and also that of his son Henry VIII, there were quite a few (understatement!) executions of people who just might have had some sort of claim to the throne. As for his mother in law Elizabeth Woodville – the same Elizabeth who had always been treated kindly by Richard, who had supposedly had her sons murdered – Henry Tudor eventually had *her* banished to a convent where she died. Interesting, huh?

All of which points to the already suggested possibility that it was Henry VII, first Tudor King and founder of a dynasty, who was the actual murderer of those two innocent boys. Not that he would have done the deed in person, of course.

During his entire reign, Henry had very little to say on the fate of the children. One would think that one of his first acts as King would have been to clear up the mystery and make some sort of formal precise accusation against his predecessor. It wasn't.

One of his first acts however, was to attempt to have his reign predated to the day *before* the Battle of Bosworth, in order to have everyone who had fought for Richard declared traitors. Does the word 'devious' spring to mind?

The short reign of Richard the Third has left us with a puzzle still unanswered. Was he a murderer, or a man who had the potential, but neither the time nor the opportunity to unite England and make it a great country? About Richard's expertise, ability and intelligence there is no doubt. He was efficient and organised, if maybe a little too trusting of some people who were not trustworthy at all. Among these one would have to number Lord Stanley, already mentioned, together with his family connections. Lord Stanley took part in the battle of Bosworth, coming in on *Henry's* side after Richard had anticipated his support.

Upon Richard's death he was sincerely mourned by the people of York, who had earlier grieved with him upon the untimely deaths of his son and wife. Richard, it would appear, could in fact be a tragic figure and not necessarily the monster he has been made out to be.

Much of this evil reputation, admittedly, is due to the Shakespearian play and the 'history' of Richard attributed to Thomas More – who was a child of maybe five years old at the time of Richard's reign. Consider that – *his* report is based on hearsay.

I cannot help but wonder – if Richard the Third had won on that long ago day on Bosworth Field, what would England and indeed the whole world have been like today? Picture it – no Tudor dynasty, no Henry VIII marrying with morbid frequency and creating a schism in the Roman Church, no Bloody Mary, no Elizabeth the First, maybe even no William Shakespeare.

But if there *had* been a William Shakespeare, one thing is for sure – his play about Richard the Third would certainly not have read as it does today!

Chapter Five

Proof by Guilt

August, 2052

Mortimer Friseley was nauseatingly rich, totally fanatical about the innocence of Richard III and a thoroughly obnoxious person. No, I didn't like him. But what happened to him I wouldn't have wished onto anyone, not even my worst enemy.

He wasn't just rich; he was also a genius and a very eccentric inventor. *And* he was obsessed with a single aim, that of proving to the world (whether or not the world cared) that the widely accepted but possibly inaccurate 'historical fact' that Richard had murdered his nephews was but a piece of Tudor slander. To be honest, few people nowadays even know who Richard III was, let alone care. And in the past

the only people who have been *really* interested one way or another have been either historians or members of the Richard III Society.

Mortimer's obsessive behaviour had led to his being expelled from every branch of the Society still in existence. They like enthusiasts but blind fanatics prone to embarrassing public displays are not welcome. They give us a bad name. Yeah, I also am an enthusiast. I never have been able to picture Richard as a murderer, and especially not of the children of his beloved and idolised elder brother.

Anyway, back to Mortimer Friseley – rich, a genius and a man with an obsession. He designed, built and tested a time machine. You can see what's coming, can't you? His sole intention in doing so was to travel back to the fifteenth century to discover and document what had really happened to the little King Edward V and his younger brother Richard. Then Mortimer would return triumphant and with proof incontrovertible of Richard III's innocence to the twenty first century.

The trouble was, it didn't work out that way at all. In fact, what happened was not only personally shattering to Mortimer, but has had the result of totally confounding me and all my conventional complacent views of time and its nature. Put bluntly, I'd never given the matter one ounce of serious thought before. Now I have horrible and very confusing thoughts about time, cause and effect and a lot of other things. I'd like to blame Mortimer Friseley, but he already feels absolutely terrible about the whole matter himself.

He feels so bad, in fact, that currently he's curled up in a catatonic state in a very luxurious but nonetheless highly secure padded cell – whoops – *suite* – in the National Psychiatric Unit. We don't get many severe mental problems in this day and age. But when we do, severe is hardly an adequate term of description. He is, to put it bluntly, bonkers. And unlikely ever to recover.

Friseley's pet theory had always been that the Duke of Buckingham, probably acting under secret instructions from Henry Tudor, had killed the nephews sometime between Richard's coronation and his (Buckingham's) ill fated rebellion. His plan was therefore to travel directly back to the time of Edward IV's death, then skip forwards a week or so at a time, observing, until he found out exactly what had happened to them.

He was all prepared when he called me in to be sole witness in this age to the anticipated success of this spectacular venture. He had the best recording devices that money could buy, and he knew how to use them to best effect.

The time machine itself was a most odd looking device. He'd used the metal frame and chassis of an ancient Mini Minor but had stripped all of the interior fittings except for the driver's seat and removed the doors. The drive mechanism for both spatial and temporal movement occupied the engine space and the anti gravity unit he'd fitted ensured smooth travel, particularly the landings. After all, we weren't quite sure how ground levels had changed over the past six hundred years. And he did require a certain degree of directional mobility.

Mortimer tested the machine with a quick flip back to New Year's Eve more than fifty years ago and we both witnessed at first hand the pandemonium as Big Ben chimed in the beginning of the twenty first century – years before either of us

were even born. I still have the recording he made and gave me of the celebrations. It was an exhilarating experience.

His fifteenth century evidence however he himself totally destroyed before taking the nose dive into catatonia that he's still in. The machine too. He destroyed that as well. I can't say that I blame him. I wish he'd never decided to build such a devilish device. But maybe, predestination being what it is, he *had* to. If I think about that possibility too deeply I also shall go crazy. To continue....

Flushed with the success of his trial run and with anticipation of the glory that would be showered upon him when he returned, he waved and called a cheerful farewell from the open cabin of the machine. He had preset the timing device to return from his mission in five minutes by our time. But in those five minutes he would travel backwards, then forwards, nearly six hundred years, to observe the events that had fascinated and inspired him for almost all of his life. He could spend as long as he wanted in the past; his return regardless would be in only five minutes from his departure by our measure of time.

A homing device he had fitted would ensure the exact coordinates of his return – smack bang in the centre of his vast and expensively equipped laboratory.

Not just that, but he would return with proof positive of Richard III's innocence. No longer would there be any justification for his image as the ultimate Wicked Uncle. His memory (and incidentally that of Mortimer Friseley also) would be covered in glory.

So much for optimistic theory.

I sat down with a glass of Mortimer's expensive brandy and sipped it. The machine whirred, shimmered and disappeared into the past. True to his word, Mortimer was back in five minutes precisely. It had been a brief (by my experience of time passing) but for him a much longer and totally shattering trip, with horrifying consequences for not only Mortimer himself, but many other people and maybe even history himself. He really should have taken me with him.

As I watched, the time machine shimmered and sparkled then solidified into existence in the here and now. And Mortimer Friseley, sobbing and almost incoherent, fell from the machine and staggered to the nearest chair into which he literally collapsed. I stared, gasped and then poured him a generous measure of brandy which he seized and downed in one gulp. Then he stared at me, white faced. He was dishevelled and his clothes were dirty and torn.

"I was right! It was Buckingham, I always knew it was him! He was going to do it himself, personally. James Tyrell was only ever a Tudor scapegoat!"

"What about the boys?" I asked.

He slumped in his chair, limp and dejected but wild eyed. He didn't look wealthy and obnoxious any more. He looked positively devastated.

"I rescued them." He hung his head in despair. "I *tried* to rescue them, after they were confined to the Tower. I got them into the machine. They were both asleep, drugged, I think. Then I tried to work out what would be the best thing to do. I

decided to go forwards a couple of months, to get them to Richard and give them into his care. But – it didn't work out that way."

We should have talked about this, about the danger of interfering, *before* he left. Time travel is *dangerous*.

As soon as he'd got the two children into the time machine things had begun to go horribly wrong. He hadn't experienced any problems on his first flight, but of course that had been a jump of only fifty years.

Six hundred years had been too far. There must have been some sort of damage done, possibly to the stabiliser units, but he hadn't become aware of the fact until it was too late. He'd got started again but had discovered, to his absolute horror, that he couldn't halt the machine in order to deliver the boys to their uncle.

No wonder that after his unsuccessful rebellion Buckingham had begged so frantically to speak with King Richard. He had wanted to tell him that he hadn't harmed the boys, but that they had simply and totally inexplicably vanished. Even Buckingham couldn't have imagined where they'd disappeared to. They had gone with Mortimer Friseley. If only I'd insisted on going with him. I might have been able to stop him from interfering. Maybe.

The damaged and unsafe time machine vibrated, shuddered and wheezed its unsteady way back towards the twenty first century with its precious and anachronistic cargo.

By this time they were being jolted into consciousness. According to Mortimer's gabbled account they were more than a mite hysterical when they awoke.

He'd thought they'd be secure enough in the tiny cabin space until he got them to safety. But they were so terrified at what was to them totally incomprehensible that they must have gone berserk. Their surroundings, the noise and vibration and Mortimer himself only fuelled their medieval fears of witchcraft.

Somewhere – *sometime* – around the middle of the twentieth century, Edward and Richard Plantagenet fell from the time machine, into the chaos that was London in the World War II period known as The Blitz. And Mortimer's machine, with its frantic operator unable to alter anything, thundered insecurely and unstoppably on through time. Irretrievably, the children of Edward IV were lost forever.

So was Richard III's reputation.

If Mortimer himself hadn't destroyed the recordings he'd brought back, I think I would have. Of course, when he'd apparently calmed down, he started thinking about what had happened, and more significantly, about *his* part in it. No wonder he went off the deep end.

His action, with the highest of motives (at least from Mortimer's point of view); that of proving inaccurate Richard's murderous image, had in fact been a factor – if not *the* factor – responsible for causing it in the first place. His misguided attempt to rescue the boys had damned their uncle as their murderer. I shall never be able to forget Mortimer's horror when he realised what he had done. It couldn't have been worse for him if he'd witnessed Richard himself actually doing the dirty deed.

But – the children of Edward IV disappeared *more than five hundred years* before Mortimer Friseley had even been born, to grow up and construct his damned machine.

How, I ask myself over and over again, could the actions of a man from the twenty first century affect an event in the fifteenth century? How could this possibly be so?

I've got to forget what he told me. I would like to be able to convince myself that it never happened and that he himself had hallucinated and dreamed up his disastrous 'rescue' of the little princes. I must forget that I actually saw the evidence Mortimer had returned with, the recordings that showed Buckingham plotting and the images of those intent on murder.

But I shall never, *never* be able to forget the sounds of their terrified screams as they woke to panic and then plunged from the time machine into oblivion in the twentieth century.

Chapter Six

Margaret Beaufort

This lady has to be one of my least favourite historical characters. Most people have probably never heard of her, but without her, there would have been no glorious Tudor reign.

She was born in 1443 and died in 1509. One of her ancestors was King Edward III of England and in her lifetime she was wed four times, including a marriage contract when she was only a child. Her second marriage was to Edmund Tudor and at the age of thirteen she became a widow and a mother in rapid succession. Later in life she married twice again but it would appear unlikely either of these marriages was consummated. Edmund Tudor's mother was Catherine of France, widow of King Henry V of England.

Margaret Beaufort was the mother of Henry VII, grandmother of Henry VIII and great grandmother of Mary, Edward VI and Elizabeth. She took a very dominant role in the court of Henry VII and set out many rules for court behaviour and protocol. She also endowed colleges of learning at Cambridge University, supported the arts and was a very intelligent and well educated woman. Reputedly she was also very pious and virtuous.

In my rather cynical opinion, too good to be true!

Philippa Gregory's book *The Red Queen* tells Margaret's life in her own words, and is a fascinating read. Her Margaret comes across as a single minded fanatic; her one aim in life to place her precious only son on the throne of England.

The story – and it is of course only a fictional treatment of historical events – implies Margaret’s involvement in the disappearance from the Tower of the two sons of Edward IV. This disappearance has generally, although not unanimously, been attributed to Edward’s younger brother, Richard III. It *is* a fact that Margaret was involved in plotting with her son and his supporters to overthrow Richard. Her husband Lord Stanley took part in the Battle of Bosworth in which Richard was killed, opting to change sides during the battle. His wife’s influence, perhaps? She also worked with Edward’s widow Elizabeth to marry off her daughter (also named Elizabeth) to Henry. By this marriage the Tudor dynasty rose to power, lasting until the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603. (another Elizabeth!)

Margaret Beaufort has the reputation of saintliness and motherly devotion. But she might just as possibly have been a conniving and scheming female who would stop at nothing to do what she considered the will of God. In Philippa Gregory’s book it appears that in Margaret’s eyes, the will of God and the will of Margaret were one and the same thing! She died the same year her grandson ascended to the throne, certain that the gates of Heaven would open wide to welcome her. I wonder...

As for myself, I wrote a short story entitled *The Beaufort Solution*, in which I had Richard win at Bosworth and totally change history. Margaret features in this, not kindly, as you can imagine!

Chapter Seven

The Face of Evil

(written about the cover illustration, a painting of Richard III)

This is the face of evil. This man, dressed in velvet and wearing a fortune in jewels, is the ultimate Wicked Uncle, murderer of small children and helpless men, both young and old. This is the man who would have married his niece, after his wife died, probably at his own hand. See the fear and guilt in his bearing, the dread in his eyes and the restlessness of his soul. Truly an evil man.

Or was he?

The catalogue of his crimes is great, but for not one single one of them is there proof other than hearsay and circumstantial evidence. Any case brought against him today would be thrown out for lack of proof. There are in fact many witnesses who place others at the scene of the crime. His life history by itself could prejudice a court in his favour. This is the man who honoured his mother, revered his elder brother, was famed for the fairness of his rule, and was honoured after his death by the city of York. His motto was *Loyalty binds me*.

This man was Richard III – the last king of England to die on a battle field. King Henry VII – the man who took his place – then attempted to have the date of *his* reign predated to the day before the battle of Bosworth. That way he could have

everyone who had followed Richard declared traitor and their estates forfeit to the crown. He did not succeed in this, although he did succeed in blackening Richard's name for ever.

Richard's most famous crime was that of murdering his own nephews, the Little Princes in the Tower, so that he could be King instead. If he did, he was indeed one of the most extraordinarily successful murderers in history. The remains of the princes have never been found. Certainly, skeletons have been found in the Tower of London, but none that could be positively identified as theirs. When Henry VII came to the throne, he did not make a direct accusation against Richard. Instead, he married the sister of the boys who had disappeared in such mysterious circumstances.

It would certainly have been to Henry's advantage to produce the remains and witnesses to prove Richard's guilt. But it was not until nearly twenty years after the crime that there was a statement about the disappearance of the boys. Conveniently, the man who made it, admitting responsibility for committing the crime on Richard's orders, had already been executed for quite another crime.

In Shakespeare's play Richard III was a wicked and devious man. He perpetrated the myth that the man was a hunchback, misshapen of body and soul. Murders and crimes a plenty were attributed to the man.

Sir Thomas More, whose history of King Richard was widely accepted as gospel truth for many years, was a child of six at the time of the battle of Bosworth. According to him, Richard murdered:

Henry VI, the feeble minded king whom Richard's elder brother Edward succeeded,
Richard's own brother Clarence,
his nephews Edward V and Richard, Duke of York,
Edward, son of Henry VI and the first husband of his (Richard's) wife Anne,
and then Anne herself after their son died and she could bear no more children.

All More's evidence was based solely on hearsay. Reliable? What do you think?

Even today there are people who view Richard as the personification of evil, and others who are not all that far short of placing a halo upon his head. The era of the last of the Plantagenet kings is one of the most widely researched – and least documented – of any times.

Many of the written records were destroyed on the say so of – surprise, surprise – King Henry VII, his successor.

Interestingly, if Richard had murdered his nephews, or had them killed, there remained other people with a claim to the throne more substantial than his. However, by the end of the reign of Henry VII, many of these people had been executed for

various reasons. Others died or were executed during the reign of his son, Henry VIII.

To this day no one *knows* whether he was incredibly wicked, or merely incredibly unfortunate. Those who uphold his innocence are divided as to where the blame actually belongs. Various theories suggest the Duke of Buckingham, Henry VII or even Henry's reputedly saintly mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort.

Richard's death however was a turning point in British history. Henry VII was succeeded by his son Henry VIII, who is most famous for his six wives and his cataclysmic break with the Church of Rome.

Chapter Eight

Suggested Readings

Non Fiction

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Carson, Annette | Richard III, The Maligned King |
| Kendall, Paul Murray | Richard III (very much in favour of Richard) |
| Seward, Desmond | Richard III: England's Black Legend (very much <i>not</i> in favour of Richard) |
| Hancock, Peter | Richard III and the Murder in the Tower |
| Saul, Nigel | The Three Richards |
| Weir, Alison | The Princes in the Tower |
| Potter, Jeremy | Good King Richard? |
| Jones, Nigel Tower, | An Epic History of the Tower of London |
| Fields, Bertram | Royal Blood |
| Michael Jones and Malcolm Underwood | The King's Mother |

I recommend Alison Weir's non-fiction historical books.

And of course, there's the Internet!

Fiction

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Gregory, Philippa | The Red Queen |
| Jarman, Rosemary Hawley | We Speak No Treason |
| Tey, Josephine | The Daughter of Time |
| Penman, Sharon | The Sunne in Splendour |
| Plaidy, Jean | The Reluctant Queen |
| Edwards, Rhoda | Some Touch of Pity |

I recommend the fiction of Philippa Gregory and Jean Plaidy

