DIDO'S LAMENT

A tale about the making of the opera
Dido and Aeneas

PETER STICKLAND

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For Ron and Mary Stickland

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and Dennis Mariner for the book design.

Principal Characters

Nahum Tate	*Writer and librettist*
Henry Purcell	*Composer*
Eliza Ashton	*Nahum's mistress*
Josias Priest	*Choreographer; Head of the School*
Cecelia Priest	*Wife of Josais; also Head of the School*
Frances Pieters	*Young lady attending school*
Anna Pieters	*Young lady attending school*
Amy Pieters	*The Mother of the young ladies*
Ellen Fairweather	*Nahum's housekeeper*
Harry Fairweather	*Ellen's son*
Horace Heveningham	*Nahum's friend*
Mary Heveningham	*Horace's wife*
Thomas Boteler (Buttons)	*Nahum's friend*
Thomas Flatman	*Nahum's friend*
The Duchess de Mazarin	*The King's Consort and Stylist*
John Blow	*Master of the King's music*
Thomas Killigrew	*Director of the Theatre Royal*
Belinda Perryman	*Mary's friend*
Faithful Tate	*Nahum's brother*

Prologue

"Friendship's the privilege of private men, for
wretched greatness knows no blessing so substantial."

Nahum Tate

'A city of refuge and the mansion house of liberty.' That's how John Milton described London and indeed there is something great about this city. It appears in all respects to have the love of heaven directed at it.

My early years were spent in Dublin and moving to London was a revelation to me. Ireland is a turbulent place where one person is set against another and where trust is not a thing you can count on, but in London there are too many differences for conflicts to cause lasting division. The sociability here maybe at times rough-hewn, but it is sociable despite that, and if London's reputation for noise and mayhem cannot be overestimated it is nonetheless the sound of excited life that greets me each morning. I live on the north side of The Strand, just west of St. Clements Church. It is often so crowded that it is hardly possible for a horse or a carriage to pass along it. The throng is like a pageant and I take in this great show from my bedroom window as though I were viewing a play from a theatre box.

The inhabitants of this town have great humour, they openly express their love for each other and they have a passion for discourse. They are the most ingenious crowd you could wish to meet and they possess an extraordinary ability to invent new ideas. Music, architecture, literature and science all flourish here as though it is natural for them to do so and I throw myself at every opportunity I have for learning. I came here

as a poet and there is no finer place to practice my art and engage my ambition to become Poet Laureate. This of course may be too much to ask, but the very thought of it drives me along and encourages my will to work.

I am Nahum Tate and I am very proud that my name is beginning to be associated with some literary acclaim. This achievement has not been easy, for I lack the private income that is essential for those with an ambition like mine. These days a great deal of my time must be taken up with journalism. I write translations, pastorals, paraphrases, prologues, epilogues and a host of other categories that defy description. I write for magazines and journals on subjects as wide apart as morality, religion, science and history. If writing journalism is not sacrifice enough, I must also direct my love of poetry to sleep so that I can concentrate on gaining some recognition. It was John Dryden who encouraged me in this. 'You must be in the theatre if your desire is to meet people and gain attention,' he told me. I followed his advice faithfully and for the past four years I have dedicated myself to writing plays.

I started by adapting Shakespeare's *King Lear*, which proved to be a difficult task. Shakespeare wrote the most wonderful collection of jewels imaginable and it was almost impossible to find passages where he had left these jewels unstrung or even under-polished. My primary ambition was to reward Cordelia for the love she bestowed upon her father, so I set about giving her a decent future, but as Cordelia's presence in the play increased so the Fool's presence diminished and before long I had no room for him. Losing the Fool was a heavy price to pay. I gained rapturous applause, but my notoriety was founded on Cordelia's happy marriage to Edgar rather than my poetic excellence. I have much to learn.

Borrowing from historic sources is fashionable in the theatre, but even with something as safe as history one has to tread carefully. Audiences are the most fickle of God's creatures and for a playwright to ignore popular taste is commercial suicide. All theatre, as far as London audiences are concerned, should display glamorous costumes and spectacular stage effects and if there is a theme that is prized above all others, then that

theme is 'love'. Further more, if a playwright has the skill to satirize love in a light-hearted manner then his works will be applauded above all others. So here is a pretty pass, for this I fear is where my ambition may yet fall apart. Humour in every part of my life I have, but when it comes to writing funny lines I cannot do it to save my life. Despite the happy ending, *King Lear* is still a tragedy.

After my first success I went looking for another great work with love as its theme. Humour I did not find, but I did discover Christopher Marlowe's play, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*. It is based upon that part of Virgil's *Aeneid* where Aeneas arrives on Dido's shore. It is a majestic play and I knew that the story of this royal couple would please today's audiences. I did not wish to follow Marlowe or Virgil too closely, or to fill the stage with gods who play with mortals and bring about their downfall, so I used the story to explore the themes of envy and greed.

When it was finished I showed it to John Dryden and Thomas D'Urfey. John insisted that I could not possibly lay my cheeky hands on one of the great legends of the age and Thomas claimed that I was tampering with a work that is rooted in literature's Holy Ground. In short, I was advised to dig for my plots elsewhere. I could not afford to be seen as an arrogant upstart, lacking any form of modesty, so I changed the characters names, set the play in Sicily and called it *Brutus of Alba*. Thomas Betterton was very taken by it and he made an elaborate production of it at The Dukes Theatre in Dorset Garden.

With this success my confidence was beginning to grow, but if my ability to gain attention in the theatre is achievable, my ability to make a living at it continues to be a struggle. Despite the vast amount of journalism I engage in, my income remains paltry and I need to supplement it by teaching. I teach poetry and literature at a boarding school for young ladies in Leicester Fields. Josias Priest runs the school with his wife, Cecelia. It has an excellent reputation and it is much sought after by the nobility and the gentry. Mr. Priest is famous in the theatre for his talent as a dancer and choreographer, so music and dancing figure highly on the curriculum. Social etiquette, deportment, English literature and French are also important subjects, but scant attention is paid to anything else.

It is an unusual place for me to work, but it has one great virtue, it is the place where I met Henry Purcell. Henry teaches music and singing at the school.

In a one-hour violin class Henry can teach his pupils a completely new piece of music, give them a clear insight into its compositional theory and leave them knowing in their hearts why music occupies such a profound place in the realm of human sensibility. Henry is composer for violins to his Majesty King Charles II. He is organist at Westminster Abbey and the keeper, maker, mender and tuner of every kind of musical instrument in the vicinity of Westminster. You would never know that he is the rising star at Court for he is eager to present himself in an ordinary light, without the display of false airs or graces. Henry lives for his music. He can play as a child plays and yet there is no mistaking his genius. He can improvise with complex musical structures with such grace and confidence you could only believe that the music is written there before him and when he plays an inexhaustible stream of variations each theme is richer in expressive beauty than the last. Everyone is astounded by his unbelievable inventiveness. I love him and I pray that fate has brought us together for good reason.

Now that I talk of love I must tell you about Eliza Ashton. Eliza is the dearest, sweetest creature you could ever wish to set your eyes upon. Before Eliza my notions of love were as light as the wind. She changed my life, my writing and my dreams. I loved her completely at first sight. I have no idea where all this love came from or why I felt it to be so complete, but never an hour passes when she is not in my thoughts, when she is not inspiring the words that I write.

I met Eliza at Smithfield Fair. She was with a group of friends and I could not take my eyes from her. A great fire fuelled within me and I followed her for the entire afternoon. I watched as she walked through the tented stalls, as she rifled through trays of ribbons, buttons and lace, as she tried on hats and wrapped herself in fabric. When I gazed at her eating gingerbread I longed to place my lips next to hers. Once the ale from the taverns was flowing and the musicians were playing dance tunes, I asked Eliza to dance. She accepted my invitation and we danced

the evening through. When she promised to meet me the following day I was in heaven.

I learned that Eliza had lost her husband to an attack of pneumonia some months previous and I was delighted that she enjoyed some independence, that she was in fact free to love me. Eliza is a dressmaker. She works from her apartment in St. John's Lane, just to the north of Smithfield Market. When we were first together I travelled there every day. We both felt that we were an unlikely couple, so I made every effort to build her trust and establish our friendship, but this was not difficult for Eliza is blessed with extraordinary beauty and she arouses great excitement in me.

Because Eliza is happiest when she is in the theatre, we attend performances whenever we can. The comedies are her favourite and she laughs 'til her stomach aches and great tears roll down her cheeks. She is amazed by the actors' art and she asks me every possible question about their techniques. When I discovered the extent of Eliza's enchantment with the comic writers I was envious of their talents. I wanted to be just like them, full of wit and worldly wise, but as I have said, writing comedy is quite beyond me. I cannot understand how they can invent so many witty conversations and write about daily life with such mischievous humour.

So this is how I am. I am blessed with a profound sense of the possibilities of tragedy and even as I watch comedy I am aware that the gaiety may yet touch upon something serious. As quick as a wink I can sense an undercurrent of loneliness in a hero or heroine, I can smell the pretence that lurks behind laughter and once I sense this façade and discover the screen that is a cover for their shortcomings, I am filled with a desire to give expression to it. I am simply born to portray the tragic.

Chapter One

I look down to The Strand from my bedroom window and sense the first promise of summer. Groups of young men, placing ladders against buildings, are decorating the street for the Whitsunday procession. The Strand has only just been cleared of the great May Day procession, but London loves to celebrate. The plague and the fire cost everyone more than they can count and Londoners are determined to raise their City from the ashes of those terrible years. I soak up the warmth of the sun and dream of being in the countryside with Eliza. I want to be alone with her, walking among some faraway hills. I want to hire a carriage from Mr. Garthway's stable in Scotland Yard and take Eliza up to Primrose Hill. I have often promised to show her the views of London from here.

This is daydreaming. Today is Tuesday and I am due to teach classes at the Priests' School this afternoon. I have also promised to give Henry Purcell the words to a song that he is to compose for me and I have not yet finished writing the words. This is to be my first collaboration with Henry and it means everything to me. I think about starting work, but Eliza's sparkling eyes, her delightful smile and the sound of her laughter play continually in my ears. Recently there have been too many days when I have not been with her and it worries me. I have started to imagine that she does not enjoy the love and attention I lavish on her in quite the same manner as she once did.

I must not torture myself with this. It was always rare for Eliza to express her feelings in words and from an early stage I learned to accept that she never made promises. I could never question what is in her heart, even though I declared my love for her openly. I promised her faithfully that my love would last forever and so it will. I never before made such

promises and would not do so unless my heart was full to overflowing. I think about the time it would take me to walk through Lincoln's Inn gardens, over the New Canal at Holborn Bridge, up Cow Lane and then on to Smithfield Market. I could be there and back in under an hour. But Eliza will be with her clients. The effort would be futile. I go to my study and write a note to Eliza, asking when we might meet.

I call out to Harry, my housekeeper's son, but neither he nor his mother, Ellen, reply to my call. On the kitchen table there is a note from Ellen and as soon as I see it I remember well enough that she and Harry have gone to visit her sister. Ellen's sister is about to give birth to her first child and she is in need of Ellen's assistance. I purposely ignored her going away so that I would not dwell upon the fact that my life is a cumbersome affair when she is not around to organise me.

I will tell you about Ellen and Harry Fairweather. Harry is eight. He is a very energetic young man and he spends most of his time out on the streets. Ellen is blessed with a remarkable constancy to her personality and nothing that is required of her is too much trouble. From the little I know of her, I understand that Harry is the product of a single night of pleasure. His father, a sailor, is married to a life at sea. Ellen is not bitter about this man's absence for she accepts the conditions that Fate has handed her. She is a magnanimous soul and does not harbour one churlish or unhappy thought. Our living together is an informal arrangement, but in many ways I regard them as my family.

I straighten my wig, return to my study and think about the words I am to give Henry. The song is for my latest play, *The History of King Richard II*, another adaptation of Shakespeare. It has been the devil's own task trying to find voices for all the characters because there are so many facts and such prodigious amounts of action to describe that there is no room to develop a meaningful dialogue. I am trying to relieve King Richard of the responsibility for what happened to him, so I have to confirm Bolingbrook as the guilty usurper and provide Richard with an opportunity to express his sadness at being so rudely deposed. To his Queen I have given feelings of devastation to express, but I need to do more to encourage the audience's sympathy for the deposed King. In

the final act Richard is imprisoned in the Tower and this is where I must express his sense of loss and bewilderment.

The idea of writing a song to accompany this scene filled me with joy. I knew for a sure thing that if anything could deepen the pathos of Richard's imprisonment it would be the music that Henry composes for this song.

Retir'd from any mortal's sight the pensive Damon lay,
He blessed the discontented night and cursed the smiling day.

The heroic couplet annoys me and I continually move the refrains from one position to another without ever feeling satisfied. As the morning draws to a close, I write out a fair copy, put it in my pocket and go for my morning draft. Generally I take my ale in the White Horse, which is opposite me here in The Strand, but the Three Kings, the Royal Oak and the Cross Keys all sit next to one another. This morning I need to visit Mr. Newsome, my shoemaker in Wych Street, so I decide to go to him first and then have a drink in Covent Garden. I bathe in the morning sun as I walk along and dream again about being with Eliza.

Upon leaving my shoemaker I enter a bar at the bottom of Drury Lane called Harpers and order my ale. I take a seat at the bar and recognise Thomas Killigrew standing at the far end of the counter. Killigrew is the director of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. He is a very jolly and rather eccentric fellow and I watch his animated conversation with interest. After a short while he recognises me and gestures for me to join him.

"Ah Nahum, excellent fellow, lovely to see you," he says. "Allow me to introduce James Billingsley, a designer from Mr. Wren's office."

Turning to Billingsley he then introduces me. "Mr. Nahum Tate, the celebrated playwright," he says.

I love his introduction. We shake hands and Killigrew asks what I am working on. When I tell him that I writing songs with Henry Purcell for my latest play he is most impressed.

"I have a high regard for the talents of Mr. Purcell," he says, but before I can capitalize on his interest, Mr. Billingsley returns to the previous subject of their conversation.

Soon I am hearing about the sets and clever stage scenery that he is designing for a new production of *Psyche* at the Dukes Theatre. He has designed a stage on two levels. The upper one is for the gods and the lower one for the mortals.

"There are so many cogs and pulleys employed in this device," Billingsley informs us, "that even with the rigours of exact science I still feel the need to pray that it will function as planned."

I am greatly entertained by his talk and most pleased when they invite me to join them for dinner. We go to the Half Moon Tavern on the corner of Drury Lane and Great Queen Street and here I take the opportunity to tell Killigrew about my play. His response is enthusiastic, as ever, but it is genuine enough to give me a slight inkling that *The History of King Richard II* could get its first performance at the Theatre Royal. We enjoy a fine dish of roasted veal with a glass of red wine and at our leave taking I promise Killigrew that I will keep in touch with him. I promise Billingsley that I will go to see his sets at The Dukes Theatre.

As I walk through St. Giles's Fields on my way to the school, I feel elated by the developments of the day. I arrive at the school and Mr. Singleton, the doorkeeper, hands me a note from Josias Priest. The letter is addressed to both Henry and I. He requests that we meet with him at four o'clock in his office. He stresses that the matter will be of considerable interest to us. I ask Singleton if Henry has arrived, and he tells me that he has not, so I walk back down the drive to meet him at the entrance.

Now, I must tell you about Henry's walks. When he travels to the school in Leicester Fields he will cross New Palace Yard, walk along King Street, through the gates that sit either end of the Privy Gardens, past the Banqueting House and on up to Charing Cross. From there it is only a few minutes walk along Haymarket to the school. This walk could be completed in a quarter of an hour, but Henry can give himself anything up to two hours for this journey and I am not exaggerating.

Let me explain. When Henry walks he composes and the needs of his musical composition will affect whether he walks straight to his destination or whether he will go round the houses. It matters greatly

whether the composition has a gay or a melancholy theme, for this will also affect the time considerably. A musical walk to a celebratory dance tune might progress at a quarter of the speed of a normal walk and a walk to a melancholy air will be so slow, it is possible that Henry's actions may not qualify for the term walking at all. This of course could be a blessing given how dangerous the streets are, for he never looks where he is going and cannot hear the great noise and disturbance that goes on around him. I doubt that he is even using his sight in the proper sense of the word, for I suspect that he only sees a page of musical notation before him. The look upon his face is simply beatific.

I hear Henry's voice before I see him. He is singing.

How often in the dead of night,
When all the world lay hush'd in sleep,
Have I thought this my chief delight,
To sigh for you, for you to weep!

As Henry turns the corner his left hand is close against his heart and his right arm is directed out in front of him. It is a gesture one uses to make a declaration of love.

"Pastora's beauties when unblown," Henry says, by way of greeting.

"Is this a song for a new production?" I ask him, giving him a hug.

"A love song is a song for lovers," he laughs, a cheeky, boyish laugh.

"Are you in love?"

"So many questions, Nahum. Are you trying to learn my secrets?"

"Tell me everything," I bid him.

Henry laughs again and claps his hands with glee. His manner always intrigues me. Whenever we meet nothing is certain. It is also curious that I can never recall his features in any exact manner. For some reason his manner outweighs his physical attributes. He has an open face, something like a large friendly angel, but more than this is difficult to describe. I say that Josias Priest has written to us, requesting a meeting and Henry asks if we are in trouble or if it is one of his exciting surprises.

"The latter," I tell him and we agree to meet before visiting our headmaster.

"I might tell you some news before the day is out," Henry says, as we are parting. "My heart is in need of some expression." And as he steps across the courtyard, I hear his song once again and his arms continue to orchestrate his music.

The pow'r you have to wound, I feel,
How long shall I of that complain?
Now show the pow'r you have to heal,
And take away the tort'ring pain.

Mr. Priest's room is a relaxed place with none of the usual attributes of an office. He has large comfortable chairs and paintings on the walls, but there is not a sign of a book or any paperwork that would confirm his role as the head of a school. It is commonly known that Cecelia, his wife, is responsible for the day-to-day running of the place. Josias is a small man, but what he lacks in stature he makes up for with enthusiasm. His face is swarthy, with tiny red vessels showing through the stubble on his cheeks. His sharp features give his face a slightly pinched character, but this first impression is much complicated by his speech, which is full of foppish affectations and endless repetitions. It drives me to distraction.

"Lovely to see you. Lovely to see you, my dears," he says as we enter the office. "Make yourselves comfortable. I have many things to tell and much to explain. Now, my dears, I will start with the next academic year. The school is moving to the Old School House in Chelsea."

Henry and I glance at each other.

"This is exciting, is it not? Do you know it, my dears?"

Henry and I both shake our heads.

"Henry you must know the musicians Thomas Lowe and Jeffrey Banister." Henry agrees that he does. "Well, they have run this school in Chelsea for the past decade and they are now about to retire. Cecelia and I believe that the time is right to expand our school and I am in great need of a proper hall where my dances can be seen to best effect. After all, it is dance and choreography that give the school its prestigious reputation. Now the question is, will you continue teaching at the school if we move to Chelsea?"

Before either of us reply or ask any question, Josias starts to detail the alterations that he intends to make to the building over the summer and then proceeds to describe the great trials he will have to go through to provide us with a new school. I feel little interested in the detailed accounts of his difficulties and for sure it will be an awful inconvenience to travel to Chelsea every week.

"… so, the Michaelmas term will not start until October," Josias concludes, "but the school will be most impressive. Most impressive, I can assure you."

"And will we have a music room as well as a hall to put on productions?" Henry asks, much taken with Josias's enthusiasm.

"Of course, my dear, of course. And you will have a place to produce your plays, Nahum. You will continue to work with us, will you not?"

Josias looks at me intently, but I keep him waiting for my reply. I dislike being placed under pressure like this.

"Let me give the question some thought," I tell him.

Josias shows no sign of disappointment with my response. "Excellent, my dear," the man says, as if I had already agreed to do his bidding. "Now, I have another thing to ask, or rather to invite you to do. Cecelia and I would like to mark the opening of the new school with a performance and we would like you to work with us to devise an entertainment. How does this strike you?"

Henry asks what kind of entertainment he has in mind and Josias launches into an elaborate description of his plans for what he calls 'a prestigious production of songs and dances.' He describes the important members of the nobility who will be in the audience and what will be expected of us. He informs us that we must include as many of the past and present pupils as possible and we must ensure that their skills are shown to best effect. He insists that the entertainment should not be too long or too taxing or the audience will give up on it.

"Think of it as a lively masque full of dancing and singing," he concludes.

I have no idea what he means. Henry of course is attentive to his every word, because if you ask Henry to compose a song for any reason at all

he is nothing but gracious and grateful to you. Indeed, if you ask him to compose ten songs then his graciousness and gratefulness increases proportionately. By the sweet smile upon his face I can tell that he has not the slightest doubt about agreeing to Josias's wishes. It would not surprise me in the least if the dear fellow were not composing the tunes this very minute.

"How much we will be paid for this?" I ask Josias and this pulls him up sharp.

"Well, my dears, we do not have a budget yet. We are hoping to secure some funds and I can assure you that we have the goodwill and generous commitment of many wealthy patrons."

Well, this isn't going to keep me alive is it? I am eager to collaborate with young Henry, but not so eager that I must go hungry. Henry is studying me, trying to read my thoughts. He is silently willing me to accept the invitation, so I turn from his gaze, but I know that I cannot refuse him. I tell Josias that he should give us some time to consider a proposal and I can hardly believe my words. It is simply a response to my love of Henry. Josias is ecstatic.

"That would be wonderful, my dears, simply wonderful. I knew you would not refuse such an opportunity. We will delight them all I can assure you of that."

He is now standing, shaking our hands and patting us on the back as though we had just received a Royal Charter to perform for the King. "I will go and tell Cecelia. She will be pleased. She will indeed be very pleased my dears."

Josias rushes out of the room and Henry and I share a look of bewilderment.

Chapter Two

As I walk with Henry out into the fields beyond the Oxford Road, I complain about the amount of time the school production will take and the absence of any proper remuneration. Henry smiles happily. When we come across an abandoned Box Cart, he jumps into it, lies down upon the boards and motions for me to join him. For sure it is a beautiful evening and for a while we joke about borrowing some fairies and pixies for the school production, something from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but soon my thoughts return to *The History of King Richard II*. I hand Henry the words for my song and describe the prison scene to him.

"It is for you to bring out the tragedy of a wretched and dying king," I tell him. "Just imagine the pain of a king who has been deprived of his crown."

I study him as he reads my paper and I imagine from his movements that he is humming a tune. Then he starts to sing a few phrases. There is a sense of gathering gloom in his short refrain. It is slow and measured and infinitely more tragic, more majestic than anything I could have imagined.

"Is this what you had in mind?" Henry asks. I nod my head and the dear fellow explodes with his boyish laughter.

"How can you know the sound of an injured heart so well?" I ask and his innocent and pleasurable laugh expresses his surprise. I suspect that he reacts like this to hide his genius and possibly to avoid creating jealousy of others. He has no ambition to be regarded as a man of great talent and he uses his youthful playfulness to set me at ease. I ask him to sing it again and Henry closes his eyes for a moment and begins. This time he follows its conclusion with a great sigh.

"It will bring tears to everyone," I tell him. Henry nods his head and there is a serious expression upon him. I wonder if it concerns the matter I touched upon earlier, when he promised to reveal the feelings in his heart. "Is there some great weight that oppresses you?" I ask, but he does not answer. He promises to notate the music for me by tomorrow and I express my thanks to him.

"How is the music for *Theodosius* progressing?" I ask. Henry is writing songs for a play by Nathaniel Lee called *Theodosius*.

"Do you know about the force of love?" he asks. Now, the full title of the play is *Theodosius Or The Force Of Love* and I suspect that the cheeky fellow is being mischievous with me. I tell him that I know something about it.

"I am completely overwhelmed by it," he says and I cannot determine if he is expressing his misery or his pleasure. "Love is the most marvellous thing," he says and now I know his feelings for sure. I slap him on the back, jump off the wagon, pull him towards me and spin him round and round by the hands. Henry does a little dance, hopping from one leg to the other while laughing and making funny noises in imitation of a song.

"We are going to celebrate this news in the nearest tavern," I tell him, "and there you can tell me about this woman who has so delightfully captured your affections."

"Frances Pieters," Henry says, almost before I have finished.

I freeze and take a deep breath.

"I am in love with Frances Pieters," he repeats as though I have not heard his words. I repeat the name Frances Pieters. I am incapable of holding back my surprise. Frances is a pupil at the Priest's school. I ask him how long this has been his secret, but he does not reply. He closes his eyes and sings tenderly.

When her languishing eyes said 'Love!'
Too soon the soft charm I obey'd.

Can the conjunctions that love creates ever be predicted? I wonder if revelations about the object of our love are always so surprising.

"Does Frances return your feelings?" I ask him.

"It must be so," he says, "but I have not spoken to her directly about it. It is too difficult a thing. All I know is that the emotion that passes between us can mean no other thing."

We walk along and I listen as he describes how his heart leaped when he first saw her and how he thinks of her constantly, even in his sleep.

"I must win her, Nahum, I must have her as my wife. She is the prize that exactly matches my heart. I have wept tears of happiness for the simple good fortune of being by her side and the very fact that she is alive makes me entirely blissful."

"Does your love for her know no bounds, Henry?"

"Indeed it does not. I am transported to a realm of sheer joy. Her beauty is perfection itself and her eyes, oh, Nahum, how I wish that my music could express the wonder of her eyes."

Henry continues with his eulogy and I wonder what role Frances's voice might have played in captivating him. That her singing rings with clarity and grace must be important, for if music prepares and warms the soul to love, then the intimacy of singing must heat it to even greater effect.

I do not know Frances well, but I know her younger sister, Anna. Anna attends my classes and she is a talented and thoughtful writer. I learned that her parents moved to London from Ghent before the great fire and that her father died two years previously. It was he who insisted that she and Frances must learn how to dance, play music and sing and he left money in his Will for them to attend the Priests' School for one year.

Anna dreams of becoming a writer and a teacher, but she knows that marriage is the only ambition that is directed at her. Frances may well have marriage as her ambition, but I doubt that she imagined she would inspire Henry's love. Not one of the Court ladies or the numerous actresses and singers who surround Henry has so far managed to do this. They all admire him greatly, but it is Frances, an unassuming young lady of sixteen, who has captured his heart.

But now I think that Henry is going too far in his talk of marriage. There has never been a time when the political and social divisions

between the Whigs of the City and Tories at Court have been so acutely drawn. They regard each other with utter disdain and Frances's family will think only of City merchants when they consider her future. Henry will also have the opinions at Westminster to contend with. If the woman of his choice is surprising to me then this is nothing compared to the response the court will have. I know that it would go better for him if he had chosen one of the daughters of his friends or fellow musicians to fall in love with.

Henry and I sit in the Golden Lion near Charing Cross. We eat anchovies and olives with our wine and our thoughts return to the school's entertainment. We agree that Josias has communicated a frightful view his entertainment and we cannot think about it in his terms. I complain about the amount of work it will entail and Henry insists that we should not pass over Josias's proposal lightly.

"What he is offering is not insignificant," he says. "He will provide us with a venue and a host of musicians, singers and dancers to perform with. I want to use this to make a production we can be proud of."

"But you might calm the level of your ambition just a little, Henry. We could for instance use some existing songs and thread them together to make a theme. This would leave us some time for our own work."

"My dear Nahum, our creative abilities are a gift we must honour with our time and energy. How else should we repay the blessings they bring. I have a suggestion to ease your fears. We will take your play *Brutus of Alba* as the subject of the entertainment and with this we will have a head start." I am surprised by his words.

"It is an intriguing suggestion, Henry, but I doubt that it will make my job of writing any easier. Besides, it is not a suitable subject to celebrate a school's new beginning. *Brutus of Alba* is a tragic tale of disappointed love. How could the death of a heroine serve as a school entertainment?"

"I have recently composed an overture that would suit this tragedy perfectly," he laughs. "It would be a shame not to make use of it."

How this fellow can always establish a new position is beyond me. We enjoy a dish of pullets and larks with a second bottle of wine and Henry continues to eulogize on the subject of our opportunities and talents.

Eliza inhabits my senses and I can feel her precious beauty. I awake with thoughts of visiting her, but King Richard needs saving and I must not take my eye off him yet. I must also write an article on Milton for Horace's Literary Journal. I will tell you about Horace. Without him I would not have survived the rigors of London thus far.

The friends of Colonel Henry Horace Heveningham, call him Horace. He is the King's Secretary in all matters of entertainment and this, as far as the King is concerned, makes him his most prized Secretary. He and his wife, Mary, are also important figures in London's literary world. Now, Horace has written the words for the King's *Welcome Ode* and Henry is composing the music for it, so they have invited me to attend the Palace tomorrow to hear its first rehearsal and I must not disappoint them, but this is exactly how love passes me by. I am crowded with distraction and if this weren't enough I must finish the article for Horace by Friday, for on Saturday I am going to Greenwich and will not be back 'til Sunday night.

I sit at my desk and compose another letter to Eliza, asking if we can meet on Monday. I walk out into the heat and noise of The Strand and make my way to Nancy in Milford Lane. Nancy is Ellen's friend and she runs a laundry where Ellen works in the afternoons. I ask if her son could deliver my letter and when I offer him two pennies William eagerly agrees. I mean to go home and write, but the day is glorious and I walk down to Wood Wharf and watch the river. I think of Henry and Frances and remember that Anna told me that they live next to the remains of All Hallows church, not far from the place where the fire started. If I visited there I could be back by dinnertime and a little air would improve my spirits before I settle down to write. A boatman asks me where I am going.

"All Hallows the Great church," I tell him.

"That will be the pier at the end of Old Swan Lane then," he says as I step into his craft. I am on my way before I know it.

I have not taken this journey for some time and the amount of new buildings east of Blackfriars is surprising. The houses are in brick, great impressive buildings they are, as tall and as straight as soldiers with windows as big as doors. We arrive at Old Swan Lane, which is just before London Bridge, and the boatman directs me up the lane and tells me to turn left on Thames Street.

I pass a number of Alleyways leading back to the river and then come upon the burnt out remains of All Hallows the Less. Next to the church is a house. Red Bull Alley separates the house from All Hallows the Great. The fire has not destroyed the Great church for it is back in use with a new roof and its stones cleaned. I cannot tell if the house between the two churches is the Pieters' residence. I wander into the small churchyard of All Hallows the Less and sit on a wall in the sun. Next to the churchyard is a very large house with stores and outhouses attached. On the wall of this property is a sign that reads, 'The Spaniard – Fish Dinners and Fine Wines.' I walk round to the entrance to take some refreshment, but the door is firmly closed.

I make my way back to All Hallows the Great and enter the church. A verger is tidying hymnbooks into piles next to the organ loft. I bid him good morning and ask if the parish records are kept here.

"They were all destroyed in the fire, sir," he says, "but the recent records we have." I ask if I may see them and he invites me to accompany him to the registrar's office. He informs a gentleman, who is writing in a ledger, that I would like to see the Parish records. I presume he is the registrar. He slowly finishes what he is writing and then studies me carefully.

"You will have to make a contribution to the Poor Box," he says, "and then you must give your name, your address, your occupation and the nature of your business."

"I am looking for an old friend," I tell him. The registrar rises slowly from his chair and asks me to follow him. We arrive in a room full of shelves.

"Everything is arranged by street," he says. "Do you know the address?"

"I am looking for a house that sits next to the church."

"That will be Mr. Muddiman's house, he is the secretary at the Merchant Taylor's School. Is it the house between the churches that you want?"

"No. I would like to know where the Pieters family live."

"The Pieters family? They own the Spaniard."

I can hardly believe it.

"The entrance is on Cole Harbour, but its address is given as Thames Street."

He makes his way along the shelves, takes down four ledgers and places them on a large table that occupies the centre of the room. Each ledger has a title clearly labelled on the front: Rates, Births, Deaths, Marriages.

I start by looking at the Poll Tax ledger. The Mother's name is Amy and the occupants are given as two unmarried daughters, a married daughter and her husband, three apprentices and two servants. Under Births I am informed that the married daughter and her husband, John Howlett, had their son John baptized at this Church the previous year. John Howlett is described as a soap maker. Their marriage is recorded as having taken place under license with the consent of the mother. I then look in the ledger for Deaths and find the record for Frances and Anna's father. John Baptiste Pieters was his name. It lists his entire estate at the time of his death. I am amazed by the detail. The contents in each of the seventeen rooms are described, including the napkins. There are two cellars and two vaults full of wine, including eighteen hogsheads of Claret, Malmsey, Rhienish and Canary. There is also a store containing a hundred skins of gilt leather. I get to fifteen chamber pots in the list and decide that my research has taken me far enough. I return to the registrar.

"Did you find what you were looking for?" he asks.

"I did, thank you. More than I needed. Tell me, do you eat at the Spaniard?"

"Oh no, it is not for the likes of me. It's a very popular place though, especially in the evenings. Wine by the gallon is consumed there on a good night and a great deal of singing can be heard well into the evening.

Not that it is a disreputable house mark you, Mrs. Pieters makes sure that everyone behaves in an orderly fashion."

I thank him for the information, put a shilling in the Poor Box and retire to the Spaniard, which is now open. I feel great excitement at entering the house. The large dining room is more than half-full and I am invited to sit at a small table by the window. The walls are covered with Spanish tapestries and the tables and chairs are covered in Spanish leather. Their connection with both Spain and Holland is puzzling, but connections of this sort are not uncommon in this town. I order a lobster and enjoy an excellent meal.

When I get back to Old Swan Lane I tell the boatman to take me to Wood Wharf. I am tempted to go straight to Henry to share the news with him, but such extravagant time wasting I must not consider. The boatman is an exceedingly jolly fellow who talks endlessly about his fights with the Lambeth boat boys.

Chapter Three

Now I must think on Milton and only Milton. 'Notions of Liberty in Paradise Lost'. This is my title for the article. I have a deep affinity with Milton. From an early age I was inspired by the truths he wrote about so eloquently and I considered every English man privileged for the definition he gave to the English mind and the dignity he brought to the English language. Freedom, moral integrity and the demands of liberty are the bedrock of Milton's vision and his advocacy of freedom for the press made a great impression on me. However, I remember finding it difficult to reconcile myself to his belief that a monarch should lose his head if he was found to be wicked or tyrannical. I could understand that he preferred 'Queen Truth' to King Charles, but I never felt that it could be his duty to reconcile our minds to the possibility that the King might be deposed. I had sympathy for Charles's predicament and indeed it was these feelings that inspired my decision to rewrite *The History of King Richard II*.

There is a loud knocking at the door, I answer it and a youth presents me with a letter. It is from my sister, Ann, in Ireland. Ann writes that my sister Mary has just given birth to her third child and has not recovered from it. My poor sweet Mary is now so unwell that Ann asks me to visit them in Dublin as soon as possible. There is no detail here for me to guess at the nature of her illness, but if it were slight Ann would never write this way. Why now? It is always the wrong time for such news. It would take me four days to get to Liverpool on horseback and two days for the sea journey. If I spend a week in Dublin this journey would take me at least three weeks. The dangers of the road are plenty and the horridly uncomfortable packet-boats are appalling. If the smell of the

animals is bad, the behaviour of the passengers is worse.

You can try this journey in summer and winter, but there is nothing to choose between them. I've been in strong gales that drove us to take shelter in the harbour at Holyhead and I've been becalmed for days in the sultry heat. Either way, life on these little craft is unbearable.

I was born in England, at Sudbury in Suffolk and my family were forever crossing the damned sea. My father, Faithful Tate, was a minister at Sudbury and it was not until I was seven that we returned to Dublin. His father, who was also christened Faithful and lived as a minister of the church, was the first to travel abroad. He, however, had very little choice in the matter. During the uprising in 1641 our family house at Ballyhays in County Cavan was sacked. My grandmother, along with her sons and daughters, were treated with disgraceful brutality. Two of them died as a result of the attack. Grandfather Faithful moved first to Dublin and then to Suffolk. They were quiet, literary people, not capable of surviving the savagery of these times and I doubt that my quiet literary life will fair well if I must now go to Ireland. I put Ann's letter in my drawer. I cannot think on it directly.

I have worked all morning. Here are my opening lines for the Milton article.

The question of predestination is debated more frequently in our times than any other. Do we have the free will to do as we please or are we ordained to carry out God's pre-ordained plan? This is at the heart of Paradise Lost. *For Milton, 'will' is the power that allows us to put reason into action and reason is our only salvation. Our freedom lies in our obedience to the will of God and our imprisonment lies in our disobedience to it.*

I don't know where I stand on this. It seems to me that when I was younger I knew better what it might mean. I take my morning ale at the White Horse and proceed to Westminster. I hope to meet Henry in the coffee house and go with him to the Banqueting House. It is not

often that I visit the Palace for I dislike all the chicanery that the King's presence attracts. The King has been in Windsor since April and he will not return to London before September when the *Welcome Ode* will be played. Generally, Henry sits in the coffee room closest to the water, watching the passing activity on the river, but he is not here when I arrive, so I sit drinking coffee and thinking about him.

Henry's days follow a simple rhythm. He starts early, writes out notation for the music that is in his head, plays the organ at Matins and then rehearses the choir. After this he goes to the river for an early dinner, carefully avoiding Westminster Hall because it is too crowded with the stalls of law stationers, booksellers and seamstresses. There are two very good taverns that flank Westminster Hall on either side. One is called Heaven and the other is called Hell. You can get a very good breast of mutton in Heaven but Henry prefers fish and usually he purchases red herring in bread from one of the stalls down by the river.

After eating, Henry will go to the coffee house. It is the same one that his father and Matthew Lock frequented when they were the old masters of music. There was often a crowd of philosophers in the coffee house in those days. It was the place to discuss the latest scientific discoveries or works of the poets and there was probably some animated discussion by the composers too.

I return to the Privy Garden and see Horace in the Court Gate reading a letter. We greet each other and he tells me that he is greatly put upon by the King.

"John Blow has just returned from Windsor with a letter from the King. He orders my return so that we can begin arranging various events of state. He is impossibly nervous about his return to London in September and he imagines that by entertaining the Court and Parliament he will encourage them to work together. I was to go with Mary to see Shadwell's production of *Psyche* at Dorset Garden this evening and she will complain bitterly if she has to attend without me. Would you accompany Mary?"

"It would be a pleasure," I tell him. "I met with James Billingsley recently and he told me about his machinery for this production. I am

eager to see it."

Horace is pleased and we walk along to the concert chamber where Horace introduces me to John Blow.

"Organist for the Chapel Royal, composer in ordinary to the King and master of the King's music," he says, before taking me by the hand and introducing me as a dear friend, poet and playwright.

John and I bow to each other. He looks wild and highly intelligent. Henry has often talked of him and if anyone could be regarded as Henry's mentor in musical composition then it is he. John Blow enabled Henry to become organist at the Abbey and he suggested that Henry be the composer for the *Welcome Ode*. Blow claps and asks for our attention.

"Henry my dear, have you established some musical response to Horace's words?"

"I have composed the music, if this is your question," Henry tells him and, realizing the surprise that his statement provokes, he laughs his cheeky boyish laugh.

"Shall we hear what you have achieved?" John asks.

Henry nods, picks up his violin and stands next to a young man who is seated at the harpsichord. A young woman joins them on the platform and without introduction they begin to play. His music conjures anticipation and then whisks into a highly punctuated and sprightly dance tune. Suddenly, the players burst into song.

Welcome, Welcome, Welcome Vice regent of the mighty King.

The choral fanfare takes me by surprise and as soon as I have grasped it Henry and his male accompanist launch into a delightful duet that could charm any King. The woman joins them in a chorus and Henry follows this with a solo. It is a delightful, dance-like serenade and he echoes the melody of his song on the violin. I had no idea that so much music was required for a *Welcome Ode*. He gives us another rousing duet followed by an innocent and intricate chorus and ends with a ritornello of astonishing beauty. John is on his feet clapping like thunder and cheering noisily.

"My dear Henry you have indeed composed the *Welcome Ode*," he

says. "Your final chorus is astounding and the second section of the overture, where the chorus is superimposed over the top of the opening melody, is pure genius. I must also say that the dotted rhythms are not unlike my own and I love it."

Henry smiles.

"How is it that you can align the individual word accents to the music so closely?" Horace asks.

"I have no idea," Henry replies, "other than that the words joined with the music of their own accord."

We all laugh. John declares that he is teasing us.

"You may possess a particular genius for the coupling of music with language, but that words should exhibit such independence on your behalf is beyond belief Henry."

We are all greatly impressed by the expressive quality of Henry's words and John says that no other composer has previously managed to display such eloquent talent. You can see why I long for the day when he will set my words to music. He is the master of musical gesture. That he has not yet been given a chance to show his talents in the theatre is quite unbelievable, but it is to my great advantage. His compositions give off the very odour of the theatre. There is no doubt that he was born with a fully formed appreciation of the importance and intricacies of dramatic artifice.

"Henry, have you scored the parts for all the instruments?" John asks him.

Henry replies that he has and John laughs.

"Then there is nothing further for us to do other than recruit the musicians and set up the rehearsals. Thank you my dear, you have made our lives simple and filled our day with delight."

I suggest to Henry that we take a drink together before I depart for the theatre, but he has been engaged to play for Lord and Lady Baggott this evening and must rehearse with the musicians before then. I agree to visit him at the Abbey tomorrow.

"Henry captures the voice of angels and the King will love him for it," Horace remarks as he joins me. He hands me a small purse, heavy with

coins and thanks me for agreeing to accompany Mary.

"Entertain her well, Nahum, and if you will be so kind please offer to attend on her over the coming weeks. Tell her that she is not to expect my early return and I will write to her tomorrow."

The Dukes Theatre is on the river, near the new canal at Blackfriars. I make my way to Westminster Pier and take a boat to the theatre wharf. I see Mary Heveningham standing in the centre of the imposing portico that faces the river. Being engaged in conversation, I stand nearby, waiting for her to finish before introducing myself. Her sentences run quickly from one subject to another without the need to take breath, so I interrupt the dear woman and inform her that I am to accompany her this evening as the King has directed Horace to return to Windsor. Mary sighs.

"Why is the King always in such a desperate need of my husband?" she asks. "Surely there are others who can do this work."

She hates attending engagements without Horace and she is very grateful that I am accompanying her this evening. She talks about the production and how she loves the character of *Psyche*, and I have to point out to her that most of the audience have already gone to their seats.

This production of *Pysche* is an English adaptation of a French comedie-ballet. It is a strange collaboration. Betterton inspired Shadwell to write it. Matthew Locke composed the vocal music and Draghi composed the instrumental music and the dance tunes. The conductor lifts his baton to signify the start of the performance.

My first reaction is that it is unusual, but as it develops I find it quite surprising. It cannot be called a drama as such, for it is no more than a collection of music, curious dances, splendid scenes and elaborate machinery. The many kinds of musical episode give it the quality of a masque and I wonder if this would be the kind of production Josias would like for his opening entertainment.

As soon as the applause dies down, Mary shivers and says that the intrigues that Psyche's sisters instigate against her are horribly relentless.

I ask if it displeased her.

"Quite the contrary," she says. "What drama there is when Venus takes Psyche from Cupid. I was firmly convinced that their love was a lost cause. And when Jupiter descended from the clouds to unite the lovers, wasn't that something?"

I agree and say that Billingsley has done a perfect job with the scenery and the machinery. We move out to the courtyard by the river and Mary asks if I will join her for supper. I say that I will and learn that she has arranged to eat with the Perrymans. I know Belinda Perryman from Mary's literary evenings and I see her now, walking towards us. We greet each other nicely and she introduces me to her husband, Richard. I am a great fan of Belinda, especially her smile. I think of her as the ideal wife, so it would be true to say that she awakens powerful instincts in me.

Mary can at times be verbose, but this is nothing in comparison to Richard Perryman's noisy and bombastic manner. The meal, pigeon breast stewed with Madeira and Spanish plums, is excellent, but I feel sorry that Belinda has to suffer her husband's terrible behaviour. I am filled with a strong desire to rescue her from him, but then I realise that she is resting her hand on his arm, offering him reassurance and boosting his abominable confidence. Belinda continues to smile gently, glancing at me now and then with her beautiful eyes. Twice she addresses a small remark to me that I return, but in the wake of her loud husband, I am without opportunity to develop a conversation with her. Her dedication to Richard fills me with sadness. She faces a losing battle with him by her side. She cannot possibly keep her sacred respect for the marriage vows when he displays such extreme provocation. She cannot possibly honour and obey him when he cannot return these virtues. But she does. She is a shining example of honourable consistency and this faithful and laudable discharge of her duty must be the noblest triumph of woman. Either that or it is sheer folly.

Chapter Four

Eliza and I are performing in The History of King Richard II *but I can't find her and all the other characters are performing* Brutus of Alba. *Now we are in Carthage and Belinda Perryman is playing Queen Dido. Am I King Richard or Brutus or maybe even Aeneas? No one is taking any notice of me. I try to gain Belinda's attention, but she continues to engage with her company of ladies. Belinda fills me with awe and my lack of presence frustrates me. I tell her that we are performing* Dido and Aeneas *and she is supposed to be in love with me, but Belinda does not hear me.*

The dream haunts me. I write out a fair copy of my essay on Milton and then switch my thoughts to *The History of King Richard II*. To show Richard as an active and just prince I have changed all the detracting language used by Shakespeare and I have tamed the vilifying talk of the traitors and the conspirators. I want my audience to know the King's distress, to have empathy and pity for him. I am writing the scene where the Queen and the Duchess of York meet Richard on the heath and I have the Queen express her affection for her husband. I think of Belinda and the generous affection she showed towards her husband.

A cup of ale and a plate of pig's trotters in the White Horse and I am on my way to see Henry. At Charing Cross a couple of ugly ruffians jostle me. It happens quickly and I have a bruise on my shins and my pockets emptied before I know it. The bruise is horrid, but I find the insult of having my money stolen worse. I limp slowly along King Street and enter the Abbey by the North Transept. The sonorous sounds of the choir greet me and I decide to sit in the Lady Chapel and allow the

beauty of their voices to heal my hurt. The anthem they are rehearsing is a psalm that Henry has set to music.

Hear my prayer, O Lord,
And let my cry come unto thee.

I remain for some time bathing in the heavenly chorus, gazing upon the beautiful ceiling and enjoying the light play upon the stained-glass windows. Henry has spent nearly all his days in this place and everything he has learned he has learned here. He became a chorister for the Chapel Royal at the age of seven and he sang in the choir until his voice broke. Then he repaired instruments and spent many hours each week copying the musical notations required by the Church. Henry and his music are inextricably linked to this Abbey. It is the centre of his world and the home of his composing spirit. When the choir has finished I cross the South Isle and enter the Cloister. Henry works in the Old Monk's Refectory at the west end of the Cloister.

John Blow and another man are with Henry. I greet John and Henry introduces me to Nicholas Staggins. Nicholas has also been to see Shadwell's *Psyche* and he is giving his account of it. Henry bids me to sit next to him.

"The music is rustic and the dances are bacchanalian," Nicholas says, "but there is much poignancy in the action. Psyche, who is greatly tortured by her sisters, is at the point of throwing herself into the river, when the river god rises out of the water and dissuades her from this. His arrival is enchanting and so is Cupid's. When he commands a song in praise of love, ten statues leap suddenly from their pedestals and begin to dance. At the end there are so many cupids flying around dropping flowers onto the stage one could only conclude that the heavens themselves have been emptied for the occasion. The stage is divided into two, giving Jupiter his palace in the clouds above and the mortals their world on the stage below. For the finale Jupiter makes his descent on a machine that brings him and the clouds down to earth."

When Nicholas has finished enthusing about the work, the three masters of the King's music start a conversation about musical drama.

John Blow insists that he wants more than a few sumptuous scenes of grand design performed to the accompaniment of music and the others agree with him.

"Music must be used to intensify the emotions," he declares, "and it should take responsibility for the structure of the work. Our sung lines must have more musical interest for the unvaried recitative only bores our audiences."

"In Italy," Nicholas says, "the narrative is not delivered in reported speech, they have a Greek-style chorus to do this. I saw a production of *L'Orfeo* in Mantua that was composed by Monteverdi some eighty years ago. He made excellent use of the chorus and it gave the work its dramatic possibilities, but I doubt this will take on in England, the role of narrative is too important to us. Our audiences will always demand that interlocutions are dispersed among the music to carry the story."

"But, unlike Italy, we have no entertainments with continuous music to provide an example," John tells him. "There is absolutely no reason why we should not establish opera here in London. If our musical repartee were more sustained we would find audiences who enjoyed performances that are distinct from musical theatre."

I have not been treated to such talk previously. I have no idea how musical and vocal sequences can work together without interrupting the poetry or how such a strategy could hold a narrative theme, but I am intrigued by the notion of it. John tells us that he and John Dryden are devising an opera and he urges Henry and Nicholas to do likewise. The theme of his work is taken from *Venus and Adonis* and he is hoping to persuade the King to have it performed privately at Court.

"Some modest masque-like entertainments would add favourably to his image," he tells us and Henry looks in my direction and winks. Henry wants something in the vein of Monteverdi for the school performance, I am sure of it.

John expresses his need of a drink and we all agree, but there is considerable disagreement about where we should go. Nicholas wants to drink wine at Marshes in Whitehall, but John is very fond of his ale and has a preference for the Sun tavern, down by the river. Henry tells

them to continue their argument outside in the cloister while he plays a song for me. Both men complain bitterly at being cast aside and insist that they would rather stop and listen.

Henry nods graciously and moves to the harpsichord. He plays and sings my song from *The History of King Richard II*. He has altered some of the words and I am surprised by the amount of repetition he has added to the phrases. Indeed, he has changed the original to such an extent that I can hardly recognise it as my own work. The phrases seem to be separate from one another and the emotions fly between them as though they are in dialogue. I am transfixed and I ask him to play it again. To hear my words in Henry's musical hands is majestic. The meaning he extracts is pure enchantment and the sadness of his tones moves me to tears. This is indeed the melancholy of a king who has lost his crown and who is about to lose his life. I put my arm around him, thank him and kiss him on the head.

"Your elaborate embellishments on wholly unimportant words reminds me of Matthew Locke," John tells him. "Locke knew most about declamation, but he did not have your instinctual inspiration for communicating text. It is completely moving, my dear. Where is it from?"

Henry tells him that it is a song for my play, *The History of King Richard II* and asks if they would like to hear another new piece. They are delighted and Henry turns back to the keyboards. The music starts in a slow, thoughtful mood and then becomes complex and very full. It is like a gentle call for attention followed by an invitation to a place where the action is rich and fast moving. It soars with anticipation and I am amazed. We are all amazed. Henry laughs.

"It is the overture to my opera," he tells us, "but I will only tell you about it when we have a drink in our hands."

John cannot wait to question him, but Henry refuses to respond. He tosses a coin to decide the place of our drinking and John wins.

In the Sun, Henry talks of the entertainment for Josias and John asks about its theme. I tell him that it is our intention to adapt a play of mine called, *Brutus of Alba*.

"You should proceed with much caution," John says. "There is a world of difference between writing a libretto and writing a play. You should start with something simpler."

I am taken aback by his response and when we continue to pursue the subject my fumbling conversation does not recover. John insists that any attempt to adapt a long narrative text to initiate the songs for an opera will fail.

"It will condemn you to fighting an inclination to keep everything from the play," he says. "If you are considering a modest number of scenes with a few songs in each, then you are already in possession of a large amount of material."

These remarks concern me and I am about to inform him that it was Henry's suggestion when he says that I will be fine as long as I follow the rules. This concerns me more, for I have no idea what the rules might be and I ask him to give me some idea about them.

"The job of the librettist is to convert everything to the short stanza," he says. "You must use as many short verses as possible. Try to vary the length of the verses and employ stops wherever you can. Let Henry help you with the use of the refrain, for his trained ear will make easy work of it. The other thing to concentrate on is writing words with open vowel sounds. The audience will hear nothing but noise if the consonants get clogged."

I am trying to etch these words into my memory, but they come at me too fast.

"The most important thing to remember is that comprehension is only a small part of the equation. Think more about pleasing the hearing of the audience rather than gratifying their understanding. You can achieve much by allowing rhyme take the place of reason. Most of this is common sense and what you do not know now you will soon learn. Don't be too ambitious, my friend. Just let Henry get to the music as soon as possible."

I am reeling from this surfeit of information and I fall silent. John joins in the conversation that Henry and Nicholas are engaging in and I ask the landlord for some paper and a quill pen. I write out as many

of his instructions as I can remember before joining their drinking and storytelling. The three masters of the King's music then sing catches and bawdy songs to entertain the revellers in the tavern.

When they return to their seats three sailors take their place and sing songs about working and going off to sea. Hardly one bawdy sentiment is expressed and the romantic and jolly songs are quite distinct from the harsh and dangerous reality that must be the truth of their lives. When they accompany their song with a little dance I turn to Henry to suggest that sailors might sing and dance by the harbour in our work, but Henry puts his hand on my knee to freeze me. His eyes are fixed upon the sailors. He nods his head as if to tell me that he knows exactly what I wish to tell him.

We eat bread and cheese, washing it down with more ale, and then Henry takes to the stage again. Most catches have a similar sounding tune, but Henry writes new melodies to his favourite words and he takes considerable care in their composition.

To thee, to thee, and to a maid
That kindly on her back will be laid
And laugh and sing and kiss and play
And wanton all a summer's day,
Such a lass, kind friend and drinking
Give me, Great Jove, and damn the thinking.

"He sings with much heartfelt expression," John remarks, "and there is longing in his voice this evening. Is he in love, do you think?"

I nod my head.

"Then he will break our hearts and fill us with a desire for innocent pleasure at the same time."

We all drink considerably more than we should and once again my news about visiting the Pieters' House has to wait for another day.

Chapter Five

I am standing by the pier below Charing Cross where Josias Priest is dancing a scene with a number of sailors. They are preparing to board their ships but, being in a drunken state, they all fall into the river.

It's a comical dream, but my nausea has little about it that amuses me. I remember standing outside the tavern laughing and singing sea shanties very badly while imitating Henry's manner of walking. I have no idea how I got home. I rouse myself to gauge how my head feels when I am on my feet. I am anxious to remember what John Blow told me and I go through my coat pockets to find the notes I made in the tavern. I put them on my desk, grateful to have them. It is Saturday and I am going to Greenwich with Buttons. My head hurts, I am dizzy and I want to be melancholy and reclusive. I wash slowly and dress in the smartest clothes I can find. My wig is a mess, but there is nothing to be done with it. The thought of coffee is the spur that enables my doddering walk to the pier.

I sit in the Old Quay coffee shop by Charing Cross wharf waiting for my dear friend Buttons. Thomas Boteler has been known as Buttons since his school days. According to him, Thomas Boteler was converted to Tommy Bottle, this changed for a short time to Tummy Button and then finally he was known simply as Buttons. This sequence of thought is entirely his way of thinking and I suspect he invented it. I love Buttons and once you are familiar with his antics you will know why. We are off to see his Uncle William. William is his patron, his mentor and his last surviving relative and you could not hope to find a more intelligent and generous fellow. Buttons parades into the house wearing a bright red coat and extravagant hat. He greets me heartily and I have great

doubts about by ability to engage with his playful and excitable energy this morning.

"You look peaky," he tells me.

"I was up late with Henry."

"How is Henry, still on the fiddle?"

"I am working with him on an opera."

"So you have an ear for music and a hand in writing it?"

"I am only writing the words."

"Quite right. Opera is not something to sing about. Have you given up on the theatre then?"

"No, I have nearly finished *Richard II*."

"He was finished years ago."

"How is your play progressing?"

"Did I tell you about my horseplay?"

"Why do you always answer a question with a question?"

"Do I?" he asks.

We continue like this until we are sitting in the boat. When I inform him that I am in need of serious calm, he leaves me be and treats the boatmen to his jokes and tricky speech. The river is choppy, I feel like death and I relieve my rebellious stomach of its awful contents more than once. My relief to be on the jetty at Greenwich is great, but once the carriage starts bumping and shaking on the rough track my queasiness returns.

A footman stands on the steps of the manor house. He walks solemnly towards us and informs Buttons that William Boteler died last night. Buttons stands perfectly still, shakes his head and walks off round the courtyard, kicking the stones as he goes. I sit on the steps until he joins me and we go together into the large reception room where he pours us both a large cup of wine. William's secretary joins us and he and Buttons go together to the library to go through some papers. The alcohol re-engages my spirits for a short while, but before long I am asleep in the chair. I remain sleeping until the dead of night when I have no idea where else I might take myself.

The morning air is fresh and a light breeze blows dust across the courtyard. My head is clear but I remain in a delicate state. Buttons continues to be busy with William's secretary so I go for a walk in the countryside. I am pleased with the meadow, the cow parsley and the hawthorn for company. Everything is fresh and green and I walk by the river, knee deep in sweet-smelling moist grass. This is good for me, but in truth, I am lonely. I want Eliza here with me. I imagine her wrapping her arms around me, pulling me down to lie with her under the warm sun. I feel my heart on fire for her. Without Eliza's love, even the lush water meadows can seem barren and dry. I cannot understand why we have been apart so often. We swore to each other that we would be constant companions. I want her starry eyes smiling at me, promising me hours of pleasure. More than my life I want to make love to her.

When I return to the house Buttons informs me that he will remain here for the funeral and to take care of William's affairs. I express my deep regrets, hug him generously and take the boat back to the City. As I approach The Strand I pray that Ellen has returned, but I gaze at the house and know that she is still with her sister. The house is empty and unloved and I go straight to bed. Dear God, may Ellen be an aunt already and may her sister have no further need of her. And while I am praying, dear Lord, please make sure that Eliza is at home when I call on her tomorrow.

I can hardly contain my enthusiasm to be with Eliza. I have one clean shirt, but my coat, waistcoat and breeches are grubby after the journey. I find a clean pair of stockings and even as I am putting them on my heart, like a bird, flutters from one place to another. I must take my shirts to Nancy's laundry in Milford Lane. I must deliver my essay on Milton to Mary Heveningham. Then I will be with Eliza.

There is a letter on the hall floor from Eliza and I can hardly bring myself to open it. I am shaking as I read her words. She writes that she has been taken up with a great many matters, but she will be at home this afternoon. I can call on her at three o'clock. I can call on her at three o'clock. My internal voice repeats this phrase with sheer delight as I cross the road to the White Horse to celebrate my love with a cup of ale. I then take my shirts to the laundry.

The Heveningham's live in Covent Garden. Edgar, the houseman, opens the door and I enquire whether, Simon Fellows, Horace's secretary, is at home. He informs me that he is out on business, but Mary is at home. This is irksome, as I need to be paid for the essay and Mary will not deal with this matter. Edgar escorts me to the library, where I wait for Mary to join me. She manages a quick, "Good morning", before launching into the matters and events that preoccupy her. The speed of her delivery is as surprising as ever. I hardly have time to catch my breath before I have agreed to read at her next literary evening and with the Milton essay in my hand I suggest that I read him. Mary agrees enthusiastically and adds a great many things that I might also read.

"I am expected at a meeting with Thomas Killigrew at the Theatre Royal," I tell her when there is a gap in her monologue. It's a horrid lie and I'm a scoundrel, having promised Horace so much, but I will do more for Mary when I am not so preoccupied. Mary says that she also has pressing matters to attend to and we agree to meet soon.

Having used Killigrew as my excuse to make my departure, I decide to have dinner at the Half Moon tavern on Drury Lane. It would be excellent luck to be able to re-enliven his interest in *The History of King Richard II*, but he is not here. I take a hasty meal and then make my way to the gardens at Lincoln's Inn. I am too excited to enjoy a leisurely stroll and before I know it I have passed through the gardens and am half way towards Holborn. I drag myself back to the gardens and sit quietly to collect my thoughts and steady my nerves.

Have you ever approached a lover's door with so much excitement that you cannot understand how you have not burst into flames? My immanent combustion causes me to knock vigorously on Eliza's door and I freeze, waiting with my heart in my mouth. She is now before me. I kiss her. I stand back to take in the sight of her. In my mind's eye Eliza is beautiful, but when she is before me this fact is confirmed a thousand fold. She is more invigorating than the sun. She smiles graciously and invites me to enter. In the drawing room I hold her to me and kiss her. I take hold of her hands and kiss them repeatedly. Then I look into her eyes and tell her how much I miss her.

Eliza laughs self-consciously. We sit together and I tell her about my writing and the trip to Greenwich, but my emotions are playing so actively that I have little desire to talk. I want to lose myself in her and kiss her repeatedly. I stand, pull her onto her feet and put my arms around her with such intent that we wobble and fall back together onto the sofa. I kiss her passionately and run my hand along her legs, inside her skirt. I am too excited for words. I try pathetically, just for one instant, to remind myself to be calm, but I cannot contain my ardour. I unbutton my breeches and drive myself towards her with a speed and a passion that I have no way of checking. Eliza is taken aback by my behaviour, but she submits to it nevertheless.

My excitement is wild and the momentum of my passion is overwhelming. I am not sure what to concentrate on first, what aspect of my passion to attend to, as everything flows from me at an alarming rate. I melt into her embrace and believe that I am performing an act of worship. My heart is pounding as I devour every moment of my contact with her. I surrender in a state of helplessness and gratitude and close my eyes. With my head nestled into her, I take great breaths in her neck, kissing her and repeating my words of undying love and profound gratitude.

Eliza's attachment to this activity is less intense than mine and when I try to engage her further she pulls away from me. We lie quietly together until my ardour cools and then Eliza sits up, straightens her skirt and tidies her hair. I try to make contact with her in a more sociable manner

and in my usual fashion I say anything that comes into my head. I talk about the days I have spent thinking of her and how greatly her beauty inspires me. I am anxious for Eliza to find me entertaining, but my humour has left me and I start to express my concerns about Henry. I tell of his love for Frances and the fear I have that her family will have nothing but contempt for him.

"This love will only cause division," I tell her.

"Then their position is not unlike our own," Eliza replies.

"This is never true," I say, laughing to brush off the statement. "What opposing concerns hinder us? We are free to enjoy each other's company as we please."

"Why is it that you feel so intently for your friend Henry?"

"Because he is infatuated with Frances and I cannot bear to see him miserable. If I could conjure a woman who might be a mistress to him, then he would not count on this love so exclusively and …"

"Oh Nahum, you must not speak so."

"Why not? Perhaps you might know someone who would play mistress to Henry."

"Are you now asking me to act as a procuress for your friends, Nahum?"

"Eliza! It was a jest. I did not mean to offended you."

I feel stupid and I attempt to recover my position, but Eliza becomes more upset the harder I try to extricate myself. She does not want to forget my words or indeed to forgive me for saying them. I have been insensitive to her, and that's certain, but why does the implication of my words have so much importance when their context was entirely harmless? Her aggressive tone continues to suggest that she has taken deep offence and I cannot believe that her extreme reaction suits my modest crime.

"You are being emotional and what you say is designed to confuse and confront."

"And you are more concerned about your friends than you are about me."

"This is never true, dear heart, how could it be true?"

"But your urgency to see me today is only on account of Henry."

"Oh Eliza, is this passionate outburst of yours a form of intimacy?"

This adds more fuel to her argument and when I try to take her hand she pulls it away, stands up and starts to pace the room.

"Eliza what is happening to you? Heaven knows, I did not mean to offend you."

I place my arms around her and try to placate her. She frees herself again and continues to express her hurt despite my reluctance to fuel the argument with more reasoning.

"Your being here has nothing to do with love."

The charge is ridiculous, yet it works on me. I am seriously under threat and a wave of aggression explodes within me. I rush at her and grab her by the hand. She pulls it away from me and I hold my arms out to show that I want to hold her. I step towards her, but she pushes me away and with her hands on her hips she assumes an adamant pose that says she is not going to be consoled or dissuaded by me.

"Eliza, for the love of God, please let us stop this now. Tell me that this pretence at being upset is only a way of taunting me. Why would I treat you in this way now when I have never treated you in such a fashion before?"

"Oh! Is this what you think, Nahum Tate? Given the way you have treated me, I am surprised that you want to talk about the treatment I am subjected to."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"What do I mean? I mean that you do not really care for me. Our being together is a convenience for you. There is no good reason for us to be together. All you do is work and I wait here for nothing more than to witness your satisfied passion. In return for this I am offered a few love poems. Do you ask anything about my life? No. Well I have one and I want it to be different to the life I'm leading now."

These words cut deeply. I had no forewarning of them. I remain quiet, allowing Eliza the opportunity to voice her frustration. It is enough to worry and confuse an angel. Eliza does not relent and she adds more pressure to her case against me.

"If we have not grown in any fashion worth mentioning, what does our friendship have to commend it? You are interested in yourself, your work and your friends in that order and I count for very little. Do you imagine that your words are so attractive that a woman should just lie down before you on account of them?"

There is such a warlike tone in her voice that my world turns black. Some horrid power inside me assumes control and I grab at her shoulders and push her with all my strength. I can see her, poor beautiful Eliza, sprawling backwards into her furniture. I have become a brute. The sight of my action frightens me. I do not know what to do.

"Get out of my house," she screams at me. "Leave me alone and don't ever come back. The very thought of you angers me."

I am striding out through the door. I can hear the sound of her voice as I go down the stairs and out into the street. I walk away quickly, seeing nothing of the world before me. I walk and I keep on walking. I pass Clerkenwell Green and leave the City. I charge through Woods Close and the fields beyond and I do not stop walking until I am high on the hills by Sadlers Wells. I stand very still and breathe into myself. I want my wildness and stupidity to recede. I want Eliza back. I take in the sight of London. It is desolate, where previously it had given pleasure. How quickly my world has fallen about me. How completely the night haunts me now with wretched misery.

Why would she not allow me to retrieve my fallen position? Surely it was this that caused my explosion. How could such blackness have overtaken me so suddenly? Should I believe her words? Is Eliza innocent in all of this? How can she possibly hate me as her words suggest? Maybe she deliberately introduced the confrontation. No. There must be some good reason, something unknown to me that is the basis of her anger, some difficulty in her life that she does not inform me of. She wants a different kind of life. Should I ask her to marry me?

My insubstantial prevarication is useless in the face of such confrontation. Maybe it is worse than I think. Maybe another man has come into her life and this is Eliza's way of moving me aside. No. My explosive anger erupted without warning and it was this that shattered

us. I was a brute. Could I have avoided this? Are confrontations inevitable? I sit for hours on the hill wavering between innocence and guilt, between love and hate. I am desperately in love with Eliza, she is at the root of my existence and I must return to apologize for my appalling behaviour, both past and present.

I walk back down the hill certain that if I express my love she will accept me. Surely, no one consciously rejects the opportunity of being loved. I knock on her door, spontaneous combustion of a different kind now about to consume me. I shake with fear, but Eliza does not answer. I am exhausted. What can I do? I walk away consumed by despondency and full of a hopeless fear for my future. I return home with two bottles of wine purchased from the White Horse. I try to write a letter of apology, but I am so wretched, so stuffed with remorse that my sanity wavers. I drink wine and write relentlessly, trying to explain. I read my words, write some more and drink more wine. In the middle of the night I fall asleep, my clothes still upon me.

Chapter Six

The sun is up and I am feeling dead. I go to the kitchen. Ellen has not returned and the house is horribly empty. I go to the Three Rings coffee house, return to my study and read the words that I poured over last night. They are cries of anguish, vows and promises, complex justifications and descriptions of my bewilderment. For my sanity I tried to touch my sorrow and my guilt, but I failed. I start to write again, driven to persevere until something resembling my broken heart appears on the page, but my ambition to write a poem that has the power to touch Eliza's heart and reveal the depth of my pain is not possible.

I write a simple letter of apology and look for some clothes to wear. I realise that my shirts are with Nancy and worse than this, today is Tuesday. I am expected at the school within the hour. I have no time to go to Smithfield. I collect my shirts, ask Nancy's son to deliver my letter and return home to dress. Never before have I felt such reluctance to leave the house. How can I teach? How am I going to talk with Josias after lessons? Where are the notes I made after my conversation with John Blow? I take a copy of *Brutus of Alba* from my shelf, put it in my coat pocket and make my way to the school as fast as my aching body will carry me.

In class, Anna pays close attention to me. She has a questioning gaze upon her and I imagine that she knows about my visit to her house. I cannot help but regard her in a different light now. I want to tell her about my visit to the Spaniard and about Henry's love for Frances. Once the lesson is over I leave the classroom quickly. I wait for Henry in the lobby and I am about to enquire if he has already gone to meet with Josias, when I see him walking slowly towards me. He looks more

dejected than I feel if this is possible.

"My dear Henry, are you so downhearted?"

"There is nothing worth the telling."

"Shall we cancel Josias?"

"We may as well cancel life itself, Nahum, for all the good it does." And with that he marches off down the corridor in the direction of Josias Priest's office. I follow behind him. Even his walk is ill tempered. Henry knocks on the door, walks across the room and slumps into one of the large chairs. Josias gives me a look that asks to be informed about Henry's actions and I indicate my incomprehension with a shrug.

"Well my dears, how lovely to see you, how lovely to see you. Henry, my dear, is there anything you need?"

Henry stares at him, closes his eyes and shakes his head.

"Very good. I will take it that you are fine unless you inform me otherwise. Have you had some thoughts about the performance?" Josias asks and I tell him that we have been thinking that the musical entertainment might take the form of an opera.

"Have you seen the production of *Psyche* at Dorset Garden?" I ask.

"No, but I have heard great noises about it. I will go. I imagine that our purse will not extend to such finery, but give me your thoughts on it."

Henry continues to look gruff and leaves me to this task.

"Do you know my play *Brutus of Alba* or the *Enchanted Lovers*?" I ask.

"I did not see it performed, but I know the story." I hand him the book.

"It could be the theme for the opera. It was originally written as *Dido and Aeneas* after Marlowe's play *Dido, Queen of Carthage*."

Josias flicks through the pages and weighs it in his hand, giving me the impression that it is too weighty an object for his entertainment. "We will simplify the plot of course," I tell him.

"Really? I would have thought that Virgil's tale is simple enough. A tragedy of this kind is a strange choice and if the Brutus play ends with the death of the queen then I am very concerned about this decision."

"Shall I give you some more description of it?"

"As you wish, my dear, but a tragedy is unsuitable in any event." I

want to tell him that I feel miserably exhausted and that I do not like the idea any better than he does. I glance at Henry. Clearly, he is going to say nothing.

"The action takes place in Syracuse, in Sicily, rather than in Carthage, but the roles are basically the same. There is a Queen to replace Dido and Brutus replaces Aeneas as the Prince of the Darden forces."

"How are the male and female roles divided?" Josias asks.

"Well, there are four or five main characters on either side so we will have to revise the roles to suit the predominantly female cast."

"My dear Nahum, I am not sure that you have noticed, but the entire cast is female. How can you possibly omit all the male roles and still have this play?"

"The music will carry the narrative not the libretto," Henry interrupts. "We are presenting an entertainment of songs and dances, not an evening of storytelling."

"I know the story well enough," Josias laughs, "and it is wrong. How will you hide the fact that it is a tale about a soldier and a queen whose lives are ruined by their passion for each other? Come my dears, let us not split hairs."

"Music and dance do not care for such detail," Henry retorts. "This is the nature of opera, is it not?"

Josias frowns and Henry rises out of his chair. "My dear Josias, you should not shrink from this. The Italian and French audiences are not entertained by lectures from playwrights on the subject of love, they prefer the music of emotion."

"My dear Henry, if there are songs then there must be words. The intention for our entertainment is to celebrate the beginning of a new school. Think about the parents of my pupils, my dear. Why should I offer them a production that ends with the death of the heroine by her own hand? Good heavens gentleman. If you are going to join me then please devise a subject other than tragedy. Give me something that will inspire my pupils to dance elegantly and their parents to applaud. Don't make them weep." Henry sits down again.

"It could be a moral tale rather than a tragedy," I offer. "If the theme

were a plea for love to be taken seriously it might inspire your pupils and gain the approval of the parents."

"Gentlemen, why you are clinging to this so adamantly? There must be any number of themes that would serve us equally well."

"And why are you demanding that we describe the thing before we have properly considered it?" Henry demands. He rises from his chair again and there is anger in his manner. "It is petty of you not to trust us to direct the nature of our business. How on earth are we to know how it will turn out? If you cannot permit us to proceed as we wish then there is no other way of proceeding."

"But surely my dears, you are starting with a need to disguise the facts. This cannot be right. I want you to devise a happy entertainment, something that will express the charm and grace of my pupils. I do not want to dress them as men, I do not want them to perform scenes of lovemaking and I do not want death …"

"I do not give a damn for this view," Henry declares. "Dressing the women as men is not the issue here and a scene of lovemaking isn't either. I am going to orchestrate a feast and I care nothing for the details of death scenes or how we might deal with fidelity. I make music and you make dance. Nahum will weave elegant words between the two and together we will make an opera. It makes no difference whether we aim to be merry or whether we aim to be sad, our art will reflect our dreams whatever the intention."

"Henry, my dear, you must calm down," Josias bids him. "I would not have asked you to work with me if I did not trust you. I suspect that I have caught you at a bad moment and perhaps we should leave our discussions for another time. I know how the theatre goes, my dear. My point is that I have to be certain that I am not digging a hole for myself. I am prepared to follow your lead, but whatever my faults, please know that I am under considerable pressure, considerable pressure my dears. This change of schools fills me with much nervousness. I have many things to consider and there is too much in the balance to proceed without care and attention. Let us sleep on it. In the meantime I will read the play and see how many dances I can extemporize on the theme. If

the choreography of disappointed love is a challenge beyond my grasp I will let you know. I wish you good day and trust that tempers will soon cool."

Josias opens the door for us and Henry and I bid him good day. I retreat to the garden and sit on a bench and Henry joins me. We sit in silence. Henry's outburst and his despondency are perplexing. I ask what ails him in such an oppressive manner.

"I want to be rid of my love for Frances. My passion for her is too fierce. It causes nothing but despair. I can only perish by the very charms that inspire me. If my fears should grow heavier they will certainly crush me."

Being faint with exhaustion and in need of some solace myself I doubt my ability to find words of consolation.

"It is difficult to dwell upon love, Henry."

"I am so irresistibly drawn to her, so captivated by her beauty, that I can think of nothing else. I want her always by my side and nothing less."

"You should try to temper your feelings." This is rich coming from me.

"I have always conducted myself with the utmost restraint," Henry continues. "The misery I suffer is made greater by my timidity and I am doomed to bathe in Frances's loveliness and receive nothing but rejection?"

"Henry …" I put my hand on his arm, but he pulls away.

"I am paralysed by the fear that she will reject me. I have no choice but to disguise my feelings even as the abysmal hollowness of my inaction haunts me. If I cannot counteract the horrible emptiness I feel, it is better that I am cut by her swift disdain than remain forever on this terrible threshold of indecision."

"Henry, why do you speak like this?"

"Every sound she utters is music to my ears. My life is not worth living if she is not with me. I wait upon everything she does. The smallest glance of her eye or movement of her hand fuels my love. I cannot bear to miss anything from her."

I allow Henry to continue with his agonized tirade. It is a lover's anguished litany, no different from the misery that fills my own heart. I think about my lovely Eliza, who demands that I never return to her. If she will not have me, then I will never love. Henry's love has been horribly interrupted, but mine has received its death knell. I pull him up, hug us both and insist that we take a drink. Henry offers no opinion or objection to my instruction and I march him along.

"Do you want to know what happened this afternoon to spark my charge?" he asks.

I say that I do.

"Frances was late for her lesson." I stop to study him. "She stood in the doorway and I swear she was flirting with Monsieur Spurrier, the French teacher. Now and then she glanced at me, to see if I was looking. How could she behave like this if it were not directed at my feelings for her, if she were not informing me that I hold no interest for her?"

"Oh Henry, you cannot read intentions into actions like this. Frances means nothing by this behaviour. It may be hard to accept these ordinary acts of attention when one is under the spell of love, but it is useless to dwell upon them, believe me."

"I maybe wrong and I maybe right, but either way I want to be rid of my love."

So here we are, two fine, young, jolly fellows drastically reduced and intimidated by our incompetent sensibilities. We sit drinking wine in the Bell on Long Acre and tacitly skate around the subject of our women. They do not cease to consume our thoughts, but we speak of other things. When our conversation returns to opera Henry's excitement resurfaces. It would seem that music, even as a topic of discussion, allows him to pull a veil across his turmoil and tranquillize his spirit. It is not long before he is in full command of his creative voice again.

"We have to dance an opera, Nahum, we cannot write it. We need only the barest of actions to carry a theme and words alone will not establish its meaning."

"Well you must explain to Josias how 'meaning' can be carried by the music. I cannot make a good job of this."

"Give me a sequence of actions and I will do the rest."

"So tell me how narrative arises out of a list of actions."

"Oh Nahum, it's simple. If Josias performed a series of dances you would invent a story to connect them. You would establish a narrative sequence whether one existed or not. If we had ten songs, ten chorus refrains and ten dances we would have an opera and if they each lasted two minutes, we would have an opera that lasts an hour."

Henry, like John Blow, has placed me squarely in the picture, but if Henry has explained precisely how an opera might be constructed I still have no idea how to proceed. What I do not doubt is that he knows exactly what he is doing. I have never told him that I wait for his inspiration, but he must be fully aware that he has my full attention. When our friendship first started I thought of him as my younger brother. Having lived twenty-seven years to his twenty, it was natural that I should think this, but Henry is now my teacher and our difference in years has no relevance. He has been swimming around in his creative pool from the beginning of his life, so he has lived with his art longer and his knowledge and maturity exceeds mine.

We continue to drink a good deal of wine to soften our spirits and I am tempted to tell him about visiting the Pieters' house, but decide against it. I do not want to talk about Frances and I do not want to talk about Eliza, but the drink softens me and without thinking I tell him about the events of last night. Henry holds my hand.

"Anyone who loves the country as much as you, Nahum, should return to it whenever you can."

It is a startling remark and I wonder why he thinks on my love of the country. "Stop working," he says, "enjoy some rest. Regard how things change."

"Well, for sure, these words could apply equally well to you, my dear, but as it happens I may go to Ireland soon. My sister Mary is unwell and Ann has asked that I visit them in Dublin."

"Then you must go. Leave everything here. Forget about Josias. Let your feelings for Eliza rest. Do what you love most in Ireland and let the landscape feed you."

"Come with me, Henry. We could sit in the Irish hills and make our opera."

"No I can't Nahum. I have no world if I am not in Westminster with my music."

Suddenly, despite my horrors of the journey, the thought of being in the Irish countryside fills me with joy and like a true Irishman I start to eulogize about the landscape, saying that there is no other like it in the world. All the Irish tales that lie stored in my head flow from me, and the horrid blackness that seemed inevitable begins to recede. Henry listens and we heat ourselves with wine.

Once in bed I pray that Frances will see the love in Henry's heart and know what a treasure lies there. I pray that Eliza will forgive me and find some room in her heart for my love. My poor little heart, I make such literary ambition of it and yet I make such a poor show of it in life.

Chapter Seven

I walked to Eliza's apartment, but she was not at home. I left a note for her and spoke with her sister-in-law. She told me that Eliza is keeping to herself now that she has another job. I was eager to know more, but she knew nothing. She said that Eliza owes rent on the apartment, so I gave her four half crowns and returned to The Strand.

I finish my dinner in the White Horse and cross The Strand. Ellen is walking next to me. I put my arm round her, hug her and take the bag of shopping she is carrying.

"Mr. Tate, whatever has come over you?"

"I am delighted to see you. Where is Harry?"

"He is out somewhere, playing with his friends."

I ask how her sister is and learn that she has a healthy girl. I am greatly relieved. I put the bag on the step, take out my key, open the door and wave my arm graciously, inviting her to enter. She gives me a puzzled look and laughs.

"I cannot manage without you, Ellen."

"Good," she says. "I have no thought of leaving."

We go together to the kitchen and share our news while she unpacks the shopping. When I tell her about returning to Ireland to visit my sister Ellen expresses some concern about the length of time I will be away, but I assure her that I will leave enough money for her to keep house while I am away.

I have been converting *Brutus of Alba* into an opera and the drastic cutting of the script has given me great satisfaction. I have omitted all of the male characters, apart from Brutus and a few sailors, and I have reduced the number of scenes to six, two in each act. Here is a description of them.

Scene One: Brutus delights the queen by describing his battles in Troy. Brutus is attracted to the queen and their love begins to grow.

Scene Two: The queen is concerned about her love for Brutus. Amarante encourages her confidence in her love.

Scene Three: The sorceress and the witches plot the queen's downfall. There is a party in Diana's grove to celebrate the hunt.

Scene Four: The sorceress conjures a storm and the queen and Brutus take shelter in a cave. The witch's potion acts upon their passions.

Scene Five: Brutus learns from a spirit, disguised as Mercury, that Jove commands him to depart for Albion. The sailors get ready to depart.

Scene Six: Brutus explains that he must honour the god's decree. The queen is outraged and Brutus is in turmoil. Brutus departs and the queen faints.

For sure, I have no idea how it will succeed. There is no narrative development and there is hardly enough action in the plot for it assume any. I have no way of judging it and I am certain that Josias will find nothing here to please him.

There is laughter in the kitchen and I recognise the voice of Buttons. I make my way downstairs and see him sitting at the table with Harry.

"I am explaining the magical qualities of breath," he says. "Are you familiar with the subject?"

I shake my head.

"Then you may listen. Now, Harry, if you blow on your hands when they are cold your breath will warm them, but if you take a bowl of hot soup and blow on it, your breath will cool it. So how do you account for that?"

"I have no idea," Harry says.

"Of course you don't, because its magic." Harry is impressed.

"Can I show Nahum the tricks you taught me?" he asks.

"Certainly you can. Now, Nahum you must sit here and concentrate very hard."

Harry treats me to a trick involving six glasses of water and then another two tricks involving the magic of numbers. He takes great

enjoyment in his performance and I feign bemused wonderment at his cleverness.

"Well done," Buttons tells him. "You are almost ready for the stage."

"Not tonight he isn't," Ellen says as she enters. "He is almost ready for bed."

Buttons and I laugh, but Harry complains. Recognising that we must leave the family to their evening rituals, I suggest that we go to the White Horse for some ale and Buttons needs no more encouragement than this.

"Did you lay old William to rest?" I ask, when we have ale in our mugs.

"Aye. Luckily he was resting before we dropped him in the ground. You look as though you too need some rest."

"I am probably writing too much."

"Something jolly, I hope."

"I write what I love."

"But do they love what you write?"

"I never know who loves what."

"I thought you were in love."

"I am, but it makes my heart sink."

"How does it sink when it should fly?"

"I have no idea."

"Then love another."

"One cannot simply choose to be in love, Buttons."

"Then who should do the choosing?"

"Love selects us, my dear. It beckons us on, then makes a fool of us."

"You were a fool to banish the Fool and you did it to establish romance in place of tragedy."

Buttons never forgave me for omitting the Fool from my version of *King Lear*. It was he who encouraged me to write the play and I dedicated it to him, but without the Fool he had no love of it.

"Do you still object to the marriage between Edgar and Cordelia?"

"No, I object to you making love your subject when you know so little about it."

"I know even less about the Fool." Buttons sighs with disappointment.

"Why are you so attentive to my failings Buttons? I feel like a pupil who has failed his teacher."

"Only a journalist is without failings," he says.

Our conversation switches to truth and the gap that exists between our lives and the lives we give our characters. We talk about everyone we know and categorize them according to their bravery. When I am with Buttons I start to understand myself. Friendship is truly the privilege of private men, for wretched greatness knows no blessing so substantial.

I have been carrying Eliza about with me like an awkward, weighty object and I have written to her every day. I have also written to my sister to inform her that I will be in Ireland in two weeks, a week for the journey and a week to make preparations.

I am now with Roger Tonson in Holborn, collecting payment for articles I have completed. He tells me that he is looking for a writer to translate Ovid's *The Art of Love* and suggests that I am the obvious man for the job. I shake my head, but it is rotten luck for I love Ovid. I ask what date the translation has to be completed by and he tells me by the end of September. I weigh up the possibilities and tell him that I will do it. This is sheer madness, but Tonson is delighted and asks if I would be interested in writing some articles for London journals as well. I tell him that I can't, but he promises me good money and as I have barely enough money to keep Ellen and Harry in the house while I am away, I ask about the subjects of the articles.

"London Town. There is one on food, one on health and one on gardens."

"How many words is the one on gardens and what is the fee?"

"Three thousand words. If you complete it this week I will pay fifteen shillings."

I tell him that I will do it. Lord knows what I am doing, but by the time Roger Tonson returns with his Latin edition of Ovid, the deal is struck. I put it under my arm and make my way to the Heveningham house in Covent Garden. Horace is still in Windsor with the King and Mary is not at home. Edgar, the houseman, escorts me to the library where Horace's secretary, Simon Fellows, is working. I enter and see Thomas Flatman sitting on a pair of steps, reading a book. We are both delighted by the surprise. He jumps down and we hug each other.

"What are you reading?" I ask.

"The Roman Poets," he tells me. "Horace has the best collection and I want to spend the summer with them. I have an appetite that only romance can nourish."

Thomas is a poet, a writer of songs and a painter of miniatures. He is the most friendly, inspiring fellow you could wish to meet and he always has a beneficial affect on my spirits. We exchange our news and when Simon enters I jump upon him and ask if I might be paid for the article on Milton. He laughs at my quickness and I inform him that I need it before I go to Ireland. Simon disappears into his office and I tell Thomas about my trip and about the article on London's gardens that I must write before the end of the week.

"I know exactly what you must read," he says and he busily searches the shelves. "Here we are, the most inspiring book you could wish for, *Upon the Gardens of Epicurus* by Sir William Temple. He writes about the gardens of Europe." We sit together at a table while I thumb through the book. He then takes the book from me and finds a page towards the end.

"Temple also describes the gardens of the Far East. He is of the opinion that Chinese gardens have more beauty than our own."

"And for what reason do they earn such accolades?" I ask.

"On account of their irregularity," he says and laughs. "Temple describes them as a contrivance of figures without any order or disposition of parts and claims that such concerns enjoy great esteem in China. When the Chinese express their appreciation of a garden of this kind they deliver a cry of delight, not unlike a shout of 'Eureka'. The

term they use is, 'The sharawadgi is fine'. It is a nice way to appreciate gardens."

Thomas talks about China's profound interest in beauty, saying that only beauty can strike the eye with startling consequences and that it is for this reason that beauty deserves a shout of recognition. Simon returns and hands me a bag containing fifteen shillings. I thank him and ask if I may borrow Sir William Temple's book. He agrees and returns to his office, leaving Thomas and I to our thoughts. With beauty in mind I think only of Eliza. I tell Thomas that I could shout her name so loudly the whole world would hear it. He asks how is it between us.

"Without any order or disposition of parts," I say, "and our landscape is so deeply obscured in gloom that I doubt we could recognise beauty even if it were present."

Thomas consoles me affectionately and agrees that a trip to Ireland might help to cure my heartache. As I am leaving I remember to write a note for Mary, explaining that I have been called away and will not be able to keep my appointment with her.

The day threatens thunder and the sky's ominous rumbles accompany my arrival at Mr. Garthway's stable in Scotland Yard. I ask him about hiring a horse to take me to Liverpool and he reminds me of the considerable arrangements I must make for such a journey. The list of things to hire is endless and the expense considerable. In addition to the saddle, bridle, saddle-cloth and saddlebags, I require a good riding suit, riding boots, spurs and a cloak. I need a belt to carry a sword and a holster for my pistol. When I complain of the journey and the cost of it Mr. Garthway agrees to lend me a hat for free.

"Your alternative," he tells me, "is to take the coach. They have just started to make the run to Chester, but the journey will take six days and every passenger complains that after half a day in the carriage they are so weary of the jolting and jostling that they will never repeat the

experience again." I stay with the horse.

I make my way to the Abbey and enter the Old Monk's Refectory to witness Henry singing and dancing while writing notation.

"*Theodosius, or The Force of Love*," he exclaims. "What has been engaging you?"

"I have just come from the stables to hire my horse for Ireland."

"Oh, Nahum. Your departure saddens me. You must write frequently. Did you prepare a sequence of scenes for me?"

I hand him the copy and Henry studies the page of writing with some seriousness. He says nothing and I feel some concern, but his verdict is that the scheme is perfect. I am both surprised and delighted, but when he suggests that we go to Josias to discuss it with him I complain that I am in no mood for this. Henry wants to work on it and determine how the musical and dramatic structures work together. He suggests that we draw a chart to describe how the songs, the choruses and the recitative might be apportioned, but I stop him.

"I am too exhausted to work, Henry. Come to supper with me."

"And where would you take me?"

"To London Bridge. There is a place near there that will entertain us very well."

"Is the food there so highly commended?"

"The food and the entertainment. Both will surprise you."

I get him to the Spaniard without mentioning that it is the Pieters' eating-house. It is considerably more crowded than it was on my previous visit and within minutes of sitting down I sit frozen to my chair. A woman of about forty, looking the very image of Frances, is standing but two or three yards from us. Henry is facing me and does not see her. I am not ready to tell Henry where he is and I certainly do not have the courage to tell him that the woman standing directly behind him could be his future mother-in-law. She quickly moves away and Henry and I enjoy a very good lobster. Henry saw the production of *Psyche* yesterday and we discuss this. He is more enthusiastic about the stage effects than John Blow is and he asks why I do not invite their use in my own plays. He advises me that if I gave *The History of King Richard II* more opportunities

for moving machinery it would have a better chance of success and I express my doubts, but he enjoys the idea of flying Richard's detractors about the stage. Then we discuss the kind of machinery that might be used in our production for Josias and the idea of flying Mercury and the witches about the stage has more sense than trying to make characters from history fly. I mention that I met James Billingsley in the company of Killigrew, and we agree to invite him to consider some modest proposals for our production.

When a group of male singers appear on the stage and sing Tudor songs in four-part harmony, Henry asks if they are the reason for our visit. I tell him that they are, having now determined that Henry should enjoy this place, for one evening at least, innocent of the meaning that it might hold for him. The singers entertain us well and Henry accompanies their melodies with humming and finger tapping. As we are heading upstream Henry says that it was a fine place for supper and I tell him that it is a fine place for love. Henry is curious about my remark and asks why this would be. I tell him that he has chosen it for himself and he asks me how.

"By loving Frances," I tell him.

Henry studies me and tries to work out my meaning.

"The Spaniard is owned and run by Amy Pieters, the mother of Frances," I tell him, Henry cannot believe it. I insist that I am telling him the truth and he calls me a wag of a friend and asks how I discovered this. When I explain my visit, Henry jumps upon me, tickling and punching me in such a strident manner that the boat rocks perilously. The boatman demands that we cease our antics, claiming that we will sink the boat, and Henry settles down, but it is all that I can do to convince him that he should not return to the Spaniard this evening.

Chapter Eight

I am King Richard, lying in a cell in the Tower. My jailers are flying around me, tormenting me with jibes and stabbing me with sticks. They vanish into thin air and a table carrying plates of delicious food rises up out of the floor. As I move towards it, it sinks back down into the floor.

I was tortured in the dream, but now that I am awake it strikes me as amusing. I write some notes to remember it and write another letter to Eliza. When I arrive in the kitchen I see Harry curled up on his mother's lap. Ellen is stroking his hair and I suspect that Harry has been involved in an accident. I ask what has happened and Ellen tells me that he has been fighting.

"I have not been fightin'," Harry exclaims. "I was set upon by savages."

He has a large bump on his left eye and a cut on his lip, but apart from that no other wounds are discernable. I ask Ellen if he is in need of a Doctor and she shakes her head. Harry, trying not to move his lips, asks if I have ever been attacked. I tell him that I have been set upon by robbers and ask if these savages stole anything from him.

"No," he complains. "Only boys get attacked for no reason."

He says that he wants to be a man as quickly as possible and I tell him that if he learnt to read and write he could be among men who discuss their differences. There is a loud rap at the door and I answer it. A young man hands me a letter. It is from Eliza. I rip it open and read it in seconds. She is inviting me to visit her tomorrow. At six o'clock I will be with Eliza again. I stand in the hallway, kissing the page and feeling the depth of my love for her. There is no part of me that is not connected to Eliza. I sit on the stairs to collect myself and then return to the kitchen

where Harry continues to enjoy Ellen's affection. I feel moved to cheer the young fellow.

"Do you know what I am going to do, Harry? I am going to teach you to read and write."

Ellen and Harry look at me as if I had just landed from the moon.

"I will make you a promise, Harry. We will start as soon as I am back from Ireland and if you show promise in this we might find you a school to go to."

"Does it take long? I mean, how soon can I go to school?"

"Harry, " his mother interjects, "this is no way to reply. First you must thank Nahum and then you can think about what it means to sit and study rather than roam the streets getting into trouble."

Harry makes a complaining noise.

"I am not sure that you can do this," Ellen tells him, "but if you can, it will be the making of you. Nahum, this is a wonderful kind offer and I thank you. Teaching Harry to read will be a task indeed. Now, Harry, what do you say?"

"Don't you worry, Mr. Tate, I am going to be good at it," he says.

Ellen and I share a look of amusement. After Eliza's letter I could promise the world to anyone.

I return to my study and consider the scene where King Richard is languishing in prison. My thoughts return to my flying dream and I write out an instruction:

A table covered with provisions rises up through the floor in front of the King.

I write words for Richard:

What mean my jailers by that plenteous board?

Another instruction:

The King is about to eat from the table when it sinks down below the floor.

This is where the song I wrote for Henry will occur. Next instruction:

A messenger enters with a letter from the Queen.

With Eliza's letter in mind I write the King's words:

O sacred character, oh heaven born saint!
Why! Here are words would charm the raging sea,
Cure lunatics; dissolve the wizard's spell,
Check baleful planets and make winter bloom.

I want to read my words to Eliza to confirm the extent of her inspiration upon me. I write for the entire day and complete the final scene.

The sun shines out from a blue sky and I decide to go in search of the gardens of London. I know the gardens in the grand houses of Somerset, Arundel and Essex for they are close by. Those by the Temple and King's Bench Walk I have walked many times. The pretty parterre and long tree-lined avenues of the Grays Inn Garden I love and the gardens and fields around Lincoln's Inn are those I frequent most. The gardens in the City and those along its northern edge are the ones that I am not familiar with. I will take a boat downriver, walk north through the City and then travel westwards back to Clerkenwell in time to visit Eliza at six o'clock.

I get off the boat at Old Swan Lane once again, but this time I walk up Ebgale Lane to Thames Street. As I walk along Fish Street I come across a monument, a rather splendid pillar of marble with a golden ball of fire at the top. This marks the place where the fire started. I walk through Wool Church Market, down Thread Needle Street and past the Royal Exchange to Broad Street without discovering a single garden. I go into the Cross Keys for a cup of ale and ask where the gardens are in this part of the City. The landlord informs me that the Drapers Garden is close by and he directs up Austin Friars and tells me to turn left at the church.

The Dutch Church is large with a very impressive edifice. I hear much gaiety coming from the garden and I discover a very pretty parterre covered in roses. There are more roses here than I have seen in any garden and there is no doubt about the pleasure it creates. I walk up Three Tun Alley to London Wall, past New Bethlehem Hospital and into a vast expanse of green.

I ask a young woman the name of these gardens and she tells me that it is called Moore Fields. "This here is the Lower Walks and up there, through the trees, is the Upper Walks."

I take in the large expanse of land and tell her that it is a park big enough to grace a country house. She smiles and I turn into Bethlehem Church Yard where a great number of children are playing sports and games with much noise and energy. Down Artillery Lane, I come to the Old Artillery Garden, a sorry piece of ground, mostly mud and a large number of weeds. I stop a couple to ask if there is a garden nearby and they direct me up Chrispin Street to Spittle Fields. It is a generous space covered in grass and surrounded by trees. Sheep are grazing quietly and one would not know that a City is close by.

I walk through Spittle Yard and into White Lion Yard, where the inn inspires thought of dinner. After a good plate of boiled beef, carrots and peas I cross Folgate and make my way down Hog Lane. Here there are row upon row of vegetable beds. These are the Gardeners Gardens and they are as attractive as anything I have seen all day. I walk for some time before the gardens end and find myself back in the upper part of Moore Fields. Being in need of a rest, I sit down on the grass and fall into a deep sleep. I wake up feeling heavy and nervous about my impending meeting with Eliza. She has been with me all day, but now my emotions are upon me and it is some time before I am ready to move on.

I continue westwards and come across the fenced-in grounds of the New Artillery Garden. A great number of tents have been erected at one end and the place is filled with a great quantity of soldiers. I walk around it to the north and walk west down Old Street until I reach Goswell Street. Here I enter the Charter House Gardens, where many couples are taking their evening stroll. Eliza and I often walked here. The clock on St. John's Tower informs me that it is already past six o'clock, so I will my brave spirit to face my fate. I walk down Swan Alley to St. John's Street and through a passageway that takes me on to St. John's Lane. If I didn't know better I would swear that Eliza's building is shaking with emotion.

I knock and wait. Eliza opens the door and holds it slightly ajar. The

beauty of her eyes is explosive. I want to hold her to me and kiss her, but I must not show my affection until it is asked for. Once in her drawing room Eliza invites me to sit on the sofa. She sits opposite me in a chair. We both start by taking the blame for our previous encounter, so we agree to put this behind us. This encourages me greatly, but when Eliza insists that she return the money I paid for her rent I feel concern. I insist that she keep it, but she is adamant and I accept the half crowns from her. I try to enquire about her new job, but she will say no more than that she works in Covent Garden. It's like talking through cheese. Then we both start to talk at the same time, so I wait for her to start. She looks worried and shakes her head.

"I want you to stop writing to me," she says. "I do not want to feel your concern for me every day." Her words explode in me.

"Eliza, how can you say this? I love you. I have never felt such love for anyone."

"Please Nahum, it is inappropriate to talk like this now. We must live separately."

"This cannot be true. Please don't say this. Eliza, I have come here to ask you to marry me. I promise that I will make you happy."

"Oh, Nahum, do not ask this. I do not want to marry you. This is not for us. What I am trying to tell you is that I want to be free of your attention."

"But you said you wanted a different kind of life. What kind of life do you want?"

"I have no idea, but I cannot marry you. I am not in love with you."

"Eliza, my dearest, dearest love. After everything that has passed between us, these sentiments break my heart. All that I felt, all that I ever hoped for, is no longer possible if you truly believe this."

"I cannot mislead you, Nahum."

"So you invite me here to sit on your sofa just to … Oh, Eliza, am I just a useless weed that needs pulling out by the roots and left to rot?"

"What do you suggest? I cannot ignore the feelings that govern my heart. I must take responsibility for my feelings."

"But I know that you have feelings for me."

"I do not love you, Nahum."

"Perhaps you are uncertain about your feelings, reluctant to give them attention."

"I never loved you. It was a mistake."

"You find love a fearful business, that's all. You do not know your heart."

"Nahum, please. If I were in love with you, you can be certain that I would know."

"I don't believe you. You are afraid of loosing control."

"Why do you always tell me what I feel?"

"Why is no one allowed to get close to you? Your heart is hardened against love."

A storm gathers across Eliza's face and tears well up in her eyes. I move from the sofa, kneel before her and take her hand. Eliza pushes me away. I scramble to my feet.

"Please, Nahum, I cannot describe these things. We must talk calmly, sensibly."

She wipes her tears. I return to the sofa.

"Is it sensible to deny your feelings?"

"Nahum, I do not know why you love me. I hate you for loving me. I hate all your horrid gratitude to me. You must be a fool to worship me as you do. I am not worth it. You love something I can't see. You are too close to me. I want you to stop persisting with this so-called love. Show me that you care for me by granting this request."

"I want to hold you close to me, Eliza. I want to dry your tears and kiss your lips."

I move towards her and she puts her arms up to prevent me from getting close. By all the saints, I can't go through this again.

"Why do you always spurn me?" I cry. I move to the centre of the room and turn to face her.

"Please don't do this to me, Eliza."

She does not move and I start to pace the room, but it doesn't help, my anger is threatening to erupt again. This time I must not storm out of the door.

"I suppose that another man has won your affections then."

Damn my life, why did I say this?

"Nahum, there are a great many men who are keen on winning my affections."

She has said this to goad me, hasn't she? And she has succeeded. I am filled with jealousy. For certain, another man will enjoy her company before long. I could be jealous of Eliza enjoying her own company, let alone that of another man.

"Why?" I shout at her. "Why do this to me now? I am only guilty of loving you, but you, you are guilty of hating me for it."

More tears collect in her eyes and she wipes her cheeks with her hand.

"You are impossible," she cries. "Why can't you give me anything I ask for? I gave you everything."

"You did, my dearest beauty, I'm sorry. You made my dreams come true, but this is why I cannot be apart from you."

I move towards her again and this time she allows me to take her hand.

"I will not to shout at you, I promise, but please, please tell me that the affection we shared was true, that there was love between us."

Eliza is silent and she does not move.

"I will do as you ask. I will not write to you everyday. I will wait. I will wait quietly in the hope that you will love me one day."

Eliza takes her hand from mine. She stands up and I move backwards to give her more room.

"I will never love you, Nahum, so you must leave me."

She utters these words slowly and I cannot doubt their meaning or the resolution that lies behind them.

"This is no way to treat a heart," I tell her.

I turn around, walk to the door, go down the stairs and leave the wretched building.

Once in my study, I stand in front of my library shelves searching for solace, desperate for my books to give me distraction. I take my play

Dido and Aeneas from the shelf, flick through it and read the words of pain I had given to Aeneas when Dido rejected him.

> *I am summoned off to howl disconsolate in flames again. I go – winged with hope I entered, but return stripped of my plumes and encumbered with despair. Not one tender look or a pitying, parting sigh. It is all my banished soul has to sustain her with until I am restored to those dear eyes again.*
>
> *She was weeping. Those eyes, rich natures choicest gems should sparkle not dissolve. Her sorrow racks me; from those eyes I felt a cold damp shoot into my conscious heart. I would that I could let my life's blood compound to save that rich experience of tears. You have made a warrior weep. Let me kneel still, rich fountain of delight, embodied rapture. Joy gleamed from thee unwashed while I pressed your hand. I know not how the subtle touch shot through each vein and tingled at my heart. I will remember – let me perish when I am guilty of a first neglect.*
>
> *But 'leave me' was your last word, your last and eternal leave. You kindle me into transport and then to death you chill me in the heat of rapture. It is barbarous to sport with wounded hearts and spread a toil for harmless, credulous love: with your smiles you have mined a woman's fraud and betrayed even the crocodile with your tears. The injunction seemed impossible, but now I shall obey – you have your wish, for I shall never intrude into your presence again. Thus in loves winding mazes we men are toiled. We mourn our hard fate, yet still indulge the pain; and while we curse our bondage we hug the chain. Witness the overflowing of my heart. Witness the labour of each panting nerve of my glowing arteries and fermenting blood. Witness my dreams all night and the innumerable deaths of every hour.*

These words are true, but they do not help to mend my broken spirit. Since long before Virgil's time it was assumed that the pain of rejected love could result in death. I have at times pondered this, but now, as death rears its wizened form and invites me with its solution, I know it to be true. I will not go there. I will cut myself away from feeling and hibernate, waiting silently until I can rejoin some buoyancy once again.

Chapter Nine

Eliza is under my skin. It rains continually. I write about gardens without the pleasure that normally accompanies such a task. As the day draws to a close I am utterly lost. I spend the night howling at the moon.

Each day I reject any notion in me to revive and I work without thinking. I have finished the article on gardens and have prepared a copy of the opera's scenes for Josias. When I arrive at the school Mr. Singleton, the doorkeeper, hands me a note from Josias. It asks that we meet in Henry's music room at four o'clock. I instruct my pupils to write about a performance they have seen and read essays that I have not marked. Henrietta Wilcox asks if I have heard the news about moving to Chelsea and I say that I have. I tell them that I will be in Ireland for the remainder of the term and may not see some of them again. I cannot look at Anna and I dismiss the class early for fear that my emotions will show. Outside Henry's music room I hear Frances Pieters' exquisite soprano voice and enter the room quietly.

Whilst they're in doubt their flame increases,
And all attendance they will pay;
When once confess'd their ardour ceases,
And vows like smoke soon fly away.

It is the astonishing purity and generous warmth of this voice that has charmed and seduced Henry. Her blue eyes, her rosy lips and her youthful figure have captured him for sure, but her beautiful singing must be Henry's inspiration. Frances finishes her song and Henry addresses her in a gentle manner.

"You should sing the word 'fly' with more gesture in its delivery,"

he tells her. "Try to exploit the expressive potential of the notes in the melisma."

"What is a melisma?" Frances asks, fluttering slightly.

"The word 'fly' in the last line has been composed as a melisma. It is a term for a musical form where various notes remain on the same syllable. It is an ornamental device, but some considerable meaning can be communicated by it. You should sing it as if you were flying away. I will sing it again."

And vows like smoke soon flyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy away.

Frances smiles. She surrenders to his words and his charms and she repeats the phrase perfectly. Her friends applaud her.

"Beautiful," Henry exclaims and he asks her to sing it again.

This clever and passionate man is helpless with gratitude for her attentive response and Frances, ablaze with her song, wears her heart proudly. Whatever occurred between them last week has passed and their communication is now entirely in the hands of Eros.

Josias flounces in. "Are you rehearsing the opera, my dears?"

"No, we are finishing our lesson," Henry tells him, annoyed by the interruption.

"Please carry on," Josias bids them. "Do please carry on. Your singing is splendid, Frances, simply splendid."

Frances bows to him, but Henry tells him that he has finished.

"It would be lovely if the pupils remained to hear something of the opera," Josias says. "You have prepared some music, I take it?"

Henry nods his head and takes his place at the harpsichord. He plays the overture that I heard at the Abbey in the company of John Blow and Nicholas Staggins. It is a musical paradise and when he has finished he informs Josias that this is the overture.

"Well, my dear, it is very grand, very grand indeed," Josias says. "Will this be played at the beginning or will the entertainment start with dancing?"

I watch Henry prepare his answer. It is obvious that Josias begs for dancing and Henry tells him that a prologue with dancing might precede

the overture. It is a perfect reply and Josias beams with pleasure. Henry picks up his violin and plays again. It is not quite a hornpipe, for it has more grace to it, but the tune has the jolly tone of a sailor's dance.

Come away all ye sailors,
Our ships are departing,
Ta ta tum – tee tee tum – tee tee tum tum tum …

Henry plays exuberantly while substituting melodic sounds for the words that have not yet been written. It is delightful and the room erupts with cheers and laughter. I recognise it from our night in the Sun when the sailors entertained us. Nothing of interest passes within Henry's orbit without him making something of it.

"Excellent jolly tune, my dear," Josias tells him. "Excellent jolly tune. I sense the dance already. Would you teach it to us? We might start to rehearse it tomorrow."

"It is too early to start rehearsals," Henry tells him.

"Well, this is what we must discuss," Josias replies. "If you have finished, perhaps we could move to my office."

Josias tells his pupils that it is time for them to take tea and they all file out of the room. Henry shares a departing glance with Frances and we accompany Josias to his office. It is my turn to collapse into his chair today and when I do, Henry asks if I have brought the copy of the scenes. I hand my single-page scenario to Josias without leaving my seat and study Josias as he studies the text.

"I remain uncertain about the subject, my dears, and I must tell you that Cecelia is more perturbed by it than I am. As you might imagine, this puts me under great pressure. I am, nevertheless, willing to trust in your promises, but only because we must proceed with haste. The timetable is what concerns me most."

"The timetable?" Henry exclaims.

"Well, I need to know how quickly can we develop the work. You must have considered the timing. Who is responsible for delivering what and when, that sort of thing? Cecelia is most concerned about it. First, I must tell you about the schools arrangements. The term finishes in four

weeks. After that, I have less than four weeks before I start packing and I would like to choreograph some of the dances at this time. Could you teach the musicians to play some dance music before the end of term."

"You cannot work on the dances before September," Henry tells him.

"But I will not have a hall then, the new school will be full of builders."

"But your demands are impossible."

"Then it is impossible for both of us," Josias puts in and he becomes obstinately silent. Henry tells him that he could rehearse the musicians and singers at the Abbey, but Josias must hire a hall in Chelsea for dancing. Josias doubts the possibility of this and pleads with Henry to make a start on the prologue so that he might choreograph the dances before the end of term. Henry agrees and Josias suggests that we make a start on it now. Henry looks searchingly at me.

"My presence is required in Ireland," I tell Josias, "and I might not be back before the end of term."

That Josias is shocked could only be expected, but when I explain the circumstances of my sister's illness, he accepts my absence with some equanimity. I explain to both that I have no time left to work and I rise from my chair. I embrace Henry. Any amount of time I have would be too short to wish him everything I would like, but to leave so hastily is shocking. I wish him everything that his heart desires. I shake Josias by the hand and leave them to devise the prologue.

I go early to Mr. Garthway's stable and ask him to prepare everything ready for my departure tomorrow. When I return home, Ellen asks if there is anything Harry can study while I am away. I offer to buy paper, pen and ink and tell her that Harry must write out the alphabet every day. She tells me that I am a saint and I will have my reward in heaven. I would sooner have Eliza here with me now. I add the purchase of paper, pen and ink to the list of things I must achieve before the day

is out. I place in my bag *The History of King Richard II* and the article on gardens and leave the house for the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. Neither Mr. Killigrew nor John Petty is present so I leave my manuscript with William Prizeman. He tells me that he knows most about candles and I tell him that I am going to trust him with my manuscript. He looks at it quizzically, so I remind him that it is my only copy and that he should guard it with his life. He promises to give it to Mr. Killigrew immediately just as soon as he returns and I make my way up Drury Lane, concerned about the trust I have placed in him.

I proceed to Holborn to deliver my article to Roger Tonson. He is also out of the office, but his brother James attends on me and presents me with a small bag of silver coins for my article. There is such pleasure in a bag of coins and with them safely in my pocket I visit Mansard's the stationers to buy quills, paper and ink. When I arrive home, Ellen is upset by Harry's late arrival. I give her the bag of silver coins and sit with her at the kitchen table, writing out the alphabet for Harry. When he eventually arrives Ellen jumps upon him.

"Why is it that you never do anything right?" she asks him.

"Because I always do everything wrong," he replies. "I don't know why I bother coming home."

Ellen gives him a clip on the ear for his rudeness.

"Go and have a wash. If you behave properly you can rejoin us. Mr. Tate has bought you a present, but if there is any more backchat you can go to bed without any supper and that will be the end of your lessons."

"Am I starting lessons today?"

"You most certainly are not, but Nahum will show how to make letters."

Harry washes quickly, returns and consumes a large slice of bread in seconds. I show him how to use the quill and as I am explaining how the letters are formed he falls asleep. As Ellen is carrying him to the bedroom there is a rap at the door.

"Buttons presents himself to you to say goodbye and to remonstrate with you for not informing him of your departure."

"Oh, Buttons! I forgot about you."

"And what if the whole world should follow suit?"

"Buttons, dear friend, they would not. Mine is an extreme case."

"Not as extreme as mine, I suspect."

"Forgive me. What would you have me do?"

"Why, reverse my fate of course."

"What I mean is, should we go for a drink?"

"Some wine to revive the memory would be appropriate I think."

"How could I forget about you Buttons?"

"That, I think, should be my question."

"Come, we will go to the White Horse."

"Does he have the power of memory?"

"No, but he has the wine."

We sit drinking and I talk first about our meeting with Josias and then about my meeting with Eliza. Buttons is cross with me for not telling him about this earlier and he insists that in future I should make myself scarce when the lures of love present themselves. I ask what he will do while I am away.

"I will go in search of attention and new friends," he says.

"You know that I did not really forget about you, don't you? Here, fill your glass. I propose a toast to you."

"A toast to me," Buttons declares and chinks my glass. "Remember me and forget my fate."

I laugh. "And what is the fate I should forget?"

"Why, the fate that causes me to be forgotten of course."

"You will always be remembered, my dear Buttons."

The early morning sky is beautiful and the air is still. I will carry nothing on horseback, other than the clothes I wear to the stables, so I have nothing to pack. Mr. Garthway's stable is busy, even at first light, and the smell of horses fills the air. Mr. Garthway's son helps me with my riding suit and I give him good reason to laugh as he watches my attempt at

fitting the spurs. Mr. Garthway introduces me to a handsome, dapple-grey horse by the name of Jupiter. He will be my closest companion for the next four days and I spend some time patting him and talking to him. I even stroke the bridle and the saddle, just to get the feel of them again. I pack my shoes and clothes into the saddlebags and put on my belt. I attach the sword and holster, mount Jupiter and he trots happily out of the stables. We are through the streets and out into the country lanes before most folk are awake. I bid myself to find some strength in solitude and sink into the feeling that I am now truly alone. There is something sobering and even victorious about solitude, but it is hardly the path to a new beginning.

Chapter Ten

The number of travellers riding north is surprising. I meet up with two Presbyterian ministers on their way to Scotland, a merchant who boasts of the many women in his life, a group of travelling players who entertain me with their amusing dialogue and a family who are travelling to Chester by coach. They confirm the horrors of the journey, just as Garthway related them to me. By the end of the fifth day I have stabled Jupiter at the Rose and Crown in Liverpool and I have booked my passage to Dublin on the 'Princess May'. It departs at high tide, three o'clock, tomorrow.

The weather is fair with a good breeze and the 'Princess May' is a handsome vessel. It is crowded and far too noisy to allow much sleep, but the journey is easy and as I gaze at the approaching coastline of Ireland, my anticipation pounds in my chest. The first rays of sunshine rise into the sky as we pull into Dublin Bay and my excitement is beyond anything I could have imagined. At Ring's Head we are informed that we must put down anchor as the tide is too low for large boats to progress to their moorings further up the Liffey. This creates some confusion among the passengers, but before long the crew launch the small boats and row us upriver. I step onto Irish soil and thank God with all my heart to be safely in this place I call home.

I proceed along Rogerson's Quay grateful to have my land legs back again and breathing in the air of Dublin as though I had never before tasted sustenance like it. I give Trinity College a cursory and nostalgic glance and make my way along Church Lane, Andrew Street and William Street as though I were here only yesterday. As I approach Mary's house my excitement turns to foreboding as I consider the news that might

greet me. I walk through Castle Market, into Drury Street and see Mary standing in the doorway of her house as bright as day. I run to her, fall into her arms and hug her while tears of relief fall down my cheeks.

Apart from some weakness on account of the blood she has lost, Mary is as fit as a fiddle. The news of my arrival travels fast and within the hour my younger brothers John and Theophulus and my older sisters Fidelia and Ann are with me. My brother's wives, my sister's husbands and their numerous children are all about. My Uncle Theosophus, his children and his children's children also join the party. Before long I cannot count the number who have come to welcome me. The children are beautiful. I feel such love for them as they run around excitedly, happy for a reason to celebrate. Our reunion lasts well into the night and we enjoy a great wealth of food and drink. My older brother Faithful is in the North, but he is to pass through Dublin soon. He is returning to his Parish at Kilbride, just south of Dublin.

I quickly feel at home in Dublin. Each day I visit one or other of my family and revisit the places that had once been part of my life. There are more markets than I remember and the streets are noisy with street sellers, performers, musicians and children. It seems more at peace than any time I have known it. The area around Wood Quay has developed into an important publishing district. I visit Dick's Coffee House and the Leather Bottle tavern, both in Fishamble Street, and the Four Courts coffee house in Wine Tavern Street.

Dick's Coffee House is the place where I am most commonly found. Thomas Cotter runs a bookshop on the ground floor and literary conversation thrives here both day and night. Thomas and I spend a good deal of time discussing the latest plays. On the floor above Dick's Coffee House, Richard Pue publishes a daily newspaper called *Pue's Occurences*. He interrupts his work regularly to join in whatever conversation is to be had. I am greatly attracted by him and before long I spend most of my evenings with Richard and his charming wife Fiona. I help them write articles for the paper and I feel so contented that I could even consider returning to Dublin to live. They are quick to tell me that

the quiet in Dublin will not last for the North is in turmoil again and the disturbances always travel here before long.

After two weeks in Dublin I feel that I should return to London, but Ann receives a letter from Faithful promising to be in Dublin the day after tomorrow. I must wait for him, but to assuage my guilt I visit the library at Trinity College to see if I can find a copy of *The Art of Love*. As I wait in line to talk to a librarian an old professor tells me that a grand new library is to be built.

"It is impossible to find anything on the shelves in here," he says.

I tell him that I am looking for *The Art of Love* and this amuses him.

"This old library might be overcrowded," he says, "but I doubt that it is overcrowded with the art of love."

I meet a charming librarian who sure enough cannot find *The Art of Love*, but he does locate a copy of Ovid's *Heroides*. In this work Ovid expresses, in a series of epistles, the thoughts of antiquity's heroines. These women relate their sorrows at having been deserted by their lovers and in the seventh epistle Ovid gives voice to Queen Dido's lamentations. I read avidly. Ovid gives us Dido, as she perceives herself to be. I had no idea that Ovid had written this.

… could you find
a wife who will love you as I have loved you?
Like devout incense thrown on smoking altars,
Like wax torches tipped with sulphur, I
am burning with love: all day long and all night,
I desire nothing but Aeneas.

As a sign of her love Dido has offered Carthage to Aeneas. It lacks nothing but a king and she is perplexed by his divine mission to establish a kingdom elsewhere.

You should see my face while I write this letter:
a Trojan knife nestles in my lap;
tears fall from my cheeks on its hammered steel blade
and soon it will be stained with my blood.

Ovid has created a gentle Dido, quite unlike Virgil's vengeful queen.

You can accuse me of nothing more than love, she tells her prince.

Despite her pain she does not wish Aeneas dead or threaten to haunt him, but she is hard on him for breaking his solemn pledge.

I know you will again be false, she insists, reminding him that he escaped from Troy with his family, but without his wife, who he left for dead.

You told me that, and I should have known
That you were only giving me fair notice.
… it is Dido, swollen with child,
whom you abandon with part of you.
To the mother's fate must be added the child's,
You will cause your unborn child to die.

These terrible words attack me like a herd of wild boars. What if Eliza had been with child and had been waiting to tell me while I was busy elsewhere? I cannot imagine the anguish that must arise with the loss of a child. This would justify Eliza's anger. For such desertion I could never be forgiven. Am I conjuring a torture for myself here? Oh Ovid, what power you weald with your art. I know so little of these things. My fears remain with me until the librarians call the end of the day.

I wander towards the Liffey and stand lost in contemplation on the Ormond Bridge. I will the motionless Liffey to flow with greater current and take my fears with it. The night is well advanced when I return to Mary's house. I go quietly to bed without speaking to anyone and lay awake bemoaning the wretched fate that has left me both guilty and unloved. The next morning I am no better placed to deal with my tragic musings. Ovid's perspective on Dido has shaken me. Whether Eliza was with child or not, my claim of love did not have sufficient examples to confirm it.

When Faithful arrives in the afternoon he suggests that I travel with him to his parish in the Wicklow Mountains. Being eager to escape my heavy thoughts and lose myself in this beautiful landscape, I take up his offer gratefully. The following morning we set off on horseback. We are

hardly out of Dublin when Faithful asks why I remain unmarried. His question bites me and I hate him for going straight to my weakness. I tell him that I am delighted by many women and that my single status is merely circumstance, but before long I talk of my love for Eliza and claim that I love her more than I love my life. He asks if we will marry and I admit that I was careless with her and we are already separated. Faithful is confused.

"I was too busy with my writing to care for her properly," I tell him.

"But there are many too contradictions here," he says.

"I am aware of the contradictions, but it is the truth for all its confusion," I tell him irritably and for sure Faithful is now fully aware that the subject is sensitive to me.

I dislike our silence so I try to explain Eliza's beauty and the powerful attraction I feel towards her.

"Loving Eliza was like arriving home," I tell him. "I would do anything, put up with anything, to have her as my wife."

I do not tell Faithful that Eliza has no intention of being my wife because I want to his pity, but he is made of sterner stuff than this. Sympathy is something he reserves for the families of deceased relatives.

"You should not hold beauty in such high esteem," he tells me. "Physical attraction should not count for so much when selecting a wife. Beauty is an illusion, a mirage that is to be avoided at all costs. If you want to stay close to God, Nahum, then you must rid yourself of these obsessions that live in your eyes."

I reject his notions without saying so and protect myself by thinking of the Chinese and their shout for beauty. Faithful, not content with the role of strict older brother, adds Pastor in the Church to his case against me and assumes responsibility for my spiritual well being.

"Your condition is like that of Narcissus," he tells me. "You gaze at yourself and see love, but it is a reflection without substance. Throwing your love at another is like throwing riches to the wind. It serves only to make you poor. Marriage is a duty, Nahum, and you should only enter into it when you are ready to dedicate yourself to the service of your wife and your family. This is the true nature of love and responsibility.

Aim for this and drive away this expectation that you deserve so much in return."

I dislike listening to his critical sermon, but I do not counter his arguments. He leaves me without ambition for debate and we travel without speaking for a while. I reflect on Belinda Perryman's talent for being a wife and Eliza's talent for inspiring desire. How could I bathe in her beauty and not think of enjoyment?

"You are right, Faithful," I tell him, "but you are also wrong. I have a young head on my shoulders and for this some leniency is due. That I ask too much for myself is certain, but passion and desire are appropriate responses to someone we love. How can you prescribe what is a reasonable amount of self-gratification?"

"When it is full of your egotism, then it is unreasonable."

"My love for Eliza was not egotistic. I always wanted the best for her. I continually looked for ways to please her."

"But if the extent of your altruism was designed to charm her into loving you in the way you wanted to be loved, then it is hardly altruism is it?"

"But that is what we all do."

"No, Nahum, it is not, but it is the way of many."

Bah. It is useless talking to him. The landscape becomes more beautiful as we approach the mountains and I reflect upon the scenery rather than continue this dialogue on love. Faithful tells me about his life and his ministry in the small Parish of Kilbride. It is situated near the Pollaphuca Lakes in the Wicklow Mountains and it is as idyllic as you could wish. He introduces me to his devoted wife, Catharine, and his three lovely children, and for sure he lives by the truth of his words. I spend a pleasant evening with them and the modest simplicity of the household is in stark contrast to the life I lead. A little nostalgia for their ways creeps up on me.

We never return to the topic of love and when it is time for me to leave, Faithful and I have become easy company for each other again. I return to Dublin and prevent my re-engagement in the pleasant life here by taking the first available boat for Liverpool. My round of farewells is

made with speed and sadness. 'The Earl of Lancaster' is a horrid ship, old and uncomfortable, and it adds to my melancholy about leaving this precious island. The nourishment I received from my family and friends and the grandeur of the landscape are things I do not want to live without.

At the Rose and Crown in Liverpool Docks I meet with John Wiltshire, a sea captain, who is on his way to Deptford to take charge of a new ship. We travel to London together. Not only does he have more stories in his head than any writer I know, he also relates them with more humour and fighting spirit than any author would. I soon grow to love him. On his most recent voyage, pirates ransacked his ship and he was thrown overboard. He spent four days at sea with only a single piece of oak and his passion for life to keep him alive. By great good fortune, he was rescued by an English frigate and he is now ready to take charge of another ship.

His descriptive style is infectious and soon I adopt his manner of speech to relate the events of my own life. I look for humour in everything and describe one disaster after another. I tell him that I rewrite famous tragedies to give them happy endings and change the names of characters so as not to offend those who consider the original as sacred. He laughs until he is fit to burst and I am entirely grateful for the opportunity to leave my self-interested over sensitivity behind.

Chapter Eleven

As I take my leave of John Wiltshire at Charing Cross we promise to meet again. I make my way to Mr. Garthway's stable at Scotland Yard and say farewell to Jupiter. His energetic and mild character served me well. It is late afternoon. I want to visit Eliza and I want to visit Henry, but I do neither. I return to The Strand, wash, change my clothes and then go for some refreshment at the White Horse. I order a mutton stew and a glass of wine and William Hawthorne, the landlord, informs me that Ellen and Harry are now working for him. I sit contemplating Ellen's new employment with some trepidation. I imagine that she has moved in my absence and I prepare myself to plead for her return.

When Ellen arrives with my food she expresses her pleasure at seeing me and asks about my travels and the health of my sister. I give her my news and Ellen tells me that she is now the cook at the White Horse. I ask if I should express my concern about this and Ellen assures me that she can manage both jobs easily. She is pleased that Harry is also working for it keeps him off the streets. I breathe a sigh of relief. When I have finished my supper I return home with Ellen and Harry. Harry shows me the writing he has completed and I am truly impressed with his considerable effort. I offer to start our lessons on Monday. Ellen entertains me with tales of London and I talk of my travels.

It is strange to be home. I do not want to read my letters or engage in anything that might stir my thoughts in the direction of the work, so I muse upon how I might begin to teach Harry. I need a text to read and I have nothing suitable to hand. I think about the story of *Jack Spriggins and the Enchanted Beans*. The adventures of the brave little boy who climbed the beanstalk to trick the horrid giant enchanted me as a child. I begin to write what I remember of it before going to bed.

I am pleased to be gazing down at another morning on The Strand. I write out enough of the Jack Spriggins story to get Harry started and go to the coffee house in Westminster in the hope of finding Henry. He is not there and he is not in the Monk's Refectory. I walk to Tothill Street, not far from the Abbey, where Henry lives with his family. Elizabeth, his mother, informs me that Henry is in Windsor playing new anthems for the King and he will return on Monday. She invites me to take some refreshment and I sit in the drawing room while she busies herself in the kitchen. It is a small room and I wonder how Henry, his mother, his brother, Daniel, and his sister, Katherine, all manage to inhabit the place.

Henry has never shown any ambition to move away from home and his family must count this a blessing, for he is their sole source of income. His wages from the King are by no means generous, and what he is due he receives infrequently. Neither he, nor his family, counts this as a burden. Their needs are modest and they dedicate their lives to music and the singing of God's praises. After a brief time with Elizabeth, I walk through Covent Garden and Lincoln's Inn Fields and when it is time to turn south to The Strand I continue on to Holborn, Smithfield Market and eventually St. John's Lane. I knock on Eliza's door without response and knock again. Her sister-in-law appears in the shop doorway and I tell her that I am hoping to see Eliza. She tells me that I will have no luck at this hour and that she has not seen or spoken to her for weeks. I ask where she can be found.

"Eliza is working in that theatre in Drury Lane," she says. "She dresses the actors there, I think, but I can't be sure. She arrives home at all times of the night and when she does there is nothing but noise that comes from her apartment. Even in the early hours fellows can be heard shouting to her from the street. She has taken a different path, sir, and it does not equate with the common decency of ordinary folk. If your business is urgent then the theatre is where you must ask for her."

I thank her and walk away quickly, for her words sit uncomfortably with me. So Eliza is working in Killigrew's theatre and she has moved on to another life. I call on Buttons and then on Thomas Flatman, but neither of them is at home. I go to the Half Moon Tavern, drink one glass of wine after another and defer my desire to visit Eliza at the Theatre Royal until it is too late for anything other than returning home.

The prospect of reading with Harry pleases me and I agree with Ellen that I will teach him for an hour each morning. The first letters that I open are from publishers asking me to contribute articles to various journals. Then I find a letter from Mr. Killigrew.

Dear Nahum,

I read your play and took great enjoyment from it. I would like to produce it and as chance would have it, the production I had planned for December has been cancelled. I would be delighted to have The History of King Richard II *performed in its place. It is short notice but there is time enough. Please let me know your views as soon as you return.*

Your friend and colleague,
Thomas Killigrew.

I am delighted and I want to read the play to confirm its delights, but Killigrew has my only copy. I am reluctant to open any more letters in case my good fortune runs out, but I see one with Anna Pieters' handwriting.

Dear Mr. Tate,

I hope that your family is well. I am sorry that you had to go away and I could not see you before the end of term. I hope that you do not mind that I write to you. I have some news to tell and then I wish to ask a favour of you.

Frances and I are now busy helping our mother run the family business. Frances is involved with the trading activities and I am engaged with the

domestic affairs of buying and preparing food. We miss living at the boarding school and I find my new life particularly hard to adjust to. I did not realise how difficult it would be to work at a job every day and I do not know how I can view my future with optimism.

Mr. Purcell comes to sing at the Spaniard twice a week. We are not allowed to listen, for the evenings tend to be rather bawdy, but I believe my mother is rather fond of him. He informed our mother that Frances and I were exceptionally talented singers and he asked if we could be involved in the entertainment that will celebrate the opening of the new school. When he offered to teach us the two major roles, my mother agreed, on condition that the lessons are held at home. We sing with Mr. Purcell on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and his lessons bring us great pleasure.

Mr. Purcell informs us that you and he are working together on the entertainment and that it will be an opera. The music is complex, but the story is enchanting and we are filled with excitement about it. Frances is to sing the part of the Queen and I am to sing the part of Amarante.

I dearly want to ask a favour of you and hope that it is not too much to ask. Would you teach me how to write words to music? It would make me completely happy if you could attend our lessons and write some of the words while we are together. Please say if this is too demanding of me. I promise that I will understand. I am thrilled to be singing your songs, but writing remains the most important thing for me.

Your dedicated student,
Anna Pieters.

P.S. I do believe that the opportunity Mr. Purcell has created gives Frances greater happiness than anything she has experienced before.

I am delighted by Anna's news and impressed with Henry's ability to establish a presence with the Pieters' family. I have no idea what he could be teaching them to sing so soon, but the cheeky fellow is capable of inventing anything if it provides him with the excuse to see Frances. I do not reply to Anna, but her request is charming and I will visit her with Henry on Tuesday. I walk out into the sunshine for some air and make my way to Wood Wharf, where I come across a gentleman and

an elegantly dressed woman who are arranging to travel to Chelsea. It occurs to me that a visit to Chelsea to see the new school would be a pleasant a way of passing a bright August day. I ask the couple if I might accompany them and they agree.

"The Pound, by the Apothecary Garden at the end of Paradise Row," the woman instructs the boatmen and turning to me, she asks where I would like to be set down."

"I am not exactly sure, madam. I am hoping to visit the Old School House, but I have never been there before."

"The School House is on Lover's Walk." She turns to the boatmen. "The Beaufort Steps is the place for our young passenger. Are you engaged in the new developments at the school?" she asks.

"I taught at the school when it was in Leicester Fields. Josias Priest and his wife Cecelia have asked Henry Purcell and I to compose an opera to celebrate the opening of the school. My name is Nahum Tate."

"I am delighted to meet you, Mr. Tate. I know you, but I am not sure how. Give me a few seconds and I will tell you. I am the Duchess de Mazarin and this is my secretary, Nicholas Campion."

We shake hands.

"Henry Purcell has played at my house on two occasions and my regard for his talents is considerable. I know the Old School House very well. I assisted the previous owners to produce a masque there a few years back. Do you know the musicians Thomas Lowe and Jeffrey Banister?"

I tell her that I do not.

"Now, what was it called? *Beauties Triumph*, that was it. It is by Thomas Duffret. You should see it if you get the chance."

I am delighted by the coincidence of meeting the Duchess, for I know her by reputation. She is close to the King, who keeps an apartment for her at St. James's Palace, and the musical entertainments and parties that take place at her house in Chelsea are renowned for being grand and colourful events.

"I was wondering when we might have opera in London," she says, "and it does not surprise me that Henry has a hand in it. Just imagine,

the first English opera is to be performed in Chelsea. How delightful. Is it to be in the French or the Italian style?"

I tell her that I am not sure that its style can be easily defined and hope that my vagueness will suffice for an answer. I have no idea what Henry and Josias might have agreed upon in my absence. The Duchess asks me to tell her about the theme or the story so that she might picture it.

"Well, there are still many things to consider, but love is at the heart of it," I say falteringly, praying that love is a safe bet.

"And who are the lovers?" she asks.

"Gods and mortals both," I reply. I feel foolish for knowing so little, but if the Duchess suspects this, she does not show it.

"I am delighted," she tells me. "I will accompany you to the school. We are all going to the Beaufort Steps," she tells the boatmen. "I know you now, Nahum Tate. I have seen your plays. Now, do not tell me their names, I must guess. Now what did I see. *King Lear*? Yes and *Brutus of Alba*. I compliment you on your excellent work."

"Thank you, your grace, you are very kind."

We talk about the theatre until the boat draws up to the most elegant set of steps I have ever seen. The Wharf is laid out in a grand, formal manner, resembling a city square. Before us are a pair of large, beautifully wrought metal gates and railings with two impressive towers at the corners. Beyond the gates, a driveway stretches ahead of us with rows of trees on either side. In the distance there is another gateway, more gardens and an impressive house beyond.

"That is the home of the Duke of Beaufort," the Duchess informs me as we turn west along the river and past a smaller but nonetheless striking house. "And that belongs to Robert, Earl of Lindsey, the King's Lord Great Chamberlain."

I am very impressed by the company that Josias is keeping. We turn down Lover's Walk and pass the stables and servants quarters of Lindsey House. We walk the length of its garden wall and then come upon an imposing house on one side of the lane with playing fields, tennis courts and a bowling green on the other side.

"This is the School," the Duchess informs me.

It is an impressive building with two great wings on either side. It is covered in scaffolding and building materials cover the courtyard. As Josias had indicated, a considerable amount of work is taking place. The gates to the courtyard are locked and the Duchess asks if I have an engagement here to fulfil. I tell her that I do.

"Then you might join us for dinner if you wish," she says.

I thank the Duchess and as we return down Lover's Walk I tell her that Josias is very concerned about the school being ready in time for him to rehearse the opera.

"Oh! But I am sure that someone in Chelsea can give him a place to rehearse. Now, let me think."

We are passing Lindsey House when she says, "I have it. I will ask the Earl of Lindsey if his house could be made available. He has a splendid hall and it would be ideal for dancing."

"Oh please your grace," I entreat her, "I hope that you do not take my information as a request for your assistance. I am sure that the Priests would not want to impose on the Lord Chamberlain."

"Nonsense. Nothing is ever achieved if one proceeds too delicately. Robert makes very little use of his house these days and he would like nothing better than to have his house populated by young ladies. He will probably pay us a visit just for the pleasure of watching them."

I laugh. I am greatly attracted by her. We walk across the Wharf, down Beaufort Street, between terraces of small houses, past an elegant church and along the embankment until we arrive at the Apothecary's Garden. The Duchess lives in an elegant house in Paradise Row that is just beyond it. Nicholas opens the door.

"Now, Nicholas," the Duchess addresses him, "if you would go to the kitchen and let Florence know that we are ready for our dinner, I will entertain Nahum in the drawing room."

The Duchess is proud of her house and she escorts me through some of its rooms. It is not grand in its dimensions, but the quality and quantity of decoration, furniture, tapestries and paintings is something to behold. We sit in the drawing room and a maid enters to enquire if we would like a drink before dinner.

"What are we eating?" the Duchess asks.

"There is a leg of veal cooked in bacon, a capon and some sausages with fritters," the maid replies and the Duchess asks her to bring a bottle of claret. During dinner the Duchess asks again about the opera's subject and I decide to be honest with her.

"Please excuse my vagueness, your Grace, I returned from Dublin only yesterday and I have not discussed the latest developments with Henry. Before leaving my play *Brutus of Alba* was the subject of our opera. It is set in Sicily."

"*Brutus of Alba*?" the Duchess cries. "I hope you do not call it this. Brutus sounds so brutal. It is fine for a play you understand, but not for an opera."

"The story belongs to Dido and Aeneas," I tell her.

"Of course. Then this is what you should call it. Dido and Aeneas are beautiful names and Carthage is the nicest setting for a romance. Keep it as this. Sicily will never do. Why change the names and location of a marvellous, classical story, known to everyone and perfect for an opera?"

"I was advised to hide the play's provenance out of respect for Virgil."

"But Virgil wrote a prose poem not a libretto for an opera. If you are going to sing in honour of this tale then honour it, the rest is all stuff and nonsense. Dido and Aeneas should be the opera's subject and its title."

I tell her that I am most pleased to hear it and silently thank God for the Duchess de Mazarin. With equal vigour the Duchess describes the many productions she has been involved with and then she expresses her eagerness to assist us with the opera. I am taken aback by this and inform her that ours is a very modest production.

"My dear man, if this is to be England's first opera there is no way on God's earth that it will be modest," she says. "With Henry Purcell composing the music it will be the finest that England will ever know. How could I not wish to be involved?"

I tell her that everyone will be delighted and she declares that she will call upon Mr. and Mrs. Priest in the morning. We sit talking in the dining

room until well after sunset and when it is time for me to leave, the Duchess asks her maid to send a man to the stables to obtain a carriage to take me home. I thank her for her kindness and her delightful company. I am deeply impressed by the Duchess and her insightful and direct manner will benefit us considerably. It is a beautiful evening. There is a pretty moon and the heavens are full of stars. We pass an impressive formal garden, cross The Creek and then travel through a series of fields and gardens. This is the landscape where Henry walks and composes. My spirit connects with him and I hum his tunes.

Chapter Twelve

Harry and I sit together and I read very slowly through the first section of the story about Jack. I run my fingers over each word so that Harry can associate it with the sound. Harry concentrates well. Then I ask him to sound the words letter by letter, starting with 'Once upon a time'.

"How can 'once' start with an 'o' and not a 'w'?" Harry asks.

I realise that any attempt to explain how the letters 'o', 'n', 'c', 'e' create the sound 'wonce' will never succeed. I skip the first word and concentrate on others that do not conflict with my method, but I am struck by the difficulty of the task. I may even be putting Harry off his reading altogether. Other than practice our patience with each other we do not get very far. I promise that he will soon get the notion of it and I pray that I am correct in this.

I am eager to meet with Thomas Killigrew, but he will not be at the theatre before noon. I commence my translation of *The Art of Love*.

Should anyone here in Rome lack finesse at lovemaking, let him
Try me – read my book, and results are guaranteed!
Technique is the secret. Charioteer, sailor, oarsman,
All need it. Technique can control
Love himself. As Automedon was charioteer to Achilles,
And Tiphys Jason's steersman, so I,
By Venus' appointment, am made Love's artificer, shall be known as
The Tiphys, the very Automedon of Love.

Ovid can go wherever his subject takes him and the difference of intention between *The Art of Love* and *Heroides* is striking. Having established himself as 'love's artificer', he offers the men of Rome advice on how to attract women.

But the theatre's curving tiers should form your favourite
Hunting ground: here you are sure to find
The richest returns, be your wish for lover or playmate,
A one-night stand or a permanent affair ...

When I was first in London I relished these words and they aroused in me an eagerness for pleasure.

… As spectators they come, come to be inspected:
Chaste modesty doesn't stand a chance …

Buttons and I would make attempts at Ovid's entreaties, but our performance was woefully inadequate. We only succeeded in gaining a poor reputation for ourselves.

Don't forget the races, either: the spacious Circus offers
Chances galore. No need,
Here, of private finger-talk, or secret signals,
Nods conveying messages: you'll sit
Right beside your mistress, without let or hindrance,
So be sure to press against her wherever you can –
An easy task: the seating divisions restrict her,
Regulations facilitate contact.

I often pressed against Eliza like this.

From the foyer of the Theatre Royal, I follow Killigrew's bellowing instructions and find him on the stage. He is pleased to see me and we go directly to his office to talk about *King Richard*. After some time searching his shelves for the manuscript it is obvious that he cannot find it. I am more than a little upset.

"Thomas, my dear, this is my only copy. Did you not make copies of it?"

"I did not, but I have not lost it. John Petty must know where it can be found."

I follow behind him but his secretary is not in his office. We return to

the stage and discover that he is not there either. William Prizeman is on the stage and Killigrew asks if he has seen either my manuscript or John Petty. He has seen both but not recently, he tells us. We are standing on the stage when squeals of laughter and the sound of running feet come from backstage.

Eliza Ashton runs onto the stage from the wings. She freezes when she sees us. John Petty, who has been chasing her, arrives on stage and he also stops in his tracks. Eliza recognises me and then looks across to the opposite side of the stage. I follow her eyes to some scaffolding attached to one of the flats and see a man quickly climbing down. His eyes are on Eliza. She turns quickly and throws the shoe she is holding at John Petty. He catches it, but before he can place it on his foot Killigrew asks him about the whereabouts of my manuscript. They enter into a conversation about it. The man on the scaffolding reaches the stage and stands, directing his gaze at Eliza. Eliza walks towards me.

"Nahum, I am pleased to see you. I understand that you have been in Ireland."

Her beauty is shocking and I want to shout out its affect upon me. Instead, I confirm that I have been in Ireland and ask how she is. Eliza gives a little bow to her head.

"So, you are now working in the theatre," I say.

"Yes, I dress the actors and look after the costumes."

She describes her work to me, interrupting it now and then with a glance at the man in the wings. By her movements and the sparkle in her eyes I imagine that she is flirting with me. I want to gather her up and take her away. The words used by Eliza's sister-in-law to describe her new life consume me with shattering discomfort. I am overwhelmed by my attraction to her and impossibly jealous of these other men. I attempt to draw her into some intimacy with me and suggest that we should meet together soon, but Eliza shakes her head, almost imperceptibly. I glance across to the man in the wings who is studying us. Fury envelops me. I despise her behaviour.

"The manuscript has been sent to the Lord Chamberlain's Office for approval," Killigrew shouts from across the stage.

I turn to him.

"Oh, yes," I say, "Robert, Earl of Lindsey, the King's Lord Great Chamberlain. The Duchess de Mazarin and I were talking of him only yesterday."

I am struck by my unusual response, but given the state I am in, I am surprised that I have managed even this. Killigrew, himself a fellow of eccentric speech, shows no surprise.

"Prizeman here will fetch the manuscript and I will arrange to have copies made before returning it to the Chamberlain's office," he says.

I walk quickly across the stage, past Killigrew and John Petty and through the auditorium without looking back. Killigrew follows behind me. He is apologizing profusely for not copying the manuscript. For certain he imagines that my storm and fury is directed at him. I do not stop walking until I am standing in Drury Lane. Killigrew calms me and suggests that we take dinner together. I am thankful for his invitation and speak pleasantly to him to relieve his discomfort. Once in the Half Moon tavern Killigrew asks how I know Eliza and I tell him that she once worked for my Aunt. We talk of the play and Killigrew confirms what a jolly fellow he can be.

I walk to the Abbey with the memory of Eliza's smiling eyes, infectious laugh and coquettish behaviour for company. It pains me that her manner demands such great attention from the men around her, but I love her and can do nothing to stop. How is it that she can encourage amorous longing and deliver disappointment in the same instant? Is she doomed to reject those who fall in love with her? Am I doomed to love her, come what may? Heaven help me. Then Faithful was right. This thing I call love is just a figment of my imagination, an illusion I have created and feed upon. Could life be any more complicated than this?

Henry is singing and playing the violin as I enter the Monk's Refectory. I close the door quietly and watch him. He is not singing words; rather he is vocalizing a series of notes and building music around them on the violin. His energy and delight is considerable. He smiles at me, nods a welcome and continues until the sequence is complete. He then he cries out his pleasure in seeing me and we hug and fall about with each other.

I tell him that his complex improvisations were beautiful.

"Oh no, my dear, this music is not a product of improvisation. Listen carefully."

He plays again.

"There are patterns, regular rhythms and recognizable sequences in the repetition of counterpoints. The notes are uniformly augmented to create a series of cannons and inversions that weave in and out of the underlying structure. Do you hear it? These are my fantasias. Do you like them?"

"I do, but I have not been introduced to them before."

"The King dislikes them. He is only interested in simple melodies to accompany the royal supper. He also prefers his musicians to be dressed in richly coloured taffetas trimmed with tinsel." Henry laughs. "I have been with the King in Windsor and I am now in a mood of intolerance. I have to compose fantasias just to get the ridiculous frivolities of courtly life out of my head. Here, look at these."

Henry hands me a collection of eight manuscripts, each containing several pages of musical notation for violin. They look unbelievably complicated, but they are also indescribably beautiful. Henry takes extraordinary pleasure in notation and while I cannot read music, I can see the structure of his thinking on the page. The gestures are deliberate, each figure boldly formed and his musical intensions are clear.

"Your dance like movements belie your methodical mind," I tell him.

Henry laughs with boyish excitement.

"Oh, Nahum, I am so pleased that you are back. I am in love and I am so full of music I cannot stop composing."

I show him Anna's letter and he reads it avidly. He laughs again and I ask him how he managed to gain the affection of Amy Pieters.

"I simply visited the eating-house every night," he tells me. "One night at the end of the week, when no entertainers were available, I offered to sing for them. After each song the audience cheered. I cannot remember being received with such uproar before. Amy was impressed by my performance and asked if I would sing and play on other occasions and I agreed." He laughs.

"Tell me how you engaged Anna and Frances to sing in the opera?"

"When I was certain that Amy was delighted with my entertainment I told her that I was composing an opera to celebrate the opening of the new school. I eulogized the singing of her daughters and said that I would be honoured if they would sing the lead roles. This flattered her, but she was also very careful about her daughters. She asked endless questions and I was careful about the subject, but eventually she agreed. I try to charm Amy whenever I can of course. I do not know if she will willingly accept me as a son-in-law, but Frances returns my love so she will find it hard to disagree."

"Henry, dear man, I have such joy to hear you say this."

"Anna has been a great help. She encourages us and when Frances and I want to exchange intimacies she diplomatically buries herself in pages of music."

"I have considerable affection for Anna and I can only marvel at her maturity and self-confidence. It is extraordinary that one so young can encourage love's emotions."

We talk on and on and I tell him about Killigrew's interest in *The History of King Richard II*. He is delighted. Then I come to the subject of Eliza and the full force of my bewilderment is evident to him. Henry bows his head and looks pained.

"Any attempt I have ever made at soothing anguished states has been useless," he says. "I hate hearing words of wisdom when I am miserable. When I feel like an old rag lost at sea, I want to feel this way, I want to flop helplessly and not be offered advice. I would do anything, my dear Nahum, to bring your smiles back, but with rejected love there is nothing I can do. Was there no one in Dublin who cheered you?"

"No, but someone in Chelsea did."

Henry looks at me closely.

"The Duchess de Mazarin," I declare with some grandeur.

"But can this be serious?" Henry asks.

"Very serious," I tell him, "but not in the way you read it." I laugh. "Meeting the Duchess could have important consequences for the opera."

I describe the day we spent together and Henry expresses his fond memories of being in her company.

"She insisted that the title of the opera revert to *Dido and Aeneas*," I say and Henry smiles. He picks up my hands, kisses each one and tells me that the Duchess is always right.

I relate some of the more adventurous aspects of my time in Ireland and explain my chance reading of Ovid's *Heroides* in the library at Trinity.

"Ovid gives Dido a powerful presence," I tell him, "and if our opera gave Dido something like his solid and emphatic character, if it primarily expressed her view, then it would truly honour the women."

These thoughts flow from me and Henry's concentration is intense.

"When I wrote *Dido and Aeneas*," I continue, "I made a tragedy that centred on Aeneas, just as Virgil had done. In *Brutus of Alba*, I did not even give the queen a name, let alone a character for anyone to identify with. She was just the queen, but our opera should give a voice to Dido's cares."

I had never expressed this to myself as clearly as I do it now. My insights are often stronger when I am with Henry. Henry is frozen. His head is lifted up and his eyes are closed. His fingers conduct very gently and I know that he is listening to music. The voice of Dido has inspired him. He stands, gathers up his manuscripts from the table, moves them to a row of shelves in the corner of the room and takes down a large roll of paper that he spreads out before me. He laughs and rubs his hands together with glee. The paper is covered in words, diagrams and musical notation.

"The entire opera is notated here," he says. "This section on the left denotes the six scenes and next to each are introductions to the music."

He sings what he has written there.

"Each scene has its own key and each key is aligned to dramatic events in the narrative. The keys express the predominant emotion of each scene."

Henry laughs and I smile in amazement. I only understand the abstract sense of his words.

"No one has aligned musical keys to dramatic situations before," he

says. "I have created a pattern where each scene alternates between minor and major keys. I had to reverse your first two scenes to keep the pattern intact though. Dido's emotional turbulence at being in love has to be in a minor key and Aeneas's declaration of love has to be in a major key."

Henry elaborates upon the conjunction of moods and keys while adding to the notes that accompany his notation.

"If we shift the emphasis from Aeneas to Dido it still marries perfectly with my sequence of keys," he says. "The minor keys for Dido will be C and G and the minor keys for Aeneas will be A and E. We can now start on the opening scene. The timing of your return couldn't have been better, my dear, I need a song to rehearse with Frances and Anna tomorrow."

I tell him that I would rather bathe in his vision with a drink in my hand and Henry indulges me. We spend the rest of the evening at Marshes in Whitehall. It occurs to me that Dido's sister is called Anna and we wonder what Anna Pieters will make of being the Queen's sister Anna in the opera. Henry suggests, mischievously, that we make Dido and Anna's characteristics mirror those of Frances and Anna Pieters.

Chapter Thirteen

I take a different approach with Harry today. I read the first section of the story, finishing where Jack's mother throws the beans out of the window, and repeat it a number of times. Then I ask Harry to read it with me. He reads my lips rather than the words so I instruct him to look at the page and point at the words with his finger. His words echo mine and we are doing fine, but when I ask him to read by himself Harry relates the story rather than read the words. He takes great pleasure in this and shows no sign of frustration when I insist that he read individual words. He laughs at his lack of ability. That his mistakes do not affect his remarkable good nature is endearing and I feel real affection for him.

"Who is the funny little man who gives Jack the beans?" he asks.

"I don't know. Who do you think he is?"

"I don't know. That's why I asked you. Are the magical beans useful?"

"We will find out. The story will tell us."

"But will it tell us what kind of man has magical beans?"

"Probably. We must wait and see."

My answer does not please Harry.

"He is probably a wizard," I tell him, "and I bet he has come to help Jack out of his poverty."

"Would you exchange a cow for some coloured beans, Nahum?"

"Probably not."

"But if Jack is being stupid and they are good magic beans, then being stupid is better than being clever."

"Well it is not always true."

"Have you ever been stupid when it was better for you?"

"I can't remember."

"If I couldn't swap a cow for beans, does this mean I will never see magic?"

"Oh, I don't know about magic. It's a very particular thing."

Harry looks disappointed. He asks no further questions and remains pensive until Ellen arrives to collect him. She hands me a letter from Josias who is delighted to have met the Duchess de Mazarin. He asks that Henry and I attend a meeting on Saturday at the Duchess's house. I write back agreeing to this, take my letter to the penny post office in Fleet Street and then set off to see Henry. As I pass the corner of Wych Street I make a detour via Drury Lane in the hope of seeing Eliza. I am beyond hope, aren't I? Doomed to swing repeatedly between pleasure and pain is what I am. I do not see Eliza and I curse my luck, wishing I had some magic to improve it. I walk along wondering about the difference between the good magical man with the beans and those who, like the sorceress in *Brutus of Alba*, take delight in causing harm. I know about neither. In the opera it will be the sorceress who wrecks the love between Dido and Aeneas and my lack of knowledge about malign influence troubles me.

I sit and listen to Henry playing a light-hearted tune on the violin. He says that it is the chorus showing their pleasure in the love between Dido and Aeneas. He then plays a series of plaintive chords on the harpsichord and stops to write notation at great speed while humming the melancholic melody. He sings it through, stopping occasionally to make further corrections, and declares that this is Dido's first song.

"We must work on this so that Frances can have something to sing this afternoon," he tells me. "I'll play the melody and you speak some words to accompany it."

"Henry, I cannot write words without knowing something about the action."

"Dido is expressing the uncertainty she feels about her love for Aeneas. You do not have to write poetry, just give her words of everyday speech to sing."

I had presumed without thinking that I would start the songs by

writing the words and while this reversal concerns me, Henry gives me no time for reflection. He sings da, da, di, di, da to the tune in a very exaggerated way.

"There are four repeating bars in the first section and each repeat should state the same short sentence."

I hear him but my mind is blank.

"Would you like me to sing something to get you started?" he asks. I say that I would and Henry, after a brief reflection, plays the music and sings words to accompany the melody.

My, my, my dear An…na, I am so en…cum…bered.
My dear, my dear An…na, I am so en…cum...bered by my love for him.

He repeats the musical phrase and looks at me. I tell him that I understand his instruction but I still can't begin. Henry scratches his head and I ask if he would continue a little longer so that I can have more of a feel for it. Henry continues.

My heart when…ev…er he app…ears
My heart when…ev…er he app…ears
Does some…thing so de...light…ful find
Does some…thing, Does some…thing so de...light…ful find
Joys could not, Joys could not, could not be more sub…lime.

I am amazed that he can invent words so quickly, but Henry admits that he borrowed them from another song. He laughs and asks me to try something. This time Henry plays the tune while singing in the da, da, di mode. I write furiously and then sing my words to him. I change them continually, half concentrating on the power of Henry's manner. His head, for reasons I cannot explain, appears to be bigger and older than usual and his face, apart from his bright blue eyes, is without expression. Now and then he shouts words like 'monosyllables' or 'rhyming' at me and I try to respond. I feel some bewilderment, but the intensity of his lyrical drive leaves me no time for questions. When I am completely exhausted I ask him to stop so that I can consider the words by myself. Henry continues with his notation while I write.

My, my, my dear Anna, I am pressed
With Torment not to be confessed.
Peace and I are strangers grown,
I languish 'till my Grief is known,
Yet would not have it guessed.

Henry, concentrating on every syllable, sings the song very slowly. It is a beautiful conclusion to our considerable effort, but writing words to music progresses more slowly than I imagined. The afternoon is now in its second hour and we leave for the City. On the boat Henry sings the chorus line that precedes Dido's song and I invent words to accompany it.

Banish sorrow, Banish care,
Let not Grief approach the fair.

A maid answers the door to us at the Pieters' house and she escorts us up to the drawing room where Frances and Anna are waiting. Anna is delighted to see me and she asks so many questions in one breath that I give her a single yes to save myself the trouble of addressing each subject. Our exchanges do not last long for Henry is keen to start. The anticipation between us is considerable. Henry starts the rehearsal with voice exercises, asking Frances and Anna to make such an assortment of breaths, noises and facial expressions that I feel my presence to be something of an intrusion. The sisters smile broadly and carry out Henry's instructions precisely. Once he is satisfied, Henry takes up his violin and plays the chorus line while I write out the words we composed on the boat. Anna and Frances sing to Henry's accompaniment.

"Now, sing it again," Henry tells them, "but this time give the words a lighter and friendlier tone."

They sing it twice more.

"The second line is not right," he says. "It cannot begin with 'Let not grief ...' We must have stronger words here."

We each make suggestions, but it is Anna who gives us the words 'Grief should ne'er approach the fair'. She is most pleased by her success and she and Frances sing the new chorus together.

"Good," Henry declares, "It is beautiful. Now we will sing Dido's first aria."

"Who is Dido an what is an aria?" Frances asks.

"Dido is the queen and an aria is a song," Henry informs her. "We are reverting to the original characters of the opera and it is now to be called *Dido and Aeneas*. Frances is Queen Dido and Anna is the Queen's sister, who is also called Anna."

"Oh, no," Anna cries, "I do not want to have the same role in opera that I have in life. I want to be different. Surely we can change it." Henry turns to me.

"Well, Mr Librettist, what is to be done about Anna's request?"

"In *Brutus of Alba* I changed the character. I made her the queen's lady-in-waiting and called her Amarante, but this is not an appropriate name for a Carthaginian."

"I am happy to be the queen's lady-in-waiting," Anna says, "and I am sure that any Carthaginian name would suit me fine."

None of us know what to choose and when all decision seems hopeless, I suggest the name Belinda.

"My Be..lin..da." Henry tries it a few times and says that it has more rhythm to it than 'My dear Anna'.

He then closes his eyes, listens and moves his hands gently.

He sings. "Ah! Belinda, Ah! Belinda", and declares, "'Ah' is more open than 'My' and it suits the mood of longing better."

We all agree and I am very pleased to have honoured Belinda Perryman.

Henry plays and sings the aria, expressing the anxiety that accompanies the first tender stirrings of love. He then invites Frances to sing it with him, telling her that he is after a deep resonant sound and bidding her to take care of her breathing.

"If you can prolong the exclamation 'Ah!' and also make it precise, it will carry the sense of Dido's profound yearning," he tells her.

Frances is radiant.

Ah! ah! ah! Belinda, I am pressed with torment not to be confessed.

Henry and Frances stay with this phrase for a considerable time and their song matches what lies in their hearts exactly. When they progress to 'Peace and I are strangers grown, I languish 'till my Grief is known', I can almost hear the sound of their hearts beating for each other.

"We will do it again," Henry instructs her. "This time you should languish longer over the several notes sung on the 'lan' of languish."

We all laugh at his words. There are many repeats before Henry is satisfied that Frances is carrying the sense and expressing the beauty of the song. Frances follows every instruction carefully, paying homage to their love and Henry's music. They do not allow their feelings for each other to distract their musical sensibilities and their love for each other is confirmed and enriched by the very phrases they sing.

There is a knock on the door, the maid enters and she informs us that Mrs. Pieters requests that Frances and Anna return to their work. The intrusion is abrupt and we are brought back rudely from our musical paradise. Frances and Anna instantly obey the instruction. As she is leaving, Frances places her hand on Henry's arm and whispers something to him. When they are out of the room Henry sways as if he is about to faint and then collapses into a chair. He chirrups his love for her and declares that he could die from sheer delight.

Once in the dining room I ask Henry when he will inform Amy Pieters of his love for Frances. He tells me that he will do it soon. Amy is nowhere in evidence and a young waiter greets us and directs us to a table. We sit quietly together.

"How is it that love lifts us to heaven and then drops us so abruptly back to earth?" Henry asks. "Now Frances is not with me, I am completely despondent. Do you think Amy will respond badly to my expression of love? I will die if I cannot resolve this issue soon. I must ask Frances to confirm her feelings first. On Thursday I will ask her permission to request Amy's approval. Will you help me?"

I say that I will and we discuss how Frances and he might have the opportunity of being alone together. We decide to invent a writing task

for Anna and I to carry out in a separate room while Frances and Henry rehearse the aria. After this the delicious halibut and canary wine add a little to our pleasant mood and soon Henry is entertaining us with his songs.

A thousand sev'ral ways I tried to hide my passion from your view …

This is followed by:

My heart, whenever you appear, does something so delightful find …

His songs match the longing in his heart …

When her languishing eyes said 'love', too soon the soft charm I obeyed …

But they emphasize the loneliness in mine.

Ye happy swains, whose nymphs are kind, teach me the art of love …

Amy Pieters does not make an appearance, but with Thursdays plan in mind Henry is content. It is late when I reach home and I am surprised to find a letter from Eliza.

Dear Nahum,

I was pleased to see you again yesterday. Is it possible for us to meet as friends? I miss your conversation and there are things that occupy me at present that need your assistance. I know I have caused you some unhappiness and I am sorry, but I could not have acted in any other way. Can you forgive me? If you are not too against me please meet me on Sunday. I will be in the Pied Bull by Smithfield at six o'clock.

Yours truly,
Eliza

I sit and read the letter repeatedly until I know it by heart. I have no idea what or how to think about it. My head swims with pleasure and I give myself over to the enjoyment of this. I fall asleep with the letter in my hand.

Chapter Fourteen

Eliza and I, lost in our union, are as one to the very tips of our fibres. We are outside history and the entire world seems to be ours. I love her completely for all time.

How in God's name can I feel like this in my dreams and Eliza declare that she feels nothing for me? It is not possible. I stand at my window gazing down at The Strand. Some early birds are about their business, braving the wind and the rain that comes at them from the southwest. The sky, though mostly grey, changes quickly. Sometimes clouds of a whiter hue embrace the grey, but there appears to be little or no prospect of their breaking up to reveal the sun or the blue of heaven. I love the weather. I love everything this morning. I wonder which fellows in the street have love in their hearts and which are escorted by sorrow. They both get as wet as each other. The tinker is as sopping as the sailor. The rich man is as drenched as the poor man, but the one who is in love imagines that the clouds have already parted and a great ray of sunshine fills their heart. I want to kiss Eliza, but I am content to write, agreeing to meet on her Sunday.

I go with my note to the kitchen and ask Ellen if Harry can deliver it. She looks briefly at the address and agrees that he can. I sit with Harry for a while eating fresh bread and apples and then we go to our lesson. I ask Harry to read individual words, but it does not get any easier for him the longer he makes attempts at it. If I had a family of words with similar sounds it would be easier. I encourage him as much as I can, but when we are finished, Harry gives a sigh of relief and asks if I will read him the whole story tomorrow. I tell him that I will.

I have several letters. One is from Thomas Flatman, who is in the

country. He invites me to visit him a week on Friday. Another is from Roger Tonson. He is enquiring about the progress of the Ovid translation. The other two are from publishers inviting me to write articles. I write to Thomas agreeing to visit him, to Roger promising a completion by the end of September and to the publishers informing them that I cannot take any extra work. I wish this were not so, for I have not earned a bean since returning from Ireland. I cannot ask for an advance payment on Ovid until I have completed more of it and in truth I have hardly started. *The Art of Love* is in three sections, in total more than a hundred pages and I completed no more than a dozen. I vow to make writing it a daily routine and settle down to work.

The first thing to get in your head is that every single
Girl can be caught – and that you'll catch her if
You set your toils right. Birds will sooner fall dumb in springtime,
Cicadas in summer, or a hunting dog
Turn his back on a hare, than a lover's bland inducements
Can fail with a woman. Even one you suppose
Reluctant will want it. Like men, girls love stolen passion,
But are better at camouflaging their desires:
If masculine custom precluded courtship of women
You'd find each besotted girl
Taking the lead herself …

After a quick dinner in the White Horse I go directly to Westminster. Henry has completed the songs for Scene One and he is now attending to his diagrams, covering them with small pieces of paper that notate his changes. He has determined that the chorus, the recitative and the dances dictate the drama more than the songs do.

"A song might express a character's hopes and fears," he tells me, "but it is better if the recitative describes the action and situates the songs in the plot. For example, here, at the end of Dido's first aria, Dido and Belinda must introduce Aeneas to us with recitative. They should also describe the effect of his arrival on the Carthaginian court shouldn't they? The songs and recitative must support each other more and the

chorus must also be integrated more precisely into the opera."

I tell him that the chorus in classical theatre has much work to do, often acting as the voice of the community. They can offer insights, instructions and encouragement and they can also be the inner voice of a character. Henry is pleased with this and we agree that the songs of the chorus should express how the Court views its hopes for the future. Henry says that there is to be a song from the chorus before each dance and there will be a dance at the end of each scene.

He writes another set of instructions to add to the large plan, humming when any new thought develops in him. I cut out his words and stick them over the earlier instructions. In this manner the extraordinary palimpsest of narrative and musical ideas, develops. Henry is composer, dramatist and mapmaker for the entire process. When we have finished, he offers to play what he has established so far and begins searching through his papers for the prologue. I had no idea he had written a prologue, but he reminds me that he did this last term so that Josias could choreograph some dances before leaving Leicester Fields.

"I imagine the prologue as a masque," he tells me. "I know that masques are performed at the end of a play, but if we must have dances at the beginning then this is where the masque will be. It can set the scene for the main action can't it?"

Henry plays an expressive sequence of melodies that constitute the six dance tunes in the prologue. He follows this with his extraordinary overture, plays a few bars from Belinda's opening aria and then sings the chorus that Frances and Anna sang yesterday. He plays Dido's first aria, improvising some recitative, and then returns to the table to write. He says we must have a song from the chorus to break up the recitative, as it is too long. He returns to the harpsichord, plays a few bars to represent the chorus and then returns to the recitative again. He finishes with the final chorus, improvising a dance tune of considerable charm.

"It sounds altogether too cheerful for a tragedy." I tell him.

"Indeed," he replies, "but pleasure first, then we shall invite our audience to weep. Besides, a cheerful song will serve me well if I am to approach Frances with the subject of marriage tomorrow. Come, we

will work on the final chorus. We will have them express their optimism about Dido's feelings for Aeneas."

Henry sits at the harpsichord, finds a melody that expresses encouragement and asks me to try out a few words. I repeatedly offer him phrases. He nods when he likes something, shakes his head when he doesn't and throws critical phrases at me like, 'too intellectual', or 'listen to the sweetness of the melody,' when he thinks they are needed. I am more accustomed now to revising my phrases almost as soon as I speak them and I deliver my words to him as fast as I can.

Suddenly he cries, "No, no, no, we must start again. I want only simple words. Deep emotions enjoy the company of simple expression," and we start again. We work relentlessly, subjecting our composition to the most intense criticism. When we are getting close Henry sings the chorus very slowly, declares that there not enough open vowel sounds and we revise the words again. The extraordinary rigor of his decision-making is the basis of his art.

Fear no danger to ensue,
The Hero loves as well as you,
Ever gentle, ever smiling,
And the cares of life beguiling.
Cupids strew your path with flowers,
Gathered from Elysian Bowers.

This is the fruit of our labours and I am now keen to refresh myself with a drink, but Henry must away to Stephen and Sarah Goodman's house where he is singing with his Uncle Thomas. As I walk home, a sense of loss comes over me and suddenly I do not know what to do with myself. The feelings of love that occupied me this morning have disappeared. The sky enjoys a rosy hue, but I have lost the euphoria that accompanied this morning's grey clouds. I enter the house with a heavy heart, but the sight of Buttons cheers me. He is sitting in the kitchen with Ellen. He tells me that he has been fed and greatly entertained by her company and Ellen says that there was never a man so full of words as Buttons is. She offers to fetch some ale from the White Horse to accompany my

supper and I tell Buttons about my time in Ireland. When I describe my conversation with Faithful, Buttons is incensed.

"I object to his thoughts and I deplore his inclination to place in your head what lies in his own," he says. "This Irish stuff is beyond the pale. You should never have left Dublin for the wild lands. It is out of bounds. I trust you ignored his advice."

Ellen returns with Harry. She scolds him for being away so late and then instructs him to wash and get ready for bed. Ellen places the jug of ale on the table and takes a cover from a plate of marrowbones that inspires my appetite. Harry returns, fetches three mugs and sits down expectantly next to Buttons. Ellen pats him gently on the head and points him in the direction of the stairs. Harry asks when I am going to read more of Jack's story and I promise to write it as soon as I can. Ellen is cross with him.

"Harry, you are nine. You cannot go making demands on your elders."

"Fine," he says gruffly. Ellen pushes him out the door and bids us goodnight.

"She is an unconventional woman and I like her," Buttons says as he pours the ale. "I have been in Windsor these past weeks and the amount of nastiness that comes from the women at court is appalling."

"And why were you at Windsor?" I ask.

"Horace asked me to help him with the King's entertainments. Charles demanded such an amount of letters and pamphlets to be written that without some assistance he would have been there 'til Christmas. I bless the stars for his company for there was no one else to talk to. The ladies look down upon anyone who must work for a living. God's gift to the world, they are, and for this they will subject you to their ignorance, dark plots and petty squabbles. I drink to Ellen and damn the ladies at court."

"Oh Buttons. I guess you fancied one of them and she snubbed you."

"Then you guess wrong. I fancy anyone who would pay me some attention."

It is wonderful to be back talking to Buttons.

Chapter Fifteen

Harry arrives at my bedroom door before I am dressed.

"Mother," he says in a very precise manner and then spells, m-o-t-h-e-r. "Jack," he says and spells, j-a-c-k. "Late," he continues with a smile, l-a-y-t.

"Thank you for the reminder Harry. I am Late, l-a-t-e."

After our lesson I occupy myself with Ovid and then receive a letter from Thomas Killigrew asking that I visit him soon. I presume that he has the manuscript in his possession again and I make a note to visit him tomorrow. I walk to Westminster Pier where I am to meet Henry and, as I turn out of King Street, I see him making his way across New Palace Yard. He is singing with a level of engagement that would suit a royal performance, but this is not unusual, I have often seen him sing and walk like this when a passage of music requires orchestration. He will do it day or night and for any little distance. He is never under any pressure to remember his composition. It simply remains in his head until he has time to notate it.

He has his violin strung across his shoulder so that his arms and hands are free to orchestrate and conduct. The movement of his limbs is extraordinary. His steps have a regular rhythm that seem to be governed by the tempo of the music, but his arms move independently of each other, rising up and down in a seemingly irregular fashion. His hands operate independently to his arms. They twist and dance in every direction while his fingers operate to give punctuation to the music. When he is close to me he stops and takes a few steps backwards. He moves forwards again and stops, the toe of his right foot pointing at the ground to give some emphasis, and then he moves forwards again until

he is upon me, his performance ended.

"Listen to this my dear, it is the chorus that divides the recitative at the end of Scene One." Henry sings a charming melody.

"I have had a most productive walk and it would benefit us to walk together more often," he says.

I have no idea how I might write and walk at the same time, but I am sure Henry does.

We climb into a boat with two other passengers and without any introduction Henry starts singing. He asks me to try out some words and I self-consciously extemporize some phrases to accompany him. We do not resolve our composition, but we are in good spirits when we arrive at the Pieters' house. Anna greets us at the door and within minutes Henry is instructing them with his voice exercises.

He starts the rehearsal with the chorus we composed yesterday and Frances and Anna sing the song of encouragement beautifully. He then starts to sing the chorus at the end of Scene One in 'Ta tum tum tee tee' fashion. He teaches it to Anna, who quickly picks up the melody, and asks her to help me write the words while Frances and he practice Dido's aria. This is all according to plan. Anna suggests that we use the breakfast room for our writing and she leads me across the hall to a charming little room, painted bright yellow, with a window big enough to fill one wall.

We sit at an oval table on leather-covered chairs, Anna singing the melody and I writing some words to get us started. When I have the tune and Anna has a measure of the words we sing the couplet alternately until we are happy with our composition.

When Monarchs unite how happy their State,
They triumph at once on their Foes and their Fate.

Henry's great task in the adjoining room continues to preoccupy me and when Anna asks if we should return to sing our song I suggest that we give Henry and Frances more time to practice together. Anna remarks that it has become very quiet in the drawing room and she opens the breakfast-room door to determine whether or not they have finished

singing. At this moment Frances, with tears in her eyes, rushes from the drawing room and flies up the stairs. Anna and I exchange a look of horror and she runs after her sister while I go in to Henry. He is looking up at the ceiling, his arms in the air, pleading to God. He drops his hands and slumps heavily into a chair.

"Frances cannot imagine how we can be married," he says miserably. "She loves me, but I cannot speak to her mother about marriage. The suggestion horrified her. I will marry her, Nahum, even if I have to steal her away."

Henry places his head in his hands and I put my arm about his shoulder. Anna re-enters the room.

"Henry, it is not what you imagine," she says. "Please do not be upset. If you make a commotion my mother will hear and our singing together will end."

"Anna is right, Henry," I urge him. "We must not alert Amy to any drama."

"Allow me to explain," Anna pleads with him, "it is not difficult to understand, but I must explain it calmly."

Henry agrees to listen quietly.

"My mother has many difficulties at present, so she is unlikely to be sympathetic to your request. Her import business is in serious trouble and her maid, who has been with her many years, is seriously ill. There is a great amount of sickness in the City and my older sister, Amy, has already moved to Richmond. She is with child again and it is safer for her to be with her husband's family. My mother is upset at loosing the company of my sister and her first grandchild. There is no doubt that Frances is enchanted by your expression of love, but you must let matters rest until she is certain that the time is right to discuss this with our mother."

Anna listens nervously at the door and then continues.

"We must cancel Tuesday's rehearsals because the Spaniard is hosting a large party to celebrate the birthday of a local alderman. Please be patient with us, Henry. There is a better time than this to discuss your future."

Henry submits to her request and Anna asks us to remain in the room for the period of our lesson to avoid arousing her mother's suspicions. She returns upstairs to be with Frances and Henry and I compare Frances's agitated manner to Anna's calm maturity. When we enter the dining room Amy asks Henry if the rehearsals went well.

"Indeed they did, madam." he says. "Allow me to introduce you to my friend and colleague Nahum Tate. He is writing the libretto for the opera."

We shake hands.

"Were you also at the rehearsal?" she asks and I tell her that I was.

"I think that we should have been introduced before the lesson began, don't you?"

"Indeed we should, madam," I tell her. "I apologize for the oversight."

"Anna has often talked about your excellent teaching. I am pleased to meet you."

"Thank you. I apologize again for not introducing myself to you earlier. You will not have to consider my neglectful behaviour again, I can assure you."

"I am sure that I will not," she says firmly, "but if you will allow me, I should like to mention one other thing. You are probably aware that Anna has an ambition to assist you in the writing of the libretto. I have given her my view on this and now I will give it to you. We must make ourselves very busy in this house and if Anna is distracted from this purpose any more than she already is, it will not benefit any of us. She is a very persuasive young woman and I trust that you will do my bidding and not encourage her in this ambition."

I bow my head and say nothing.

"Now, if you will excuse me, I have many pressing matters to attend to."

She turns to Henry. "Entertain my guests well this evening Henry," and with that she makes her departure.

Henry and I are in a state of shock.

"The effect she has is not unlike a hurricane," I suggest.

Henry nods his head and furrows his brow. We sit with our wine and I sing the words that Anna and I devised for the chorus. He likes our words well enough, but he remains pensive. I have never seen him reluctant to sing before, but tonight he is.

Ah! Powerful Love! What cursed arts hast thou to torture human hearts …

He follows this sad song with another.

If grief has any pow'r to kill, I have receiv'd my doom …

He returns to the table, takes up his violin and plays one of his fantasias. Given how badly the King received these works I feel nervous for him, but the dinner guests stop their eating and listen intently. He captivates them with his virtuoso playing and singing and the shouts of appreciation grow ever louder with each new piece. When Amy returns to the dining room her broad smile is perfect illustration of her pleasure. What she cannot know is that Henry is playing for his life.

Harry and I spent our time dividing words into small phrases, but he was a reluctant student today. I was translating Ovid when Ellen gave me a letter from Horace.

Dear Nahum,

I would love it if we could meet together soon. The literary evening that Mary and I are planning is to take place on the third of September. Mary has been collecting recent translations of Roman poetry and we have decided to make this the subject of our evening's entertainment. I know that you discussed reading Milton, but would it be too inconvenient to ask you to translate something from the Latin to read for us?

I do not have time now to write more, but please call in to see us any time you are free and we can discuss it.

Your dear friend,
Horace Heveningham

I am slightly put out by Horace's news, but as Milton is now far from my thoughts, I am not entirely disappointed. I could read *The Art of Love*, but I doubt that Horace's guests would appreciate Ovid's flirtatious advice to the men of Rome. They would be more at ease with *Heroides*. I consider reading from *Heroides* and *The Art of Love*. I write to Horace with this suggestion and ask if he has a copy of *Heroides* that I might borrow. I am eager to read Ovid's words for Queen Dido again.

I post my letter, take my morning ale and sit waiting for Killigrew to arrive. I am in his office, leafing through my manuscript. These precious words were written in the days when Eliza's love spurred my pen to dance. Killigrew enters and hands me a letter.

"It is from The Lord Chamberlain's Office," he tells me.

Dear Mr. Killigrew,

We have read The History of King Richard II *most carefully and it is the opinion of this office that anyone who attempts to produce this play will be carrying out a highly irresponsible act. If this play were performed at the Theatre Royal it would cause the King's subjects to remember his father's unhappy fate and might serve as an incitement to oppose the King. It will certainly increase the King's vulnerability and jeopardize his position at a time when the Court is experiencing considerable opposition. Therefore, permission and license to perform* The History of King Richard II *will not be granted.*

This injunction is binding on all subjects of the King and any who give offence in this matter will be dealt with according to the laws that pertain to acts of treason.

Yours truly,
Robert, Earl of Lindsey, Lord Chamberlain.

"It is beyond my understanding," I shout. "It is beyond anyone's understanding. How in God's name can a history of times long past be suppressed as a libel upon our own? I have everywhere given King Richard the language of an active, prudent Prince, someone who prefers the good of his subjects to his own pleasure. I even inserted a new scene with the Queen to show the King at his best. The malignancy of the King's fortune is the reason for his unhappy state not the poverty of

his character. He suffers from an extremity of distress not a weakness of ambition. Every scene expresses respect to majesty and confirms the dignity of court. Not one page breathes anything but loyalty and for my trouble I am accused of crimes against the King."

"Gently my friend. Sit quietly for a while. Do not rail on so."

"But I am wronged by this letter and I must be given the opportunity to explain my good intentions. You must help me make the Lord Chamberlain aware that this decision could not possibly represent the King's best interests."

"Nahum, I doubt that this decision is reversible."

"Oh yes it is. I will speak to the Duchess de Mazarin about it tomorrow. I am certain that she will lobby the Lord Chamberlain on my behalf."

"Nahum, please calm yourself. You cannot go making this kind of commotion. It will jeopardize your chances of a new production in December."

"And what chances are these? I have no other play waiting to be produced."

"Well, we might retrieve something of this yet. You might change the names of the characters and set the scene in a distant land to avoid the comparison. There will be no objections if a connection cannot be made with merry England."

"I cannot believe that I am again being coerced into changing the context of my play. Changing Carthage for Sicily is one thing, but *The History of King Richard II* is nothing if it is not an English tale. It will not work on the other side of the channel any more than it would on the Moon. It relies upon an association with England, where the audience remember their King. An abstract tale will not affect them."

"Well, if you take my advice, you will not write to the Lord Chamberlain. Don't act rashly, my dear, take some time to consider your position. I promise that I will produce the revised version if the Lord Chamberlain will accept it."

I thank Killigrew for his offer, pick up my manuscript, bid him 'good day' and walk out of the theatre. There is no mistaking that this business has set me alight. I storm around Lincoln's Inn gardens in considerable

distress and end up in the White Horse. I do not visit Henry as I had promised. Ellen arrives with a giant portion of steak and kidney pie, followed by Harry who brings a great quantity of vegetables.

"I wish you would write more about Jack today," he says. "I want to know what happens to him when he reaches the castle."

I promise that I will write the entire story before Monday and sit thinking about Jack Spriggins. William asks if I would like anything more before he prepares my bill and I tell him that I have finished. I search my pockets and find that have only four pennies. It is not enough for the meal and I have precious little at home to add to it. The rent on my house is long overdue and I have not paid Ellen anything since I departed for Ireland. I tell William that I will pay him next week. I have no choice but to rewrite *The History of King Richard II*. The Lord Chamberlain's rejection cannot affect my purse as well as my ambition.

Chapter Sixteen

The sun has warmed the morning to an uncommon degree and I hope that our day in Chelsea has no unpleasant surprises. When I tell Henry about the Lord Chamberlain's view of my play he encourages me to change the names.

"Your reputation will light the stars with this opera," he says. "Be cheery with me, my dear fellow, for today I must inspire the Duchess and the Priests to love our work. They must know that they have a great work in their hands or they will ask for all manner of changes."

Henry sings as we head up river. He does not mention my absence yesterday or the events at the Pieters' house the day before. The Duchess is not at home, but her maid escorts us to the dining room, promising that the Duchess will arrive shortly. I sit in a lounge chair and Henry sits at the harpsichord. He plays a series of chords and then adds words, which he delivers in a precise, declamatory manner.

When Mr. Priest went off to Town
He wore his brightest dressing gown …

I laugh at his antics.

"Concentrate on the rhythm," he bids me. "Our recitative must use rhyming couplets and each line should contain four or five stresses, like this. Listen…"

Henry starts again, but the Duchess enters, followed quickly by Josias and Cecelia Priest. We greet enthusiastically and the Duchess, delighted to see Henry again, talks to him as though he were a long lost friend. When Henry announces that he will play us something from the opera, we all settle ourselves in chairs facing the harpsichord. He starts with the prologue and follows it with the overture. Then he improvises his

tunes for the scenes, accompanying his playing with descriptions.

"Scene one. Dido is melancholy. C minor. Scene two. Belinda celebrates love. C major. Aeneas arrives. G major. He courts Dido. A cadence change to E minor. He asks Dido to confirm her love for him. G major again."

We all attend to him closely. The Duchess sits with her hands together as though she were praying. I think of John Blow.

"Let the music carry the meaning," he said.

"Scene three. The sorceress calls the witches. F minor. They plot Dido's downfall. F major. Scene four. The hunting party at Diana's Grove. D minor. The storm. D major. Mercury arrives. A minor. Scene Five. The sailors prepare to depart. B flat major. The witches celebrate. B flat major again. Scene six. Dido's grief. G minor."

The last is a ravishingly melancholic key and we all respond with rapturous applause. The Duchess rises from her chair, takes Henry's hands in hers and places a kiss on each of his cheeks. She turns to the Priests with a great smile of pleasure.

"What a remarkable demonstration of genius," she says.

"Yes," Cecelia agrees, "the music has great beauty and I am certain that Henry's ingenuity can honour any theme, but I must tell you that the story of Dido and Aeneas has no place in the school. I trust that you are not entirely fixed in your ambition to offer this tale for our entertainment."

Waves of shock fill the room.

"I do not see how anyone can object …" Henry begins, but Cecelia interrupts.

"What you see or what you do not see does not have the best interests of the school at heart, Henry. These are my interests and if I object to this tale then it will not be performed, no matter how you dress it up with beauty."

We are all bewildered by Cecelia's challenging purposefulness, except Josias who shrinks into his chair, trying not to be noticed.

"Mrs. Priest," the Duchess addresses her, "it is extraordinary that you claim to have no need of beauty."

"I never said this," Cecelia replies. "I have a care for beauty, but I

am also mindful of its context. Beauty will lead us astray as easily as it inspires us."

The wretched harridan sounds just like my brother Faithful.

"Well," the Duchess exclaims grandly, "I wonder what course you might suggest for us. Can you think of something that will keep us on the straight and narrow?"

"Surely there is every reason to keep the music that Henry has prepared?" Cecelia declares. "I recognise that it has the mark of genius about it. I simply do not want the tragedy that accompanies it. The entertainment must celebrate life not the death of an ancient queen. I think we should change the characters and the setting."

May the good Lord save us. Surely we are not in for another change of characters are we? Henry will not stand for it. Despite his advice to me about *The History of King Richard II*, he will not change this work.

"You have in your garden the first shoots of a marvellous flower," the Duchess says, "and you have no idea what to do with it. You cannot object to the subjects of life and death as though they were issues of comfort and discomfort. You cannot propose an opera and then offer your guests a few romantic dances. The opera needs its connection with the great themes of antiquity. It must establish some resonance for us if we are to associate it with greatness."

"I did not ask for an opera," Cecilia replies curtly, "only for an entertainment. Besides, there are operas without love and death as their abiding passions."

"The moral principles could be more important than love and death," I tell her.

"Nahum, it is the moral that I object to," she says. "It is inappropriate and there is no reason on earth why we should have it."

Henry is walking the room heavily. He stops and turns to Cecilia.

"Josias insisted that I establish this opera quickly and I worked like a Trojan to please him. This work will establish your school as the finest in the land and you have to be off your hinges to ask me to start at the beginning again."

The Duchess shouts his name in a scolding manner.

"I apologize madam," he says. "Please pardon my expression. All I meant to say was that I do not intend revising it. I am already in rehearsal with Frances and Anna Pieters and ..."

"With Frances and Anna Pieters?" Josias declares. "How splendid."

"I will write no other work for the school," Henry continues, "and I will compose this opera whether you care to produce it or not."

"Cecelia," the Duchess addresses her, "I think you are about to loose one of the great performances of our age. Would you not consider broadening of your view?"

Cecelia remains silent.

"Can we not at least try to address your concerns?"

"If the subject is disappointed love and if it ends with the death of the heroine, then it is not for me," Cecelia tells her.

"We must also consider the expense," Josias puts in, "and the short amount of time available to us. The building work is late and we must put back the start of term by a month. This is a considerable loss of income to us, a considerable loss of income I can tell you. We simply do not have sufficient resources to produce an opera."

"We will find the resources," the Duchess replies. "Money is never the problem. Do you know the best way to capitalise on this performance?"

There is silence.

"No? Then I will tell you. Invite the King. He will bring them all out of the woodwork and then you will see how fat their purses are." Cecelia becomes agitated and the red in Josias's stubble is flowering. "I can easily request the King's presence you know, but I will only do it if I believe the opera will entertain him."

"The Duchess has a point, my dear," Josias puts in. We all stare at Cecelia.

"The King is discerning in his tastes and he has a preference for simple things, as I do. We cannot be certain that he will attend or that he will enjoy the performance."

"Trust us," the Duchess tells her.

"I trust that you have the skills, but not your ability to gauge our audience."

She continues to press her point, but I notice a slackening in her view. She insists that she wants no uncontrollable emotions, that Dido's relation to Aeneas cannot be passionate and that Dido cannot kill herself, but she has accepted their presence. We continue to add to our case by promising that the chorus will give a balanced view, that the music will be delicate and the themes lyrical. Then Cecelia hits upon the idea of an epilogue. She asks if I would write something to emphasise the virtuous lives of her pupils and express the school's honourable intentions. I cannot think of a more loathsome task, but I agree to do it.

When the Duchess tells the Priests that she will talk to Betterton and Killigrew about lending their costumes and sets they become more comfortable, but when she tells them that Robert, Earl of Lindsey has agreed that Lindsey House can be used for dance rehearsals, the day is suddenly ours. The Priests are delighted and Josias asks Henry how soon he can complete the dance music. Henry agrees to deliver it by the first week of September and with this our talk is about detail rather than principles. Josias enquires about the male roles and Henry tells him that Aeneas is the only man.

"I will invite the finest bass vocalist in the land," he says. "There are sailors, but the young ladies can sing sailor songs without causing too much confusion. As for the chorus, I will recruit members of the Abbey choir to sing the bass and tenor parts."

Josias nods his consent and the dear Duchess orders drinks to be served. We toast to the success of *Dido and Aeneas* with some relief. I speak with Josias privately and tell him that my finances are a nagging presence in my life. I insist that Henry and I be paid for our work. I knew that Josias would be reticent about this but after a short negotiation he agrees to pay me a full day's wage for every half day I teach.

After this Josias and Cecilia make their departure. I tell Henry about our income and we drink again to the success of the opera. The Duchess is eager to learn more about the settings for the scenes. First she is surprised to learn that we have not thought about this and then she is delighted because she can make it her concern.

"As I am styling and dressing the performers, it is better that I think

about this," she says, but she wants a clear description of each scene and a complete list of the characters and we haven't even prepared this. I promise to work at it. When I tell her about James Billingsley and the sets he designed for *Psyche* at the Dukes Theatre, the Duchess wants to fly gods about the stage, but I tell her that there are no gods.

"Well, witches then," she says with some disappointment, adding that she will talk with Billingsley soon. We continue to discuss the scenery and agree that the witches' scene will take place in a cave, that the hunting scene will have a pastoral setting and that the sailor's scene will need a harbour. I learn from Henry that the prologue will also have a pastoral setting. How he knows this I have no idea. After more drinking our mood becomes too cheery to deal with any more work.

Chapter Seventeen

"No sooner is he out of church and his rudeness begins," Ellen tells me as she pulls a reluctant Harry behind her. She gives Harry a shake. "Now walk along nicely and do not ask for anything more. You will be fed at dinner time and not before."

We are outside St Clements church and we are on our way to the Sunday market. I take Harry by the hand. He asks if I have finished writing about Jack yet and Ellen rebukes him.

"Now, Harry, don't go worrying Mr. Tate again. You just make sure that you work hard when you're at your lessons. How is his reading coming along, Nahum?"

"Oh, he will be reading before long."

"Does he have to be reading before he can go to a school?"

"I expect so," I reply.

"At what age do they start school?"

"I have no idea. I will try to find out though."

These questions from Ellen concern me. I cannot remember whether I promised to get Harry into a school and I doubt the possibility even if he was an accomplished reader. The thought of causing Ellen disappointment over this distresses me.

I settle down to consider Harry's story. Jack Spriggins tries to outwit the horrid giant, whose voracious appetite and thunderous voice struck terror in me when I was a boy. The giant could sense the presence of Jack in his castle well before he saw him.

Fe-fi-fo-fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman.
Let him be alive or let him be dead,
I'll grind his bones to make my bread.

In Jack's first adventure he steals two huge bags of gold coins while the giant is sleeping. The giant's wife helps Jack by hiding him in the wardrobe. When Jack and his mother have spent all the gold, his mother encourages him to make a second visit to the castle. Again, the giant's wife helps him, this time by hiding him in the oven. On this visit Jack steals a chicken that lays golden eggs from the sleeping giant. With this object of fortune their prosperity is guaranteed. Then, surprisingly and against his mother's wishes, Jack returns a third time. This time he steals a golden harp, but the harp wakens the giant and he chases Jack down the beanstalk. Jack, on reaching the ground chops the beanstalk down and the horrid giant falls to his death.

Having completed my version of the tale I go in search of Harry and read it to him and Ellen. Harry loves being frightened by the giant. I ask him why Jack goes to the castle a third time, against his mother's wishes.

"To get more gold," Harry says.

"But they already have enough gold to live on. Do you think that the magic castle has more to offer than gold?"

Harry thinks about this.

"So what is better than gold?" he asks.

"Music. The harp plays music whenever it is requested and it will teach Jack about the importance of beauty. You too will need to learn this before you become a man. You have to be brave enough to fight and sensitive enough to be gentle."

"What's sensitive?"

"It is like the feelings in your heart, Harry; you feel them before you know them. You cannot steal sensitivity you must own it yourself. This is why the harp cried out to the giant when Jack was stealing it. Like sensitivity it is true to its owner."

Harry is envious of Jack's luck and as he departs for his bedroom to read the story alone he mutters something about wanting to meet a magical man.

"He surprises me when you are with him," Ellen says.

I make my way to Smithfield. Despite my eloquent teaching about the need to be sensitive and brave, I am neither. My feelings proceed without me and I am scared. How stupid is it to love someone who does not return that love? I sit waiting for Eliza in the tavern, training myself to show no sign of excitement when she enters. The kind of intimacies that figure so highly in my imagination, have no place now, but the second she enters every promise I have made vanishes. Her beauty strikes my eye as powerfully as it has ever done. Only Eliza can do this to me. I steady myself and greet her with a formal kiss. I pour her a cup of canary wine and pull my chair further from her than my desire directs me. I talk excitedly, praying that my words will drive away my thoughts. I ask about her job at the theatre and Eliza tells me that a group of dressers, prop makers and scene are going to act in a play. I listen while remaining hopelessly attached to thoughts of embracing her and surrendering to passion.

"We finish our work at the theatre around seven o'clock," Eliza says, "and then we meet at my apartment to practice our acting."

So the fuss and commotion that her sister-in-law had complained about was no more than Eliza's friends rehearsing a play. My jealousy was unjust and this makes me miserable. She is working on a scene from *A Country Wife* by William Wycherley and knowing her love of comedy and his extraordinary talent for writing comedies this does not surprise me.

"We chose Wycherley because we were upset by his recent misfortune. Having married the Countess of Drogheda without her family's consent, they inherited her fortune when she died and this left Wycherley in debt. Now he is in Fleet Prison. This is why we want to get one of his plays produced, so that we can give him some money. We are hoping that Mr. Killigrew will agree to produce it."

I tell her that I am impressed with her concern and energetic activity, but I also feel a tinge of envy about the attention she is directing at poor Wycherley. Eliza smiles proudly and informs me of her ambition to become an actor. I am startled by this.

"Mr. Killigrew has invited us to present our scene to him next Friday

and I want you to help us, Nahum."

"And what would you have me do?"

"Attend the audition and tell him how good we are, how successful the play would be, that sort of thing. You have some influence with him. He will listen to you."

"Well, I can certainly speak enthusiastically about your talents, Eliza, but can the other actors match your skills?"

"Oh, yes. We are all working so hard. Oh, thank you, Nahum."

She smiles at me and I feel some of the loving attention that I once received from her. How I long to hug her excitement. "I want to act more than anything," she says.

"You are so beautiful," I tell her.

"Nahum," she declares, guardedly. "This is not about me being beautiful."

"Well it helps." I fumble. "Being loved must count for something."

There is a look of anger on Eliza's face. She is horribly disappointed in me.

"I want to act, Nahum, and this is all I want. I am not seeking love."

"I am sorry, Eliza, I did not mean …"

"But you always do this, Nahum. You always turn it round to yourself."

Before I know it we are back into a full-scale argument.

"Talk to me about acting and be my friend," she says, but I have no idea how I can be her friend. I tell her that she is always angry and forbidding and she says that I am ridiculous and grasping. I tell her that her independence emphasizes my loneliness and that her reluctance inflames my desires. I accuse her of wanting to separate me from the things that give me definition and she demands that I should not insist on gratifying my desires at every turn.

"This is the task of knight-errant, Eliza, not a simple Irishman."

"You are not a simple Irishman, Nahum, just love me with some courtesy."

"Eliza, the thought of loving you with the courtesy of a knight fills me with horror and foreboding. Submitting to pain and loneliness without

the hope of ever gaining your heart turns my joy to despair."

"Nahum, forget about courtly love. For goodness sake, I am inviting you to a comedy not a life of abstinence. I am not asking you to do anything other than sound enthusiastic about the scene we are acting for Killigrew. If you cannot do this, so be it. It will not be the end of the world."

"Please don't ridicule me for loving you, Eliza."

"You are the limit, Nahum Tate, and you are your own worst enemy. Why do you always come back to the same thing? Leave it alone for goodness sake."

I tell her that I will do her bidding and make a great show of my enthusiasm for her acting. She says that I have an odd heart and that it would be improved if I wrote comedy. She stands, turns away and back again and blows me a kiss before departing.

"Women can be difficult." This comes from an old fellow on the table next to me.

"You're right," I tell him, "but this time I think that I am the difficult one. I am fated to keep my ardour alive without ever allowing it to cool."

"You believe in fate then. Me, I loathe the very notion of destiny."

"Really! But we have destiny without believing that we are directed by fate. With Eliza I am hopelessly devoid of will. I am operated by forces that are outside of me."

"That's love for you then."

"Do you think that being in love invites feelings of destiny?"

"No, but maybe destiny establishes some sense of distance when we have no other means of verifying where we are or what we are doing."

"When I follow my heart it feels perilously close to believing in fate."

"The heart is a bewildering thing."

"Eliza said that I had an 'odd heart'."

"If you ask me, that's the only kind of heart we are given. At least, I know of no other. When you are my age you will look back and long for some of the foolishness of your youthful heart. It teaches you how to live."

He stands up slowly and lifts his stick off the back of the chair.

"What is your name, sir?" I ask him.

"Christopher Peabody."

"Well, I thank you, Christopher Peabody. You have much wisdom in you."

"Aye, I might do sometimes, but remember, there are times in your life when you are lucky and other times when you are not. In either circumstance you should not establish firm opinions or make resolutions that are not retractable. Life changes."

He winks at me. "It's a free world, my boy, and you don't have to stop loving her unless you want to."

With that he walks out of the tavern, relying greatly on his stick to make his way.

Chapter Eighteen

Eliza and I are with Henry, in his music room. We are sitting peacefully and in silence as Henry works at his notation. The speed and intensity of his engagement is unbelievable. I tell Eliza that I could rewrite The History of King Richard II *in a day if I worked like Henry. "Why don't you then," she says.*

This was my dream, but what a joy it would be to rid myself so quickly of the Lord Chamberlain's rejection. I imagine myself this evening, free from care, relieved of my irksome indecision and ready to start anew. I amuse myself with the thought that *The History of King Richard II* might be only the second of a long line of plays that must have Sicily as their permanent island of exile. I remember the humorous manner in which I described my literary changes to Captain Wiltshire on our journey to London and I am now filled with a great fire to complete my alterations by the end of the day. I cancel my lesson with Harry, ask him to take a letter to Henry and start the rewrite of *The History of King Richard II*.

I change the names of all the characters and the places they inhabit. I work furiously with no more concern than I would if I were making a copy. I have a great sense of accomplishment when I re-title the work *The Sicilian Usurper.* By the time Buttons arrives it is a new play. I am delighted to see him.

"I have changed *The History of King Richard II* into *The Sicilian Usurper* in one day," I tell him proudly.

"That's nothing. I have usurped history for the second time in two days," he says.

He avoids my friendly swipe and picks up the journal that contains

my article on gardens. I point out the article to him and then insist that he read Sir William Temple's book instead. I direct him to the page where Temple describes Chinese gardens. Buttons reads and smiles. I knew that he would love the sharawadgi.

"They delight in things that sit between one thing and another almost as much as I do," he says. "Order and chaos are fine companions and any garden that has them conversing together would be beautiful. How do the Chinese achieve this? Does he say? Do you think that the gardener instructs his apprentice to drop great stones 'willy-nilly' into the garden? I wonder if I could do this with my next book."

We go to the White Horse and I tell him about our meeting with the Priest's and Cecelia's attempts to have Henry change the story of *Dido and Aeneas*.

"I agree with Cecelia," he says. "Why write another tragedy?"

"So what would your subject for an opera be?"

"Oh I don't know. Perhaps I would adapt Sir Philip Sidney's Dido from the Arcadia. Do you remember the husband whose many wives retaliate against him?"

"The villain who attempts to murder Dido."

"Indeed. Dido is his tenth wife. He left his first wife because she was over-wayward, his second because she was too soon won, the third because she was not merry enough and the fourth because she was over-gamesome. I think that the fifth had become sick, the sixth was foolish enough to be jealous of him and the seventh he left because she refused to carry his letter to a lover. What a husband is this? The eighth he left because she was not secretive enough and the ninth because she lacked any liberal views. As for Dido, he could find no fault with her other than that he had met with many women who were as beautiful as she. I would have Henry set to music their cries of vitriol as they beat this terrible specimen to death. That would be my entertainment for a boarding school for young ladies. What do you think?"

"Why is it that you never take things seriously, Buttons?"

" I do. I am a serious fellow, but it's a different seriousness to yours."

"You like to appear as one who lacks seriousness then."

"I am always serious about being true. I do not waver in that. I like to encourage contradictions to play together, but for you contradictions are a trial."

"How would we answer questions without resolving contradictions?"

"There is nothing more pointless than an attempt to resolve contradictions."

We spend the remainder of the evening in extravagant talk.

Harry flies into my room.

"Are you sure that the story finishes here, Mr. Tate?"

I laugh at his words and we go to the study for his lesson. I tell him that after the death of the giant, there is nothing more to be said, but he complains that I did not tell him about the strange little man with the magic beans.

"He was a good magician, that's all we know about him."

Harry is greatly disappointed and he also wants to know who the giant is and what happens to Jack after he has the harp.

"He lives happily ever after. This is how stories end," I insist, but Harry wants me to write more.

"Where will it end?" I ask, but Harry looks so displeased that I agree to put more words to the adventure. We proceed with the task of breaking down words into manageable chunks to facilitate his pronunciation and I wonder at the formidable task I have agreed to undertake for him.

I have a letter from Horace, confirming that I may borrow his Latin edition of Ovid's *Heroides*. I can visit him on Saturday. I also have a letter from Anna.

Dear Mr. Tate,

I am most grateful to you for attending our rehearsals. To be close to a composer and a librettist when they are creating an opera is the most I could ever wish for in life. I hope that the intensity of feeling between Frances and Mr. Purcell does not jeopardize this for I cannot express how much being with you both means to me.

I dream of finding some position in the world that would engage me in a similar manner, but I cannot imagine what this could be. My life becomes more difficult by the day. I have no interest in the great amount of things that I am expected to undertake here and, worse than this, I cannot bear the sullenness and general poor temperament that pervade our house. My mother continues to be greatly irritated and there is nothing Frances and I can do to banish her care and sorrow.

Frances is also more troubled than she is happy about the love she feels for Mr. Purcell. I tell her that love should not torment her and I try to encourage her to enjoy the fortune that smiles upon her, but she cannot seem to shake the clouds from off her brow. Please ask Mr. Purcell to be patient with us, and kind to Frances when he is with her. Our household will return to its happy state before long and Frances will one day soon learn how to enjoy the stirrings of her heart.

Thank you for your forbearance last Thursday. We will not allow grief to join us again. Only the voices that delight us will be invited in future, so that we can honour the pleasures that this great and important work offer us.

Yours truly,
Anna Pieters.

PS. If you have anything written out concerning the characters and the overall development of the story I should love to see it.

Anna is extraordinary, she thinks about everyone and considers everything. Her final request reminds me that I must attend to the description of the scenes. I go to Westminster and show Henry the letter. He does not know why Frances should be so concerned about his love for her, but I point out that her feelings are no different to the uncertainty he felt before he learned what was in her heart.

"But we know how our hearts are placed now," he says and I entreat him to do as Anna bids and be patient. Henry reads the letter again and expresses his enjoyment of Anna's words, 'shake the clouds from off your brow'.

"This is the advice that Belinda should give Dido," he says.

I laugh, but Henry is serious. He plays some sketches he has devised

for Belinda's opening aria and he asks me to give him some words. Henry proceeds quickly, calling to me 'this is Belinda,' or 'this is Dido,' when the roles change. I am hot and my words are sluggish. We go to Heaven to eat a mutton pie, but it is filled with noisy customers, so we buy herring down by the river. As we eat in the sun, Henry insists that we walk and compose this afternoon.

"Rhythm and meter come naturally to us when we are moving," he says, "and walking keeps the melodies free."

We walk in the fields beyond Tothill Street and I realise how much energy and concentration it takes to compose while walking. Henry has no concern about time, other than its connection with his music, and he pays no attention to the direction we are travelling in or to the terrain we are travelling on. The pace of our walk changes continually and Henry's arms and hands never stop moving. When a good few hours have passed, I tell him that comic eccentricity is the term most people would use to describe our activity.

"Well, there is method in my movements," he says, "but its description involves too much detail for those who do not know music."

"Try me," I bid him. "I am in need of some respite."

Henry stops and considers.

"I will start with the hands. I keep the tempo with my left hand and the melody with my right. By this method I compose orchestral parts for different instruments. For example, I might move my left arm to follow the sounds of the bass viol and then use repeated movements of my hand, like this, to express a sequence of sustained single notes."

He looks at me to determine if I am following his description and laughs his cheeky, nervous laugh.

"With my right arm I might work on the harpsichord refrain. If I am using the harpsichord to fill in an improvised realisation of the chords suggested by the bass, then the movement of my right arm will be more complex than the left."

He makes wild movements with his arm to demonstrate this and then begins singing. "Taa, ta rom ta, taa ta rom. My voice echoes the melody and my legs echoes the rhythm."

He starts to walk and I study his exaggerated changes in speed.

"I use my feet for punctuation," and he stands still, points his toe and then digs his heel into the ground. I am astonished. Henry turns back to me and laughs.

"Henry, I swear that they listen to your musical walks in Heaven, and I am not referring to the tavern."

He laughs, walks on and continues to sing while I chase him with my words.

Grief increasing, by concealing.

The moment he hears these words, Henry lets out a great brooding sigh and stops. He sits by a tree and I put my arm about him. The words touched his yearning for Frances and he is so filled with emotion that he cannot go on. We sit for some time and then return. As we are saying goodbye, Henry asks if I will refine my words overnight and be with him early tomorrow. I say that I am too exhausted to write more words, but Henry insists that he must have them by Thursday or Frances and Anna will have nothing to sing. He bids me to sing before I sleep, but I am asleep the moment I lie on my bed.

Chapter Nineteen

I have described the characters and their stage appearances in each scene and I have clarified the dramatic development of the narrative. I am writing out a description of the various locations when Harry arrives.

"Before you ask me," I tell him, "I have not had time to write a new ending to the story."

"I can't think what you do all day," he says, sounding not unlike his mother, and as I am about to give him one of Ellen's clips about the ears, he ducks and runs around the table. I love his cheekiness. As we work together I study his concentration as he pours over words at my table. I know that he will be reading soon.

I copy a description of the scenes for Anna and assure her that Henry waits for Frances with a patient heart. I make further copies of the scenes for Henry, the Duchess and Josias and then write to Horace confirming that I will visit him on Saturday. I do not have a minute to translate *The Art of Love*, but I do take my morning ale at the White Horse before posting the letters and running to Westminster. We have hardly wished each other 'good day' before Henry asks if I made changes overnight.

"I slept, Henry, it is renowned for being good for you."

"If you repeat the lines to yourself a few times before your sleep, you will count the meter of your rhymes during the night," he tells me. "It hardly takes any time."

I nod my head and laugh. Henry sits at the harpsichord.

"I hope you can remember the words," he says and he plays what we devised on our walk yesterday.

Henry conducts with one hand, plays the music with the other and concentrates upon every word I utter. Even the slightest inflection in my speech can inspire Henry to change the pace of the music or alter its

accents. Sometimes, he even helps me to shape the phrases. His originality, his melodic thoughts and his creative insights are inexhaustible. I am fully charged up by this activity, but after three hours or more I tell him that I am drained by the intensity of it.

"You must learn to steady your concentration, trust your senses and relax," he tells me. "Just enjoy the beauty of the dependable rhythms."

I apologize for being a poor student and Henry shakes his head. "What I tell you I also tell myself. Our partnership thrives because of the respect, love and loyalty we have for each other."

When our day is through I am aware of the influence of Anna's letter.

Belinda: *Shake the cloud from off your brow,*
Fate your wishes do allow.
Empire growing, Pleasures flowing,
Fortune smiles and so should you,
Shake the cloud from off your brow.
Chorus: *Banish sorrow, banish care,*
Grief should ne're approach the fair.
Dido: *Ah! Belinda I am pressed,*
With torment not to be confessed.
Peace and I are strangers grown,
I languish till my grief is known,
Yet would not have it guessed.
Belinda: *Grief Increasing, by concealing,*
Dido: *Mine admits of no revealing.*
Belinda: *Then let me speak, the Trojan guest,*
Into your tender thoughts has pressed.

We have completed most of the first scene and started upon the recitative section between Dido, Aeneas and Belinda in the second. Henry walks with me to New Palace Yard humming:

Shake the cloud from off your brow.

He says that he will sing it all night. I walk back to The Strand, dreaming of sleep. When I am asleep I dream of the opera. Given the heat of the night I am easily transported to Carthage.

As Henry and I head upriver, it is the poor state of my accounts that concern me. This morning I had a letter from my landlord, reminding me that I am behind with the rent. I had expected his communication and carefully put it to the back of my mind, but now his words cast a shadow over the excitement that this day promises. Anna opens the door to us before we have reached the steps and Henry and I are both taken aback. She looks ashen and speaks to us in urgent and whispered tones.

"The rehearsal is impossible today. You must return without delay. I will write to explain later. Please do not enquire further. You must not remain a minute longer."

"What is happening?" Henry demands. "You must give us some knowledge of this, it is too urgent to be left unexplained."

"It is my mother," Anna replies. "Oh, please do not ask me about it now."

"I will not leave you like this," Henry insists. "You must tell me something."

Anna looks horrified and mumbles a few words.

"What?" Henry shouts to her.

"Frances was on the stairs, weeping," Anna says. "She was in great distress, complaining that love was causing her nothing but turmoil. As she talked of her unhappiness my mother overheard her and flew into rage. I was instructed to return to my room, but I had to warn you. Please, you must go before my mother hears you."

"Did Frances mention her love for me?" Henry asks.

"Yes. Now make haste. It will be worse for us all if my mother catches you."

"I must talk to your mother," Henry says, trying to push past Anna. "I cannot have her at odds with me."

Anna holds him at the door.

"Mr. Purcell, I beg you. Do not confront my mother."

"I have no intention of confronting her. I want to tell her the truth about my feelings for Frances."

"You must not. She knows that Frances is apprehensive about your attentions."

"Why is she so fearful?"

"Because she believes that you receive considerable attention from the women at Court. Surely you can understand this? My mother says that all courtiers have something of the gallant about them and she insists that you have tricked Frances."

"I must see her." Henry is furious.

"Please do not be angry with Frances, I beg you. It is natural for a woman to express doubts about a man's constancy."

I place my arm on Henry's shoulder.

"Come away," I bid him. "Let us deal with this another time."

Amy Pieters appears in the hallway.

"What are you doing here, Anna?" she asks sternly. "You have disobeyed my instruction. Go to your room now and stay there."

Anna throws us a look of despair and makes her way up stairs.

"Now, gentlemen, since you have chosen to visit me I would be grateful if you came in off the street."

We enter the house and Amy closes the door behind us.

"Mrs. Pieters, I would like to say …"

"No, Mr. Purcell, this is my house and you will do me the courtesy of allowing me to speak first. I am deeply offended. I invited you into my house in good faith to entertain my guests, but you have taken it into your head to entertain my daughter."

"But …"

"Do you think that we do not know you, Mr. Purcell? Do you imagine that your bawdy songs and drunken behaviour fail to express how it goes with you?"

"I did not …"

"Do you expect me to condone your behaviour and celebrate when you attempt to force your attentions upon my daughter? You must reckon that we lack any form of honour or self-respect."

"Please, let me explain."

"No, sir. I do not want to listen to your lies. You would have us believe that only noble thoughts direct your gaze, but your ornamental life is nothing but a poor imitation of the Court you serve. You are all tarred with the same brush and you dedicate your giddy lives to nothing but gallantry and pleasure. Damn you to presume that my daughter deserves your attentions. These afternoons were just an excuse for your idle passion and flirtatious dalliance. How dare you wheedle your way into this house with false promises and blatant lies? We are not fooled by this gilded artifice that you wear so proudly, you cannot hide the dishonesty and greed that are the stuff of you. You can leave this house now. I do not expect to see you again."

"Madam, I compose music for the King and I resent being accused of imitating the lives of his courtiers."

"Ha, ha, ha. Resent what you will. I have no interest in the frivolous butterfly that is called 'King'. Ha, ha, ha." She has a malicious laugh.

"You are wrong about me. My life is dedicated to the Church and its music. You should not demean me or deny the high regard in which I am held."

Amy Pieters again uses laughter to express her derision.

"I know that this is the way you speak, but it is not the way you act."

"I love Frances more than I love my life."

"Then you can go to hell. Love, ha. You have no idea about love. Ha, ha, ha."

Amy's aggression and hatred are nothing next to her terrible laugh.

"I want to marry Frances. I promise to look after …"

Amy thrusts forward in a threatening manner.

"What do you own, Mr. Purcell? What business are you engaged in?

"I work for the King."

"You work for the King. Ha, ha, ha. The King pays nothing, even when he has money. Do you own any property? Do you have an inheritance? Is there anything to recommend you?"

"I live with my mother and my family."

"You live with your mother. And I suppose that my daughter is also

to live with your mother is she? You are wasting my time, Mr. Purcell. You have angered me considerably and your foolish proposal makes a mockery of me and my family. Now, I have given you all the time that I intend to give. You will leave this house and you will not return. Is that clear?"

Amy opens the door and Henry and I make our sorry way down the steps and onto the street.

Henry walks off at a considerable pace. I have to run to keep up with him. At the end of Cole Harbour he turns east down Thames Street. I walk at his pace just a little behind him. We say nothing. He stops at the crossroads by London Bridge and then turns north up Fish Street. As he approaches the giant pillar he slows his pace, stops and stands staring at it. I tell him that this is where the fire began. He crosses the street, walks up to the pillar and kicks it. He leans his head against it and proceeds to beat against it with his fists. Slowly he slides down and sits with his back against it. He shuts his eyes tightly and covers his ears with his hands. I sit down beside him.

"Amy Pieters is a dried up old witch," I tell him. "She responds to love with destruction."

Henry puts his face in his hands.

"She is without a heart. She indulges her miserable opinion and there is nothing in her world but gold. She can only crush sensitivity."

Henry shakes his head and lets out a low moan.

"Her daughter's marriage is only a means of securing wealth. Everything else makes her vulnerable."

"Oh, shut up, Nahum. Please shut up."

Henry lets out a great anguished cry and he repeats it until it loses all meaning and energy. We sit in silence. I am so angry with the witch that I vow to fashion my witches in the opera upon her. Old hags they will be, with horror their pleasure and pain their enjoyment.

"I will model our witches on Amy Pieters," I tell him. "Nothing but derisive laughter with destruction as their intention. Do you hear me Henry? I am not going to write anything for the witches. Their laugher will portray their horror."

Henry gives me a black look. I sing 'Ha, ha, ha', with all the meanness and derision I can muster and my vocalizing distracts him. He takes up the sounds, substituting an intense 'Ho, ho, ho, for my Ha, ha, ha'. He stands and offers me his hand.

"We must return, Nahum. We must have Amy's deprived and wretched sounds down on paper before her revulsion ceases to afflict us."

We travel upriver making horrid and frightening sounds for each other.

"You 'ave bin drinking too much, I'll warrant," the boatman tells us.

"No," I tell him. "We are writing a play with music to scare our audience."

"Well, you've scared me right enough and I can't row if you continue with it, that's a fact."

Henry and I cease our grating noises.

Once in the refectory, Henry, violin in hand, plays what he refers to as the prelude for the witches. It is a spontaneous outburst, his rhythm aggressive, and his melody vicious. It arrives fully formed and complete with enough anticipation of terror to prepare our audience for harridans whose sole intent is to cause harm. We do not know whether to laugh or cry. It will be the sorceress who opens the scene and with these sounds she will demand the presence of the witches. I write her call to them.

Wayward sisters, you that fright,
The lonely traveller by night.
Who like dismal ravens crying,
Beat the windows of the dying.
Appear, appear at my call, and share in the fame,
Of a mischief shall make all Carthage to flame.
Appear, Appear.

The song, full of power and foreboding, carries the charge of our anger. Then, with an emotional expression that is both wicked and amusing, Henry begins to sing the 'Ho, ho, ho' sounds while accompanying himself on the violin. He discovers another melody underneath the first that is full of mischief and I can imagine the dissolute dance that might

accompany it. The chorus will sing this wretched laughter with the witches. I write their words.

Harm's our delight and mischief all our skill.

We have conjured songs out of thin air and with the exception of the recitative we have completed the first scene of the second act. I tell Henry that we should reward ourselves with a visit to the Sun.

"I am already drunk," he says and it is true, we are drunk with creativity, but this does not stop us from drinking as much ale as we are capable of consuming. Oblivion is the only opportunity worth cultivating this evening. Henry's art may transcend his tragedy, but his heart knows only the grave business that besets him. We bemoan the dismal fortune that distances us from love and when we are completely drunk we lampoon and vilify the frightful Amy. We even toast the wretched woman for her inspiration. Drunkenness alleviates wretched states, it puts a temporary stop to misery, but by morning, when the harsh light of a new day brings realization sharply into view, Henry will remember his ravaged senses and weep. We fall upon each other as we say goodnight. I remember nothing more.

Chapter Twenty

Now to be sure my head is in a bad way and the sultry heat and overcast sky does nothing to improve it. I push myself to write out a fair copy of *The Sicilian Usurper* for Killigrew. He is surprised to see me and he is even more surprised to see *The Sicilian Usurper*. He promises to copy it before sending it to the Lord Chamberlain and tells me that he must hasten to a performance by his assistants.

"Would you care to join me?" he asks. "The pretty maid Eliza is performing."

I thank him and we go together to the auditorium. I sit nervously while Killigrew talks of Wycherley and *The Country Wife*.

"Excellent writing," he exclaims, "such innuendo and farce. I love a man who can make comic action out of flirting and jealousy."

I will tell you about *The Country Wife*. It concerns Mr. and Mrs. Pinchwife who have come up from the country to visit his sister, Alithea. Alithea is about to be married, but another man has fallen passionately in love with her. Mr. Pinchwife is a silly, jealous man, who will not allow his wife out in London, but already Mr. Horner has seen her and has fallen in love with her. Desire is everywhere.

"We are waiting too long," Killigrew calls out. "Mr. Petty, fetch us some brandy before we die of boredom."

We wait on. I have terrible jitters, but the brandy revives me a little.

"Are we ready?" Killigrew shouts at the closed curtains before him.

A man presents himself. "Just a few seconds, sir, and we will be ready."

"Not good," he shouts to him. "Not good to keep your audience waiting."

The man reappears between the curtains.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we invite you to the first scene of the second act of Wycherley's play, *The Country Wife*."

The curtain opens and there stands Eliza. She is playing Mrs. Pinchwife. She is complaining to Alithea that her husband will not let her go to the theatre for fear that she will like the actors too much and that the gallants will seek to court her. He considers all town women to be notorious and impudent, calling them 'errant jilflirts, gadders and magpies.' Mr. Pinchwife hears her complaints, but he will have none of it. When Alithea's betrothed and a friend are announced he locks his wife in a cupboard. The 'would be' husband asks his friend for his opinion of his future bride, but his friend has already fallen for Alithea and he is making passes at her. Alithea is taken aback, but her future spouse, a foolish man, is intent on proving that he is not jealous. Mr. Pinchwife is outraged and Alithea and the two visitors depart to the theatre leaving Mr. Pinchwife alone.

Three town women now appear on stage. They are Lady Fidget, Mrs. Dainty Fidget and Mrs. Squeamish. Eliza is now playing Lady Fidget. I am transfixed by her beauty. The ladies ask if they can escort Mrs. Pinchwife to the theatre, but Mr. Pinchwife tells them that she has smallpox. They insist on seeing her so he pretends to fetch her. The ladies complain that their husbands spend their time and fortunes keeping little playhouse creatures, but they also dream of becoming a mistress to some fine gentlemen about town.

Killigrew claps noisily and the actors return to the stage to make their bows and curtseys.

"You have all performed excellently well," he tells them. "As well as anyone on this stage, I would say. What do you think, Mr. Petty?"

"Most excellent," John Petty replies. "If we have an opportunity to produce it, we should encourage them to rehearse the full production."

"Fulsome praise, sir. What did you think of their efforts, Nahum?"

"I agree. They perform as well as any actors I have seen. I also concur with John Petty. They should work on the full production."

"I am inclined to agree, but I cannot fund a full production. I would

love to have the play in reserve, but produce it I cannot."

There is a sound of disappointment from the actors.

"Perhaps we should look for a shorter comedy that has fewer parts. I would gladly help dear Wycherley, but not at the cost of ending up in the same prison as he."

"Perhaps someone could edit the play for us." This comes from the tall fellow, who I saw on the scaffolding previously.

"Mr. Tate might do this," Eliza chips in quickly.

I am completely taken aback.

"This is a possibility," Killigrew says. "What do you think, Nahum?"

I lift my hands, as if protecting myself from a physical onslaught and laugh in a slightly hysterical fashion. Everyone is staring at me.

"I have neither the temperament nor the time to rewrite a comedy," I tell them. "Besides, I think that rewriting the play is not a good suggestion. Once you start to reorganise a play like this, all hell will be let loose. Do an extract by all means, but rewrite it? Never."

Eliza looks at me in horror.

"I take your point, Nahum, but this kind of thing is not unusual for us. We will not push your reluctance, however. Perhaps someone who is familiar with comedy would do it. How about Sir George Etheridge? He has great skill in the art of comedy. I hear that he is married to a rich old widow, so he should easily afford some generosity towards our unfortunate Mr. Wycherley."

"Excellent notion, sir," John Petty puts in. "We are often in need of a short play and we should not miss this opportunity. Should Nahum's new play not manage a run we could replace it with *The Country Wife*."

"Mr. Petty, I despise you for such a comment," Killigrew shouts at him. "It is very bad luck to speak so."

I try not to show the hurt his words cause me, but I mark John Petty as a man not to be trusted.

"Well done, my dears. We shall think some more upon it and I will talk to Etheridge. He may even agree to finance a full production."

The actors depart backstage to get changed. I take my leave of Killigrew and wander up Drury Lane. I am in a confused state. Was I beastly to

refuse Eliza this opportunity? I cannot, under any circumstances, rewrite Wycherley. I want to hug Eliza and tell her how wonderfully she acted, but I could hardly be more distant from her now. I walk along to Thomas Flatman's house full of foreboding. The sky darkens with every step I make and thunder resounds close by. Suddenly the heavens open and I am drowned in minutes by a ferocious storm.

I arrive at Thomas's house wet and miserable. Thomas responds quickly and bids me to remove my clothes. He gives me a shirt and some breeches to wear and asks about my visit to Ireland. I give him my news and then he talks of his stay in Sussex. He is in love with a young woman he met there and I learn that she and her Aunt will be visiting for supper. He reads his recent poems and then takes me to the studio to show me his paintings. They are miniatures that have his new love, Caroline, as their subject. I have brought my article on gardens to show him and when we are back in the drawing room I hand it to him.

"You made very little of the sharawadgi," he says.

"It is true. My misery at losing Eliza crept uninvited into the work."

"Are you still captivated by her?"

"I am, but it is a tale so sad and full of woe it might melt the rocks as well as you."

"Is it certain that you have lost her then."

"Aye, but I cannot forget her and my heart will not be dictated to on this matter. Friendship and assistance she wants, but love she does not."

"Eliza inspired you beautifully and you must keep your fine feelings for her."

We fall silent.

"You have a good heart and you should not allow rejection to break it."

"Thank you Thomas, good it might be, but confused it certainly is."

"Oh, what is confusion? Think of the Chinese garden, disagreeing in parts, but upon the whole, very agreeable."

I moan.

"You must try to live without anger."

"I would do better to live without love."

"Don't live without love. Attend to your own love, not Eliza's. Take yourself back. You are a jewel. Don't linger here. I shall read you another poem."

Youth yet is yours! Scorn not the dance!
Your daily exercise continue;
And don't say there is no Romance
As long as there is breath within you.

It is a translation of Horace and Thomas will read it at Horace's literary evening.

"It is my ambition to read Ovid," I say. "Two works. In *The Art of Love* the man eulogizes romance and in the *Heroides* the woman bemoans its terrible outcome."

His maid enters and Caroline and her Aunt Elizabeth are shown into the room. They both display a beauty and a delicacy that is uncommon. Over supper, they talk in gentle and measured tones about their life in the country. When we have finished eating, Thomas invites them to see his paintings, but Elizabeth says that he should show them to Caroline, for she wishes to talk with me. Thomas and Caroline depart eagerly and Elizabeth smiles happily.

"An aunt should always show generosity towards her niece," she says. "So, Nahum, tell me about your life or tell me about your writing."

I talk of my writing.

"If I am not mistaken, you live with a broken heart," she says suddenly.

I am taken aback and ask how she knows this.

"I learn it from your spirit, not from your words. I can feel a rupture in you and it has a distinct quality of rejection about it. The woman who caused this inspired you greatly."

Her frailty has evaporated and before me sits a woman of considerable strength. I invite her to tell me more and I encourage her vigorously when she asks if I am certain about my request.

"Women have considerable power when they want to attract a

man," she says, "they inspire his potency, but when they no longer wish to arouse it they thwart his desire and break his spirit. This is not intentional."

I nod my head.

"But you cannot check your desire, so your woman continues to exercise her control unchallenged. This further reduces your potency. You want to control her, but she will not allow it."

"What use am I to her without my spirit?"

"Very useful if she wants something from you still."

I nod my head. I am startled by her vision and ask what I should do.

"You are stuck in repetition, my dear. You have allowed your woman to become the embodiment of stimulation and excitement, so now you must break this connection. You must stop the flow of images that you conjure around her. Only then can you be free of her."

"How should I do this?"

"You can't and besides, you will not do as I say even if I told you."

I plead with her to tell me.

"If she inspired you so beautifully, you must honour her and when the time comes you must let her move on."

"And if I do not do this?"

"Then you will remain in this limbo until you have used her up, until she no longer works on you. There is no grace in life if you force her to get what she wants in this way."

"I cannot think like this."

"You cannot think at all. You men define yourselves by the attention you receive. Beauty steals your minds and rejection steals your identity. It is important that your heart can be ruled in this fashion. Women have no other way of distracting you from the affairs of the world that you cling to so faithfully. How else would we establish families and ensure future generations? Your hearts are your strength and your weakness and we must rule them or loose the victory."

"But we loved each other."

"Oh yes. You must believe that it was love."

Thomas and Caroline return. I cannot think how long they have been

absent. I want only to talk to this woman who sees with her senses, but our talk returns to Thomas's paintings. When the women take their leave, I thank Elizabeth and she smiles gently as though nothing out of the ordinary has occurred. I talk with Thomas about her and he is as surprised by her powers of perception as I am.

As I change back into my clothes, the rain is again falling in torrents. We stand wondering at its ferocity and then Thomas offers me an oilskin umbrella.

"Thank you," I say, "but I cannot see myself walking along with an implement for the ladies."

Thomas laughs and thrusts the umbrella towards me.

"Take it and use it like a lady. Have you forgotten Beaumont and Fletcher.

Are you at ease? Now is your heart at rest?
Now you have got a shadow, an umbrella,
To keep the scorching world's opinion
From your fair credit.

"I love you Thomas. I will use it."

I go out into the pouring rain, trying to remember the strange words of Elizabeth and hardly remembering a thing. I doubt that I can change the way I feel about Eliza.

Chapter Twenty-one

It has rained all night and it continues to pour. For sure Aunt Elizabeth's clean words do not sit happily with me this morning. Either I am too destructive to do her bidding or I know that I cannot reject my beautiful muse, Eliza. She still holds the truth of my feelings. As I step through the great puddles on my way to visit Horace I am pleased to have Thomas's umbrella. Horace is surprised that I made the journey, but sitting with Horace in his library is one of my greatest pleasures. He tells me about life in Windsor and talks of the vulnerability that the King is feeling. If I were King I too would want Horace by my side everyday.

We discuss the literary evening he is planning and he gives me his copy of the *Heroides*. He asks if I could translate the entire work and I tell him that as soon as I have finished *The Art of Love* I will do so. I admit that I am greatly in need of funds and Horace offers to give me an advance. He is always so thoughtful and I feel ashamed by my readiness to inspire and accept his offer. I talk enthusiastically about the opera and conclude by mentioning the lack of recompense I am to receive for it. Horace asks if I am in debt and when I confirm it he insists that he will pay me in full for the translation now if it will clear my debts. He is a great man and I love him.

I talk about the things that fill my days and mention that I am teaching Harry to read. Horace is surprised by the activity. I tell him that Harry is an entertaining young fellow with more than enough talent to go to school. I ask if he knows about schools and he says that he does not, but at one time he was a warden of the Stationers' Company and helped raise money for the school there.

"It is in Bolt Court, just off Fleet Street," he says. "I could ask how boys

obtain a place there. They start at eight, I think."

"Do they read and write before they start?"

"Now I have no idea, Nahum. I doubt it, though. It is run by a charity to support the poorer members of the company. Let me make some enquiries."

"Is it only the sons of company members who attend the school?"

"So many questions, Nahum. Your dedication to your housekeeper's son is commendable. I imagine that they take some fee-paying boys, but I have no idea what it costs. I doubt that it is a great amount."

"Would you find out the costs for me? It is very important to me." Horace agrees and studies me quietly.

"What is your attachment to your housekeeper?" he asks.

I laugh.

"Oh, I don't know. We are like a family. We support each other, but we have no other form of attachment."

"Nahum, I apologize for prying, but your concern for her son is quite particular."

"You should meet Harry. He is a delight. I want to give him a start in life."

"Then I will make enquiries at the school and if it is possible for Harry to attend I will finance his first year. After that it will be up to you."

"No Horace. This is beyond generosity."

"Nonsense, my mind is made up. Harry will go to the Stationers' Company School at my expense."

I hug him and promise to dedicate my libretto to him.

"May your generosity always be remembered," I say as I fly from his house and rejoin the rain. I jump with delight over the puddles, my umbrella in one hand and the *Heroides* in the other. I burst into the White Horse and find Ellen in the kitchen.

"Sit down," I tell her, "I have the most wonderful news."

"What is it?" she asks. She is in a fluster for my eagerness and enthusiasm are not things she is familiar with. She dries her hands and straightens her apron.

"Do I have to sit down or can I remain standing?" she asks.

"You can remain standing, Ellen. Are you ready?"

She nods her head, but she looks as if she is about to loose it to the executioner.

"It is good news, Ellen, you do not have to look so frightened."

"Then for goodness sake tell me what it is or I shall die of suspense before you get the words out."

"Harry is going to school."

Ellen says nothing and she does not move.

"Horace Heveningham has promised to pay for the first year of Harry's schooling."

"What kind of school?" she asks with a troubled frown.

"The Stationers Company. Just off Fleet Street."

Ellen lifts her apron and starts to cry. She is shaking her head and great sobs, accompanied by the words "I don't believe it," come from her repeatedly. For a while it appears that she is not going to stop, so I take her by the hand and direct her to sit down. She sits, stands up and sits down again in quick succession. The intensity of her excitement, mixed with her disbelief is comical.

"Where is Harry?" she asks. She shouts his name. "Harry. Where is the boy?"

"He is delivering the laundry to Nancy," the barman informs her.

"Oh, I forgot. Oh, I hope he will behave himself. I hope they will not send him home on account of his bad behaviour. He does not know how to behave at school. He is sure to misbehave. What shall I do if he is sent home?"

"Ellen, he hasn't even started and you are worrying about him being expelled. You must stop worrying, Harry will be fine. I will wait in the tavern for his return. Do you still provide refreshment? I should like a carafe of wine and something to eat."

"Oh, yes, goodness me, I am sorry." Ellen moves across to the stove. "Harry, going to school. I can hardly believe it. Will a bowl of vegetable broth suit you?"

She takes my bowl and we go into the bar. "Bread," she says, "you will need some bread." She runs to the kitchen and quickly returns. "Harry

is in the kitchen now. Will you tell him? I can't remember everything you said. Harry," she shouts to him. Harry arrives in the bar looking as though he is about to be punished for something.

"I have a friend, Harry, who is going to arrange for you to go to school."

Harry is not certain where to look, but he nods his head thoughtfully.

"What do you think?"

"How soon will I go?" he asks.

"As soon as we can arrange it," I tell him. Harry nods his head again.

"You wretched child," Ellen cries angrily, shaking him by the shoulder. "Is this the only response you can find for a man who has just done you the greatest service?"

"I am sorry," Harry says. "Thank you, Mr. Tate."

"Is there no more enthusiasm in you than this?" Ellen complains.

I ask her to desist and Ellen starts to weep again. She has no idea what to do with her happiness. I tell Harry what little I know about the Stationers school and then, as usual, he has more questions for me than I can answer. We leave the White Horse together and cross The Strand. I open my umbrella to protect us from the torrential rain. Once we are dry Harry starts to dance and Ellen sings. I have never seen such happiness. When they have gone to bed I sit in the study reading Ovid's *Heroides*.

There is a tremendous knocking at the door. It is late for visitors. I go to my bedroom window and shout down to the street. There is no reply, but I can see a figure slumped against my door. The rain is pouring on him. I rush down and open the door carefully. A hand reaches up to me. It is Henry. I try to lift him, but he is a dead weight.

"Henry, what is it? Are you hurt? Are you drunk, you old sot?"

I attempt to lift him, but he slumps down again. He is soaked to the skin and laughing. I pull him up and he shouts out in pain. He is injured. I pull him inside. Henry has never been this drunk before. He can hold his drink better than any Lambeth boatman. I pull off his wet clothes to see where his injuries are.

"Talk to me, Henry. Tell me what has happened."

"I love her, Nahum. I tried to steal her away."

I call for Ellen to help me.

"It is Henry. Can you fetch a towel and some blankets? He is injured."

I ask Henry to tell me what has happened, but he only laughs hysterically and repeats the words, "I must tell you what happened. You will not believe what has happened."

He does not tell me anything. He is delirious and I try to calm him. I tell him that he will be fine, that we are going to put some dry clothes on him, but Henry does not take this in. Ellen returns and we dry Henry's body. His ankle is swollen and blue, but there are no other signs of injury. With Ellen's help I get him to stand on his good leg. He looks about the room without knowing where he is.

"I am going to get you into bed," I tell him. "Can we get you up stairs?"

Henry nods his head. I put his arm about me and ask him to hop forward. He is shivering.

"We must get you warm, Henry. We must get you up the stairs."

"I tried to steal Frances," he tells me again.

Ellen suggests that he lie on the kitchen table, but I have him on the first step now and I am intent on getting his large frame to the bedroom. He does not complain and once there, I ease him on to the bed and cover him with blankets. His shivering frightens me. I have never seen anyone shiver like this. There are pearls of sweat on his brow. Occasionally, he lets out a moan, but other than this he says nothing. I am full of fear for him. Ellen arrives with a cup of warm milk and we sit him up.

"This is good for you," I tell him.

Henry sips at the cup and lies down again. He opens his eyes. They are full of fear. He sits up and I place a cushion behind the pillow so that he can be more upright. He closes his eyes again and then sits bolt upright.

"I have broken my ankle, Nahum. It hurts. I ran and hopped all the way here. The boats were floating in King Street. I had to walk through the park. St. James' Park was just like a lake. But I got to Frances's house.

All afternoon I stood outside."

He laughs and then falls silent. Ellen and I share a look of alarm.

"Did you have rain, Nahum?"

I said that we did.

"I tried to see Frances. I didn't see her. I know she was at home. I wanted to steal her away. That's very bad of me, isn't it?"

"Yes it is," I tell him.

"I climbed up a drainpipe and onto one of the sheds. I crawled along the ridge to the window, but it was locked. I couldn't see much because of the rain, but I could see the staircase. I stared in for ages. Then a maid saw me. She screamed and shouted that I was a burglar. She called out for help so I scampered along the roof. Then I fell off and landed in the alley. There was shouting coming from the yard so I ran. My ankle is broken, but I didn't stop, I just kept running and then I hid. I must have been fast for they did not catch me."

Henry is like a man who has survived some terrible battle. Tears fall down his cheeks and he is shivering again. I pull the blankets over him, but he sits up sharply.

"They recognised me, Nahum. They must have recognised me. What should I do? I have no idea what I should do."

"There is nothing to be done, Henry. Just rest. Keep warm and rest."

He lies back down and Ellen and I sit by him. He makes a few moans and mumbles things that are not to be understood, but before long he is sleeping. I tell Ellen to go to bed and I remain at his bedside.

Henry's noises waken me. It is still dark. He is boiling up with fever. I pull the bedcovers off and put a cold towel on his forehead. He shivers violently so I pull the bedcovers over him again. I go down to Ellen and ask for her help. Ellen pulls the covers off and she instructs me to open the window. Henry shivers no matter what we do. His delirious condition frightens me and Ellen suggests that I fetch Dr. Stoller.

I run along The Strand and rant at Dr. Stoller as we hurry back. He insists that I calm myself, but I am too deeply threatened by Henry's danger to contain my nerves. While the good doctor examines my

patient, I dwell on the enormity of Henry's talent and plead with God to save him. What possible purpose can he have for putting Henry's life in danger? Only Henry can hear the brilliant sound of angels. Only Henry can invite us to celebrate the golden music of heaven. Who better than he will serve to honour and glorify God's name? How can he be taken from us now?

Chapter Twenty-two

I have no idea how long Dr. Stoller has been with Henry, but it is now light. Ellen and I go in to him and he asks me to tell him how Henry came to this condition. I describe what I know and Dr. Stoller says that Henry has a fever and he has sprained his ankle. I breathe a sigh of relief.

"But there are swellings in Henry's groin and neck," he adds, "and these are very worrying."

I look at him in horror.

"I can give him a physic to take, but for the moment there is little more I can do. I will return later in the day to check on him."

"What has caused the swelling?" I ask.

"It is difficult to be certain. Henry's ague was probably brought about by extremes of heat and cold. No doubt his condition is exacerbated by the collective states of shock, exhaustion and the distress that disappointed love has brought him. Sleep is the best cure for him, other than this there is little I can do."

I take this to mean that this is the end for Henry and I weep and clutch Ellen desperately.

"You should also take some rest, Nahum. Take some of the physic I am prescribing for Henry."

He turns to Ellen and hands her a note.

"You should mix these ingredients into a broth and give it to Henry whenever he can drink. Now you should take some rest. I will return later. Do not worry, Henry is strong and I doubt that he is ready to depart this life just yet."

Ellen and I go to lie down, but we are back at Henry's bedside within the hour. I tell her that I am going to Tothill Street to inform Henry's

mother. My walk is the most agitated sequence of steps I have ever taken. I wrap at the door and Elizabeth, who is already distraught at Henry's absence, starts to pray when she hears my news. Henry's brother Daniel and his sister Katherine join us and Katherine rallies her Mother. They dress quickly and return with me to The Strand.

They stand in trepidation and silence as they watch Henry battle with his raging fever. Elizabeth sits by her son's side, holds his hand and repeats his name as a litany. The sadness in the room is unbearable. Ellen enters with the broth she has prepared, but Henry is too unconscious to take it. Faint with tiredness, I go to my study, lie on the daybed and sleep. Upon waking I learn that Dr. Stoller has made another visit. He remains perturbed about Henry's swellings and believes that it could be days before we know how much danger he is in. Ellen entreats us to eat, but the Purcell family remain in the bedroom. I take some broth and return to my study.

I feel inadequate and I compare my miserable literary contribution to the immeasurable value of Henry's music. There are times when I imagine that my perceptions are strong and clear, but it is not true. I elude myself. I have no understanding of life, no insights to offer. I pick up thoughts that I hear or read and believe them to be my own. I am an arrogant man, a man whose confidence is only stupid vanity. I am shamed by my trivial mediocrity and I despair at my ridiculous ambition. Dear God, you would do better to take me in place of Henry. I would gladly walk towards death to save him.

In the morning I watch Elizabeth spooning broth through Henry's lips. He remains unconscious. Daniel has returned home to inform the Dean of the Abbey and to send news to John Blow at Windsor. Elizabeth has gone to Somerset House to inform her Uncle Thomas. I have a letter from Josias Priest, asking about our progress and requesting a meeting with us. When Daniel returns, he hands me another letter. It is a summons

from the magistrate instructing Henry to appear before him tomorrow at ten o'clock. Daniel and I share a stunned silence. We agree that we must go to the magistrate and explain Henry's circumstances. Katherine arrives with her Uncle Thomas. He kisses Elizabeth and stands besides her. He is like a father to Henry. They sing together like father and son. I tell Thomas about the magistrate's summons and he insists that he will go to the court to present Henry's case. All day we wait and pray for Henry's recovery. I spend the evening with my books.

After his morning visit, Dr. Stoller informs us that the swellings in Henry's neck and groin remain a concern. Henry continues to sleep feverishly. The Dean of the Abbey visits and we pray together for Henry's recovery. Thomas Purcell returns from the magistrate's court and we are delighted when he informs us that the case is closed.

"No further action will be taken. The magistrate recognised the extremity of Henry's condition and accepted that he intended no harm either to the house or its inhabitants. He had to accept the wishes of Amy Pieters though and he has placed an injunction on Henry, preventing him from making any further visits to the house."

Good God, but there is great sadness mixed with my relief here. In the evening Henry receives some nourishment from his mother, but he takes no more than a few sips. I return to my study and think about death. Death is easier to consider when we connect it to rebirth. We can descend into winter if we can look forward to spring. I pray for Henry's spring and read late into the night, loosing myself in Virgil's *Aeneid*. Aeneas the True goes through every kind of trial imaginable. Even in Italy he has more battles to fight and he must also undertake a tortuous journey to the Underworld to visit his father. Before he finds his father, Aeneas meets Dido again.

She was roaming in the broad wood with her wound still fresh upon her. Troy's hero found himself near to her and as soon as he recognised her dimly

through the shadows, like one who early in the month sees or thinks that he sees the moon rising through the clouds, his tears fell and he spoke to her in the sweet accents of love:

'O Dido, unhappy Dido, was the news, then, true which was brought to me, that you had perished, had taken the sword, and trodden the path to its end? Ah, could I have been the cause of your death? By the stars, by the High Gods I swear, I swear by any truth there may be in the depths of earth, that it was not by my own will, your majesty, that I departed from your shores; but rather was I imperiously forced by the same direction which compels me now to pass through the shadows in this world of crumbling decay under deepest night; and I could not know that my leaving you would have caused you so terrible a grief. Stay your step and withdraw not from my sight. Whom do you seek to escape? My speaking to you now is the last indulgence which fate can give me.'

By such words, Aeneas tried to soften her, and invited tears. But in her the anger blazed and grimly she glared, holding her gaze averted and fixed on the ground; she was no more moved by what Aeneas had begun to say than if she had been hard flint or a standing block of Parian marble. At length she flung herself away, and, in hatred still, fled back into the shadows offered by the wood, where Sychaeus, her husband in former days, had sympathy for her distress and matched his love to hers. Aeneas was shocked by her unjust fate; and, as she went, long gazed after her with tearful eyes and pity for her in his heart.

Eventually Aeneas meets his dead father who reveals to him the destiny of souls and warns him of the terrible burdens that he must bare in life. Aeneas, the son of the Goddess, returns through the Gate of Ivory to continue his difficult path.

Elizabeth wakens me. It is still dark. Henry is having a fit. When I enter the room he is thrashing about on the bed and shouting as if he is trying

to fight off terrible demons. We attempt to cool him, but he does not become calm. I go to fetch Dr. Stoller again and the good doctor returns to give Henry another examination.

"His swellings have reduced," he tells us.

We are completely taken aback by his words.

"Henry is in some distress and there is no doubt that he is plagued by nightmares, but I do not believe that his condition has deteriorated."

He takes from his case a small bag of herbs.

"Add this to the physic and get him to drink as often as you can. I am not without some confidence that if the swellings reduce further he will be clear of the worst danger. You must all remain hopeful."

Elizabeth and I are praying together when John Blow arrives. His distress upon seeing Henry is acute. He falls at his bedside, weeping and stroking Henry's cheeks. He pleads with Henry to fight for his recovery, telling him repeatedly how important he is. Henry opens his eyes briefly to smile at him and we all cry at the sight of it.

"By now the entire Court will know of Henry's condition," John Blow tells us. "The King is distraught and he asks me to ensure that all possible arrangements are made to effect Henry's recovery. He offers his physicians to attend on him and I am authorized to contact them if there is need."

"Dr. Stoller is the best," I tell him.

"The King does not know about the circumstances at the Pieters house and we must keep this to ourselves. The King's distress will be nothing when measured against his displeasure should he learn of Henry's escapade in the City."

We all understand his message and we vow to keep silent.

"One other thing that concerns the King are the arrangements for the Welcome Ode. Rehearsals are expected to begin on Monday. It is crucial that the King's return to London is a great State occasion. He has been planning this event for months and nothing can be allowed to cloud this day. I will now direct the rehearsals, but I need the manuscript in order to do so."

Daniel informs him that it is in the Monk's refectory and he offers to go there with John.

Henry has had another fitful night, but in the light of morning some colour is discernable in his cheeks. He has taken his physic of herbs and is now drinking the broth. We all talk encouragingly to him and he smiles weakly before returning to his sleep. I go for a long walk and deliver a letter to Eliza, asking if we can meet again on Sunday. When I return Henry is awake and talking to Elizabeth. She is weeping, but they are tears of relief. When he sees me Henry stops talking and holds out his hand to me. I take it. There is no strength in it, but I am deeply grateful to have hold of it.

"Where did you find me?" Henry asks.

"On my doorstep," I tell him.

He smiles and closes his eyes again. By all the saints, talking with Henry fills me with great emotion. Elizabeth prays and strokes his hand while he sleeps. The poor woman must be exhausted, but she does not cease her constant thanks to God. I have never heard such wondrous prayers being offered.

In the evening I return to the bedroom. Elizabeth, Katherine and Daniel are with Henry and he recognises me.

"I need some paper and a pen," he says.

"Oh, no, you don't," Elizabeth reproves him. "You will not be working until I am certain of your recovery." Henry sighs.

"Nahum, I have been dreaming in G minor. It is the key of the final scene." I smile at him. With music in his dreams I know that Henry has returned to us.

The weather and the news this morning are both delightful. Dr. Stoller says that Henry has been through the worst. The yellow lumps on his neck and groin are receding and Elizabeth can take him home tomorrow. Thomas Purcell takes Elizabeth back to Tothill Street to make preparations and I am grateful to be alone with Henry. He again asks for some paper and a pen.

"I promise not to write," he tells me. "But Daniel is coming and I want him to notate something for me. I will sleep now. You do not have to worry about me."

I kiss him on the forehead, leave my writing utensils for him and go the landlord's office to pay my rent. I call in at the Half Moon tavern for dinner and Thomas Killigrew is there. He tells me that he had a visit from the Duchess de Mazarin.

"Did you know that she is on the scrounge for costumes for your opera? Well, this is fine, but after I had agreed to give her everything she asked for, she told me that I was an old rogue and entirely miserly. Can you believe it? She wants me to give her people to dress the performers and acres of scenery in addition to costumes. She said that it was for the honour of England. I love her. I had to agree to everything."

I laugh at the antics of the Duchess. Killigrew asks me to visit him soon to discuss 'the usurper'.

"This time it is a copy I have sent to the Chamberlain's office," he says. I smile at him and return home.

Henry is fast asleep. The paper is unused and Daniel is not in the house. I want to work on Ovid's translation, but I am too distracted to write. Henry calls to me and he asks me to listen to him. His voice is quiet and slightly broken, but there is a recognisable tune in his humming. Gradually he gains more confidence. I swear to you that it is the saddest melody you will ever hear.

"I want you to write some words, Nahum. Can you remember the tune?"

I join him in humming it.

"It is very sad," I tell him.

"It is a lament, Dido's final lament. Think of Eliza and give me some words."

I am on the verge of tears, but as I take in Henry's sounds, Da dum de dee, Da dum de dee, I convert them to 'remember me, remember me'. These were the words Buttons offered as a toast when I left for Ireland. 'Remember me and forget my fate'. But Dido's fate is not to be forgotten. We must remember her love and forget that she must die on account of it. I think of Eliza as Henry suggested. I imagine myself on my deathbed, talking to her, apologising for the trouble I have caused. These are the words that come to me and form around the melody.

When I am laid, am laid in earth,
May my wrongs create
No trouble, no trouble in thy breast;
Remember me, remember me, but ah! forget my fate.
Remember me, but ah! forget my fate.

I speak it and Henry sings it, two men performing a tender, heartfelt duet for a woman to sing. There is no way of describing the beauty of this lament. It goes down to the very bottom of life and touches everything. When I am in my bed I lie awake, filled with its resonance.

Chapter Twenty-three

Elizabeth, Thomas and Daniel arrive before I can spend time with my composer. The morning is taken up with arrangements for moving him. He is not strong enough to walk down the stairs so Daniel and I make a chair with our hands and carry him between us. When he is in the carriage he tells me that the words to Dido's lament are majestic. I promise to visit him soon and with that the Purcell family return home. I feel lost and sad without Henry.

Ellen and I convert the sickroom back into my bedroom and then she hands me two letters. From the seal I can tell that one is from the Stationers' Company school. I run down and tell her that we are invited to visit the school on Tuesday. Ellen rubs her cheeks and straightens her cap and apron as though the school governors are expected in the kitchen at any minute.

"He has been reading all week," she says proudly, holding Harry close to her.

"But I can't spell yet," Harry complains.

"You are doing well enough," I tell him. "They are not going to test you, I am sure of that. Would you like to read to me this afternoon?"

"Yes. Have you written a new ending for the story?"

Ellen clips him, but I laugh. I promise to do it before the day is out.

The second letter is from Anna.

Dear Nahum,

I wish that I could speak with you about the things I have to tell. Even the faint possibility of doing so is impossible at present. You will not be surprised to learn that Mr. Purcell's visit here last Saturday gave Frances and I a considerable

shock, but unfortunately there is worse news to tell.

When my mother learned that Frances refused to give up her feelings for Mr. Purcell, she informed her that she had already found a suitor for her. Frances was furious and vowed that on the issue of marriage she would only follow her heart. My mother spoke sternly to her and demanded that she be mindful of her duty. They fought with each other until Frances collapsed. Frances was taken to bed and she has stayed there ever since. She has no condition that medical prognosis can determine, but she refuses to talk, even to me, and she refuses to eat. Her health is now a serious concern for us. My mother believes that Frances is being wilful and controlling and this only adds to her anger.

For you to understand the decision my mother has taken I must tell you a little of what I have learned recently. My mother manages two businesses. 'The Spaniard' and a company that imports merchandise from Spain. My father employed a Spaniard, Alfonso Balbas, to travel to Spain to purchase the goods. He is a resident of London. After my father's death, this man asked for my mother's hand in marriage. I learned this from Lina, my mother's maid. When my mother refused him, he declared that he would only continue in her employment if she made him a partner in the business. My mother accepted his demands and agreed to share the profits with him. Senor Balbas is now unhappy with his share of the business and he is threatening to set up in competition with my mother unless she consents to a marriage between Frances and his son, Diego. There is nothing wrong with Diego, he is a fine, handsome man, but he is completely the wrong kind of husband for Frances. My mother refuses to accept this and she cannot believe that Frances is prepared to express her distress in such a manner.

I try desperately to engage with Frances, but she refuses all my entreaties to come out of her melancholy. This business has shaken me and I can no longer deal with the ways of this household alone. I know that my sister will not give up her principles and before long her death will be the sad conclusion to this miserably unhappy tale.

Please do not inform Mr. Purcell of these events at present. There is nothing he can do and I would not have him suffer further on account of us. There is no possibility now of Frances and I being involved with the opera. I wish I could write how deeply this affects me.

For the time being, I am banned from engaging in any form of communication with either you or Mr. Purcell, but without your support I cannot continue. Please write to me and tell me everything. You must send it to the house of my friend, Emily Perritt, 4 Old Swan Lane.

Please encourage Mr. Purcell to keep a place in his heart for Frances. He must have been in great distress to entertain the thought of entering the house without permission. I fervently hope that some day soon I will have better news to share with you. I pray that Frances and Henry will, one day, enjoy the love that they share for each other. Every hour I tell myself that nothing is impossible.

Yours truly,
Anna Pieters

Good Lord, is it conceivable that a letter could contain worse news? I cannot possibly inform Henry of these developments. I write to Anna, explaining everything that has occurred since Henry's unfortunate visit. When I return from the Penny Post Office, Harry is waiting for me. We settle in my study and I listen to his reading. I can hardly believe his extraordinary development. After this I sit in my study to write about the events that follow Jack's triumph over the giant.

Before long Jack forgot about the terrors of his flight down the beanstalk. Each day he listened to the wonderful music that the harp played for him. He had never imagined that there was such a quantity of music in the world. Jack was very happy, but he soon yearned to make his own music. One day he asked his mother if he could be taught how to play. She said that he could, but they would only find a music teacher in the city. Jack asked her to tell him about the city and when he had heard all that she told him Jack was convinced that the city was where he wanted to be. His mother promised to enquire how they might do this.

One afternoon, while his mother was away making preparations for their departure, the strange little man who gave Jack the beans appeared in the garden. Before Jack could tell him about his adventures, the little man spoke.

"Well done, Jack, you have shown yourself to be a brave young man in your dealings with the giant and a clever young man in your thoughts about your future. You shall now reap the benefit of your talents. But, before you begin the

next stage of your life, I must tell you about your father.

"Before you were born, your father worked for a powerful and wealthy baron. He was always generous in his dealings with people, but the baron and his wife were greedy beyond words. They insisted that your father carry out cruel deeds to further increase their wealth. When he refused to do their bidding, the baron, in his fury, had your father killed. Your mother, who was carrying you inside her, escaped from the baron's men just as they were arriving to rob your family of their house and land. I witnessed these terrible deeds, but I could do nothing to stop them. I travelled to lands far and wide, looking for someone who might help me. Eventually, I found a wizard who agreed that the wicked baron should be punished for his misdeeds. He cast a spell upon the baron and his wife. This spell banished them, together with their property and their lands, to a place of enchantment that they had to inhabit alone. The baron and his castle were increased in size to giant proportions, while his wife, unchanged in size, was given the task of feeding her husband's terrible appetite. Once the wizard had completed his spell he gave me the magic beans that would give you access to the giant's magical realm. He instructed me to give them to you when you were ready to use them. I watched you carefully over many years and I chose my time carefully."

When his story was complete, the strange little man went on his way. Jack's mother returned home soon afterwards and Jack could not wait to tell her what had occurred. He started to tell her who the giant was, but his mother informed him that she too had heard the news from the man who had given him the beans. Jack kissed his mother and then fell into her arms, sobbing great tears of grief for his father. They sat together in the garden and Jack's mother told him how brave and generous his father had been and the difficult times they had experienced in the horrid baron's employment. After she had finished her tale, Jack's mother instructed him to pack his belongings, for in the morning they were to depart for the city. Jack woke to a great rumbling in the garden. He ran to his bedroom window and there he saw a splendid carriage harnessed to two magnificent horses. Jack and his mother locked the house for the last time and stepped into the carriage. With the hen on his lap and the harp by his side, Jack looked back on the land of his youth and remembered how happy his childhood had been.

"I have been to the Abbey and listened to your psalms," I tell Henry when I arrive in his bedroom. Henry is drumming on a table and he fills the room with his presence.

"I need pen and paper, Nahum, there is music in me that I must write down. I will become ill again if I cannot notate it. I can hear the ending of the opera where the chorus respond to Dido's grief. Please come to me tomorrow with pen and paper."

"I will, I promise. How it is that you can hear music?"

"I have no idea. Some times my senses are stronger than at other times. It is not always benign. Last Saturday, before I went to the Spaniard, a strange power was upon me. I was outside of myself, fighting myself and out of control. How can a mind conspire against itself in this manner? Afterwards, as I walked through St. James's Park, I could hear the sounds of the trees as they soaked up the rain."

"Were you completely lost to yourself then?"

"Completely. I did not wake from this state until I was lying in your bed. I realised that death was invading me and I shuddered and trembled in fright, but I could do nothing to stop it. I did not want to return to the terrible condition of my loss. When I felt my body and soul move asunder I accepted it. Death was a welcome guest and I was no more. Later I was aware of music resonating in me and I understood that my senses were moving again, that death had passed me by. Music of great beauty was singing me back to life. This was Dido's Lament, but now there is great music in me again and I must write down before it leaves me."

God preserve this man forever. He has a direct connection with the music of heaven. We talk about Frances and I give him the address he can send his letters to. The rest of Anna's news I do not mention and I pray that he cannot read my thoughts. We discuss a letter of apology to Amy that I will write for him and then Elizabeth enters to announce

that her brother-in-law, Thomas and the Dean of the Abbey have come to visit. She asks me to stay, but I feel my presence is an intrusion and I return home.

Harry is waiting for me at the door and he greets me with an expectant look. I tell him that I know what is on his mind and say that I am going to read the new ending to the story just as soon as I have written the words that are presently in my head. Harry nods and waits for me on the stairs while I write words for the chorus to sing.

Great minds against themselves conspire
And shun the cure they most desire.

I read Jack's story to Harry with great theatricality and he listens intently.

"Read it to me again, please," he cries. "I love hearing about my father."

"Is this how you see him, Harry?"

"Yes. I am Jack and you are the funny little man with the beans."

I laugh. I love Harry. I give him the text and ask him to read it before he has committed my reading to memory. He reads it perfectly and I tell him that he is definitely ready for school.

When I am alone I go through *The Art of Love*, searching for the right section to read for Horace and Mary. The elegies for the man's voice displease me; they are isolated and will not companion Dido's voice in *Heroides*. Perhaps the dream of putting Ovid's male and female voices together is unrealistic. I take out Ovid's *Amores*, which is the predecessor to *The Art of Love*. I see a page with a sheet of paper with the name "Aeneas" in my handwriting on it. I read the page.

My capricious heart's a cockpit for conflicting emotions,
Love versus hate – but love, I think, will win.
I'll hate if I can. If not, I'll play the reluctant lover:
No ox loves the yoke – he's just stuck with what he hates.
A fugitive from your vices, I'm lured back by your beauty:
Your morals turn me off, your body on.
So I can live neither with nor without you, I don't seem

To know my own mind. I wish you were
Either less beautiful or more faithful: such a good figure
Does not go with your bad ways.
The facts demand censure, the face begs for love – and gets it,
Eclipsing (to my cost) its owner's crimes.
By the bed we shared, by all those gods who so often
Let you take their names in vain,
By your face, that image for me of high divinity,
By those eyes which captivated mine,
Spare me! And mine you'll always remain, whatever your nature;
Just choose – would you rather I loved
Freely or by constraint? Let me spread sail, cruise with a following
Breeze – make me want what I cannot resist!

Ovid is addressing his words to his mysterious and beautiful mistress, Corinna. It suits me perfectly and I translate it without delay. I imagine that I have written it to Eliza. She has not replied to my request to see her at the Pied Bull, but I will go there nevertheless. I walk in the fields around Lincoln's Inn before going to Smithfield. I sit in the tavern for an hour, but Eliza does not appear. I can only love with constraint. I return to my study and translate Dido's words to Aeneas from Ovid's *Heroides*.

And so, at fates call, the white swan lets himself
Down in the water-soaked grasses by
The Meander's shoreline to sing his last song;
But I will not hope to move your heart
With my prayer because the god opposes me.
After the loss of all that's mine,
Good name, chastity of both body and soul,
A loss of words is not important.
But I ask again: are you still determined
To abandon me to misery
And permit both your ships and your promises
To sail from this shore on the same wind?

Aeneas, are you still determined to leave
Both your mooring and your solemn pledge
To seek a kingdom in remote Italy,
A place whose shores you have never seen?…

Chapter Twenty-four

There is a knock at the door and Harry enters. I am writing Henry's letter to Amy and I remind him that there is no lesson today.

"Can you just tell me what wizards do," he says.

"No I can't Harry, but soon you will be able to ask your teacher at school all the questions under the sun. Save them up for him. I would hate to leave him with nothing to do."

Harry nods wisely and makes his departure. I write my letter.

Dear Mrs. Pieters

I apologize a thousand times for my uninvited visit to your house. I am full of repentance and I doubt that my tears of regret will ever cease their flow. With this letter I ask to kneel before you to beg your forgiveness. I shall never intrude into your presence again and may I perish if I neglect this promise. I assure you that my foolish behaviour was an uncharacteristic act brought about by an extreme circumstance. I will never allow myself to lapse into such condition again, for as long as I live.

I pray that you will sometime learn that your reckoning of me is unjust and that I do not deserve the contempt in which you hold me. I care about your opinion and to suggest that I am poorly endowed with grace leaves my banished soul with nothing to sustain it. That I have offended you by my love for Frances leaves me encumbered with despair, but this despair will be nothing compared to my misery should I suspect that you apportion Frances with some of the blame. I promise that she is guilty of nothing. With all my heart I believe her to be the choicest and fairest of women and I would rather die than cause her any distress.

I would gladly pay all the riches in the world to have my feelings for Frances meet with your approval, but as you so clearly observe, I have no such riches.

I have only love to offer and this is not a commodity I can take to the market place.

Should such time arise when you might invite me once again into your house I will welcome this with all my heart. To be lost to you and your daughters forever will leave me in the greatest sorrow and despair.

Yours most sincerely,
Henry Purcell

I imagined the letter as a brief apology, but it is more a plea for justice. I am not confident that it will please Henry. I write a letter to Josias, who must be furious about our lack of communication with him, and pretend that the meeting he suggested was for this coming Saturday, rather than the previous one. I tell him that we cannot attend the meeting this week and promise that Henry and I will be with him on the Saturday after next. I take my letters, my words for the chorus and the writing materials to Henry. He enjoys both letters, claiming that he has no idea how I can use such sweet words to Amy when I vilified her so adamantly. Henry reads the words of the chorus.

Great minds against themselves conspire
And shun the cure they most desire.

He closes his eyes, sings the words to a gentle melody and says that he loves them. Then he says that we must devise some recitative for Dido to sing before her lament. He sings the chorus lines I have just given him and follows it with Dido's lament.

"What can she say between these two moments?" he asks. "Think of her in the palace, sitting on the stairs. Belinda is by her side and she has Aeneas's sword in her hand."

"Like you she will know if death is about to invade her and she will also regard it as a welcome guest."
"Write this," Henry demands. He sounds out some chords and I begin.

Thy hand Belinda, darkness shades me,
On thy bosom let me rest,
More I would, but death invades me.
Death is now a welcome guest.

Elizabeth enters the room and startles us. She is carrying Henry's dinner.

"Henry, you should not be working. You must stop and eat now."

She turns to me. "We love you, Nahum, but you must not support Henry in his ambition to work continuously."

I apologize to Elizabeth and promise to leave as soon as Henry has eaten. She returns downstairs and I repeat my words to Henry, very quietly, while he eats and hums at the same time. It is indeed a strange thing to take sustenance and compose tragedy simultaneously. I am about to leave when Elizabeth announces the arrival of the Duchess de Mazarin. I go to the drawing room to greet her and Henry dresses and arrives shortly after. She makes more fuss of him than a mother would her own child and then launches into her preoccupations with the opera.

"Killigrew was a darling about lending his costumes, but Betterton was more reticent. He claims to have precious little for himself. When I railed at him for being miserly he offered to lend us Peter Beardsley, his scene painter. We can have him for the time it takes to paint two scenes and no more."

"It was Beardsley who painted the sets for *Brutus of Alba*," I tell her. "He is a delightful man and he will depict our scenes beautifully."

"Excellent," she exclaims. "Now, about the costumes. Finding gowns for the leading ladies is easy, but I must know if the remainder of the cast are wearing antique or present day costumes. The present day option is by far the easiest."

"Then let us settle on this," Henry says, looking at me in case I should hold a different view. "My Uncle Thomas is the Master of the Robes at Somerset House. I am sure that he will assist you."

"Excellent, what a lovely man. One can never have too many gowns. So, I need to have the measurements of the young ladies who are singing the lead roles. They are sisters, I understand."

Henry and I look at each other and neither of us says a word.

"Well my dears, come along, if anything is wrong I had better know of it."

"You must promise not to mention this to another living soul," I entreat her.

"Oh, intrigue. How delightful. I love it already. I assure you, gentlemen, I can be the mother of discretion when I have to be."

Henry tells her about his love for Frances and describes Amy's reaction when she heard the news. He mentions his visit to the Pieters's house and explains about the magistrate.

"Good Lord, you poor boy. That's city folk for you. So, what do we do now? Josias is already frantic about finding the dancers, he will not welcome this added trial."

Henry waves his hand to stop her.

"My cousin Elizabeth will sing Dido and my sister Katherine will sing Belinda."

"Josias will never have it," I tell him. "He will insist upon using his own pupils."

"I will rehearse Elizabeth and Katherine next week. By the time we see Josias it will be too late for him to change the arrangements." I wince.

"Are the two young ladies of a similar age to the pupils?" the Duchess asks.

Henry says they are.

"Then the audience will never know the difference. If they are the best, then they should sing. I will support you, Henry. Now, who is to sing Aeneas?"

"John Gostling," Henry informs her. "He is a big man, but you cannot measure him at present for he lives in Canterbury and besides, I have not yet asked him."

"You are a genius," the Duchess declares, "he is a most excellent choice. Have no fear I know how to dress him. Men are always easy. I will dress him as a Trojan general. Now what about your sister, is she here?"

Henry asks me to go to the morning room and ask Katherine to join us. She does so and Henry introduces her.

"Turn around, my dear. Good, you are beautiful. You are dark and you are a perfectly normal shape and size. You will make an ideal sister for the queen."

"Lady-in-waiting," I tell her. "We have changed her character. She is to be Belinda, the queen's lady-in-waiting."

"Belinda," the Duchess repeats the name slowly. "What a lovely name. Is your cousin, Elizabeth, of a similar build?" she asks Katherine.

"No, she is a little taller than I."

Katherine looks at Henry for some explanation of these exchanges, but he says nothing.

"Is Elizabeth getting married?" she asks.

"No, Katherine, I want you to be the lady-in-waiting in the opera and I want Elizabeth to be the queen. It was my intention to talk to you about it earlier."

"We are going to sing in the opera?" Henry nods his head. "Really? And are we to dress in beautiful gowns and sing the leading roles?"

"Yes, and spend many long hours rehearsing," Henry instructs her.

"Can I go and tell Elizabeth?" she asks. Henry says she may if their mother will agree and Katherine flies from the room to talk to her.

"I will have my dressmaker visit you sometime this week," the Duchess calls after her. "Good, so now we know about Dido and Belinda. Who are the other women?"

Henry informs her that he must now rest and he invites the Duchess to remain and discuss the roles with me. As he is leaving he reminds us that there is a prologue.

"Oh, don't worry. You told me about the pastoral prologue," the Duchess says. "There will be nymphs, shepherdesses and cupids a plenty."

Henry laughs and leaves me to discuss the cast and what they will wear. It fills me with apprehension.

The Duchess is keen to return to her apartments, so we take her carriage to St. James's Palace, a journey of a few minutes. Once inside, we travel along endless corridors and up many flights of stairs to her apartment. The tall ceilings are very impressive, but the rooms do not have the charm of her house in Paradise Row. Her private paintings are much better than the solemn portraits that look out from these walls and the windows here give very little light. The whole is in need of some

refurbishment. The Duchess orders refreshments and asks me to tell her about Henry. I try to look innocent, but I have no confidence that innocence will work with the Duchess, so I tell her everything, including the terrible contents of Anna's letter.

"What is the name of our Spanish gentleman?" she asks.

"Alfonso Balbas is the father and Diego the son."

The Duchess makes a note.

"Good, I will make enquiries about him. Now, let us return to our opera. We will start with Dido. I want you to tell me everything about her. Her history, her character, her qualities, everything you know. I must get her exactly right."

It is not easy explaining the qualities of one powerful woman to another powerful woman.

"Dido is complex," I begin falteringly. "In Virgil she is the queen of Carthage, but Dido is also the name the Carthaginians use for Aphrodite, the Goddess of love and beauty. In Virgil she is a Phoenician princess from Tyre who was married to Sychaeus, the greatest landowner of all the Phoenicians. She loved him ardently, but her brother, Pygmalion, being a monster of unmatched wickedness and blind with lust for gold, murdered him for his riches. Dido, in fear and horror, fled her homeland and sought refuge in Libya. Here she founded Carthage, making it a most powerful and beautiful city. She is a formidable woman. When Aeneas spurns Dido, Virgil makes her into a vengeful queen, but Henry and I would have her as a great and generous soul who has no thought for revenge."

"Excellent, I love her. Is there anything I should know about Belinda?"

"She is remarkable for the love and attention she bestows upon the queen."

"Good, then she is easy. Who is next?"

"The sorceress and the witches."

"We have a sorceress and witches? How very chilling. Tell me about them." I think carefully about this and then tell her that we modelled the witches on Frances's mother. The Duchess laughs uproariously and asks

who the sorceress is modelled on.

"No one. I have no real idea about the sorceress. She is just the sorceress."

"Oh! This will never do. I cannot dress someone who is without qualities. Is she a cave dweller or a Duchess? I must know something."

"She is neither. Perhaps you might suggest something to give her definition."

"Come," she declares, "we will go to the library. Mr. Somers is always the man to ask when one is bothered by such matters."

We travel down stairs and along corridors until we come to the library. The Duchess introduces me to Mr. Somers, the Librarian.

"We have a problem," the Duchess tells him. "We have a Carthaginian sorceress in our opera, but we know nothing about her circumstances. We must devise a costume for her and we are hoping that you might assist us." Mr. Somers wears a bemused look, scratches his head and repeats 'sorceress' a number of times.

"Does she have a significant presence in the opera?" he asks.

"Absolutely," the Duchess replies, "she should be like the queen of the night."

"Well, there you have it," Mr. Somers declares. "You should dress her as Persephone, the Queen of the Underworld."

"Excellent," the Duchess cries. "You are always so clever and helpful. Thank you."

The Duchess dances out of the library and I follow after her. I cannot believe her speed in everything.

"We now have two queens and no cave dwellers," she tells me. "This can only be a good thing."

As we pass a footman she asks him the time.

"It is after four, your Grace, and probably nearer five."

"Goodness. Now, I must get busy. The King arrives on Saturday and there is much to do. Are you happy with the sorceress as Persephone?" she asks.

"Perfectly," I reply.

"Excellent, one can never have too many queens," and with this she

breezes off down the corridor, leaving me to ask the footman for the directions to get out.

Dusk is settling in and a half moon is glimmering in the sky. I walk along slowly, musing about the sorceress as Persephone. The Duchess's decision may have been swift, but it has a delightful resonance for me. Dido is Aphrodite the queen of life, and the sorceress is Persephone the queen of death. In the ancient tale of Aphrodite, she places her consort, Adonis, in the care of Persephone the Goddess of the Underworld. Persephone falls in love with him and refuses to give him back. When the Goddess of Love descends to the realm of Death to beg for his return, Persephone refuses her and because their dispute cannot be resolved, Zeus decrees that Adonis must spend half the year with each of them.

I enter the house and hear Ellen shouting at Harry. He is in a very argumentative mood. I visit them in the kitchen. Ellen is cutting Harry's hair.

"Oh, Nahum, please tell this boy that he must agree to be made presentable."

"You have scrubbed my ears off and now you are cutting all my hair off."

"They are going to test you, Harry, and you have to look your best."

"Your mother is right," I tell him. "You should agree to look like a schoolboy. But Ellen, schoolboys are allowed to have some hair. Please do not fret so; I am sure they are not going to test him. We are just going to make the arrangements for him to attend the school, that's all."

"Are you sure? Who ever heard of a school accepting a boy without taking a test?"

"Ellen, the purpose of our visit is to meet the headmaster and to see the school."

Ellen sighs, places the scissors on the table and removes the towel from Harry's shoulders. Harry quickly disappears in case his mother should change her mind. Ellen complains that she has not been made for such excitement and I tell her that she is the finest mother in the entire city. She sighs, sweeps up the hair from the floor and invites me to eat some of her vegetable soup.

Chapter Twenty-five

'One can never have too many queens'. I heard the Duchess's words in my sleep. Venus and Juno were also there. In the work of Virgil and Marlowe, Venus instructs her son cupid to touch Dido with his arrow and Juno, the wife of Jove, prepares the potion that fires the royal couple's passion. In my dream Venus and Juno were dancing a light-hearted celebration to honour love and the inspiration that it brings. If the theme of the prologue were equally gay it would marry with Henry's sprightly dance tunes and provide a perfect counterpoint to the tragedy.

Ellen is in the kitchen arranging pans, plates and cutlery for no reason other than to placate her nervousness. Under her apron she wears a new dress and her hair is neatly tied at the back. She says that we must leave soon and I nod my head and pick at some bread. Harry and I are both excited and we are noisy with chatter as we walk along to the school. Ellen lags behind. As we enter Bolt Court her face is ashen. At the door she puffs and pulls Harry's cap off. The doorman escorts us to the headmaster's office where Mr. Percy Somers, a tall, thin man with an unusually bright smile, takes charge of us and tells us about the school.

"So, young man, let us talk about you. What might your ambition be?"

"I don't know what you mean, sir."

"Why do you want to study? Do you have any thoughts about your future?"

"I would like to meet with gentlemen and earn plenty of money, sir."

"Well that is a start," Mr. Somers tells him. "Now, if you would all like to come with me, I will show you the classrooms. There are four separate

rooms and different year groups are accommodated and taught in each. They are in need of decoration, but they will be jollier when the boys have returned. Harry is to be in the first class where boys of eight and nine study. Mr. Partridge will be his form teacher. He is firm but fair. Do you think that you will like it, Harry?"

"Not yet, sir. I have never been with so many boys before. Are they like me? I mean will they be my friends? Can we talk to each other?"

"You will have plenty of time to enjoy their company," he laughs. "Now, we must determine what you know." He turns to Ellen and I. "If you would like to wait in my office we will carry out a short test in the classroom."

Ellen looks at me in horror and we make our way to his office.

"Mr. Tate, you may be a great playwright, but you know nothing about schools. I told you they would test him. What will we do?"

"We will wait patiently," I tell her, but as it is, we both wait nervously.

After a quarter of an hour, Mr. Somers enters, his broad smile still upon his face. He has his arm around Harry's shoulders and he asks him to sit next to Ellen.

"Well, I must say that Harry reads as well as any boy his age, but he knows very little about arithmetic."

Ellen's fingers dig into my leg so violently that I almost shout out. Somers continues.

"When I asked him how much change I should have if I gave a man six pence for something that cost four pence he knew that I should receive two pence change, but when I asked him to subtract twenty-four from fifty-seven he said that he had never had fifty-seven of anything."

Mr. Somers bursts out laughing and I join him. Ellen is furious and Harry smiles proudly.

"He will be fine, Mrs. Fairweather, just fine. You have taught him to read well and we can quickly get him started on his sums. All you need to do is sign the agreement and we will see Harry on the thirteenth of September at eight o'clock."

"That's my birthday!" Harry exclaims.

"Congratulations," Mr. Somers declares, "I wish you fifty-seven of something."

Ellen asks me to sign the agreement and I feel proud to do so. We walk back along The Strand, arm-in-arm, as happy as could be. When we are back in the kitchen Ellen tells me that this is like a dream to her. She cannot believe that it is possible.

"Would you write a letter of thanks to Horace Heveningham for me?" she asks. There are tears in her eyes and I offer her my handkerchief.

"Oh, don't look at me," she says. "I am just too happy, that's all."

I have written a libretto for the prologue about the spring-like qualities of the first stirrings of romance. The gods are my protagonists and it illustrates how beauty affects gods and mortals alike. Both are powerless in the face of deep attraction. I have Phoebus and Venus as my immortal lovers.

From Aurora's Spicy bed,
Phoebus rears his Sacred Head.

The prologue opens with Phoebus riding in his chariot over the sea, calling the Nereids and Tritons to rise up and offer him their devotion. Venus then appears before Phoebus and her lustre half eclipses the very light that he gives to the world. He reacts to her beauty with bewilderment and desire.

Phoebus: *Ten thousand thousand harms,*
From such prevailing charms,
To gods and men must instantly ensue.
Chorus: *And if the deities above,*
Are victims of the power of love,
What must wretched mortals do?
Venus: *Fear not Phoebus, fear not me,*
A harmless Deity.
These are all my guards ye view.
What can these blind archers do?
Phoebus: *Blind they are, but strike the heart.*

Venus: *What Phoebus says is always true.*
They wound indeed, but 'tis a pleasant smart.

Phoebus is a hot-headed fellow and he cannot resist courting the sovereign queen of beauty. I have not yet written the second scene, but in it I will have Spring appear to eulogize love and her nymphs will dance to celebrate the courtship of the gods. Shepherds and shepherdesses will also join the celebrations.

I decide to visit Buttons. I walk through Lincoln's Inn Fields, down Cursitors Alley, into Magpie Yard and knock on his door. Buttons appears in his nightshirt.

"Dress yourself and come with me for some wine," I bid him.

"You interrupt a man at his studies to go off drinking?" He declares.

"Surely you have worked enough already."

"Surely not. Hardly a minute has passed since I finished my morning prayers."

"Buttons, the night will be upon us within the hour."

"Then I shall be dressed within the hour."

He runs up the stairs, leaving the door open, and returns fully dressed quicker than it would have taken me to find my stockings. We go to the Red Hart just off Fetter Lane. Unusually for me, I steal much of the conversation.

"If you go on like this," he tells me, "I shall have said nothing though I have been with you for hours. I pray that you will soon lead a simple life."

"Do you pray, Buttons?"

"Only that I might become a better fool."

"There are none better than you."

"Yes, every poet is a fool: by demonstration Ned can show it: happy, could Ned's inverted rule prove every fool a poet."

"You are witty and wise, my Buttons."

"Not me, these words are from Matthew Prior. As for being wise, there are none who would agree with you. A good deal of wit I may have, but in judgment I am sorely lacking. I think we must follow Locke in this."

"And what does Locke say?"

"Oh Locke. He would have wisdom a thing that is quite contrary to the quickness and variety of wit. For him, wisdom does not strike so lively on the fancy and make such pleasant pictures and agreeable visions, but it is better for separating one thing from another. If wisdom is what you want then you must look for it in a place where Buttons does not reside."

I love him wherever he resides and we drink and talk the whole evening through.

"Reading or spelling?" Harry asks as he enters the study for his morning lesson.

"Writing," I tell him. "You are going to be my assistant and make copies for me."

"Am I to be paid?"

I laugh at his cheekiness and tell him that I must first determine how useful he is. I give him the pages of my prologue and ask him to copy them. While he works at this I prepare a comparative list of singers for both the prologue and the opera. Ellen is surprised that Harry is working, but she agrees that he can remain with me 'til dinnertime. I inspect his writing and while the lines slant down as they approach the right of the page, the words are well formed and I am impressed by his effort. I give him three pennies and agree that he can help me again when I need it. It's a happy pair of writers who go to the White Horse for dinner.

In Tothill Street I knock on Henry's door and Katherine informs me that he is at the Palace rehearsing the King's Welcome Ode with John Blow. His mother is very displeased with him. Katherine introduces me to her cousin, Elizabeth. They are on their way to the Palace to meet the Duchess and her dressmaker. They are excited and they ask me if they are suitably dressed.

"Let me see you side by side," I tell them. "You are dressed beautifully, but I also want to imagine you as Dido and Belinda."

They stand together self-consciously and make funny faces and gestures with their hands. I ask them to pose as the queen and her lady-in-waiting and they strike a formal stance that is equally comical. They ask me to tell them about the opera and I ask them to sing something for me. They sing one of Henry's anthems.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
And to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
World without end.
Amen.

They have glorious voices and I am excited that rehearsals are to start on Thursday. Katherine asks if I will give them the words before then because Henry hates it if they read and sing at the same time. I agree to do so and ask them to take a copy of my prologue to the Duchess. I leave a second copy for Henry and we walk along to the Palace together. I had no idea how we might progress without Anna and Frances, but Katherine and Elizabeth make an impressive duo. I sing their plaintive anthem in the crowded streets and return home to consider Ovid's advice to the men Rome.

Nothing works on a mood like tactful tolerance: harshness
Provokes hatred, makes nasty rows.
We detest the hawk and the wolf, those natural hunters,
Always preying on timid flocks;
But the gentle swallow goes safe from man's snares, we fashion
Little turreted houses for doves.

I have been translating since the sun was up and I continue with it while Harry copies out my list of scenes. Ellen was displeased that I paid Harry for his work and told me that as long as he has a roof over his head, food in his belly and clothes on his back, he needs nothing more. She bids us to have dinner at noon and hands me a letter.

Dear Nahum,

I apologize for not replying to your letter. I have been working day and night and this is my only excuse. Sir George Etheridge could not be found so we are trying to write the play ourselves. I was upset that Killigrew would not finance our play and I think you are right about the difficulties of making changes. So far we have only succeeded in getting ourselves into a mess.

We are only six and we have to change roles continuously to perform twelve characters. John Petty has made a big chart to show when we must enter and exit, but it is impossible to achieve. All the characters are important and we cannot do without them. I wish you would come and join us, or at least visit us once to give us your advice. Mr. Killigrew is too busy. I am sure that you are also busy, but if you have time on Saturday morning, please come to the theatre.

Yours truly,

Eliza

PS If you would rather meet at the Pied Bull on Sunday, I will meet you. Write to me.

I want to go to her this minute. I hold the letter close to me, as though it contains my heart. How is this possible? I have tried to forget her perfections and conjure her defects, but my heart still leaps at the slightest sign from her. I will never snap the heartstrings that connect me with her. I write, agreeing to see her on Sunday.

Chapter Twenty-six

Without intending to satisfy Buttons' wishes, I now lead a simple life. I translate Ovid from morning 'til night. Ellen has gone with Harry to visit her sister and will not return before Monday. I want to go to the Theatre Royal to help Eliza rehearse, but in truth I only want Eliza to myself. The thought of Horace and Mary's literary evening excites me like the thought of food excites a starving man.

I avoid Drury Lane on my way to Covent Garden. More than twenty guests are gathered in the Heveningham's library. Buttons is not yet among them, but Belinda Perryman is talking to John and Rosemary Southern. Belinda is pregnant and the very picture of health and happiness. I congratulate her on her pregnancy and she pats her stomach.

"Number three," she says proudly.

Mary calls for our attention and asks us to be seated. Buttons enters while she is talking about the Journal that is to feature our translations. He is nothing but quiet and discrete in his movements, but he is wearing a brightly coloured coat and no one can resist looking at him. Mary welcomes him with a smile, completes her introduction and starts the first reading. She has translated Lecretius.

But all is vanity, since from the very fountain of enchantment
rises a drop of bitterness to torment even the flowers.

Horace reads his translation of Catullus.

None could ever say that she,
Lesbia, was not loved by me.
Never in all the world round
Was there faith so true as mine.

Thomas Flatman reads Horace.

Though he be fairer than a star;
Though lighter than the bark of any tree,
Rough Adria was angrier, far;
Yet I wish to love and live and die with thee.

Thomas Babbington reads Virgil.

Within our orchard's walls I saw thee – for I was there to point
The way – a little maid gathering dewy apples with my mother!

I start with Ovid's *Amores*.

Just choose – would you rather I loved
Freely or by constraint? Let me spread sail, cruise with a following
Breeze – make me want what I can't resist!

and finish with the *Heroides*.

And so, at fate's call, the white swan lets himself
Down in the water-soaked grasses by
The meander's shoreline to sing his last song;

John Potter finishes the readings with a poem by Petronius Arbiter.

But thus, thus, keeping endless Holiday
Let us together closely lie, and kiss,
There is no labour, nor no shame in this;
This hath pleased; doth please, and long will please;
Never can this decay, but is beginning ever.

It is wonderful entertainment and the beautiful silences that follow each reading are proof of the great poetry here. I am disappointed that Belinda has to leave so soon, but had she stayed I would probably have told her about giving her name to one of my leading ladies and this would have embarrassed her. My attraction to her is innocent, but it breeds a desire to receive some sign of affection from her.

Most of the guests I know well and Mary introduces me to those I

don't know. She is an excellent host. We all talk noisily and enjoy the fine wine and delicious pastries. Buttons is in fine form and I can hear him from the other side of the library. He is with Robert Frobisher, a painter of wildlife or rather I should say, a colourist with an obsession for birds. I make my way over to them. Robert is speaking in haughty tones.

"I take it that you do you not care for birds," he says.

"Birds!" Buttons declares. "I care for two types of bird, chicken and roast chicken."

I try desperately and unsuccessfully to control my laughter, but our painter is not amused. He moves quickly away from us. I walk with Buttons into the lobby and it is a full ten minutes before I can compose myself sufficiently to return to the library. This little fracas does nothing to dampen the mood of the evening, however, and the delightful conversation continues well into the night. As I take my leave of Horace, he apologizes for not inviting me to the King's Welcome performance.

"There were simply too many guests on the list," he says.

"I composed the invitation and wrote a good many of them," Buttons says, "but I forgot to send myself one."

"I am happy to avoid such courtly gatherings," I say, "but I am sad that I will not hear the Welcome Ode. It is extraordinary that these works are only performed once. I doubt that future king's will have the luxury of a composer like Henry."

"Oh, Henry's music will delight our future countrymen long after we are gone," Buttons declares. "Just as Roman poetry has delighted us tonight. What fortune that Aeneas did not remain in Carthage. We would have had none of this poetry had he not founded Rome."

I love his talent for colliding fact with fiction.

After the morning service at the Abbey, I go to Tothill Street. Katherine informs me that Henry is again at the Palace preparing for tomorrows celebrations. She invites me in and we talk sweetly together, but hardly

a minute passes when I do not think of Eliza. She shadows my thoughts like an accompanying angel.

As I approach the Pied Bull, Eliza is hurrying in my direction. We both reach the entrance at the same time. She gives me a friendly kiss on the cheek, but it is not enough to convince me that she is delighted to see me. I order some wine and a dish of anchovies. Eliza talks enthusiastically about her play, claiming that they have added more farce to the original, but with each new phrase I begin to sense the problems they are experiencing. They could not know that a play disintegrates when you try to unpick it. She believes that I can make it work for fewer actors, but I tell her that I am not a magician. I try to convince her that they should be satisfied with performing extracts, but she continues to press for my assistance. My plea is that the task will consume me, that I cannot have *The Country Wife* in my head alongside *Dido and Aeneas*, but Eliza will not give up. She asks why is the opera so demanding and I explain the difficultly of creating narratives with songs.

"There is little room for words and there is so much for Dido to express."

"Why are you writing about this woman again?" she asks. "She killed herself for love. She is dead. Nothing more needs to be said."

"Dido is not a dead queen, she is a goddess and, like all goddesses, she is redefined anew by succeeding generations."

Eliza shrugs.

"Did she have a family?"

"No. Her husband was murdered and she has no children."

"Aeneas should have given her a child. He would not have left and she would not have killed herself."

Her words remind me of the despair I felt on the Liffey Bridge.

"I am not so certain," I tell her.

We fall silent.

"Does it not interest you that love can be destructive when it is thwarted? Henry has given Dido an extraordinary voice to express her heart. Her lament is the saddest song you will ever hear."

"I have no appetite for laments, Nahum. They speak only of pain."

"Henry's music has the power to soothe grief. With him, Dido will live forever and bring solace to broken hearts."

"Does the opera make Aeneas responsible for Dido's grief?"

"No, the argument for or against is never certain. Aeneas the True, the son of Venus is one of antiquities greatest hero's. He survives the battle when Troy is lost and takes responsibility for its sacred lore and religious rites. He endures every trial imaginable to found Rome, but the glories of his quest are not the subject of our opera. We do not debate him and he has very little to sing."

"He could have taken Dido with him to Rome."

"No, Dido wanted him to remain in Carthage. Aeneas has to weigh the balance between love and responsibility and his distraught state leaves him little room for romance."

Eliza studies me.

"Aeneas is probably best described as innocent. He is a fearless fighter in the field, but when the flower of love blooms, its fragrance and abundant beauty overwhelm him. He is a soldier lost in the presence of beauty and an easy target for destructive forces."

"Why do you always stay with the ancient tales?" I shrug my shoulders.

"You should write about our present times."

"Dido's real name is Elissa, which is not unlike your own. Perhaps I am writing about you. If I set the opera in London today would that please you? I could eulogize your beauty and celebrate the wondrous feelings of love that you inspire."

Eliza looks disgusted with me.

"I could express the gratitude I feel for the intimacies you shared."

"You will do nothing of the sort."

"I will. I will reveal how your bounteous love was beyond my wildest dreams."

"Stop it, Nahum. I do not want you to speak like this."

"Even your eyebrows speak eloquently of feminine beauty." Eliza shakes her head and stands up as if to go. I want to gather her up and hold her close to me. Having caged and abandoned my feelings, they

now rise up in great profusion.

"Eliza, I will never stop loving you."

"Nahum, please desist. I cannot have such words now."

"But these words are part of me. Why should you ban my words?"

"You promised that you would not talk like this. I think you should go now."

I apologize and she berates me for my endless apologies. First she insists that she is going then she insists that I am to go. When I refuse she threatens to go again. I plead with her to stay, but she is resolved and she storms out of the tavern. How I wish that this horrible silence and grating remorse were not familiar to me.

Eliza storms back and places both hands on the table with a resounding thump. Her face is very close to mine.

"You are going to stop this nonsense, Nahum. You are going to be my friend and not upset me. Do you hear?"

I nod my head.

"If you promise not to behave foolishly we can meet again next week. Is that agreed?"

I nod my head again and smile at her.

"You are going to help me, Nahum, you are going to help us make our play a success or my name is not Eliza Ashton. Is that true?"

I nod.

"Good, so now goodbye. Next Sunday. Here at six," and with that Eliza is gone.

Chapter Twenty-seven

I spend the day thinking of Eliza while translating Ovid. I oppose her wishes only in respect of my desire for her, other than that I do her bidding. Ellen and Harry come home at sunset. She goes immediately the White Horse and returns with a cup of ale, two sausage pies and some radishes. I eat as directed and Harry eats as though he has not eaten for a fortnight. He finds his new cousin extremely funny and he relates her actions in an amusing manner. The next morning I tell him that he should write a story about her and I watch as he struggles to describe his thoughts. None of the words he uses verbally come to him when he is writing. I help him construct his sentences and promise that he will improve, but Harry is not happy. At the end of the hour Ellen enters with a letter from Anna.

Dear Mr. Tate,

I write with poor news and I must be brief. Frances has become so unwell that the possibility that she will not survive this ordeal has become very real. My mother and I speak to her constantly, but Frances does not reply. We have no reaction from her that leads us to assume that she is even aware of being addressed. She lives on small amounts of liquid that we force upon her, but the doctor, and indeed everyone else we have spoken to, have no idea what is to be done. I know that my mother's insistence that she marry Diego Balbas is responsible for this, but my mother insists that this could not be the cause. I spend my days telling Frances that she will soon marry Henry. What else can I do?

Please pray that we may reverse her condition.

Yours truly,

Anna Pieters.

What wretched news. I wish Dr. Stoller could visit, but Amy would never accept my recommendation. I write quickly to Anna, giving her Dr. Stoller's details, and try to relax the shock that fills my body as I make my way to the Abbey. I pray that Henry will not read my distraught state, but Henry is taken up with the King's pleasure at his Welcome Ode and he describes the event in full.

"The King said that he loves me dearly and that I should regard the Court as my family. I wondered about his meaning until he added that in future I should stay close to the Court. I knew then that he was referring to my visit to the Pieters' house."

I give a gasp of surprise, but Henry laughs. "Oh fear not, nothing at Court remains the same for long. The King has too much on his mind to worry about me." It is obvious that Henry has recovered from the ague that threatened him so severely and I pray that Frances will do likewise. Henry shows me a letter from Josias.

Dear Henry,

In less than a week I will start rehearsing the prologue dances. I trust that work on the opera is progressing as planned. Lindsey House is ready and I have invited the dance pupils to return to school next Monday. I hope that the prologue is ready. Laurence Webster is visiting you on Wednesday to learn the music. We expect Nahum and yourself at the school on Saturday.

Yours truly,
Josias Priest.

"I have prepared the scenario and I know the characters," I tell him.

"Excellent. We have much to compose today if I am to give Laurence Webster the music tomorrow. Daniel will be here shortly to notate and make copies of the music."

Henry studies my prologue and he is delighted with it.

"We must start rehearsals on Thursday. Elizabeth will sing Venus, Katherine will sing Spring and the Reverend John Gostling will sing Phoebus."

I ask him to tell me about John Gostling.

"John is a minor Canon at Canterbury Cathedral," he says. "His bass

voice has extraordinary depth and resonance and I have composed a number of songs for him. We have great feelings for each other. The Gostlings and the Purcells have been family friends for years. Last year, at my Uncle Thomas's request, he received the Royal summons to sing for the Chapel Royal. The King was greatly impressed with his voice and he invited him to sing the Welcome Ode. During rehearsals last week I asked if he would sing the part of Aeneas and he agreed. The King has engaged him to sing for the Private Music during September, so this should give us enough time to rehearse. He has to be in Canterbury during the first half of October, but he will sing for the King again when the Court returns from Newmarket."

Daniel arrives and we commence the opening scene of the prologue. Henry reads my words and improvises some melodies for Phoebus, the Nereids and Venus to sing. He allocates the first dance to the tritons and the final dance to the Nereids. He does not question the music that comes to him and Daniel notates it the moment he hears it. They check the notation and I write two lines for the chorus to sing.

To Phoebus and Venus our homage we'll pay,
Her charms bless the night, as his beams bless the day.

We walk to the river, purchase herring and bread and eat it on our return while talking about Scene Two, where Spring arrives with her nymphs. Once back, Henry plays a simple melody on the harpsichord to accompany Spring's entrance and calls his notes to Daniel at the same time. Then he plays a dance that he says is for Spring and her nymphs when they welcome Venus to the shore. I have barely finished making a note of this when Henry starts to play a tune to mark the entrance of the shepherdesses. These delightfully light-hearted songs pour out of Henry and Daniel continues to notate them as fast as he creates. Their speed defies comprehension. Henry finishes the dances for the shepherdesses and Nymphs, invents a duet for the shepherds and shepherdesses and rearranges the final dance for the country maids, all before the day is out.

I am exhausted. We sit with a bottle of wine in Marshes and Henry,

who has no need to recover, pesters me to suggest ways in which he can show himself to Amy as an ideal husband. When he realises that I have no talent for this he tells me that I should restore my confidence in love and re-engage my enthusiasm for passion.

"You should find a mistress," he says and I cannot believe that this subject, with the roles reversed, has returned to haunt me. "Now that the Court is in London there is ample opportunity to meet with pretty women. I will assist you if you wish."

"Thank you Henry, but my heart is too sensitive for mistresses. I have always been taken up with love and I never learned how to play games with my affections. I have no cunning knavery to help me juggle the sharp practices needed for secret affairs."

"But you present your manhood in such a poor light, Nahum."

"Aye, but for the present my spirit resides somewhere underground and I must accept this. Until I have extricated myself from this deep vaulted cell where the light does not enter, I can go nowhere to search for affection."

"Then I will pull you out by the scruff of your neck," he says, grabbing at me. We laugh and fight with each other, rolling about the tavern floor. When the landlord asks us to stop, I tell Henry that I will return when I am ready. He laughs and sings a song from the prologue. There is happiness with him despite the irresolvable problems that his love for Frances presents.

Harry arrives late for his lesson, but he arrives with a story that expresses his concern about going to school and loosing his friends in the street.

"School isn't an adventure," he tells me. "Stealing apples is an adventure. Going to school is just sitting at a desk with boys I don't know."

I tell him that writing is also an adventure, but he takes my word for it reluctantly. Ellen enters with two letters, one from Killigrew and the other from Anna. I tear this one open.

Dear Nahum,

Before my letter to you was in your hands our prayers were answered. Senor Balbas has returned to Spain. We had no forewarning of this. He wrote to my mother as he was preparing to leave. He gave no reason for his decision, but he was clear that he would not return. I sat with Frances repeating the news to her. First she squeezed my hand and then she opened her eyes. When I asked if she understood what I was telling her she gave me a smile. Oh, Nahum, I cannot tell you how brightly my heart sang at this moment.

My mother now agrees that my prognosis of Frances's condition was true. She still shakes her head in disbelief, but she smiles now for the first time in months. She is going to finish with the trading business. We will live on less, but we shall be happy. I wish that you and Henry were here to celebrate with us.

Yours truly,
Anna

It is a miracle that Senor Balbas should leave so suddenly, but to leave no reason is indeed strange. I write to congratulate Anna and express my great relief at Frances's recovery. I open Killigrew's letter.

Dear Nahum,

The Lord Chamberlain has accepted The Sicilian Usurper. *This is great news, well done. The King's Company will need to start rehearsals soon if the production is to be ready for an opening in December. I know that you are busy, but I should like a meeting with you. Can you give me some clues about the period when the action takes place? Come to the theatre on Friday if you can. About three o'clock would be good.*

Your affectionate friend,
Thomas Killigrew

What a day for news. I write quickly to Killigrew, giving him my delighted thanks and agreeing to meet him on Friday. I suggest that the play should be set in our own times to please Eliza. I deliver Killigrew's letter to the Theatre Royal and Anna's letter to the Penny Post office.

The ale this morning is the best I have ever tasted. I write a song for the arrival of Spring…

See the Spring in all her glory,
Welcomes Venus to the shore.
Smiling hours are now before you,
Hours that may return no more.

… another to accompany the entrance of the shepherdesses.

Jolly Shepherds come away
To celebrate this genial day.

… and a duet for the shepherd and shepherdess.

Shepherd: *The Sun does guild our bowers.*
Shepherdess: *The Spring does yield us flowers,*
She sends the vine,
Shepherd: *He makes the wine,*
To charm our happy hours.
Shepherdess: *She gives our flocks their feeding,*
Shepherd: *He makes 'em fit for breeding.*
Shepherdess: *She decks the Plain,*
Shepherd: *He fills the grain,*
And makes it worth the weeding.

I go to call on Buttons to celebrate, but he is not at home, so I make my way to the Red Hart in case he should be there. My luck has run out. It is a beautiful September evening so I sit in the garden drinking wine and eating pigeon stew cooked in plums. Two young maids sit near me on the wall. The jolly animation of their friendship is fascinating and I strain to hear their conversation over the noise of the other drinkers.

"What am I to do?" asks one, with a giggle in her voice rather than a question.

"Give his face a slap," replies the other.

"But he says my lips are like cherries and that he will die if I don't kiss him. What should I do, spit in his eye?"

The other one laughs.

"Annie, you knowed what's right and wrong since you bin ten. Just say no."

"I aint prissy and quaint, Molly, you know that. I jist cain't say no."

Molly jumps off the wall, laughing and then notices me staring at her. She sits back next to Annie and whispers something to her. They scream with excited laughter. Annie turns her head towards me and turns it back very quickly. They both fall into fits of giggles. They jump off the wall and run down the street. They are lovely. Annie is particularly lovely. If I were ten years younger I too would ask her for a kiss.

Chapter Twenty-eight

I am arranging the various copies of the libretto when Harry enters and asks if I have anything he can read. I offer him my article on gardens, but Harry turns his nose up at this. I tell him that I have no adventure stories that he can read and he shrugs, picks up the journal and returns downstairs. I go to Westminster. I am keen to meet John Gostling and excited about rehearsing the prologue with the singers. Elizabeth, Katherine and Daniel are waiting outside the refectory and I learn that Henry is at the Palace rehearsing a concert for the King. Elizabeth and Katherine tell me about their visit to the Duchess and they describe the many dresses, shoes, jewellery and wigs that they wore. Elizabeth says that they are to visit Killigrew's wardrobe at the Theatre Royal to find costumes for Venus and Spring.

While they talk on excitedly, Daniel throws stones across the courtyard. Being sixteen he is half a boy and half a man and on neither count is he interested in the talk of his sister and his cousin. His voice has broken so he must wait before rejoining the choir. Like Henry, Daniel lives for music. He composes anthems and he plays harpsichord and violin excellently well.

"That is not the point," Henry shouts from the other side of the cloister, "if they are playing at Court they should arrive on time. Why should I have to rehearse again at six o'clock? Good morning," he says with bad temper while searching for the key. "My first rehearsal today has put me in a foul mood, so I hope you are going to lighten my day."

Henry opens the door.

"John, this is Nahum. Nahum, John. How am I to think about the romance of gods when I have been plagued by idle clowns all morning?"

John and I express our pleasure at meeting and Henry tells us that we should not waste any more time. He starts immediately with exercises and he instructs the singers to carry out all manner of movements and breathing exercises.

"Breath deeply but slowly," he tells them. "Invite availability and generosity and remember where breathing begins."

Henry then makes sounds that the singers repeat. I gaze at John Gostling. He is just as I imagined him, tall, strong and dark. He will make an excellent Aeneas. Henry continues to direct the singer's movements.

"Feel the pleasure of concentrated alignment," he tells them. "The voice starts here. Now be still."

Henry never repeats his exercises and I suspect that he devises them specifically for the songs he is to rehearse. I have no idea where he finds the time for this. He sings scales that the singers echo, gives each of them their pitch and with extraordinary ease the sounds become the chords of the prologue.

"Listen to that. Beautiful," he declares. "We are now ready. Daniel, I want you to play."

Daniel collects up the score and sits at the harpsichord. I take from my bag the libretto and hand it to the singers.

"No paper," Henry says. "We do not read words, we sing."

I have my pages returned to me. Katherine forewarned me of this.

Henry sings each phrase for John and he repeats everything back to him. Soon I am listening to Phoebus for the first time. Elizabeth sings Venus and together they transform my words into delightful song. Katherine sings Spring with enchantment and, as I study her open character and pleasant smile, I know that I will like her as Belinda.

"Do you want to change anything?" Henry asks and I tell him that I do not. He instructs Daniel to play the harpsichord again and at mystifying speed he improvises his changes on the violin. As soon as he has finished he repeats the changes while Daniel notates. The singers join them again. They are completely in tune with each other and sing like a heavenly host. The prologue is amazing.

Suddenly Henry declares that he and John must return to the Palace

to rehearse the King's concert. Daniel stays to complete the notation, Elizabeth and Katherine go to Westminster Hall to see what bargains they can find and I return home. Tonight I need someone to love.

Harry presents himself in my study and asks how flowers and trees can mean something. I ask him if he is referring to my article and he says that he is.

"You wrote that flowers have meaning. What does that mean?"

We sit together and talk about the beauty of arrangement and how it might influence our decisions.

"Attending to the form of things helps to breathe life into them," I tell him. "When people visit a garden and understand the structure of its decisions, they have a sense of the gardener's invitation. Then it means something to them."

Harry asks if I would take him to a garden to show him 'meaning' and I agree to do this on Sunday.

I have three weeks to complete the translation of Ovid's three books. So far I have only translated six of the twenty-two pages in Book Two. I press on.

Love is a species of warfare. Slack troopers, go elsewhere!
It takes more than cowards to guard
These standards. Night-duty in winter, long route-marches, every
Hardship, all forms of suffering: these await
The recruit who expects a soft option. You'll often be out in
Cloudbursts, and bivouacked on the bare ground.

I don't much like these notions of hardship and warfare. Why should love involve fighting? For months I have done nothing but fight with Eliza. I want love to occur simply and of its own accord. I switch my thoughts to *The Sicilian Usurper*. I know nothing about Sicily in our current times and

Killigrew will expect me to give him some direction on this. The only person who will have any kind of view about the Sicilians is Horace, so I make my way to him. It is raining again and I take the umbrella. Horace's secretary escorts me to the library where Horace and Thomas Flatman are sitting together. I am delighted to see them, but there is a dark mood around them. Something horrendous has occurred.

"Bad news," Horace says disconsolately, "we have just returned from Belinda Perryman's funeral."

His words are like an explosion. I stand immobile with goose bumps consuming me. I imagine that I am watching myself.

"She died on Wednesday night. There were complications with the child. Both were lost."

"We have lost Belinda? I cannot understand it. She was perfect for this world."

I see tears in Thomas's eyes. My own tears well up and trickle down my face. Thomas offers me his hand and I take it. My body jerks and a sob leaps out of me.

"Belinda was here only last week. It holds her presence still. She was full of life. Everything about her had such beauty."

Horace and Thomas remain silent. I gaze about the library.

"I will always associate Belinda with this place. Where is she buried?"

"In St. Paul's Churchyard, here in Covent Garden."

"She should be in this library. She should never lie in the ground."

"We will make a mausoleum, or some small monument for her," Horace says, "something of beauty to honour her with."

He suggests that we go to the Half Moon tavern and we sit drinking ale and eulogizing Belinda. After some time we order wine and venison and our solemn mood lifts. It is impossible to stay with such sadness for long. We talk of other things and then Thomas announces that he is to be married to Caroline. It is to be this Friday morning and he invites me to the wedding supper at the Stationers' Company. Our mood shifts again and I tell him that Caroline is fortunate to have found such a fine husband. Then I remember the reason for my visit.

"Horace, I came to you this morning to learn about present day Sicily. *The History of King Richard II* has become *The Sicilian Usurper*, and I know nothing about Sicily."

"Well, you cannot have a king if it is set in our current times," he says. "Sicily is ruled by a viceroy, but he does have a palace in Palermo."

"I cannot change my king for a viceroy," I tell him. "Who is a viceroy?"

"Well, the viceroy is likely to be a Spanish nobleman, but one of the Sicilian princes has been a viceroy in the past. Could you exchange your king for a prince?"

"Certainly not. What can you tell me about their society and their court?"

"Very little. If the news I hear of the Mediterranean is correct, plague and famine is likely to be their most pressing concern."

"I need to know about the court at Palermo. If I dress my actors as our own court dresses would this be out of character?"

"No, dress them as you will. No one will know the difference."

I thank him for his help, hug them both and take my leave.

It is well past three o'clock when I arrive at the theatre and Killigrew is waiting for me in his office. I reveal what I know about Sicily, but Killigrew is nervous about setting the play in our own times.

"How do we convince an audience that it is set in Sicily, if there is nothing to recognise it?" he asks. "The Lord Chamberlain will not hesitate to stop the play if he connects these events with the King. Surely we should set it in ancient times. This will avoid all confusion. What does it benefit from being set in our own times?"

"Only my reputation," I tell him. "It would benefit me greatly to have a play that was not another account of history."

"Nahum, you can spend the rest of your life writing about our own times, or even future times for all I care, but *The Sicilian Usurper* must be set in the past. Trust me, we are treading a delicate line with this play. Let us use classical sets and costumes. I have them here, ready to use,

and I beg you to consider this. I am under strict instruction to cease my extravagant spending and if I go against this there will be no more plays at the Theatre Royal."

"The play is yours," I tell him. "Do with it as you wish. I will not make your life difficult over dates. In truth I believe that the words need a classical setting. Promise me one thing though. Keep the instructions for the prison scene. I want the jailors to fly and the table of food to float before the king."

Killigrew laughs. "You shall have the flying objects, never fear. Can we turn the king into a prince?"

"No. The king must remain a king. Other than this I entrust the play in to your capable hands. May God grant you a happy time with it."

"Pray for the audiences, my dear boy, it is they who grant us happy times."

Outside the theatre, my thoughts return to Belinda. Poor, beautiful Belinda, what misery her husband and children must be experiencing. I walk to Covent Garden. As I approach the churchyard there is a break in the clouds just at that place where the sun is situated. A strange, red sadness floats in the grey clouds like an eye that has wept too much. I enter the churchyard and see a new mound of earth to the right of the gates. This must be where Belinda lies, but there is nothing yet to indicate it. I stand, looking upon this mound and feel my sorrow. This simple mound of earth speaks eloquently of death. A woman who once inspired us all now lies silently below. She was so modest in life it is difficult to imagine what kind of monument we could make for her. Her mound alone suffices, but I would prefer it if it were covered every day in fresh earth. Then her departure would never be more than a day old. I touch the mound tenderly and pray for her. There is only grey in the sky now. At home I write a poem for Belinda.

Each day a man will dig the ground,
To lay fresh soil upon her mound.
Her death now close, we won't forget,
To lose her heart is our regret.

Then I sit with Harry and teach him a new game of cards.

Chapter Twenty-nine

I wake to the noise of a bell and imagine that it is tolling for Belinda. Then I hear Ellen shouting to Harry to take the rubbish out. It is the bell of the rubbish cart ringing in The Strand. I thank God that I still have Ellen. Like Belinda she asks for very little and her life is full of grace and simplicity. I talk to her about taking Harry to a garden tomorrow so that I might explain its beauty to him. Ellen smiles.

"Your influence on that boy amazes me. Until now the only gardens he has shown any affection for are the ones that have apples ripe for stealing."

I make my way to Westminster. Henry and I are to visit the school today, but I am without the excitement I should feel. Belinda's death sits heavily on me. It is a strange morning; warm and heavy with a milky grey light and it connects with my sense of loss. I even imagine that the world is moving more slowly than usual.

In the refectory Henry is singing and moving his arms in a rhythmical fashion. A letter from Frances has filled him with joy. He asks if I knew that she had been unwell. I say that I did.

"You must not keep these things from me, Nahum. Frances is my life. You must promise to share any news you have of her. What do you know of her malady?"

"Only that she took to her bed with melancholy."

"Nothing else?" I shake my head again. "Are you sure?"

"This is all I know, Henry." I hate lying to him.

"Frances always asks that I remain patient and hold on to my love for her. Sweet thing. How could I cease to love her? She is certain that she will change her mother's view of me before long."

I am still out of kilter with myself as we head down river. I am thinking that there are fewer boats than usual on the river and I tell myself that the world is quiet out of respect for Belinda. The large empty houses in Chelsea always stand silent, but today I imagine that they do so account of her death.

The school courtyard is a shock to my melancholy. It is noisy with building activity and materials cover every inch of ground. Mr. Singleton meets us at the door and escorts us to the main hall. The hall is covered in scaffolding and the walls are without plaster. There are no doors at any of the openings and the stage is no more than a bare platform.

"Ah! Here you are, my dears," Josias calls to us as he enters with Cecelia and the Duchess. "What do you think? It is splendid, is it not?"

I tell him that he has created an impressive space and Josias clambers on to the stage and invites us to join him. He has located it on the long side of the hall and the frontage now extends the full length of the hall. He has also built an extension at the back of the stage. It is larger than any performance space I know.

"Time, my dears, that is what we need more of. Time. But the builders are working all hours and they promise that it will be ready. Our dancers move in to Lindsey House on Monday."

Henry and I express our appreciation and we make our way to the Duchess's house for the meeting.

Josias and Henry talk with animation, Cecelia returns to her apartment to collect some papers and the Duchess and I walk together along the river. She asks how Henry fares and I tell her that Frances is recovering and they both confirm their love for each other. Then I tell her that Senor Balbas has hurriedly returned to Spain, leaving no reason for his departure. I allow the import of my words to impress the Duchess, but she smiles and says nothing.

"They are not returning," I tell her, "Why would they have departed so quickly?"

"Customs and Excise," the Duchess declares nonchalantly.

"To what are you referring, your Grace?"

"I wouldn't be at all surprised if Senor Balbas was in trouble with

the Customs and Excise people. The import and export businesses are infamously bad at paying their taxes, you know."

"You may have a point,"

She has a broad smile upon her face and suddenly I have a strange feeling about her involvement in this business.

"I take it that this is an assumption of yours?" I ask her.

"Oh yes," she says and her smile broadens considerably.

"Your Grace, did you … ?"

"Not so loud, Nahum, my dear. Let's just say that I have an acquaintance who owed me a little favour."

"Are you saying that … ?"

"Shush, my friend, they will hear you. The least said about diplomacy at Court the better."

I get her meaning and I would like to give her a hug, but Cecelia joins us, so the Duchess and I switch our conversation to the opera.

We gather together in the Duchess's dining room. John Campion, her secretary, is sitting next to Roger Summerson, the school secretary. There is a large sheet of paper before them. The Duchess thanks the two men for sending out the invitations and for preparing a calendar to communicate the various tasks. She tells us that the King will not be attending the performance as he has French and Dutch Ambassadors to attend to that week. I look quickly at Cecelia to judge her reaction, but she must know this already for she shows no sign of surprise. Henry shrugs his shoulders. There is some disappointment in his demeanour.

Cecelia explains the calendar. She has worked out how the pupils will spend their days, dividing the time between lessons and rehearsals. She knows how dormitories will be occupied and the times they are to take their meals. Performers names have been placed against a list of dance roles and blank spaces have been left against the list of singers and musicians. A list of all the costumes has also been prepared. This is accompanied by notes that indicate who lent the item or who is responsible for making it. We are given detailed information about the school building programme and the set building programme. Cecelia knows who is managing the stage and who is in charge of lighting it.

She knows when Peter Beardsley will paint the sets and when James Billingsley will design and make the stage machinery. They have both been invited to a meeting at the school next Saturday. On this day Henry and I are to brief them on our requirements for stage scenery and special effects. With this Cecelia invites Henry and I to outline our progress. We exchange a look of concern.

Henry tells them that we have completed everything, including the prologue, and rehearsals are underway. Josias asks who is rehearsing. He knows that Frances and Anna are no longer singing, I am sure of it. Henry tries to be nonchalant, but the second he mentions his cousin and his sister Josias explodes.

"You cannot invite your relatives to perform. We have promoted this opera as a school production. The female roles must be sung by our pupils."

"You have absolutely no idea how difficult …"

"I have a perfectly good idea …"

"No you do not. You cannot imagine how difficult it is to lose your lead singers. You have no idea how demanding it is to sing these parts. If I choose my sister and my cousin it is because they have the ability and the temperament to sing these roles. Other than Frances and Anna, you cannot possibly provide me with a pupil, past or present, to match the talents and experience of Katherine and Elizabeth. I have started rehearsals and time will not permit me to start again with new singers."

Josias wants to know why he was not consulted on this before.

"Henry needed time to confirm the success of his decision before informing you," the Duchess tells him. "I promise you, once you have heard these girls sing, you will agree with Henry."

Josias complains that he has advertised the opera as a performance by young ladies of the school, but the Duchess insists it usual to make the lead roles an exception. Josias asks who is singing the male role.

"John Gostling," Henry says, "the finest tenor in the land. He must return to Canterbury next week, hence my need to progress quickly with the rehearsals."

"We must agree," Cecelia tells him, "there is no time left for argument."

"Then this will be the last part not performed by my pupils," Josias tells him.

"I must choose the sorceress," Henry says. "The rest I will take as they come."

"Enough is enough," Josias demands.

"But I need the sorceress. I can survive with anyone for the other parts, but if the sorceress does not have a powerful voice, the work is lost. I know of no pupil who can sing this role."

"I will find someone," Josias insists, "and I will not engage further in discussions about it."

He reads out the dates and times allocated for the delivery of musical scores and manuscripts and then proceeds to describe the nature of each rehearsal. The realisation that time is passing at an alarming rate is shocking to me. The Duchess attempts to calm our nerves by ordering wine, but Josias continues working and writes out the list of singers for Henry to agree. When this is achieved he and Cecelia make their departure.

"I will have my sorceress or die in the attempt," Henry declares.

"Nahum and I also have some demands for the sorceress," the Duchess informs him. Henry invites her to say more.

"For us she is Persephone, the Queen of the Underworld. We want her to be young and seductive, beautiful and grand."

"My sorceress has a powerful voice and a solid presence," Henry says. "Her voice must have a richness that no young girl will achieve."

"Then you must have your choice. I will dress her like a goddess and if she is not young and slender I will ask James Billingsley to construct some apparatus to make her so. She will be the most elegant Corinthian column you have ever seen."

Henry laughs and we discuss James Billingsley's contribution. Phoebus and Venus must arrive in chariots, we must have some machinery to fly the cupids about the stage and the spirit, disguised as Mercury, must arrive from the clouds. We agree that the country scene of the prologue

will double with the hunting scene of the opera, but we cannot determine how the cave might be depicted. The final scene is also a problem that is too great for us. It starts with sailors making ready their ships for departure and ends in the palace where Dido sings her final lament.

"I must have a staircase," Henry insists.

We study him.

"The lament must be sung on a staircase. Dido cannot collapse to the ground, so her death must be performed sitting down. She will fall against the stairs."

"That is good," the Duchess agrees. "It will not be so obvious that she is dead. Can we still have flying cupids to mourn her?"

Henry closes his eyes in concentration and the Duchess pours more wine. As she and I drink Henry sways gently. It is obvious that there is music in him. Suddenly he sings.

"Da de de dum, you cupids come. Think, Nahum, what is the line? Da de de dum, you cupids come."

"With drooping wings, you cupids come," I say.

"Perfect, we have it. We will have cupids. It is beautiful."

The Duchess expresses her surprise at our instant composition and we laugh and toast the opera. We continue with our drinking well into the night. Upon our departure the Duchess declares that it is too dangerous to return by boat and she orders a carriage. Henry asks the driver to walk the horse as slowly as he can and he gives him a rhythm as a measure of the speed he wants. The horse plods along to the rhythm of the final chorus and we compose it on our ride home.

With drooping wings you Cupids come,
To scatter roses on her tomb.
Soft and gentle as her heart,
Keep here your watch and never part.

My dearest Belinda, these lines are dedicated to you.

Chapter Thirty

The main entrance to Essex House is on The Strand, opposite St. Clements Church, and the stable and carriage house entrance is off Milford Lane. The splendid garden stretches down to the river and I have walked here many times. After the morning service I talk with Mr. Pike, the gateman, and he agrees that Ellen, Harry and I can view the gardens. The late summer weather is glorious. I explain to Ellen and Harry the importance of the views and how a series of rooms are established by the straight avenues and well-disciplined hedges. I tell them that the sundial, the old relics and the antiquities are all carefully placed to make our walk enjoyable and to give it meaning. Harry asks if they have an orchard and Ellen addresses him crossly.

"Allow Nahum to tell you what he knows or you will never see the beauty of it."

"Apples add to the beauty of gardens and so do pears and plums," he complains, but Ellen instructs him to be silent. I direct them to look at a blind wall at the back of the coach house, where an arch with an elegant pediment has been constructed to create the illusion that the garden continues beyond. Then I take them to the maze at the end of the garden and show them a miniature grove-like temple that is built as a ruin and covered in mistletoe. Ellen is delighted with everything, but Harry does not care for the ruins or the romantic view that they suggest.

His jolly mood only returns when we are at the Fleet Street Market, probably because I have agreed to buy him a birthday present. He chooses a book with thirty empty pages to write in and I purchase two of them so that he can have more than fifty-seven of something. I buy him some quills and some ink as well.

I am in the Pied Bull thinking about the grove scene. In my original version this is where Dido and Aeneas made love. My shockingly beautiful Eliza is telling me about the progress of her play. She is having some difficulty with her accent for Lady Fidget, so I invite her to practice her pronunciation on me. I enjoy this for it gives me every opportunity to study her delicious neck and collarbones. I want to kiss her. After our 'Fidget' exercises Eliza elaborates upon her frustrations. The group are too few to cover all the parts and they continue unsuccessfully to rewrite the play.

"Everyone squabbles and some have walked out of rehearsals," she says and then she bursts into tears. I comfort her and suggest that she is trying to do too much.

"A writer must write, a director must direct, an actor must act and a publicist must publicise the result."

I give her this advice, but it does not affect her disenchantment. I tell her that she should attract benefactors, find a director and invite new actors to join them.

"Use Wycherley's unfortunate circumstances to attract donations. Make a broadsheet to explain why you are performing the play and advertise it outside the Theatre Royal. You could also see if Betterton will allow the sheets to be distributed outside the Dukes Theatre. Once you have your army, then you can go to war."

Eliza dries her eyes on her handkerchief.

"I will help you. I will write the broadsheet and take it to Roger Tonson. He will have some copies printed for me."

I am delighted to have affected Eliza's mood and I purchase a second jug of wine to celebrate. Eliza asks me about the opera and I tell her that I must resolve the scene at Diana's grove where Dido and Aeneas are supposed to make love. She looks at me carefully, as though she suspects that I am making another play at her.

"I want to connect Dido with Diana because she is the goddess of the hunt and the goddess of chastity. In classical tradition, the grove and the hunt are often the places where love is undone and because we have no love scenes in the opera this reference will help to infer one. I had

a similar grove scene in *Brutus of Alba*. The prince and the queen take shelter in a cave when the storm occurs and it is here that they give way to their passions. The sorceress tricked them with a magic potion that could 'fire the chastest breasts with loose desires'. I drank a draught like this the day I met you."

"Nahum!"

"Sorry. There are no magic potions in the opera. The audience can only assume that Dido has lost her chastity."

"Did the goddess Diana lose her chastity at the grove?"

"In a way. Actaeon threatens her chastity when he invades the grove and she turns his hounds upon him and they kill him."

"Oh! Good Lord. What happens to Aeneas at the grove?"

"Very little. I might make a connection between him and Adonis, the great hunter. Venus, the goddess of love, fell in love with Adonis. She loved the hunt, but she was concerned that his dangerous prey would injure him. She asked him to cease his hunting, but Adonis refused and they argued. The jealous Persephone, goddess of the Underworld, witnessed this. She wanted Adonis with her, so she assumed the form of a wild boar and killed him. Venus turns Adonis into a flower and mourns his loss."

"Nahum, you are mad for connections. Why do you persist in this?"

"Understanding enjoys connections. That's what you need. More connections."

"So will you help me become a published then?"

"A Publicist," I correct her. She laughs. How could I refuse her? It is not the most romantic activity I can think of, but it will do. I promise to visit the theatre tomorrow with my broadsheet and suggest that she visit Roger Tonson with me. She is happy and this is all I could wish for. I return to my study and start writing the grove scene.

Chorus: *So fair the game, so rich the sport,*
Diana's self might to these woods resort.
Woman: *Here Actaeon met his fate,*
Pursued by his own hounds,

Aeneas: *Behold upon my bending spear,*
A monsters head stands bleeding.
With tuffs far exceeding,
These did Venus' huntsmen tear.

I am keen to see Harry before he starts school to wish him good luck and a happy birthday, but I am up too late. There is another letter from Anna and I open it greedily.

Dear Nahum,

Thank you for your letter. I have been very busy. First we were selling the import business and we packed up the paperwork and made preparations to sell the stock and now my mother has found another partner and everything is to be as it was previously. The new partner is young and married so we are safe on this count.

My mother and Frances continue to argue. Frances is feeling better, but she is not getting stronger. She does not eat enough to keep a bird alive. I watch her hide her food. This fools our mother, but it does not fool me. I speak sternly to her and she promises to eat, but she does not. I continue to pray for her recovery.

My mother is now insisting that Frances and I attend more social occasions. We are to go to dances to make ourselves more visible. I hate the very thought of it. My mother will not be happy until we are married off. I will never be happy.

Please write and tell me your news.

Yours truly,

Anna.

I write to Anna with news of the opera. I describe Henry's delight at receiving Frances' letter and promise her that life will not always be so difficult. I write Eliza's broadsheet and meet Ellen as I am going for my morning ale. I ask how Harry faired.

"He went to school with no more ceremony than if he were visiting

the post office," she tells me. "I had so many butterflies in my stomach I had to walk for half an hour before I could even approach the school. He will be all right, wont he?"

"Harry will be fine," I promise her.

After my ale I make for the Theatre Royal. I explain to Killigrew the plan that Eliza and I have made to advertise the play and this amuses him. Eliza is sewing in the costume room. I show her the broadsheet, say that Killigrew is happy to support her and ask if she is ready to accompany me to Roger Tonson's office. Eliza grandly throws a shawl about her shoulders and we march out of theatre together. With Eliza's hand on my arm, I am as joyous as I can remember.

Roger is very taken by Eliza. He agrees to publish the broadsheet and he writes a note to Mr. Percy, the printer, asking him to make copies at his expense. I tell him that the Ovid translation will be complete in two weeks, knowing full well that I have no hope of achieving this. Eliza and I go to Mr. Percy's print works in Chancery Lane and she charms him into agreeing to make this his next task. Once back at the theatre Eliza and I part as dear friends, but I have a strange mood upon me. I work on Ovid.

Harry hates school. He can see no reason why anyone should sit at a desk for so many hours. I spoke to him last night when Ellen was at a loss to know what to do with him and I learned that the boys in his class teased him. They called him a poor thing for not having a father. I tried to convince Harry that the virtues of tolerance and fortitude might be of benefit to him, but without friends at school nothing was any use to him. This was no way to spend a birthday. Ellen was convinced that he would not go to school unattended, so I offered to take him. I asked Ellen to get us up early and I went with Harry to Mr. Garthway's stable where I hired horses for both of us. Harry was both shocked and elated

by my action, but I would not answer any question from him. He did as I instructed and we rode to school in silence. We sat on our horses at the entrance before any boy arrived and I told him to keep himself and his horse as still as a statue, insisting that he should greet no one. I read allowed to him from *The Tales Of The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote Of La Mancha*.

> *O perpetual discoverer of the Antipodes! Torch of the world! Eye of Heaven! Sweet stirrer of wine coolers! Here Thymbrius, there Phoebus, now archer, now physician! Father of Poetry, inventor of Music, you who always rise and – though you seem to – never set! On you I call, sun, by whose aid man engenders man. On you I call to favour me and to light the darkness of my mind, that I may be scrupulous in the narration of the great Sancho Panza's government; for without you I feel myself timid, faint-hearted and confused.*

When the final bell rang I told Harry to go to school and tell the boys that I am his guardian. Harry walked confidently through the gates and I returned the horses to Mr. Garthway's stable. The little man inspired an extraordinary performance from me. I went home to translate Ovid and I give this excuse for being late to Henry.

Henry nods unsympathetically and invites me to study the structure of the opera with him. We spend some time studying Henry's master plan and I express my surprise that Aeneas has only three short appearances. We argue about how many songs he should sing, but Henry is insistent that Aeneas should not detract from Dido.

"The pious words I gave Brutus may have been too plentiful," I tell him, "but there must be more to Aeneas than this."

"Then do it efficiently and without piety," Henry tells me. I show him the words I have prepared for the grove scene and wait anxiously for his view of them.

"I like it when you instigate our songs with words," he says. "I find it almost as pleasing as when I instigate them with the music."

He laughs, slaps me on the back and agrees to look at the songs of Aeneas with me. We work on Aeneas's recitative following Mercury's injunction that he depart for Rome.

Aeneas: *Jove's commands shall be obeyed,*
Tonight our anchors will be weighed,
But Ah! What language can I try,
My injured Queen to pacify.
No sooner she resigns her heart,
But from her arms I'm forced to part.
How can so hard a fate be took,
One night enjoyed, the next forsook.
Yours be the blame, ye gods, for I
Obey your will – but with more ease could die.

There is a quite a commotion in the kitchen when I arrive home. Harry jumps upon me and explains with glee how his classmates regard him after this morning's performance. Ellen is joyous about it and today is more like Harry's birthday.

Chapter Thirty-one

With our soloists assembled, Henry asks me to introduce our characters to them.

"Dido and Aeneas are personages of great destiny," I begin. For some reason I feel self-conscious about describing them. "They love each other and Belinda encourages their love. For Aeneas, love is a matter of private intimacy, but for Dido love is a thing of the world. She is first and foremost a queen. Aeneas would forget that they are rulers of empire with duties of state, but Dido has declared her chastity publicly and Aeneas must agree to become her prince or her reputation and the respect of her people will falter. Aeneas is true to his heart, but he lacks the wisdom that his position demands. He should have realised that a casual love affair would wound Dido. He knows that Carthage does not figure in his destiny."

"Poor man," John Gostling remarks. "It would seem that he must take full responsibility for this tragedy."

"Yes, he is innocent and such innocence is commonly the cause of tragedy. I should like to save Aeneas from this fate that has alluded every other hero in history, but this time I cannot."

John gives me a studied look while I describe Dido's anger at Aeneas' departure.

"Aeneas will attempt to reverse his decision, but Dido sees his change of heart as evidence of his faithlessness and she insists that he leave her. The royal couple have a final argument before Aeneas departs."

"You never told me that they argue," Henry says. "Come, we will work on this. It would please me greatly to compose an argument this morning."

Daniel is not with us, so Katherine plays the harpsichord. Henry composes, I write and Elizabeth and John express the argument in recitative.

Aeneas: *By all that's good.*
Dido: *By all that's good, no more!*
All that's good you have forswore.
To your promised empire fly,
And let forsaken Dido die.
Aeneas: *In spite of Jove's command, I'll stay,*
Offend the gods, and love obey.
Dido: *No faithless man, thy course pursue;*
I'm now resolved as well as you.
No repentance shall reclaim
The injured Dido's slighted flame,
For 'tis enough, what'er you now decree,
That you had once a thought of leaving me.
Aeneas: *Let Jove say what he please, I'll stay!*
Dido: *Away, away, away, away,*
Aeneas: *No, no, I'll stay, no, no, I'll stay,*
Dido: *No, no, no, no, no, no, away, away, away,*
Aeneas: *I'll stay, I'll stay, I'll stay and love obey!*
Dido: *Away, away, to death I'll fly if longer you delay;*
Aeneas: *I'll stay and love obey! I'll stay, I'll stay and love obey!*
And love obey!
Dido: *Away, away.*

The hour's pass unnoticed and only at the days end do we realise what enjoyment we had. As we are leaving Henry suggests that I join him and John at the Palace where they are performing a series of songs to accompany the King's supper. I had thoughts of returning home to my work, but Henry insists that I will be greatly entertained by this.

"You will eat and drink to your heart's content," he says. "No one will know you are not a musician if we dress you in costume."

I agree.

The performer's robing room is very crowded and the process of finding a costume is both chaotic and boisterous. Henry laughs when he sees me dressed in purple silk with orange trimmings. I ask him what I should do while he performs for the King and he tells me that I must be with him.

"I will lend you a violin and you can stand next to me and pretend to play."

"Henry!" I shout at him in alarm, " I will do no such thing. My false identity will be unmasked. I think it is better that I go."

"No, no, you must stay."

"No, I will go."

"Please stay."

"No, no, I'll go."

We laugh at our repeat of the day's argument.

"No one will even look at you. It will amuse you to see the royal guests at supper and afterwards we will drink and enjoy our trick."

I am sitting next to Henry in the minstrel's gallery. He has removed the strings from my violin to prevent my making any screeching noises while pretending to play. The musicians tune their instruments and I mimic them. As the Royal guests take their seats my nerves are in a perilous state. Henry sniggers and I poke him in the ribs with my bow. He instructs me to follow his moves and copy everything he does.

John Blow arrives before us and, as he bows to Henry, he recognises me. I receive his acknowledgement and a smile, and I nod my head to him. He lifts his baton and the orchestra begin their fanfare to announce the arrival of the King and Queen. The guests are entirely taken up with their courtly supper and before long I realise that Henry is right. No one has any regard for the musicians.

John Gostling joins us and the King looks up to him the moment he sings. All the guests do likewise. My eyes are fixed sideways so that I can align my bowing actions with Henry's and I perform my actions as precisely as I am able. My concentration is intense. After several songs John Blow and John Gostling leave the gallery. There is polite applause and Henry asks me to follow him. I fall against the wall of the corridor

with the strain of it all.

"Is that it? Are we finished?" I ask Henry.

"Yes, for the moment. The others will serenade the King through supper."

Blow and Gostling join Henry in laughing at my worried state. I can appreciate the humour of it all, but I shall not repeat it again. We return the violins to the robing room and then go together to a small banqueting hall close to the kitchens. It is laid out with every dish imaginable. Fricassee of rabbits and chicken, legs of boiled mutton, stewed carps, a side of lamb, roasted pigeons, lobsters, dozens of tarts, lamprey pies, anchovies and sweetmeats of every description. I eat heartily and enjoy the excellent Reinish wine.

Others in the King's employ join us and by the time the remainder of the orchestra arrive, the room is packed with great merriment and feasting. Being dressed as a musician, I am regaled with musical talk, but with the confidence of wine inside me I keep my disguise hidden and enjoy my charlatan performance.

A great number of maids are employed to move away the plates and add new dishes to the table. One in particular catches my eye. She smiles at me whenever she is close by and I move about the room to facilitate contact with her. The more we share glances the more attracted I become. We play this game for a while and I get ever nearer to her with each opportunity. Eventually, I stand directly beside her when she is collecting plates and I lean in close to ask her name.

"Molly," she replies and she laughs beautifully. When she is making her way back to the kitchen, she turns her head to me, delivers a coquettish smile and then moves her head repeatedly. For sure she is encouraging me to follow her. I am aflame with desire and find myself in a corridor next to the busy pantry. I cannot see Molly, but she soon returns without her tray and leads me around a corner to a place where a great deal of linen is stored. She leans against the shelves, pulls me towards her and kisses me with some passion. I have never known the like of it.

After two or three such kisses, Molly says she must return, but she asks me to remain.

"I will return with kisses every time I pass," she says. I stand immobile. I am still dressed in purple silk with orange trimmings and I have no idea what excuse I might give if my presence were questioned. Being twice counterfeited, my excuse could only be complex. I turn into the corridor just as Molly is returning. She throws her arms about me and showers me with kisses.

"Molly, I love you, but I cannot stay. More than the world, I would spend the rest of my life here, but I must return."

"Come again tomorrow," she bids me, "and we will kiss some more." She walks away quickly, throwing me another smile. I can hardly walk as I make my way back to the feast. Henry is not here and neither are Gostling or Blow. Indeed, there are no musicians in the room and I realise that they have returned to play for the King. Dear Lord what a state I am in. I am desperate for my own clothes, but I have no idea where the robing room is. I ask directions of a few guests who enjoy my anxiety, presuming no doubt that I am the worse for wine. I find the room; locate my clothes and dress with great speed. I run in every direction until a passing maid gives me directions. I have never before been so grateful to be out on King Street.

I have been with Mr. Peregrine, the tailor, to purchase something to wear at Thomas's wedding. Mr. Peregrine had very few clothes that were ready to wear and those that he had were made to show off the latest fashions. I insisted that I could not see myself in such foppish attire, but he scolded me for my opinion and told me that the ladies would love me. I remembered Molly's kisses then and blessed her forwardness. I have returned home with stockings, a pair of petticoat breeches, a billowing linen shirt trimmed with point, a waistcoat and a doublet with a rear skirt-like extension. I put them in a cupboard and wish that I had never visited Mr. Peregrine. I return to Westminster, late again for rehearsals.

John and Henry greet my arrival in the refectory with cheers. Henry

asks how I enjoyed my evening and I smile sheepishly.

"Act One, Scene One," he says, patting his bow on the violin for attention. He starts to play. Daniel plays the harpsichord and Elizabeth and Katherine sing. John and I listen to the opening songs of the opera.

Shake the cloud from off your brow …
Banish sorrow, banish care …
Ah! Belinda I am pressed …
Grief increasing, by concealing …
When monarchs unite how happy their state …
Whence could so much virtue spring? …
Fear no danger to ensue the hero loves as well as you.

As sure as God is in his heaven there is nothing more beautiful than this sequence of songs, but when we start to work on Aeneas's entrance in Scene Two there is something sluggish about our progress. I try to write some welcoming recitative for Dido and Belinda to sing, but it is poor stuff. Henry suggests that we take a break from it and he plays an air and a delightful melody that leads into a dance for the chorus. I write again and the singers try my words, but when it is time for John and Henry to return to the Palace to perform at the King's supper we have not settled on anything. Henry asks if I would care to accompany them again and I tell him that not for all the feasting in Christendom would I do this. They laugh. In truth, I have a yearning to be with Molly in the linen store again, but I return home to be with Ovid.

Chapter Thirty-two

Belinda: *See your royal guest appears,*
How god-like is the form he bears.
Aeneas: *When royal fan shall I be blest,*
With cares of love, and state distrest.
Dido: *Fate forbids what you pursue,*
Aeneas: *Aeneas has no fate but you.*
Let Dido smile, and I'll defie,
The feeble stroke of destiny.
Chorus: *Cupid only throws the dart.*
That's dreadful for a warrior's heart.
And she that wounds can only cure the smart.
Aeneas: *If not for mine, for empire's sake,*
Some pity on your lover take.
Belinda: *Pursue you conquest love – her eyes*
Confess the flame her tongue denies.

Today I made something of Aeneas's arrival at the palace. Henry is relieved and the singers have performed beautifully. It is thrilling to write and hear the instant response of singers. Elizabeth and Katherine return home and John and I are ready for some ale. Henry is playing a dance melody.

"This is the chorus inviting everyone to the grove," he tells us. "Can you give me some words for it?"

John insists that we should do it tomorrow, but there is no dissuading Henry when the composing spirit is upon him. He plays again and I start to speak my words to him.

Chorus: *To the hills and the vales, to the rocks and the mountains,*
To the musical groves and the cool shady fountains.
Let the triumphs of love and of beauty be shown,
Go revel ye Cupids, the day is your own.

Now we are in need of some revelling. We drink three jugs of ale and then ask for more to accompany our bread and cheese. John is in a very buoyant mood and when he takes to the stage his powerful voice reverberates like thunder through the very structure of the place. The tavern's customers look at him as though he had just arrived from Mars.

I have just written to Roger Tonson to explain that the translation will not be ready by the end of next week. I promise faithfully that he will have it by mid October. I am trying on my new clothes when Ellen enters.

"Good gracious, you must be off to see the King," she declares.

"Not today. I am celebrating Thomas's marriage."

"Looking like this you will probably be married yourself before the day is out."

She bids me to enjoy myself and I put upon my new wig and step out into the morning sunshine, conspicuous and ill at ease.

The Stationers' Company is in Ave Maria Lane. Once I am on Ludgate Hill I see the site of the new St. Paul's just ahead of me. The model of it promises us a splendid building and I walk to the perimeter of the site. The construction is not yet out of the ground, but an army of builders are transporting materials into the basement. I return back down Ludgate Hill and into Ave Maria Lane. The Stationers' Company has the finest edifice of any building in London. I enter the Great Livery Hall, which has an impressive stained-glass window, walk through a small anteroom and enter the Courtroom. Many guests are already gathered.

I am marvelling at the fine plasterwork and gilding when Horace taps me on the shoulder. I greet him, and Mary who is by his side, and

express my continuing sorrow at losing Belinda. Mary declares that Belinda will be at peace in heaven and I tell her that I have given her name to Dido's lady-in-waiting in the opera. She is pleased with this and she wishes to know more about the character. I tell her that it is Belinda who inspires Dido to be confident in love and that she supports Dido her in her grief. Mary is delighted. Horace says that he was hoping to attend some rehearsals, but once again the King demands his presence in Newmarket.

"I am expected there on Monday. I dislike the place, but everyone needs my entertainments for there is little to occupy them, other than horse-racing."

Mary complains about being left alone again and she reminds me that I had promised to translate some additional text for the journal. I promise to attend to this soon.

"How now, jolly crowd, have you come to mourn the loss of another fine bachelor?" Horace and I great Buttons cheerily, but Mary huffs loudly.

"Mr. Boteler," she addresses him, "why must you practice so assiduously your delight in saying the wrong things at the wrong time?"

"Why, I thought my words entirely apt."

"And why would you think such a thing?"

"Because it is commonly understood that men are incomplete before they are married and finished once they are so."

"Oh, such poor sentiments, my dear sir. You will be happy enough to marry when the woman of your dreams presents herself to you."

"Not me," says Buttons, "I am too suspicious of this thing called love. Besides, do you know of a woman who would want a man who thinks as I do?"

"What you think is of no consequence," Mary tells him. "Men and women alike expect to change the ways and opinions of their spouse."

"Exactly," Buttons declares, "A more dangerous thing I cannot imagine. This is the start of it and the remainder of their days are spent in a rage because the other has not responded as they are expected to."

"Come let us eat and drink to honour our hosts," Horace puts in. "Today we must celebrate a union, not instigate more dissention."

The wedding party is a rather sober affair, but the food is delicious, especially the salmon which I eat in great quantities. Thomas's father-in-law has no time for drinking and displays of revelry, but he is ebullient in his praises of Thomas. As everyone is getting ready to depart I look for Buttons. He has not been in evidence for some time. I see Caroline, who is still smiling graciously to everyone, and ask if she has seen my friend. She tells me that her Aunt Elizabeth was feeling unwell and Buttons offered to accompany her home. I smile. I don't doubt that Buttons has discovered Elizabeth's extraordinary powers and now wants to learn what he can.

I go to the Mother Red Cap in Playhouse Yard, drink some good ale and enjoy a fine drama from a group of French actors and clowns. There is some excellent buffoonery from an attractive female performer who inspires my curiosity and indeed my desire. Being able to watch a confident woman on stage is one of the finest achievements of our age. It might change the way we are more than other thing. I think of Eliza and wonder at the pleasure she will bring to her audience.

The rain poured all night and my dreams rained down in wretched accompaniment. I was full of fear and frustration and my lack of breath caused me to imagine that I had contacted some illness. As I make my way to Westminster I am grateful to have Thomas's umbrella for the rain falls in sheets. Henry is uncommonly quiet, but I do not enquire about his mood. On our way to Chelsea the appalling weather gives us plenty to contend with. The rain drives at us horizontally, making the boat's canopy of little use, and I am surprised that our two oarsmen are willing to work on such a day.

James Billingsley and Josias are in the school hall when we arrive. Josias introduces James as 'a genius of mechanical devices' and tells us

that Peter Beardsley is expected shortly. The Duchess and Cecelia will not be joining us and we look about the stage while Josias explains where the proscenium screens and flats will be situated. He explains how the two rows of grooves in the floor will allow the shutters to be moved on and off the stage.

"The potential for apparatus is very limited," James tells him. "There is nothing to fix anything to, not even the possibility of hanging something from the ceiling."

Josias is horrified, but James says that this is not a problem.

"Everything can work from the floor and in many ways this makes my job easier." Josias is relieved.

We go through the scenes, describing where we need machinery, and James makes sketches and writes notes while we talk. We tell him about the chariots in the prologue, the staircase in the final palace scene and the need to increase the stature of the sorceress. We ask him for ideas about the witches' cave and we discuss how Mercury might appear before Aeneas.

James doubts that we will be able to fly the cupids about the stage for the finale, but this is the only troublesome aspect of our brief to him. We are talking about the palace, and the scene it might require, when Peter Beardsley arrives. He and James greet each other warmly. I introduce Peter to Josias and Henry, and eulogize about the beautiful scenes he painted for *Brutus of Alba*.

We return to our discussion about the final palace scene. Peter suggests that we paint the palace by showing its terrace so that we can include a view of the harbour in the distance. He draws a sketch and it is pure genius. Against the single screen sailors can make ready for their departure on the dockside and the royal couple can perform their final parting in the palace. James gets the point immediately and he draws a column and a pediment to suggest the palace with a regal looking staircase to the side of it. Josias repeatedly expresses his appreciation.

The opening scene of the prologue is also a tricky problem. Peter has been instructed by Betterton to paint no more than two screens. We cannot do without the palace and the country scenes, but I am insisting

that we must also have a sky and the sea for Phoebus's entrance at the start of the prologue. There appears to be no solution to this until Henry suggests that we paint the rear wall blue. I fall on him laughing at his simple resolution and Josias again regales us with his repetitive praise. Peter agrees to mix the paint and wanders off to take measurements for his screens. James makes further sketches of the models he will prepare for the machinery and we agree to visit him at Mr. Wren's office next week. Once our discussions have concluded, Josias invites us to Lindsey House to see the prologue dances, but the two maestros of stage scenery must return to London. Henry and I accompany Josias.

Lindsey House has a grand entrance and a very impressive hall, covered in abundant decoration. The dancers are conversing together in one corner, looking rather like a band of angels in their white shifts. Laurence Webster is sitting at the harpsichord and Henry talks with him while Josias prepares his dancers. He calls their names and arranges them on either side of the hall. Henry sits next to me, full of excited anticipation and Josias gives Laurence a signal to begin.

Josias shouts the moves to his pupils and I realise why he was so keen to create a wide stage. His dancers move in long lines, weaving and snaking in and around each other. The choreography is very gay and every repetition in the music is clearly reflected in the dancers' movements. Henry is so affected by the conjunction of music and dance that he cannot remain seated. He dances and sways to the notes and rhythms as though he were conducting the movement of the dancers with his body. The dancers cannot hide their surprise and enjoyment of his actions and many a smile passes between them. Josias also displays considerable love for his art and his graceful movements are heartfelt and beautiful. Dance is indeed his genius and I feel real affection for him as a dance master and choreographer.

Henry applauds loudly and Josias is a picture of happiness. A radiant colour has blossomed beneath his skin and lit up his emotions. Pleasure beams from his face. He teaches his dancers how to take their bows and then instructs them to change and return to the school. As Henry and I are leaving, Josias expresses his eagerness to receive the remainder of the

dance music by the following week and Henry agrees to have it ready by the time we meet at Mr. Wren's office.

We walk back to the Beaufort Steps and Henry expresses his doubts about fulfilling his promise to Josias. He has a number of concerts to play for the King, some private engagements to perform and rehearsals for Theodosius start on Monday.

I insist that he is working too hard, but Henry waves his hand at me and asks if I have heard anything from Anna. While we wait for a boat, we discuss how we might arrange to see Anna and Frances in secret and I agree to write to Anna to suggest this. Our wait is tiresome and we reflect upon the Duchess's advice to take a carriage back to town at night. Henry shouts at every boat travelling down river, but the swollen waters carry them swiftly past us. Eventually a hooded skiff without passengers moves towards us and the two oarsmen agree to transport us to Westminster. Henry falls asleep and I sit quietly thinking about Eliza.

As we are approaching Westminster there is much boisterous activity on the river. A large number of boats seem to be gathered together and in some places skirmishes or fights are taking place. The oarsmen react with horror.

"It's the Lambeth boat boys," one cries. "They are controlling their territory."

"Where are you from?" I ask.

"Wapping mate and we are turning around."

It takes some time to turn the boat, for the river flows against us with much force. The commotion wakes Henry. I explain our plight to him and he asks if there are other oars we might use. There are none. The Lambeth boats are getting close and the oarsmen decide to make for the bank. They turn, but the boat immediately starts to move downriver again, towards our assailants. We are approaching the bank as three boats draw up alongside us. With unbelievable animosity they attack, thrashing at us with their oars. It appears that only our destruction will satisfy them. A giant of a man grabs hold of our canopy support, boards the boat and strikes out at Henry with his stick. Henry avoids the blow,

but he slips and lands flat on his back.

There is an almighty crack. My entire body shudders and leaps at the same time. I feel heat. It might also be pain. I am filled with water and turmoil. I choke and breathe in more water. There are shouts and my arms are flaying. I have a choking pain mixed with foul tasting, muddy water and blood. I splutter and cry out. Henry pulls me through mud and reeds and places me on some waterlogged roots at the side of the river. With his hand, he wipes the blood that is streaming down my face and lifts me so that I am resting against a gnarled, old tree trunk. He pulls off his shirt, wraps it about my head and asks how I am feeling.

I look about me. I expect to see a sign hanging up in front of me that might answer his question.

"I am very tired," I tell him.

Henry sits next to me with his arm around me. I watch as the Lambeth boats depart and our boatmen pull their boat out of the river. I feel sick and bewildered. Henry lifts his shirt to see if I am still bleeding. I am.

"How are you feeling now?" he asks.

"I have no idea," I tell him. "Apart from pain I have no other senses."

"I must know how badly you are hurt," Henry says and the agitation in his voice frightens me. I feel cold and lost, but I don't know how to describe this. The boatmen help Henry to carry me further up the bank. Henry pulls off my boots and empties the water from them. The boatmen sit beside us.

"What will you do now?" Henry asks them.

"Just sit here and wait," one of them replies. "They will have to go home to bed sometime and when they do we will do the same."

Henry pulls my wet boots back on and suggests that we walk to Westminster.

"We must find you a Hackney carriage or a sedan chair," he says. I do not want to move, but he insists that I will catch a chill if I remain here. I doubt that anyone will want to transport a muddy, blood-spattered passenger, but Henry helps me to my feet and pays our boatmen. He wishes them well and places my arm on his shoulder.

My walk to Westminster is a shambling, feeble affair. Without doubt

we are a strange-looking pair, but the people of Westminster know well enough what the cause our sorry state is. Talk of the Lambeth boat boys is everywhere. We can find neither carriage nor sedan chair for transport, so Henry helps me to complete the slow and pitiful walk to The Strand.

Henry batters at the door and Ellen helps him to transport me to the kitchen. She is horrified. She instructs Harry to fetch a blanket and tells Henry to boil some water. Ellen places the blanket around my shoulders and washes me as I sit in a chair. She applies a bandage to my wounded head and then instructs Henry to wash and change into my clothes. While I repeat for Harry the events that occurred on the river, Ellen warms some broth. Henry drinks the broth, but I feel too sick to eat so I retire to bed.

Chapter Thirty-three

I cannot decide how I feel. Ellen insists that I stay in bed, but I drink some of her vegetable broth and go for a walk in Lincoln's Inn Fields. My thoughts are stuck on Eliza, so I make my way to Smithfield very slowly and sit in the Pied Bull waiting for her. I sit for a considerable time, half dreaming. Eliza's arrival startles me, but she is more startled than I am. She asks anxiously about my condition and I pretend to be feeling better than I am. I tell her about the events by the riverbank.

Eliza shows me a copy of the broadsheet and she explains with great pride all that she and her troupe are undertaking to communicate the Wycherley play to the public. She is nervous about going to see Betterton, even with the letter of introduction that Killigrew has given her. I try to encourage her confidence and she tells me that John Petty has agreed to accompany her.

"He is very kind and I am most grateful to him," she says.

I am horribly jealous of John Petty. Is Eliza teaching me not to care for her too much? I ask if she remembers the affection we once shared.

"Nahum, please do not talk of this now."

"You are mine Eliza. We were made for each other."

Eliza tries a weak smile, but she is unhappy.

"We are identical instruments. Our strings resonate at the same pitch."

"Stop it, Nahum, stop this nonsense."

"I will not. I remember how you reacted when I kissed you."

Eliza has a storm in her face.

"I know your desires and I have experienced your deepest pleasures. I want you to remember that. What right have you to deny what has passed between us?"

"Nahum, I do not wish to deny anything. Why do you want to hurt me like this?"

"Because it is the only way I can get you to remember me. What happened between us was true. You cannot pretend that it did not happen."

"I am not trying to pretend anything. Whatever you say is true, but why must you always talk of it?"

"Because everything else is a lie. Why should I deny my experience and hide our connection? Why must I be a fool for your love? Why do you …"

I sway slightly and fall to the floor. I think that someone has pulled the chair from under me. I am shaken and I can hear Eliza's voice, but I cannot hear what she is saying. I feel sick and horribly giddy and there is a high-pitched ringing in my ears. I try desperately to concentrate on her words, but I am too confused. I hear Eliza say that I have fainted. There are many voices around me. I am unwell. They are carrying me. Eliza sits beside me in a hackney carriage. She is wiping the sweat off my brow. Sitting up straight is more difficult than I imagined. I think it is Ellen who puts me to bed.

I am up, struggling to write something. My giddiness overwhelms me and I return to bed. It is dark. It must be the middle of the night. I am sick. I have pressing pains on my chest. It is day. Ellen is talking to me. I am out of breath and panting. I sleep. I am Jake, a black Irish wolfhound bounding across the marshes. I am barking.

"Don't keep a dog and do the barking," I tell myself. Am I barking or am I coughing? I am exhausted. I need a drink. There is a mug. I drink from it. The strong-tasting herbs and black treacle make me sick. I am very tired. I must rest. I cough and sleep. I can hear Ellen's voice. Her hand is behind my head.

"Nahum. Nahum. Try to wake up. Try to drink something."

I taste the herbs and treacle again and wretch. I sleep. I am dreaming

of Jake. We play together on the hills. I hear myself coughing. I don't know how long I have been coughing.

"Ellen, my chest hurts. The broth is nice, but I hate the herbs."

I sleep.

"It cannot be tuberculosis. He fell in the river. It is pneumonic plague for certain."

"But if it were pneumonic plague he would be dead by now."

I open my eyes. It is Dr. Stoller.

"Nahum, can you hear me?"

I nod my head.

"Promise me that you will drink my physic."

I nod again. I am so pleased that Dr. Stoller is here. I sleep.

"… he had taken no more than a mouthful of bread when the Giant could be heard in the hallway. The woman told Jack to hide in the wardrobe. She shut the door on him, but the keyhole was large enough for Jack to see through. A voice like thunder cried out. 'Fe, fi, fo, fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman. Let him be alive or let him be dead, I'll grind his bones to make my bread'."

"Harry?"

"Mr. Tate. They say that you are going to die."

"No, Harry. I am not going to die. I will be better soon."

"Shall I tell my mother?"

"Yes, Harry. Tell Ellen that I am better."

"I thought that reading would make you feel better."

"It did Harry. Thank you. I liked it very much."

Ellen arrives with some broth and she talks to me while easing the liquid into my mouth. She repeatedly asks how I am feeling, as though each new minute needs further confirmation. She tells me that Buttons has been to visit and so has Henry. I ask what day it is and she tells me that it is Sunday. I ask if Harry would go to the Pied Bull in Smithfield to inform Eliza that I am too sick to see her. I wake from another sleep,

conscious of the touch of Eliza's hand. There is no hand like Eliza's. I gaze at her and she smiles at me. After a while she places a kiss on my forehead and departs. I return to sleep.

Today I am feeling stronger. Henry enters the room and I have enough strength to welcome him. Henry talks to me and I talk a little.

"When you lay sick in this bed, I promised God that if he would save you I would gladly offer myself in your place. Do you think that he has come to collect his debt?"

"No my dear. God will have neither of us until we have properly sung his praises and our opera is only the beginning."

Henry talks about the opera, but I do not have the energy to make a picture of all his words. He has composed the dances for Josias. I cannot make out whether there are thirteen dances or six.

"Thirteen," he says. "Six are improvised pantomimes danced to the music I have already written. The rest are formal dances that Josias will choreograph."

I have my eyes closed again and my understanding is at rest. I can hear Henry singing the merry dance tunes. I have no idea how he can he store so much music in his head.

I am dancing with Eliza in a sacred grove. I honour my love for her. My wretched coughing interrupts this sojourn with my fecund goddess and wakes me. I drink greedily, happy that I am beginning to inhabit my body again. Ellen announces that I have visitors. Henry, the Duchess de Mazarin, Josias and Cecelia have come from their meeting with James Billingsley and Peter Beardsley. Once I have expressed how I am feeling, the Duchess says that the drawings and the models are very impressive. Josias says that James has invented a platform to move characters on and off stage.

"It is about two feet square and five feet high," the Duchess says. "It is not unlike a small, high table, but it has runners on its base. A man with a long rod can push it on and pull it off the stage. When Phoebus arrives, the side of the platform that faces the audience is covered with a flat 'cut out' of a chariot set on clouds. Some steps are fixed to the front of the platform and Phoebus walks down from his chariot on to the stage. The platform is then pulled back and turned around to reveal Venus's chariot on the opposite side. Again, when Venus steps off, the platform is pulled into the wings. He is such a clever man. I never know what kind of spirit causes such invention."

"He may need to rest now," Cecelia tells her.

"Are you up to this?" the Duchess asks. "I must tell you about the sorceress."

I nod my head.

"Well, the sorceress arrives on the same platform. The chariots have been removed and she stands upon it. Her long flowing gown covers the platform down to the ground. You will love it. She is more than ten foot tall and covered in red silk. A more beautiful Persephone you will never see. Mercury also stands on the platform. When he appears to Aeneas, it is covered in clouds. And the cupids use it. Do you remember, at the end, when they appear above Dido and scatter roses?"

I smile at the Duchess, cough and tell them that I will be better soon.

"I am worried about the cave though," the Duchess continues. "Peter is to paint a large freestanding screen for the witches hide behind. They arrive on stage through a cut in the fabric."

"It will be fine," Josias exclaims. "I wish you could visit us soon, Nahum. You will not believe your eyes. The hall is complete, the stage had been fitted with a proscenium arch and the flats and shutters are all in place. We start rehearsing soon."

Ellen informs my visitors that they should not overtax me. I start to complain, but I have serious bout of coughing and she does not have to insist further. As my guests are taking their leave, Cecelia hands me an envelope with invitations enclosed. She asks if I remember about agreeing to write an epilogue and suggests that she invite someone else

to write it. I insist that I must do this and Cecelia smiles.

"I am still nervous about the moral standing of the school," she says.

They take their leave, but Henry remains.

"I have succeeded in securing my sorceress," he tells me. "Mrs. Amanda Lockhart. Her voice is so resonant you would think that Vulcan himself had forged it. The Duchess says that she will make her the greatest beauty of the age. I have invited Frances and Anna to the performance, but I cannot see how they can attend. I have many letters from Frances, but there is no sign that we can be together. They are to attend Mr. Simpson's dance academy ball on Saturday. Will you be better by then?"

I shake my head sadly.

"I will go, but I will not dance. I will ask Mr. Simpson if I can join the orchestra. You could join me on the violin again if you like?" He laughs.

"I would rather dance," I tell him.

I have a letter from Anna.

Dear Nahum,

Henry has informed us that you suffer from an ague that threatens you severely. I am most perturbed and seek some further news from you. Please, please tell me that your health is improving. Henry has sent us invitations to the performance. If we can attend it will be the happiest day of my life. We have not informed our mother, for we know what her response will be. She is going to visit my sister Amy in Richmond soon. Amy is about to deliver her second child. We pray that she will remain there long enough for us to visit Chelsea without her knowledge.

On Saturday we are going to a Ball at Mr. Simpson's Dance Academy. I was hoping that you could be there, but with this awful news I doubt that I will see you. My mother insists that she will attend the ball with us so the chances of us being together in any meaningful way are not good. I have no idea what Frances

will do if she has sight of Henry. She lives only for the day when she can be with him again.

Please write to me as soon as you are well enough to do so.

Your affectionate friend,

Anna

I write to her and I give her a full account of my horrid dousing in the river. I also write to Roger Tonson explaining my recent difficulties. I promise that he will have the translation by mid October. Harry delivers my letters to the Penny Post office, together with my invitations to Horace, Mary, Eliza, Buttons and Thomas. The two remaining tickets I am giving to Ellen and Harry. Harry was delighted when I told him, but Ellen said that it was not their place to attend. I told her that seeing an opera is very important for Harry's education, but she continued to be nervous about it. Then I gave her three guineas for a new dress and she scolded me. She did not want to accept the gift, but I insisted that women always buy a new dress to attend an opera. Ellen says that she is still thinking about it, but I know that she and Harry will be in Chelsea for the performance.

Henry visits again. It is Sunday. He did not go to the Ball and he is miserable about it.

"When Frances informed me that Amy was to accompany her I could not bear the thought of confrontation, so I sat drinking wine with Nicholas Staggins in Marshes. Why is love so difficult? Should I write to Amy again? Would you help me?"

I spend the afternoon trying to convince him that writing to Amy will not help. He rails on about his misery. Everything is impossible when he can see no way forward.

Chapter Thirty-four

I spend my days writing lines for the opera, translating Ovid and taking short walks in Lincoln's Inn gardens. I spend my nights coughing. I hate this coughing more than anything. Ellen continues to attend to me closely and Harry gives me a daily account of his activities at school. He has his friends now, but the lessons are not as interesting as I led him to believe. I tell him that he will reap the benefits later, but he is not convinced. For some reason he thinks that all stories should concern magical fortune. He is adamant that one day he will possess the kind of magic that will make him rich. I hope that his clarity of purpose brings success.

Henry and I work together each evening. He sings everything that we have devised for the opera. He uses, 'Ta rum ta tee tum', where words have yet to be written and I fill in the words where I can. I keep notes of those sections that I must write the next day. One evening when we are working together Buttons visits.

"Ah, my dear, what a pleasure it is to see you working," he says.

"Oh, Buttons," I cough. "It is lovely to see you. I am on my feet, but this cough is driving me mad. I feel barely human barking like this day and night."

"It is true," he says, "You were always a hound for refusing to write doggerel."

"I am happy enough with my writing," I laugh.

"You are never happy, Nahum. It is your heroic spirit that keeps you alive."

"I am no hero, Buttons."

"Indeed you are. I hear that you are to be given a knighthood for the

valour you displayed at the Lambeth Armada."

All work must cease when Buttons is in this mood and he entertains us late into the evening. I am greatly relieved that the noise of my coughing is mixed with the noise of my laughter.

I meet with Eliza in the New Inn garden. She is on her way to visit me and she is delighted that I am out walking again. She hugs me warmly and invites me to sit with her on a bench. She tells me that Killigrew has agreed to direct the play and they have a full cast of actors. She is grateful that someone else is struggling with Lady Fidget's pronunciation and she enjoys playing Mrs. Pinchwife.

"Did you manage to rescue Aeneas from oblivion?" she asks.

"No. There is no room in an opera for such ambition. Poor Aeneas. There is no way of knowing what complexities lie ahead."

"Was Dido reluctant to love him?"

"Yes. Dido had recently lost her husband when Aeneas arrived in Carthage and she had promised to honour his name forever. New feelings of love are not easy."

"Then Dido's situation and mine were similar. I did not promise my husband so much, but when you and I first met he had recently died."

She falls silent. We are holding hands as lovers do. If love does not exist here then it exists nowhere.

"I felt terrible when my husband died. Being alone was horrifying. I did not know how to live my life. I did not know who I was."

"Then I arrived."

"Yes, then you arrived."

She slaps me in a friendly manner, but I see a tear in her eye.

"You, with all your talk of love. Then I had to make another decision. I had no idea how to make promises and I didn't know if I could trust anyone again. When love arises we have to make a decision about it quickly, don't we?"

"Or you can simply decide to love someone."

"But we must sense whether we trust them. Dido did not trust Aeneas did she?"

"No, she cannot trust him, but in his case it is not difficult to see why. Aeneas is a god-like prince. His fate is already determined. His destiny is to found Rome. Dido must doubt that he has the ability to ignore this fate for the sake of love. It is Belinda and the court who persuade her to trust her feelings for him."

"Yes, and as soon as she does so, Aeneas declares that he must leave."

"That is the tragedy. But this does not make your position and Dido's similar. Did you have to decide to trust me? I certainly had no thoughts of leaving you."

"It worried me that you always talked of love. I found it difficult enough trying to be your mistress. I had never been anyone's mistress before. I did not know how to act or what was expected of me."

"But I loved you. I did not have a destiny that threatened this love. I had no promised land beckoning me on as Aeneas did."

I look at her closely.

"Oh, Nahum, you have no idea how I thought about you. Your character was fully formed. You were complete. I was only half formed and then I was broken by my husband's death. I could see how dedicated you were to your writing. How could I possibly imagine that I would count in your world?"

"But you were the centre of my life."

"In one respect I may have been, but I could not imagine that I would remain so. I could not trust my feelings, so I could not will myself to fall in love with you."

"Even if I loved you?"

"I was never certain of it. You have no idea how vulnerable I was. Vulnerability was all that I had. If you could not see my vulnerability, how could you see other things about me that might be important?"

I lift her hand and kiss it.

"But I would have looked after you. How could you have had these feelings and not have talked to me about them?"

"In those days, I could not talk about anything. I had no idea how I felt."

"I would have done anything to ensure the possibility of our love."

"You found me attractive and this was important. You gave me confidence."

"I wish I was confident, but I too am vulnerable. It was you who inspired my passion and my poetry. The joy you brought me was real. There is nothing more real than desire. You gave me hope and a reason to celebrate life."

She squeezes my hand.

"Oh, Nahum, you cannot possibly tell me that you lack reasons to celebrate life. Your optimism and your enthusiasm are the most distinctive features about you."

"But without love they are nothing. I only have my work. I would like more to show at my journeys end than the odd collection of words I have gathered."

"Please don't say this, Nahum. I don't believe that you feel this way."

"I do. Old works are like remnants that lie in the street when the market is over."

"Oh Nahum, I wanted to be close to you, because you were not like this. I never wanted a bed of swirling emotions, but I did want the confidence to live."

"Oh well, you cannot ignore emotions. It is the emotions that make life."

"You are right," she says and she lifts my hand, kisses it and says that she must return to the theatre. I see a tear in her eye. I return home and translate Ovid.

So with the heart. It grows torpid from lack of worry,
Needs a sharp stimulus to elicit love.
Get her anxious about you, reheat her tepid passions,
Tell her your guilty secrets, watch her blanch.

I know that I will never do this.

My strength gathers slowly and my cough diminishes. I work tirelessly on the translation and finish Part Two. When I arrive in Roger's office with the first two sections, he is greatly relieved to see me. I promise that he shall have Part Three by next week. He pours us both a large cup of rum and drinks to my health.

In the third book Ovid addresses his advice on love to the women of Rome. Pursuit and warfare are still in evidence.

… When a new-captured lover
Is stumbling into the toils, then let him believe
He alone has rights to your bed – but later, make him conscious
Of rivals, of shared delights. Neglect
These devices – his ardour will wane.

Ovid treats his men and women as equals in the fight. I hate it that he suggests that rivalry be put to use as weaponry.

On my first visit to the Abbey since the attack, two violinists, a viola player and a bass player are accompanying Henry on the harpsichord. He concentrates on every nuance of their playing. Katherine and Elizabeth sing beautifully and Daniel continues to notate the changes. On Saturday they are all moving to Chelsea, to stay at Lindsey House. Henry is eager to rehearse with the full cast of singers and he asks how soon I can join him. I say that I will deliver my translation to Tonson on Monday and travel to Chelsea after that.

I am as good as my word. On Monday morning I set out for Holborn with my bag packed and Part Three of *The Art of Love* in my pocket. Roger is delighted with the first two sections and he thanks me profusely for the third. I find a hackney carriage and enjoy the ride to Chelsea.

The school hall is populated with scene painters, prop makers and an army of young ladies who are mending, making and altering costumes. The Duchess is everywhere and she is issuing instructions like a general preparing for battle. When she sees me she issues one last order and then walks over to greet me.

I am very touched by her pleasure in seeing me and she pulls me by the arm to show me her costumes. She starts with Phoebus who is to wear a suit of gold and then shows me Venus, who has a splendid blue silken dress with a sparkling tiara. Spring has a most extravagant costume and a great profusion of bright flowers have been sewn on to a robe that enjoys every shade of green imaginable. Dido has the most regal of costumes. It has a richness of form and texture that could only suggest a queen. Aeneas has a military costume that confirms him as the Prince of Troy, with elegant black boots and a great plumed helmet. The sorceress has a long wine-red gown made of silk.

"It is nearly eleven feet long," the Duchess boasts proudly as she pulls it across the floor. "This costume will be the star of the show. You haven't met Amanda Lockhart have you? Her singing is extraordinary, but when the our seductive Persephone floats onto the stage everyone will fall in love with her."

She gives me a cheeky smile. "Well, off to Lindsey House with you. They are rehearsing there. I have much to do."

The Duchess returns to her troops and her instructions ring out across the hall.

Elizabeth and Katherine greet me as I enter the hall in Lindsey House. Choruses and dances are being rehearsed and I sit with them and watch Henry and Josias at work. It is not going well. The continual stops and re-runs have caused tempers to become short and Henry and Josias are continually in conflict. When either stops the action the other is exasperated by it. Suddenly Henry storms into the centre of the hall and claps his hands to gain everyone's attention.

"You are all performing excellently well," he tells them.

The assembled players, singers and dancers look at him aghast, utterly perplexed by this reversal.

"I am sorry that it has been so difficult, but after all this hard work we are now ready to perform the entire work from the beginning. Now we will do it without a break."

Everyone looks at each other to judge and then share their surprised reactions.

"Just trust yourselves to get it right. It is in your memory, so relax. If you invite it nicely, your part will flow from you as though you had been doing it all your life."

There are a few sounds of disbelief.

"Keep yourselves open," he tells them, "and remember what I told you about the ancient lesson of availability. If you forget anything remain silent or stand still until you can regain your place. We will stop for nothing."

A sense of excitement is soon echoing round the hall.

"Think about where your heart reigns and invite everyone to share your love."

The entire cohort is excited and curious. Josias is as surprised as anyone, but he does not contradict Henry. The maestro and his choreographer move the performers to their starting positions and before anyone has time to think, Henry raises his baton and the musicians begin.

There are mistakes, but they are not significant. Essentially, what was lacking before in the marriage between dancers and singers is now working. Henry expresses his pleasure by dancing during the fast movements and swaying his arms during the slow ones. The only time he is static is when the sorceress sings. Amanda Lockhart has a voice as deep as the earth is wide, but her jolly disposition and rotund figure conflict with my image of her as the seductive queen of the night. For sure she has beauty and the Duchess has vision, but the styling of her as a young maid will require some inspiration.

The cast cheer and clap each other enthusiastically. Great peals of laughter fill the hall, mixed no doubt with huge sighs of relief. As their concentration has been intense so their pleasure is now ecstatic. Henry comes to greet me.

"You inspired their performance beautifully," I tell him.

"We all need encouragement," he says. "Did you enjoy Amanda Lockhart?"

"Her voice is perfect. I hope her presence on the platform can match this."

"It will. And what about Elizabeth, she has a remarkable voice does she not?

Before I can answer Henry calls to a neatly dressed man who played the violin.

"George, over here," he calls, waving his arm for George to join us.

"Nahum, let me introduce you to George Lawson, our lead violinist and a highly accomplished and intelligent man. You will be sharing a bedroom with him here in Lindsey House. The two of you will get along famously, I am certain of it."

"The dormitories here are pleasing enough," George tells me. "But the food has little to recommend it, unless, that is, you are keen on pastry."

I tell him that I never eat pastry and this seems to please him. George offers to show me to our room and when I have deposited my bag he invites me to join him for some ale at the Royal Oak. He is an extremely jolly fellow and his gaiety increases the longer he drinks. As the evening progresses, he asks the landlord if he has any fish in the kitchen and when he learns that the cook has Dover sole he insists that we take our supper here.

It is late by the time we return to Lindsey House and, other than my evenings with Buttons, I cannot remember laughing so gaily. We are quite drunk and we talk in whispers and stifle our laughs so as not to disturb the other inhabitants of the house. When we are in our beds George asks if I am fond of singing and I say that I am.

"Good," he says. "For I sing in my sleep."

I laugh and ask what kind of songs he will sing.

"Well, pretty much everything I play on the violin."

"So I will expect a concert," I tell him.

George is happy and he hums quietly.

We are about to start rehearsals in the School hall. John Gostling has arrived from Canterbury and he and Henry are going over recent changes in the libretto. James Billingsley is busy inspecting the props and directing how they are to be used. He is pleased with their construction and he asks me to supervise the palace scene. The scene movers pull the staircase into position on the left-hand side of the stage and then move a single large column into the centre. They pull the harbour screen into position and place a stone-like balustrade into place behind the column. The balustrade marries with a painted balustrade that Beardsley has illustrated on the screen. The left of the stage is the palace and the right is the harbour just as they had illustrated it. When Dido stands on the terrace she can see the anchored Trojan boats.

I express my wonderment at its practical beauty and the scene movers take away the props belonging to the palace and fill the stage with crates and barrels to make the scene a dockside. Josias and I both express our pleasure with the scenery and Henry calls to everyone to prepare for the first scene of Act One. The scene movers prepare the stage again and the Duchess and I sit waiting for the opera to begin. Henry calls for everyone's attention and he addresses the Duchess and I for the entire cast to hear.

"I want the two of you to study the performances very carefully. I want you to think about the placement of the performers, the quality of their presence and, most importantly, the graceful flow of events. I do not want to stop the action unless it falls apart, but whenever you feel that a comment should be made I want you to speak it out."

He then turns to the assembled players.

"You are all to listen to the comments of our directors. Anyone hearing advice directed at them will immediately act upon the instruction without stopping the rehearsal. Is that clear?"

There is a general nodding of heads. Henry tells them to take to their places and the rehearsal begins. The task of tying everything together into a seamless whole requires intense concentration. Even the smallest gesture either contributes to or distracts from the action. Josias also calls instructions to the dancers as he moves among them on the stage.

The Duchess enjoys the role immensely and everyone responds to her instructions quickly and decisively. She has a splendid eye for detail and a natural talent for directing. She was simply born to it.

Henry gives surprisingly few instructions, but he listens intently. His face is a picture of pain when the sound is not to his satisfaction. Mostly, he whispers short phrases to his performers like, 'Stand still', 'face the audience', or 'make it audible'.

It is a good first day on the stage and we all celebrate with a visit to the Royal Oak. George Lawson is soon entertaining everyone and I am often in fits of laughter.

How the dances and choruses knit together into a seamless flow of action and music becomes our daily concern. We listen intently as the recitatives interweave with the arias and we often discuss whether the change of a single word or note might improve the whole. The skills of our performers grow visibly and audibly each day and the presence of Elizabeth is now striking in its maturity. She appears to have grown so much into her role that everything about her has the air of a royal personage. Even when she is not performing, she acts in a measured and graceful manner and her voice echoes the elegant and well-phrased accents that her role as Dido requires.

The sorceress on her platform is in every way a resounding success. She floats, very slowly for a yard or two, high above the stage. With her long gown flowing to the ground, she is, as the Duchess suggested, the most extraordinary Corinthian column we will ever see. Her presence is so demanding that when she beckons her witches to her side the world seems not to be the same place. We tremble as her voice rings out and you could not imagine anything other than that the entire spirit world is responding to her call.

Wayward Sisters, you that fright
The lonely traveller by night, appear, appear ...

As the days pass it becomes obvious that the cave scene lacks magic. The 'walk on' cave, referred to by the Duchess as 'the rude rocks', begins to annoy us. I think that it has some innocent charm about it, but I do not convince the others of this. The awesome length of the sorceress on her platform dominates the stage at the beginning of the scene, but the action at the close of the scene has nothing to recommend it. Henry says that we cannot change the cave, so we must look to the music to improve the scene. He asks me to write a few words to create the impression that spells are being cast in a cave. It is a simple but perplexing request and I walk about the hall muttering to myself. I try a few lines.

In our deep vaulted cell the charm we'll prepare,
Too dreadful a practice for this open air.

Henry is delighted with it and declares that he is going for a walk. We rest and wait for Henry's return. He returns looking so pleased with himself that we cannot wait to learn what he has concocted. He asks Daniel and the musicians to join him and they work furiously together, notating the score for the musicians and singers. Within the hour they are distributing copies of the score. Henry addresses the chorus.

"I want half of you to go backstage and half of you to remain on the stage. You are going to sing a chorus with an echo. Those who are behind the wings will repeat each phrase that is sung by the chorus on the stage. The echo singers must sound distant if we are to conjure the presence of a cave."

We are all amazed by his invention and when the chorus perform the echo, we are more amazed still. The repetition of words is delightful and we all laugh for the sheer joy of it. The Duchess touches my arm.

"I find it difficult to measure the level of genius that can musically conjure a cave," she says.

I nod my head and smile.

Chapter Thirty-five

With two days remaining before the big day, Henry receives a letter from Frances informing him that Amy is to remain in Richmond and she and Anna are coming to the performance. He laughs while great tears well up in his eyes and fall down his cheeks. I thank God that he never learned how close Frances was to death.

On the day of our final dress rehearsal, Lady Dorothy Burke, a pupil of the school, arrives on stage with Cecelia to rehearse the epilogue. It is not my epilogue, for I have completely forgotten to write it. I listen carefully to her words.

The vocal part we have tonight perform'd
And if by Love our hearts not yet are warm'd
Great Providence has still more bounteous been
To save us from those grand deceivers, men.

I ask Cecelia who has written these lines and she tells me that Thomas D'Ufrey has.

"I thought it best not to trouble you," she says.

"Well this certainly troubles me," I tell her sharply. "I do not care for D'Ufrey and I care even less for his words."

"Well I think that they serve …" she begins and stops when I leap onto the stage.

"I'll tell you what they serve, Cecelia. They serve to undermine all the eloquent speech and poetic thought that has preceded them and I will not allow them to be read. You simply cannot end the performance with these offensive lines."

Cecelia looks at me aghast. She asks Lady Dorothy Burke to return to her class and a furious argument ensues. The Duchess and Josias arrive on stage and attempt to calm our battle.

"I have no idea why he is so distressed," Cecelia tells them.

"Then I will tell you why," I shout at her. "I have spent the last four months sounding out every one of my syllables to check their resonance and confirm their meaning and if you think that I am going to allow some casual remark of D'Ufrey's to have the final say, you are mistaken."

"Oh, really," she retorts. "How can D'Ufrey's words be so offensive to you?"

"Well, they are and I am adamant," I tell her. "I will not have these lines follow my libretto and what is more I refuse to write another epilogue to replace them."

"Then what is to be done?" she asks, as though the impasse were irresolvable.

"I think that Josias should end the performance with a speech," the Duchess puts in, 'something extemporized.' Josias looks at Cecelia. He asks her what she thinks, but Cecelia looks perplexed.

"You see, my dear, it is simply too much to add a rhyming epilogue," the Duchess continues. "By the end of the opera our guests will have had a surfeit of formal words. This, I think, is the point that Nahum is trying to make."

I nod my head. How I love the Duchess.

"Make a relaxed speech, Josias, you are good at this sort of thing. It would be ungracious to apologize for something that has not caused offence."

"There is some sense in this, my dear" Josias says timidly. "The opera appears to our own senses as something beautiful and we should not gauge our audience's response before we have seen it."

"There is no point in looking at me for approval," she says. "Ask Mr. Tate. He is the one who will have a tantrum one-way or another."

Josias looks at me.

"If you promise not to use D'Ufrey's words, I am happy," I tell him. "I would prefer it if you did not philosophise on the subject of love and I

will run you through with a sword if you say anything that suggests that we need saving from 'those grand deceivers, men'."

"I will simply refer to the qualities and reputation of our pupils," he says and so we are agreed. I apologise to Cecelia for my strong words. She bows her head and leaves the stage without a word. The rest of us prepare for the final dress rehearsal.

We have interrogated the action too extensively to feel comfortable about further criticism, but something remains to be done about the lighting arrangements. Some twenty young ladies are engaged in keeping the great number of candles alight and their continual coming and going is disorganised and distracting. To add to the difficulties, James has directed that the candles should be moved about the stage to create different lighting effects. During the cave scene with the witches, for example, a great number of candles are placed together to give the illusion of a fire in front of the cave. When the sailors are preparing to depart, the candles are positioned on the crates by the dockside. For the finale, the chorus carry the candles up the stairs, looking every bit like a procession of angels on their way to heaven.

I am inclined to accept it as it is, but the Duchess and Josias are adamant that the issue of graceful movement should be resolved. They continue to work late into the evening and do not allow the candle lighters any rest until they are happy with their performance. After we return from supper they invite us back to the hall to watch the candleholders perform a silent sequence of actions. The young ladies move with all the grace expected of the performers. Their play with candles is a striking performance, a magical vigil of light to mark the eve of England's first opera.

The noise and frantic activity on the final morning is considerable. Finding ourselves with very little to do, Henry and I decide to go for a walk. We make our way across the fields, each of us contemplating our own thoughts. Often we have walked together with purpose, but

this walk speaks of the intimacy and respect we have for each other. We arrive at the village of Chelsea and stop at the Royal Oak for some ale. John Gostling is at the bar with George Lawson and Laurence Webster.

"How are the two maestros faring?" John asks. "Have you mastered your nerves or are your legs like jelly?"

"I am nervous about meeting Frances not the opera," Henry tells him.

"Indeed, there is no comparison," John replies. "There is no mastery over love."

"Aye, and generally we fall in love before we have mastered anything," Laurence adds. "We jump at the chance and then pray for the best."

"Not I," says George. "I pray for the best and then jump at the chance."

We all laugh at his quip and continue with love as the topic of our conversation. George ensures that gaiety plays its part, but he soon tires of us and leaves the bar. When he returns we discover that he has ordered bread and herring for us all.

We return to the hall refreshed. Everyone has some task or other to engage with, but I have nothing to keep me busy. I remain with Henry who checks through the sheets of notation that are placed on the musician's stands. I take a copy of the score and sit quietly reading the opera. Henry plays a brooding melody on the harpsichord and this slowly develops into a complex dance of sounds. It reminds me of his fantasias. After a while he asks if I will accompany him to the lane.

"I am praying that Frances will arrive early," he says. "It would be perfect to be with her before the performance starts."

I am pleased with the chance to be out again. We walk down to the Beaufort Steps and as we do not see our guests we continue our walk along the river as far as the Apothecary's Garden. As we are returning, coaches and carriages are arriving and some guests are gathering in the lane and the courtyard.

I return to the hall and walk about in a nervous state. I go backstage and decide to stay there. Now and then I peer around the screens. John Blow and Nicholas Staggins are the first guests I recognise. Then I see

James Billingsley, Peter Beardsley and Thomas Betterton. When I next steal a look I see Henry's mother and uncle chattering excitedly. My own guests are seated in a row together. Thomas Flatman is next to Mary Heveningham, Horace is next to her, Harry next to him and then Ellen. Harry and Horace are exceptionally busy with their conversation and I wonder what answers Horace is required to find to placate the inquisitive Harry. There is a spare seat where Buttons should be and I cannot see Eliza. I walk to the other side of the stage and look from there. Eliza is sitting next to Thomas Killigrew. My heart jumps when I see her. My heart will always jump at the sight of Eliza.

The hall is now full. The several doors to the refectory have been opened up and some guests are now beginning to fill this space at the back of the hall. The two seats near the front that Henry has reserved for Frances and Anna remain empty. The time is approaching when we must start. The Duchess, speaking in an uncharacteristic whisper, is busy lining up the performers. Josias taps me on the shoulder and asks where Henry is. I suggest that I go to the courtyard in search of him. I ask Mr. Singleton if he has seen Henry, but he has not. Then I ask if he is aware of the arrival of Frances and Anna Pieters, but the poor man is so overwhelmed by the task of checking invites that he cannot be certain of anything.

I walk out into the courtyard and from there to the lane. I look up towards Little Chelsea and then down towards the river. In my estimation the opera is now late in starting. I am turning back into the courtyard when I hear Henry calling to me. He is walking down Lovers' Walk with Frances on one arm and Anna on the other. My nervousness gives way to joy and I run to them and hug them warmly. It would be easy to imagine that they were simply taking a quiet Sunday stroll. I insist that they hurry to take their places, but Henry, drunk with the pleasure of being with Frances, bids me to be calm.

"Nothing will begin without me," he says.

"Of this I am certain," I tell him.

Josias meets us in the lobby. It is now his turn to express some agitation and he repeatedly bids them to hurry to their places.

"Is everything ready?" Henry asks him.

"Of course, of course, come along, come along."

Josias herds them through the doors and asks Singleton to escort Frances and Anna to their seats. Henry waits by the doors. The musicians are in their places, tuning their instruments. Josias invites me to take Cecelia's place on the balcony at the rear of the hall.

"She wishes to be backstage with the Duchess," he tells me.

Once we are in our seats, a group of young ladies move the candles from their position around the hall to the front of the stage. Cecelia steps through on to the stage and the excited chatter ceases.

"My Lords, ladies and gentlemen," Cecelia declaims, "We present an entertainment to mark the opening of our new school. We give you the opera, *Dido and Aeneas*."

Henry walks assuredly to his position at the harpsichord and tremendous applause greets him. He bows, lifts his arms and the audience fall silent. The stage is empty. I can hardly breath for my excitement.

The first bars of music rise up. The candle bearers re-enter and move the candles to the back of the stage by the great blue wall. The sky is now receiving the first rays of light from Phoebus.

Phoebus enters in his chariot. He passes over the sea, calling to the Nereids to pay their respects to him. He joins the Nereids and they sing to him of Venus. Venus enters in her chariot while the tritons dance in her honour. Her beauty puts Phoebus into a state of shock. The chorus sing, the Nereids dance and Spring enters in all her glory to welcome Venus to the shore. The heavenly couple leave the stage to Spring and her nymphs who dance and sing in praise of the courting couple. Dancing shepherds and shepherdesses join in the celebrations and the chorus entreat us,

Let us love and happy live.

The nymphs dance again. A shepherd asks a shepherdess why this morning is so full of joy,

The sun has been to court our queen,
And tired the Spring with wooing.

The country maids dance round and round and one by one they disappear into the wings.

The applause is jubilant. Josias slaps me sharply on the leg.

"We have them," he says. "They love it."

I nod my head. I am surprised that I have not yet swooned with the excitement of it all.

Henry's overture fills the hall. It invites us to another world. No one could doubt that something of great import is about to occur. The screens are pushed along the stage to reveal the palace scene. Dido, Belinda and their courtiers enter. I have no idea how they can sing. I could not sing now to save my life. Belinda addresses Dido,

Shake the cloud from off your brow,

and the chorus entreat her,

Banish sorrow, banish care,
Grief should ne're approach the fair.

Dido sings,

Ah! Belinda, I am pressed
With torment not to be confessed.

Belinda and the court ladies try to dissuade her,

Fear no danger to ensue,
The hero loves as well as you.

To these refrains the court ladies dance playfully around the central column.

Aeneas enters and Belinda addresses Dido,

See your Royal guest appears;
How god-like is the form he bears.

Aeneas asks,

When Royal fan shall I be blessed,
With cares of love, and state distressed.

Dido tells him,

Fate forbids what you pursue.

and he replies,

Aeneas has no fate but you.

The chorus sing,

Cupid only throws the dart.

Aeneas pleads,

If not for mine for Empires, sake,
Some pity on your lover take.

Belinda advises Dido,

Pursue thy conquest love.

She tells us that her eyes

Confess the flame her tongue denies.

The court ladies dance again and the chorus sing.

To the hills and the vales, to the rocks and the mountains,
To the musical groves and the cool shady fountains.
Let the triumphs of love and of beauty be shown,
Go revel ye cupids, the day is your own.

They all leave the stage and the sound of the audience's appreciation is unanimous. They love what they see and hear. The palace screens are pulled back and the country scene replaces it. Two young men carry the cave into the centre of the stage. A group of young dancers surround the cave and begin a dance that is full of extravagant and theatrical gestures. Thunder and lighting fill the hall and the candle lighters move the candles to the front of the cave. Henry's prelude for the witches conjures fear. It is the most ominous sound imaginable.

The giant sorceress is sliding onto the stage. Everyone gasps in amazement. Her voice is tremendous.

Wayward sisters, you that fright
The lonely traveller by night,
Appear, Appear.

The two witches come out of the cave.

Say, Beldam, say, what's thy will?
Harms our delight and mischief all our skill.

The sorceress sings,

The Queen of Carthage, whom we hate,
As we do all in prosperous state,
'ere sunset, shall most wretched prove,
Deprived of fame, of life and love.

The chorus laugh horribly,

Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho.

The sorceress reveals her wicked plan to trick Aeneas. They all laugh and dance in terrifying fashion, repeating their dreadful song.

Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho.
But 'ere we this perform,
We'll conjure for a storm
To mar their hunting sport
And drive 'em back to Court.

The witches return to their cave and the chorus sing their slow and beautiful echo.

In our deep vaulted cell the charm we'll prepare,
To dreadful a practice for this open air.

It is magical. The furies dance to the echoing tones of the music and the cave is carried offstage to the clamour of thunder and lighting.

We are now in Diana's sacred grove. The entire Court and Aeneas arrive as the musicians play a delightful ritornelle. The chorus sing.

Thanks to these lonesome vales,
These desert hills and dales.
So fair the game, so rich the sport,
Diana's self might to these woods resort.

Dido's women dance to entertain Aeneas. He shows them a boar's head, the prize of his hunting, which has tuffs to rival those of Venus's huntsmen. Henry musically conjures a storm and great claps of thunder

echo across the stage. The Court hastens back to town. Aeneas is alone. It is dark. On to the stage comes the cloud that carries the false 'Mercury' aloft.

Stay, Prince and hear great Jove's command.
He summons thee, this night, away.

This spirit has a compelling voice and Aeneas moans. He tells him,

Tonight thou must forsake this land.
The angry god will brook no longer stay.
Jove commands thee waste no more,
In love's delights those precious hours,
Allowed by the almighty powers,
To gain the Latin shore,
And ruined Troy restore.

Aeneas in great confusion cries out.

Jove's commands shall be obeyed.
Tonight our anchors shall be weighed.

Mercury and his cloud disappear.

But ah! What language can I try,
My injured Queen to pacify?
No sooner she resigns her heart,
But from her arms I'm forced to part.

The music is unbelievably tragic.

How can so hard a fate be took?
One night enjoyed, the next forsook.
Yours be the blame, ye gods for I
Obey your will, but with more ease could die.

Aeneas departs and the second act is complete. The entire hall is in a highly charged and emotional state. No one moves. The screens of the country scene are pulled back and replaced by the screens depicting the docks. As the prop movers place the barrels on the stage we hear

Henry's hornpipe. The sailors dance and sing.

Come away, fellow sailors, your anchors be weighing,
Time and tide will admit no delaying.
Take a boozy short leave of your nymphs on the shore,
And silence their mourning,
With vows of returning,
But never intending to visit them more.

The dancing sailors fill the stage and the great sorceress returns with her witches.

See, see, the flags and streamers curling,
Anchors weighing, sails unfurling.
Our plot has took,
The Queen's forsook, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho.
Elissa's ruined, ho, ho, ho.

The horrible group laugh and sing and plot another storm for Aeneas to contend with on the ocean.

Destruction's our delight; Delight our greatest sorrow.
Elissa bleeds tonight and Carthage flames tomorrow.
Ho, ho, ho'.

They dance to Henry's sounds of tragic destruction. The barrels are removed and the palace scene is established. The presence of the staircase fills me with foreboding. Dido and Belinda enter. Henry's harpsichord conjures sadness and pain as Dido walks up the stairs. She stops half way up, turns slowly and sits on a step. Aeneas enters and Belinda sings.

See madam, where the Prince appears,
Such sorrow in his looks he bears,
As would convince you still he's true.

Aeneas hears him,

What shall lost Aeneas do?
How royal fair shall I impart
The god's decree and tell you that we must part.

Dido stands up abruptly and walks down the stairs to face Aeneas.

Thus on the fatal banks of the Nile
Weeps the deceitful crocodile.

On hearing this Aeneas cries out,

By all that's good,

but Dido silences him.

By all that's good no more.
All that's good you have forsworn.
To your promised Empire fly
And let forsaken Dido die.

Aeneas pleads,

In spite of Jove's command I'll stay,
Offend the gods and love obey,

but Dido rejects him. She is angry.

No faithless man, thy course pursue,
I'm now resolved as well as you.
No repentance shall reclaim,
The injured Dido's slighted flame.
For 'tis enough what e'er you now decree,
That you had once a thought of leaving me.

The royal couple argue bitterly.

Let Jove say what he will, I'll stay.
Away.
I'll stay.
Away, to death I'll fly if longer you delay.

Aeneas is utterly distraught. He turns from Dido and walks away. Dido walks back up the stairs and turns around. Her body is weighed down, her face is full of sorrow and her voice resounds with a sadness that is almost impossible to bear.

But death, alas, I cannot shun.

Death must come when he is gone.

Dido slumps heavily onto a step and the chorus address the audience.

Great minds against themselves conspire
And shun the cure they most desire.

Dido faints, falls back on the stairs and then raises herself, slowly, tragically. The music, like arrows, strikes at my heart. Dido puts her hand out to Belinda.

Thy hand Belinda; Darkness shades me.
On thy bosom let me rest.
More I would but death invades me.
Death is now a welcome guest.

Belinda joins Dido on the staircase as the bass and the harpsichord give us forewarning of what is to follow. There is not a sound in the hall. It is impossible to measure the power of these moments. Dido stands again and looks towards the harbour where her lost Aeneas is now departing.

When I am laid, am laid in earth,
May my wrongs create no trouble, no trouble in thy breast;
Remember me, remember me, but, ah, forget my fate.
Remember me, but, ah, forget my fate.

Dido falls back onto the stair. She does not stir. Belinda sits beside her and lifts her head. The moving platform returns to the stage with cupids occupying the clouds. It moves towards the staircase and they scatter roses over Dido and Belinda. The members of the chorus, carrying candles, walk with melancholy up the stairs on either side of Dido's fallen body. They turn and face the audience.

With drooping wings you cupids come,
To scatter roses on her tomb.
Soft and gentle as her heart,
Keep here your watch and never part.

Belinda lays Dido back on the stair and drops her own head into her lap. The stage is still. The music and action is no more.

Chapter Thirty-six

No one in the audience moves. Everyone shares this moment of silence. Betterton is the first on his feat. He is shouting 'bravo'. Soon everyone is standing and clapping. I can see heads shaking in disbelief. Handkerchiefs are dabbing at tears. Josias places his hand on my shoulder and suggests that we go backstage.

By the time we reach the stage the performers are still receiving applause. Dido and Belinda are on stage together. Two pupils hand them flowers. Their singing was exemplary in every way and Elizabeth's beautiful presence was perfect in its tragedy. John Gostling takes to the stage. He is greeted with the tumultuous applause deserving of a hero. As he leaves, the extraordinary sorceress glides on in her long gown. She bows to the hall from her platform and great cheers rise up from the audience. A ladder is placed next to her and a young pupil climbs up to present her with flowers. The sorceress glides back off the stage.

The assembly of performers return again and again to receive their applause and there are cries for Henry. He jumps to the stage and gestures for Josias and I to join him. The applause is rapturous. Josias motions for Cecelia and the Duchess to accompany us. Two fairies carrying flowers present these to Cecelia and the Duchess. Josias then calls for James Billingsley and Peter Beardsley to come up to the stage. Great shouts of 'bravo' come from the audience. The company of dancers return for another ovation and the company of singers do the same. Henry motions to the musicians to stand and the enthusiastic clapping continues.

We all vacate the stage, leaving Josias to make his speech. He motions for the audience to become quiet, but the tide of excitement is overwhelming. He tries to speak, but he is too filled with emotion to

make his voice heard. He thanks the audience and joins us backstage.

"The audience need time to recover," he tells Cecelia. She gives him a kiss and wipes a tear from his eye. We are all in shock. The performance was more powerful than anyone could have imagined. I need to stretch my limbs and relieve those muscles that were fixed by the intensity of the drama. I leave the stage and try to make for the lobby, but the hall is crowded with excitement and the noise is considerable. I am stopped at every step and congratulated, so I return to stand with Henry and Josias. Many guests gather round us to offer their congratulations. Ellen comes clutching her handkerchief and she talks with considerable animation. Being elated is not a quality I have seen in Ellen before. I am delighted that the opera has acted upon her with such poignancy. I ask Harry if he enjoyed the performance.

"I think so," he says. "Did people sing to each other like this in the olden days?"

"No, Harry," I laugh, "they spoke as we do, but the idea of an opera is to convert words into song."

"It's a funny thing to do. It makes the people act strange. It would be nice if we sung to each other all the time, wouldn't it?"

"Indeed it would," I tell him.

Buttons comes to me. He is wiping his eyes exaggeratedly and he places a kiss upon my cheek with a slow, graceful gesture.

"I had no idea that crying could give me so much pleasure," he says. "It was the most moving hour of my life."

"You are teasing me with this laughing and crying of yours," I scold him.

"No, in truth, I promise that I am not. The qualities of this opera impressed me greatly. It is exactly how I wish to be entertained."

This time there is only honesty in his expression.

"You were wrong about one thing though."

I regard him closely.

"What you said about Dido was not true. She is angry. Hers is not a withering, broken heart, it is a heart that is passionately angry or this thing would never have killed her."

I am shocked and silenced by his words.

"I hope that there are more operas before long," he says. "Do you have plans for another?"

I shake my head and laugh.

I have never before received so many pats on the back or kisses on the cheek. For most of the guests, Dido and Aeneas is their first experience of an opera and without exception they display an extraordinary enthusiasm for it. John Blow is certain that opera will now become the most popular form of musical drama. His excitement knows no bounds and he suggests that we are on the threshold of a new era.

I feel as though this great tumult will never die down and I never want it to. I love this beautiful, euphoric, unstoppable excitement and I want to feel this with Eliza by my side. I feel an arm slide into mine. It is Anna.

"Anna. Did you enjoy it?" I ask.

"I loved it more than anything."

Henry and Frances join us and Anna continues.

"I imagined that this opera would leave me with sadness, but the songs lifted me up and changed my relationship to the tragedy."

"This is Henry's vision," I tell her.

"It is not just the music. It is the conjunction of music, libretto and dance that makes it a perfect form for lifting the spirits."

Henry places his great arm about her.

"What pleasure your words bring us, Anna. I could dance and sing all night. Come Frances, we will ask the musicians to play some dance tunes for us."

Henry tickles Frances and she laughs with great abandon.

"I cannot dance, you silly thing. I have not dressed for dancing."

"Well, I know where we can find costumes for all occasions," he tells her and he pulls her on to the stage and they disappear behind the screens. Anna and I enjoy their happiness. We start to talk of the opera, but a group of Anna's old school friends greet her and offer to show her around the new school. Anna leaves to accompany them.

All the guests are taken up with their excited talking and drinking. I make my way through the crowds, conversing briefly with everyone I know. I come across John Blow and Nicholas Staggins, who congratulate me heartily. John tells me that it is a splendid libretto and I love his words.

"You are being very kind to me," I say.

"Certainly not," he declares. "You are the first writer to be so generous to music. Most writers insist on too much literature, but you, my dear Tate, you were perfect for Henry. You supported him and gave him a partnership. Without you he could never have done it."

I am surprised by John's words, and a little embarrassed to receive such a good opinion from him. A small group gathers around John. They are eager to listen to him and when the attention is off me I slip away and go in search of Eliza. I see her standing with Thomas Killigrew in a vestibule next to the library. I greet them and give Eliza a kiss."

"The opera is a most enchanting form," Killigrew tells me. "I think there would be considerable interest for it at the Theatre Royal. Has our friend Betterton expressed an interest in producing Dido and Aeneas?"

"Not that I am aware of," I tell him.

"I will go and have a drink with him and learn of his intentions."

I am delighted to be alone with Eliza. I ask what she thought of our entertainment.

"I am completely overwhelmed by it. You are right about the music. There is nothing so beautiful. It gives beauty to everything. And you are right about the lament. I have never before heard such sadness from music."

Suddenly the sound of violins rises up out of the hall. Eliza turns towards the door and I stand next to her. Henry and Frances are dancing together in the middle of the floor. Henry is wearing the golden suit of Phoebus and Frances is dressed in the beautiful blue robes of Venus. They are an extraordinary sight. A great circle gathers around them and their admirers clap to encourage their dancing. I glance at Eliza quickly as she watches the dance. I love her. When the orchestra strikes up again Henry and Frances leave the floor and join us. I introduce Eliza.

"Eliza, I am honoured to meet you at last," Henry says. "Nahum has talked so often about you."

He turns towards Frances.

"May I introduce Frances Pieters? Frances is my inspiration in everything and the love of my life."

Eliza and Frances shake hands and express their pleasure in meeting. Eliza's eyes and mine meet quickly. I do not know what to say. I want to tell Frances that Eliza is the love of my life and my inspiration in everything, but this is too intimate an introduction to be expressed now. The seconds go by and I lose the opportunity to honour Eliza with an introduction that communicates the place she has in my heart. She is more beautiful to me than words and I am distraught.

"How did you find our entertainment?" Henry asks Eliza.

"I am deeply moved by it."

"Good. I feel this way about it myself." He laughs his cheeky laugh.

"Eliza, I have a favour to ask of you."

Eliza bows to him.

"I am in need of Nahum. Would you allow me to steal him from you for a short while?"

"Of course," Eliza says graciously.

"Thank you. I will return him to you in good spirits, I promise."

That I have lost Eliza so quickly startles me. I want nothing in the whole world but to remain with her. I take her hand, squeeze it briefly and say that I will return to her. Henry is walking briskly off, pulling Frances behind him, so I follow the heavenly couple. I glance back briefly to Eliza. She makes no move and gives me no sign.

I enter the Lobby just as Henry is interrupting Anna. She is with her school friends and he apologizes for disrupting them. He asks Anna if she would assist him in an important matter and Anna agrees. Still holding onto Frances, Henry walks off, saying that he must now find John Gostling. Anna asks if I know about the nature of Henry's important matter and I tell her that I am as perplexed by it as she is. When Henry finds John he invites him to attend a private celebration and takes him by the hand. He leads us all to the north wing, where we follow him into

the chapel. Henry stands before the altar in his shimmering gold suit, holding Frances by his side. Her elegant gown, worn by the Goddess of Love, is the blue of heaven.

"I wish to solemnly declare before this altar, that Frances and I have consummated our marriage."

We are all transfixed. Frances beams with happiness.

"My esteemed friend and reverend, we beseech you to perform a ceremony that will make our marriage official in the eyes of the Church."

I knew it. Anna gasps and puts a hand to her mouth. I am aware of each second as it passes. John Gostling stands amazed.

"I do not know what to say," he says. "My intuition tells me that it would be prudent to spend a little more time considering such an important decision."

"It would be a waste of time. Frances and I decided upon our marriage long ago."

John looks at me and then he looks at Anna.

"Anna, would your family consent to this marriage?"

Anna considers carefully.

"My mother is fully aware that neither Henry nor Frances will find happiness unless they are together," she tells him. What a clever girl. It is the perfect answer. The reverend Gostling turns to Henry.

"Henry, you do not need parental consent, but what you ask of me will not meet with the approval of my superiors. I will be fined for undertaking this ceremony without a license or the necessary marriage bans being published."

"I will gladly pay the fine," Henry tells him. He bites his lip. John Gostling is silent. He must realise that dissuading Henry of anything once he has set his mind to it is impossible. John walks to the altar, turns around and asks us to stand before him. I stand next to Henry and Anna stands next to Frances. I hardly know what is happening. The Reverend John Gostling asks Henry and Frances to take off their rings and hand them to each other. He asks Henry to repeat his words:

"I, Henry Purcell …"
"I, Henry Purcell," Henry repeats,
"take Frances Pieters …"
"take Frances Pieters …"
"to be my lawful wedded wife."
"to be my lawful wedded wife."
"To have and to hold …"
"from this day forward …"
"for better or for worse …"
"for richer, for poorer …"
"in sickness and in health …"
"to love and to cherish …"
"from this day forward …"
"'til death do us part."

John Gostling asks Frances to repeat the same. Frances is trembling and her words are shaky. Anna and I are moved to tears. What poignancy lies in this powerful affirmation that is spoken so publicly and yet so intimately.

"I now pronounce you man and wife."

These words from the man of the church ring out. They permeate everything and change the way things were. Henry and Frances are married. We watch as their kiss, so full of meaning, confirms their marriage.

Chapter Thirty-seven

The Reverend John Gostling embraces the newlyweds and wishes them a long and happy marriage. Anna hugs them and jumps up and down, kissing them alternately. Their exuberance and laughter is both comical and profound. I kiss them and say that I will always remember their happiness on this day. Henry, beaming like Phoebus himself, takes his beautiful Venus by the hand and walks her back down the aisle. They leave the chapel as Mr. and Mrs. Purcell. John follows after them. I walk as far as the door, but Anna is not with me. She has remained seated on the front bench. I return and sit next to her. We sit quietly and Anna utters a long sigh.

"Do you know, Nahum," she says, "my longing to be in love is unbearable. I am completely happy for Frances, but her marriage will consign me to my mother's home forever. My life will have no possibility. I must now assist my mother in everything."

"Oh, Anna, this is not inevitable. Many things happen in life that cause it to change direction."

"But you do not know my mother, Nahum."

She sighs again. I consider what words I might offer her, but suddenly she says,

"Do you not think that Henry's action was entirely heroic?"

"I do. His determination is profoundly impressive."

"Tell me something." She stops and considers. "Had we been moved to love each other, could you have stolen me away like this?"

"Oh! Anna I would not … that is I could not … you know … steal someone."

Anna laughs heartily.

"But if we both loved each other?"

"Oh yes, I see. Yes, if we loved each other I would go to the ends of the earth."

"I want someone like you, Nahum, someone who loves literature and will dedicate their life to study and writing."

I am speechless.

"Will I ever find someone?"

"I am sure you will."

"My happiness depends upon it."

"Anna, your life has only just begun. Don't be impatient. Love will come your way. There is nothing you can do to arrange it. Stay close to writers if you will, wait patiently if you can, but be certain that love will surprise you someday."

"I have a wish, Nahum."

I look at her.

"I would like it if you would regard me as your friend rather than a pupil you once taught."

"But I do this already Anna. I value your qualities highly and I will support you in every way I can. We will always talk about writing and we will meet regularly."

We sit in silence. I am very moved by her expression.

"I regard Henry as my brother," I tell her, "and now that he is married to Frances, you and I must be related in some manner."

Anna smiles and offers me her hand. I hold it and then stand up, pulling her up from her seat.

"Come," I bid her, "I will introduce you to my friends."

Anna smiles.

"This would please me more than anything, but first I must find Frances to embrace her again."

We leave the chapel and walk arm-in-arm back to the lobby. The Duchess has just offered a toast to Henry and Frances and the news of their marriage is on everyone's lips. Henry and Frances are with his mother and uncle. His mother is crying, but it is certain that happiness is the cause of her tears. Henry has his arm around her and I watch as she

extends her arm to include Frances. The three of them stand together in each other's embrace.

The sound of music and chatter in the main hall is considerable. Anna goes to join Frances and I search about for Eliza. I do not see her. I return to the lobby. Thomas Flatman is standing in the doorway and I take him to Anna and introduce them. I tell Thomas that Anna has a great interest in writing and she promises to be a very fine writer. Thomas shows great attentiveness towards her. He says that we should invite her to our literary evenings and he promises to send her his latest poems. He insists that she reply to him with her comments and Anna promises to do so. She is flattered by his interest and she is delighted when he invites her to dance.

There is a merry throng of dancers in the main hall. Buttons is dancing with the Duchess. She is laughing uproariously. Buttons is dancing in such a wild fashion that she can hardly keep on her feet. When the dance ends the Duchess goes to join her friends and Buttons comes over to me. Thomas and Anna join us.

"This is my dear friend Anna and this is my dear friend Buttons," I say.

"Buttons?" Anna exclaims. It is half a question and half an exclamation.

"Yes, a small disk or knob used as a fastener or an ornament," Buttons says.

Anna laughs.

"And which of the two are you?" she asks.

"Me, I am an ornamental knob," he tells her proudly.

Anna puts a hand to mouth.

"You should not say so," she tells him.

"Indeed I should, for I have no talent for buttoning my lip."

Anna laughs again.

"So what are your talents?" she asks him.

"I have a talent for being forward," he says, "not unlike you it would seem. Do you have other talents that you would admit to?"

Anna looks surprised.

"Writing," she says. "Nahum is my teacher. I should like to emulate his literary talents."

"Emulate Nahum. Now there's an ambition. I suggest that some advice might be appropriate. Don't write too much, try not to be over serious and move heaven and earth to avoid the heroic couplet."

I slap him on the shoulder.

"Buttons has little time for rules and even less for formal restraints," I tell Anna.

"I will have you know," he exclaims, "that I adhere to the laws of physics as well as any man."

Anna laughs again and Buttons bows to her before skipping onto the dance floor to find another unsuspecting soul to sweep and whirl about the hall.

Anna studies Buttons and asks one question after another about him. I describe his antics and his love of reversing common habits of thinking. It is obvious that Buttons has fascinated her considerably. I see Horace and Mary in the lobby. They are getting ready to leave so I take Anna to them. I say that of all my pupils, Anna showed the greatest talent for literature. Mary holds her hand and studies her face.

"What inspired your interest in literature?" she asks.

"I am not sure that I know," Anna replies, "other than having an urgent need to express my feelings in words."

"That is a good place to start," Mary tells her, "but what is your interest?"

"Is this not an interest?" Anna asks, a little taken aback.

"What do you like to read?" Mary asks.

"I like to read about ordinary people and events. When an author takes me by surprise, then I love this more than anything."

"That is the best place to start, my dear," Mary says.

"She has a considerable intellect and a heart of gold," I tell Mary.

"Indeed," Mary declares, "I may be in need of you, Anna. Here is my card. I would like it if we could arrange to meet. I have many activities to attend to that might benefit from your assistance."

Anna's face lights up.

"Should I write to you?" she asks.

"Indeed you should. Send me your address and I will arrange a date when we can be together. Now, sadly, Horace and I must be leaving."

"Yes," Horace puts in. "I must visit the King before the night is out. By the way," he addresses me, "I enjoyed meeting young Harry. It is a long time since I last enjoyed the presence of such a delightfully inquisitive mind."

"Some day he will be a credit to your generosity," I tell him, "as I hope I will."

"You are this already, Nahum. Tonight you have entertained us excellently well and I will remember this opera forever. Let us meet soon. Have you seen Thomas or Buttons here about? They are travelling with us to London."

I am about to go in search of them when they both enter the lobby. All suggest that I accompany them in the coach. I thank them for their kind offer and declare that I have not soaked up all the great excitement yet. Buttons takes his leave of Anna.

"Should Nahum visit you soon, I would like to be included in the invitation."

Anna smiles and offers him her hand. Buttons lifts it to his lips in an exaggerated expression of courtly chivalry. Anna loves his acting. We stand waving to them until they are out of sight.

"Mary Heveningham is a prominent literary figure," I tell her, "You should make every effort to engage with her activities."

Anna kisses Mary's card and then she kisses me. "I must tell Frances about my good fortune," she says.

Cecelia has provided a feast and the musicians provide great entertainment. I enjoy more cups of wine and go about talking to acquaintances while keeping up my search for Eliza. I spy Killigrew and run to him, knowing that he will know of Eliza's whereabouts.

"Are you leaving," I ask him.

"Indeed I am, but that was the most marvellous entertainment."

He hugs me.

"Here stands a man who will henceforth delight in his enthusiasm for the opera. You must visit me at the theatre soon. We have started rehearsals for King Richard."

"I certainly will," I tell him. "Is Eliza accompanying you to London?"

"Oh no, my dear. She has returned with John Petty".

My legs buckle under me.

"I have no idea how he came to be here. He was not at the performance."

"Was he not?" I ask, feigning no particular interest in the information.

"No my dear," Killigrew says, "and I hope that he will keep his wits about him. There is always such a conflagration of interest around young Eliza as you know."

My need to question Killigrew's observation is overwhelming, but I resist. I cannot bear to hear news of Eliza and if I should, I will not be able to hold back the emotions that are about to topple me. We talk on, but I am hardly aware of our conversation. 'With love there is only giving'. These words are ringing in my head. 'With love there is only giving'. When I bid Killigrew goodbye, I do it without being aware of it and then I stand very still. There is nothing so final in love than the presence of another. No good will come of obsession now. More words come to me, 'Stop the flow of images! Do not get stuck in repetition! When the times comes you must let her move on'. Must I give up all hope? Yes I must. I must live without it.

I sit on a bench in the courtyard. I must not imagine all Eliza's words to be hollow just because she returned with John Petty. There are probably reasons here that are beyond my comprehension. Ellen and Harry approach me. Ellen has been searching for me everywhere. They are keen to return and I too have a longing to be home now. I go to discover what arrangements have been made for the journey downriver. A large number of guests are making preparations to leave. Henry and Frances are putting on their coats, having changed back into their own clothes.

Henry addresses me. "I am going to take Frances and Anna to the City by coach. Would you care to join us?"

"Do you have room for three more?" I ask.

"I doubt it. We are three and there is my mother, my uncle and Elizabeth, Katherine and Daniel too."

"Then I will return with Ellen and Harry," I tell him. "We will take a boat."

"Are you sure this is wise?" he asks.

"I will make sure that we get a Lambeth man," I tell him.

I go to take my leave of the Duchess and the Priests. We are all very emotional.

"Have you forgiven me," Cecelia asks.

"Oh, Cecelia, I could ask you the same question. No one, having worked on this great occasion, could be ungracious about any part of it. I will always cherish our time together."

I turn to Josias and shake his hand. We are always slightly embarrassed with each other.

"I loved your dances," I tell him.

"I will see you next week, my dear," he says. "How we will return to our mundane lives after this I do not know. I suspect that the demands of our pupils will soon put us in mind of our duties again."

The Duchess kisses me on the lips and we embrace each other tenderly. There are tears in her eyes. She takes both my hands in hers.

"You must come and see me regularly," she says. "I want you to remain close to me. Our being together has been extraordinary and I should like this to be the beginning and not the end."

"I will see you as often as you wish," I tell her.

"Good. I am soon to retire from Court and I will be in need of your company."

I cannot imagine that the Duchess will ever retire, but I have no words left to express my thoughts to her. I blow her a kiss as I go out to the courtyard. I take Anna by the hand as we walk to the coach. She hugs me, thanks me for my kindness and asks if we will meet soon. I promise that we will and Henry and Frances join us.

"My dear happy couple," I embrace them, "your marriage has filled

me with an abundance of pleasure and I can hardly express it. Your bravery is exemplary and I pray that your days are filled with love. I also pray that Amy will understand that your love could not accept the boundaries that she thought to impose upon it. One day your marriage will fill her with happiness."

Henry puts his arm around me.

"On this subject, Nahum, I would like you visit us at the Spaniard tomorrow. We must write a letter to Amy and I should like your assistance."

"Such a task will require the finest literary skills," I tell him. "I too will need some assistance. Do you know of anyone with an empathy for matters of this kind?"

"Of course," he replies. He takes Anna by the hand.

"Are you ready for your first commission?" he asks.

Anna smiles, gives a curtsey and turns to me. "We will write an elegiac poem in honour of the Great Mother," she says.

"Indeed we will," I say. "We will make of it a sonnet in praise of love and we will stress the beauty of our theme with open vowels and rhyming couplets."

We all laugh. Henry's mother places her hand upon my arm.

"You're a special man, Nahum Tate," she says placing a kiss on my cheek. It brings a tear to my eye.

Ellen and Harry stand next to me and we watch as Anna and the Purcell family crowd into their coach. We wave them goodbye and make our way to the Beaufort Steps. There are a number of school guests waiting for vessels to take them down river, but Harry jumps the queue and throws himself into the first boat. I ask him to return, but the generous guests insist that we take the boat. I thank them. Harry is at the front of the skiff and Ellen and I are at the back. The boatman hands me two blankets and we wrap these around us.

As the boat moves out into the river a shiver of loneliness ripples through me. I am leaving my life behind on that riverbank. *Dido and Aeneas* is over. It defined my life and gave me the greatest occupation. There is nothing so lonesome in the entire world as the end of a

performance. I cannot imagine how I will start on something new, how I might begin life afresh. As surely as our boat leaves land behind, so, with every stroke of the boatman's oar, my ties to Eliza loose their connection. Any hope that she would one day be mine I leave there. Ellen puts her hand on my arm.

"You look white, Nahum. Are you alright?"

"Yes, I am fine."

"Your opera filled me with a wonder that will stay with me forever."

"Dear Ellen, it pleases me that you say so."

"I cannot compare the delight of this occasion to anything else in my life."

"Thank you."

"But I am thanking you, Nahum. I have no idea how anyone could begin to compose anything as beautiful as an opera. How is it that you know about these things?"

"I have no idea. Until recently, I knew nothing about opera."

"Well, you must be the happiest man alive."

"Ellen, I am so happy I could cry."

I turn my head to the water in case my tears should start to flow. They do not, but I remain gazing at the water. I feel Ellen's hand. She has placed it gently in the centre of my back. Its presence gives me some composure. No, it is more than this. It is as though my heart lives somewhere here and Ellen's hand has melted something frozen in me. Could such a simple gesture activate so much? I turn my head to her and smile.

"I will live to play another day," I say. Ellen nods her head and I sit close to her. Harry calls to the boatman ahead of us. He then waves his arms and shouts,

"Move over, we are coming through."

Ellen and I laugh at his cheekiness.

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