

**SARAH CHLOE
BURNS**

**MATILDA
OF
ARGYLL**

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“The blood of the Conqueror
boils in my veins, and I’ll be
damned if I shall sit idly...
while you rule upon my
throne...my son’s throne!”

Prologue

Angers, France; 1136 A.D.

“*Ah, mon dieu! Mon dieu! Je m’appelle Matilda! Je suis le fille d’Henri, le rex tres magnifique d’Angletaire y Normande,*” Empress Matilda screamed into the night air from her balcony overlooking the city of Angers. “The throne of England belongs to me and my heirs! Father promised, and Stephen agreed officially, in writing. Now that thieving underhanded cousin of mine has shown his true colors; *n’est-ce pas?* My father’s favorite nephew, and he expresses his gratitude in this knave-like manner! I tell you, I won’t stand for it any longer, Geoffrey. Did I not agree to this asinine union of ours for the very purpose of producing an heir to the throne? Have I not endured the languor of our marriage bed and the dreadful pangs of childbirth three times just so that Father’s direct heirs might continue to rule England and Normandy, as he and my grandfather before him? And now I’m forced to accept this double humiliation while *ma petites*, Henri, Geoffrey, and William rot in this prison-like fortress of Angers,” Matilda fumed, as her bored and equally unassailable spouse listened in practiced self-control.

“If you have quite finished, my dar-r-rling wife,” Geoffrey Plantagenet queried in exaggerated tones of almost soluble disgust, “I believe I am ready to discuss a suitable course of action. Far be it from me to restrain you from pursuing your path to retribution. As you are very well aware, your marriage to me has opened certain doors to your future—our sons’ futures—and cinched numerous enemies as well. Your cousin and the other Counts of

Blois are the natural enemies of the Angevin duchy, and therefore my family's antagonists long before our union and the birth of our sons. Never forget," he reminded her in a most threatening tone," that my sons are the future Dukes and Count of Anjou, and their best interests are always on my mind," Geoffrey stated firmly. "Therefore I suggest that you cease your relentless raving and morbid moanings, and go to work—and to war—to achieve your goals. I will be immensely preoccupied over the next few years in breaking the backs of those corrupt and barbaric relatives of yours in Normandy. My sons will most certainly be installed as the rightful heirs to both the Angevin and neighboring Norman duchies. As far as England is concerned, I advise you to gather your forces together, confer with your powerful uncle in Scotland, and plunder the throne of that underhanded Stephen. I'll wager great odds that the cold blood running through your veins could provoke an ice storm to settle over that already frigid throne on the Thames, and you will soon be roasting Stephen's bones, even as his head is displayed on the bridge nearby," Geoffrey stated emphatically.

A cruel smile was curving on Matilda's lips as she listened to Geoffrey's cleverly written script of their future. There were few grounds upon which the two of them stood as agreeable equals, but one was in the cold, calculating world of political gain. Of course, she thought. I have both the strength of body and mind to construct a plan of action and lead a military campaign against England. And why wouldn't my Uncle David lend his considerable forces to overthrow Stephen? Any proclaimed enemy of mine can be no friend to Scotland, can he?

"Why Geoffrey, you have moments of sheer brilliance, moments when I am made aware of Father's good reasoning in arranging this farcical marriage of ours. Why, I believe I would even be willing to warm your bed for a night if you will lend me your assistance in this matter of recruiting an army," she uttered, in her best attempt to sound seductive.

"Oh please, Matilda! Spare me this nauseating attempt to appear fetching and feminine. I would sooner gather and train an

army for you in an attempt to bribe you away from my bed than to have your stiff, unresponsive and—let’s face it—aging body beneath me again,” Geoffrey protested in disgust, as he quickly ducked to dodge the vase Matilda was in the process of hurling toward him.

“You bastard!” she screamed. “You are certainly living up to that inescapable title, aren’t you? As if I would truly wish to spend another night in your flailing and inexperienced embrace, and risk another pregnancy! Three reminders of that nightmare is quite enough,” she said, red with humiliation and anger.

Smiling coldly, the twenty-three-year-old Geoffrey prepared to leave this thirty-four-year-old wife’s room. “Perhaps in the morning we can talk more sanely about the necessary preparations for war. The barons are anxious to move toward Rouen, and our advance through Normandy should lend you great assistance in crossing the channel to England. Regrettably, I must bid you a sound good night now,” he said with delicious sarcasm. “A very warm and willing body awaits me in my chamber,” Geoffrey declared with purring satisfaction, as he closed the door to Matilda’s icy stare.

Later, as Matilda’s Lady-in-Waiting assisted her in removing her heavy gown down to her undergarments, Matilda concentrated very hard on calming her nerves and bringing her mind to focus on her future and the path to her goals. She sat at her dressing table, staring into the mirror as her thinning brown hair was brushed, and pondered the direction her life had taken. Thus far, she had been denied any participation in choosing her life’s partners, let alone the country in which she must dwell. At least Geoffrey was offering her a considerable opportunity to control her destiny. As she relaxed, her thoughts wandered.

When Matilda was a very youthful and budding young woman of twelve, King Henry had arranged her marriage to Henry V, then reigning as Emperor of Germany. Twelve years later (1126) the emperor died, and Matilda was returned to her father, a childless widow; nonetheless, his only legitimate heir to the throne.

Within two years, King Henry had secured Matilda's second marriage, this time to the much more promising young Duke Geoffrey Plantagenet of Angers. The King was proud of this advantageous connection, which could extend his kingdom for his heirs. Now he must hope for a grandson, and his plans would certainly materialize.

Well, I've produced that heir, Father, and two spares as well, she thought to herself. In the fourth year of her marriage to Geoffrey Plantagenet, Matilda gave birth to Henry, who should become England's King Henry II. She and Geoffrey had spent so little time in the same bed, it seemed like a miracle when the heir to the throne arrived in their world in 1132. It could be that pride of fatherhood moved Geoffrey to find his bold, unfeminine wife somewhat more desirable. Whatever inspired him to visit her chamber more frequently, they were both pleased with the results of their union. In their fifth year of married life, his own namesake, Geoffrey, was born; then year six witnessed the arrival of yet another heir, William (namesake of the Great Conqueror). King Henry I of England went to his grave feeling certain of his family's future.

As Matilda excused her Lady-in-Waiting from her chamber, she walked out onto her balcony for the second time that evening. Staring into the stars above her, she began to call upon her ancestors for assistance, as she also recalled the stories related to her by her father. Strange how history repeats itself, she thought...

William of Normandy, though born the illegitimate son of Robert, Duke of Normandy, inherited his father's duchy in 1035. Both charismatic and brilliant, he became a respected Norman leader by 1047—so much so that when he visited King Edward (his distant cousin) in 1051, he was promised succession to the English throne. Imagine his indignation when, instead, Harold, Earl of Wessex succeeded Edward in 1066 (Harold was the King's brother-in-law). Edward the Confessor had indeed died childless, but failed to honor his promise to William, who immediately

gathered his forces in retaliation. Arriving in England with Normandy's leading nobles and church dignitaries, he defeated Harold at the Battle of Hastings. William thus assumed what he considered his rightful throne as King of England. Uniting Normandy and England under one crown not only increased the breadth of William's kingdom, his own power and wealth, but it also insured the future union of French and English bloodlines.

The importance of this union is emphasized by the fact that his wife, Matilda, commissioned the creation of a grand tapestry to record every aspect of the Battle of Hastings and following victories. Seventy meters in length, the tapestry depicts each phase and location of William's victories, in dramatic pictures and words—and survives today as a treasured relic of French history. As for William, he was both a faithful and devoted husband and conscientious monarch, and it was perhaps for this reason that Matilda relished the chance to advertise her husband's accomplishments. Indeed, her role as nurturing lover, confidante and helpmate seemed to transfer to William a balanced perspective as ruler of his household and kingdom. He was a military man, anchored by a deep and abiding love of family. Matilda's strength, on the other hand, is mirrored in the amazing family album preserved in her great tapestry, and in her offspring.

In England, William acquired an already efficiently administered kingdom, which he promised to preserve. With the implementation of new customs (many from his native Normandy), he made the English government ever stronger. He commissioned the surveying and registering of English estates in his famous *Domesday Book*, which enabled him and future kings to keep tabs on the lords and nobility (for taxing purposes) throughout England. These and other improvements continued over the next century, under the leadership of his sons.

Upon the death of the Conqueror (1087), his two sons succeeded to the throne. William II (1087-1100) was a strong leader, who succeeded to the throne instead of his older brother Robert (whom his father considered too easy-going to be king). Robert was given the duchy of Normandy instead. However, it

was the younger brother, Henry I (1100-1135), who proved to be the ablest of the three, if not the most ethical. In fact, while never proven, it has long been assumed that Henry indeed engineered William II's death.

King William II possessed a great passion for hunting, which he was pursuing on August 2, 1100, in England's New Forest. Strangely, it was by the arrow of one of his closest friends that he met his death. Although reported as an accident, others questioned that Walter Tyrell would so suddenly lose his archery skills. In fact, many soon assumed Tyrell was acting upon the instructions of the younger brother, Henry. Coincidentally, Henry removed the royal treasury at Winchester the very next day—adding to the already growing suspicions among the royal courtiers. Nevertheless, affections can shift suddenly, when advantages accompany the change in leadership.

A skillful diplomat, Henry took advantage of England's growing prosperity—levying heavy taxes, creating strong baronial allegiances through patronage, and exiling troublemakers who disagreed with his policies. In short, to his admirers, the prolonged period of peace engendered by his strong-fisted economic policies placed Henry I far above the level of either his father or his brother. However, for those who admired gentility, little was to be found in Henry. He commanded effectively, demanded much of those in his charge, and felt an entitlement leading to self-indulgence. He viewed tenderness and fidelity as weakness.

Henry the Able-Bodied, one might also call him, because his lusty sexual exploits remain as one of his most notorious legacies. The father of at least twenty-two bastard offspring, Henry was nevertheless able to sire only one legitimate male offspring, William, who drowned at the age of seventeen, while sailing from France to England. His only remaining legitimate heir was, alas, a daughter named for his proud and genteel mother, Matilda. With no future king in sight, King Henry believed the monarchy could best be served by an allegiance with Normandy's longstanding rival in northern France, the duchy of Anjou. Used as a political pawn, therefore, Matilda was wed to Geoffrey

Plantagenet, count of Anjou. And while nuptial bliss was not a consideration of this contractual agreement, the marriage was fruitful in many ways.

As hoped, this union produced one male heir prior to Henry's death; he had the seeming assurance that Henry Plantagenet, or Henry II, would eventually inherit his title. In the meantime, Henry came to an agreement with the English barons and Stephen of Blois, grandson of William the Conqueror (and possible litigant to the throne), that Matilda would ascend to the throne upon Henry's death. When Henry passed in 1135, however, Stephen usurped the throne. Only two years old at his grandfather's death, Henry Plantagenet would not be able to stand up against his cousin, and Stephen assumed that Matilda *could* not do so.

"Well, we'll just see about that, Stephen," Matilda spoke aloud to the night air. "I am my father's daughter, after all. The blood of the Conqueror boils in my veins, and I'll be damned if I shall sit idly, stitching and embroidering, while you rule upon my throne...my son's throne!" she finished vehemently. For the next few weeks, she and Geoffrey recruited an army to march upon England, employing his leading military men to train them before their march northward to the channel.

Unbeknownst to Matilda, her task would consume her life. All tolled, another seventeen years of patient endurance, struggles, alliances and warfare would lapse before the throne was secured...years of reliving and retelling the heroic tale of her grandfather, William the Conqueror. However, this Matilda was not content to oversee needlework and pray. The division of her parents and grandparents' kingdoms weighed heavily upon her; and while she and Geoffrey were less than ideal, loving spouses, they were both able warriors. The births of their sons united them for a few years. When they chose warfare, however, Matilda and Geoffrey went their separate ways. Geoffrey fought to regain control of the Norman territories, while Matilda led a large contingency to recapture the English throne. This was accomplished in short order. Partly due to Stephen's

misgovernment, Matilda was able to win over numerous barons; and when war broke out between the two claimants in 1141, Matilda was victorious and Stephen imprisoned.

Unfortunately, Matilda's flintlike determination was all too apparent in her personality. She passionately persuaded her uncle, King David of Scotland, to assist her in defeating King Stephen of England. With a typical Scotsman's desire to rally to a just cause, he unquestioningly mustered his forces throughout Scotland and marched to war. Additionally, Matilda's bastard brother, Robert Earl of Gloucester, led men into battle. Losing approximately eleven thousand of his fellow countrymen in the ensuing battles, King David loyally assisted Matilda to victory. However, she failed to show an equally passionate gratitude, once enthroned. She was arrogant and presumptuous, and her sense of entitlement soon alienated the loyalties of her English subjects. Reigning for less than two years, Matilda was soon unseated by Stephen. Not until Stephen's death would Henry II succeed to his grandfather's office as King of England.

When the Plantagenets and Henry II of Anjou were at last successful, the rewards were great, however. Henry II (1154-1189), through his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine, extended his grandfather's dominion to include not only England and Normandy, but Anjou and Aquitaine as well. In fact, his kingdom eventually stretched from Scotland to the north, well into the eastern portions of France. William and Henry could rest proudly. Henry II and Eleanor produced numerous sons and daughters (while this Henry's mistresses produced a few offspring as well).

Interestingly, both marital and extra-marital liaisons seemed always beneficial to the men in power and at least not detrimental to the male offspring of the mistresses. Royal bastards such as Geoffrey Plantagenet and William Longsword (Henry II's sons out of wedlock) were given recognition and honors. Their mothers, on the other hand, were treated with contempt and revulsion.

Women who broke the laws of the Church and the rules of society were outcasts. Even fortunate, respectable and privileged women, meanwhile (such as Empress Matilda or Eleanor of Aquitaine) were used as political pawns by their fathers. Only the most determined could make any real and lasting impact on the high politics of their era. Though her own power was limited because of her role as a mere daughter of royalty, Matilda's fame does survive. Not merely a dedicated mother and accomplished military leader, Matilda instinctively recognized her family's important role in history, preserving their story and her grandmother's tapestry for future generations. An often excessively proud mother of both France and England, her bloodline was nevertheless assured. Perhaps more importantly, Scotland and France became, as it were, blood relatives, united in power against England.

But what of her father's numerous wandering, unclaimed and dispossessed offspring? Would they inherit the proud spirit of a grandfather known as William the Conqueror, the artistic nature of their grandmother Matilda, the capable diplomatic wit of Henry I, the military strength of a Scottish King David or Robert Earl of Gloucester, or possibly the determined and calculating discipline of their estranged sister Matilda? What unions and future allegiances would they forge? What distances would they travel to carry their spirit into this second millennium?

POOR LA MAPA
PÁGINA 12

“How could such a good man
become so bad a king?”

London; Spring of 1638

Chapter 1

Charles I began his reign as the King of all England in the year 1625. As the second son of James I of England (also James VI of Scotland), he never expected to inherit the throne—doing so only at the death of his older brother Henry. However, once enthroned, he ruled with alacrity and according to his own conscience (much to the chagrin of most of the English and Scottish peoples).

As a Protestant nation, Great Britain was still a struggling infant; and many of her inhabitants either personally endured or were told the stories of the not too distant past—of violent religious struggles between monarchs, the reign of “bloody Mary,” and the resulting ghastly deaths of Protestant protesters. During the subsequent reign of Queen Elizabeth, England had once again been firmly established as a Protestant nation; the Scottish had become Presbyterian Protestants, also through a violent rebellion led by Henry Knox, in 1560. The English nation was determined to maintain its religious status, which worked so well with their system of shared government. The king’s power was balanced by the power of Parliament.

When King James ascended to the throne in 1603, he had already served as King of Scotland for thirty-six years, exercising the Divine Right of Kings (as God’s appointed monarch, he exercised absolute authority). He would not have such a free hand in ruling England as well. The English were disgruntled to see the power of Parliament weakened during his reign, and so were doubly concerned when his son, Charles, exhibited the same sentiments. Furthermore, while James was merely tolerant of

Catholicism, Charles carried this sentiment even further by marrying Henrietta Maria, the daughter of French King Henry IV, and an avowed Catholic.

Like his father, Charles also believed in the Divine Right of Kings, and he dissolved Parliament in the year 1629. Englishmen and Scotsmen alike exercised a cautious alert regarding their king, from that point forward. Without a political voice, their religious systems and way of life could be overthrown once again. By 1638, the atmosphere of London City was indeed tense.

Easing her way around the side of the townhouse, the young lady glanced surreptitiously through the gate toward the street in front. Seeing no family members or servants to prevent her flight, she slipped beyond her prescribed boundaries. Getting her bearings and gathering her voluminous petticoats and wool skirt just above her ankles, she raced deftly down the cobbled London street, past exquisite homes and carriages, with the damp wind blowing against her ruddy cheeks. Her destination was the London Bridge. Figuring that the great procession may have reached that location, she raced on, hoping to find a good viewing point.

Within twenty minutes, she had reached Pudding Lane, where the fragrant smells of freshly baking scones enticed her senses toward a bakeshop. Reaching into her coat pocket, she felt for her change purse and made the snap decision to dart inside the shop for refreshments. Her spirits immediately fell. She had not counted on the crowd gathered inside, but her grumbling stomach convinced her that this had become a necessary break. “Excuse me please, sir-r-r. I’m in r-r-rather a hurry to catch a glimpse o’ the procession. Could you be the most gr-r-racious o’ gentlemen and allow me to place me or-r-rder quickly?”

Staring at the young woman with unconcealed shock, the finely dressed gentleman, of some thirty odd years, responded, “Well, aren’t you the cat’s meow?! Racin’ in here in your fine

clothin' and no gentleman to protect you. Why, do you think the rest of us are simply out for a Sunday stroll? We've likely all turned out to catch a glimpse of the fine hoity-toity lady from France ourselves—only we have better timin' than the young lass.” (He had easily detected the strong Scottish brogue.) “Don't you know the procession has passed and moved on toward Cheapside? I'm headed there directly after I receive my order of scones. If you want to be even more scandalous by acceptin' a carriage ride from a stranger, you may wish to accompany me. In fact, I've a mind to insist upon it for your own safety. Had I a daughter or wife of your exquisite appearance, I would certainly not let her loose on the streets of London at any time—much less on such a day when the masses are teemin'.” Without waiting for a response from the stunned young woman, he reported, “My manservant has brought along a pipin' hot pot of tea for the outing, if you're up for the venture.”

Sizing the man up quickly, the fair maid came to another impetuous decision. He looks to be a completely sincere and respectable gentleman, so I shall introduce myself as...Elizabeth...no, Lizzie (sounds more common) Alexander. Yes, since there's no denying my Scottish blood (and I suspect that his accent is at least lowland Scotch), I shall simply pass myself off as one of the Alexander clan, and keep some sort of anonymity. “Kind sir-r-r, you are most gallant, and I would be so appreciative of a ride...after I get me hands on one of those fine pastr-r-ries.”

Paying the baker for the bag of fresh hot scones, the gentleman extended his hand politely. “Nonsense, miss. I have more than enough for the two of us and the rest of the party in the carriage. Come along then, and as soon as I learn your identity, I shall introduce you to the rest of the Alexander family. By the by, I am most commonly known as Laird Robert, though you may continue to address me as 'kind sir' if you so desire.”

Halting suddenly, the young lady dropped her change purse to the floor and stared at the stranger who was becoming more familiar to her with each passing minute. Okay, a slight hitch in

my plan. I'm not an Alexander then. Bending to fetch her purse, she thought quickly.

"I'm sorry. Did I say somethin' offensive? After all, 'tis quite a small family at that. I can't imagine that you would not enjoy meetin' my favorite companion." Holding the door wide, the gentleman followed her out of the bakeshop, led her on to his carriage, where a manservant opened the door and bowed ever so precisely.

"Giles, allow me to introduce to you..."

"Miss MacDonald...Lizzie MacDonald." She extended her hand, and the young man bowed once again. Stepping into the carriage, "Lizzie" was warmly greeted by the coach's only other occupant, who immediately lapped her cheeks with a large wet tongue.

Caught off guard, she gasped and fell back against the warm velvet seat. Laughing hardily, Laird Robert lurched into the opposite seat, next to his springer spaniel.

"Meet Laird Alfred Alexander, Miss MacDonald. Has a certain ring to it, don't you think? I figured if he was my nearest and dearest companion, he needed a comparable title and station in life. And he has obliged me by guiding me to some of the finest game that England and Scotland have to offer. Alfred, meet the lovely Miss Macdonald, whose parents are wild with worry even at this very moment, I daresay."

"Oh, I dunno about that. They left early this mornin', along with me br-r-rothers, on some family business. After that, they expected to cr-r-ross paths with the infamous lady whom we are so shamelessly pur-r-rsuin' ourselves. It's cur-r-rious, don't you think, that the very people whose lives she is purportedly makin' miserable are str-r-rivin' so hard to catch a glimpse of the evil Catholic queen mother. And what is it about a foreign aristocrat that affects the Scottish and English anyway? Me father and mother seem to despise her ever so much more than King Charles, and I can't quite fathom why."

Extending a hot scone to “Lizzie,” Robert Alexander began to talk to her more seriously, “Well, Elizabeth (Robert adopted a parental tone), I’m frankly surprised that you would fill your head with such concerns and worries. I take it by your conversation and behavior that you are educated, but aren’t politics a bit beyond the scope of your studies? Wouldn’t you be better served to concern yourself with needlework, music and art? In fact, would your parents approve of this conversation?”

With fire in her eyes, “Lizzie” said, “Why, no more than they would approve of me leavin’ the townhouse today on me own, runnin’ around the streets of London, or ridin’ with a perfect stranger to Cheapside, especially considerin’ this is me first visit to London. No more than they would approve of me attendin’ Westminster School with me younger brother, or Pembroke with me older brother. No, I’m a constant disappointment to them in that respect. Rules are rules, they say, and I say who wrote these lopsided rules? Meanwhile, they seem to be hintin’ more and more lately that *they* have grand plans for me. Frankly, I’m mystified that, having proven my brain to be superior to my brothers’, the fact that I wear petticoats and they don’t makes me head somehow daft, and me incapable of plotting me own future.”

With a patronizing smile on his face, Robert held up his hand as a signal to stop, “Whoa there, young lady. Looks as if I’ve touched upon a delicate subject. But Elizabeth, you may be a little presumptuous in your last statement. I mean, do you believe that any of us really have complete freedom to plot our own futures? Don’t your parents have plans for your brothers as well?”

“Oh certainly, but those plans involve a lot more opportunity and freedom than the lot of us female, uh, McDonalds. Me oldest brother will inherit the family estate and business; the next in line will be educated in the religious canons and expect a political appointment, and I know Mama and Papa hope that me younger brother, Bruce, will become a minister. Kind of coverin’ all their bases, I guess. It’s all about authority, don’t you know. The haves and the have-nots, and we women fall into the latter

category. And you see, me br-r-rain simply doesn't accept the confinement foisted upon it."

"Apparently not, but I suspect you had better start workin' a little more on acceptance and a bit more confinement. Unless you were born to inherit a crown, you will likely never have the liberty bestowed upon the male population. And even if you did inherit a crown, you might find the responsibility a bit confining, even as does our honorable king," Alexander warned her.

"Well, now we're back to where we started. What is acceptable about our king, and not acceptable about his mother-in-law?" Lizzie inquired.

Robert Alexander, in spite of his paternal instincts and reservations, began to inform Lizzie about the character of the king of England. By nature, Charles was rather shy and serious. Add to that the fact that he had a definite speech impediment, and one might understand why he never hoped nor expected to inherit the throne. To the conceited intellect, this generated criticism; but to those with heart and conscience, he gained sympathy. The responsibility of kingship was thrust upon him, however, when his older brother Henry died. Charles nevertheless earned a certain amount of respect due to his intellectual abilities, while his love of art endeared him to another segment of the intellectual crowd. So where did he warrant scorn? Well, of course, despite the fact that he was a professed Protestant, he was married to a woman who was both Catholic and French. At heart, might he be a Catholic simply embracing Protestantism for his father's sake, and to save his own skin? All of these possibilities meant that he was being weighed in the balances. Who knows where it will all end? One thing is for certain: it is a foolish thing to flaunt his powerful Catholic mother-in-law in front of a citizenry and Parliament doubting where his true affections lie—especially considering the fact that Charles (like his father, James I) believed in the absolute Divine Right of Kings. To a society in transition, this was a constant threat, and the disfranchised English Parliament seemed imminently on the verge of revolution.

Enjoying the last crumbs of her scone, Lizzie leaned over toward Laird Robert and said in a voice that implied secrecy, “I see. And now I understand why me father and his circle are bandin’ together to protect the Kirk (religious covenant) of Scotland. Whatever religious winds blow in England seem to always threaten to demand change in our institutions. I just don’t see why two separate viewpoints cannot exist simultaneously. I mean, is it necessary that religion be so absolute in every person’s eyes? Perhaps King Charles and his wife have come up with a happy compromise in their own household—sort of a mixture of Catholicism and Protestantism, and they’ll let the rest of the country exist as it is.” As she finished this statement, her pensive expression focused past Robert to the streets of London.

Observing the green eyed, raven haired young woman, Laird Robert could not hide his own surprise at the clever thoughts and words which continued to pour from her. Not only was she out of line in her behavior, but her intelligence seemed to be unchecked as well. Surprisingly, he found himself enthralled by both. What chance circumstance had caused their paths to cross at just such a time in his life? Such a time indeed! He felt both excitement and sadness at the same moment, but he hadn’t time to dwell upon this mood. They were just passing the Cheapside Cross, decorated with statues of the pope, the Virgin and Child, and the Apostles, at the end of Honey Lane.

“Well, the desired destination. Shall we step outside the carriage and find a suitable place to behold her Ladyship?”

Lizzie seemed reticent to disembark. Glancing out the carriage window, she suddenly awoke to the fact that she just might encounter someone she should not see—her parents. Sensing the reason for her sudden shyness, Robert said, “Or, of course, we might remain safely inside the carriage until Marie de’ Medici is nearby.” At that moment, the servant was opening the carriage door, and Lizzie regained her courage.

“No sir, we’ve come this far. I won’t r-r-rain on your parade and miss the excitement as well.” She took Giles’s hand

and stepped cautiously from the coach. With much trepidation, she glanced quickly around the square. No family in sight as yet. The noise of the crowd was exhilarating and disquieting as well. Some seemed on the verge of rebellion, but most were simply anxious to view an important figure such as Marie de' Medici. Decidedly, there were few gentry in this scavenging crowd at Cheapside (aptly named, she thought to herself). Lizzie realized how fortunate she was to be in the company of Laird Robert at this very moment.

Robert Alexander had taken care to park his carriage among a respectable group of Brits. This was indeed a teeming and slightly irate crowd, and as the procession approached from a distance, cries of revulsion and crudeness could be heard. "Take your 'popery' and French ways and drown them in the Thames!" "Take your papist daughter home with you when ya' leave!" "God save the Parliament and give us a Protestant king!" Lizzie was filled with excitement, tinged with fear. The king's guards led the procession and continued to lash out at over-exuberant critics—whipping them back into the crowd. However, the majority of the crowd was more courteous and quietly indignant.

"I believe we have to give the king the benefit of the doubt. He is quite learned and seems sincerely religious," one gentleman stated.

"Oh, for sure. Yet it's the kind of religion that I'm in question about," replied a second gentleman.

"I have but one question for the likes of you, and that is this. How could so good a man be so bad a king?" asked the third man in the group. "And goodness isn't everything when it comes to a kingdom to run. The will of the people must be considered, and Parliament reflects that will better than the King himself. And ask the Parliamentarians. King Charles consults no one, except perhaps his Catholic wife. England has seen about enough of absolute power, I say. Why regress to the old ways?" the third gentleman queried.

Lizzie listened intently, shaking her head in agreement, when she became aware of the nearing coach. She stretched her

neck to get a clear view of de Medici. There in all her royal glory sat the rotund French woman, clad in royal blue velvet and satin. Looking for all the world like a well fed gilded bird, perched on a luxurious traveling throne, she nevertheless appeared strangely as one held hostage, in Lizzie's eyes. "My, she does look quite healthy but unhappy at the same time," Lizzie commented.

Laird Robert chuckled and replied, "I read of an occasion at the castle in Blois when the scheming queen mother was placed under house arrest, from 1617-1619. She escaped through a window, though she was stuck for a short while due to her large size. She was the ultimate victor, however, securing for her son, Gaston, the privilege of Orleans and the earldom of Blois. He came eventually to live in the very castle where she was held captive, so she is certainly to be admired for her cleverness."

"I wonder," said Lizzie, "if women ever draw a truly free breath."

Startled, Laird Robert queried, "Whatever do you mean? Have you been charged for the air you have breathed today?"

She stared at him with disdain, wondering if indeed he were her elder, as judged by appearances. She decided a response was unnecessary and simply walked toward the carriage. The excitement of the day had taken its toll and was drawing to a close. Remembering the regimen of her daily life, Lizzie realized she must return to the townhouse as soon as possible. Sensing her tenuous position, Robert took her arm and escorted her to the carriage. There, Giles handed both safely inside, and Laird Alfred signaled his pleasure at their return.

Settled quietly within the carriage, "Lizzie" suddenly and surprisingly began to feel uncomfortable and apprehensive. She was to have spent a quiet day relaxing in the new townhouse with her sister, preparing for unknown guests and a sumptuous dinner that very evening. Instead, she had broken the rules of her family and society in general. Here she was with a perfect stranger, and she had no idea or assurance that he would deliver her safely to her

destination. What if he misused her in some unknown way? It occurred to her that her tempestuous nature did not invite a lot of consideration from this gentleman. Perhaps she had better adjust her attitude and invite more modest and genteel treatment. Feeling strangely unsure of herself, she glanced at Laird Robert somewhat shyly and stated, "It has occurred to me that I may have behaved rather unseemly today. I hope that you will overlook me rash comments and show me the kindness and courtesy of returning me to the Farnyer's Bakehouse on Pudding Lane."

"Please, no apologies are necessary. I have quite enjoyed the surprisingly intelligent and spirited banter from such a young lass. Furthermore, I will be insulted if you do not allow me to deliver you to your residence," Laird Robert responded.

"No! I mean, surely your Lairdship realizes how distressed me parents would be to see me not only in the company of a strange gentleman, but ridin' around London in his carriage—unaccompanied. No, I would greatly appreciate the return ride to Pudding Lane, and from there I can retrace me steps to Covent Garden."

"Ah, Covent Garden. Impressive. Well, I daresay I can accommodate you, Miss MacDonald."

As they traveled on, both parties were quiet, pensive, subdued, involved in perplexing thoughts of their own respective futures. "Lizzie" knew her parents had some sort of undisclosed plans for her, and Laird Robert hoped that his future would involve someone as intriguing as Miss MacDonald.

Arriving at their original meeting point, the carriage came to a halt just where she had first seen it that very morning (or was it noon by then?). Giles came to the door once again, and Alfred good-naturedly leaped toward the young lady. "Well, I do thank ye kindly for allowin' me to join you, Laird Alfred. You've been quite gr-r-racious in your behavior. And Laird Robert, I r-r-realize I'd have never seen the pr-r-rocession today without your kind

assistance. If you'll excuse me unladylike behavior and accept me apology, I'll be biddin' you adieu now."

"You know, I must admit I quite liked your impudent side—perhaps a bit more than the lady you're imitatin' now. If our paths ever cross again, you must promise to drop the veneer you've just put on and be yourself," Robert said with a sad smile.

Pleased in spite of herself, "Lizzie" stepped out of the carriage, shivering in the cold brisk air, curtsied to Laird Robert (who was now standing at her side), and bid him good afternoon.

Robert turned to Giles and spoke in low tones as the young lady gathered her skirts and whisked off down Pudding Lane for the long walk to Covent Gardens. Giles nodded agreeably and stepped back into the driver's seat of the carriage. Turning the horses around, the Alexander clan sat for a few minutes and watched the outline of young "Lizzie" as it disappeared in front of them. The cold afternoon breezes were whipping at her deep green and black plaid woolen scarf and skirts, even as the elm trees seemed to sway to the rhythm of her steps. Then taking the reigns, Giles very slowly followed along behind her, at a safe distance, ambling past the shops and sites of Pudding Lane, the London Bridge receding into the background.

Her mind in a whirl and slightly agitated with herself for the chance she had taken this very day, the middle child of the Campbell clan darted rapidly around the streets of London until she eventually approached Covent Garden. Passing the exquisite piazza and St. Paul's Cathedral, she raced along Russell Street until she reached the stylish homes of King Street. Slowing down to catch her breath and survey the situation, she was relieved that none of her family, their servants or carriage were apparent. Breathing deeply and determinedly, she composed herself and began to construct a story, in the event she was caught red-handed. Yes indeed, she had taken a great chance and had a most unusual day.

Reaching the side gate, she realized she had made one grave error. For privacy purposes, the gate could only be opened from the interior. She would either have to approach from the front door or climb over the gate. The latter being completely foolish, the young lass approached the front door, tried the knob, and—thanks be to God—the door opened. She moved quickly and deftly to enter unseen, when suddenly the maid appeared in the hallway.

“Oh, there ye be, miss. Ellie and I have been absolutely beside ourselves with worry for the past hour. Where in the world did ye get off to? Your parents would have me head if I could not explain your absence!”

“Oh, Lizzie, I just slipped out for a little turn around the block, and seeing the crocuses just beginning to form buds, I could not help but admire the first buds of springtime. Please excuse me for causin’ ye so much anxiety. I’ll just be slippin’ on upstairs to rest a bit and freshen up for the evenin’ meal. Mama and Papa are not back then?”

“Lucky for you and me both, I’d say, and a relief to your Sis.”

“Thank ye, Lizzie. I’ll wait for your call to dinner then.” And walking composedly up the staircase, she approached the room she shared with her sister, Ellie.

“Oh Great Chief in the Sky,
and Ishtar, Mother of my
Mothers, if you will not
deliver me from my captors,
grant that my remaining days
will be blessed with blissful
purpose.”

Somewhere in the Carribean; Spring 1638

Chapter 2

To say that the Navigation Age paved the superhighways for Europeans' passage to the New World is stating the case mildly. However, to imagine that the western hemisphere was better off following the European invasion is more difficult to answer, at least in the positive. Competition for empire set the stage for immense reward for the conquering nations, while delivering abhorrent consequences to the indigenous races.

By the closing years of the fifteenth century, navigators of the Mediterranean nations were so impatient to explore uncharted waters and reach distant, unknown lands that they cast their fates to the winds, even before technology had improved to the point of making long-distance travel practical. In fact, when Christopher Columbus sailed off into the unknown western waters in 1492, with the blessing and monetary support of Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain, he and his men sailed in the tubby shaped ships which had been sailing the Mediterranean for decades. Meanwhile, Spain's Iberian neighbor to the west was busy creating new tools, which would make their early voyages more successful than Christopher's.

In the early fifteenth century, Prince Henry the Navigator, of Portugal, established a school for the express purpose of compiling Europe's leading navigational wisdom in one place. He

gathered the most experienced sailors, shipbuilders and mapmakers together to share their knowledge. Collectively, they honed new navigational skills, created more sophisticated guidance instruments, and designed the more seaworthy caravel—a narrow ship with a steering rudder, square and triangular sails, much better suited for oceanic travel than previous vessels. Prince Henry thus assured that Portugal would be the first European nation to circumnavigate the African continent.

Bartolomeo Dias was able to reach Africa's southern tip in the year 1488. In 1497, Vasco da Gama led an expedition to successfully circumnavigate Africa, eventually reaching the country of India, which Columbus had always assumed he'd found on his travels. Soon, the Portuguese Christians outmaneuvered the Arab Muslims, becoming the dominant traders along Africa's western coast. This accomplishment may be considered one of the more positive aspects of the early navigation age, at least to the European nations. There would be many negatives.

The Arab Muslims had conducted a profitable overland slave trade in Africa for centuries. As early as the 1440s, the Portuguese likewise began purchasing Africans for the express purpose of slave labor. While the Africans' practice of indentured servitude was useful as a form of corporal punishment for debts, crimes against society, and so on, the Portuguese traders soon put their own spin on the practice. The merchants purchased a number of Africans to take back as a prize gift to the Church. Pleased with this new source of labor, the pope approved their use in the vineyards. This trade in human labor, however, proved to be a mere novelty for European society. A huge population of serfs provided more than adequate cheap labor for the landed nobility. However, further exploration abroad would provide enough virgin soil for a very large labor force, filling the greedy pocketbooks of the slave traders.

On the heels of Columbus's voyages, adventurers such as Pizarro, Cortez and de Soto continued to introduce European bacteria and viruses to the native peoples of America, thinning their populations remarkably. This did make the Europeans' task

of dominance easier, of course, and the Portuguese and Spanish competed for the right to claim these new lands (by the authority of the pope, no less). Later, they would decide how best to develop them agriculturally.

Of course, in lieu of the massive natural deaths and slaughtering of Native Americans, laborers for this newfound land must be imported. By the seventeenth century, the trade in African lives had already reached monumental proportions, and would continue to increase exponentially until the end of the eighteenth century. First the Portuguese, and later the Spanish dominated and profited from the sale of human laborers.

One society's invented necessity orchestrated the cataclysmic destruction of an ancient civilization.

The moon and stars had completed their seasonal cycles at least three times since Mamadou's life had been delivered into the bowels of everlasting turmoil. Nothing his family and kinship group had taught him could have prepared him for such confusion and suffering. Surely the gods and goddesses they worshipped were not as powerful as those of his captors, overseeing this strange world. Perhaps his village had not been entirely successful in appeasing the gods of punishment and sorrow. Or...perhaps Mamadou himself possessed some fatal flaw, which singled him out for a particularly treacherous path in life. Day and night, season after season, he tortured himself with such meditations, but to no avail. Now it seemed the gods were laughing at him once again.

Toiling for three years in the tobacco and sugar fields of Santo Domingo, Mamadou's life had become a living nightmare of toil, sweat, fatigue, and punishment since his capture in his homeland of Mali. While on a routine hunting trip, hiding in the waist-high savanna and tracking wild game, he had been attacked (they must have leapt from the mahogany tree behind him) by at least three of a nearby Mende tribe. Knocked unconscious and tied securely, he was carried away to a distant barracoon on the Ghana

coast. Mamadou had never been this far from home; nor had he seen such a huge manmade structure. He awoke amidst a throng of approximately three hundred diverse African men and women of various Sudanese regions—all speaking distinct regional dialects, foreign to Mamadou. Crowded together in barred cells, they were overlooking a vast stretch of water, which led to...where? His homeland? Surely someone had made a grave mistake.

Thus began the heartbreaking reality of a slave life so heinous and foreign to Mamadou that the reality of his old life seemed like a figment of his own imagination. Could life really have been so simple and sublime? During the summer of his nineteenth year, he had been treacherously ripped away from a village of loving family and kin, who could have no way of knowing the cause of his disappearance. He had tried (over and over, day in and day out) to imagine their confusion and anguish. They would have searched up and down the river and across the arid lands to locate his presumably dead body. But nowhere would their efforts be rewarded. Death would be preferable to this unanswered search. Though his family was large and only his sisters could carry on the royal lineage in their matriarchal tribe, Mamadou remembered how very precious he was to his beloved mother Songhe, as well as his father. Many times since his personal hell had begun, Mamadou had considered taking his own life, but he remembered his mother's words. "As the Mother Earth rewards us with the fruits of our labor, so our unseen selves (our eternal spirits) will be rewarded for hallowing our own lives, as well as the lives of our friends and enemies," she instructed the village. The Ibos people of Songhai had striven, therefore, to live peaceably among themselves and their neighboring tribes.

Songhe was descended from the family who originally settled the village of Gao. Title, wealth and family name therefore descended through her bloodline. This meant, as well, that she was the local chief and priestess. Life in this remote region along the Niger River had flowed along relatively peacefully and predictably for many generations—the locals believed—because of their solemn respect for their ancestral gods and goddesses. Honoring the earth, they had been able to produce sufficient edible crops to

supplement the living flesh from the great river. For their health and prosperity, they offered thanks through their festivals of celebration. The hallowed bones and jewels of their ancestors were enshrined in the temple at the center of their village, within the holy of holies. Next to this daub and waddle structure stood the colossal figure of the Goddess Isis, whom they called upon to flood their land with vital water for irrigation and life-giving sustenance. Mamadou remembered his village, his life, his family, and his love for them was his only sustenance now.

After what had seemed like a year (in reality, seven weeks) of sickening movement across water, chained side-by-side in the lower decks of a large ship, sick and half-starved, the Africans reached what would become their new home. Cleaned, fed and oiled, they were sold to the landowners of Santo Domingo. Unable to communicate among themselves or to their captors, their only guidance came from the lashing they received if they did not work the soil quickly enough; their only reward was the meager food and drink they received twice daily, and the blessed dark of night, when they could do nothing but drift into a coma-like sleep. Unfortunately, each day the sun continued to rise, and the nightmare resumed. Until one morning, approximately fourteen revolutions of the moon past, life (if it could be considered living) had continued the same.

Awakened before daylight, Mamadou and several other of the largest, strongest Africans were led from their huts on the sugar plantation, and taken by wagon to a ship on the coast. Was this the end of their captivity? Had they proven themselves to be worthy men, and so would be returned to their homeland? They mumbled to one another in the few terms that they had come to understand from their various dialects. Confusion reigned, and it was apparent that they would know nothing until they were taken to the next destination.

And so, day after day, he watched for a glimpse of the homeland. At least this ship was not so crowded with sick and dying captives. This gave him hope, until the sight of land brought fresh heartache. This was not the same coast from which he was

shipped away long ago. The previous journey had been much longer; of that much he was certain. His intuition told him that his torture would be resumed on a new landscape. As the shadows of impending doom engulfed him, Mamadou looked skyward and uttered, “Oh Great Chief in the Sky, and Ishtar, Mother of my Mothers, if you will not deliver me from my captors, grant that my remaining days may be blessed with blissful purpose.”

William Henry Curtis used his key to open the small chest he kept hidden in his bedroom armoire. He checked the treasured contents carefully and took from it a large roll of currency and a few gold coins. Placing these inside his valise, he locked the chest, placed the key in a small drawer of his writing table, and left his bedroom. Walking down the curving staircase of his newly built mansion on the James River, he surveyed his new and growing kingdom. Indeed, he had arrived at the most opportune time in Jamestown’s brief history. The starving time had passed, the period of communal survival eventually led to a grand and profitable new crop (tobacco), and now numerous British gentry were arriving to create a truly respectable community. The stage was set, the ingredients were available, and he intended to capitalize on his opportunities, becoming part of the wealthy aristocracy in this new world.

Due to the liberal headright system established by Governor Dale back in the 1620s, Curtis received three hundred acres of prime tidewater land when he arrived in the Virginia colony in 1625. Arriving with his wife, three small children and four adult servants, he received fifty acres for every adult in the group. He immediately supervised the division of his land into sections. Purchasing six indentured servants from England, he received three hundred additional acres of adjacent land and set about clearing, cultivating and planting fifty acres of tobacco (with only two weeks left of the planting season, he was fortunate to work fifty acres that first year).

Meanwhile, he also began planning the construction of his riverfront plantation. Residing in a cluster of pre-existing hovels

during that period was somewhat difficult, but well worth the wait. In the space of two short years, his tobacco crop (he managed to plant one-hundred acres the second year) had produced profits, the value of his land increased accordingly, and a sizable loan from an English bank provided the capital to begin construction in early 1637. The result was this almost completed palatial structure in which he and his family were now ensconced in April 1638. Yes, life was indeed good, and promised only to improve!

According to his calculations, profits could continue to multiply for years to come. Because he possessed land from the riverfront to the hillsides to the north, he now experimented with sugar and rice cultivation as well. The leaching effects of tobacco had already been proven to render soil unusable within as few as three years, and he had gathered that valuable piece of information from planters who had learned the hard way.

With a total of six hundred acres to cultivate, he was practicing crop rotation already; time would tell if his methods were successful. Meanwhile, he now needed to increase the number of indentures on his estate, and word had just arrived that the ship full of slaves from the West Indies was now moored in Jamestown.

His carriage was brought around to the entrance, and he stepped into the parlor to kiss Fiona good-bye. She and the nursemaid were smiling as young Henry (their fourth child and the first born in Virginia) took a few uncertain steps. He was now ten months old and the delight of the entire household. Clearly, God had blessed William's household, and clearly, they deserved His blessing.

It was a clear but cool and blustery day along the James River, as William and his manservant negotiated the rough road to Jamestown. A prosperous, ambitious local merchant, Mr. George Menefie, had advertised the fact that he was bringing in another shipload of Africans to sell as indentures. He had kept his previous shipment so that he himself could receive a patent for three thousand acres of prime tidewater land. Observing the envy of his neighbors, he decided that to occasionally carry a line of Africans for sale could further his local influence. Word had

quickly spread that the ship was just offshore, and the auction would be held this very day, and William Curtis hoped to purchase at least six more indentures for the work intensive planting period in front of him. Perhaps he could do with fewer if they proved to be strong, hardy workers. "Please hurry, Edgar. We do want to have the pick of the litter, so to speak."

Mamadou and the others were well fed in the last few hours before reaching Jamestown. Given sufficient water and maize to plump them up, splashed with buckets of water, and oiled to show off their fine musculature, they stepped off the ship onto the wharf at Jamestown, unsure what would befall them. One thing was certain—Mamadou had the appearance of a huge, strong and dark-skinned Adonis. He was a perfect physical specimen, and something about the still innocent sincerity of his expression made him especially appealing. One could sense that this man could not only work hard and long, but he was incapable of deceit. At least, that was the impression he made upon William Henry Curtis, and he suspected others had that same sense.

As the fifty black slaves were filed off the ship, still chained together in groups of five, they stumbled onto the auction block in groups as well. One at a time, however, they stepped onto the large tree stump, which indicated the particular chattel under consideration. Prior to Mamadou, no one had been purchased for less than 100 pounds sterling. As Mamadou stepped onto the auction "stump," bidding immediately began at 100 pounds. Shortly, the price had reached 200, 225, 250, until Curtis had succinctly raised the level to 350 pounds sterling (was he crazy?). Bidding ceased, and the crowd looked at him with a certain amount of envy, mixed with contempt. Was he truly so prosperous already, or did he look upon this African as a good investment in future profits? Never mind the fact that he had already purchased four servants for from 100 to 250 pounds. Now purchasing this man for 350 pounds represented a decadent display of wealth.

William Henry Curtis was a bit dismayed with himself, but something told him that this huge, keen-eyed African was worth

more than the other four combined. He had apparently endured the seasoning process in the sugar islands, his spirit was subdued, and he was still strong and healthy. Yes, William was investing in future increase. The tobacco-planting season had just begun, and with these strong new additions to the workforce, he should be able to at least double last year's production.

As the Africans bounced along the roadway back to the plantation, Mamadou drank in the beauty of the surrounding countryside, breathing in the fragrance of the green, damp Virginia hills. Certainly, his ancestors had heard his request. This place looked like the paradise his mother had spoken of when he was a child. A land far beyond the dry sands of his country, across the waters; the story of their forefathers and mothers had been kept alive for his generation. Some of his kinsmen had been brave enough to float across the distant waters, while others had returned to the Niger to make certain the survival of their clan. And now, surely the great goddess had delivered him to that distant paradise, and he would meet with his great destiny.

Mamadou lifted his face, smiling toward the heavens, just as the winds began to change. As he chanted words of praise, the gathering clouds overhead responded by releasing a gentle, refreshing spring rain. The other Africans began to follow Mamadou's example, each chanting in their own dialects.

In the front of the carriage, with his manservant Edgar, William Curtis felt a chill run through his body. Was it his imagination, or did this strange giant behind him just conjure up a change in the weather? Staring at the somehow cheerful group of Africans, he smiled uncomfortably, before glancing at Edgar, who appeared to be frozen with fear.

"Jolly good day's work, don't you think, Edgar?" William queried cheerily.

“I certainly have been praying that it has been, sir, and not simply that you have lost your good sense, if you’ll excuse my boldness,” Edgar announced cautiously.

Chuckling good-naturedly, William stared straight ahead of him. “Nonsense. Apparently, these men are grateful to be in our company. Most likely, they are relieved to have a superior to look out for their welfare,” he finished, smugly.

The dark cloud that had just blown over their heads suddenly thundered loudly, as lightning struck a nearby pine, and the gentle rainfall was transposed into a cold and gushing storm.

CAMPBELL CLAN IN 1638

<i>Colin Campbell</i>				<i>Mary Stuart Campbell</i>
/	/	/	/	/
Gavin (&Claire)	James	Matilda	Bruce	Eleanor

CAMPBELL SERVANTS

John & Mrs. Cummings
Elizabeth (Lizzie)

FAMILY FRIENDS

Donald & Mrs. MacPherson
Angus & Mrs. Montgomery

“Aye, the Scottish have been deemed a backward people for far too long. Since the Kirk, we can be proud to be the first to institute public education, more’s the better.”

London, Following the Queen Mother’s Parade; Covent Gardens

Chapter 3

Colin Campbell sat staring into the roaring fire in his study, searching for answers that could not come. The events of the day had his mind and spirit in turmoil. There was simply no easy road ahead for Scotland. From all of the information he had gathered while in London, King Charles was most definitely holding fast to the reigns of power. The Kirk and the National Covenant of Scotland meant no more to him than the will of a distant and feeble nation, ready to be conquered. The difference, of course, was that the will of the Scottish people was strong, and nearby—and the English Protestants were almost as unhappy as the Scots. The Scottish Covenanters were sincere in their commitment to Presbyterianism, and were willing to fight to the death for their convictions. God forbid that it should come to that. As laird over a large estate in Argyll and father of five, the devastation of war was an unwelcome intrusion upon Colin’s life, not to mention its affect upon his family’s and tenants’ futures.

The Scottish were justifiably proud of the events that sparked their separation from the Catholic Church. It had begun with the return of the remorseless reformer, John Knox. He had fought against Cardinal Beaton prior to his exile, had been delivered to the French, for whom he rowed and served as a galley slave, and eventually reached Geneva, Switzerland. There he met the austere John Calvin and adapted his own spiritual doctrine

from Calvinism. He returned to Scotland in 1559 to find a spirit of revolution already brewing. The cause of this turmoil derived from the words of the Beggars' Summons (a manifesto placed on the door of every church in Scotland on New Year's Day, 1559).

In essence, the anonymous writer charged the Church with oppressing the majority of Scottish citizens through its lack of concern for the impotent members of society. "The blind, crooked, lame, widows, orphans, and all other poor visited by the hand of God as may not work, to the flocks of the friars within this realm, we wish restitution of wrongs past, and reformation in times coming," the Summons stated. Scots had for years criticized the great display of wealth which they believed prevented true religiosity within the Catholic Church, and the manifesto became the symbolic statement of their discontent. Into this fray stepped John Knox, who began delivering fiery Protestant sermons prior to the priests' mass in Perth. When contentions arose between the two factions, the Protestants did not hesitate to take up arms against the French army dispatched to Perth by the Catholic queen-regent. When the Scots invited Queen Elizabeth to come to their aid, the final blow was delivered. The queen-regent (Mary) was dying, and was spared the final humiliation of knowing the outcome. Scotland had earned the right to proclaim Protestantism/Presbyterianism as the national religion. Most importantly, the Scots could resolutely claim, more than the English, that a true reformation had taken place, and the Scottish Reformation included consideration for the will of all of the people—rich, poor and those somewhere between.

For the several centuries since leaders like Wallace and Bruce, the only unifying force had been an intense hatred for English authority. Since 1560, however, the Scottish were united in the direction the new Confession of Faith had brought to their country. The Scottish Parliament put an official end to any connection with the Church of Rome, and established the Protestant Presbyterian Church as the Kirk of Scotland. The Pope was cast off, and all non-Protestant practices and doctrines were forbidden, along with the saying of Mass. Finally, the new religious belief in an individual's relationship with God meant every Scottish citizen was entitled to an elementary education, in

order to read and understand God's Word. The Scottish Kirk set out to end illiteracy in the nation, and English visitors soon began to remark on the new civility in this previously barbaric and heathen nation. Now here it is 1638, and our nation has made too much progress for any Scotsman to accept less, Colin thought.

A soft tap at the study door put a momentary end to Colin's ruminations.

"Yes, who is it?"

"Tis John, sir."

"Come in then, John. What is it?"

"The guests are beginning to arrive, sir. Shall I tell them you are available?"

"Why yes, of course. Show the gentlemen into me study, and the ladies to the drawing room."

"Very well, sir. The missus is in the kitchen giving last minute instructions. I shall inform her as well."

"Thank you, John."

Within minutes, the manservant escorted three gentlemen into his master's study, and left.

"Good evenin', gentlemen. So good to see ye again. Please join me in a seat close to the fire. I was just havin' a brief smoke prior to dinner. Would ya' care to join me?" Colin inquired.

"No, thank you," replied Angus Montgomery.

"The aroma is quite appealing, and I've brought my pipe as well. Don't mind if I do," Donald MacPherson said, helping himself to the packet of tobacco.

“Perhaps I’ll join you in a smoke after dinner, Colin. In the meantime, I’m more interested in pursuin’ the topic of this morning’s meeting. While I’m quite anxious about the intentions of our fine king, I am nonetheless convinced there are some wonderful opportunities to be seized in the expandin’ empire. Hopefully, you have been giving some consideration to the idea of cooperatin’ in a joint stock venture. Our combined regions have much to offer and profit from in the mercantile arena,” stated Laird Robert Alexander.

“I’ve no doubt, Robert, and I do have me sons’ futures to think of—not to mention the welfar-r-re of me lovely lasses. This omniscient dark cloud surroundin’ King Charles does have me thinkin’ pr-r-ocess somewhat muddied at the moment, though, I do confess. However, I shall try to place that on the back bur-r-ner for the moment.”

“Well, thank goodness his religious preferences won’t affect the strength of our trade. However, his authoritarian ‘divine right of kings’ liturgy has surely prevented Parliament from favoring the merchant class,” quipped Angus Montgomery.

“Aye, and the Puritans are no happier about that than they are about the Church of England or Catholicism. It seems to me that a gaggle of angry Puritans is pretty near as powerful in warfare as a band of dour Scots,” stated Donald MacPherson in an amused tone.

“You’ve a good point there, Mr. MacPher-r-rson,” Colin replied in a respectful tone (MacPherson being the eldest of the four gentlemen present). “And it’s gr-r-rateful I am that the three of you are so fr-r-requently in London. You’ve provided me with some great legal assistance this very day. Me sons are much more comfortable about the prospect of stayin’ on here, after your wise counsel.”

“They appear to have their wits about them, Colin, and my mother always assured me that the intelligence of the youth are generally gleaned from the mother’s side of the family. (A tolerant