



Write your own Historical Fiction 2023

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The voice for history

The Coronation which never came

The stone walls surrounding me breathe out wisps of long trapped cold, making me shiver. Looking out of the tiny window, I can see the gardens of rich green stretching out, the ravens a contrasting shadow of night against the bright, late spring day. The winding river reflects the shards of brilliant sunlight, creating ripples of glistening gold. The day outside is wonderful; however, in my little tower I am separated. I am a mere onlooker on the beautiful world. However, in a month this will not be the case. In a month all of this will be mine. In a month I will be free to do as I please because I will officially be king.

The thought fills me with excitement. I am going to be king! I am only 12 years old, but I am going to rule over the entire country. However, I also dread the danger and difficulties which come with being king, but luckily I will have Uncle Richard to help advise me and keep me safe. My coronation will be amazing. Everyone who is anyone will be there, bowing down to me as I sit regally on the coronation chair. I will be sitting where generations of monarchs have sat, and I hope to be just like them; successful and respected. The whole country will know of the splendour of my coronation, and my reign will reflect that. I have heard of the drama surrounding my father's untraditional, rushed coronation, but mine will be a completely different. Mine will be better.

A sombre knock breaks me from my thoughts. 'Come in!' I shout.

A hunched man hobbles in. The shadows of the room seem to gather around him, however I still recognise the familiar build of my uncle. 'Good day Uncle,' I beam. Although he is a cold and often unkind man, I am thankful for any company at all.

'My King,' he says, bowing low. The idea that my uncle, the Lord Protector and Duke of Gloucester, defers in submission to only me makes me feel strange. I am so bored currently that I beg him to let me go outside and ride, or do anything at all away from my lonely tower. At last, he decides to allow me outside, but also informs me that I will not be alone for much longer.

'In a week your younger brother will be joining you here,' he tells me, and I am overcome with joy. I have not seen Richard in what feels like an age and, although he can be horribly irritating, I am excited to see my little brother again. My uncle leaves again as I hurriedly pull on my riding boots, ready to sprint out to the stables.

My horse and only friend, Carbonel, waits patiently at the stables. She is gloriously, majestically beautiful shadow. The wind whips at me playfully as I ride across the fields. The whole world stretches out beneath me, and the scenery passes in a blur. The countryside is a series of paint strokes which overlap, intertwine and disappear before my eyes. For the first time since my father died, I feel really alive. When I am crowned, I will be able to feel like this whenever I want. Only one month left...

Two weeks later...

I stare out the window again. The sun is harsh, burning the ground below my tower. The heat makes the world seem dysfunctional and out of control. The river is glugging along slowly, but sudden bursts of energy keep it bubbling thickly along. Despite the unbearable heat outside nothing can ruin my mood. Richard is arriving soon! My little brother, whom I have not seen in months, will be with me, here, in just a few hours. I won't be bored anymore once he arrives. We will play, and talk, and fight just like we did before Father died. The door opens with a quiet creak and a small face pokes around the door. There is a slightly anxious smile on his pale face. 'Richard!' I cry, running up to him in a very unregal manner, 'I've missed you!' I wrap my

arms around him before the embarrassment of the fact that I am almost in tears about seeing my *little brother* hits me. I step away quickly, grinning sheepishly. 'Let's go outside,' I say. 'I can't wait to show you around the grounds.'

The sun beats down on my neck, but I do not care. The river giggles as it runs past, reflecting my giddiness. 'Catch!' shouts Richard, and a rough leather ball flies towards me. I leap and catch it, my feet landing in the soft grass. It is nice to be able to be just another little boy again instead of the king. We play like this for hours. Dozens of people walk past us, curling their lips at the immaturity of their king. But I do not care what they think. I can be both a boy and a king if I want.

The joy continued for days, and now I am even more excited to be king because then nobody can stop my fun, not even Uncle Richard. The familiar, hunched figure appears like a ghost at the doorway. 'Speak of the devil,' I think standing up to greet him. 'Hello uncle,' I say walking towards him.

'Hello Edward,' he replies, a hint of mocking in his voice. I stop suddenly. Usually, he greets me as a king, but not today. What has changed? A feeling of foreboding overwhelms me, and I step back to be closer to my brother, his familiarity a calming presence.

'What is wrong with you uncle?' I say.

'Oh no Edward,' he answers maliciously. 'There is nothing wrong with me. You are the problem. Both of you,' he says, gesticulating at my brother and I with his cane. I am so confused. Why are we the problem? What could we have done? Uncle Richard himself taught us to be well behaved; a good king should be powerful, but being respected is just as important.

'What do you mean?' I say incredulously, 'What is wrong with us?'

'Many things,' he states, an unnerving grin stretching over his face, 'but the one I am currently speaking of is that you are illegitimate children of my dear, deceased brother.' With those words my heart sinks. 'That's right Edward. You will never be king, but I will.'

I realise now that I will never be free. The rest of my sorry life will be spent locked in this tower with Richard, hope and happiness becoming distant memories while we waste away here- and while all this is happening my uncle will be king. That man; that crippled, evil man; will be ruling the land that should be mine. With one word, he has taken my future and thrown it away. With one word I have become *nothing*.

We quickly fall into a routine. Uncle Richard moves us into an even smaller, higher tower, one even more separate from the outside world. To start with we were allowed outside once a day, but now we get to leave our tower once a week, if we are lucky. The idea of being king has quickly changed into a distant dream, one that many common boys like me have when they are young and naïve. The walls around me try grasp at the final breaths of warmth, as autumn tightens its grip on the world, trying to drag it towards shorter, colder days. Looking out of the tiny windows, I can see the hundreds of stars casting out beams of soft, ghostly light into the gardens below. The ravens cause inconspicuous ripples in the darkness. I climb into my little bed beside Richard, pulling the blanket up to protect me from the chill of night. 'Goodnight Richard,' I murmur, sleep already pulling me into its comforting embrace, 'See you in the morning.'

I can't breathe. As I wake that is my only thought. I can't breathe at all. I kick and wave my arms but nothing works, nothing stops the throbbing in my lungs as they scream for air. The room is unnaturally dark, and I realise that my face is covered. I am being murdered. The darkness becomes yet darker as my mind becomes foggy and slow. I hope Richard is alright, but in my heart, I know he is dead, or at least he will be soon. My last thought is that I know who has caused this; who decided to kill two boys in the dead of night. As my eyes close and I stop struggling I think to myself, 'Long live the king.'

Just under two hundred years later...

A group of workmen dig below a magnificently large staircase in the Tower of London. It is a hot day and the room in which they work stinks of sweat and dirt. The tower is being remodelled to be better suited to the 17th century, and to bring it away from the past. As the workmen dig deeper and deeper into the earth beneath the almighty building, they are surprised to hit a hard, wooden box. Intrigued by their discovery, the workmen bring out the crate, and lift the lid tentatively. Two small skeletons are nestled together within. Although it would never be completely proven, there is no doubt in the minds of historians. The princes in the tower have been found. Too late for their coronation, but not too late to be buried with dignity.