



TIMELESS

Through
Each
Tomorrow

BOOK 6

GABRIELLE MEYER



TIMELESS • 6

Through *Each* Tomorrow

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Thank you for your unwavering support, your priceless wisdom,
and your loyal friendship. I'm so happy that God called us
on our writing journeys at the same time.





TIMELESS FAMILY TREE

Theodosia

B. 1733 & 1973



Libby

B. 1755 & 1895

(book 1)



Maggie

B. 1841, 1921, & 1981

(book 2)



Grace

B. 1667 & 1887

(book 3)



Kathryn

B. 1865 & 1915

(book 5)



Cecily

B. 1542 & 1892

(book 6)

Hope

B. 1667 & 1887

(book 3)

— *cousins* —

Rachel Howlett

B. 1672 & 1862



Anne Reed

B. 1692 & 1892



Caroline

B. 1706 & 1906

(book 4)

— *step-siblings* —

Charles

B. 1539 & 1859

(book 6)



1



CHARLES

JUNE 1, 1883

FREDERICKSBURG, VIRGINIA

Hardship seemed my constant companion. The only difference was that in 1563, I had money and a title to overcome the difficulties life threw at me. But here in 1883, nothing had been easy since the war. Something needed to change soon, because I was running out of time.

The last rays of sunshine spiked through the bank of low-lying clouds, painting the sky with vibrant colors. As I leaned against the open barn door, admiring God's creativity, I had to force myself to lower my gaze on the failing horse farm I'd inherited from my father.

"Don't let Mama see your glum face." My sister, Ada, stepped out of the gray weathered farmhouse and walked toward me, one hand on her low back, the other holding an envelope.

I smiled as I pushed away from the barn, not wanting to pile more worry onto her weary shoulders. Widowed less than six months after she married her childhood sweetheart, she'd come

back to the farm pregnant and destitute. The baby wasn't due for another two months, but she was exhausted.

"I don't mean to look glum." I pressed a kiss to the side of her head. "Sometimes I get lost in my own thoughts." I studied her as she pulled back. "How is Mama today?"

Ada let out a sigh. "I had hoped the baby would give her something to look forward to." She put her hand on her rounded belly, sadness in her blue eyes. "She hasn't eaten in three days, Charles. I don't know what we're going to do."

This bout of melancholy was the deepest we had ever seen. Mama had suffered on and off since Papa's death, but it had never put her in bed before. The weight of her unhappiness had fallen on us ever since we were children, and though I tried to tell myself it wasn't my fault, I always wondered if things would have been different had I been able to make something of the farm.

I had one more long-shot idea, but it would be a miracle if it worked.

"I'll check in on her before supper and see if I can get her to join us," I promised.

There was curiosity in her face as she handed me the missive. "I almost forgot. This arrived for you when you were in the field. I wouldn't have bothered you about it since I know the mares are due back any minute, but it's from New York City." She frowned. "Why would someone from Whitney Shipping in New York City send you a letter? Is it another bill?"

My pulse pounded as I took the envelope, knowing exactly what it might contain.

The miracle.

I couldn't share it with Ada. Not yet. "I told you not to worry about the bills." I tried to chide her, distracting her from the letter. "We'll get by."

She put her hand on the back of my head where my time-crossing mark sat just above my hairline. Her face was serious. "You don't have much time left, and Cecily needs you more than we do."

"You both need me." I moved away from her touch, not wanting to worry about Cecily today. I had enough troubles to contend with. The letter in my hand could be the answer to the most pressing problem, but it would involve the most risk.

With another sigh, Ada glanced at the road, where a horse-drawn trailer was about to turn into our drive. "It looks like the girls are back."

My attention was torn from the important letter, though I wanted to read Drew's response immediately. I'd asked him for two favors, one that might have ramifications in 1563 and the other that could change the course of our lives in 1883. Yet, I'd been waiting for months for my two broodmares to return after using every bit of savings to send them to a stud farm. Stella and Faye were the only two thoroughbreds I had left from Father's prize-winning stock, and the fate of our farm rested on their ability to breed. It would be months before I knew if we had succeeded, and many more months until the foals were born and ready to sell. For now, we were living on the butter and egg money Ada earned and the goodwill of the bank.

I hesitated only a moment before handing the letter back to Ada. "Take it to my office. I'll see about it later."

Her pretty eyes had been full of life at one time, but now they were dull and disillusioned. She was only twenty-six, but she looked much older from her grief. "I'll keep supper warm for you."

"Thanks." I wanted to read Drew's letter more than anything, but the mares would need to be tended to, and there was no one else to do it.

I waited for the driver to pull up to the yard, trying not to feel embarrassed by the state of the farm. Vibrant before the War Between the States, our property was now a shadow of its former glory. Papa had been a prosperous horse breeder before the war broke out, but he'd died in the conflict, and then the farm had become a field hospital for Union soldiers during the last Battle of Fredericksburg. The only things that had survived were the house and barn. I'd been trying to rebuild the farm since I was

old enough to hold a hammer, but without money, I had worked in vain, eking out only enough to get by.

It took some time to unload the mares and get them into the barn. After the driver left, I set about grooming them, speaking in low tones, checking on their health.

As I lifted Stella's hind leg to pick her hoof, I immediately noticed a foul odor and discovered that her hoof was infected with thrush. After checking her other hooves and those of Faye, it was obvious they hadn't been cared for properly at the stud farm. Faye's hoof was so infected, she whinnied in pain when I tried to clean it.

I took several deep breaths, trying to calm my anger as I calculated how much it would cost to have the farrier visit the farm. It was an expense I hadn't anticipated, and with no ability to borrow more from the bank, I wasn't sure how we'd afford it.

Still, it wasn't the farrier bill or the other debt we owed that pressed against my thoughts.

An hour later, I left the barn and washed my hands at the pump before heading into the house. The letter from New York was all I could think about as I stepped into my office and found it sitting on top of my desk.

Without hesitating, I opened the seal and took it out of the envelope, dropping into the chair to read it.

*Whitney Shipping
New York, New York*

Charles,

I'm going to start my letter by saying that both of your requests would involve great risks, and I'm not sure I want to take them. Though I would be honored to serve our queen, if anyone discovered the truth, both of us would face the Tower—or worse. And what if I accidentally change history? I might forfeit my path in 1563 before I'm ready. I was prepared to say no. However, something came up, and I realized that perhaps we could help each other.

You need a physician that the queen can trust in 1563, and I am suddenly in need of an English aristocrat in 1883. I know that sounds strange. Let me explain. Mother has been in a terrible rivalry with my aunt for years, perhaps you've read about it in the papers. It's become a legendary fight, each one trying to prove that she is the Mrs. Whitney, the queen of the nouveau riche. They've both built enormous cottages in Newport and ridiculous mansions in New York City. They've thrown elaborate parties, costing hundreds of thousands of dollars, and purchased the most outlandish things to try to outdo one another. Their chief aim is to be included in Mrs. Astor's 400, a list of the most important people in American society—according to Mrs. Astor. Because the Whitney money is new, Mrs. Astor has snubbed them for years, but it hasn't deterred them. Whichever one gets the first invitation will be the winner, and my mother wants it more than anything.

The biggest issue, and the only one that really concerns me, is that both women draw from the same financial source: Whitney Shipping. Frankly, their lavish feud is starting to threaten our company's stability. One of them needs to win soon, or I fear they will do irreparable damage.

When my aunt informed the New York World that she was on her way back from Paris with Vicomte Deville, and that she would be entertaining him in Newport for the summer, my mother insisted that I find an aristocrat with higher standing so she could outdo my aunt. Mother believes that if she can bring an earl or a duke to Newport, Mrs. Astor won't be able to ignore her any longer.

It goes without saying that Whitney Shipping needs this rivalry to end.

I know you're not an earl in 1883, but you are one in 1563, and you have all the knowledge and mannerisms of an earl to pull it off for a few weeks. You can even tell Mother your real name from 1563, Charles Pembroke, the Earl of Norfolk, so you won't mess anything up.

I just need you to show up at a few parties and impress a few of her friends, hoping to draw Mrs. Astor's attention.

Charles, if you are willing to come to Newport, I will agree to see the queen. And, regarding your other request, I will see what I can do. I think I can convince my father to invest in your horse farm, given the right angle. He's always been an avid horseman, but his shipping business has kept him too busy to pursue his passion. He's in Europe and won't return to New York until September. He has no plans to go to Newport, since he and Mother are not speaking.

I propose that you come to Newport for July and August as Lord Norfolk, and then we will go to New York when Father returns in September and you can meet him as Charles Hollingsworth, the owner of the Hollingsworth Horse Farm.

Mother and Father's social and business lives do not intersect, so neither one will be the wiser. If all goes as planned, your horse farm could be financially stable by the beginning of next year—before your twenty-fifth birthday when you need to make your final decision. If you choose to stay in 1563, you can have someone in place to keep up the farm so your mother and sister have an income. And, if you choose to stay in 1883, you'll have all the financial backing you'll need.

If you're willing to come, I will wire you enough money to get to New York, and enough to take care of your mother and sister until your return at the end of the summer. I will meet you in New York to outfit you as the Earl of Norfolk before we head to Newport.

I await your reply,

Drew

I folded the letter and ran my hand over the stubble of a beard I hadn't shaved that morning. In 1563, I was the Earl of Norfolk,

an esteemed and respected member of Queen Elizabeth's privy council, and the heir of Arundel Castle. It was there that I met Andrew Bromley, the carpenter's son. I had recognized the time-crossing mark on the back of his head, and we'd learned that we occupied the same two paths—only, he was the son and heir of a massive shipping fortune in 1883, and I was the destitute son of a widowed mother. Our lives were complete opposites, but because of our time-crossing marks, we had been lifelong friends, though I'd never met him in person in 1883.

"You must eat, Mama." Ada's voice filtered into my office from our mother's bedroom across the hall. "You haven't touched anything in days."

I set the letter on the desk and left my office, Drew's request sitting heavy on my heart. Could I pretend to be the earl in this path? It would mean leaving my sister and mother for a few months, but with Drew's financial help, I could hire a farmhand while I was away.

"Mama," I said as I entered her room and found Ada sitting on the bed next to her, holding a bowl of steaming soup. "Ada is right. You must eat something."

Mama turned her gaunt face toward me, desperation in her eyes. "Charles. Did the horses come home? How are they?"

I sat on the other side of her bed and took her free hand in mine, trying to sound positive as I smiled at her. "They're back and looking fine."

A spark of hope warmed her blue eyes. "Do you think there will be foals? You know it was your father's greatest hope that this farm would succeed and prosper. If he knew—" She stopped, her lips trembling. "He'd be so disappointed in me for letting things get this bad. I never wanted to fail him or his memory."

"There will be foals, Mama." I tried to reassure her, knowing full well that the failure of the farm was my fault alone. One disaster after another had befallen us. As soon as we thought we were ahead, another calamity would strike. "The driver brought a letter from the studmaster, and he is confident that the mares

are in foal. Stella and Faye are young and healthy and should do just fine. Things will look up, Mama. God will provide for us as He always has.” Though I wasn’t sure I believed it, the promise seemed to strengthen Mama.

She studied me, the lines around her eyes deep and troubled. “Do you promise, Charles? Because things have looked up before.”

Drew’s request echoed in my mind as I thought about the ramifications. This wasn’t the best time to leave the farm, but it couldn’t be helped. And if it meant that I could meet his father and possibly get financial backing to expand our farm, it would be the best possible outcome. I could pretend to be an earl for a couple of months.

In turn, Drew would meet with the queen. If all went as planned, he could diagnose what was ailing her and help her recover. I could then give my attention to my younger stepsister in 1563, Cecily. Mama and Ada weren’t my only responsibilities. Cecily was also on my mind. I needed to make sure she was taken care of if I left her.

As part of my time-crossing gift, I had to choose which life I wanted to keep on my twenty-fifth birthday next March and which one I would forfeit. If I could find a husband for Cecily before then, I would stay with Mama and Ada. If the farm was financially secure, I would stay with Cecily.

Either way, I had a lot of work ahead of me and not enough time.

With a smile, I squeezed Mama’s hand. “I promise I will do everything I can to ensure that the farm succeeds. You have my word.” Perhaps this was God’s answer to my many prayers.

Hope sparked in her gaze as she squeezed my hand back and then took the bowl of soup from Ada.

I wasn’t sure how I would keep my word, but I could not fail.

2



CHARLES

NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND

JUNE 27, 1883

Midcliff was a Tudor-style mansion sitting proud on Ochre Point in the most fashionable neighborhood in Newport. A misting rain made it appear ethereal as it overlooked the white-capped waves of the Atlantic Ocean. A storm had followed us all the way from New York City and didn't appear to be clearing any time soon. Dark gray clouds hung low overhead, and a cool wind rocked the ornate carriage Mrs. Whitney had sent for our arrival.

I took a deep breath, hoping and praying I would not regret coming to Newport.

"What do you think, Charles?" Drew asked, sitting across from me in the carriage as it pulled into the circular drive. His arms were crossed as he leaned back in his seat. "It's not Arundel Castle, but it's a lot more comfortable than that drafty monstrosity."

I smiled at my friend's description of my ancestral home in 1563. As the 2nd Earl of Norfolk, I took great pride in Arundel Castle, even if it was drafty. "Midcliff will do," I said, affecting my cultured British accent for the role I was about to play. "For now."

Drew grinned at me.

Even though I sounded confident, I wasn't feeling it.

"I hope this works," I said to Drew as the carriage began to slow near the main entrance and our charade was about to begin.

"There is a lot riding on this," Drew agreed, his good humor disappearing as his face became serious. "It could either be a magnificent win for my mother's social status and finally end her expensive rivalry with my aunt, or it could be an abysmal failure, ruining her chances to ever show her face in polite society again. There isn't much room in between."

I scoffed. "Thanks for taking the edge off my nerves."

Drew's affable smile returned as he unfolded his arms. "It's going to be fine—better than fine. Just think of it as a summer holiday. As long as no one learns the truth about your identity, you won't need to worry about a thing. And when we're done here, we'll meet with Father in New York and see if we can convince him to back your farm."

"Don't forget your end of the bargain. The queen's health continues to decline. If something happens to her, another war could break out in England and thousands of people could die."

Drew's smile fell. "Thanks for taking the edge off *my* nerves."

As soon as the carriage came to a stop, a footman opened the door and a gust of wind sprayed us with rain.

I hoped I wouldn't regret my decision to come to Midcliff as the Earl of Norfolk—or my decision to ask Drew to serve Queen Elizabeth as a royal physician. While he wasn't a doctor in 1563, he was a medical student in 1883, and he knew more than any other physician or apothecary who had previously examined the queen.

But that was a problem for a different day.

As Drew and I exited the carriage, the front door of Midcliff opened and an elegant woman appeared. She was easily in her mid-forties, with her graying hair styled high on her head and wearing a light-colored dress. Large diamonds drooped from her earlobes.

“Drew!” She held out a hand to him, her eyes shining. “You’re finally here.”

“Mother.” He went to the woman and embraced her. “It’s good to see you again.”

A butler stood at attention just inside the door, staring at the opposite wall. Waiting.

I followed Drew into the foyer, out of the rain.

Mrs. Whitney pulled back and smiled at her only son before she turned to me. “Lord Norfolk.” She gave me a practiced curtsy. “It is an honor to welcome you to our humble cottage.”

The mansion in question was not humble by any stretch of the imagination, but it was what high society called their summer cottages in Newport.

I did not have to pretend to know how to behave as I offered her a bow, taking her hand to kiss it. The courtly manners drilled into me as a child in the 1500s followed me to 1883. Whether I was greeting Queen Elizabeth or a leader of American High Society, I knew what to do. “It is an honor, Mrs. Whitney,” I said, using my British accent. “Thank you for your invitation.”

Her cheeks were pink with delight as she demurred. “The honor belongs to us, my lord. You have no idea how pleased I am to have an earl as our guest of honor this summer. My sister-in-law, the *other* Mrs. Whitney, has a lowly vicomte visiting from France.” Her laughter tinkled perfectly, though I knew the rivalry was fierce.

“You must be tired and famished from your travels,” she continued as the butler closed the door behind us. “I have arranged for refreshments on the veranda.” She linked arms with Drew and motioned toward the back of the house. “Prescott,” she said to the butler, “see that all their luggage is brought to their rooms.”

Prescott nodded as we left the bright foyer and moved through a large parlor.

The house was decorated in various shades of white. The wallpaper was cream with white flowers, the trim was cream, the drapes were cream, and the furniture was covered in white brocade. Only the floors were natural wood. It was airy and bright—and made

me uncomfortable. Whitehall Palace, where we resided with Queen Elizabeth for most of the year, and Arundel Castle were grander in scale, but rough in comparison. The farmhouse in Virginia was small and sparsely furnished compared to this cottage, and almost always covered in a layer of dust.

The sound of laughter and conversation filtered into the parlor from a distant room.

Drew's steps faltered. "Are you hosting a party, Mother?"

"Just a few close friends," she said with a wave of her hand. "And Evelyn, of course."

My pulse picked up speed at a "few close friends" as I shared a look with Drew.

"Mother." Drew paused, his voice serious. "I told you that Charles didn't want a lot of fuss."

"It's not much fuss." She patted his arm. "Just a few neighbors, really. They're so eager to meet our guest."

I touched the cravat at my throat, trying not to feel like I was choking. Uncertainty was a new experience for me. I had no reason to feel apprehensive when I was the earl in 1563 or Charles Hollingsworth in 1883. But being the earl in 1883 was an entirely different matter.

Mrs. Whitney led the way onto the veranda. The archways facing the ocean had been battened down with green-striped canvas, but the room was still cool. It was a semicircle, wrapped around the curved parlor windows.

And it was full of wealthy women. At least two dozen. Young, old, and in between, covered with jewels and expensive clothing.

A hush fell over the group as they examined me like a fresh piece of prized horseflesh.

"Ladies." Mrs. Whitney clapped her hands, presumably to quiet them, though everyone had already stopped speaking. "It is my greatest honor to introduce you to Charles Pembroke, the Earl of Norfolk!" Her voice had risen a notch with excitement, and she turned to me, her eyes sparkling. "My lord, these are my dearest and closest friends."

The ruse had begun.

I offered them a charming smile as I bowed deeply. "It is an honor to be in your presence."

They twittered and chirped as older women discreetly nudged their daughters with enthusiasm and determination.

"My lord," Mrs. Whitney said as she motioned toward a table at the front of the room and closest to the rounded parlor windows. "Won't you sit here?"

Three young women and two older women already sat at the table. One of the younger women had blond hair and wide blue eyes, and the other two had darker hair. All three sized me up. The one with light hair didn't look impressed, while the others offered warm smiles.

"Evelyn, dear." Mrs. Whitney motioned to the indifferent young woman. "Rise and greet our guest of honor."

Evelyn rose as her clear gaze held mine. It wasn't hostile, but neither was it welcoming. Her hair was swept up in a bun, and the tight bodice of her light-colored gown was stiff and ruffled. She was pretty, but not in a classical way. Her features were unique—distinguishable in a room of other pretty girls.

"Lord Norfolk," Mrs. Whitney said, more enthusiastic than before. "May I present my daughter, Drew's younger sister, *Miss Evelyn Whitney*."

Evelyn gave me a small curtsy, and I bowed.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, *Miss Whitney*."

"The pleasure is mine, Lord Norfolk."

I glanced at Drew and lifted a brow. He hadn't told me he had a sister.

He just shrugged.

"And this is Mrs. Reinhold and Miss Isabel Reinhold," Mrs. Whitney said. "Congressman Reinhold's family."

Again, I bowed.

"How do you do, Lord Norfolk?" Isabel asked as she rose and curtsied.

I bowed, taken with her gentle voice and sweet demeanor.

“Next”—Mrs. Whitney lifted her chin, her voice cooling, though she seemed quite pleased with herself—“is Mrs. *Clarence* Whitney, my sister-in-law.”

This was the woman who had tried to outdo Drew’s mother whenever possible.

Mrs. Clarence Whitney pursed her lips as she extended a hand to me. “How fortuitous that Drew should have a noble friend, available at a moment’s notice, to visit for the summer.”

“I was fortunate to receive the invitation,” I said as I bowed, harnessing all my aristocratic charm, ready with the story we had agreed upon. “Drew and I met in London when he was on his tour last summer, and he made me promise to drop in when I visited New York. When I did, he invited me to accompany him to Newport.”

I hated to lie, but no one would believe the truth.

“May I introduce *my* daughter,” Mrs. Clarence Whitney said as she motioned to the other young woman. “Miss Marianna Whitney.”

She stood to curtsy, and I bowed.

A footman appeared and pulled out a chair for me between Evelyn and Isabel—which was not a coincidence, if Mrs. Whitney’s private smile meant something.

The moment the conversation shifted toward Drew, Evelyn turned to me.

“If you think you’ve come to marry an heiress,” she said in a quiet, even voice, “then I’m afraid you will be disappointed, Lord Norfolk. I am not for sale.”

My eyebrows lifted at her boldness.

But I wasn’t unnerved. I had no intention of wooing her or anyone else until I made my final decision next March when I turned twenty-five. Even if I was searching for a wife in this path, I wouldn’t look for a wealthy heiress who couldn’t survive on my Virginia farm.

“If you think you’re going to buy a title,” I said, just as frank as I lifted a glass of punch, “then *you* will be disappointed, Miss Whitney. My earldom is not for sale.”

It was her turn to look surprised as I turned my attention to Miss Reinhold.

“How has your summer been thus far, Miss Reinhold?”

Her lips tilted into a charming smile as she glanced from Miss Whitney to me and said, “It has been lovely, my lord, but I believe it just got more interesting.”

I couldn’t agree more.



Three hours later, I stood near the windows in my large bedchamber, staring at the tumultuous Atlantic. My room was curved and sat right above the parlor with the veranda roof below. It was probably the nicest bedchamber in the cottage, with panoramic views of the ocean and the other mansions along the rocky shoreline.

I wished I could enjoy it, but knowing that Mama and Ada were alone at the farm, with just enough money to scrape by for the summer, haunted my thoughts. It seemed cruel that I was here enjoying the finest luxuries available while they worked so hard. They knew I had gone to New York to seek an investor—they just didn’t know how I was going about getting one.

I hadn’t stopped praying since I’d left the farm. This was my last hope.

A knock at my door pulled my attention away from the ocean.

“Come in,” I called.

Drew entered the large bedchamber and fell into one of the plush seats near the window. “Sorry about that, old chap. I didn’t know Mother was planning a luncheon.”

“You didn’t tell me you had a sister.” I crossed my arms and leaned against the window frame. “Does your mother think I’m here looking for a wealthy heiress?” The newspapers were always full of details of one American heiress or another marrying into the British aristocracy. Many wealthy families with new money, who weren’t accepted into Mrs. Astor’s circle, took their daughters

to Europe to find titled gentlemen to marry them. In exchange, the destitute aristocrats were given large dowries to save their family estates.

“Even if she does—” Drew yawned—“you have nothing to worry about. Evelyn has no intention of nabbing an earl.” He paused. “Honestly, I don’t know what Evelyn wants. She’s changed so much over the past year and a half, she probably doesn’t, either.” He grinned. “But Miss Reinhold was enjoyable. Mother would like me to escort her around this summer. Father would benefit having a congressman for an in-law.”

“Speaking of your father, have you heard from him? Does he still plan to return in September?”

Drew dropped his feet on the floor. “I forgot to tell you that his plans changed. He wrote and said he’s coming home early. I left him a message at his office, outlining the investment opportunity in your farm.” He shook his head. “He’ll probably be so surprised that I’m dipping my toes into the family business, he’ll contact me the moment he gets back.”

“I hope you’re right. It would be nice to know if he’s interested before September.” And maybe I could quit this charade sooner. But it made me pause. “You’re sure he won’t come to Newport?”

“He detests this place. Nothing could persuade him to come.”

“Good.”

“For now,” Drew continued, “just focus on what we’re doing here. It wouldn’t hurt you to flirt with Evelyn. Any rumor that my mother might have an earl for a son-in-law would escalate her rise up the social ladder, and perhaps she and my aunt would quit their feuding.”

I turned from the window, thinking back to his earlier comment. “What do you mean your sister has changed?”

“She used to be more like Miss Reinhold. Teasing and laughing. Now she’s reserved and serious, almost melancholy and prudish. Whatever happened, it took place while I was at Yale. I’ve asked Mother, but she doesn’t know, either. It’s a mystery to all of us.”

“Have you asked Evelyn?”

“Of course I’ve asked her. But she says everything is fine.” He clasped his hands and leaned forward, putting his elbows on his knees. “And speaking of sisters. Have you decided how we’re going to convince Cecily that I’m a physician?”

I sighed and returned my attention to the ocean. Large waves rolled toward the cliff, breaking against the shore and spraying into the rain-drenched air. My stepsister, Cecily, was the only real obstacle I faced in bringing Drew into Windsor Castle, where the queen had moved the court earlier that month because of the plague sweeping across London. Cecily had known Drew since we were all children at Arundel Castle. She knew he was a carpenter.

“When was the last time you saw her?” I asked.

His brows came together as he looked at his clasped hands. “Five years ago.” He spoke the words softly. “Before she moved to court.”

“I think the best thing we can do is tell her the truth.”

He looked up at me. “You think that’s a good idea?”

“We’re spinning a lot of webs. I think we should be honest when we can be. She knows you’re a time-crosser, and when I explain that you’re a medical student, hopefully she’ll understand.”

“Do you think it’s wise? If the queen learns the truth, you and I could face severe punishment. I don’t want Cecily to suffer with us.”

“Cecily knows how to keep secrets. I won’t tell her more than necessary.”

“I hope you’re right.” He studied me for a moment. “How is Cecily?”

I pushed away from the window frame. “She wasn’t doing well last time I saw her. It’s been a few weeks since the court moved to Windsor.”

“I wouldn’t do well, either, if I lost one of my paths unexpectedly.”

Cecily was grieving the loss of her second path in 1913, but she would come around. I would see to it. “Everything will work out

for all of us,” I tried to assure him, though the encouragement was more for my benefit. “Once you diagnose the queen, we’ll establish her treatment, and then you can go back to Arundel. You’ll be leaving 1563 in December, so even if you’re caught—”

“I’ll only spend six months in the Tower,” he finished with a dry tone. “If you’re caught pretending to be the Earl of Norfolk here, all you’ll have to deal with is a scandal. I think you got the better end of this bargain.”

“You forget, I could end up in the Tower with you. Besides, I have a lot to lose in 1883, as well.”

A lot could happen between now and next March when I turned twenty-five. I’d known since I was small that I would have to decide if I wanted to stay in the 1500s or the 1800s. It was part of the time-crossing rules that governed my gift—if it could be called a gift. Ever since I was born, I had gone between my two lives. Tonight when I went to sleep in 1883, I would wake up in 1563. After I spent a day in 1563, I would go to sleep and then wake up again in 1883. Time stood still while I was away. I had two identical bodies and one conscious mind that moved between them. It was the same for Drew and had been the same for Cecily. I had inherited my time-crossing mark from Papa in 1883. It meant that on my twenty-fifth birthday, whichever path I wanted to keep forever was the one I would stay awake in past midnight. In the path I didn’t choose, my body would die, and that would be the end of my life there.

Drew and I moved between the same two paths, but Cecily didn’t. She had lived in the 1500s and the 1900s. She had always planned to choose her 1900s path when her birthday came—and I was going to choose my 1883 path to take care of Mama and Ada. But last January, everything changed. Cecily died of polio in her 1900s path, so her conscious mind had stayed in 1563, and she had no other choice.

Which meant my choices had changed.

“Let’s just focus on what we’re both planning to do,” I said. “Tomorrow when we wake up in 1563, I will introduce you to the

queen and you can examine her and find out what's wrong. If we're fortunate, it will be something simple."

Drew was still frowning. "What do her other physicians say?"

"She refuses to let them examine her."

He pulled back, his elbows coming off his knees. "What makes you think she'll let me?"

"She trusts me. And she'll like that you aren't part of the court. She doesn't trust the other physicians who are more interested in their own political gain than in serving her. If she likes you, she'll let you examine her."

"I'm only a student," he reminded me.

"But you're smart. I know you can help her."

He lifted his hands and leaned back in the chair. "I'll do my best."

"I'm not asking for anything else."

"And don't forget to flirt with Evelyn a little," Drew said as he stood. "My aunt would be livid if she thought Evelyn was going to become a countess."

"I don't want any complications this summer. And I don't want to break any hearts."

Drew grunted as he walked to the door. "I know that you're used to women falling at your feet, Lord Norfolk, but Evelyn isn't like the others. Mother has introduced her to dozens of European lords and princes and the wealthiest bachelors in America, and none of them have turned her head. I doubt you'll have to worry about breaking her heart."

"Maybe her heart has already been broken."

Drew paused, his hand on the doorknob. "Maybe it has, but I have no idea who would have done it. She wasn't serious with any of her beaux in her debutant year." He was about to leave the room when he said, "I hope you don't mind that Mother is making a fuss about you."

I lifted my shoulder. It helped keep my mind occupied, so I wouldn't worry about tomorrow. Because as confident as I tried to sound, I was nervous about Drew meeting the queen and Cecily

learning about our plan. If the queen suspected that Drew wasn't a physician, or anyone thought I was trying to harm the queen, that could mean execution.

Drew had to be careful.

I had to be smart.

And Cecily would have to be quiet.