

## A True Story



## A Read the story

You are going to be the Queen!

The words echoed in the huge, ornamented room, while the sixteen-year-old girl opened her eyes wide with anticipation.

'You are going to be the Queen!'



Jane started to dance happily... for isn't it almost every girl's dream to become a princess, or even better: a queen? To be honest, she had already known that she had a chance of becoming the next ruler of the country as the rightful heir to the throne, but she wasn't *really* aware of the fact, and it all seemed like a dream!

Jane was only a teenager, but her strict upbringing made her life difficult. She couldn't go out on her own, she couldn't talk to her peers, let alone find a friend her age. However, she was lucky to have her nanny who was ready to turn a blind eye to some of the mischievous things Jane tried to do in the desperation of her solitude. While Jane was dancing, her nanny was helping her dress.

'Come on now, Jane – your mother will soon visit you in your quarters and she mustn't see you like this. You must look fit to be the future Queen!'

Jane settled down a bit and let her nanny help her with the heavy gown. She absolutely hated being dressed this way, but she was waiting patiently while her nanny tirelessly tackled the numerous bows and laces on the

richly embroidered material. When she was done dressing, the girl looked at herself in the mirror. She saw a beautiful young woman who looked as gracious and noble as all the other women in her aristocratic family. But unlike them, Jane still felt like a child, a high-spirited young girl who would now be able to live her own life without her family following her every step. Because that is what queens do. She smiled at her reflection.

Suddenly, the door opened and Jane saw her mother, the Duchess.

'Mother, mother!' shouted the girl without thinking. 'Have you heard the news? My uncles were right! I am the next heir to the throne!' She pulled up the edges of her long gown and stepped forward to greet her mother.

Jane's strict mother was shocked by this display of emotion. Instead of responding to Jane, she turned to her nanny.

'What kind of behaviour is this? Why is my daughter racing about like a wild hound?'

'I am sorry, my Lady', said the nanny, 'but Jane is excited and...'

'Jane is a noblewoman and not some peasant girl, and she should behave accordingly! Now take her away and I will tell you about the preparations for the coronation!'

Jane said nothing and bowed her head. Her mother had always had the last word and nothing could be done about that.

She remembered when she was betrothed to a young Lord from another noble family. She hadn't even known the boy, and yet she had to marry him! She complained to her mother and all she got was a harsh reprimand.

'You shall do what you are told to do!' her mother replied.

It was all part of the political game of the time: her arranged marriage, her life, and now even her becoming the Queen. But she was looking forward to the last part. She felt that nobody could order the Queen around.

That's why she kept silent. She felt her time would come.

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Eight days had passed since the coronation. Jane was sitting in a huge, gold-plated armchair and felt a bit uneasy. The armchair belonged to the late King, who was her cousin and who had ruled over the country for a little more than two decades. And now her family had done everything they could to put Jane in his place, fulfilling their long-time desire to secure their bloodline to the throne.

Suddenly she heard a clamour. Someone was approaching the room with a strong but steady pace and it seemed like voices were shouting something.

'What is happening?' the Queen asked her lady-in-waiting. 'Who is yelling out there? Go and check!'

The Queen's lady went to open the door, but it was opened by somebody else. Behind the door stood a tall man with a grave look in his eyes. He was surrounded by other strange men dressed in military uniform. Jane also noticed the shadow of a woman.

'Your Majesty, you must come with us immediately. You're being arrested under the charge of treason against the country.'

'What are you talking about?' responded Jane to the tall man. 'How dare you? I am the Queen and I order you to go away! Guards! Take him away!'

Nobody moved.

'Your Majesty, you have to come with us. We have your husband too.'

'You will not order the Queen! I will have you arrested!'

The woman in the shadow moved forward a bit, so Jane could recognise her face. It was her cousin Mary. She would recognise her sinister look anywhere. Mary wanted the throne for herself, and she probably had something to do with this arrest. Jane had always been afraid of that pale, slender-looking lady who was said to be exceptionally harsh and cruel.

*Jane the Queen*

The men who demanded her arrest approached the Queen, but her eyes were fixated on her cousin, Mary.

'What did you do, Mary?' Jane asked her cousin. 'Are you behind all of this? Guard, take them away!'

Again, nobody moved. Her ladies were too afraid to react, her personal guards wouldn't do a thing, and her husband – well, he was of no use since he too had obviously fallen into their hands.

'Mary! Say something! How dare you approach the Queen in this way?'

Again, Mary didn't answer, but she smiled maliciously.

Nothing could be done. The Queen was taken away.

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It was raining. The rain drops felt so heavy on Jane's tired eyelids. She tried to think, but she was unable to. She even tried to remember the trial. They made her confess that she had committed treason by accepting the crown that belonged to her cousin Mary. And yes, she did want the crown. But not for the reasons they thought. Jane just wanted to be free.

She looked around. Many people seemed sad, others looked frightened. Her last day as a queen.

Jane cast one last glance at the crowd and it seemed someone's sad eyes were watching her tirelessly, but she couldn't really tell who it was because of the rain. She imagined her nanny sending her a last goodbye.

She had been the Queen for nine days, and she was finally walking to her freedom, never to return again.



## GLOSSARY\*:

<b>ornamented</b>	decorated	<b>betrothe</b>	to promise to marry or give in marriage
<b>anticipation</b>	expectation of a particular event	<b>harsh</b>	causing discomfort; the opposite of gentle
<b>heir</b>	a person who has legal claim to a title or a throne	<b>reprimand</b>	a severe criticism
<b>upbringing</b>	a particular way of raising a child	<b>late</b>	used for talking about someone who has died
<b>quarters</b>	the place where somebody lives	<b>bloodline</b>	a sequence of direct ancestors
<b>tackle</b>	to deal with something	<b>clamour</b>	a loud, continuous noise
<b>peers</b>	people who belong to the same age group	<b>pace</b>	a manner of going on foot
<b>embroidered</b>	made with needlework	<b>grave</b>	serious, heavy
<b>gown</b>	a woman's dress	<b>sinister</b>	evil, threatening
<b>coronation</b>	the act or ceremony of crowning a queen or a king	<b>slender</b>	thin, slim
		<b>exceptionally</b>	better than average; unusual

\*Words and expressions have been looked up in the Merriam-Webster online dictionary. Some of them have been partially modified (<http://www.merriam-webster.com>; <http://www.wordcentral.com>).

## B Answer the questions and discuss.

- 1 What kind of a girl is Jane? In which way is she similar to today's teenagers?
- 2 Jane's life is orchestrated by her parents and society. Can you find parts in the text that support this statement?
- 3 Are Jane and her mother close in any way? Try to describe their relationship.
- 4 Who was behind the Queen's arrest and why?
- 5 Can you clarify the story's ending? What do you think happened to Jane?
- 6 Can you guess which country the story relates to?



## WRITING

### C The power is in your hands!

The story doesn't have to end this way. Rewrite the last part of the story and give it a different ending. You can use your imagination.

## HOMEWORK

### Find the real Jane!

The Nine-Day Queen story is based on real events. Use a search engine to find out more about her life. Find some pictures, too. Report your findings to the rest of the class. These are your keywords: *Jane Grey*, *Bloody Mary*, *The Nine-Day Queen*.



*The Streatham portrait, believed to be a copy of a contemporary portrait of Lady Jane Grey.*