

Tudors

PRIVY TO THE KING BY NIGEL BRYANT

- FX* 1530s. Windsor Castle, early morning. Sounds of fabric brushed as Henry Norris, a dapper man in his 30s, hums while getting the king's clothes ready.
- NORRIS [V/O]** Henry Norris at your service - welcome to the royal castle of Windsor!
- KING HENRY** *[a little off, calling from a doorway]* Norris!
- NORRIS [V/O]** Oh - his majesty King Henry calls. And it won't do to keep him waiting...
- NORRIS** *[hurrying along]* On my way, Majesty!
- KING HENRY** Norris, man! Where are you?
- NORRIS** *[arriving]* Here, my lord!
- KING HENRY** The sun's risen. I meant to go hunting early!
- NORRIS** Indeed, my lord. And all's in hand.
- KING HENRY** Follow!
- NORRIS** Majesty.
- FX* We follow King Henry and Norris through a chamber and quickly into a smaller room
- KING HENRY** Are the fires all lit?
- NORRIS** They are, my lord.
- KING HENRY** In every chamber?
- NORRIS** In every chamber. We've been up since three, my lord, putting fresh straw on every floor and lighting fires.
- FX* We hear the king's nightshirt and some, as yet, unexplained gruntings and strainings.





- KING HENRY I sense impatience, Norris. Do you think me too concerned with hygiene?
- NORRIS Why, no, my lord, I -
- KING HENRY Our hygiene must be perfect. There are so many of us here at Court, there is great risk of sickness and disease.
- NORRIS Indeed, my lord.
- NORRIS [V/O] His Majesty is right, of course. There are fully a thousand people here at Court - as many as a fair-sized town! Here at Windsor we've room enough, but not all palaces are as great. We move from palace to palace, you see.**
- KING HENRY *[straining]* Thank God we've left Richmond!
- NORRIS We stayed there far too long!
- NORRIS [V/O] Once we've eaten all the food in a palace, and hunted all the game in the local forest, we move on to the next...**
- KING HENRY *[straining again]* The stench there was appalling!
- NORRIS Intolerable, my lord.
- NORRIS [V/O] Yes, above all, once a palace has become too filthy: when all the privies start to stink, and all the pits are full of sewage, then we move on and leave the Scourers to their work. They say that sometimes the sewage-mound they're faced with stands head-high, and they have to dig it out armed just with...well...shovels.**
- KING HENRY Hygiene in the kitchens needs attention.
- NORRIS It does, my lord.
- KING HENRY I am told the scullions are going about their duties naked!
- NORRIS It is mightily hot in the kitchens, my lord.
- KING HENRY Cooks, scullions, even the boys who turn the roasting-spits, are to wear clothes to avoid infection.

- NORRIS [V/O]** His Majesty is right to be fearful. The sweating sickness carried off 400 in Oxford just last week, and a year ago 2,000 died in London. The sweating sickness strikes quite suddenly. Sometimes in a matter of hours. Merry at dinner, dead at supper!
- KING HENRY** *[straining especially hard]* My easement is difficult this morning, Norris.
- NORRIS** So it seems, my lord.
- NORRIS [V/O]** Oh - in case you've been concerned about these - ah - noises from His Majesty, I should explain my - um - job here at Court. My title is Groom of the Stool, and I - ah - help the king with his easement - that is - um - in his toilet. Each morning I take a basin of water, a pitcher and some linen cloths to help His Majesty...with his nether end. It is an honour to be with His Majesty at such private moments. But sometimes they are more than moments! He has of late been experiencing difficulty...
- KING HENRY** Will it never come?
- NORRIS** Your doctor, my lord, has an idea that meat may be the problem.
- KING HENRY** Meat? Is the man mad?
- NORRIS** He believes if you eat more vegetables you'll be relieved.
- KING HENRY** Vegetables? What grows in the ground is fit only for beggars and peasants! Give me venison, swan, partridge, pigeon and good English beef! *[Straining mightily]* My huntsmen are waiting! If only I could...ohhh..!
- NORRIS [V/O]** **How His Majesty loves the Hunt! He has risen now - at four in the morning - to begin his hunting early, and may well stay hunting till after dark!**
- KING HENRY** I need my sport! Oh, to be able still to joust! Do you remember..?
- NORRIS** I do, my lord...
- FX** *Under the following we hear the sounds of a violent joust - charging horses, mighty clashes, cheers and groans of crowd...*
- NORRIS [V/O]** **In his youth, jousting was everything to His Majesty.**
- KING HENRY** Remember how I unhorsed Brandon? They said he was the finest in the kingdom, but I struck him with my lance, full in the chest, and brought him crashing down!



- FX* *In the background, the gallop and crash and roar of the crowd coincide with Henry's foreground excitement, as, with a sudden sense of delighted wonder:*
- KING HENRY By God, it does me good just to think of it! Down goes Brandon, the crowd all roar, and – *[mighty strain and huge, triumphant relief]* – my easement is complete!
- NORRIS Indeed it is, my lord!
- KING HENRY *[Rising]* Then come!
- NORRIS My lord - ah - you are not fully clean yet.
- KING HENRY Well be quick, then!
- NORRIS Majesty.
- FX* Cut to sound of horns, cries and galloping horses crashing through a forest.
- NORRIS [V/O] And then - the chase! His Majesty, his courtiers and huntsmen ride out for the hunt. I can't keep up with him! My poor horse is exhausted!**
- FX* *Another great blast of a horn*
- NORRIS *[calling to a huntsman]* Is it a deer he's after?
- HUNTSMAN *[calling back]* No, sir, a boar.
- NORRIS A boar? But are they not dangerous, ferocious beasts?
- HUNTSMAN Indeed they are, sir. Their tusks can rip a man apart.
- NORRIS I must follow His Majesty! Hup!
- FX* *We hear him spur his horse forward. Noise of fast-running hooves under the following:*
- NORRIS [V/O] I spur after the King, alarmed for his safety. I know King Henry will settle for nothing less than giving the beast its death-blow by his own hand!**
- FX* *Norris reigns in. Fearsome sounds of a boar at bay, snorting and stomping, attacked by dogs.*



- NORRIS [V/O]** I find His Majesty at last in a narrow glade. The dogs have cornered the boar and are leaping at it. But the boar is lashing with its tusks, tossing dogs backward through the air.
- KING HENRY** *[calling]* Look at him, Norris! Here's a beast indeed!
- NORRIS** He's a...fine animal, my lord.
- KING HENRY** *[to a Huntsman]* Call off the dogs! They've done enough! And give me a stronger spear: this one's too light.
- HUNTSMAN** It's the best for throwing, my lord.
- KING HENRY** I don't mean to throw - I shall charge it with a lance.
- NORRIS [V/O]** His Majesty's horse knows better - he rears and whinnies in fear. But the King is a magnificent horseman and reins him in; then he snatches up the strongest spear and rides toward the boar. It bristles and snorts most monstrously, and sets itself for a sudden leap...
- KING HENRY** Hah!
- NORRIS [V/O]** ...but before it can even leave the ground the King impales it on his spear. He has struck it dead - the very image of Saint George the Dragon-slayer!
- FX** *Sounds of wild cheering. The dogs bark and bay dementedly. These sounds cross-fade to a line of horses riding at a gentle pace through the woods.*
- We're riding back now to the palace. It's been a good day's hunting, and His Majesty is in a joyous mood! He has killed a great number of deer as well as his glorious boar. His Majesty has enjoyed it greatly - and when he's had good sport he'll talk of it for hours over supper! Though it must be said, his mood can change...**
- FX** *There is a commotion a little way off, and a Huntsman approaches.*
- HUNTSMAN** My Lord!
- KING HENRY** What's the matter?
- HUNTSMAN** Poachers, my lord - man and his son.
- KING HENRY** Your names?



JOHN'S FATHER William Little...and my son John.

KING HENRY I take it you know mine?

JOHN'S FATHER Yes...Your Majesty.

KING HENRY The punishment for poaching in the daytime is prison. But under cover of night, the only punishment possible is death.

JOHN'S FATHER For me, sir, yes, but my son here -

KING HENRY Did the boy also shoot an arrow?

JOHN Yes, sir.

JOHN'S FATHER No, sir. John's a boastful boy, wants to claim -

KING HENRY You'll both be hanged. Deliver them to the guard. Ride on!

FX Sounds of the line of horses continuing on their way

NORRIS [V/O] I pity them - of course I do. But the king's sport must be protected. Show mercy to poachers and all the common folk of England will all be hunting! And then there'll be nothing left for His Majesty to chase! And when all's said and done, the Court must be fed: there's venison a-plenty killed today - pork too! Ah! I can see the lights of the castle now - almost time for supper! Then music, dancing, entertainments...before I see His tireless Majesty to bed.