

Orchestration

2 Flutes – Oboe – English Horn – 2 Clarinets – 2 Bassoons – 4 Horns – 3 Trumpets – 3 Trombones – Tuba – Timpani (4 drums) – Percussion (3 players): Snare Drum, Tenor Drum, Bass Drum, Cymbals, Gong, Glockenspiel, Vibraphone, Chimes, Triangle, Tambourine, Hammers* – Harp – Celesta – Strings

* In addition to three orchestral percussion, hammers are played on stage by two carpenters.

The Story

The three acts begin with orchestral preludes followed by introductory ballads sung by a minstrel. The first of these ballads welcomes the audience and prepares them for a sad story. The action of Act 1 centers around Jane's arranged marriage to Guildford Dudley. After a scene in which Jane's parents inform her of the marriage plan, she retires alone and sings an aria of lament, quoting words from the Passion text in Luke's gospel. A large-scale wedding ballet (consisting of a series of instrumental dances) is followed by a discussion between Lady Dudley and her husband John. They worry about Jane's future and Mary's plans, but they feel confident that Jane will be proclaimed queen and that their military forces can prevail over those of Mary.

The orchestral prelude to Act 2 is a grand dirge for King Edward. The minstrel then sings of Edward's death and Jane's attendant crown and jewels. Jane is brought to the council chamber to hear the proclamation of Edward's death and a discussion of the succession. In the following scene, Pembroke and Arundel (loyal to Mary) discuss their treacherous plan to support Jane's coronation publicly while simultaneously plotting to aid Mary. In the military planning room, Jane and her advisors prepare to defeat Mary when she marches on London. Pembroke says that Mary's father (Henry) or father-in-law (John Dudley) must lead the troops to victory. Secretly,

Pembroke and Arundel know that the defeat they are planning will greatly weaken Jane's position.

After the orchestral prelude, the minstrel begins Act 3 by singing of Dudley's defeat, Mary's ascension to the throne, and Jane's imprisonment; at the end it describes the bright sunlit Monday, approaching the day of the beheading. Jane's husband is allowed to visit her in prison. Although married, they have not consummated their relationship, and the opening scene, though tentatively at first, is something of a love duet. At the end Jane sings of her hope that she is now pregnant with a son and muses on Queen Mary's kindness, while Guildford sings tenderly of the kindness of "this queen" (meaning Jane). Scene 2 describes Mary's visit to Jane's cell. Jane's father and uncles, under the leadership of Wyatt, have again attempted to proclaim Jane as ruler; but their rebellion has failed. To protect the crown from further jeopardy, Mary contends that alas she cannot sign Jane's pardon, and thus the execution will proceed. She sings of her need to find Jane guilty of plots against her and talks about the cruel deeds she now must perform. Mary will send her priest to say prayers for Jane. Jane answers that Mary has more need for these prayers than she does. The final scene begins with a version of the "Cries of London." Jane sings her farewell as the chorus recalls the words from the Gospel of Luke. She is beheaded.

— Arnold Rosner and Carson Cooman

Composer's Note

The Chronicle of Nine is in the copious tradition of operas about thrones and those who jockey around them: in this case concerning the character of Lady Jane Grey (ca. 1537–1554), whose marriage and ascendancy were arranged more or less in spite of her, and who was overthrown and ultimately condemned by the forces of the (rightful) Mary (Tudor). The libretto is by Florence Stevenson and combines a straightforward dramatization of the events with great sensitivity to the people who lived them. Several important scenes in the opera are duets. The composer has tried to intensify the mood of these both melodically and coloristically: the love duet between Jane and her (arranged) husband Guildford Dudley emphasizes harp and vibraphone; the dialogue for Jane and Mary before the execution uses only an accompanying ensemble of six cellos. Of course, there is still room for grand crowd scenes and heavy orchestral preludes; indeed, the four orchestral movements have been extracted to form *Symphony No. 7, "The Tragedy of Queen Jane."*

As for titling the opera, *The Chronicle of Nine* was the original name of Ms. Stevenson's stage play, and she meant it to refer to the number of days of Jane's reign. But in the opera the title refers not only to that but to the number of active singing roles and the number of scenes in which there is vocal action. (The composer tries to ascribe to coincidence the opera's nine-squared opus number—81!)

For much of the text, the vocal music is less in a set-aria tradition than in the manner of impassioned-recitative or through-melody, as one finds in one way or another in such operatic composers as Monteverdi and Wagner. In the English language, however, perhaps the closest comparison is with Vaughan Williams's *Riders to the Sea*. In part for contrast to this, a tenor, acting as a minstrel, sings an introductory vocal ballad between the prelude and first scene of each act; these are of a more "arioso" style and relate to the style of Elizabethan lute songs.

— Arnold Rosner

Libretto

From the play of the same name, later renamed *The Chronicle of Queen Jane*, by Florence Stevenson, with additional words from the Gospel according to Luke.

Act 1

1. Prelude

2. Ballad

MINSTREL, *strumming on his lute, enters apron of stage and strolls throughout ballad; curtain remains down.*

Welcome all you lords
and all you ladies so fine,
come and listen to my chronicle,
to the chronicle of nine.

I've come to sing you a ballad,
just a rhyme, you might say,
without reason, though it does tell a sad story
and the story is reason enough.

What does anything mean of itself

and in itself save that it is a part of something else?

Life happens, does it not?

An herb flower, pulled from its bed,
dies but lives, to flavor food.

Saving your presence,
my lords and ladies,
come and listen to my chronicle,
to the chronicle of nine.

Minstrel, still strumming, slowly exits.

3. Scene 1

Curtain rises on Grey family room. Jane is present and Henry enters.

HENRY

Well, Jane, we've had good news from court.

JANE

From court? How does the king fare?

HENRY

To my mind, his physicians overdose the lad with their medicines.

JANE

He wrote to me that he'd won at tennis three times last week. I took that to mean he's getting stronger.

HENRY

Well, kings must always win, you know.

JANE

Edward's fair minded. (*Frances enters.*) He'd not consent.

FRANCES

Who'd not consent to what?

HENRY

We spoke of the king, Frances. I told Jane, we'd heard from court and she inquired after him.

FRANCES

Has she other news?

HENRY

Not yet. Jane, oh do sit down, my dear.

FRANCES

Hold yourself erect, please; sit as a princess should, not like a sack of meal! Well, Henry, proceed.

HENRY

Child, our despatch came from the regent, who'd asked to be remembered to you. I've had a similar request from his son, young Guildford...

JANE

From Guildford Dudley? But why should that be, Father? I hardly know him.

HENRY

Come, Jane, Lord Dudley writes that he waxes most ardent when he speaks of you.

JANE

Ardent? It is another of Lord Dudley's lies.

FRANCES

Hold, Jane, you are too saucy.

JANE

But Mother, last year when Lord Dudley had the king dub him Duke of Northumberland, you laughed and called him an upstart rogue who smelt of the carpentry

shop and still had shavings in his hair.

FRANCES

Jane Grey, are you a parrot who must repeat my every incontinent word?!

HENRY

Now hear me, Jane. Lord Dudley, the duke of Northumberland, has done us a very great honor.

FRANCES

Instruct her as to the nature of that honor.

HENRY

If you'd cease to interrupt me, I should. Jane, the lord regent of England has requested your hand in marriage for his son, Lord Guildford Dudley.

JANE

You deem this an honor, Father?

FRANCES

Yes!, and one we've accepted in your name.

Jane, nervously, sits down, slightly backing away from Frances.

FRANCES

The marriage contracts are being drawn up and the women ordered to begin sewing your bridal garments.

JANE

No, I'll not wed him.

FRANCES

Don't say me "no"!

Jane stands, with greater courage.

JANE

Why should Lord Dudley want my hand for his son? What is he planning now?

FRANCES

Planning, naught but an advantageous alliance for the house of Dudley. Most advantageous for an adventurer of his stripe!

JANE

There, you do despise him, and yet would give me to him.

FRANCES

Despise him—I admire him, a most resourceful man ready to seize opportunity when it comes his way.

JANE

I do not want a husband. I do not want to marry.

FRANCES

Come, we Tudor women must marry. It's decreed in heaven. You'll find him to your liking. He's handsome and lusty like his brothers; their wives do not complain.

JANE

Mother, I have promised myself to God, to work for him, to help abolish Papistry throughout the land.

FRANCES

Then I charge you, offer up your loins and breed brats to sing his praises.

JANE

I'll not marry Guildford Dudley!

HENRY

We've given our word, dear Jane.

JANE

But I've not given my word, and I never shall!

Jane angrily rushes out.

FRANCES

I knew it. I told you how she'd be. Was there ever wench so contrary?

HENRY

Take heart, my love, once they're wed, you'll see what game I mean to play.

FRANCES

Play games with a gamester of Lord Dudley's ilk; I'll not give you odds on winners.

HENRY

I'll not be the loser, nor will you.

FRANCES

We've a fortnight for our preparations.

Curtain falls.

4. Scene 2

Curtain rises on Jane, in her room, at her mirror. She is wearing a robe and about to make evening prayer.

JANE

Into thy hands I commend my spirit, O God. Into thy hands I commend my soul.

Jane touches or ponders various religious objects, opens her Bible, reading.

JANE

And the other said, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power," and he said unto him, "Truly, (*looking upward, eyes off Bible*) I say to you this day, you will be with me in Paradise."

Redirecting her glare to Bible page.

JANE

It was now about the sixth hour and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour while the sun's light failed and the curtain of the temple was torn in twain, then Jesus with a loud voice cried, "Father! (*Clasps Bible, hands closed around it*) Into thy hands I commend my spirit, O God. Into thy hands I commend my soul." And having said this, he breathed his last. (*Sets Bible aside*)

Returns to mirrors in preparation for retiring. Curtain slowly falls.

5. Scene 3: Wedding Ballet

Quick rising curtain to brilliantly lit and appointed chamber. Rear of stage, two guards are seen with raised crossed swords, in front of an elegant curtain through which celebrants enter in pairs during "Intrada," which is a stately promenade. Jane and Guildford enter last.

Intrada

Minuet: Elegant and somewhat seductive, danced by three or four pairs of excellent dancers. Remainder of wedding party watch from the sides. Jane and Guildford may participate somewhat reluctantly, or may be more or less encircled by dancers at times.

At specific moments, couples should lightly kiss. Trio sections may be treated as duets for the best dancers.

Round Dance: Athletic, active, but never vulgar, dance for entire company.

Tempo d'intrada: Bow and salute one another, leaving in pairs in majestic recessional. (John and Lady Dudley linger behind; otherwise exit order reverses the entrance order of Intrada.)

Attacca (Curtain remains up.)

6. Scene 4

John, Lady Dudley remain in now dim chamber.

LADY DUDLEY

You're trembling; it's a cold night for July; your man's on his way to Lady Mary with news of the king?

JOHN

Of the king, my dear, I've said her brother's ill and begs that she attend him.

LADY DUDLEY

Ah, that's clever, an ambush, John?

JOHN

Fifty men lie in wait for her.

LADY DUDLEY

Was it necessary to send our other son upon this mission?

JOHN

There's no danger; she'll be taken unawares. It had to be done tonight; if she'd escaped us and ridden north, there's many might have joined her.

LADY DUDLEY

And many more are loyal to you.

JOHN

I'm not sure of that, I've heard whisperings of late and followed them—

LADY DUDLEY

And found what?

JOHN

Just empty rooms, empty rooms, heavy with the smell of men's sweat, all the spices of occupancy.

LADY DUDLEY

It's your imagination; the king's will is signed, we've but to proclaim Jane queen. Who'd risk his neck for Mary with her masses and her Pope; would the people welcome a Papist to the throne?

JOHN

It's they that might rise to her defence. She's King Henry's first-born daughter, a Tudor in direct line to rule.

LADY DUDLEY

Lady Jane should be Tudor enough to please them; she's ripe for bearing sons. Mary's close on forty and dry and wasted as a woman twenty years her senior. No seed will take root in her womb. Come home, John, in a few days the council meets, and you must be rested when you proclaim Jane queen.

JOHN

They smile on me too much the lot of them, so they smiled on Somerset a year ago. All of us smiled and betrayed him to his death. I won his place so easily I

could lose it as easily.

LADY DUDLEY

You're stronger than Somerset, the council will do your bidding as they always have.

JOHN

Edward was living then and is dying now; my regency's ended.

LADY DUDLEY

And another ready to begin. It will as you have planned. Jane and Guildford will sire you your race of Dudley kings.

JOHN

Listen, it's hailing. I see the hailstones are of a rusty hue as if tinged with blood. Many fell when the last king died. What manner of omen can that be?

LADY DUDLEY

Heaven's tears. Come my dearest, dearest love, you need your rest, and I need you beside me.

Curtain falls.

Act 2

7. Prelude

The prelude may be played with curtain down as usual, or as a grand staged dirge for King Edward. In this instance, the curtain must be lowered at the end for the subsequent ballad.

8. Ballad

Minstrel, as in Act 1, strolls, strumming, along apron of stage.

MINSTREL

Now Edward was a king,
but he was ill and slight.
And so it passed, my friends,
that he did die one night.
Jane Grey was sore frightened
but she was Tudor born.
And to the council chamber
went the maiden so forlorn.
Now Jane will be a queen
and wear a velvet gown,
with jewels upon her bosom
and with a golden crown.

9. Scene 1

Council chamber, entrances on either side, balcony on upper story on stage right.

Curtain rises. Bustling council (men's chorus), including John, Henry, Arundel, Pembroke, Guildford, Lady Dudley, Frances try to press Jane in and to her place. As regent, John occupies central position.

COUNCIL

Gracious majesty, your highness.

FRANCES

Come sit here, your majesty.

JANE

Must I?

LADY DUDLEY

Go greet your wife.

GUILDFORD

I need no prompting, Mother. Jane, my love, my little queen, I bid you welcome home.

LADY DUDLEY

My dearest Jane, how well, how refreshed you seem.

JANE

I am not well, Lady Dudley, indeed I—will you more plague me? Away!

GUILDFORD

Is this how you greet me, you—

FRANCES

Silence, both of you, mark you how the council stares.

JOHN

The council will take its place, please.

ARUNDEL

Should we not do homage to our queen?

Councilmen find their seats.

JANE

My lords, I pray you, listen to me.

JOHN

My dearest Lady Jane, sure your words are of the greatest moment. But, I beg you, first let's to the purpose of our meeting. (*addresses Council*) My lords, as regent, it is my duty, to bring before you this first official proclamation of the death of our sovereign lord, King Edward the Sixth, on the morning of seven July, one thousand, five hundred fifty-three.

HENRY

May God have mercy on his soul.

JANE

Amen.

COUNCIL

Amen.

JOHN

The late King Edward, as well we know, was a righteous prince with deep concern for his country and his people. And as his end drew near, he fretted sadly that he might not provide for them. And so he framed this will. Here it is, my lords, (*hands will to Pembroke*) signed, as your can see, by his gracious majesty.

PEMBROKE

Sure, it's Edward's signature right enough. I pray, let us hear the last wishes of our king.

JOHN

My lords, King Henry the Eighth did name his daughters Mary and Elizabeth as next in line for the throne. But young Edward saw no wisdom in his father's choice. He'd not have his sisters heirs.

JANE (*stands*)

Why is that, my lord, when he loved them both so much?

FRANCES (*stands*)

Hold your peace, damn you.

JANE

But it is the truth.

Frances pushes Jane back to her seat.

ARUNDEL

It is the truth.

JOHN

Ay, of a certainty it is the truth but more than both his sisters did Edward love his God. And Mary Tudor having disobeyed both Edward and his father in her refusal to accept reforms of our religion. She has forfeited all rights to the throne.

HENRY

Yes, all rights to the throne.

JANE (*stands again*)

My cousin Elizabeth sings no masses.

JOHN

Ay, Lady Elizabeth sings no masses, but she is the daughter to Anne Boleyn, and who, my lords, will respect a nation governed by a bastard. (*Jane, distraught, is seated again.*) In the interests of the state, he had no other cause than to offer the crown to Lady Frances Brandon who in turn did pray that the succession pass instead to her daughter Jane. And so it was that Jane Grey has been declared queen of England, the only lawful queen. It was his majesty's further wish that all male heirs of the said Lady Jane Grey should have the right of succession. Do you honor this device, my lords?

ARUNDEL (*stands, nodding, and council stands, in gestures of salute and agreement*)

Are we not here for that purpose, my Lord Northumberland?

COUNCIL

Gracious majesty.

JANE (*still seated*)

No, I pray you, do not make me be a queen; the crown belongs to Mary.

JOHN

Let me hear all of your voices, my lords.

JOHN, GUILDFORD, HENRY, FRANCES, LADY DUDLEY, & COUNCIL (*all join in praise and gestures of congratulations and obeisance to Jane*)

Long live Queen Jane. Long live Jane Grey, our queen. Gracious majesty.

Arundel and Pembroke leave, unnoticed, and make their way upstairs to balcony.

COUNCIL

Gracious majesty.

All but Arundel and Pembroke leave. Jane is ushered out by Frances and Lady Dudley.

Curtain remains up.

10. Scene 2

Arundel has comfortably reached balcony high above council chamber; awaits Pembroke.

PENBROKE (*reaches balcony level, panting*)
Lord, 'tis a spot for falcons only.

ARUNDEL

You were not followed?

PEMBROKE

We must not stay, our absence will be marked. What of the Lady Mary?

ARUNDEL

My warning reached her in time. She's gone north.

PEMBROKE

When do we hatch the tale?

ARUNDEL

Let Lady Jane be crowned our queen, the while we spread the whisper of Mary all about, then will our worthy Admiral Dudley's fragile craft be engulfed before his sails are unfurled to catch the sea breeze.

PEMBROKE

Fragile indeed, 'tis a pity that he must bait his traps with such a tender bird.

ARUNDEL

A Grey wed to a Dudley, spend your sympathy more frugally, my Lord Pembroke.

PEMBROKE

Still you treasure your ancient grudges.

ARUNDEL

Henry Grey betrayed my sister. John Dudley kept me rotting in the tower the best part of a year. I'm not like to forget that, I promise you. Have you ever dealt in the tower prisons, Pembroke? seen the rats run across the floor; lain two hundred nights without a woman fondling you? My cell was cold with river mist. Nor did I like the view with the reeking scaffold. (*Arundel produces a scarlet handkerchief*)

PEMBROKE

What's this? a shred of cloth? What meaning can it have?

ARUNDEL

Scarlet cloth, Pembroke, and what vat dyed it? A child dipped it in poor Somerset's blood. Some day I'll brighten its hue in Dudley gore. (*Folds cloth and returns it to his pocket*) Enough, we must talk of strategy, if Dudley holds the tower.

PEMBROKE

He must not hold the tower, there'd be a long and bloody siege.

ARUNDEL

We must coax him forth, ambush him quickly. Once we have him, his men will desert.

PEMBROKE

Smoke the eagle from his mountain, but how?

ARUNDEL

The how will present itself at the proper time; our forces multiply as his divide. A vulture tops the Dudley standard now.

PEMBROKE

Long live Queen Mary.

Slow curtain.

11. Scene 3

Curtain rises on military planning room, replete with maps, banners in tribute to Jane and to England, and other objects of war. Jane is present, as are John, Henry, Arundel, and Pembroke. A messenger rushes about, and the other men read his note and bustle and whisper over it.

JANE

What's this news come from the north, my lord duke?

JOHN

Mary and her rabble mean to march on London.

PEMBROKE

I say, we're lost!

JOHN

I say, you're daft!

JANE

Why consider defeat, our arsenal's well-stocked, our men ready?

JOHN

A sufficient force by land and sea and this army of peasants will be routed.

ARUNDEL

How many ships ride along the Thames?

JOHN

Fifty and all my captains alerted. We could sail within the hour.

PEMBROKE

It seems your grace has been long prepared for action.

JOHN

Aye, my lord, and well prepared too; all the men are primed for fighting.

PEMBROKE

Who will lead them?

ARUNDEL

The man we name must be of the highest rank. To my mind, there is but one choice: Henry Grey, the Earl of Suffolk.

JANE

My father?

PEMBROKE

One of England's finest soldiers. Who would wear her majesty's colors with more pride? He would fight unto the death.

JANE

To the death? Will there be much fighting?

ARUNDEL

A skirmish or two, but never fear, your majesty, Suffolk's always had the devil's own luck in battle.

PEMBROKE

Your majesty, your father has every chance of emerging victor in this uneven combat.

JANE

Is there none other that we might appoint?

ARUNDEL

There's no finer soldier than your majesty's father or of course Lord Northumberland, whose skill as an admiral's matched by his prowess on land.

JANE

My lord duke, why yes, he'd be our choice.

JOHN

Impossible. I must defend the tower.

PEMBROKE

Your grace, I see reason in the queen's suggestion. Yours is the name to make men tremble.

ARUNDEL

We've all witnessed Northumberland's miracles upon the battlefield.

JOHN

Enough, though I'd be honored to ride forth for her majesty.

JANE

My lord duke, what better proof of our consideration for our people than to let them know that they are defended by England's finest soldier.

ARUNDEL

Let it be known that I, Earl of Arundel, offer my allegiance to the throne and to my country.

PEMBROKE

Long live the queen and may God be with us all.

Arundel and Pembroke exchange sly glances as chorus of soldiers enters and gradually assembles into ranks behind John.

JANE

Amen to that, my lords. Our prayers for your safety and comfort and your success ride with you into the battle.

SOLDIERS *(by turns marching, standing at "present arms," and saluting either John or Jane)*

Long live our queen "Iane Regina," long live our gracious queen. Long live the queen and may God be with us all.

Marching off, led by John, Jane, and Henry. Arundel and Pembroke are last to exit. Stage now empty. Curtain down quickly.

Act 3**12. Prelude****13. Ballad**

MINSTREL *(as in Acts 1 and 2, strolling apron of stage)*

Northumberland to battle went
with bold five hundred strong.
He took the road to Norfolk,
a turn so very wrong.
Lord Dudley would die in August
and swift the days would pass,
while Mary reigned in London,
a proper queen at last.
Lady Jane will lie in prison
till a Monday dawns full clear.
Odd that the sun should shine
so bright upon a day so drear.

14. Scene 1

Curtain rises on Jane's cell in the tower. She is preparing for bed as Guildford enters. Jane's reaction shows mixed emotion at seeing him.

GUILDFORD

Perhaps I'd best leave, your ladyship?

JANE

No, I—will you have wine, my lord? Here are cakes and wine.

GUILDFORD

You are so very, very young.

JANE

What does that mean?

GUILDFORD

Nothing, really.

JANE

Here, 'tis good wine.

GUILDFORD

If I might drink to you, Jane. Jane, why don't you look at me?

JANE

I am looking at you, my lord.

GUILDFORD

You're looking at my boots and have done so since I entered. Are you sorry you consented to welcome me tonight? Are you still afraid of me; why were you frowning when I came in?

JANE

That was because of mother, who sees spies everywhere.

GUILDFORD

There are many spies about.

JANE

What do they want with me?

GUILDFORD

Words are weapons these days, to be hurled at our new queen, maybe they hunt such stones in our poor conversation.

JANE

She cannot suspect me. Her letters have been so very kind.

Their actions, which were at first hesitant, are now more intense and become ardent.

GUILDFORD

What does it matter?, all that matters is we're here together, are we not, Jane?

JANE

Yes, together.

GUILDFORD

And being so there's no need to drink or talk the night away.

JANE & GUILDFORD

And being so there's no need to talk the night away.

*Embraces, by turns intensifying and pulling back...
Passionate embraces. Intense kiss. Another kiss.
Prolonged, climactic kiss. Kiss released, but remain in
each others' arms. Embrace finally released.*

JANE

I had such a pretty dream.

GUILDFORD

Tell it to me, my love.

JANE

We were home, and all the roses were blooming and—
(*Their eyes meet, they embrace peacefully, release, but
still holding hands.*) I love it when you hold me, hold me
tighter still. (*embrace again*)

GUILDFORD

I'll not let you go this night. (*release*) I'll never let you
go again.

JANE

No, never, oh, I wish we really, really were home.

GUILDFORD

I'd not exchange your dream for this reality. We're here
together, and you are not afraid.

JANE

It is so beautiful being with you. I'd not known it could
be so beautiful. I thought I was floating; I'm sure I was
floating. I'm sure I was floating. I pray you'll fill me with
a son this night.

GUILDFORD

Conceived tonight he'd be a happy child.

JANE

Guildford, when will they free us?

GUILDFORD

Very soon, I'm sure.

JANE

It's been very soon for a long time, now.

GUILDFORD

We should be home by early spring, you'll see. Yet I love
this prison now we've been together.

JANE

Together, I never knew the meaning of the word. Were
it not for the kindness, kindness of the queen—good
queen. Dear good queen, sweet cousin Mary, I'll
remember you in all my prayers.

GUILDFORD

I'll remember the kindness of this queen.

Light embrace. Curtain falls.

15. Scene 2

*Curtain rises on Jane's cell in late morning. Jane is at her
desk, writing. Mary walks in, Jane glances up, somewhat
startled.*

JANE

Your majesty. (*stops writing.*)

MARY

Aye, majesty still, through no fault of yours. (*Jane neat-
ens papers, puts them aside.*) You are as I remembered,
meek and mild. The serpent's young, 'tis true. I meant
you well, Jane Grey. You were wrong to serve me so.

JANE (standing, defensive)

What may you mean, your majesty?

MARY

Will you pretend you do not know? I speak of your
betrayal.

JANE

If I was traitor to you, it was no wish of mine.

MARY

I pray you, do not tell me once again how you were
coerced upon the throne!

JANE

You said that you believed it!

MARY

I thank you, cousin, for your pretty words. You have,
I see, the ability to make the false sound true. Do not
pretend that you are in ignorance of your father's
doings! You know full well that he and your precious
uncles have proclaimed you queen again.

JANE

Proclaimed me queen? It is not true, he would not, for...
for he gave me his word, he swore by God he would not.

MARY

By what God did he so swear? His Protestant turncoat
God that is as false as he.

JANE

By our own true God he swore it.

MARY

Then he is forsworn, for he and his brothers rode throughout the countryside and as Wyatt stirred my cities to rebel, your father swore that Jane Grey was the rightful queen!

JANE

He promised I should be left in peace. Why should he do such a wicked thing? Believe me!

MARY

Yes, I believe you, God pity me, I do, and have believed it from the first. I knew you'd have no part in this late rebellion.

JANE

Then why did you accuse me? (*sits at her desk again*)

MARY

I wanted you to be guilty, Jane, and hoped against hope that I'd see the evidence of it in your eyes. Is there not some little measure there? Did you not pray for a Wyatt victory? Come, tell me the truth, Jane, tell me this truth that I needs must hear, confess it to me! Confess it to me, confess to me! Why are you so silent?

JANE

What will you have me say?

MARY

Something, anything, anything, so that I may know I have not let you die for nothing.

JANE

You... you said... I think... I am to die?

MARY

Why do you stare at me in such surprise? You were so sentenced; have you forgotten that?

JANE

I'd not forgotten, but I thought...

MARY

You thought I'd be merciful, you were told I meant to free you; all this I know, and it's the truth, your pardon lay upon my desk, wanting only for my signature. Why do I tell you this? I did not come to torture you, child. I'd not meant to let you know how close you were to freedom. You cannot blame me, put your blame where it belongs, on your foolish father.

JANE

I am to die? I've not lived very long.

MARY

You cannot believe, I'm sure, that sometimes it is better not to live too long, better for us who are born to crowns or near them. Such lives cannot be very happy.

JANE

When will it be?

MARY

In two days time.

JANE

A Sunday and a Monday and that is all, it's not long, but I think I'm glad of that. I've the time for such farewells as I might pen but little time for thinking on it overmuch.

MARY

Jane Grey, admit your guilt!

JANE

I am not guilty, your majesty.

MARY

Oh, it's a cruel thing I needs must do, I who have known so much of cruelty myself, and will they call me tyrant then? Oh, were it mine to do, Jane, I'd free you, send you far away. But as the state, I cannot, for while you live, your name will be a challenge to traitors and a danger to our throne. I cannot stay longer, little Jane, I'll send my priest to shrive you. Fare you well, Jane Grey, I shall pray for you.

JANE

Save your prayers, cousin Mary; you've more need for them than I.

Mary, regretfully, leaves. Jane cries lightly, returns to her writing desk. Curtain slowly falls.

16. Scene 3

Curtain slowly rises. Scene is outdoors, early morning. Dim light, but gradually brighter. At first a few vendors are setting up stands of plums, oysters, and so forth. Gradually crowd (mixed chorus) gathers; a festive market or fair-like atmosphere prevails eventually, although it is also tinged with various darker emotions.

CHORUS OF VENDORS

Ripe strawberries, strawberries ripe!

A child for the gallows.

Oh will ye buy sweet fine plums?

Charms against the plague, oh will ye buy sweet fine plums?

New oysters, just opened oysters, new oysters.

Buy a gallows toy made very like the block!

From a balcony (to audience's left) overlooking the scene, Mary and Arundel observe the activity and preparation for the execution.

MARY

Here's the pardon; I might yet sign it.

ARUNDEL

Under the ashes, still a fire smolders. Will your majesty kindle it again?

MARY

The death of a child, it's an ill omen for my reign. Let me have the pardon!

ARUNDEL

Hear me, your majesty; in ancient times, there was a custom amongst many peoples. In the spring was sacrificed a child, its body lain in the furrows to insure a good and fruitful harvest.

MARY

Sow seeds in blood? What crops will we reap?

ARUNDEL

The strong grain grows, my queen, minding not what nourishes it!

The block is slid, or wheeled, onto the rear center of stage where two carpenters (percussionists) work on it. Only their hammering sounds are audible, though they may also use other visually noticeable tool. The hammers should sound as hammers normally sound but not identical to each other.

CHORUS

Buy a gallows toy made very like the block.

(Two of the basses are ale vendors, serving foaming tankards from kegs. Soon most of the chorus is drinking.)

Ale by the tankard!

(One also is a chestnut vendor, roasting nuts over a fire.)

Chestnuts, hot!

The block is clumsily maneuvered offstage, to audience's right, by the carpenters and others. The block is now in readiness, just offstage; the people have reached a pitch of expectation.

CHORUS

Drink by the tankard, 'ave some ale! Oh will ye buy a fine gallows toy? A toy made very like the block! A charm against the plague!

From the back of the stage, Jane slowly enters, wearing a stark black hood. She is flanked by her "ladies." Just behind is a minister, in correct Anglican garb.

PLUM VENDOR

Oh, will ye buy sweet fine plums?

CHORUS

New oysters, just opened oysters.
For the gallows—strawberries ripe.

The ladies leave Jane, light touching or kissing her. The priest stands behind her. Jane is at center of stage, stands upright and, with her arms, asks for the crowd's attention.

JANE

Good people, though I am innocent of the desire to betray my queen, yet was I an accomplice by my presence, acquiescent in my silence. I hope my fate will serve as a warning for those who'd rise against the crown. If I can save one life dying thus, then I should not have died in vain! Now, good people, Jane Dudley bids you all a long farewell. Fare you well, a long farewell, farewell forevermore. I am glad it is a fair day; farewell. Into thy hands, I commend my spirit, O God!

Jane walks offstage, toward the block. The minister follows.

CHORUS

Into thy hands, I commend my spirit, O God! *(The crowd gathers towards the block, craning their necks with building morbid expectation.)* A child for the gallows.

The axe falls at a specific moment, but this is noticeable only by a slight flicker of shadow. The crowd reacts in various ways: some crane their heads even more, some turn away, others rub their own necks. Arundel's gaze is triumphantly transfixed as he comforts Mary, who is looking down. The crowd very gradually disperses. Mary and Arundel leave their balcony. As most of the crowd has dispersed, the audience now observes the minstrel (with his lute) among the stragglers. The crowd now entirely dispersed, the scene darkens gradually. Curtain falls.