



Sic Semper Tyrannis

By Lady Tyler "Bio" Rodriguez

It was the spark that defined an era. One explosion, one target, one woman. The actions of a single individual would set into motion decades of violence and revolutionary beliefs. A conspiracy, to destroy the monarchy! Heroine or villainess, Kathryn Hepburn has a long and twisting legacy that ebbs and flows with time. But as the years pass, her story becomes mangled and molded, details change. Nuance is lost. But it is not gone forever. This is the true story of a queen, a princess, and an infamous date. October 5th, 1605! This, is The Princess Plot, only on English Broadcast Central!

This is a political rally being held in Edinburgh, Scotland. In this crowd, you can see signs that say, "The Last Queen of Scotland," with images of fire surrounding it. This is an implicit reference to Kathryn Hepburn, the last princess of Scotland, and seen by many Scottish nationalists, as the last true monarch of the kingdom. Yet this rally is anti-monarchy; it happened last year to protest a statue being built of Queen Alice the Great, to mark the anniversary of her conquest of Scotland.

Hepburn's legacy as an anti-monarchy rebel, is well established. In the 1880s and 1890s, the firebrand socialist Catherine "Fighting Kate" Eddowes often said Hepburn was the only monarch she respected. In the 1980s, the Prime Minister of Flanders was one Audrey Van Kyteler, but after a chance encounter with the pilot Werner Voss as a young girl, she went by the pen name Audrey Hepburn, as a way of showing she did not follow her ancestor's beliefs.

Yet every October 5th, a solemn prayer is held in English Parliament, and the burning of Hepburn effigies and other national enemies is a time-honored tradition by the night's end. For some, it appears that there are two women, Hepburn, the heroic woman, and Hepburn, the vile terrorist. This stark divide only grows, when the discussion of Celtic rights inevitably appears.

Kathryn Hepburn was born around 1580. She was the eldest daughter of King James of Scotland, born James Hepburn, and Mary of Scots. The political situation in the late 16th and early 17th century, was complex.

Since the conquest of Scotland under Alice the Great in the 1330s, the kingdom had served as a vassal to the larger and more powerful Britain. The descendants of King Edward Balloli continued to pledge loyalty to the Kyteler family, but were always seen as untrustworthy by the lords of Britain. If your family is willing to betray your own people on two separate occasions, how can you ever be seen as loyal? Members of the famous Black Guard standing army were always positioned in Scotland in case of rebellion. Perhaps aware of their reputation, the Balloli's stayed loyal through the Hotspurs War of 1415 and the 100 Years War. King John II of Scotland even helped put down the Welsh Revolt alongside King Henry IV.

The Balloli Family however, backed the Plantagenet Family during the War of the Lions. When that conflict ended with the death of King Richard II and the rescue of King Edward VI from the Tower of London, the victorious Kytelers had the Balloli's removed and the Scottish King Edward II taken to the Tower instead. In their place, came the Hepburn Family, first ruled by Patrick I.

By 1580, Scotland had proven loyal for over a century. Conflict still flared up from time to time, but little came of it; the largest was during the failed Protestant Reformation in Britain. Unlike the Balloli's, the Hepburns proudly bent the knee and gave no sign of treasonous behavior. As a reward for consistently backing the crown, Britain began to give Scotland more autonomy and freedom, allowing representation in parliament, and removing Black Guard outposts. King James was a fierce fighter, personally leading his men to victory against the Spanish alongside Queen Alice II, even being knighted by her. His wife, was less happy with her lot in life. She had hoped to marry into the Kyteler family and was disappointed to instead become Queen of Scotland. Scottish citizens were mixed on the relationship with Britain; some felt it was best to be loyal, others felt the consistent oppression of nearby Ireland was unjust and sooner or later, it would be their fate as well.

Princess Kathryn was the oldest of five children the couple had. Local legends say she was a tomboy who bullied her younger sister Mary, fought with swords, and would even fight other little lords whom she didn't like, but such stories always have origins centuries after her death.

We do know she traveled to Kilkenny once with her parents, on a pilgrimage to St. Canice Cathedral. The church was still as grand as it had been in Alice the Great's time, but the city itself had fallen on hard times after years of economic oppression following countless failed uprisings. Flemishtown was empty and desolate, its many merchants having long since left for London. The men and women who remained were intensely bitter towards the Kyteler family, witch statues could still be regularly found in people's houses. Black Guard soldiers patrolled the city streets, occasionally enacting harsh judgments on those who lashed out.

Hepburn could not understand, why people who looked like her, were suffering so greatly. Her parent's many excuses did not placate her heart. She often crossed the Irish Sea and gave money to the poor and homeless, even stealing royal funds to do so. These actions resulted in harsh disciplinary actions when King James discovered what happened to his money.

During one punishment, Hepburn was sent to the Isle of Wight in 1602. For one year, she was forced to work at Yarmouth Abbey, cleaning the burial chamber of Alice the Great just as the legendary St. Audrey had done centuries before. It only fanned the hatred she had of those in power, especially after learning about St. Audrey's more revolutionary beliefs early in her life.

While at Yarmouth, Queen Alice II, "The Glorious" died in her sleep on April 30th. At her funeral, her only child, Anne, was proclaimed Queen. Some MPs scoffed at another woman ruling the kingdom, others felt she lacked her mother's wisdom. Hepburn was in attendance that day, and she met a man who would facilitate the beliefs she was now carrying.

John Killigrew, fifth of his name, was not a respected member of parliament. Alongside serving as MP for Penryn, he was Vice Admiral of Cornwall and Governor of Pendennis Castle, the massive fortification first built by Henry V in the 1550s. There had been rumors of John's disloyalty during the war with Spain, and his family had a long history of supporting and assisting piracy; his own mother had been perhaps the worst pirate in England.

Lady Mary Killigrew, born Mary Wolverston, was the daughter of a pirate. Upon marrying John Killigrew IV, Mary began a criminal campaign centered on smuggling and piracy. She personally led raids on French, Spanish, and Flemish ships in southern Britain, always using her connections to avoid criminal punishment. It is Mary Killigrew, who famously killed the Irish pirate queen Grace O'Malley, supposedly to eliminate a rival who was becoming close with Queen Alice II. Mary Killigrew died in 1590 of natural causes instead of the rope. Her death left the oldest child John, in charge of the family, and he was ill-prepared to lead. John Killigrew often boasted that his family was grand and great, when in truth, it was a clan of rabble-rousers who often claimed to be descended from a pirate, John Crabbe, the Flemish pirate under Alice the Great. This claim is almost certainly false.

John Killigrew was well aware of the suffering of the Irish. He himself believed the Cornish didn't get enough respect and perhaps deserved their own kingdom. Killigrew and Hepburn soon hatched a plot to remove the Kytelers and parliament. The two would then place a puppet on the throne, who would be more agreeable. They decided Anne's firstborn son, Charles, at only 4 years old, would suffice.

Beginning in late 1602, Killigrew began slowly moving gunpowder barrels from Pendennis Castle to a small undercroft beneath parliament he had rented out. No other members of the Killigrew or Hepburn families were aware of the plot.

As months turned to years, the concerns surrounding Anne's rule, began to be proven correct. She frequently fought with parliament and her own advisors. She increasingly focused on the colonies in the Americas and neglected trade with Flanders. She cracked down yet harder on the Irish, raising taxes, demanding public pledges of loyalty to the crown, putting forth funds to rebuild the Great Alice statue, and even creating more statues. Anne spent most of her time courting playwrights who would write plays about her family's history; few people seemed pleased with her rule.

Most concerning for Killigrew and Hepburn, Anne was deeply paranoid about non-English lords. She considered revoking Scottish members from parliament and stripping the Killigrews from all hereditary titles. These decisions never came to be, but they added urgency to the plot.

In the fall of 1605, both conspirators were confident they had stashed enough gunpowder to destroy parliament and Queen Anne, roughly 400 kilograms of explosives. They chose the date to be October

5th, during a large procession concerning the spending of royal funds. Killigrew would attend the meeting, but would leave right before the vote, with the excuse being he needed to meet with a tax collector. It was well known that the Killigrew family didn't always pay its fair share, and some MPs openly wondered when the law would catch up to them.

Hepburn would then light the fuse, walk out of the undercroft, and attend a play at the Globe Theater, supposed it was Richard II. When the gunpowder detonated, everyone in and around parliament would be killed. Hepburn and Killigrew would then kidnap baby Charles from Buckingham Palace by claiming they were escorting him to a safer location. They'd proclaim him king of Britain, and rally enough support from Scotland, Ireland, and Cornwall to fight off any challenger. They would then be Charles's guardians until he came of age, and in this timeframe, would begin loosening laws for the Cornish and Celtic peoples, eventually culminating in independent kingdoms.

It was, an optimistic plan, perhaps even painfully naïve. But regardless of how plausible it ultimately was, they put it into action. At around 9:00 AM, Killigrew appeared in his MP seat and demanded action on the bill concerning royal funds. 20 minutes later, Hepburn entered the undercroft, but encountered a handful of soldiers, commanded by a local sheriff, Guy Fawkes. Complaints of loud noises had been reported the past few days in the undercroft. Fawkes asked the lady to explain what was in a series of barrels he found hidden in an alcove. She faked ignorance, but Fawkes opened them up and discovered they were filled to the brim with gunpowder. Fawkes told two of his guards to look after Hepburn, as he went up to report the matter to the Queen, who was now in attendance.

Realizing the plot was about to unravel, Hepburn made a fateful decision, she was going to light the fuse of gunpowder and die with everyone else. We do not know the exact details of what occurred; she may have begun to fight with the guards before throwing a torch, or perhaps she simply grabbed a torch, and dove onto the gunpowder barrels.

Just as Guy Fawkes reached the parliament floor, it exploded. A massive fireball consumed the building, sparking small fires that spread throughout London. The Globe Theater was among the many that caught fire, burning to the ground, and killing its owner, playwright William Shakespeare. His contemporary, Ben Jonson, would speak fondly of him for the rest of his life, further noting that Shakespeare's wife Anne carried on his writing legacy.

As the dust settled, a portion of parliament still stood. It turned out that the conspirators had both not used enough gunpowder to destroy the entire building, and some of it had not gone off due to poor handling plus the passage of time. Only the east wing of parliament had been destroyed. But the carnage was unspeakable; at least half of parliament died in the blast, John Killigrew was among the dead. Overall, over 1000 people were killed in the October 5th, 1605, bombing.

Queen Anne did not survive the explosion; her mangled body was found in the ruins sometime on October 6th. Many of the survivors were MPs who had detested the Queen as a tyrant. Still, they were horrified at the unprecedented violence on display. Guy Fawkes had survived, with mild injuries, and it only took a few hours, for Fawkes to detail who had lit the fuse.

With Charles only a child and much of parliament gone, someone had to temporarily lead Britain. Sir Oliver Cromwell, MP of Huntingdonshire, declared himself a new title, Lord Protector of Britain, until the child came of age. He immediately sat about getting justice for those slain.

King James and Queen Mary were summoned to London within the week. They stood accused of planning and executing a treasonous plot to murder the Queen and the political body of Britain. The couple did not understand how it had come to this.

A search of the estate found a confession Hepburn had written in the days prior to the attack. She admitted to doing all this in the name of the Celtic people of Scotland and Ireland, and that perhaps the entire concept of monarchy was wrong and deserved to die with the rest of the Kytelers.

This letter is contentious, as she never once mentions Cornwall or John Killigrew. As if she didn't fully trust him even this late into the plot. Her claims of support for Scotland and Ireland are quite clearly true, but her claims of being what is now a Republican do not stand up under scrutiny when contrasted with the letters she wrote about the overall details of the plot, which clearly shows Hepburn to be pro-monarchy, just anti-Kyteler.

Those letters would not be discovered until the 1840s; thus, no punishment befell the Killigrew family; the same could not be said, for the Hepburns. No amount of pleading could convince the governing body, that they weren't involved.

The Hepburn's titles and lands were stripped. James and Mary, alongside their children, were imprisoned for years in The Tower of London until King Charles I had them released. Disease had taken its toll; all but one of their children, Princess Mary, had died in the Tower. The family quietly moved to the colonies, forgotten by history until the 1690s.

But most controversially, the kingship of Scotland was dissolved, and all Scottish MPs were removed. This decision sparked riots in Scottish cities, which soon grew into revolts, encompassing Ireland. The Celtic Revolts would last for over a decade, leaving potentially hundreds of thousands dead, in what the League of Nations now classify as Crimes Against Humanity.

Cromwell would wield power with an iron fist; Charles was merely a figurehead for decades. When Cromwell died in the 1650s, the strength of the monarchy had dwindled. Cromwell is now largely seen as the first Prime Minister of Britain, and its only Lord Protector until the 1980s.

Ultimately, Kathryn Hepburn was a dreamer. A woman who cared about the poor citizens of Scotland and Ireland, and desperately wanted change. She came to believe that violence would make right, a belief not too dissimilar from the Kytelers she loathed. She willingly died for her beliefs, and likely died thinking she had changed the kingdom forever. Unfortunately, her immediate legacy was of death and destruction to that what she wanted to protect. Only in time, would a kinder fate be gifted to her, revolutionary and Republican heroine. By then, her world, would largely be unrecognizable. One can only wonder, if the image of Kathryn Hepburn so many cherish, would be one she'd approve of.

This has been The Princess Plot, on English Broadcast Central.

The True Story

Following the Protestant Reformation and especially the formation of the Church of England under King Henry VIII, Catholic power began to dwindle. Queen Elizabeth I introduced laws

that required swearing allegiance to the monarch as the head of state and church under penalty of fines, prison, or even execution. Some viewed her cousin Mary of Scots as the true heir, but her execution for treason in 1587 ended that debate. Elizabeth had no children, making succession difficult; it was possible that a Catholic monarch could rise, similar to Queen Mary. Before her death in 1603, the line of succession question was concluded via diplomacy. The crown was passed to King James VI of Scotland, son of Mary of Scots and a protestant.

Despite a more moderate attitude towards Catholics, prosecution largely continued as the various wars of religion continued to break out, alongside numerous political assassinations. A handful of plots, like the Bye Plot, tried to remove James, and rumors of his wife converting led to more crackdowns.

The plot known as the Gunpowder Plot was planned by the Catholic Robert Catesby. They planned a decapitating strike on the British government that would kill James and numerous other targets, and kidnap his daughter Elizabeth, intended to be a puppet queen. The plot grew to include 13 people, including former soldier Guy Fawkes. The plan was to detonate several dozen barrels of gunpowder in an undercroft beneath parliament. The king was always present for the opening of parliament. The date was delayed due to fears of the plague, but ultimately landed on November 5th, 1605. It is arguably if the plan was ever realistic, not so much in if it would kill the king, but rather if overthrowing the government and installing Elizabeth was feasible, and wouldn't just lead to her overthrow and the mass purging of Catholics.

Some of the plotters got cold feet, especially concerning innocent Catholics who might die, or people they cared about. A letter addressed William Parker, the 4th Baron of Monteagle, to not attend parliament on the 5th. The writer is unknown but suspected to be plotter Francis Tresham, Parker's brother-in-law. This letter was deemed suspicious and led directly to a search of parliament. Fawkes was found in the undercroft carrying a lantern, slow matches, and a pocket watch. 36 barrels of gunpowder were also discovered.

The plot rapidly unraveled within a few days. Some of the plotters, like Catesby, were killed, others were arrested. All conspirators were tried, found guilty, and executed. Although Fawkes managed to cheat a slow death via hanging, drawn, and quartered, by breaking his neck by jumping from the gallows.

By 1606, commemorations of the event were held, which later grew to include bonfires, fireworks, and the burning of effigies depicting figures loathed by the public. It continues to this day as Guy Fawkes Night.

Sources.

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Contemporary sketch of eight of the conspirators.