

Blood-Red Goblet

The Glassmaker Series

Book One
The Glass Dagger

Book Two
The Crystal Ship

Book Three
Blood-Red Goblet

Book Four
A Shattered Crystal
To be published 2010

Blood-Red Goblet

Third Adventure Of The Glassmaker Series

By

Peter Cooke



Petan Publishing

All rights reserved; no part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

First Edition
Published in Great Britain in 2010

by

Petan Publishing
20 Dorchester Crescent,
Baildon, Shipley,
West Yorkshire, BD17 7LE.
peter.cooke@petanpublishing.co.uk
www.petanpublishing.co.uk

Copyright © Peter Cooke 2010

Peter Cooke has exerted his moral rights

This novel is a work of fiction. The names, characters and incidents portrayed in it are based on historical events, but the work is entirely from the author's imagination.

Paperback ISBN 978-0-9553418-2-3

This book is printed on FSC compliant paper stocks using digital printing technology to minimise wastage

London & Paris

1581 – 1587

Historical Characters

Elizabeth I - (September 1533 – 24 March 1603) Queen of England and Ireland from 17 November 1558 until her death, sometimes referred to as The Virgin Queen, Gloriana, or Good Queen Bess, Elizabeth was the fifth and last monarch of the Tudor dynasty, succeeding her half-sister, Mary Tudor.

William Cecil - 1st. Baron Burghley, (13 September 1520 – 4 August 1598), Principal Secretary of State (1558–1572) and Lord High Treasurer from 1572.

Sir Francis Walsingham - (1532 – 1590), French Ambassador, Principal Secretary (1572 – 1590)

Admiral Sir John Hawkins - (1532 – 1595) English shipbuilder, naval administrator and commander, merchant, navigator, privateer, slave trader, politician, treasurer, (1577) and controller, (1589) of the Navy,

Roberto Ridolfi - (1531-1612) Count, of Ridolfi di Piazza family, Florentine banker.

Sir Francis Drake - Vice Admiral, (c. 1540 – January 27, 1596) second cousin of Admiral Hawkins, English privateer, navigator, slave trader, politician and civil engineer, first Antarctic explorer, first circumnavigation of the world.

George Fitzwilliam - relative of Duchess of Feria, former shipmate of Admiral Hawkins

Gilbert Gifford - (1561-1590), English Catholic

Sir Henry Babington - of Dethick Hall, Dethick, Derbyshire

Anthony Babington - (1561–86) son of Sir Henry,

Mary Stuart - (December 8, 1542 – February 8, 1587) was Queen of Scots (the monarch of the Kingdom of Scotland) from December 14, 1542, to July 24, 1567, daughter of Mary of Guise. Mother of James (19 June 1566 – 27 March 1625) who was King of Scots as James VI, and King of England and King of Ireland as James I succeeding Elizabeth I.

Marie de Guise - (November 22, 1515 – June 11, 1560) Queen Consort of James V of Scotland and the mother of Mary, Queen of Scots. She was Regent, or Governor, of Scotland 1554–1560.

Thomas Howard - 4th. Duke of Norfolk, (1535 -1572.)

Robert Dudley - 1st Earl of Leicester, Master of Horse To Elizabeth I(1533 – 1588)

George Talbot - 6th Earl of Shrewsbury & Waterford, Earl Sheffield (1528 – 1590)

Bess of Hardwick - Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury (1527 – 1608)

Robert Devereux - 2nd. Earl of Essex, (1566 - 1601)

Guerau de Spes - Spanish Ambassador to the English Court.

John Lesley - (1527 – 1596) Bishop of Ross, Scottish Roman Catholic supporter of Mary Stuart.

William Herle - spy in the pay of Lord Burghley

Higford - secretary to Thomas Howard

Bannister - steward to Thomas Howard in Shrewsbury

Henri de Lorraine - 3rd. Duke of Guise

Doctor Bayly - Royal Physician to Queen Elizabeth I

All other characters depicted in this book are fictional. The Babington plot occurred substantially as described except for the events involving Jacob Bell and the other fictional characters. See Historical Notes.

Chapter One

London, June, 1581

Dear God! The very houses seem asleep
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

Upon Westminster Bridge
By William Wordsworth

Jack Petts picked up the lantern from the table in the entrance hall and turned to his younger brother Bob. 'It's time the lamps were lit, Bob, it's nearly dark out there,' he said pointing to the drive. 'Come on sleepy head, stir your bones.'

They were both dressed in the distinctive black and yellow livery of Jacob Bell, the Queen's Glassmaker. They'd been in his service ever since he'd been temporarily paralysed in saving Count Ridolfi's life, some ten years earlier. After Jacob's marriage to Lady Maria, they'd moved into the new house at Mark Street and together with Mistris Simpkin, they ran the household.

Bob gave a sheepish grin, he'd been nodding off in his chair. Picking up his lantern and taper he followed Jack out of the front door and up the drive. Carefully lighting the lamps outside the entrance, they closed and bolted the imposing wooden gates. Pausing only to light the ones on their posts at intervals down the drive and those at either side of the solid oak entrance doors, they went inside.

'You can turn in now, Bob,' said Jack. 'I'll just go and see if Master Jacob needs anything. He's been busy in the study all night and Lady Maria has already retired.'

'Aye, it's been quiet since Mistris Anna got the children off to bed. They fair wear you out chasing around the house and getting into who knows what mischief. I'll bid thee good night then, Jack and don't worry about lighting the fires in the morning, I'll see to 'em.'

Jack nodded and with a cheery wave to Bob, made his way to the study. He knocked and opening the the double doors entered the study and library that was his master's pride and joy. The oak-panelled room had two walls lined with books from floor to ceiling. Jacob had been collecting them since his wedding to Lady Maria nine years ago.

Jacob was sitting at his desk with books of accounts strewn everywhere. He looked up enquiringly when Jack Petts came in.

'The lanterns are lit, Master Jacob and everyone's abed. I'm going up myself.'

Jacob looked at the ornate mantle clock in surprise. 'Is it that time already?'

Yes, Master Jacob. Can I get you anything before I go up?

'A glass of Mistris Simpkin's fresh lemonade wouldn't go amiss before you go. I'll be off to my bed very soon, I've nearly finished now.'

When Jack had left, Jacob sipped his lemonade and made a few more careful entries to the column of figures. With a final check, he put down his quill and re-opened the letter from Francis Drake. He'd received it only that morning and it contained a draft on the London Goldsmiths for his share of the booty brought back by the now, Sir Francis Drake, from his historic circumnavigation.

The figure was huge. Jacob had to read it several times before his mind could grasp it.

Of course, the rumours that Drake had brought back an immense fortune had abounded, only to be contradicted by official statements that the amounts had been trivial.

Admiral Hawkins insisted that Drake had landed a fortune in gold, silver, jewels and spices at Plymouth, but there was no telling how much if any the Queen would retain. The Spanish Ambassador, Mendosa, was demanding the return of the stolen property and insisting that Drake should be brought to trial. Not a good way to influence the Queen, who had sent him away from court in a fine show of righteous anger.

Drake meanwhile had disappeared. Hawkins thought he was in hiding on his estates in Ireland, but no one was sure. When he returned some weeks later, he was flaunting his wealth. So was the Queen, wearing a magnificent crown set with huge emeralds given to her by Drake. She further enraged Mendosa on April the fourth. On the deck of Drake's flagship, the Golden Hinde, she jokingly remarked she had come to cut off Drake's head to appease the Spanish Ambassador and then commanding Drake to kneel, she handed the gilded sword to the Marquis de Marchaumont bidding him to dub Drake a knight. By knighting her pirate in full view of the delighted French delegates, Elizabeth had shown how serious she was in supporting them against the might of Spain.

In gratitude, Drake gave the Queen a diamond encrusted frog to honour her matrimonial plans. She loved presents. As for Mendosa's claims, the booty from Drake paid off the national debt and left £47,000 to spare, so there was little chance of it being repaid.

Jacob regarded the draft again. Well, now the speculation was over. The draft informed him that the sum of £23,500 was awaiting his instructions at the London Goldsmiths. Not a bad return on the £500 he'd invested in backing Drake's expedition!

Sitting back with a sigh, he thought about all that had happened in the past few months. The euphoria of Drake's return in September last year and the birth of his daughter Margaret Ann shortly afterwards, had given way to despair, in February.

Margaret Ann, born prematurely, was a small and weakly child. After the birth, Maria was exhausted and the baby needed constant care, They'd spent a very quiet Christmas.

Early in February, Maria and Margaret Ann became ill with the sweating fever. Luckily, none of the other four children or Jacob were infected. Maria, who had a fairly mild case soon recovered, but not without a huge toll on her natural reserves of energy. However, despite all their efforts to prevent it, Margaret Ann died.

For several weeks now, Maria had been gripped by a melancholia which resisted all the efforts of her family and friends. Jacob was perplexed. Nothing he tried seemed to make any difference; so he called in his friend and family physician Doctor Nguyễn. His diagnosis was that Maria was suffering from an excess of black bile brought on by the after effects of child-birth and the sweating fever. Since the heat from the fever had now gone, he prepared a concoction of Chinese ginseng and Lotus root. He also suggested that it might be a good idea to have a change in surroundings. 'Too many bad memories here at moment. Need go away with children, make good memories. Take concoction, soon be feeling better.'

A few days later, Roberto, Jacob's partner and close friend, informed him that sales in France were tailing off. He wondered if it was due to the lack of a warehouse in Paris. 'Why don't we open a warehouse and showroom in Paris,' he said, 'It's bound to boost our sales.'

Jacob thought this was an excellent idea. Then it occurred to him, it would also

provide the change of scenery that Maria needed. He would buy a house in the most influential neighbourhood in Paris and convert part of the ground floor to a showroom rather in the style of his father's house in Venice. Not only that, he'd have an opening night to outshine the one held in Venice when he first started as a Fattori.

Surely, Maria would be motivated and stimulated by the new house, and a glittering opening night. Not to mention the chance to explore Paris. He looked at the Goldsmith's draft again. The timing of its arrival must be an omen. There was more than enough to buy a splendid house and showroom and to have a lavish opening ceremony.

This started another train of thought. What if he met up with the Duke of Guise again? His château was in the Marais district of Paris. Not that it was a place of fond memories, despite its opulence. Jacob had been severely injured in saving Count Ridolfi's life and awoke there to find he was crippled. He rubbed his back distractedly. Although he was cured, it still gave him a little pain. Especially on cold, damp nights in the winter.

This train of thought led to his secret conversation with Lord Burghley and Walsingham, just after Eleanor was born. He shook his head in disbelief. Was it really nine years ago. Where did the time go?

Walsingham had intercepted a letter from Henry, Duke of Guise, to the Bishop of Ross, Mary Stuart's chief supporter. He'd named Jacob as a suitable person to recruit in the quest to free Mary Stuart. Jacob's decision to wait until it happened had proved a wise one. To this day he'd not heard a word, nor had he needed to tell Maria about it.

On occasions, Jacob had clandestine meetings with Walsingham. On the matter of the letter, he counselled Jacob to bide his time. As he'd said only the previous month. 'I know not when you will get the call to join the Guises, but rest assured you will. There are plots aplenty in the air and my spies tell me there is sure to be another attempt to free the Stuart women in the near future.'

Just then, Jacob became aware of a light at the open door. Looking up he saw a very pale Maria standing there holding her night-light 'Are you coming to bed, Jacob,' she said in a tremulous voice, 'the children have been asleep for ages.'

Jacob went across to meet her. 'I was just clearing away. You go on up and I will follow directly.'

She gave him a wan smile. 'I'll wait for you if you don't mind and we can go together.'

Jacob took the night-light from her and placed it on the desk. Taking her in his arms he held her close. 'Why you're trembling like a leaf, my love. Are you cold?' He took off his doublet and placed it round her shoulders. 'Is that better?'

She looked up at him. 'I was a little cold, but I've been having awful dreams about Margaret Ann. She keeps holding her arms out and crying over and over again, "Where are you, mamma. Where are you?"'

Her voice broke off in distress and her shoulders shuddered as she sobbed into Jacob's shoulder. Jacob hugged her, stroking her hair and murmuring words of reassurance. When she had quietened a little, he blew out the candles on his desk and picking up her night-light, guided her up the stairs to bed.

Once they were in bed she clung to him and Jacob did his best to calm her. Eventually, her arm over his chest, she fell asleep, but it was a long time before Jacob slept.