

Dodging the Puddle

Queen Elizabeth 1st sighed. These walk-a-bouts were tiresome but according to her peers, a necessity. It was the only way of meeting her people, so she plastered a bright smile onto her face for the walk around Whitehall.

Her lady-in-waiting stood behind smoothing the wrinkles from her gown. She whispered, 'At least it's stopped raining today?'

Elizabeth nodded. It had rained for two days but at last the sun had appeared this morning. She wrinkled her nose at the foul smell from offal and dead animals that the butchers threw out into the streets.

The high lace ruffle around her neck seemed to dig into her skin but she took a deep breath and slowly set off to walk. Her guards were all around them which always made her feel safe and she was amazed at the crowds of people who had arrived. They parted like the Sea of Galilee and she walked amongst them nodding and waving.

Along the route her people cheered, and men donned their tall felt hats which lightened her mood and she began to relax and smile more. She was their queen and they loved her. It did her soul good to look at them and feel their adoration because she wanted to support them all.

Her father, Henry VIII, had often told her, being the monarch was a lonely job, and lately she'd begun to realise how right he was. She'd appointed a loyal staff to help her govern but she didn't have anyone close to her. Throughout her reign her main aim was to provide her people with stability and consistency, which from what she could see today, was working well.

Ahead of her lay a big pool of mud and she stood still. How was she going to dodge this puddle? The dirty, rank-smelling mud seemed to stretch across the whole pathway.

She glanced at her lady-in-waiting as though she would have the answer, but she bit her lip and shrugged her shoulders.

Elizabeth gathered her embroidered boots. Suddenly, two of the guards were very tall with big

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One of the guards shouted and tried to bar him from stepping any further but Elizabeth wasn't scared, she could tell he was a gentleman. She nodded her consent to the guard who stood down but glared at the stranger all the while.

With a quick flourish the gentleman whipped the blue and silver cape from his left shoulder and threw it over the puddle. 'Your, Majesty, allow me.'

Elizabeth stared at his brown bushy eyebrows, his dark brown moustache and goatee beard. His chocolate-brown eyes twinkled at her until she felt her cheeks blush. Her heart began to pound, and she wanted to giggle for some reason. He'd made her come over all shy and girl-like. She shook herself and pulled back her shoulders. Get a grip, she remonstrated, you're the Queen of England.

Gingerly, she stepped onto the cape. It was a good quality thick material with beautiful embroidery detail. She hoped the bottom of her boots weren't too muddy. Alighting safely across the puddle onto drier ground she smiled at him.

With a demure sideways glance, she enquired, 'Your name, Sir?'

He stood in front of her and bowed low from his waist. Elizabeth saw the sun glisten on his curly brown hair, and knew he was the handsomest man she'd had the pleasure to look upon for a long while.

He grinned. 'Sir Walter Raleigh,' he said. 'Forever in your service.'