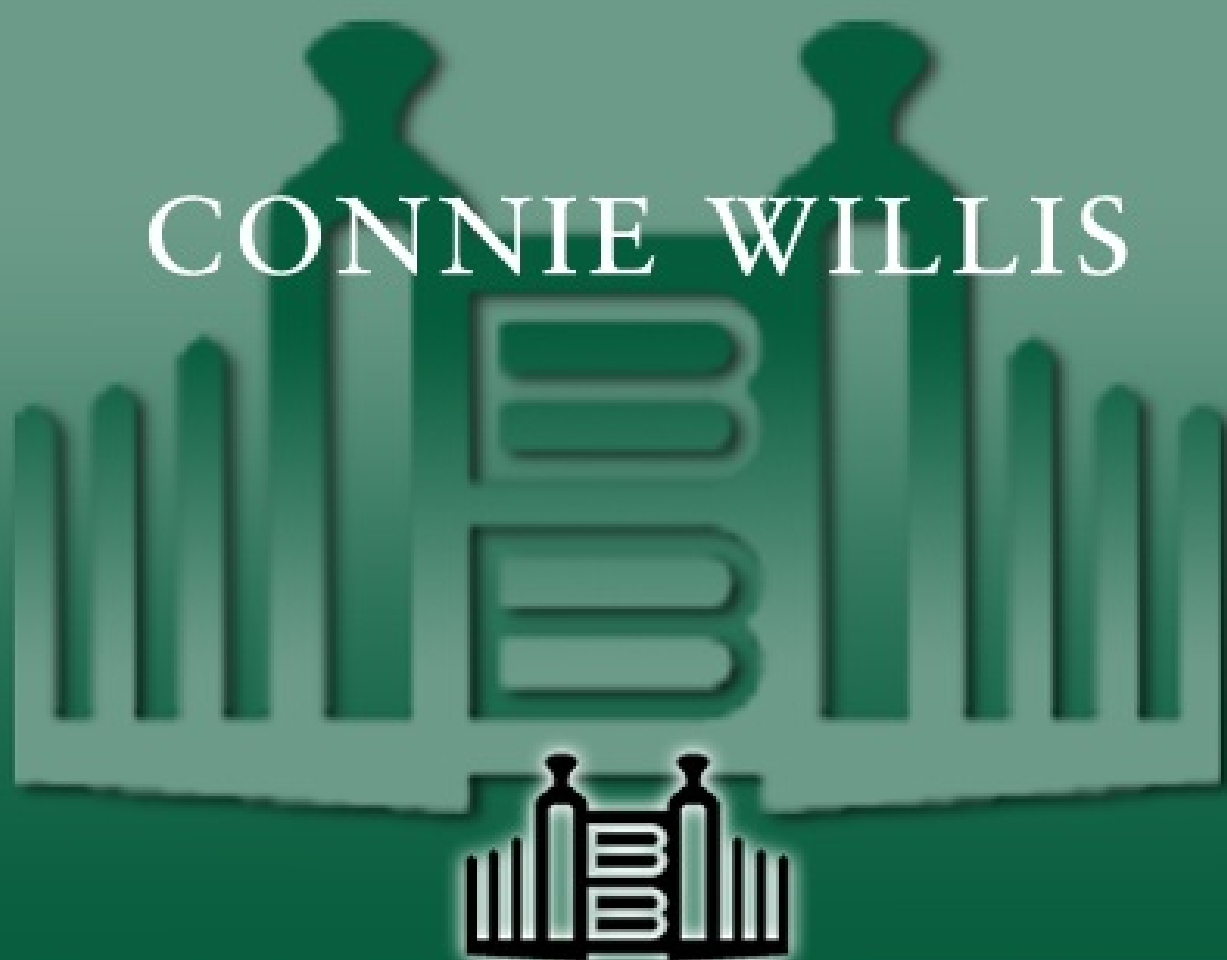


# THE DOOMSDAY BOOK

CONNIE WILLIS



BALLANTINE BOOKS

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**MIRACLE AND OTHER CHRISTMAS STORIES**  
**PASSAGE**  
**BLACKOUT**

DOOMS-  
DAY  
BOOK



Connie Willis



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*This edition contains the complete text of the original hardcover edition.*

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NOT ONE WORD HAS BEEN OMITTED.

DOOMSDAY BOOK

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# DEDICATION

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To Laura and Cordelia—  
my Kivrins

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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My special thanks to Head Librarian Jamie LaRue and the rest of the staff of the Greeley Public Library for their endless and invaluable assistance.

And my undying gratitude to Sheila and Kelly and Frazier and Cee, and especially to Marta—those friends I love.

*“And lest things which should be remembered perish with time and vanish from the memory of those who are to come after us, I, seeing so many evils and the whole world, as it were, placed within the grasp of the Evil One, being myself as if among the dead, I, waiting for death, have put into writing all the things that I have witnessed.*

*And, lest the writing should perish with the writer and the work fail with the laborer, I leave parchment to continue this work, if perchance any man survive and any of the race of Adam escape this pestilence and carry on the work which I have begun ...”*

BROTHER JOHN CLYN

1349



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# BOOK ONE



*“What a ringer needs most is not strength but the ability to keep time ... You must bring these two things together in your mind and let them rest there forever—bells and time, bells and time.”*

RONALD BLYTHE  
*Akenfield*

Mr. Dunworthy opened the door to the laboratory and his spectacles promptly steamed up.

“Am I too late?” he said, yanking them off and squinting at Mary.

“Shut the door,” she said. “I can’t hear you over the sound of those ghastly carols.”

Dunworthy closed the door, but it didn’t completely shut out the sound of “O Come, All Ye Faithful” wafting in from the quad. “Am I too late?” he said again.

Mary shook her head. “All you’ve missed is Gilchrist’s speech.” She leaned back in her chair to let Dunworthy squeeze past her into the narrow observation area. She had taken off her coat and wool hat and set them on the only other chair, along with a large shopping bag full of parcels. Her gray hair was in disarray, as if she had tried to fluff it up after taking her hat off. “A very long speech about Mediaeval’s maiden voyage in time,” she said, “and the college of Brasenose taking its rightful place as the jewel in history’s crown. Is it still raining?”

“Yes,” he said, wiping his spectacles on his muffler. He hooked the wire rims over his ears and went up to the thin-glass partition to look at the net. In the center of the laboratory was a smashed-up wagon surrounded by overturned trunks and wooden boxes. Above them hung the protective shields of the net, draped like a gauzy parachute.

Kivrin’s tutor Latimer, looking older and even more infirm than usual, was standing next to one of the trunks. Montoya was standing over by the console wearing jeans and a terrorist jacket and looking impatiently at the digital on her wrist. Badri was sitting in front of the console, typing something and frowning at the display screens.

“Where’s Kivrin?” Dunworthy said.

“I haven’t seen her,” Mary said. “Do come and sit down. The drop isn’t scheduled till noon, and I doubt very much that they’ll get her off by then. Particularly if Gilchrist makes another speech.”

She draped her coat over the back of her own chair and set the shopping bag full of parcels on the floor by her feet. “I *do* hope this doesn’t go all day. I must pick up my great-nephew Colin at the Underground station at three. He’s coming in on the tube.”

She rummaged in her shopping bag. “My niece Deirdre is off to Kent for the holidays and asked me to look after him. I do hope it doesn’t rain the entire time he’s here,” she said, still rummaging. “He’s twelve, a nice boy, very bright, though he has the most wretched vocabulary. Everything is either necrotic or apocalyptic. And Deirdre allows him entirely too many sweets.”

She continued to dig through the contents of the shopping bag. “I got this for him for Christmas. She hauled up a narrow red-and-green-striped box. “I’d hoped to get the rest of my shopping done before I came here, but it was pouring rain, and I can only tolerate that ghastly digital carillon music on the High Street for brief intervals.”

She opened the box and folded back the tissue. “I’ve no idea what twelve-year-old boys are wearing these days, but mufflers are timeless, don’t you think, James? James?”

He turned from where he had been staring blindly at the display screens. “What?”

“I said, mufflers are always an appropriate Christmas gift for boys, don’t you think?”

He looked at the muffler she was holding up for his inspection. It was of dark gray plaid wool. He would not have been caught dead in it when he was a boy, and that had been fifty years ago. “Yes,” he said, and turned back to the thin-glass.

“What is it, James? Is something wrong?”

Latimer picked up a small brass-bound casket, and then looked vaguely around, as if he had

forgotten what he intended to do with it. Montoya glanced impatiently at her digital.

“Where’s Gilchrist?” Dunworthy said.

“He went through there,” Mary said, pointing at a door on the far side of the net. “He orated on Mediaeval’s place in history, talked to Kivrin for a bit, the tech ran some tests, and then Gilchrist and Kivrin went through that door. I assume he’s still in there with her, getting her ready.”

“Getting her ready,” Dunworthy muttered.

“James, do come and sit down, and tell me what’s wrong,” she said, jamming the muffler back in its box and stuffing it into the shopping bag, “and where you’ve been? I expected you to be here when I arrived. After all, Kivrin’s your favorite pupil.”

“I was trying to reach the Head of the History Faculty,” Dunworthy said, looking at the display screens.

“Basingame? I thought he was off somewhere on Christmas vac.”

“He is, and Gilchrist maneuvered to be appointed Acting Head in his absence so he could get the Middle Ages opened to time travel. He rescinded the blanket ranking of ten and arbitrarily assigned rankings to each century. Do you know what he assigned the 1300s? A six. A six! If Basingame had been here, he’d never have allowed it. But the man’s nowhere to be found.” He looked hopefully at Mary. “You don’t know where he is, do you?”

“No,” she said. “Somewhere in Scotland, I think.”

“Somewhere in Scotland,” he said bitterly. “And meanwhile, Gilchrist is sending Kivrin into a century which is clearly a ten, a century which had scrofula and the plague and burned Joan of Arc at the stake.”

He looked at Badri, who was speaking into the console’s ear now. “You said Badri ran tests. What were they? A coordinates check? A field projection?”

“I don’t know.” She waved vaguely at the screens, with their constantly changing matrices and columns of figures. “I’m only a doctor, not a net technician. I *thought* I recognized the technician. He’s from Balliol, isn’t he?”

Dunworthy nodded. “He’s the best tech Balliol has,” he said, watching Badri, who was tapping the console’s keys one at a time, his eyes on the changing readouts. “All of New College’s techs were gone for the vac. Gilchrist was planning to use a first-year apprentice who’d never run a manned drop. A first-year apprentice for a remote! I talked him into using Badri. If I can’t stop this drop, at least I can see that it’s run by a competent tech.”

Badri frowned at the screen, pulled a meter out of his pocket, and started toward the wagon.

“Badri!” Dunworthy called.

Badri gave no indication he’d heard. He walked around the perimeter of the boxes and trunk, looking at the meter. He moved one of the boxes slightly to the left.

“He can’t hear you,” Mary said.

“Badri!” he shouted. “I need to speak to you.”

Mary had stood up. “He can’t hear you, James,” she said. “The partition’s soundproofed.”

Badri said something to Latimer, who was still holding the brass-bound casket. Latimer looked bewildered. Badri took the casket from him and set it down on the chalked mark.

Dunworthy looked around for a microphone. He couldn’t see one. “How were you able to hear Gilchrist’s speech?” he asked Mary.

“Gilchrist pressed a button on the inside there,” she said, pointing at a wall panel next to the net.

Badri had sat down in front of the console again and was speaking into the ear. The net shield began to lower into place. Badri said something else, and they rose to where they’d been.

“I told Badri to recheck everything, the net, the apprentice’s calculations, everything,” he said, “and to abort the drop immediately if he found any errors, no matter what Gilchrist said.”

“But surely Gilchrist wouldn’t jeopardize Kivrin’s safety,” Mary protested. “He told me he’d take every precaution—”

“Every precaution! He hasn’t run recon tests or parameter checks. We did two years of unmanned in Twentieth Century before we sent anyone through. He hasn’t done any. Badri told him he should delay the drop until he could do at least one, and instead he moved the drop up two days. The man’s complete incompetent.”

“But he explained why the drop had to be today,” Mary said. “In his speech. He said the contemp in the 1300s paid no attention to dates, except planting and harvesting times and church holy days. He said the concentration of holy days was greatest around Christmas, and that was why Mediaeval had decided to send Kivrin now, so she could use the Advent holy days to determine her temporal location and ensure her being at the drop site on the twenty-eighth of December.”

“His sending her now has nothing to do with Advent or holy days,” he said, watching Badri. He went back to tapping one key at a time and frowning. “He could send her next week and use Epiphany for the rendezvous date. He could run unmanneds for six months and then send her lapse-time. Gilchrist is sending her now because Basingame’s off on holiday and isn’t here to stop him.”

“Oh, dear,” Mary said. “I rather thought he was rushing it myself. When I told him how long she’d needed Kivrin in Infirmary, he tried to talk me out of it. I had to explain that her inoculations needed time to take effect.”

“A rendezvous on the twenty-eighth of December,” Dunworthy said bitterly. “Do you realize what a holy day that is? The Feast of the Slaughter of the Innocents. Which, in light of how this drop is being run, may be entirely appropriate.”

“Why can’t you stop it?” Mary said. “You can forbid Kivrin to go, can’t you? You’re her tutor.”

“No,” he said. “I’m not. She’s a student at Brasenose. *Latimer*’s her tutor.” He waved his hand in the direction of Latimer, who had picked up the brass-bound casket again and was peering absentmindedly into it. “She came to Balliol and asked me to tutor her unofficially.”

He turned and stared blindly at the thin-glass. “I told her then that she couldn’t go.”

Kivrin had come to see him when she was a first-year student. “I want to go to the Middle Ages,” she had said. She wasn’t even a meter and a half tall, and her fair hair was in braids. She hadn’t looked old enough to cross the street by herself.

“You can’t,” he had said, his first mistake. He should have sent her back to Mediaeval, told her she would have to take the matter up with her tutor. “The Middle Ages are closed. They have a ranking of ten.”

“A blanket ten,” Kivrin said, “which Mr. Gilchrist says they don’t deserve. He says that ranking would never hold up under a year-by-year analysis. It’s based on the contemp’s mortality rate, which was largely due to bad nutrition and no med support. The ranking wouldn’t be nearly as high for a historian who’d been inoculated against disease. Mr. Gilchrist plans to ask the History Faculty to reevaluate the ranking and open part of the fourteenth century.”

“I cannot conceive of the History Faculty opening a century that had not only the Black Death and cholera, but the Hundred Years War,” Dunworthy said.

“But they might, and if they do, I want to go.”

“It’s impossible,” he said. “Even if it were opened, Mediaeval wouldn’t send a woman. An unaccompanied woman was unheard of in the fourteenth century. Only women of the lowest class went about alone, and they were fair game for any man or beast who happened along. Women of the

nobility and even the emerging middle class were constantly attended by their fathers or the husbands or their servants, usually all three, and even if you weren't a woman, you're an undergraduate. The fourteenth century is far too dangerous for Mediaeval to consider sending an undergraduate. They would send an experienced historian."

"It's no more dangerous than the twentieth century," Kivrin said. "Mustard gas and automobile crashes and pinpoints. At least no one's going to drop a bomb on me. And who's an experienced mediaeval historian? Nobody has on-site experience, and your twentieth-century historians here at Balliol don't know anything about the Middle Ages. Nobody knows anything. There are scarcely any records, except for parish registers and tax rolls, and nobody knows what their lives were like at all. That's why I want to go. I want to find out about them, how they lived, what they were like. Won't you please help me?"

He finally said, "I'm afraid you'll have to speak with Mediaeval about that," but it was too late.

"I've already talked to them," she said. "They don't know anything about the Middle Ages either, mean, anything practical. Mr. Latimer's teaching me Middle English, but it's all pronomial inflections and vowel shifts. He hasn't taught me to say anything.

"I need to know the language and the customs," she said, leaning over Dunworthy's desk, "and the money and table manners and things. Did you know they didn't use plates? They used flat loaves of bread called *manchets*, and when they finished eating their meat, they broke them into pieces and ate them. I need someone to teach me things like that, so I won't make mistakes."

"I'm a twentieth-century historian, not a mediaevalist. I haven't studied the Middle Ages in forty years."

"But you know the *sorts* of things I need to know. I can look them up and learn them, if you'll just tell me what they are."

"What about Gilchrist?" he said, even though he considered Gilchrist a self-important fool.

"He's working on the reranking and hasn't any time."

And what good will the reranking do if he has no historians to send? Dunworthy thought. "What about the visiting American professor, Montoya? She's working on a mediaeval dig out near Witney, isn't she? She should know something about the customs."

"Ms. Montoya hasn't any time either; she's so busy trying to recruit people to work on the Skendgate dig. Don't you see? They're all useless. You're the only one who can help me."

He should have said, "Nevertheless, they are members of Brasenose's faculty, and I am not," but instead he had been maliciously delighted to hear her tell him what he had thought all along, that Mr. Latimer was a doddering old man and Montoya a frustrated archaeologist, that Gilchrist was incapable of training historians. He had been eager to use her to show Mediaeval how it should be done.

"We'll have you augmented with an interpreter," he had said. "And I want you to learn Church Latin, Norman French, and Old German, in addition to Mr. Latimer's Middle English," and she had immediately pulled a pencil and an exercise book from her pocket and begun making a list.

"You'll need practical experience in farming—milking a cow, gathering eggs, vegetable gardening," he'd said, ticking them off on his fingers. "Your hair isn't long enough. You'll need to take cortixidils. You'll need to learn to spin, with a spindle, not a spinning wheel. The spinning wheel wasn't invented yet. And you'll need to learn to ride a horse."

He had stopped, finally coming to his senses. "Do you know what you need to learn?" he had said, watching her, earnestly bent over the list she was scribbling, her braids dangling over her shoulder. "How to treat open sores and infected wounds, how to prepare a child's body for burial, how to dig a grave. The mortality rate will still be worth a ten, even if Gilchrist somehow succeeds in getting the

ranking changed. The average life expectancy in 1300 was thirty-eight. You have no business going there.”

Kivrin had looked up, her pencil poised above the paper. “Where should I go to look at dead bodies?” she had said earnestly. “The morgue? Or should I ask Dr. Ahrens in Infirmary?”

“I told her she couldn’t go,” Dunworthy said, still staring unseeing at the glass, “but she wouldn’t listen.”

“I know,” Mary said. “She wouldn’t listen to me either.”

Dunworthy sat down stiffly next to her. The rain and all the chasing after Basingame had aggravated his arthritis. He still had his overcoat on. He struggled out of it and unwound the muffler from around his neck.

“I wanted to cauterize her nose for her,” Mary said. “I told her the smells of the fourteenth century could be completely incapacitating, that we’re simply not used to excrement and bad meat and decomposition in this day and age. I told her nausea would interfere significantly with her ability to function.”

“But she wouldn’t listen,” Dunworthy said.

“No.”

“I tried to explain to her that the Middle Ages were dangerous and Gilchrist wasn’t taking sufficient precautions, and she told me I was worrying over nothing.”

“Perhaps we are,” Mary said. “After all, it’s Badri who’s running the drop, not Gilchrist, and you said he’d abort if there was any problem.”

“Yes,” he said, watching Badri through the glass. He was typing again, one key at a time, his eyes on the screens. Badri was not only Balliol’s best tech, but the University’s. And he had run dozens of remotes.

“And Kivrin’s well prepared,” Mary said. “You’ve tutored her, and I’ve spent the last month in Infirmary getting her physically ready. She’s protected against cholera and typhoid and anything else that was extant in 1320, which, by the way, the plague you are so worried over wasn’t. There were no cases in England until the Black Death reached there in 1348. I’ve removed her appendix and augmented her immune system. I’ve given her full-spectrum antivirals and a short course of mediaeval medicine. And she’s done a good deal of work on her own. She was studying medicinal herbs while she was in Infirmary.”

“I know,” Dunworthy said. She had spent the last Christmas vac memorizing masses in Latin and learning to weave and embroider, and he had taught her everything he could think of. But was it enough to protect her from being trampled by a horse, or raped by a drunken knight on his way home from the Crusades? They were still burning people at the stake in 1320. There was no inoculation to protect her from that or from someone seeing her come through and deciding she was a witch.

He looked back through the thin-glass. Latimer picked the trunk up for the third time and set it back down. Montoya looked at her watch again. The tech punched the keys and frowned.

“I should have refused to tutor her,” he said. “I only did it to show Gilchrist up for the incompetent he is.”

“Nonsense,” Mary said. “You did it because she’s Kivrin. She’s you all over again—bright, resourceful, determined.”

“I was never that foolhardy.”

“Of course you were. I can remember a time when you couldn’t wait to rush off to the London Bli and have bombs dropped on your head. And I seem to remember a certain incident involving the Bodleian—”



The prep-room door flared open, and Kivrin and Gilchrist came into the room, Kivrin holding her long skirts up as she stepped over the scattered boxes. She was wearing the white rabbit-fur-lined cloak and the bright blue kirtle she had come to show him yesterday. She had told him the cloak was hand-woven. It looked like an old wool blanket someone had draped over her shoulders, and the kirtle's sleeves were too long. They nearly covered her hands. Her long, fair hair was held back by a fillet and fell loosely onto her shoulders. She still didn't look old enough to cross the street by herself.

Dunworthy stood up, ready to pound on the glass again as soon as she looked in his direction, but she stopped midway into the clutter, her face still half-averted from him, looked down at the marks on the floor, stepped forward a little, and arranged her dragging skirts around her.

Gilchrist went over to Badri, said something to him, and picked up a carryboard that was lying on top of the console. He began checking items off with a brisk poke of the light pen.

Kivrin said something to him and pointed at the brass-bound casket. Montoya straightened impatiently up from leaning over Badri's shoulder, and came over to where Kivrin was standing, shaking her head. Kivrin said something else, more firmly, and Montoya knelt down and moved the trunk over next to the wagon.

Gilchrist checked another item off his list. He said something to Latimer, and Latimer went and got a flat metal box and handed it to Gilchrist. Gilchrist said something to Kivrin, and she brought her flattened hands together in front of her chest. She bent her head over them and began speaking.

"Is he having her practice praying?" Dunworthy said. "That will be useful, since God's help may be the only help she gets on this drop."

"They're checking the implant," Mary said.

"What implant?"

"A special chip corder so she can record her field work. Most of the contemps can't read or write, so I implanted an ear and an A-to-D in one wrist and a memory in the other. She activates it by pressing the pads of her palms together. When she's speaking into it, it looks like she's praying. The chips have a 2.5-gigabyte capacity, so she'll be able to record her observations for the full two and a half weeks."

"You should have implanted a locator as well so she could call for help."

Gilchrist was messing with the flat metal box. He shook his head and then moved Kivrin's folded hands up a little higher. The too-long sleeve fell back. Her hand was cut. A thin brown line of dried blood ran down the cut.

"Something's wrong," Dunworthy said, turning toward Mary. "She's hurt."

Kivrin was talking into her hands again. Gilchrist nodded. Kivrin looked at him, saw Dunworthy, and flashed him a delighted smile. Her temple was bloody, too. Her hair under the fillet was matted with it. Gilchrist looked up, saw Dunworthy, and hurried toward the thin-glass partition, looking irritated.

"She hasn't even gone yet, and they've already let her be injured!" Dunworthy pounded on the glass.

Gilchrist walked over to the wall panel, pressed a key, and then came over and stood in front of Dunworthy. "Mr. Dunworthy," he said. He nodded at Mary. "Dr. Ahrens. I'm so pleased you decided to come *see Kivrin off*," He put the faintest emphasis on the last three words, so that they sounded like a threat.

"What's happened to Kivrin?" Dunworthy said.

"Happened?" Gilchrist said, sounding surprised. "I don't know what you mean."

Kivrin had started over to the partition, holding up the skirt of her kirtle with a bloody hand. The

was a reddish bruise on her cheek.

"I want to speak to her," Dunworthy said.

"I'm afraid there isn't time," Gilchrist said. "We have a schedule to keep to."

"I demand to speak to her."

Gilchrist pursed his lips and two white lines appeared on either side of his nose. "May I remind you, Mr. Dunworthy," he said coldly, "that this drop is Brasenose's, not Balliol's. I of course appreciate the assistance you have given in loaning us your tech, and I respect your many years of experience as a historian, but I assure you I have everything well in hand."

"Then why is your historian injured before she's even left?"

"Oh, Mr. Dunworthy, I'm so glad you came," Kivrin said, coming up to the glass. "I was afraid I wouldn't be able to say good-bye to you. Isn't this exciting?"

Exciting. "You're bleeding," Dunworthy said. "What's gone wrong?"

"Nothing," Kivrin said, touching her temple gingerly and then looking at her fingers. "It's part of the costume." She looked past him at Mary. "Dr. Ahrens, you came, too. I'm so glad."

Mary had stood up, still holding her shopping bag. "I want to see your antiviral inoculation," she said. "Have you had any other reaction besides the swelling? Any itching?"

"It's all right, Dr. Ahrens," Kivrin said. She held the sleeve back and then let it fall again before Mary could possibly have had a good look at the underside of her arm. There was another reddish bruise on Kivrin's forearm, already beginning to turn black and blue.

"It would seem to be more to the point to ask her why she's bleeding," Dunworthy said.

"It's part of the costume. I told you, I'm Isabel de Beauvrier, and I'm supposed to have been waylaid by robbers while traveling," Kivrin said. She turned and gestured at the boxes and smashed wagon. "My things were stolen, and I was left for dead. I got the idea from you, Mr. Dunworthy," she said reproachfully.

"I certainly never suggested that you start out bloody and beaten," Dunworthy said.

"Stage blood was impractical," Gilchrist said. "Probability couldn't give us statistically significant odds that no one would tend her wound."

"And it never occurred to you to dupe a realistic wound? You knocked her on the head instead?" Dunworthy said angrily.

"Mr. Dunworthy, may I remind you—"

"That this is Brasenose's project, not Balliol's? You're bloody right it isn't. If it were Twentieth Century's, we'd be trying to protect the historian from injury, not inflicting it on her ourselves. I want to speak to Badri. I want to know if he's rechecked the apprentice's calculations."

Gilchrist's lips pursed. "Mr. Dunworthy, Mr. Chaudhuri may be your net technician, but this is *my* drop. I assure you we have considered every possible contingency—"

"It's just a nick," Kivrin said. "It doesn't even hurt. I'm all right, really. Please don't get upset, Mr. Dunworthy. The idea of being injured was mine. I remembered what you said about how a woman in the Middle Ages was so vulnerable, and I thought it would be a good idea if I looked more vulnerable than I was."

It would be impossible for you to look more vulnerable than you are, Dunworthy thought.

"If I pretend to be unconscious, then I can overhear what people are saying about me, and they won't ask a lot of questions about who I am, because it will be obvious that—"

"It's time for you to get into position," Gilchrist said, moving threateningly over to the wall panel.

"I'm coming," Kivrin said, not budging.

"We're ready to set the net."

“I know,” she said firmly. “I’ll be there as soon as I’ve told Mr. Dunworthy and Dr. Ahrens good-bye.”

Gilchrist nodded curtly and walked back into the debris. Latimer asked him something, and he snapped an answer.

“What does getting into position entail?” Dunworthy asked. “Having him take a cosh to you because Probability’s told him there’s a statistical possibility someone won’t believe you’re truly unconscious?”

“It involves lying down and closing my eyes,” Kivrin said, grinning. “Don’t worry.”

“There’s no reason you can’t wait until tomorrow and at least give Badri time to run a parameter check,” Dunworthy said.

“I want to see that inoculation again,” Mary said.

“Will you two stop fretting?” Kivrin said. “My inoculation doesn’t itch, the cut doesn’t hurt. Badri’s spent all morning running checks. I know you’re worried about me, but please don’t be. The drop’s on the main road from Oxford to Bath only two miles from Skendgate. If no one comes along I’ll walk into the village and tell them I’ve been attacked by robbers. After I’ve determined my location so I can find the drop again.” She put her hand up to the glass. “I just want to thank you both for everything you’ve done. I’ve wanted to go to the Middle Ages more than anything, and now I’m actually going.”

“You’re likely to experience headache and fatigue after the drop,” Mary said. “They’re a normal side effect of the time lag.”

Gilchrist came back over to the thin-glass. “It’s time for you to get into position,” he said.

“I’ve got to go,” she said, gathering up her heavy skirts. “Thank you both so much. I wouldn’t be going if it weren’t for you two helping me.”

“Good-bye,” Mary said.

“Be careful,” Dunworthy said.

“I will,” Kivrin said, but Gilchrist had already pressed the wall panel, and Dunworthy couldn’t help her. She smiled, held up her hand in a little wave, and went over to the smashed wagon.

Mary sat back down and began rummaging through the shopping bag for a handkerchief. Gilchrist was reading off items from the carryboard. Kivrin nodded at each one, and he ticked them off with the light pen.

“What if she gets blood poisoning from that cut on her temple?” Dunworthy said, still standing by the glass.

“She won’t get blood poisoning,” Mary said. “I enhanced her immune system.” She blew her nose.

Kivrin was arguing with Gilchrist about something. The white lines along his nose were sharp and defined. She shook her head, and after a minute he checked off the next item with an abrupt, angry motion.

Gilchrist and the rest of Mediaeval might be incompetent, but Kivrin wasn’t. She had learned Middle English and Church Latin and Anglo-Saxon. She had memorized the Latin masses and taught herself to embroider and milk a cow. She had come up with an identity and a rationale for being alone on the road between Oxford and Bath, and she had the interpreter and augmented stem cells and the appendix.

“She’ll do swimmingly,” Dunworthy said, “which will only serve to convince Gilchrist Mediaeval methods aren’t slipshod and dangerous.”

Gilchrist walked over to the console and handed the carryboard to Badri. Kivrin folded her hands again, closer to her face this time, her mouth nearly touching them, and began to speak into them.

Mary came closer and stood beside Dunworthy, clutching her handkerchief. “When I was nineteen—which was, oh, Lord, forty years ago, it doesn’t seem that long—my sister and I traveled all over Egypt,” she said. “It was during the Pandemic. Quarantines were being slapped on all about us, and the Israelis were shooting Americans on sight, but we didn’t care. I don’t think it even occurred to us that we might be in danger, that we might catch it or be mistaken for Americans. We wanted to see the Pyramids.”

Kivrin had stopped praying. Badri left his console and came over to where she was standing. He spoke to her for several minutes, the frown never leaving his face. She knelt and then lay down on her side next to the wagon, turning so she was on her back with one arm flung over her head and her skirts tangled about her legs. The tech arranged her skirts, pulled out the light measure, and paced around her, walked back to the console, and spoke into the ear. Kivrin lay quite still, the blood on her forehead almost black under the light.

“Oh, dear, she looks so young,” Mary said.

Badri spoke into the ear, glared at the results on the screen, went back to Kivrin. He stepped over her, straddling her legs, and bent down to adjust her sleeve. He took a measurement, moved her arm so it was across her face as if warding off a blow from her attackers, measured again.

“Did you see the Pyramids?” Dunworthy said.

“What?” Mary said.

“When you were in Egypt. When you went tearing about the Middle East oblivious to danger. Did you manage to see the Pyramids?”

“No. Cairo was put under quarantine the day we landed.” She looked at Kivrin, lying there on the floor. “But we saw the Valley of the Kings.”

Badri moved Kivrin’s arm a fraction of an inch, stood frowning at her for a moment, and then went back to the console. Gilchrist and Latimer followed him. Montoya stepped back to make room for a pair of them around the screen. Badri spoke into the console’s ear, and the semitransparent shields began to lower into place, covering Kivrin like a veil.

“We were glad we went,” Mary said. “We came home without a scratch.”

The shields touched the ground, draped a little like Kivrin’s too-long skirts, stopped.

“Be careful,” Dunworthy whispered. Mary took hold of his hand.

Latimer and Gilchrist huddled in front of the screen, watching the sudden explosion of numbers. Montoya glanced at her digital. Badri leaned forward and opened the net. The air inside the shields glittered with sudden condensation.

“Don’t go,” Dunworthy said.

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TRANSCRIPT FROM THE DOMESDAY BOOK  
(000008–000242)

First entry. 22 December, 2054. Oxford. This will be a record of my historical observations of life in Oxfordshire, England, 13 December, 1320, to 28 December, 1320 (Old Style).

(Break)

Mr. Dunworthy, I'm calling this the Domesday Book because it's supposed to be a record of life in the Middle Ages, which is what William the Conqueror's survey turned out to be, even though he intended it as a method of making sure he got every pound of gold and tax his tenants owed him.

I am also calling it the Domesday Book because I would imagine that's what you'd like to call it if you are so convinced something awful's going to happen to me. I'm watching you in the observation area right now, telling poor Dr. Ahrens all the dreadful dangers of the 1300s. You needn't bother. She's already warned me about time lag and every single mediaeval disease in gruesome detail, even though I'm supposed to be immune to all of them. *And* warned me about the prevalence of rape in the 1300s. And when I tell her I'll be perfectly all right she doesn't listen to me either. I will be perfectly all right, Mr. Dunworthy.

Of course you will already know that, and that I made it back in one piece and all according to schedule, by the time you get to hear this, so you won't mind my teasing you a little. I know you are only concerned for me, and I know very well that without all your help and preparation I wouldn't make it back in one piece or at all.

I am therefore dedicating the Domesday Book to you, Mr. Dunworthy. If it weren't for you, I wouldn't be standing here in kirtle and cloak, talking into this corder, waiting for Badri and Mr. Gilchrist to finish their endless calculations and wishing they would hurry so I can *go*.

(Break)

I'm here.

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“Well,” Mary said on a long, drawn-out breath. “I could do with a drink.”

“I thought you had to go fetch your great-nephew,” Dunworthy said, still watching the place where Kivrin had been. The air glittered with ice particles inside the veil of shields. Near the floor, frost had formed on the inside of the thin-glass.

The unholy three of Mediaeval were still watching the screens, even though they showed nothing but the flat line of arrival. “I needn’t fetch Colin until three,” Mary said. “You look as though you could use a bit of bracing up yourself, and the Lamb and Cross is just down the street.”

“I want to wait until he has the fix,” Dunworthy said, watching the tech.

There was still no data on the screens. Badri was frowning. Montoya looked at her digital and said something to Gilchrist. Gilchrist nodded, and she scooped up a bag that had been lying half under the console, waved good-bye to Latimer, and went out through the side door.

“Unlike Montoya, who obviously cannot wait to return to her dig, I would like to stay until I’m certain Kivrin got through without incident,” Dunworthy said.

“I’m not suggesting you go back to Balliol,” Mary said, wrestling her way into her coat, “but the fix will take at least an hour, if not two, and in the meantime, your standing here won’t hurry it along. Watched pot and all that. The pub’s just across the way. It’s very small and quite nice, the sort of place that doesn’t put up Christmas decorations or play artificial bell music.” She held his overcoat out to him. “We’ll have a drink and something to eat, and then you can come back here and pace holes in the floor until the fix comes in.”

“I want to wait here,” he said, still looking at the empty net. “Why didn’t Basingame have a locator implanted in *his* wrist? The Head of the History Faculty has no business going off on holiday and not even a number where he can be reached.”

Gilchrist straightened himself up from the still-unchanging screen and clapped Badri on the shoulders. Latimer blinked as if he wasn’t sure where he was. Gilchrist shook his hand, smiling expansively. He started across the floor toward the thin-glass partition, looking smug.

“Let’s go,” Dunworthy said, snatching his overcoat from Mary and opening the door. A blast of cold air hit them. “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night” hit them. Mary darted through the door as though she were escaping, and Dunworthy pulled it to behind them and followed Mary through the quad and out through Brasenose’s gate.

It was bitter cold, but it wasn’t raining. It looked as though it might at any moment, though, and the crush of shoppers on the pavement in front of Brasenose had apparently decided it would. At least half of them had umbrellas already opened. A woman with a large red one and both arms full of parcels bumped into Dunworthy. “Watch where you’re going, can’t you?” she said, and hurried on.

“The Christmas spirit,” Mary said, buttoning her coat with one hand and hanging on to her shopping bag with the other. “The pub’s just down there past the chemist’s,” she said, nodding her head at the opposite side of the street. “It’s these ghastly bells, I think. They’d ruin anyone’s mood.”

She started off down the pavement through the maze of umbrellas. Dunworthy debated putting his coat on and then decided it wasn’t worth the struggle for so short a distance. He plunged after her, trying to keep clear of the deadly umbrellas and to determine what carol was being slaughtered now. It sounded like a cross between a call to arms and a dirge, but it was most probably “Jingle Bells.”

Mary was standing at the curb opposite the chemist’s, digging in her shopping bag again. “What was that ghastly din supposed to be?” she said, coming up with a collapsible umbrella. “‘Little Town of

Bethlehem'?"

"'Jingle Bells,'" Dunworthy said and stepped out into the street.

"James!" Mary said and grabbed hold of his sleeve.

The bicycle's front tire missed him by centimeters, and the rear pedal caught him on the leg. The rider swerved, shouting, "Don't you know how to cross a bleeding street?"

Dunworthy stepped backward and crashed into a six-year-old holding a plush Santa. The child's mother glared.

"Do be careful, James," Mary said.

They crossed the street, Mary leading the way. Halfway across it began to rain. Mary ducked under the chemist's overhang and tried to get her umbrella open. The chemist's window was draped in green and gold tinsel and had a sign posted in among the perfumes that said, "Save the Marston Parish Church Bells. Give to the Restoration Fund."

The carillon had finished obliterating "Jingle Bells" or "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and was now working on "We Three Kings of Orient Are." Dunworthy recognized the minor key.

Mary still couldn't get her umbrella up. She shoved it back in the bag and took off down the pavement again. Dunworthy followed, trying to avoid collisions, past a stationer's and a tobacconist's shop hung with blinking red and green lights, through the door Mary was holding open for him.

His spectacles steamed up immediately. He took them off to wipe at them with the collar of his overcoat. Mary shut the door and plunged them into a blur of brown and blissful silence.

"Oh, dear," Mary said. "I told you they were the sort that wouldn't put up decorations."

Dunworthy put his spectacles back on. The shelves behind the bar were strung with blinking lights in pale green, pink, and an anemic blue. On the corner of the bar was a large fiber-optic Christmas tree on a revolving stand.

There was no one else in the narrow pub except a beefy-looking man behind the bar. Mary squeezed between two empty tables and into the corner.

"At least we can't hear those wretched bells in here," she said, putting her bag down on the settle. "No, I'll get the drinks. You sit down. That cyclist nearly put you out."

She excavated some mangled pound notes out of the shopping bag and went up to the bar. "Two pints of bitter," she told the barman. "Do you want something to eat?" she asked Dunworthy. "They've got sandwiches and cheese rolls."

"Did you see Gilchrist staring at the console and grinning like the Cheshire cat? He didn't even look to see whether Kivrin had gone or whether she was still lying there, half-dead."

"Make that two pints and a good stiff whiskey," Mary said.

Dunworthy sat down. There was a crèche on the table complete with tiny plastic sheep and a half-naked baby in a manger. "Gilchrist should have sent her from the dig," he said. "The calculations for remote are exponentially more complicated than for an on-site. I suppose I should be grateful he didn't send her lapse-time as well. The first-year apprentice couldn't do the calculations. I was afraid when I loaned him Badri, Gilchrist would decide he wanted a lapse-time drop instead of a real-time."

He moved one of the plastic sheep closer to the shepherd. "If he's aware there's a difference," he said. "Do you know what he said when I told him he should run at least one unmanned? He said, 'If something unfortunate does happen, we can go back in time and pull Ms. Engle out before it happens. Can't we?' The man has no notion of how the net works, no notion of the paradoxes, no notion that Kivrin is *there*, and what happens to her is real and irrevocable."

Mary maneuvered her way between the tables, carrying the whiskey in one hand and the two pints awkwardly in the other. She set the whiskey down in front of him. "It's my standard prescription for

cycling victims and overprotective fathers. Did it catch you in the leg?"

"No," Dunworthy said.

"I had a bicycle accident in last week. One of your Twentieth Centuries. Just back from a World War I drop. Two weeks unscathed at Belleau Wood and then walked into a high-wheeler on the Broad." She went back to the bar to fetch her cheese roll.

"I hate parables," Dunworthy said. He picked up the plastic Virgin. She was dressed in blue with a white cloak. "If he *had* sent her lapse-time, at least she wouldn't have been in danger of freezing to death. She should have had something warmer than a rabbit-fur lining, or didn't it occur to Gilchrist that 1320 was the beginning of the Little Ice Age?"

"I've just thought who you remind me of," Mary said, setting down her plate and a napkin. "William Gaddson's mother."

That was a truly unfair remark. William Gaddson was one of his first-year students. His mother had been up six times this term, the first time to bring William a pair of earmuffs.

"He catches a chill if he doesn't wear them," she had told Dunworthy. "Willy's always been susceptible to chill, and now he's so far away from home and all. His tutor isn't taking proper care of him, even though I've spoken to him repeatedly."

Willy was the size of an oak tree and looked as susceptible to chill as one. "I'm certain he can take care of himself," he had told Mrs. Gaddson, which was a mistake. She had promptly added Dunworthy to the list of people who refused to take proper care of Willy, but it hadn't stopped her coming up every two weeks to deliver vitamins to Dunworthy and insist that Willy be taken off the rowing team because he was overexerting himself.

"I would hardly put my concern for Kivrin in the same category as Mrs. Gaddson's overprotectiveness," Dunworthy said. "The 1300s are full of cutthroats and thieves. And worse."

"That's what Mrs. Gaddson said about Oxford," Mary said placidly, sipping her pint of ale. "I told her she couldn't protect Willy from life. And you can't protect Kivrin. You didn't become an historian by staying safely at home. You've got to let her go, even if it is dangerous. Every century's a terror to James."

"This century doesn't have the Black Death."

"It had the Pandemic, which killed sixty-five million people. And the Black Death wasn't in England in 1320," she said. "It didn't reach there till 1348." She put her mug down on the table, and the figurine of Mary fell over. "But even if it had, Kivrin couldn't get it. I immunized her against the bubonic plague." She smiled ruefully at Dunworthy. "I have my own moments of Mrs. Gaddsonitis. Besides, she would never get the plague because we're both worrying over it. None of the things she frets about ever happen. Something one's never thought of does."

"Very comforting." He placed the blue-and-white Mary next to the figure of Joseph. It fell over. He set it carefully back up.

"It should be comforting, James," she said briskly. "Because it's obvious you've thought of every possible dreadful thing that could happen to Kivrin. Which means she's perfectly all right. She's probably already sitting in a castle having peacock pie for lunch, although I suppose it isn't the same time of day there."

He shook his head. "There will have been slippage—God only knows how much, since Gilchrist didn't do parameter checks. Badri thought it would be several days."

Or several weeks, he thought, and if it were the middle of January, there wouldn't be any holy days for Kivrin to determine the date by. Even a discrepancy of several hours could put her on the Oxford-Bath road in the middle of the night.



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