The King died. Long live the King. And then the Queen died. She was buried beside him. The King died and then the Queen died of grief. This was the posted report. And no one said a thing. But you can’t die of grief. It can take away your appetite and keep you in your chamber, but not forever. It isn’t terminal. Eventually you’ll come out and want a toddy. The Queen died subsequent to the King, but not of grief. I know the royal coroner, have seen him around, a young guy with a good job.

The death rate for the royalty is so much lower than that of the general populace. The coroner was summoned by the musicians, found her on the bedroom floor, checked for a pulse, and wrote “Grief” on the form. It looked good. And it was necessary. It answered the thousand questions about the state of the nation.

He didn’t examine the body, perform an autopsy. If he had, he wouldn’t have found grief. “There is no place for grief in the body.” He would have found a blood alcohol level of one point nine and he would have found a clot of improperly chewed tangerine in the lady’s throat which she had ingested while laughing.

But this seems a fine point. The Queen is dead. Long live her grief. Long live the Duke of Reddington and the Earl of Halstar who were with me that night entertaining the Queen in her chambers. She was a vigorous sort. And long live the posted report which will always fill a royal place in this old kingdom.