

SALT IN WINTER

A FICTIONALIZED BIOGRAPHY WITH CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

JOSEPHINE MARY GARBUTT

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of the
University of Salford
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Arts and Media
The University of Salford
2021

Contents

Tables and Images	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Abbreviations.....	v
Abstract	vi
<i>Salt in Winter: a Fictionalised Biography</i>	2
<i>Critical Reflections</i>	378
<i>Contents.....</i>	379
Introduction	381
Appendices	470
References.....	478
Additional Bibliography.....	488
Historical Research: 16 th & 17 th centuries.....	488
Primary Sources	488
Secondary Sources	489
History of Salt.....	493
History and Theory.....	494
Contemporary Issues of Asylum and Immigration	495
Wider Reading.....	496
Biography	496
Historical Novels	496
Asylum and Immigration Novels.....	497
Innovative Writing	497
Theory and Criticism	498
Writing Techniques.....	501
Dictionaries and Reference Books	501

Tables and Images

Figure 1 Linen-fold panelling: Boscobel House, Staffs.	419
Figure 2 Taroko Gorge, Taiwan. photo.	419
Figure 3 Knole Papers, by permission of Kent County Archives	451
Table 1 storyboard	462
Table 2 hot seating	464
Table 3 Jordan Controversy	471
Table 4 Lawsuits	476

Acknowledgments

I am particularly grateful for the enthusiastic support and patience of my supervisor, Dr. Ursula Hurley at the University of Salford, without whom this project could not have been accomplished. My thanks are also due to Dr Marijke Hoek for her continuous support and encouragement; to Zoe Cooley for her support and advice on asylum and immigration matters; to my husband, David, who has accepted my absences with good grace and kept me constantly supplied with soup and coffee; to the rest of my family for their support and understanding of an absent mother/grandmother.

Finally, I offer respectful gratitude to Dave Smith, the founder of the Boaz Trust, who taught me that faith is strongest when applied by ordinary people to extraordinary circumstances – and who never once spoke of giving up.

Abbreviations

HSC	Henry Smith Charity
KCA	Kent County Archives
LMA	London metropolitan Archives
MAP	Manchester Asylum Project
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NA	National Archives
PAST	Postgraduate Archival Skills Training
PRO	Public Record Office
TNA	The National Archives
UKBA	United Kingdom Borders Agency
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front

Abstract

This practice-based thesis comprises a novel exploring the life and legacy of 16th century philanthropist Henry Smith, with critical reflections on the research foundational to the creative text. The novel is a biographical work that argues for fictionalisation as an effective means to investigate a life lost to history, and to construct a sympathetic character with whom readers can engage: in my own words, “an old sick man with a big heart who would never know the full value of his achievements but would continue to nurture the dream that he could somehow enrich a distant future.”¹ In 2021 – that “distant future” – the Henry Smith charity perpetuates Smith’s dream of enrichment as one of the UK’s largest grant-making trusts.

A fictionalised version of Smith’s contemporary, Robert Hene, acts as the first-person narrative voice in the novel, both as witness to and proponent of the tensions inherent in biographical practice, facilitating enquiries concerning the motivations and hazards of Smith’s ambition and bringing veracity to the historical context. Threads of connection between Robert’s timeframe [1576-1668] and that of ‘William’ – an asylum seeker and present-day beneficiary of Smith’s legacy [1985 -] – are realized both through intimations of parallelism between the two strands of the story, and playful notions of slippage. The juxtaposition of these two storylines is resonant of the Bakhtinian concept of unfinalizability, “each unity . . . enter[ing] into the single process of the developing human culture”² [see 3.3.2].

The critical components of this thesis articulate the quandaries for a writer faced with an obscure historical character and a paucity of evidence. Challenges concerning the integration of speculative material with historical fact explore the potential for synergy between fiction and history, whilst a definitive explanation of fiction as imperative to the narrative may be found in “The Pursuit of Truth” [1.3]. The complexities of practice-as-research are viewed as both beneficial and demanding for the creative writer – particularly with regard to a long-form narrative – whilst literary examples from both past and present cite precedents for a form of hybridisation as a way to navigate biographical and novelistic genres.

¹ See 1.6.4 p.407

² Bakhtin, M.M. *Speech Genres and Other late Essays*. University of Texas Press, 1986. p. 6

Salt in Winter: A Fictionalised Biography

Blessed is he who plants trees under whose shade he will never sit.

Indian proverb

Prologue 1660

*'I will say to the north, give up; and to the south, keep not back: bring my sons
from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.'*

The priest's voice startles me from sleep.

Jemmy stifles a giggle. 'Grandfather, you dozed off again ...'

I cough, straighten my cuff, as if to excuse the sudden jerk of my head. On my right Sarah-Jane sits straight and still but a slight twitching at the side of her mouth shows me that she's heard Jemmy's remark and will nudge me if I relapse. Which I will do ... of course ... it takes but a few words, a verse or two from the gospel reading, a collect, and I'm away in the past. That hymn we sang just now to Tallis's tune, we used to sing to another psalm, the second ... or third ...

*O Lord how many are my foes,
when wilt thou hear my cry?*

My mind goes scurrying off down a lane of its own and I have to stifle a yawn ... but it's no use, I'm back at St Olave's and beside me Henry grasps his book, gnarled hands shaking slightly. I suppose his cry was heard in the end ... but I'm off again, down Silver Street, past the church, on to Foster Lane.

Sarah-Jane moves her foot; I feel the pressure of her booted heel and open my eyes wide to concentrate.

*Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.
Behold I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth*

The priest, Edwin, drops his voice to its customary drone ... my eyelids seem to be closing.

Henry Smith – not a day goes but I remember him. How to set down his story? At the time I knew scarce half of it, and now, after all these years, there may be discrepancies – things that went on behind my back can only be conjectured, although much was revealed in

the end. The generations have come and gone, and whilst one may carry great weight and the next seem of little consequence, all roll down the same endless stream. All leave traces on the shore.

I think of Joane, God rest her soul.

Then there was Sam of course – and his little Hannah. She has children of her own now, and one of them married.

Sarah Spurstowe ... she had eyes in the back of her head and a wit more perceptive than her mother's.

Praise be to God that I kept my writings; unexceptional as they are, they take me back to you, my love. And they give me courage to write again, to fill the gaps where time has obscured truth.

So, I shall make a beginning before I grow too old and my poor eyes dim forever. Somehow, through invention and calculation, by gathering up fragments of those who rest in the dust, and by imagination – yes, by my own understanding and re-creation – I shall set down a form of Henry Smith's life. I must set it down. Of all things I wish I could tell Henry Smith that his efforts were not in vain, that he was not wasting his time.

I creak to my feet to say the *Nunc Dimittis*. There is a pricking behind my eyes ... *for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation* ... now that there are so many will they turn and look at him *a light to lighten the Gentiles* ... acknowledge him as he stands before that great and terrible throne? Will they bear witness from the north, the south ... *the glory of my people Israel*...

Who knows?

Sarah-Jane is speaking to me now, loudly, with the assumed patience that I must tolerate, for my ears have grown as feeble as the rest of my poor body. 'Come along now, father, let me take your arm.'

Chapter 1

London 1624

I was late. Light was already seeping through a crack in the shutters. Where the devil was Tring? Stumbling from the bed I struggled into my breeches, hurrying from the house just as the three-quarters sounded.

Most unseemly, Mr. Hene. The accusing voice was Henry Smith's, although Henry himself was no doubt snug at home, already at his papers.

At Duck Lane, I raised my hand to stifle a yawn. Why had I tarried so long at the Talbot last night? I should have been abed like all good Christian men, instead of gazing gloomily into a pint-pot.

And what hour of the day do you call this, Mr. Hene?

As if it should it matter ... anyone would think I was still his apprentice ... God only knows what had made me agree to do this.

I booted a rotten apple into the gutter. Rolfe. It was John Rolfe. Only a few weeks since my arrival in London, and he had bamboozled me again.

I had been away for a number of years. The first few weeks of my return were spent on setting my house in order, reacquainting myself with some of my old haunts, marvelling at how London had changed. I had a few modest business interests but I knew that these would not suffice, so I had begun to cast around for further opportunities. Then one evening, coming from the Salter's hall, I was walking down Wood Street when I almost collided with a slight figure in a dark cloak. I stepped aside, muttering an apology, and the man made to move on, but something in my voice must have caught his attention. He stopped and stared, then his face broke into a wide grin.

'Midge! Well of all the people...' He took a long case off his shoulder, staring in

amazement at me.

‘John. John Rolfe. Faith, it’s good to see you,’ I indicated the case. ‘Still playing the mandolin?’

He frowned, ‘lute, Robert, lute. And this is no ordinary one – it’s a bass, a chittarone. I’ve just acquired it, all the way from Florence. It’s actually much longer than this box, the neck extends.’

I laughed; he still had the same boyish enthusiasm. ‘It looks heavy. You could make good use of a porter.’

John smiled, ‘Faith, Midge, it’s an age since you followed me round the town with two or three lutes about your person. Actually, I’ve just come from the Feathers, we had a merry time of it, you’d have enjoyed it ... anyway, what brings you to London?’

‘That’s a long story,’ I moved aside as a gang of apprentices pushed past, ‘God’s teeth, these streets are even noisier than I remember.’

‘It’s early enough yet, they’ll be far worse later on,’ John picked up the instrument and heaved it back onto his shoulder. We watched as the youths jostled one another, bellowing a raucous jingle as they disappeared round the corner.

‘That would have been us, ten years since,’ John said. ‘Well,’ he stood regarding me quizzically. ‘Midge, of all people,’ then ‘how about a pint of the heavy? The Talbot’s just up there, we might find a quiet booth.’

In the end we sank several jugs of ale. The Talbot was unchanged as far as I could tell, and the beer still as good as ever. There was much to catch up on and our conversation ranged from the old days, here in London as apprentices, to John’s reluctant involvement in his father’s wine business and his abiding enthusiasm for music.

I didn’t have a lot to tell him; there were too many things that I had no desire to relate. All I said was that I was restless, dissatisfied with the life I had been leading. Yes – in answer

to a question – I had been married, sadly my wife had not survived childbirth. No, neither had the infant. That was some time ago now, I said. The notion had come to me to revisit the city after a period of work was completed. John did not ask what that was, and I did not tell him. He was ever the good talker, so I let him have his head.

It was not until we got up to leave, stumbling slightly, that Henry Smith's name entered the conversation.

'Did you know that he lives just round the corner from here?' John asked me.

'I had heard. Silver Street, isn't it?'

'It is indeed.' John hesitated, then added, 'You might as well know, I've been working for him recently.' He laughed at my expression, 'not every day, just when he has need of a scrivener. It's useful work. Well, it *was*. Now, I confess it is engulfing me.' He spread out his fingers and in the dim lamplight I could see the ink stains on his right hand.

'How long have you been there?'

'Oh, a number of months,' he said vaguely. As we stepped outside, he went on to tell me that Mr Smith had become exceedingly wealthy.

'Well, I knew he was making his way in the world,' I said dryly. I could feel John surveying me from beneath his long lashes and forced a smile; I was casting around for something else to say when the watchman's bell sounded. It was a timely intervention.

'I must be off,' I said, 'it's a fair step back to Holborn.'

John grasped my sleeve, 'Midge, it's so good to see you.'

I laughed, 'Faith, it's a long time since anyone called me that.'

'You, me and Meggie. Do you recall?' John asked.

'How could I forget?'

'Meggie is back with him you know.'

I kept my voice level. 'With Mr Smith? No, I hadn't heard that.'

‘Yes, indeed she is. Married now, to Tom, Henry’s steward.’ John looked at me curiously. ‘Have you seen Henry Smith since ... er since...?’

‘Since he threw me out of his house?’ I shook my head vehemently, ‘No I have not. And by God, I’d be well content never to set eyes on him again.’

But now, here I was, slipping through the postern behind the old Friars’ ground, to cross St Martin’s Lane, on my way back to Silver Street for the second time in a week. London was beginning to stir. A disconsolate bleating told me the sheep were gathering at Aldgate, whilst a stench from St Nicholas suggested the butchers already had their knives out. The wind skittered the leaves under the arches of St Anne’s portal and set me a-shivering; it was a chill morning, even for March, how had I not thought to wear a cloak? No-one was abroad on Pope Street, the road was in deep shadow, shutters all tightly drawn on houses leaning in to such a degree, they threatened to topple over. My footsteps echoed a solitary reveille as I crossed into Foster Lane.

Then as if on a signal, Bartholomew’s began the strike of six, answered by the thin tones of St Olave’s. Time for the city gates to open, and all across London a cacophony of bells, like a choir singing the self-same psalm but at variance. I minded how much I missed this sound when I was away in the country.

Beyond St Olave’s, Henry Smith’s house came into view. A handsome dwelling, broad, pale-timbered, mullioned windows set either side of a carved porch. Some said the address lacked status, but Henry preferred this quiet corner. ‘Otherwise I might be forced to go abroad of an evening to sup with self-satisfied merchants and their goodwives.’

A dim light showed above the porch. I went in through the side gate, Henry wouldn’t want to be disturbed. In the yard, a young man almost cannoned into me. Tom Davasour,

Henry's steward, tall, fair hair tousled, blue eyes not fully awake.

'He's up early again, Tom.'

Tom set his pail down, brushed his fringe from his eyes and grinned at me.

'Ay ... mumbling away...'

'What's it now?'

'Most like he hasn't slept well. Often a bit of a mulligrubs first thing.' He picked up his bucket. 'He don't say much to me, anyways. Ask Meggie.'

'Ask me what?' Tom's wife emerged from the kitchen, tucking her hair beneath her coif. Meggie Davasour, known to the neighbours as 'that blackamoor' – but never in Tom's hearing; rumoured to be from African parts, 'not a Londoner, not like Tom.'

I bade Meggie a polite good morning and received a brisk nod. There was a time we had known each other well, but since my return to London, her manner towards me had been strangely unwelcoming...

'I was enquiring after Mr Smith,' I said.

'Oh, he's up and working already. Still muttering about the rents . . .' She looked into the bucket. 'Tom Davasour, I hope you fetched that water from the conduit, else the brew'll go badly.'

'Course I did. Why d'you think I've risen so early?'

Meggie had always loathed ale-making. In truth I was surprised that she hadn't persuaded Henry to buy his ale by the barrel, like other people. At one time he would have gladly given in to her. But it was cheaper like this, and at least Meggie didn't have to grind the malt, for which, according to Henry, she ought to be thankful. But according to him, Meggie should be thankful that she had work at all, 'there's those who have nothing in this city, she has no reason to complain.'

In the kitchen, I filled a tankard with ale, lifting it to the light. Hmm ... a bit cloudy but

it would have to do. I carried it across the hall to where a shallow flight of stairs led up to a half landing. There, in a small room over the porch, an old man sat scowling at a sheaf of papers. Henry Smith, London merchant, member of the Worshipful Company of Salters, one-time alderman of Farringdon ward; now well past his three score years and ten but, as ever, hard at work.

I stood in the doorway, my head bent, watching as he ran a lean finger down columns of figures, muttering to himself. He had aged; never tall, he was now diminished, somewhat stooped. He sat enveloped in a house robe that had seen better days, an embroidered toque covering lank grey hair, eyes screwed up above mottled cheeks, a tinge of grey to his compressed lips.

‘Lymington – farm rent five shillings; Southwick Mill, two shillings and fourpence. Longney ... Longney ... where the devil is Lumley’s money?’

He would not have heard my footsteps, but some instinct caused him to look up and he waved a quill in greeting, droplets of black ink splattering the papers. I pushed a book of accounts to one side and set the beaker down.

‘Drink this Mr Smith. I doubt you’ve had anything yet . . .’

‘Don’t move those. I haven’t done with them.’ Henry’s tone was querulous. He selected a paper and handed it to me. ‘These questions – Dorset’s man again.’

The hand was slanted, the signature festooned with the curlicues and dashes of the last century. *Edward Lindsey*. The earl of Dorset’s bailiff with his usual complaints. I turned the page over, scanning it quickly.

‘The earl seems to be causing him a lot of worry.’

‘Eh? What’s that? What about the earl?’

‘His tenants are complaining again...’

‘Huh, no reason to blame *him*.’

I didn't risk a reply, but continued to read Lindsey's letter, struggling to disentangle the 'heretofores' and 'for-as-muchses.' The final lines intrigued me ...

I have addressed these matters to the earl of Dorset's High Sheriff, Serjeant Amherst. I regret that a response has not yet been forthcoming. Doubtless Amherst is much occupied with the earl's affairs, his Lordship having returned to his residence in London.

Much occupied with the earl's affairs. Well, that was one way of putting it.

'Lindsey sounds put upon,' I said, 'I think I might feel the same, in his shoes.'

'Lindsey? Put upon? Pah...' Henry grunted impatiently, 'he's trying my patience.'

Dorset made me a promise. He just needs more time.'

The earl of Dorset, the notorious Richard Sackville, always needed more time. But the more time he was given, the more money he would spend, frittering away his fortune whilst Lindsey, his bailiff, strove in vain to redress his profligacy. Not that this could be suggested to Henry ... I handed the letter back and picked up a book of accounts.

'I'll make a start with these – I didn't quite complete them last week.'

Henry grunted and buried his head in his papers once more.

Downstairs in the library I opened the accounts; Henry's method of ordering his figures was sadly outmoded though he'd raised no objection when I suggested using the new double entry system. As I sharpened a quill to embark on a methodical reworking of his figures I stared down at the paper with a sudden sinking of my spirits. I could still be his apprentice, sitting here. Whatever the reasons for my return to London, working with Henry Smith had not been one of them.

It was John Rolfe who had told me of Henry's need for a scrivener. He wasted no time, arriving at my house the very day after our meeting. Hearing his knock, I went out just as

Simon opened the door. John stepped over the threshold and gazed around.

‘Good morrow, Midge. So – Holborn. Well.’

I resisted the sudden desire to stammer an apology and invited him into my small parlour, where he came straight to the point.

‘I wondered if you would consider working for Mr Smith.’

I stared at him. ‘Is this some kind of a jest?’

‘N... no, not at all.’

I felt my anger rising. ‘But it’s a preposterous suggestion. By all the saints, how could you possibly ask that of me?’

John winced, ‘Robert, if I could just explain.’ His dark eyes were hard to read. ‘You say that you’re disillusioned with the life you have been leading...’

‘When did I say that?’

‘In the tavern. You told me that you did not want to labour on your father’s farm in ... in Berkshire, I seem to recall; but thought you would try your luck in London again.’

‘Try my luck? I hardly think I ...’

‘Well, perhaps not in those words, but you made it clear that you needed to find employment – that you had not decided what to do.’

I groaned, my hands over my face. ‘I was ale-soused. You are taking advantage of my ramblings.’ The memory of past jibes rose up as I added curtly ‘I am no longer a mere jobbing clerk, John. I have my own involvements – properties that I rent out, tenants...’ This was somewhat fantastical, but John was not to know that I was referring to two labourers’ cottages in Hackney.

‘Ah. Then you would be well suited to assisting a man of property like Henry Smith.’

John spread his hands, ‘Robert, now that Smith has turned philanthropical, there could be a means here to spend your time profitably.’ He brightened, ‘perhaps you could consider it for

a short time – a few months,’ then, pulling a face, ‘my father – he has begun to complain. And now he expects me to accompany him on a voyage. I really cannot keep putting him off.’

So, this was really for John’s benefit. I was tempted to retort that I too had taken several voyages since I last knew him, that indeed my work was not as dull as he might imagine. But in truth I had little to boast of. Besides, curiosity compelled me to ask him, ‘what do you mean, Smith has turned philanthropical? I cannot recall that he used to be overly concerned with the needs of others.’

John looked puzzled. ‘I thought I’d told you ... Henry has formed a trust company. He is determined to leave an endowment that will provide for the poor.’

‘What poor ... I mean, who?’

‘Well, to begin with, Londoners. But it’s more far-reaching in its ambition’ – John warmed to his task – ‘Smith is wholly absorbed by it and now he is in urgent need of an able accountant. From what you have told me, you would be more fitted to the task than I. In truth, I think he might welcome someone with a better head for figures; and he knows your work from before.’

‘Before ...’ I was exasperated. ‘Will he not also have remembered his suspicions *from before*?’

‘Robert ... that was all nonsense.’ John looked me full in the face, ‘how can you think otherwise?’

‘Mr Smith believed it.’

‘No. I’ll warrant that he did not believe it, Robert. Whatever he said to you was uttered in the heat of the moment. Maybe now is the time to put it to rest.’ And ignoring the doubts written on my face, he pressed his point, ‘Robert, he is the most sought-after moneylender in

town. Several courtiers have come to him of late in need of extra funds. King James is costing them dear.'

'Ah... I see.' My voice was rising. 'So, pray tell me, what rate of interest does Smith charge, these days?'

'The same as the others – better than some,' John shook his head. 'I ask your pardon. I seem to have come on a fool's errand.'

But John Rolfe could not leave well alone. He had ever been a meddler and a few days later a letter arrived from Henry Smith himself. The seal was distressingly familiar, but the paper was best imperial, the lines written in good black ink, the scrawl that I remembered replaced by a neat hand; even his signature was legible. The tone of his address was cautious, expressing the hope that *we could, by meeting, allow the past and all its follies to be put behind us*; mention was made of my *past Usefulness* to him and of his hope that I would honour him with a visit *in the Near future*.

I set it aside. But then, one afternoon I received a most unexpected visitor, as John's uncle, Sir Geoffrey Blake appeared at my lodgings. Blake had never been a man to stand on ceremony and the modesty of my abode seemed to cause him no alarm.

I had rented a small house in Holborn, retaining the elderly housekeeper, a despondent old man by the name of Lemuel Tring. Tring and his goodwife – whose first name I was never to discover – were as one in their approach to life, united in a repudiation of mirth, with a mutual tendency towards dejection. Happily, their presence was made more tolerable by the addition of a manservant, one Simon Briggs, a cheerful willing boy with a head of red hair and a face covered in freckles. Simon appeared not to notice the Trings' lack of spirits and possessed enough good humour for the three of them.

On seeing Sir Geoffrey Blake's carriage roll up outside, Tring was thrown into confusion and it was left to Simon, beaming affably, to fling open the front door and usher Sir Geoffrey into the parlour.

'Grand gen'lman to see you, Mr Hene.'

Blake himself was equally affable, bowing his head to accommodate the nodding feathers of his high crowned hat as he squeezed himself through the modest door of my parlour. 'Forgive me for this impromptu visit, Robert. I may call you Robert, yes, I thought as much. I was passing this way and it seemed opportune to call on you. Yes, thank you, I will sit down. No, please don't concern yourself about the boots. No, I beg of you, they will not trouble me in the least. I'll just place them here on the floor.' And with that, he sank into my one good chair, arranging his capacious breeches, smoothing out the pleats of his doublet. 'There, now I can spread myself out. No, no. I am in no need of refreshments, I dined royally but two hours since. Now then, it's on account of Henry Smith that I've called. No, it was not at his request, I assure you he knows nothing about this, I came of my own volition. I won't beat about the bush...'

Blake's visit was enlightening. It became clear that he was concerned for Mr. Smith's welfare; moreover, that his nephew John had confided to him that Smith might have become erratic in his calculations.

'John has assured me that he has done his best to redress the errors in Mr Smith's accounts; that he has checked the incoming receipts and the interest on loans ... and so on and so forth ...' Blake waved his hands, 'I am sure I do not need to apprise you of all the details, but it would appear that there are discrepancies...' He leaned towards me, his lips pursed above a well-trimmed beard that quivered with the thrust of his chin. 'John does not feel adequate to the task. In truth, he regarded you as something of a Godsend. A God-send,

Robert.’ He lowered his voice. ‘You must understand that Henry may not be long for this world.’

‘Not long for this world?’ I wondered how serious this was.

‘Well, he is of a great age y’know. A great age. And besides, how can any of us ascertain the number of our years?’ Blake produced a large kerchief, wiped his brow and continued. ‘There are matters that make it expedient for this enterprise to be fully effectuated ... to be ... to be established in law.’ His voice dropped as he leaned forward again, ‘Robert, it was a wondrous thing that Henry accomplished when he acquired the Dorset property.’

‘Acquired it? Surely not. Which property are you referring to?’

‘Knole House. I thought John might have told you.’

Knole House. I felt suddenly breathless. It was one of the finest country houses in the kingdom, a magnificent sprawl of a place down in Kent. ‘Does he intend to live there?’

Blake’s chuckled, jowls all a-quiver. ‘Not at all. No Robert, Henry isn’t one of your landed gentry – as you know. He loaned Dorset – Richard Sackville – an immense amount of money,’ Blake waved his hands again, ‘thousands of pounds... but of course Dorset couldn’t repay him. As far as I know he hasn’t even the money for the interest on the loan. So, the house has been made over to Henry. He has the revenues from all the farms, smithies, and so on. I think there may even be an ironworks somewhere on the far edge of the estates.’

‘Well.’ I was completely lost for words.

Blake fidgeted with folds of his cravat. ‘But Sackville might as well be pulling the place down for all the care he is taking of it.’

‘Sackville? Lord Dorset?’

‘Yes, Robert. The third earl. Hah, the first two earls – his father and grandfather – worked wonders on the place. Turned it from a run-down old abbey into a palace. A palace, Robert.’

I smiled then, ‘I know, Sir Geoffrey. I went there with Mr. Smith when I was his apprentice.’

‘Aah. Did you indeed? So, you will understand something of my perplexity when I tell you that it is in danger of being reduced to its former state.’

I sighed. How could I respond to this? Blake had thrown a new light onto Henry’s position. What a colossal task to manage the finances for the Knole estate. And I knew from my previous involvement with him that he had a great many other properties too.

‘But does Mr. Smith not have trustees?’ I said suddenly. ‘Surely they must be keeping a watch on his business affairs?’

‘Hmm.’ Sir Geoffrey shook his head. ‘In the strictest confidence, my nephew – John, that is – has told me that most of Henry’s trustees are also in debt. Most of them are connected with Dorset, and he has inveigled money from them too. And they, in turn, have borrowed from Henry.’

‘What an appalling tangle,’ I exclaimed.

‘Indeed.’ Sir Geoffrey nodded. ‘John assures me that he has spent a deal of time writing letters to them, imploring them to pay Mr Smith what they owe.’ He looked me full in the face, ‘and now, now that John has left his employ, Henry needs a man of courage and capability to help him.’ Dust flew up as he pounded the arm of his chair. ‘Courage and capability,’ he repeated. He lapsed into silence for a moment before heaving himself up and declaring, ‘I will leave you to consider what I have said.’ Then, coughing a little, ‘As to ... er ... ahem ... as to remuneration, if you were to decide that Mr Smith’s terms were insufficient, I can assure you that we could come to some sort of arrangement.’ He looked at me meaningfully, ‘that is to say, you and I.’

Of course, I declined this offer. I thanked Sir Geoffrey, said that it was most considerate of him, but added that I had business interests of my own. As he left, I wondered

why he was so willing to become involved. It was an odd suggestion, to augment my income from his own purse. But since I had last been acquainted with Blake, he had risen in the world. Now he was a Member of Parliament and a peer of the realm. I found that I could not refuse him. It was only a matter of a few days before I stood beside him outside Smith's house on Silver Street.

The meeting was awkward. Both Henry and I had little to say, although we were able to respond to one another with a degree of civility. As I sat opposite him in his parlour, I did not see the cruel censor of my frequent imaginings, but a man diminished both in age and stature, more reflective than I remembered and – seemingly – prepared to put things right between us. I do not now recall all that was said, but by the time I left, I had made a promise to visit him again, on the understanding that he would explain his Great Enterprise to me.

On my second visit to the house, I began to understand that Henry's scheme outstripped even the most generous benefactions of other London merchants. It was not so much a decision to leave a charitable legacy, but a carefully constructed plan to build a means whereby the moneys left would grow and multiply – a vast charitable provision that might become a perpetual endowment. It was – in the simplest terms – visionary. I had to confess that I was most intrigued. Moreover, my recent circumstances had left me in want of direction. Could it be possible that the man who had scorned me should now be offering me a chance to find a way forward?

Well, I told myself now, no matter that I was still uncertain as to how I had been inveigled into this position. I was here now, toiling in Henry Smith's library. I would have to make the best of it.

There was a sudden loud creaking overhead. I set my pen down and stared up at the ceiling as the noise was followed by a dull but unmistakeable sound – a rhythmic repetitive

thud ... thud ... thud ... Dear God, this was something I had forgotten about. Henry must be pacing the floor. Great heavens, after all these years...

As one of Henry's apprentices I had become used to his pacing. In those days he was still nimble of gait and apart from his comical reappearances at the window – for he would stride around outside in the courtyard – we took no heed, other than stretching our own legs in a surreptitious mimicry of our master's peregrinations. But now that Henry was a deal older and somewhat less nimble of gait, every thud seemed to be followed by a shuffle, as his left foot trailed somewhat irresolutely behind his right.

I sat frowning at the column of figures in front of me. So, Sir Geoffrey Blake had spoken true. Henry was showing signs of anxiety. After a while the sounds ceased and I put down my pen to take the book of accounts upstairs.

'If it please you, Mr Smith, this page requires some amendments. I'll need all the figures if I'm to send it to Mr. Wingfield.'

Henry held it up to his eyes, squinting slightly. 'Oh, that.' He stared at it in silence 'Yes, it's a loan ... made ... er, made on behalf of Essex. But he's in the Netherlands now.' He picked up his quill, saying dismissively, 'It's a complicated matter. Leave it to me if you will. Send the other details over to Amherst, this can follow in due course.'

Richard Amherst, lawyer and member of Parliament, was a man of much significance to Mr Smith, although how he found the time to work for Smith was a mystery. Amherst had but recently been elevated to the position of serjeant-at-law – one of those elite gentlemen who was allowed to preside over all the common courts and had particular jurisdiction over the court of common pleas – furthermore, he held the position of high sheriff to all of Richard Sackville's estates.

There was a loud clattering and clamouring outside in the yard. Henry raised his head, 'What's all that commotion?'

‘They’re brewing the ale.’

He picked up the jar of ale, put his nose in it and sniffed. ‘Hah – they’re not before time, this reeks like Hackney marshes.’ Then he took a long draught and wiped his beard with the back of his hand. ‘Pah – tell Meggie to keep this horse-piss for my caudle. I’ll not have any more of it.’

He might fare better with the beer we brewed back in my father’s house in Berkshire, I thought. Compared to the ale in this house it was strong and dark. But I did my best to banish the thought of a pint pot, as I returned to the warmth of the library.

Send the other details over to Amherst, Henry had said. It was a simple request, but of a sudden I had an upsurge of resolve. ‘That is precisely what I will do,’ I thought; I would remind Amherst that he himself owed Henry money, that the Knole accounts were in arrears, that Lord Lumley’s agent had ignored several written reminders of the one thousand pounds owed by his master ... one thousand pounds ... dear God ... but Wingfield seemed to owe even more ... yes, indeed. I would most surely send Serjeant Amherst these details. I lifted my head and stared at the shelves stuffed with papers, maps, books of accounts.... I had been here scarcely a sennight but it was long enough to realise that however praise-worthy Henry’s ambition, the success of his legacy depended as much on the pledges of his debtors as it did on his own proficiency.

Chapter 2

I returned to Silver Street the following day to find that the gate into the yard was bolted. I knocked at the front door and Jane, the housemaid, flung it open. She was holding a besom and appeared to be standing in a pile of rushes.

‘Come in, Mr Hene.’ She tutted as I stumbled through the rushes, and bawled, ‘Mistress Meggie, it’s Mr Hene.’

‘Jane, you do not announce visitors in that way.’ Meggie emerged from the parlour, a long broom in her hand. She shook her head, ‘how many times do I have to tell you?’ Jane tossed her head and continued to attack the rushes, not in the least dismayed.

Meggie turned to me. ‘We’re all at sixes and sevens, Mr. Hene,’ she said, brushing down her apron. ‘We weren’t expecting visitors, the master is resting today.’

‘Ah. I wouldn’t have come if I’d known...’

‘There are days when he is not up to much,’ she said. ‘Perhaps we should get word to you ...’ she looked at me doubtfully ‘you can use the library if it suits you.’

We were standing in the hall. Although it lacked the grandeur of the great galleried chamber in Henry’s previous house it was a room of pleasing proportions. There were two deeply recessed windows to one side, brilliantly coloured roundels of glass inset in both; on the wall opposite an exquisitely carved mantel surrounded a wide fireplace. At the end of the room, set against the panelling, hung a large tapestry depicting the Flight into Egypt.

‘I remember that tapestry,’ I said.

Meggie followed my gaze, ‘It seems to be fading,’ she said, her voice regretful. ‘I have tried to keep the sun off it, but...’

‘In Henry’s old home it was beneath the gallery.’

Meggie nodded, ‘at St Dunstan’s ... yes.’

I went closer to examine the woven figures of Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus. There was a time when Henry could scarcely conceal his pride in the splendour of his dining hall and in the illustrious gatherings at his table, such luminaries as Edward and Mary Sackville, Lord Lumley, even the Duke of Buckingham, George Villiers. It would be hard to imagine him entertaining them here, in Cripplegate.

I said, 'I have been wondering ... why did Henry leave St Dunstan's?'

Meggie propped her broom against a chair. 'The master said that he did not need such a great house. He was never really at ease there after Mistress Anne ... well I suppose old Mr Frobisher died, then Goody Frobisher begged leave to go to her sister in Whitechapel. By which time Tom and I were in a fair way to taking charge.' She picked at a loose thread on the tapestry, pushing it back into place. 'There were no more prentices after Tom,' she said.

'Perchance Master Henry had had enough of idle young men,' I said lightly. Then added, as Meggie's eyes widened, 'not that I meant Tom. I was thinking of the youths before him.'

Meggie's face was expressionless. 'Of course,' she said. 'But I have little recollection of the ... the others.'

'But you must recall our gallivanting with John Rolfe,' I said. 'He and I were laughing about that the other day, recalling how I got the name Midge. Faith, it took me back...'

Meggie picked up her broom. 'If you please, I...'

'We were minded of the midget at Bartholomew's fair. Don't you recall how you gaped at the tiny man in his booth and wondered if in truth he was three years and twenty, as his keeper declared?' Meggie was silent, but I pressed on, 'You looked up at me and said you could scarce credit his size beside my lanky frame. And by the time we had returned to St Dunstan's, you were both calling me 'Midge.' I stopped. Then seeing her bewilderment added, 'perchance you did not realise that John is the reason why I am here now?'

‘Master Rolfe has much to answer for,’ was her tart response.

I drew in my breath. Beneath Meggie’s dark skin, a flush rose from her neck to her face. There was an awkward silence before she added, ‘by your leave I will return to my work now.’ She picked up a candlestick, frowning at it and called Jane to gather up the silverware and take it to the pot room. Then, with a small curtsy, she turned on her heel and walked away, leaving me beneath the tapestry wondering what on earth I had said to cause her such loss of countenance. Why the sudden flare of anger when I mentioned John? He had not, after all, been ‘one of the idle young men’ apprenticed to Henry. Not that Henry’s apprentices were really allowed to waste a moment of their time. I had spoken in haste; it was my own words that were idle. In truth, Pelham House, Henry’s residence, was always a hive of activity.

Pelham House had been named for Mistress Anne’s first husband, Francis Pelham, a man of considerable wealth who died without issue, bequeathing the property to his widow. After her husband’s death, Anne Pelham took on his business affairs and established herself as a woman to be reckoned with, refurbishing the house in a manner suited to lavish entertainment and advancing her social standing in the city, moving gracefully between modest merchants and august lords and ladies. When she consented to marry Henry Smith, it was thought amongst the well-to-do merchants and their ladies that he had done rather well for himself.

My reverie was interrupted by a dazzling light. The sun’s rays had caught the edge of a magnificent silver vessel that stood at the centre of the table. I drew in my breath, I remembered this too – it was Henry’s ‘Salt,’ one of his most prized possessions, an ornamental salt cellar for the precious white crystals that had first brought him his fortune. I ran my fingers over the raised frieze, taking in the dancing figures that encircled the bowl in their enamelled robes, atop an intricate border of lozenges, scrolls and squares.

‘Tis a fine piece.’

I had not heard Tom entering the hall and started as he came and stood beside me.

‘Your pardon, Mr. Hene.’ Tom grinned at me amiably.[ADD] My arrival in the house had not put him out of countenance, I thought now. And I wondered how much he knew of my friendship with Meggie, or for that matter of any of her past life.

‘I mind that Henry – your master – told me that this Salt was very old, made somewhere in Italy, some two centuries ago.’ I said.

‘Must be worth a fair amount,’ Tom said.

‘Yes, I’m sure it is. But I seem to recall that it was given to him in lieu of a debt, from some high-flown salt merchant fallen on hard times. I can’t recall his name.’

‘Told me his own father was a salter before him,’ Tom said. He stared at the Salt, ‘don’t think he did as well as Master Henry though.’

‘What makes you say that?’

‘Oh, just something that Meggie said. One time after she’d gone to visit Widow Jackson.’

‘Joane Jackson? Henry’s sister?’ Meggie had said nothing of this to me.

Tom nodded. ‘They have a great affection for one another. Always have done, from what I can tell. And now that the old lady can’t walk here, Meggie visits her when she can.’

‘That’s good to hear, Tom. I expect it pleases Henry as well.’

Tom looked at me doubtfully. ‘Well, Mr Hene, in all truth I doubt that he gives the matter much thought.’ He coloured a little, ‘not that I should ...’ then, lifting his head, ‘I think I can hear him; likely he’ll be wanting to be dressed. I’ll tell him you are here.’

Down the street, St Olave’s clock chimed the half hour and I hastened to the library. By the time Jane came in to tell me that the master was on his way downstairs I had penned promissory notes for more than two hundred pounds to be distributed amongst the parishes in

Lambeth and Farringdon wards and logged the distribution of numerous bestowments — ‘superior wool cloth,’ purchased for Goody Baker ‘to relieve her of the winter cold,’ fifteen shillings for food ‘for poor prisoners,’ relief of a debt for a man in the Marshalsea — as I entered these details into the new accounts system, I saw that whilst Henry’s record keeping might lack finesse there was no denying the breadth of his generosity. My mind went back to Mistress Anne. She was a charitable lady, if ever I knew one, I thought. Could this be the reason why Henry Smith was expending his energies on his legacy ? Might he regret that he and Anne had not worked together in the same way ?

But what about his own sister? Joane was his nearest surviving kinswoman. And she had ever been a close friend to Mistress Anne. Most likely it was Tom’s understanding of the matter, I told myself now. Besides, Henry was much occupied with a worthy ambition ...

Perchance these thoughts had heightened my sensibilities, for as I walked home through the back streets of Cripplegate later that day, I perceived all manner of impoverishments that I had not noticed before. In the shadow of St. Wilfred’s porch, a young woman stood with a child in her arms. ‘If you please sir, just a penny for a loaf of bread.’ An old man sat by the conduit at Moor Lane, a crutch under his arm, a bloodied bandage where one of his feet should have been, ‘spare a halfpenny for a mug of ale.’ Then, hard by the town wall I almost tripped over a dark figure, in the shadow of the gate-tower. He glanced up at me, but when I looked back, he was gone. I stood perplexed, peering along the street, but I could see him no more.

Interlude

London 2011

William has been walking for an hour or two when he comes across the wall. It's old, broken down, strangely out of place amongst the glass and concrete, a mixture of bricks and stones, There's a busy road at the end of it and an old tower, just there in the grass beside a tall office building. From the jagged gaps in its walls, the tower looks as if it is near to collapse.

William wonders if there's somewhere to sit down. His leg has begun to swell and his back is aching. Across the street he sees a small green space almost hidden amongst the tower blocks. There's a board by the entrance, he traces some of the words. From what he can make out it's the site of an old church. Apart from a boy and girl on a bench beneath a tree the place is empty. And it's quiet here, away from the traffic. This city is so big, so loud. He should have become used to noise after two years in Goma, he thinks. But Goma, on the eastern edge of the Congo, is a sprawl of low houses under a vast sky; here, everything feels shut in, immense buildings along narrow streets, the sky only visible in the patches between.

He sinks down onto a bench, cut into the wall, and takes a piece of paper from his pocket, eyes close up to it, lips moving. It's crumpled and creased as if he's read it over and over. A shadow falls across the paper. William looks up to see a lady standing in front of him, fifty-something, sensible shoes, raspberry-pink mac. She's smiling, her eyes friendly ... but he pulls his jacket tightly across his body and folds his arms, turning away. It doesn't seem to worry her, though.

'Do you mind if I join you?' she asks, 'I've walked miles and my poor feet are killing me.' She settles herself down. 'Nice now, isn't it.'

William gives her a half nod. He makes a show of studying the paper, but the lady hasn't finished, 'I thought it might rain again today, so I came prepared, you never know.' She folds up her raincoat, sets it on the bench, and picks up a large shopping bag. Out comes

a flask, a packet of biscuits, a plastic box ... she pours herself a cup of tea, then pours out another one and offers it to William. He's about to refuse, but there's something so trusting in her smile ... he takes the cup, stammering his thanks, and they sit together sipping in silence.

He won't realise this is not the usual thing for the middle of London - not this part, the financial district. No way. Not many flasks of tea and packets of biscuits around here at lunch time; plenty of miso, truffle shavings, Pinot Gris... this woman's a bit of an odd ball. There's a hint of a northern accent in her voice – not that this is what makes her odd, though it might account for her lack of reserve – but even she seems to be taken aback when William thrusts a piece of paper at her and says,

'I go to Government Office. Croy-don.'

She sets her cup down on the arm of the bench. 'Screening interview,' she frowns at the date. 'It's tomorrow.' She hands it back. 'It's from the Home Office,' she says. 'It's to apply for asylum – to stay in the country.' She looks at him. 'Have you had anything to eat today?' He shakes his head and she asks him if he's walked far. Some might find this intrusive, but he seems to think it's ok.

She asks where he's staying. 'Shad-well,' he says. He tells her about the other people in the hostel, one man thinks he should go to this interview, but another one says it's Government, too dangerous, he'll be put in prison, sent back.

If the woman is shocked, she doesn't show it; she puts a hand on his arm, 'it really is better that you go,' she says comfortably. 'Take no notice of that man. He's probably had a bad experience, I'm afraid it can happen...' then she opens her bag and takes out a handful of leaflets, going through them slowly, one at a time, 'sorry love, it's in here somewhere ...' and hands him a small card. 'There's people who will help you, you know. Here's the number of a charity, and while I'm at it,' scrabbling round in her bag again, 'I've got a bus timetable.' She peers at the small print over the top of her glasses, 'Let's see now – yes here it is, you

can get there on three buses, two if you don't mind a walk – the 468 gets you to the middle of Croydon then ask for Lunar House. I'll write it all down.'

As William stares at the strange words and numbers she has a chance to look at him more carefully, to note his blood-shot eyes, the sprinkling of grey in closely cropped black hair, his large hands shaking a little as he holds the paper. Perhaps she notices the broken zip on his thin jacket, the flap of a sole on his down-at-heel boots. Presently she asks, 'Do you have a mobile – a phone?'

He nods and holds it out, 'but Mama, no ... no working.'

She goes back into her bag and brings out a purse, then thrusts some notes into his hands.

'Get some phone cover, ask at the hostel – and this should cover the bus fare.'

William stares at the money, 'Mama, no ...' he protests, but she is gently insistent.

'It'll tide you over,' she cuts him short as he begins to stammer his thanks. 'You make sure you go,' and she reaches out to touch his arm again. After he has limped away, she stays on the bench for a few more minutes, her bag beside her. You might think she'd be feeling pleased with herself, but no – anyone watching her now would see that she is close to tears.

Chapter 3

London 1624

Goodwife Tring was a terrible cook. During the first weeks of my tenancy, I endured her burnt offerings with a commendable degree of long-suffering, telling myself that once we were accustomed to one another, the meals might improve. The dinners at Silver Street offered some respite – Meggie’s food was wholly different from Mistress Tring’s. Her fine white manchet loaves were newly baked, the roasted meats sauced with herbs and spices, her pottage was a fragrant broth of meat and vegetables. Further relief came from the one day in seven when Tring and his wife, Protestants of the ‘hotter’ sort, attended a gathering across the town at the house of a devout friend.

‘It has been our custom, Mr. Hene, to meet with our brethren,’ Tring told me, on the first day of our acquaintance. He stood twisting his hands, a look of anxiety on his long face. ‘That is to say, not only on the Sabbath but at other times – if – er, if we can be spared.’

‘At other times?’

‘On a Wednesday. In the afternoon.’ His chin quivered, ‘at the house of Mistress Tring’s cousin, hard by Simpson’s Tannery in Cow Lane.’

I assured Tring that I had no quarrel with this. ‘Of course you may go. If this is your custom, I will not stand in your way.’ But I declined his invitation to accompany them, determined that he would not influence me in the manner of my own beliefs. I had but recently extricated myself from the most barbarous extremes of religion and I was highly suspicious of anything or anyone that might carry even a whiff of Puritanism. Tring and I reached a tacit agreement that he and his goodwife could attend their gatherings, that they could say their morning prayers in the kitchen with or without Simon and that my own attendance at the parish church would – in my view – suffice for my religious duties.

But Goody Tring’s cooking did not improve. Indeed, her meals seemed to worsen as

the days went on, until, one day at dinner, struggling to soften a hunk of coarse bread in the thin gruel that Tring referred to as ‘pottage,’ I decided that something would have to be done.

I summoned Tring, who was polishing the silver candlesticks. This task he favoured above all others, so he came with some reluctance to hear me declare that I would like to release his goodwife from her duties on Wednesdays. ‘For I shall not need to sit down to a meal at noon, I am seldom at home then.’ Tring opened his mouth to protest but I swept on, ‘furthermore if you are at your gatherings, Mistress Tring has no need to supper for me.’

Of course, Tring felt obliged to object. They would rise early and prepare food, he said. But I would not countenance it. So then he must needs express his gratitude and summon Goody Tring from the kitchen, so that she could do likewise. Finally, I concurred that each week, on that one day, I would break my fast with a greater degree of ceremony so as to set their minds at rest, adding a particular request for fresh manchets from the baker and good butter from Jackson’s dairy.

So it was that I left the house once a week to sup well at the Swan in Holborn and to take part in the singing of ballades and catches afterwards. Presently I became acquainted with two of the singers and found that they were my close neighbours. William Turner and his wife Jenny became my good friends and would always give me welcome when I was in want of company. At length I accepted their invitations to go abroad in the town to see a play, or to make music in another tavern, and I began to enjoy a measure of respite from my work with Mr Smith.

But I run on... there was another benefit regarding the Tring’s adherence to their meetings that I must now relate.

One Thursday morning, Tring appeared at my breakfast table instead of Simon. He said he had some news that I might find to be of interest. There was a look on his face of near animation as he began to speak.

‘Mistress Tring and I went, by invitation, to a different house last night. We have friends in a meeting over in Lime Street, close by the Pewterer’s Hall. They invited us to hear a message from the nephew of Mistress Locke – her as was married to Godly Master Dering afore he died.’

I nodded, politely interested. ‘In truth I have read some of Dering’s sermons. I like what he has to say.’

Tring bobbed up and down with excitement at this, a vein throbbing on his forehead. ‘Oh ... in truth Master Hene, I did not know that you took an interest...’

‘Please to go on with your story,’ I replied. I was not about to encourage him towards religious confabulations.

‘Yes ... yes,’ he took a deep breath, ‘it was a large room in a big house. The only people with whom we were acquainted were our friends Mr. Emmanuel and Mistress Mercy Flaxton. But seated next to them was an old spinster with whom we fell into conversation. And in the course of our exchange, we discovered that she lives in the house of a godly lady who is the sister of Mr Smith – the man you work with.’

‘Ah.’ Now I was interested. ‘Joane Jackson. It must be.’

Tring bobbed animatedly. ‘That’s right, Mr Hene. Widow Jackson.’

‘Did you learn anything else about her?’

‘She is of a great age.’ Tring’s brow became creased. ‘I ... I seem to recall that she is no longer able to walk far. But this I can say,’ he drew himself up ‘she – the other lady – remembered your name. I trust you have no objection to my having mentioned it, but Mistress Flaxton was inquiring about the house and wondered if there were new tenants and ... and ...’

‘No matter,’ I replied. ‘I think this is timely, it was my intention to see Goody Joane again. I shall walk across to her house when I am able to spare the time.’

Two days later I set off in the direction of Aldgate, at the east side of the town. It was an age since I had strolled down Cheapside or looked around the Exchange. Spring was in the air and in spite of the Lenten fasting, the streets were full of life. Young girls up from the country stood with bunches of sweet-smelling early violets and primroses, costermongers shouted ‘catkins, hazel catkins,’ for the palm-bearing at Easter and the butchers’ shops were busy with preparations for the feast days ahead when salt fish would be happily relinquished for beef, bacon and new spring lamb.

At Cornhill the wide steps of Gresham’s Exchange were thronged with merchants and goodwives. Great heavens, it must be nigh on fifteen summers since I first came here with Anne Smith. I minded how she used to revel in planning her grand dinners; it gave her an opportunity to leave the house, she said, to venture into the streets and purchase sweetmeats. Old Frobisher, Henry’s steward, would be moved to protest. ‘Mistress, why did you not tell me you needed ginger-root?’ – or candied aniseeds, verjuice, almonds, cinnamon – ‘’i faith I could have sent Mistress Frobisher with one of the maids.’

But Anne would say that she liked to go herself, that Henry had agreed that I could accompany her. ‘Agreed’ was not completely true – Henry did not let me go willingly.

‘Young Hene is bound to me as apprentice,’ was his customary response. ‘He hasn’t come up to London to fritter away his days in the pursuit of knick-knacks.’

But at times Henry was away from the house for more than a day or two. Then Mistress Anne would steal into the library, tap me on the shoulder and with a mischievous glance at the other clerks, whisper that she needed my help and we would hurry out of the back gate, laughing like a couple of children as we made for the markets, returning hours later to set the baskets down and unpack all her purchases; Goody Frobisher exclaiming over apricots, holding a pretty syllabub glass up to the light or appraising the jewel colours of the

mistress's embroidery threads. Anne, dimpling, would draw small bags of sugared almonds or twists of marchpane from her basket, declaring that she had not ventured forth for such delicacies, but seeing them, was persuaded that they might be of use, 'for you never know who Master Smith might invite for dinner and I would that we were always in readiness.'

Today the arcades were crowded and I spent little time jostling for space, merely for the sake of a few gewgaws. Back in the street I passed the great conduit and branched off into Bucklersbury, thinking to purchase some small gift for Joane. I selected a jar of preserved quinces, from a very fine grocer's shop stocked with all sorts of tempting delicacies. As I turned to leave, a man, who I took to be the owner of the shop, came in from the back room, and nodded at me. He was stout, his considerable girth constrained by a leather apron, florid of face, a pair of inquisitive eyes above fleshy cheeks. As I walked away, I felt sure I had seen him before, but I could not place him.

When I reached Aldgate, the view through the archway stopped me in my tracks. I stared into the street beyond, wondering if I had taken a wrong turn. Aldgate itself was unchanged, the gate house and portcullis as I remembered, but beyond was a maze of new buildings, crowding hard up against the street with scarce room left for two carriages to pass in the way. What I recalled as a pleasant place, just beyond the town walls, a place where folk would stroll to take the air, seemed to have been turned into a builder's yard. Who had allowed this ill-considered expansion? Even as I stood, mouth agape like a fool, a mail coach shuddered to a halt and the boy on the box blasted his post-horn, struggling to squeeze past a carter who was blocking the way.

'Did you not see the standings?' the boy hollered, 'yer meant to wait, you addle-pated numbskull...'

I left them to their altercation and turned up the next lane, where after a walk of a few minutes I arrive at the peaceful backwater of St Mary's. This was unchanged; great elms still

stood guard over the churchyard and shed a pleasant green light on the huddled cottages opposite.

Widow Jackson's face was a picture as she greeted me, her cheeks wrinkling into a smile of delight. Never a woman of great stature, she was now quite stooped, but as she hobbled across the room to embrace me, the warmth of her welcome was unchanged, her eyes bright, her smile as affectionate as it had ever been.

'Robert Hene, what a blessed sight.'

I bent down to kiss her. She reached her hands up to my shoulders and rested them there, looking into my face.

'Well, Robert ...' was all she said, then proceeded to make a fuss over me, to which I succumbed most willingly. I looked around. Plain straight-backed chairs, made comfortable by brightly embroidered cushions, were set either side of the hearth. Pots and pans hung from the walls of the inglenook and a fire burned in the grate.

'I don't recall the fireplace; I seem to recall your fire was set in the centre of the room.'

Joane smiled, 'they built a chimney to the side of the house, it's a great improvement. I'm surprised you remember it, though.'

I could hardly forget the smoke-filled room, I thought, the walls running with damp, windows that allowed more draughts in than they excluded – and Joane struggling to raise her family, whilst her husband laboured all hours to earn a living.

'It was Henry that did it,' she said proudly.

'Henry – your brother?'

'Oh no.' Joane's smile faded. 'My son, Henry Jackson.' The smile returned as she went on to outline all the improvements to her cottage, how it was now warm and dry, 'and there's another room behind this one, just a small one where the stairs go up, with a buttery off it.

Verity has a room up in the eaves – my son arranged for that too.'

‘Verity?’

‘Verity Frobisher, old Ebenezer’s daughter.’

‘Of course, Henry’s steward.’ This must be the ‘old spinster’ that Tring had met.

‘I invited her to come and live with me after her mother Edith died,’ Joane said.

‘I am sure Mistress Edith would be pleased that you’ve taken Verity in. She was a kind-hearted lady, I remember after Anne – after Mistress Anne – died, she took Meggie under her wing.’

‘Of course, you were there.’ Joane sighed, ‘Poor Anne. I’m minded of her every time I give thanks for the food on my table.’

‘Yes. Yes, she never spoke of it, but I knew what she was doing.’ I stopped for fear of offending Joane. ‘Not that she ever said...’ I went on, ‘but I carried her baskets when she went about the parish. They were always full at the start and empty on our return home.’

Joane’s eyes misted over. ‘D’you think Henry knew of her charity?’

‘I was only a youth at the time. It never crossed my mind to wonder. But no, perhaps he didn’t. I’m certain she wouldn’t have told him.’

‘She would be grieved to see the hunger in these streets now,’ Joane said. She sat still, her lips moving, then roused herself, ‘I have lived in this house nigh on forty years and never wanted for bread, thanks be to God.’ Her faded blue eyes stared into the past. ‘There was a time when I thought we might have to leave... that we might be turned out.’

‘Turned out? Why was that?’

‘Thomas – Mr Jackson, my husband – was owed a deal of money. He was a good worker, was Thomas. But he couldn’t stand up to the gentry.’

‘He was a mercer, was he not?’

‘Yes. Fancy you remembering that. He had a small shop off Lime Street, it wasn’t the best of sites, but he was doing well.’ Joane stared into the fire for a long moment.

‘Then one day a man came in, said his master’s house was being refurbished. A big town house down on the Strand. They needed wool, silks, all sorts of stuffs ... Thomas worked so hard to acquire them. The only problem was that his Lordship’s understanding of settling his bills was to wait and wait til it suited him - never mind the people who needed paying, or their families.’ Joane’s brow wrinkled, ‘Lord Buckhurst, I think he was called.’

‘Buckhurst?’ I knew that name. ‘Wasn’t he one of the Sackvilles?’

‘Sir Thomas Sackville, I think. He was a favourite of the old queen – God rest her soul. I think she made him an earl ...’

‘She did indeed, Joane. The earl of Dorset.’

So, the ‘big town house on the Strand’ must have been Dorset House. I had addressed a number of letters there in the past few days. And now Joane’s brother, Henry Smith, was the owner of Knole, the Sackvilles’ great house in Kent. I looked round the room again, everything neat and clean, the floor swept, a rag rug set before the fire. One plain table, three upright chairs and a small buffet cupboard – and a chimney, may God be praised – but where was Henry in all of this?

I collected myself as Joane continued. ‘Poor Thomas. He did his best, we never had to forfeit our house.’ She shook her head, ‘not like when my father was alive.’

‘Your father? Your’s and Henry’s father?’

Joane nodded, ‘indeed, yes. Henry must have been ... let me see, about ten summers, maybe eleven. I was but a small child.’ She folded her hands in her lap. ‘I recall us having to leave the house, men coming, must have been the bailiffs I suppose – no doubt Henry would remember more.’

‘And then...?’

‘Well – then we had to find a place to stay.’ Joane shuddered. ‘It was a dreadful hovel that we ended up in. A great block of a house full of strangers ... and rats. I’ve never forgotten it. I think that must be why I helped Anne Smith to take those foreigners in.’ She stopped and said abruptly, ‘you did know about that, didn’t you?’

‘I did. Quite by chance, for Anne and Frobisher hid them most successfully.’

‘Do you think Henry ever realised what was going on?’

‘Hmm... that I can’t say. It would be interesting to find out.’ I took a deep breath, for some reason that I couldn’t fathom, I was loath to tell Joane my news. ‘I have... you ... er ... you may be surprised to hear that I am working for Mr Smith ...’

Joane looked bewildered. ‘Henry? *You* are working for him? Why, Robert?’

‘When his present secretary learned of my presence in London he asked if I would take over his work for a while. Henry is constructing a legacy to support the London poor, out of his own beneficence. It is an ambitious scheme.’

Joane looked nonplussed by this. ‘Well – well that is a surprise,’ she said, before abruptly changing the subject. ‘Henry – my son Henry Jackson – has a thriving new business in Bucklersbury.’

I had a jolt of recognition and produced the jar of quinces. We both laughed as I confessed that I was sure I’d seen the shop keeper somewhere before but had not been able to place him. Joane told me how well his work was going, how both his sons were employed there too.

‘But Joseph is a wild young man who likes to go his own way.’ Joane went on to lament how Joe Jackson had been seen leaving the house late at night and how his poor mother, Martha, was in a constant state of disquiet over him.

‘Poor Martha tells me that he is too often lying abed when he should have been up betimes. Both the lads have been raised to obey their father in all things, as indeed they

should have been. Henry has not spared the rod, but still Joseph shows little sign of repentance.’ Then she brightened. ‘But God be praised, Sam is a respectful boy, well-mannered and of great use to both his parents. And dear Sarah is her father’s joy, full of faith and a love of the scriptures.’

I smiled and nodded, as was no doubt expected, but in truth I had little to say to this; I remembered Joe as a bright child, brimming with liveliness and fun and I recalled my own father’s correction of me, how his chastisement seemed to be mixed with a sorrow that induced within me a desire to please him. But when my mother took the stick to me, all of a rage, and demanded that I kneel before her and pray a thanksgiving on the rod that corrected me, I would tremble with fury and lower my head.

‘Joe must have been but six or seven years when last I saw him.’ I said. ‘I seem to recall that Mr Smith – your brother – had a particular fondness for him.’

‘Yes, he did.’

‘Does Joe still visit him?’

‘Not so much, as far as I can tell, but youths are youths.’

‘Yes. Indeed.’

We turned to more general matters. Presently I rose to take my leave, vowing to return soon.

On the threshold, Joane put a hand on my arm. ‘So, Robert, you have met Tom?’

‘Tom Davasour? Yes, indeed. He seems to be a ... an honest young man.’

‘And how is dear Meggie?’ she asked.

‘I ... I thought you had but lately seen her.’

‘Yes.’ She stood, very composed in her plain gown and knitted grey shawl. ‘I am asking you though.’

I knew full well what she was doing, and I confess I could not like it. But Joane was ever kind and though her gaze was penetrating, it was not intrusive.

‘Oohh...’ I let out a long breath. ‘She is Mistress Davasour now and has been these past eight years. As regards my presence in the house, she treats me with courtesy.’ But even I could hear the petulance in my tone as I added, ‘Things cannot ever be as they were.’

Interlude

Croydon 2011

*Around 70% of people in immigration detention have come to the UK seeking sanctuary and have claimed asylum. They are detained for the administrative convenience of the government which argues that their detention is necessary to maintain an effective immigration system*³

14.12.11

UKBA to Campsfield House Detention centre

Re: *William Muambi*

Country of origin: DRC

d.o.b. *unknown*

Date of entry to UK: *16.06.11*

Asylum Claim: *refused pending tribunal 13.08.11*

Reason for refusal: *Claim Unfounded (insufficient proof of persecution)*

Temporary support withdrawn.

William will realise soon enough that things cannot ever be as they were. But do they have to be as bad as this? His cousin Joseph had assured told him that the UK was a good place, that they'd treat him fairly— only now he is on his way to a detention centre, or, to give it its proper name, an Immigration Removal Centre. The lady in the pink mac would be horrified if she knew.

The long wait in the corridor at Lunar house was nothing compared with some of the things William has had to put up with in the past. He's always been a patient man; besides he was quite hopeful that the people there would listen to his story; that they might be able to

³ BID. (2009) Out of Sight, Out of Mind Bail for Immigration Detainees, <https://www.biduk.org/pages/62-bid-research-reports>, p.5.

help him find out what happened to Cecile and their girls. But he didn't get a chance to tell them about his missing family, or that his village was destroyed. One of them didn't even believe he came from the Congo.

Suburbs give way to green fields; the boy sitting next to him is clearly upset, and when William asks him if he knows how long they will have to stay 'in this place' the boy shakes his head. 'They don't say.' He gives a long shuddering sigh, 'I have been before.'

Chapter 4

London 1624

Shortly before Easter I arranged to meet John Rolfe at the Feathers. It would be the first time I had seen him since I took his place as Henry Smith's man of business. And to my annoyance, I was late, out of breath, no doubt red faced ...

As John clicked his fingers and called for a flagon of wine, I smoothed my hair and straightened my collar. It would have been a deal more convenient to have met at the Talbot, it was only round the corner from Silver Street. But John would have none of it.

'Their wine's like vinegar. I'd rather not be seen drinking it.'

Look at him now, I thought, conscious of my shabby doublet – even as a young apprentice, John had carried himself with an air of sophistication. I tried not to stare at the lace trim on his wide collar, the full sleeves gathered into elegant frills at the wrists. He must have prospered; even though he came from a devoutly Puritan family, he was decked out with all the grace and refinement of a fashionable gentleman. I watched him charming the serving wenches and wondered, not for the first time, why he had seized upon me as soon as I was back in London. He was so persuasive, so adamant that this would be for a short time, just to get him out of a tight place, sweeping away my protestations as if they were of no consequence.

One of the girls brought us the wine, blushing a little as John thanked her with exaggerated courtesy.

'Drink it slowly,' he said to me, 'It's one of our better ones.' He tapped the side of his nose, 'acquired from a Spanish trader.'

I took a cautious sip, the wine was smooth and honeyed, with the warm fragrance of damask roses. 'Mmm...' I took a longer draught.

John grinned, ‘Thought you’d like that. It’s from Gascony, came in on the *Lady Jane* last month.’

‘Gascony?’ I was confused. ‘I thought you said it was from Spain ...’

John laughed and shook his head. ‘That’s not precisely what I told you.’ He drank deeply from his own glass, then, ever restless, turned and looked about until he spied a lute on the far wall. Muttering an apology, he walked over to lift it from its hook and fiddled with the pegs until he had the tuning to his satisfaction. A hush came over the tavern as he began to play, slowly, somnolently. John Rolfe was known for his particular talent and men paused in their conversations to listen, puffing on their clay pipes, as an old melancholic air wove its way through the smoke. As John caressed the strings, black curls escaped from the ribbon fastening his hair, spilling over his lace collar.

I had been bent over Henry’s library table all afternoon and now my back was aching and the dash across town had left me out of sorts. I stretched out my legs; I should have left the house sooner, but there were ‘other things’ that Henry suddenly found, that could not be delayed. This was too much like the old days, when I was at his beck and call.

Now, the sweet notes of the pavane died away to a shuffling, a clearing of throats, and John adjusted the pegs again, plucking each string until he was satisfied. Someone called out for *Bedlam Boys*, and a right raucous din they made of it, with a stamping and a clapping that set the whole tavern going. I found my own fingers tapping along as they got to

Bedlam boys are bonny

For they all go bare

And they live by the air . . . (a long-held roar, before collapsing into)

And they want no drink or money.

... and a general hubbub and banging on the tables until the landlord called us to order. John strummed a light-hearted jig, to the delight of two cupshotten journeymen, who fell into

a sprightly caper. The music ended with more cheers and stamping of feet. A carter up from Kent bought John a drink as a token of his appreciation while the serving girls threw him more admiring glances.

The old resentment nagged at the back of my mind. John's apprenticeship to a vintner had been arranged by his father, in expectation of him joining the family company, a most stylish and successful enterprise. For a time, I was in awe of him, grateful for his friendship and content to follow him from tavern to tavern, carrying his lute-case, buying the ale, the shade to his light. But with his success, our friendship had declined and he had less need of a faithful companion.

Now he replaced the lute on its hook and came back to the table. 'What's the matter, Robert?' He set the tankard of ale down next to the wine glasses. 'Mr. Smith already causing you sorrow?'

I shrugged, 'I'd forgotten how pernicky he is.'

'I'll grant that he can be difficult to please.' John gave me a rueful glance. 'Are you regretting your decision?'

My decision? I thought it was yours. 'In truth, John, I was not best pleased at the thought of ever seeing Henry again. And yes, he's still demanding, exasperating, even.' I drained the last of my wine, 'but I am not the person who walked out of his house all those years ago.'

'Has he referred to all that? Since you came back, I mean.'

'No. I confess I was apprehensive as to ...,' I searched for words.

'As to his manner?' John said. He bent his head towards me, 'I do not know precisely what occurred, back then, but my uncle seems to think you were gravely insulted.'

'It was a misunderstanding.' I was suddenly conscious of my nails digging into the palm of my hand and set my drink down, flexing my fingers. 'I think we have a tacit

agreement to put it behind us,’ I said, ‘although an apology might have been in order. As to his moneylending, I was young, too quick in my opinions.’

‘Ah...’ John’s eyes glittered, ‘you’re referring to his usury.’

This was direct even for him. ‘Lending at interest,’ I said firmly. ‘Faith John, it is merely a small amount. And from what I have observed these last weeks, I am persuaded that he really does desire to use it in order to advantage those in need.’

‘Advantage those in need,’ John guffawed, ‘you make Smith sound like Robyne Hude.’

‘Robin who?’

‘The ballad, *A Lytell Gest of Robyne Hude*. You must know some of those stories from your boyhood. The booksellers in Paternoster Row have produced new copies in English.’

‘Oh, the man who stole from the rich to give to the poor.’ I laughed. ‘I suppose Henry could bear a likeness to him. But I think Robin was something of a villain.’

‘Hmmm ...’ John looked at me quizzically. ‘As to villainy, there are still those who regard Master Smith with a deal of suspicion.’

‘Because of...?’

‘Because of those charges he levies – that small amount of interest. Don’t forget most of his family are Reformist by persuasion.’

Aah ... but so are yours, John Rolfe, I thought. Perhaps this was the reason ... I took a deep breath.

‘John, why were you so anxious to leave him?’

There was the minutest pause before John replied. ‘Oh, that. So that’s what’s bothering you.’ He sat a little straighter, brushing a long tendril of black hair from his face. ‘Well, it was not on account of religious variances; I suppose I was beginning to feel out of my depth, beginning to worry about making errors.’

‘Yes, I can understand that. But Henry himself has not got everything right.’

I told him then about the Wingfield account. ‘There were gaps in his records,’ I said.

‘Oh, my Lord,’ John blew out his cheeks, ‘I fear this has happened before. Henry does overlook things from time to time. It was precisely these complexities that were beginning to weary me.’ He glanced at me from under his lashes, ‘and as God is my witness, I needed to be free to pursue my musical ventures.’ He pulled a face, ‘and to satisfy my father that I can make my way in vintnery.’

John’s glass was empty. He lifted the tankard of ale and took a hesitant sip, made a face and set it back down. I called for another flagon of wine. John filled both our glasses and raised his,

‘Your good health Robert. And my hearty thanks for what you have agreed to do.’

I raised mine in return. ‘It’s your uncle you have to thank. He came to see me. Perchance that was at your request?’

‘I cannot deny it. But I believe it was also out of goodwill towards Mr Smith. He is hard pressed.’

‘I understand that his involvement with Dorset has made considerable demands on his time,’ I said.

‘Indeed. And he is not getting the returns that he expected. Meanwhile Richard Sackville – Dorset, if you will – has already spent the money he made from selling the place. Now he’s borrowing from anyone who will advance a loan.’ He dropped his voice, ‘and Richard Amherst, his high sheriff, cannot restrain him, for all his good standing with the family.’

I lowered my voice too. ‘Are things really so bad? Henry always had such a high regard for the Sackville family.’ I turned the beaker around in my hands. ‘He won’t hear a word against any of them, even now.’

‘Have you noticed if Henry has appealed to Amherst for advice recently?’ John asked.

‘I believe he has; but without success as far as I can see.’

‘Hmm.’ John kept his voice down. ‘In truth, Amherst is much occupied in steering Richard Sackville away from the gaming tables.’

‘Ah, I have suspected as much – but Henry would never have mentioned ...’

‘Oh Henry ...’ John sounded scornful, ‘As you said, he refuses to listen to anything that puts Sackville in a bad light.’ He looked at me levelly, ‘Sackville’s been losing money hand over fist. And now he’s intent on throwing it away on his lady-love.’

‘His lady-love?’

‘Lady Pennistone. It’s common knowledge that she is dallying with Sackville under her husband’s nose. Now she’s in London with him, whilst Pennistone is up in the North Country – and word has it that Sackville and his wife – the much-beleaguered Lady Anne – are at odds again. So, with the King’s court returning to Whitehall ... well, I doubt Sackville will be drumming his heels at Knole for any longer than he has to ...’

‘Oh dear.’ This was all rather overwhelming. I thought of the columns of figures, Henry’s painstaking calculations, each small dividend minutely listed for the sake of his precious legacy ... whilst Sackville wasted his substance in riotous living and left poor Lady Anne to languish at Knole.

Conversation was becoming difficult as the tavern filled up again. Men jostled for space, the tap room boys ferreted their way between tables with a ‘by your leave’ or ‘make way.’ Presently, with a pretty show of regret, John said that he must go. As we moved to the door, he clapped me on the back, ‘try not to fret too much, Robert. Sackville’s still a young man. Let’s hope he’ll acquire more wisdom with age.’

Chapter 5

Back in Henry's house the next day, I was in the kitchen talking to Tom and Meggie, when Jane burst in from the town. She brought news, she said. Meggie was not impressed.

'I hope you've brought fish too. You've kept me waiting long enough.'

'Of course.' Jane thrust her basket at Meggie. 'Bream, caught fresh, just the thing for Master Henry. And I managed to get the last of the shrimps,' she added.

'Take them into the buttery.' Meggie wrinkled her nose, 'I hope they're fresh as well.'

'Wouldn't have bought them otherwise,' Jane tossed her head and flounced out. But she was far too full of her news to sulk and was back in an instant, her eyes bulging with glee.

'Heard a rumour in town ... about that Lord Dorset.'

Meggie tutted as she picked up a knife and started to scrape sugar loaf into a bowl.

'Met Jennet Green on Fish Street,' Jane continued, 'she told me Lord high and mighty Dorset's been seen over Peckham way with his doxy – on their way to the town, she said... *together.*'

Tom winked at me. 'Don't surprise me, word out there, Dorset's very free with the women. Especially his own servants...'

'Tom ...' Meggie sighed in exasperation. 'Who's Jennet Green, anyway?'

'Her as works for Madame Mountjoy across the road.' Jane could not hide her surprise. 'Don't you know her? She's Bessie Longden's sister – her who's married to that groom.' Jane stretched her hand towards the ginger and Meggie slapped her away. Unperturbed, she continued, 'he told her – the groom ...'

'Andrew,' Meggie said, 'Mr Longden to you.'

'...Mr Longden then. Told her there was a maid there – at the King's Head – said

Lord Dorset lay with her right next door to where the Pennistone woman was sleeping.'

'Jane, get to your work!' Meggie glared at her and began breaking eggs into the bowl, beating them furiously. 'No wonder you're late, idling in town whilst I wait for the victuals.'

Jane took a cloth to the table, 'I saw him this morning – that Andrew – on his way down Temple Bar, to meet the lawyer. Gentleman as comes to see the master.'

'Serjeant Amherst,' Tom said.

'That's the one. Says they're off to Kent somewhere.'

'Hmm... I wish he'd make time to come here first,' I said.

I got up and left them to their gossiping. Tom and Jane were Londoners born and bred, and not averse to tittle tattle when it came to the affairs of the king and his entourage. London has ever gorged itself on the latest intrigues, the scandals, the successes and failures of the court. And if the earl of Dorset was even half of what I'd heard, his extravagant appearance and irresistible charm would no doubt add further glamour to James's entourage. According to John Rolfe, Dorset might not be as close to the king as Buckingham, James's 'dear Steenie,' but he was a firm favourite, nonetheless.

But later in the week, it was whispered that Sackville had become indisposed. The pox was the most likely cause of his sickness and there were many who were only too willing to bring him to judgement. He had been spotted at the Globe in the company of a famous beauty who seemed to make her living by most dubious means. One of the preachers at St Paul's Cross, a hotter sort of protestant, wasted no time in launching a tirade, fulminating on the wages of sin. Then a chambermaid from Dorset House insisted that a scullion from the earl's own kitchens had poisoned him, at the bidding of Lord Pennistone.

All of this I heard from Simon, the lad who I had hired as my manservant. He regarded me as something of a rustic and had taken on the mantle of my adviser in all things municipal, even though I told him that I had only been absent from the city for a few years.

Now I told him that his tongue would be the undoing of him, that these rumours were doubtless exaggerated. The earl of Dorset was a young man, in his prime; if he had caught a chill, he would doubtless shrug it off in due course. But back in Silver Street, Tom told me that Serjeant Amherst had been summoned back from Knoles because of the earl of Dorset's fever.

'Jennet told us that the earl took to his bed on Tuesday and his fever has worsened.'

'Tom, does your master know of this?'

'Not as I can say, Master Robert.' He hesitated, 'but I understand Master Henry has some dealings with him.'

I kept my voice low, 'They have arrangements - Master Henry and the earl of Dorset. There is property involved.' There was silence for a moment, then I came to a decision. 'I am sure that this news is nothing to concern us over much, Tom. When Master Henry comes down, I can tell him of the earl's sickness. It is as well if he knows.'

I became engrossed in the accounts. When, some half hour later, there was a knock at the front door, it made no impression on me. Indeed, the first inkling I had of anything untoward was the sound of hurried footsteps along the corridor.

'Robert, come quickly.' Meggie burst through the door, 'It's the master, he seems to have had a shock...'

Henry was standing in the hall, leaning against the table. He held a paper in his hand, a familiar crest, black against the white sheet, the broken seal a gash of scarlet at the foot of the page. He stared at me as I reached him, 'h... how can this be possible?'

I looked at him in perplexity, 'What is it?'

'Richard ... it's Richard. The earl ... he ... he's dead.'

God in heaven. Dorset dead ? 'But... but how...?'

He thrust the paper into my hand. The message was short and to the point. Amherst as ‘the bearer of bad tidings,’ regretted that the earl of Dorset had been unable to overcome his fever and had died in the small hours of the morning.

Henry let out a groan and swayed most alarmingly. Meggie grasped his arms and led him to a chair where he sat, ashen faced, staring as if at nothing, deep lines etched across his brow. A draught under the door lifted the mat and set the fire-dogs rattling. One of the candles dipped, the flame flickered and died.

I looked over the lines again, as if reading them once more might change their meaning. How could this have happened? Less than a week since, Dorset had been on his way to town with that woman. I confess I shuddered then, fearing for his mortal soul. Keeping my voice low, I asked Meggie who it was who had delivered the note.

‘It must have been one of the pages,’ she said, her eyes wide, ‘he was wearing the Dorset livery. He just handed it to me and left.’

‘He may have had a number of calls to make.’

Meggie nodded. ‘I did my best to warn Master Henry’ she said. ‘I could see the letter was black-edged; I spoke slowly ... told him it was like to be bad news.’

She poured wine into a beaker. I knelt awkwardly by Henry’s chair and handed him the drink and he took it absently but did not raise it to his lips.

‘He had such life...’ he muttered.

He had such life – of a sudden I recalled seeing the earl’s portrait in Dorset House, when, as an apprentice I accompanied my master and was left to wait in the hall. An immense silver frame hanging beside the grand staircase; the young earl, staring impassively from it. Richard, knight of the realm, resplendent from his extravagant ruff of Valenciennes lace to his exquisitely embroidered white and gold shoes. The glittering, glamorous darling of London society ...

I stood up and paced across the hall. The Holy Family stared impassively from their tapestry at the end of the room, but my mind was reeling and I gave them no heed. If Dorset was dead, what would happen to his creditors? Who would they turn to for recompense? At the other end of the room, Henry seemed to have shrunk. His lips were pale, his hands tightly clasped. Sweet Mary and all the saints, how must he recover from this?

Chapter 6

A bell tolls in the steeple of St Brides. The Strand is thronged with curious onlookers, awe-struck by the magnificence of this, the last journey of Richard Sackville, Earl of Dorset. They say London is never silent, but the bell's muffled tones, the measured beats of horses' hooves on straw-covered roads, the creak of the velvet-lined cart, have quite robbed the crowds of the desire to raise their voices.

As the cortege passes by, aldermen remove their hats, liveried servants their caps, heads bowed. I shudder inwardly at the relentless tolling of the bell, a tocsin for a life spent too extravagantly, only to be lost too soon. Now, in the midst of this pomp and splendour, it's hard to believe that it happened but seven days since.

Londoners well know how to celebrate the dead, how to get a good return from the investment of this obligatory vigil. Five and thirty paupers attempt to keep in step as they walk behind the cart, looking dutifully mournful in their borrowed black, though I mind that their thoughts are on the vittles soon to come, and the coins from Dorset's coffers. Only thirty-five . . . and I marvel at how short a life might be.

Master Smith trudges along in his black robe, holding himself straight for one so advanced in years. He has not ventured this far in weeks, being so infirm. But John Rolfe has come to offer his support and we exchange a glance of tacit incredulity that Henry is able to do this at all, so great was his anguish when he heard of Dorset's death.

We pause for him to catch his breath and watch as a group of noblemen pass by. There is Buckingham, black velvet from head to toe, sober and magnificent. He keeps pace with the earl of Essex, Robert Devereux, who, newly returned from the Rhinelands, appears to have aged, looking fretful and rather stooped. Walking behind them with a company of Dorset's men is Serjeant Amherst, in his full regalia as high sheriff, conspicuous with his reddish-

brown beard, ginger hair and piercing blue eyes. Henry sees him at once. He nods in his direction and Amherst, unsmiling, inclines his head in return. How vexing for Henry, to see the very man he needs to speak to, but to be unable to engage him in conversation.

The crowd thickens as the procession crosses the Fleet and presses through Lud Gate, up the hill to St. Paul's. The townsfolk are pouring onto the streets in their thousands to gawp at Dorset's marching men in their armour of silver and blue and at the six black-plumed horses their silk-fringed trappings rustling in the breeze as they draw the hearse along beneath its canopy. All is sombre as the occasion demands, save for the coffin, draped in a magnificent pall that flaunts jewelled embroideries of scarlet, blue and gold, a flamboyance that is a telling reminder of the man himself.

The heralds of arms raise their scutcheons, their customary scarlet exchanged for the deepest purple and now priests and choristers are lining up on Ludgate Hill to join the procession, the sound of their psalm singing borne on the breeze towards the Temple courts, where lawyers and students must surely give pause to listen, to reflect perchance on their own mortality.

I catch sight of the grocer, Henry Jackson, in the watching crowd. I doubt Henry sees him; I grasp his elbow as the cane trembles in his hand. Dorset's death has come as a shock to him and I wonder if he is moved by the solemnity of the occasion or grieving for Sackville himself.

If the Londoners are looking to see the earl's wife, Lady Anne Sackville, then they look in vain, for she has not made the journey from Knole House as she is gravely ill, stricken with smallpox that will mar her beauty for the rest of her days. Nor are her sons in attendance, having already passed this way and even now lying in the Sackville vault at Withyham. It seems a strange fate that has left Richard Sackville bereft of his family for this, his final journey.

All the great and the good have turned out today; King James's courtiers, London's illustrious Lord Mayor and his Council, Members of Parliament – up past St Paul's, they go, through the narrow streets where a sharp wind from the Thames sets the heraldic banners fluttering, bright scarlet and gold against a cloudless sky. The bells of St Paul's are muffled for the occasion; nevertheless, their deep notes finally overwhelm the incessant tolling from St. Bride's.

At the top of the hill, as the Lord Mayor's coach passes by, Henry stands still, white-faced and breathless. John takes hold of his other arm.

'I must stop here. Tell the boys . . .'

Henry's robes are such a weight. I expressed my misgivings earlier in the week, but my remarks fell on deaf ears. I turn to the two attendants. 'Make haste, bring the chair. Go by Paternoster where it's quieter.'

We lead Henry to a stone seat in the shadow of St Paul's, where he sinks down, his face working against the effort of the journey. John has a brief word with him, then nods in my direction as he lifts his hat.

'I shall bid you good day. As God is my witness, he's done well to get this far.'

'Will you go on, now?' I wonder at his leaving whilst Henry is so indisposed.

'Just to the bridge. Amherst will go down to Sussex of course. Doubtless he will report to Henry in due course.' John replaces his hat over his unruly curls and walks briskly away.

The crowds are thinning now; only family members and friends will cross the river to make the arduous journey through Sussex to Dorset's final resting place at Withyham. The street traders will be back along Cheapside as soon as the cortege has passed, and down at Gresham's Emporium, afternoon trade will be all the brisker for the morning's delay.

A man slips through the crowd to where Henry sits. My hand goes to my sword as he shoves me aside. I'm about to demand his business, thinking him to be some sort of ruffler or

whip-jack, but then I notice that he has the attire of a servant, not the full livery of a nobleman's house, more that of a minor official, but distinctive enough. He is short of stature and looks sadly ill-kempt, lank greasy hair above a pasty face and a long thin nose set to sneer at whatever it might sniff. He speaks low and at such a speed that I doubt if Henry can hear much, yet his eyes widen in alarm. The scoundrel turns on his heel to go, then stops and brings his face close to mine, the stench of his breath so foul that I turn away, trying not to retch.

‘The old fool’s got it coming to him now,’ he hisses, ‘just wait and see . . .’

And with that he makes off into the crowd.

Interlude

Campsfield 2012

A detainee with mental health issues is in a critical condition after being beaten up by Mitie security guards at Campsfield IRC in Oxfordshire. Between 60 and 100 detainees have occupied the courtyard to protest against the violence and the inhuman living conditions they suffer during detention.⁴

Everyone at Campsfield is in lock-down. In the hour they're allowed out of their cells the men bunch together muttering, some are so panicked that their dread becomes infectious...

Back in Uganda, in the camp, William felt he was being watched by other refugees. Here, it's the guards who are watching for signs of trouble, but still, he's on edge. How can he tell who might be here, in this place? There are Congolese here, they could be from rebel groups, he has no idea who the troops were who attacked his village. He notes the different languages but listens in vain for Lingalan or Nande ... when he hears Swahili it comes as something of a relief.

The waiting makes people angry, trapped in their own thoughts. One of them set fire to his cell last week, another copied him, then a whole group went up on the rooftop to protest about their treatment. The police were called, troops and firefighters ... William doesn't want to get drawn into any of this, he doesn't want to end up like those mad people. Head cases, someone called them. Even so, he worries that his shouts wake the man in the bunk above him, most nights when the dreams come.

⁴ Close Campsfield (2014) Retrieved 24 March 2021, from <https://en.close-thecamps.org/2014/11/30/uk-en-campaign-to-close-campsfield-protests-in-campsfield-irc-after-detainee-is-beaten-up-by-mitie-security-guards/> accessed

Chapter 7

London 1624

‘Robert, can you find the last two years’ returns for Kemsing?’

‘Have we received the rents for Michaelmas?’

‘Did you receive a reply from Bailey?’

‘How goes the repair of the chapel at Longton?’

Question after question ... Henry’s dismay at Richard Sackville’s death was turning into a feverish determination to grind his way out of whatever obstacles might lie in his way. Often, we worked late into the evening; *whenever I picked up my quill, he seemed to bark out an order* and expect an immediate response. For all his frailty, he demonstrated a new urgency to shore up his investments, in order to clear the way towards advancing his vision. And the more there was to do, the more convinced I was that this might be possible. But it was not without cost to us both.

And now to my dismay, Henry was beginning to pace again. If the room was small, he walked a precise square, if the proportions were more generous, a rectangle. In his hall he circumnavigated the table, keeping to a line that bordered the turkey carpet, before turning to traverse the threadbare flowers on its shorter length, returning by way of the opposite border. Here in the library, he executed a perfect square, ten steps for each line. And now that his years had declined, his pace decreased in both speed and length and consequently was very slow; moreover, his breathing became laboured and I found myself holding my breath in turn.

I told myself that I should be more sanguine about this, that at least Henry was not counting aloud, although according to Tom, once he was settled at night in his bedchamber, he rehearsed complicated arithmetical conundrums, balance sheets of profit and loss, lending rates and accrued interest.

‘It begins like a muttering,’ Tom told me. ‘And sometimes that is all, and he goes

quietly off to sleep. But lately its started to get louder and louder until we can even hear him down in the kitchen and that with the door fast closed.'

No, Henry had not yet resorted to counting during the day, for which I gave thanks. But as I took up my pen once more, I wondered how long his state of aggravation could last.

I had sent word to Serjeant Amherst's secretary the previous Monday, imploring him to appeal to Amherst to spare us a few moments of his time. I was persuaded that he might set Henry's mind at rest, I wrote. But word was returned to me that Amherst was occupied with Dorset's affairs.

Then I received a letter from Rolfe. Was I aware, he inquired, of the Lord Mayor's banquet in a few weeks? If Mr Smith would consider attending it, he might be able to speak to Amherst. *My Uncle Geoffrey will be there*, he wrote. Moreover, he – Rolfe – could accompany Henry, *if the thought of escorting him to this event dismays you after so many days spent in his service*. I wondered if this was a sop to my agreeing to take Rolfe's place; but the suggestion seemed to be a good one and I determined to put it to Henry.

The Lord Mayor's banquet, an annual event for the members of the twelve great livery companies, was eagerly anticipated by all the City masters, wardens of the Guilds, the nobility and a select company of freemen. It was a most convivial occasion, a sumptuous feast accompanied by a consort of musicians, their fiddles, lutes, shawms and viols reverberating from the high gallery out and across the great domed rafters, in the scented air of a thousand beeswax candles.

It was many years since I had seen Henry in his scarlet aldermen's robes, but I was sure that Meggie would have kept the ceremonial garments in good fettle. Perhaps I should advise her to take them out for an airing...

Now, as Henry re-seated himself and cleared his throat, I steeled myself for another question. He was fretting about a letter that I had copied three or four days since. Had there

been a reply yet? Was I certain that I had sent it as directed? I stifled an angry retort, assuring him that indeed I had, jabbing my pen into the paper. A blotch of ink spread across the page and I cursed under my breath. I'd have to start again.

There was a growling within my belly, we had been hard at work since eight o'clock and as the carriage clock chimed the twelve and Jane flounced in to tell us that dinner was waiting, I offered up silent thanks. Henry rose and walked slowly through the parlour, treading on the edge of the mat, a precise two inches from the floorboards. At the table he embarked on a meticulous re-alignment of fork, trencher, side plate and wine glass. When I offered him wine, he inclined his head, gazing intently as I poured some for myself, relaxing only as I replaced the jug with exaggerated precision.

We conversed amicably enough over the food, until I said, casually, 'Henry, it must be several months – a year maybe – since you have had cause to wear your Alderman's robes. I have taken the liberty of asking Meggie to air them for you.'

Henry turned his rheumy eyes on me, 'What should I want with Alderman's garb?'

'The Lord Mayor's banquet takes place on the first Friday in June. We – I – thought that it might be a diversion for you.'

'No ... no Robert. I don't want to go.'

'But there are so many men who would be pleased to see you again. Your friends from the Salter's Guild for example ...'

'Friends? The salters? Hah...'

'Sir John Weston – when he called on you last week ...'

'Weston? Hasn't given me the time of day for a twelve-month, then turns up at the door as bold as you please.'

I suppressed a sigh. 'I think he was concerned for your health.'

‘The man’s after something, I’ll be bound.’ Henry wiped his mouth with the corner of his napkin. ‘No Robert, I have had quite enough of feasting and fraternizing.’ He waved a bony finger, ticking off the occasions to which he had apparently been subjected. ‘Plow Monday dinner, Michaelmas, the Merchants’ banquet, the dinner for the Lord Mayor Elect, now this one for the Lord Mayor himself. Don’t like the fellow. Never should have been elected.’

I opened my mouth to protest. If Meggie was to be believed, Henry had attended none of these occasions. But before I could utter a word he silenced me. ‘No Robert, even the thought of another roast swan makes me liverish. Leave it to the vintners and victuallers, the tailors and mercers. I’ve had my fill.’

There was nothing more for me to say. But when Henry retired to rest for an hour (‘not a minute beyond the sixty, Robert,’) I made for the kitchen. Tom was sitting at one end of the table, mending the handle of a skillet. At the other end, Meggie was scouring the pewter ware with coarse handfuls of horsetail from the garden. She looked up as I came in.

‘How have you found the master today?’ she asked.

‘He is certainly not in the best of spirits.’

‘Somewhat absented in his manner?’ Tom said.

I nodded my head. ‘There is no need for you to air his robes, I regret to say.’

‘Poor Master Henry,’ Meggie’s large brown eyes brimmed with concern. ‘He has always enjoyed these grand occasions. He must be disappointed.’

‘Hardly disappointed, Meggie, he’s refusing to go.’

She selected some more stalks of horsetail from her basket. ‘What’s to do with him, then?’

I wondered how much she, or the rest of Henry’s household, knew about his affairs.

‘I think he has had a shock. The earl of Dorset’s death was very sudden.’

‘They’re saying it was the pox that took him,’ Tom blurted out, but Meggie cut him short.

‘I heard it was a surfeit of potatoes,’ she shook her head in wonder, ‘dead in two days.’

‘Better not let the master hear that,’ Tom said, ‘he’ll not let another morsel of food pass his lips...’

‘Oh, he won’t eat *potatoes*,’ Meggie said. ‘I can’t tempt him with anything much these days and he certainly won’t try any new-fangled foods. Martha said that she would bring him a mutton pasty, but I don’t know...’ her voice tailed off.

‘Tell her to bring it anyway,’ Tom grinned, ‘we’ll have it in the kitchen.’

Meggie sniffed at this, pushing a handful of horsetail into a tankard and rubbing it vigorously. ‘Do you think Master Henry is worried about what he might be given to eat at the banquet?’ she said.

I shook my head. ‘I doubt it. More like he’s fretting about what others might be saying.’

‘Why should people be talking about him?’ Meggie wondered.

Tom tested the handle of the pan and set it down. ‘This should hold now, Meggie. I’ll warrant Mr Hene’s right,’ he continued. ‘Haven’t you heard the stallholders? Only this morning, across in Wood Street they were calling him ‘Old dog Smith.’ Dorset’s done for him good and proper, they said. Serves him right for robbing him.’

‘Dog Smith?’ Meggie was thoroughly perplexed, ‘robbing him? What do you mean?’

‘I’m sure it’s all tittle-tattle.’ I frowned at Tom. ‘If Henry should get to hear these absurd tales ...’

But in truth, this left me ill-at-ease. How had they got hold of that scurrilous name? Such rumours were drawn from more than idle gossip. And Henry was already known for a moneylender ... then there was that startling encounter at Dorset’s funeral. Even now I found

myself wincing at the memory of Henry sinking down on the steps, hands trembling, his face bewildered ... what reason would anyone have to abuse him like that? Perhaps these things were connected ... but no, surely not. Unless perchance someone had a grudge against him.

I wondered whether Sir Geoffrey Blake might be able to advise me. I knew that he was a true friend to Henry; besides, Blake knew of my own past, the long apprenticeship I was compelled to endure, the lengths that I had gone to in serving Henry Smith. If I could trust anyone, I reckoned it would be him. I resolved to pay him a visit.

The next morning, I made my excuses to Henry and set off towards Ludgate. When last I lived in London, Blake had been the owner of a bookshop just off Fleet Street, but now, according to John Rolfe, he was the master of a thriving print works. I was expecting to see a larger establishment but as I turned into the Strand, the imposing building that confronted me was even more impressive than I had imagined it would be.

I paused to admire the richly embossed stonework before crossing the street to mount a flight of steps. Carved oak doors swung wide as I approached, two liveried footmen either side and a third man advancing to enquire of my business. Inside was a hubbub of noise, clerks and apprentices running hither and thither, leather-aproned labourers all seemingly in a hurry, all appearing to have vital tasks that must be done without delay. As I stared around at the great entrance hall, I felt somewhat overawed. This setting was a far cry from my house in Holborn, where Sir Geoffrey Blake and I had last met. I felt suddenly bashful as if perchance I presumed too much on the goodwill of this eminent man. But as I was ushered into his office, up a further flight of steps, Blake rose from behind a vast desk, his hands held out in greeting.

‘Robert, come in, come in.’ He beamed at me. ‘You are thrice welcome. So good of you to take the time to come and see me.’

He showed me to a chair and sat down behind his desk. ‘Thank you for your message. It allowed me to order my time to good effect. Now,’ his eyes twinkling, ‘apart from your reluctant enslavement with Mr Smith, pray tell me what has brought you back to the city – I’m agog to hear your news.’

Sir Geoffrey Blake had never been a man to stand on ceremony and within minutes we were at ease with one another. When he asked if I had had dinner, I shook my head ruefully,

‘Truth to tell, Sir Geoffrey, I shared a small loaf with Henry at breakfast, but I have not eaten since.’

‘A small loaf? Shared with Mr. Smith? You must be half famished,’ he laughed ‘It’s a few hours since my breakfast too, so we’ll go up to the Hand. Nothing like one of their beef and ale pies to cheer a fellow up.’

We walked up the hill through Temple Bar. The taverns around here were often overflowing with law students but today many were out of town, it being nearly Ascension and the courts not in session; even so, Blake was clearly well-known and we were compelled to stop several times for him to greet people or to return their good wishes. At length we reached the tavern and found an empty booth. Blake called for food and drink. Being loath to unburden myself about Henry Smith straightaway, I asked him about the printworks.

‘There is a huge demand for popular material now,’ he said. ‘Remind me, Robert, when was it you left London?’

‘Nigh on ten years ago,’ I replied. ‘But even then, around Paternoster Row there were many books to be had in English.’

‘Well, they’ve increase tenfold,’ Blake said. ‘The Bible is still the most requested one, but nowadays people ask for herbals, almanacs, all manner of domestic subjects. Then there’s the pamphlets – poetry and the like.’

He plunged his fork into the steaming crust of his pie and inhaled deeply. 'My word, that smells good. Best not to scald my mouth though. Now, what was I saying? Poetry ... as a matter of fact we rushed a pamphlet to print only last week, lamenting Dorset's demise. One of the pot-poets, Abraham Holland as I recall. Very affecting I must say.' He took a mouthful of beef and chewed thoughtfully, 'it's selling well too.'

I confessed that I had not seen it. 'But I see that you have news-posts about the Spanish attacks, they're pasted up all across the town.'

'Yes. We've had to be very careful about the wording,' Blake said. 'It wouldn't do to offend the king. I've already been warned about losing my licence.'

Between mouthfuls of beef, we decided that parliament was right to put pressure on the king to support the Netherlands against Spain, now that a Spanish fleet had besieged and taken a Dutch port. We kept our voices low, in spite of the partitions that separated these tables, for it would not do to be heard passing judgement on the monarchy. Presently Blake scooped the last mouthful from his trencher and took a long draught of ale, sighing with satisfaction, 'Ah, that's better. Now then,' fixing me with a kindly stare, 'how's Master Henry?'

'He's troubled, Sir Geoffrey.'

'Well, yes. I'm sure he must be.'

He called for another bowl of ale, asking me if I would have one too, but I thanked him and declined. 'Wine then?' he suggested, 'malmsey? Or there's an excellent claret here.'

I shook my head, laughing, 'In faith, I've been too long in the country. Ale is sufficient for me at dinnertime.'

Blake looked disappointed. 'Come out to Hale when you can, Robert. I keep an excellent cellar.' He loosened the laces on his doublet and belched gently. 'Ah, that's better. Speaking of good wine, I am hoping to see Henry at the banquet next week.'

‘I did encourage him to attend. But he declined.’

‘A pity. It’s usually a most convivial occasion. I think he would enjoy it.’

I shifted in my seat. ‘At one time perhaps ...’

‘But now?’

‘Now he has other matters on his mind.’ I looked round and lowered my voice, ‘I believe Henry is afraid of venturing out, lest he meet people who will ask him for payment ... Dorset’s creditors. He has already had some quite menacing letters.’

‘Surely they should be applying to Serjeant Amherst – as Dorset’s high sheriff?’

‘You would think so Sir Geoffrey; but since Sackville’s death, they seem to be expecting Henry to foot the bill.’

‘What has Serjeant Amherst to say about that?’

‘That’s one of the problems. The Serjeant has not replied to Henry’s request to see him.’

‘Robert, let me speak frankly.’ Blake looked me kindly, ‘Henry’s manner is not always the most endearing – he can be... well ... excessively irritating.’

‘Yes, I know.’

He chuckled. ‘I am sure you do. I know that John found him prickly, short-tempered ... and I would be prepared to bet that this has also been Amherst’s experience.’ He noticed my raised eyebrows and added, ‘Amherst has been at Henry’s beck and call these ten years – maybe more. He has many other responsibilities – Henry knows this full well but is slow to acknowledge it.’

‘But Sir Geoffrey, Serjeant Amherst must understand that Henry’s plans for his legacy are dependent on the revenues from Knole House. And as Dorset’s high sheriff, Amherst...’

‘Amherst,’ Blake broke in, ‘has watched helplessly whilst Dorset cut a swathe of desecration through his father’s and grandfather’s carefully amassed resources.’

‘But could he not have done anything to prevent it?’

Blake spread his hands ‘I think that he has done everything he could. Robert, you must understand – Dorset was well-nigh impossible to control.’

In truth, I had been hoping for more than this. I was expecting Blake to reassure me, even to hint, perhaps, that he might drop a word in Serjeant Amherst’s ear. It had not occurred to me that he might take his part.

I burst out, ‘did you know that Henry was threatened at Dorset’s funeral?’

‘Threatened?’ He looked puzzled. ‘What do you mean?’

I told him about Henry’s strange encounter by St Paul’s steps. But Blake dismissed it as the work of a lunatic and when I retorted that it might have been set up by one of Dorset’s creditors, his face darkened.

‘No.’ He was unhesitating in his response. ‘No, Robert. What would be the point of that?’ I must have looked disconsolate for he added, ‘I wouldn’t concern yourself with it. In all probability it was some fleering charlatan with a grudge against any one of London’s wealthy. A pity you couldn’t have called one of the constables.’

‘The street was too crowded. He ran off before we could stop him.’ Besides, I wanted to add, how could we raise a hue and cry in the midst of a funeral procession?

Blake drained his tankard. ‘The news of Sackville’s death must have come as a great shock to Henry.’

I nodded. ‘Yes, yes indeed it did.’ I could see Henry still, staring blindly at that black-edged sheet of paper, his face chalk-white.

‘So, I would venture to suggest that an occurrence like that might cause him more disquiet than usual.’

‘Yes, yes that may be so...’ But I was not convinced. Anyone who witnessed the malevolence of that man would not be so sanguine about the incident.

Blake wiped his face with a napkin. 'I'm sure Henry has faced worse things. Besides, he has been known to threaten people himself. Now, I must return to my office.' As we left the tavern he added, 'Did you know that Sir Edward Sackville is back from the continent?'

I had not heard this, although I was aware that Richard Sackville's brother was about to return from Italy where he had been for the past twelve months. 'Henry will be cheered by his return,' I said. I stopped as two clerks of the courts made to go past, but Blake's page advanced before him in a fine show of consequence, forcing them to step aside.

Blake half turned, 'Henry knows them well?' he asked.

'Knows... oh, Sir Edward and his lady? Yes. Yes indeed. He was witness to their marriage, you know. I was apprenticed to him at that time. I went with him, down to Knole.'

'Well, ... that must have been an occasion.' Blake smiled at me. 'I vow it must have pleased Master Smith to keep such company.'

'Yes. Indeed. And now Edward Sackville will be the fourth earl of Dorset and Lady Mary will become a countess.'

'Well, let us hope Sir Edward will grasp the reins with both hands.' Blake said. 'He will find that he has many responsibilities.'

We reached the printworks and he bade me a courteous farewell. I wandered slowly away. Had Blake been amused by my eagerness to talk of the Sackvilles, I wondered?

Had there been a hint of mockery in his manner as I recalled Henry's gratification?

I vow it must have pleased Master Smith to keep such company.

Well, perchance Blake might view Henry as an upstart. Certainly, there were those who did. But Henry had been on cordial terms with Edward and Mary long before Richard Sackville had approached him for money. I crossed Fleet Bridge, smiling at the memory of myself as an awestruck young apprentice, staring goggle-eyed at the feasting and merrymaking as the bells pealed in every parish around Knole. Even then, I thought, it was

Richard who was the shining light. Edward must have been richly attired, as befits a bridegroom; no doubt Mary was too, though I could not say that I remembered much about either of them. Amongst the throng of bewigged and bejewelled guests, amidst the spangled collars, silks and satins, it was Richard that commanded everyone's attention, Richard who eclipsed them all. He was like the noonday sun to their lesser lights, adored and indulged by all who came under his spell.

But now, by his untimely death, Richard Sackville had brought his estates and his family into such disarray... and I saw it was a grievous thing for such promise to end in so little ... and in truth I began to see the cruelty of such a death, to abandon those that are left behind to the probabilities of ruin.

Must Henry fall victim to this? I wandered up Chancery Lane, passing by the entrance to Lincoln's Inn. A group of lawyers stood inside, conversing together, and I bethought me of Serjeant Amherst. Surely as a distinguished officer of the law he could protect Henry from the wrath of Richard Sackville's creditors? Perhaps Blake was right, once Amherst reflected on the situation, he would be bound to see that Henry needed some support. After all, the law was there for protection as well as for correction; and if anyone could advise Henry on the legalities of his situation, it must be his lawyer.

Of a sudden, I noticed the dark figure of a man standing in the shadows beyond the gatehouse. He looked up and I could not prevent myself from staring, for he was as black as any Moor. Was he waiting to petition a lawyer, I wondered? I turned back as I crossed the street but could see him no more. He must have disappeared into the courtyard.

Interlude

Campsfield 2012

Nearly 30,000 people every year experience immigration detention in the UK. Many have never committed a crime but, unlike people held in the criminal justice system, immigration detainees are locked up without a time limit to their detention.⁵

William is still here, in Campsfield.

It's no use asking why.

'Why' is not a question that asylum seekers can profitably ask, so there's not a lot of point in you asking it either ... unless you're prepared to challenge the system...

Although William himself has been asked 'why' so many times in the last few weeks.

Why did you leave the DRC?

Why did you go to a refugee camp?

Why have you chosen to come to the UK?

Why did you not claim asylum on entering the country?

Why do you not have papers?

'How' might be a better question, William thinks.

How can I get someone to help me?

How can I access my lawyer if he will not answer my calls?

After all, the law is there for protection as well as correction; and if anyone can advise William on the legalities of his situation, it must surely be his lawyer.

⁵ BID. (2009) Out of Sight, Out of Mind Bail for Immigration Detainees, <https://www.biduk.org/pages/62-bid-research-reports>, p.5.

Chapter 8

London 1624

The first Monday in June, Henry not being best disposed to rise early and the day being fine and warm, I took a beaker of ale outside to enjoy in the garden. All was quiet in the yard, the bricks on the chimney wall already sun-warmed and bees droning lazily on the old climbing rose. Hearing voices behind the wicket gate, I rounded the wall to see who was there. Meggie was sitting on the bench with a lady, well-dressed, seemingly a person of quality. As she turned towards me, I gave a start of surprise.

‘Mistress Jackson. Martha,’ I grasped her outstretched hands. ‘Faith, it’s an age since I saw you last.’

‘Robert Hene.’ Still the same cornflower blue eyes, now widening, as she added, ‘well. It must be nigh on ten years.’ She looked me up and down. ‘My, you’ve become quite the gentleman.’

I confess that as I returned Martha’s gaze, I saw little of the girl she used to be. The merry lass who stole Henry Jackson’s heart was quite gone; in her place a merchant’s wife, decked out in the sort of finery that the younger Martha might have envied. Although I am no connoisseur of ladies’ fashion, I could not help noticing the satin sheen of her gown with its extravagant hanging sleeves. But beneath a fine lace cap, her golden locks were sadly faded, lines of discontent hardly concealed by the powder on her face. It seemed that the merriment had quite vanished.

Meggie indicated the stool next to her. ‘Do sit down Mr. Hene.’

‘Yes, do,’ Martha broke in, ‘my neck is quite stretched looking up at you.’

I laughed and shifted the stool to lean my back against the wall. ‘I was wondering how Henry is faring,’ I said to Meggie. ‘Has he been sleeping more soundly?’

Meggie nodded. ‘He has. The apothecary made up a posset with sorrel and purslane.’

‘I would have included violet leaves, myself,’ Martha said.

Meggie inclined her head. ‘Well, he is not so choleric. But I asked the physician to attend on him because I am worried about his restlessness. And his appetite is poor.’

‘Oh dear,’ Martha sighed. ‘We have intended to visit him more frequently, but our own situation ... well it’s ... it’s been so difficult ...’

‘I am sure Master Jackson must be very busy in the shop,’ I began but Meggie broke in,

‘Martha’s concerns are rather more than that.’ She turned to her, ‘do you want to continue, or...’

‘Well, Robert may as well know too. It will be all across the family before long.’

Martha’s lips were trembling and she clutched a handkerchief between beringed fingers.

‘Joe has left us,’ she began.

‘Joe? Your son Joseph?’

Martha’s rings sparkled in the sunlight as she wrung her hands, recounting the events surrounding her son’s departure. From what she told us, it seemed that Joane had not been exaggerating when she said that Joe was a young man who liked to go his own way... although Martha’s version of events was rather more theatrical. I confess I had forgotten her particular talent for loquaciousness and as she enumerated the circumstances of Joe’s absence, I began to regret the meagre height of the stool I sat upon.

Her family had but recently moved, Martha said. They had left the rooms behind the shop for a fine house in Bishopsgate – here followed details of the parlour, the furniture, the fabric of the wing chairs – then, turning her attention to the shop, she added that Mr Jackson was in process of enlarging the place. His aim was to tempt the palates of the wealthy – here a rehearsal of the delicacies he had but lately obtained, dates, oranges, nutmeg – and there followed an animated exchange between Martha and Meggie concerning the merits of sugar

and cinnamon over honey in the broiling of fowls, until I was forced to shuffle in my seat and cough extravagantly and Martha resumed the thread of her story.

Joe, she said, was 'prenticed to one of the other guildsmen, Solomon Ferris, who owned a shop in the next street. Mr. Ferris had an arrangement with Henry Jackson that involved the joint services of Joe Jackson and a journeyman employed by both merchants.

'When there is a consignment to fetch from one of the ports, they'll take to the road together,' Martha explained. She went on to say that Mr. Jackson had given clear instructions to the journeyman – Basson – to look after Joe. 'He had no reason to doubt him, but a month went by and there was only one short note from Basson and nothing at all from Joe. Well, Master Ferris was beginning to complain about Joe's absence and Mr Jackson didn't know how to answer him and I was persuaded that Joe must be lying injured somewhere, with no-one to help him.' She shook her head, her ringlets quivering beneath the lace cap. 'It must have been some weeks later, before a carpenter from Hackney spotted the journeyman in a tavern down Portsmouth way. Once he was back in London, he – the carpenter, that is – came into the shop to tell Mr. Jackson.' Martha's eyes brimmed. 'He said that the wretched Basson was very much the worse for drink. And what with his tongue being loosened and all, he told the carpenter that Joe had met a girl,' Martha dropped her voice, 'one of *ill repute*. And from what the man said, Joe had made up his mind not to come home.' Martha's shoulders heaved as she applied a handkerchief to her eyes. Meggie put out her hand, her slender fingers bronze as they rested on Martha's plump white skin.

'Perchance Joe will repent of his haste,' I said.

'But I have not told you the worst of it.' Martha turned reproachful eyes on me. Lines had appeared where the tears had coursed down her powdered cheeks.

'The worst of it?' My heart sank a little, the bench seemed to grow even more uncomfortable.

Martha shook out her sleeves then folded her hands again. 'We had been talking of a betrothal between Joe and the daughter of Sir Peregrine Brady – I'm sure you must have heard of him, Robert – the master of the Worshipful Company of Mercers.' Her voice rose. 'Mistress Brady was a *Throckmorton* before she married Sir Peregrine...'

'But surely,' Meggie searched for the right words, 'if Joe is still working out his apprenticeship, he is not yet able to marry...'

'Oh, this was but an early discussion,' Martha snapped.

'What will happen to his apprenticeship now?' I asked.

Martha's lips began to tremble again. 'We have begged Mr. Ferris to be patient, but he has already lost one lad this year and is complaining that he can't afford to lose another.'

I stretched surreptitiously to ease my back, as Meggie spoke soothing words to her. Then I asked, 'is Joe's present address known to anyone?'

'They sent a message down to Portsmouth by one of the other journeymen. He said he'd ask around the docks and the taverns. And Sam is determined to go down soon, although Mr Jackson can hardly spare him. But I hope that he will go, for Joe might take heed of his own brother.' Martha twisted her rings round, her eyes cast down.

Meggie looked across at me. 'Mr Hene, just before you arrived, Martha and I were wondering whether Master Henry should hear about this.'

'Uncle Henry would be so distressed to learn of it,' Martha said. 'I know Joe has not been to see him in an age, but I vow he is fond of him, in his way.'

'I cannot see what telling Henry would achieve,' I said. 'If you will trust me on this, I think it better to wait a while.'

But even if I had told Henry about Joe, the events of the next few days would most likely have wiped all memory of his great-nephew's absence from his mind.

Chapter 9

I had arranged to take a wherry upstream to Kingston the following Thursday, in pursuit of my own business affairs, but I found I had left a sheaf of papers in Henry's library and was obliged to go by way of Silver Street. Knowing that the town would be full of visitors for the Lord mayor's banquet, I was sorely vexed with myself. I had planned this journey by river with the express intention of avoiding the crowds. Now I would be delayed and there would be a far greater number of people on the water as the day wore on. Furthermore, the tide would be against me, setting me back another four pence for the journey.

I reached Henry's house in an ill humour, determined not to tarry for any longer than was needful. But before I could unlatch the gate, it was pulled open from the inside and Jane emerged all of a flutter and a flurry, her face a picture of alarm.

'Ooh, Mr Hene, thank God you're here, you can't imagine what's happened... oh,' she fanned herself with a cloth, 'it's put me in such a dither ... ooh that horrible man.'

I was not well-disposed to hear such histrionics, particularly in my own state of irritation. I looked at her sternly, 'Jane for the love of God, stop flapping about like a rooster and stand still,' and as she subsided, 'you'd better tell me what you mean.'

She had hardly begun to explain when Jed, the scullion, came out, 'Tom wants you,' he said to her. 'Oh, good morrow Mr Hene, I ask your pardon...'

'Jed, what the devil's going on?' I asked.

'The master had a letter delivered this morning. He got very angry ...' Jed's lips twitched, 'he threw a glass goblet against the wall.'

'Good heavens.' But if Henry threw a glass each time he disapproved of a written message he would have long ago disposed of his entire stock. Clearly this was no trivial matter. I sighed. 'I suppose I'd better go and see what's to do.'

I walked across the hall, which was empty save for Jane, who seized a brush and began to sweep up shards of glass. In the parlour, Tom hovered over Henry, who was sitting ashen faced, breathing deeply. My heart sank as he waved a thick paper at me; this might not be such a brief visit, after all.

‘Answer for my actions,’ he rasped. ‘The Star Chamber. God’s teeth, how much more do I have to endure?’

‘The *Star* Chamber...?’ Good God what was this? I struggled to keep my voice calm, ‘Henry, if I may read it?’

But Henry was not ready to relinquish the sheet. He peered at the close-written lines and held it up to the light muttering, ‘inventory ...various debts ... great forfeitures.’ Presently he thrust it at me, growling, ‘here, see what you can make of it.’

I saw the Dorset insignia at the head. A letter from Knole, then. As I read it through, my heart began to pound.

the late lamented Lord, Richard Sackville... lands, messuages and their appurtenances... inventory has been executed various Debts have been disclosed. As the Official owner of Knole House you are charged ... the tenants of the Knole estate Complaining ... I am bound to inform you that as the Holder of the deeds of Knole the Burden of these Arrears remains with You. You are consequently fallen into Great forfeitures... summoned forthwith to the Star Chamber to Answer

And at the end, the familiar signature. *Edward Lindsey, Bailiff.*

I stared at the sheet of paper, turned it over, held it to the light. I was puzzled. ‘Mr Smith,’ I began, ‘why should anyone summon you to that place? Surely Chancery is the court for property disputes? Or Common Pleas – if this is concerned with Knole – but why the Star Chamber?’

Henry made no reply. Of course, I thought, any of Dorset’s high-ranking creditors

could take their case before the King's Council. It was their privilege. But not Henry Smith, not a mere merchant, however wealthy. But the Court of the Star Chamber... it was a place to be feared, a place to instil terror in the hearts of all who were summoned there. Why, nursemaids even used it to threaten their charges:

'You do as you are bidden, or you'll find yourself in the Star Chamber. They'll cut off your ears and slit your tongue and you'll never get out alive.'

I shuddered. However well versed in court procedures Henry might be, he had never been summoned to the Star Chamber. However skilful his defence, he must know that this court, unlike any other, would allow him no redress. Defendants in the Star Chamber were refused the right to speak.

I looked down at the letter again, '*Great Forfeitures and Dangers.*' Dear God in heaven, all these months of calculations, deeds executed, letters penned, bills of conveyance, not to mention Henry's meticulous documentation of every procedure – leases, rents, charges – all could be worthless, scattered like chaff to the four winds. His plans could end in failure ... I must have spoken aloud, for there came a feeble whisper.

'It must not be. It must not be ...' Henry looked up at me. 'What will happen to my legacy?' His face took on a pitiable, pleading look. 'There are those of my trustees who are in debt to me, but Richard...' his voice rose, 'Richard was in debt to them all. All have his bonds. God in heaven, I will not be allowed to defend myself. If they desire to foreclose, it will cost me...' his lips trembled, 'it will cost me everything. I could even be tortured, Robert.' He lifted his head. 'Then what would become of my great enterprise?'

How extraordinary, I thought, that even the pain of the Star Chamber seemed to be of less importance to Henry than the survival of his legacy. Somewhat foolishly, I burst out 'but Henry, you would still have your own estate and all the other properties, Southwick and Eastbrooke, Iwood, Warbleton ...'

‘All could be consumed.’

‘But could you not assign the moneys remaining to those causes...’

‘What monies ... what *remaining*?’ Fear was beginning to give way to anger now and I knew I must tread carefully.

‘Henry, you have achieved so much ... you have already done immeasurable good in so many parishes . . .’

‘Immeasurable. . . *immeasurable*?’ Henry stood up so suddenly that I rocked on my heels. He began to pace the room, his colour rising. ‘Do you not understand? Have you paid no attention? This is not just a *Will*, nor is it a mere charitable impulse.’

‘No, no of course . . .’

‘The sudden whim of a ne’er-do-well papist or ... or some lily-livered Presbyterian attempting to appease his God...’

‘No, indeed, I never meant ...’

‘For nigh on two decades Robert, nay, for two and twenty years, I have devoted myself to this work.’

‘Yes ... yes sir, I kn ...’

‘As God is my witness, I have lived a life of simplicity ... of ... of *frugality*.’

Henry stopped suddenly, breathing hard, one hand out to steady himself against the mantelpiece. I picked up the letter and he snatched it from me and sank down into his chair, his lips working as if better to comprehend the words. Presently he turned the paper over and stared at the signature. *Edward Lindsey*, he muttered. ‘Edward Lindsey,’ he repeated aloud.

The chimes of the carriage clock sounded the half hour; down in the street a dog barked, somewhere in the house a door banged. Henry looked up at me, his face anguished. ‘I thought ... I believed that Lindsey was my true friend. How in God’s name could he have turned on me like this?’

An hour later I left the house carrying a letter addressed to Serjeant Amherst. As I fastened my coat, I barked out instructions, the town would be bustling with visitors arriving for the banquet and there was no time to waste.

‘Make sure to keep the fire well stoked ... try to persuade Master Henry to take some broth at noon ... and some ale, Meggie; warm the ale, just how he likes it.’

Meggie waved a spoon at me, ‘get gone ... get gone. If I don’t know by now, Robert,’ but I had already slammed the door and was off down the road, past St Olave’s, a quick tilt of the hat to the priest and his wife, no time for pleasantries; I’d have to explain another day ...yes... yes... Mr. Smith was in good health, nothing to be concerned about, left, down Foster Lane, potholes splattering my hose with mud, crowds around the Conduit, nearly colliding with a water carrier; ‘by your leave,’ dodging the bucket swinging from the pole, and on, into Paternoster Row where the booksellers were already enjoying a brisk Friday morning trade. Down Ludgate Hill carts were nose- to- tail at the gate and beyond, horses straining to pull a coach that was jammed fast beneath the archway. A man, purple-faced, harangued his groom, crowds watching. Great heavens, what a to-do. At least it made me smile as I crossed the street and slipped through the postern, where hands reached between the iron bars of the gaol, ‘a penny for bread, for the love of God,’ but I gave no heed, hurrying on down Fleet Street where hostels were overflowing, servants shouldering packs, ostlers leading horses to the stable yards...

At Serjeant’s Inn, I suffered a severe set-back as a puffed-up porter announced that Amherst was at Westminster. No, he hadn’t been to his lodgings or he’d have known, he knew all the comings and goings round here. The porter glanced unconcernedly at the miserable group of petitioners by the steps – there were no practitioners of the law available at all this morning, not one. He bellowed at a wizened old beldam to get back in line, what did she think she was doing?

Minutes later, walking back into the melee of Fleet Street, I had fared little better than those poor supplicants. If Henry's letter was delivered at all, I did not anticipate a speedy reply. Even as I greased the porter's palm with my own coins, he reminded me that Amherst was a very busy man. Yet surely Serjeant Amherst would be alarmed to learn of Lindsey's threatening letter ... unless it was sent at his instigation ... but no, that would be unthinkable. I felt the bile rising in my throat; if I could just get my hands on whoever was responsible ...

But as I turned towards Farringdon, my pace slowed and I realized that my ire was in truth directed towards Henry himself. Surely, he must shoulder some of the blame ... if he had only heeded the warnings about the earl's fecklessness. But Knole had been too big a prize to turn down and he had ever been obdurate when it came to turning a profit.

I minded the awe in which I held Mr. Smith when as a green apprentice, I first joined his household in St Dunstan's. Although he had begun as a salter, by the time I became acquainted with him, salt was only a small part of his concerns. He had found more effective ways to make money; not content with importing the precious white crystals, he developed a thriving trade in the export market, selling all manner of goods – fustians, flax, hides, even iron. I had seen him bargaining with other merchants at the Royal Exchange. It was clear that no-one would get the better of him.

But – young innocent that I was – I had yet to learn that he had found an alternative means of success that cast all these other activities into the shade. Until one morning, as I was checking through some accounts, a servant came to me in the library.

'Yer wanted in the parlour, Mr. Robert.' The man tapped the side of his nose, 'he's got one o'the nobility in there with 'im. Very flash 'e is.'

I found the master deep in conversation with a man who he introduced as 'Sir Thomas Hoby.' I made a low bow, pulling my cap off, but the man bid me be at ease. 'For

I'm here to beg a favour from your master. No cause for airs and graces,' and he'd laughed somewhat too heartily for a man of such consequence.

During the next hour I stood witness to an eye-watering transaction. Sir Thomas had applied to Master Henry for a loan so as to secure a property to settle on his daughter and son-in-law. The agreement was that the deeds of the property should be kept by Henry as surety for the deal; that as soon as all was concluded, they would be conveyed to Sir Thomas. Thereafter, at the right time, he would have the pleasure of endowing his daughter and her husband with a fine house. But as I pored over the details of the transaction, I saw that Henry had not only taken possession of the deeds but had increased the amount of Sir Thomas's repayments by leveraging a high rate of interest. This came as a shock to me. I had understood Master Henry to be a moderate Puritan. But his wife, Mistress Anne Smith, was a strict adherent to the faith who would not countenance the practice of usury. I was young and impressionable and therefore thoroughly confused when I realised that the master must be concealing these transactions from her. How could Master Henry stand so serenely beside Mistress Anne as they said prayers with their household every week, yet sanction such a burden of debt for Sir Thomas Hoby?

How innocent I had been, I thought now. My path towards disillusion had scarcely begun. Henry's aspirations as a legitimate man of business were so much less reprehensible than the appalling deeds I had witnessed in the name of religion, deeds with which I had senselessly connived ...

Large drops of rain were beginning to fall from a darkened sky. Drawing my coat around me, I essayed a shorter route back to Silver street and found myself in the mean little alleyways close to Newgate. Two men blocked the way, one pulling, one pushing a handcart piled high with household goods, a woman in a tattered shawl beside them, dragging a child

in her wake. Once prosperous, these houses were going for tenements now, more and more people pouring into the town for work. Some of the buildings were so extended on the top storeys that the wooden jetties threatened to topple into the street. I looked at the cracks appearing amongst the paving stones, the nettles choking the remains of an old apple orchard.

God in heaven, was everything to come to rack and ruin?

Interlude

Campsfield 2013

Detention for three months would be considered a substantial period and six months a long period. Imperative considerations of public safety may be necessary to justify detention in excess of six months.⁶

William does not know what to do. He was given the number of a solicitor by the Home office and he spoke to him once on the phone. The man said ‘leave it with me’ ... but now, months later, after trying to call him over and over again, all William gets is the engaged signal.

And now, night after night the soldiers return like slaving wolves.

you are Hutu

don't move, don't look up ...

dust ...can't breathe

you are with government troops

no, no – not Hutu

from Buk... Buk...

another lorry ...

a door slams ...

shots

silence

two black gulls circle overhead

waiting ... waiting

turning to run as bullets sear his flesh

⁶ Systematic Failure: Immigration Bail Hearings 2019, The View from Taylor House.
<https://bailobs.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/systematic-failure-1.pdf> p.23

He has been in Campsfield for more than a hundred days. Then one morning, in the breakfast queue, Mugisha, a friendly Rwandan, tells him about a BID workshop.

‘Who is Bid?’ William asks

‘It is not person it is organisation who come to help.’

‘How they help us?’

‘They tell us how to get bail. Bail in Detention – that is their name – BID.’

Mugisha chuckles at the short form.

The man in front of William turns and scoffs at the notion of bail. His voice rises as he protests that he’s filled many forms in, but he’s still here. What’s the use of these people trying to help?

But Mugisha urges William to go with him to the workshop. ‘Sometimes, my friend, people get disappointed. Then they give up too easily – but what can you gain by giving up?’

At the BID meeting William learns that he has a right of appeal against his detention. It isn’t straightforward, but Mugisha helps him with his first application, which is unsuccessful, then his second, also refused, and finally, his third.

‘Why do you help me so much?’ William asks him.

Mugisha smiles, ‘Why shouldn’t I? There’s not much else to do here.’ His face clouds over, ‘my life has not always been easy, but I am alive, my sickness is not so bad. Besides,’ he grins at William, ‘my name, Mugisha, it means “Blessing.”’

And finally, some of Mugisha’s blessing lights on William’s shoulders. His third application is accepted and he’s released from Campsfield. He is granted something called Section 95 – it gives him a place to stay and a card worth thirty-five pounds for weekly food shopping. He is sent back to the house in Shadwell. It makes him wonder what all those months in detention were for.

Most of the men that were in the house before have moved on, but one of them, Patrice, from Guinea-Bissau, is still here. They're glad to see each other again; the presence of another French speaker is a relief. The two men have to share a room and one night the lorries come back again, roaring past William, men in uniform waving and cheering, rifles glinting in early morning sun. William's shouts wake Patrice, who asks him about the nightmares. William puts a hand to his head, 'they beat me – here.' Up above his hairline, there's an ugly scar, jagged and pink across his skull. Patrice shudders as William adds 'it was AKM – assault rifle – I thought they would kill me but they hit me with ... with back.'

'With the butt – what happened?'

'I not know ... I fall, go un... un...'

'*Inconscient.*' Patrice says

William nods, '*inconscient.*'

'How long ... you out?'

'I not... I do not know. I am in hospital long time...'

When William wakes the next morning, his headache has gone. *I have a bed to sleep in* he thinks. *No-one is coming for me.* Perhaps today could be the day the letter comes, the day he gets the date for his hearing.

Chapter 10

London 1624

I waited for a week, then no word having come from Henry, I walked across to visit him.

Meggie let me in at the back door and told me that he was indisposed.

‘He’s not sleeping well. Not eating much either.’ She looked up as Tom came in. ‘I think we should tell Mr Hene.’

‘You mean about the master?’ Tom asked.

Meggie nodded.

‘Well...’ he leaned against the wall, his arms folded. ‘It’s been since that letter came for him. He’s been pacing the floor of an evening and then, two nights since it must have been, I was still awake in the small hours.’ He glanced at Meggie, a quick complicit grin, ‘and I heard a sound from his room. He was talking, quite fast. But it was like he was saying something over and over.’

‘Ah.’ I brushed aside the thought of Tom and Meggie still awake in the small hours. ‘Henry has a tendency to count out loud when he becomes agitated,’ I said.

Tom scratched his head, ‘I know, Mr Hene. But this was different, it sounded like something about candles ...’ He looked at me ruefully. ‘I know it seems ... but anyway, it was candles and then about rent.’

‘Rent ...’ I traced circles in the dusting of flour on the table. ‘Well, that could be any number of things, particularly if his mind is disturbed.’

‘Only,’ Meggie was hesitant. ‘I ... I was going to visit Joane – Widow Jackson – and so I told her that the master was unwell. That ... that he seemed to be disturbed in his spirits.’ She glanced up at me, ‘I did not want to betray a confidence but...’

‘Meggie, she is his nearest kin,’ I said. ‘If anyone should know about this, she should.’

‘Yes,’ Tom said. ‘Go on Meggie, tell him what old Joane said.’

‘She seemed to understand the reason for his words.’ Meggie began. ‘She said that they were not strange to her, that they minded her of a very dark time in their lives. That sometimes memories from the early days become closer with age ... and he may have simply been exchanging one anxiety for another.’ She picked up a ladle, weighing it absently in her hands as she went on, ‘Joane told me that come All Soul’s night they went to light candles on the graves ... that there were two wee bairns in their family who had died.’ There was a tremor in her voice as she added, ‘it was a sorry tale.’

We were silent for a minute. I coughed and said, ‘and what about the rent?’

‘Oh, that was a while later, though Henry was still but a schoolboy and Joane almost too young to remember what happened. It concerned their father.’ At this Meggie seemed to collect herself and her manner grew distant again. She picked up a basket and went to the back door. ‘Perhaps you should ask her yourself,’ she said. ‘Master Henry said that there are papers in the library you can work on,’ and she went out into the yard. I caught Tom’s eye and he gave me a rueful smile.

‘Well, best get to work then.’ As I stood up a thought came to me, ‘Tom, could you bring Jane to me? I’d like to ask you both something.’

Presently Jane came marching into the library, looking uneasy. ‘Tom says as you want to speak to me.’

‘Call him master,’ Tom muttered. Jane looked at the ceiling.

‘Jane,’ I said. ‘Did you know the person who gave you that letter?’

‘What letter?’ She ignored a hiss from Tom and folded her arms.

‘The one that so upset Master Henry last week.’

‘I can’t say as I did.’ She gave me a sidelong glance, ‘know him, I mean. He wasn’t one of the regular carriers.’

‘What did he look like?’

‘Er ...’ Jane shifted from one foot to the other, ‘he wasn’t tall.’

‘So, short then.’

‘I s’pose.’

‘What about his face?’

‘Couldn’t hardly see it ... sir.’

‘Why not?’

‘He was wearing a hat.’

‘But’ I suppressed a sigh of impatience, ‘you must have seen something, Jane. What about his girth. His belly – was it large?’

‘No. No I’d say he was scraggy – a real spindle-shanks.’ She brightened. ‘He had a thin nose ... I noticed that.’

‘A thin nose?’ Tom said. ‘Why would you remark on anyone’s nose being thin?’

‘It was long.’ Jane giggled. ‘Long and thin with a drip on the end. I thought it might drip on me if I got too close.’ She scratched the back of her neck. ‘He wasn’t what you’d call pretty. Horrible long lank hair he had. And he held out his hand as if he thought I’d pay him for the message, but I shut the door quick.’

‘Thank you, Jane, you may go.’ I winced as the door slammed behind her and turned to Tom. ‘Tom, those men in the streets you heard, calling out about ‘Dog Smith.’ You didn’t recognise anyone, did you?’

Tom shook his head. ‘Can’t say as I noticed, Mr. Hene. I’m sorry I can’t be of more help.’

I told him what had occurred after Dorset’s funeral and his eyes opened wide. ‘He’s not to everyone’s liking, you know.’ I made no response and he added ‘but I can’t say as those threats fit with the tittle-tattle. These things spread across the town; folk just repeat each other.’

I was not convinced. ‘The only thing is ... that description Jane gave ... well, it might be important.’ I hesitated, then made a decision, ‘this isn’t merely about gossip, or even about some addle-pate venting his spleen; there are people who are seeking to do Mr. Smith real harm – even to fleece him of his assets – for reasons that I have not yet discovered.’

‘Hmm ...’ Tom shifted his weight from one foot to the other, his face screwed up in concentration. Then he nodded, ‘If you really think it’s worth following, I do know someone as knows everyone, over Stepney way.’

‘How could he help?’

‘He walks on both sides of the street if you get my drift,’

‘Ah – so he would be acquainted with your rogues and fraters.’ I was gratified that I’d recalled Simon’s London expressions, but Tom’s face was a picture.

‘Yes indeed, Mr. Hene. And doxies, morts, clapperdudgeons...’

I held up my hands, laughing. ‘So, he’s lived a colourful life. Do you think you could drop a few words in his ear?’

‘Tell you what I’ll do,’ Tom said. ‘Next time Meggie goes across to see Goody Jackson I’ll go with her and seek him out.’

‘You haven’t told me his name.’

‘It’s Frazer. Jeremiah Frazer. Known him half my life.’

‘And you’ll be able to find him?’

Tom grinned. ‘There’s a tavern he’s often in.’

‘Stepney way?’

‘Thereabouts. The White Hart, on the way to the docks.’ Then after a short pause, ‘You’ve not been there, have you, Mr. Hene?’

‘No Tom. At least, not yet.’

‘Not ever I should say.’ He made a face, ‘I used to have to go and get my father out of the place when my mother said he couldn’t walk home.’ He grinned. ‘Well, she said he’d lost his legs, but I knew what she meant.’ There was a tremor of excitement in his voice. ‘If he’s not there, someone’ll know where I can find him.’

‘And Tom,’ I looked at him severely, ‘everything that I have told you must be kept between ourselves. Do you understand?’

Tom nodded earnestly. ‘You can trust me, Mr. Hene. None of this will pass my lips.’ I watched him as he left the room. Perhaps I was making too much of this, but I could not risk it going further.

I resolved to get to work and turned over the mound of papers Henry had left for me. But my mind was still troubled and I wondered if there was much to be gained in sending out these bills if he was summonsed ... and as for the accounts... there was a folder missing that I thought likely to be in Henry’s dressing room. As I started up the stairs, I could hear a low murmuring from the room above. Puzzled, I mounted the last few steps and pushed open the door:

‘It’s Robert, Master Henry, Robert Hene,’ I said quietly. ‘I have come to see how you are.’

And now the strangest thing happened. There was a movement at the head of Henry’s bed, but the curtain was not fully drawn back so I stepped quietly into the middle of the room the better to see. Henry’s face was turned towards me, his countenance grey against the bleached linen covers, but his eyes were unseeing, unfocussed, as if he was elsewhere in his thoughts. His lips moved and he rasped,

I’m coming Master Edwin. I’m coming...

The bell ... no, I won’t be late ...

Henry's voice was faint, the chamber dark after the brightness of the sunlit library. He clawed at the counterpane, his fingers searching, restless...

Candles... candles... knocking... knocking... Joane

I waited, holding my breath.

Joane... she can't come knocking... Joane where...

Henry's voice grew louder.

Joane... father... father, where?

He turned his head away and I strained to hear as his voice sank to a murmur.

Father... rent... rent's due ...

A candle burned low in the holder; it must have been there all night. Now a sudden stirring in the air sent the flame bending and dipping.

Rent's due...

Down in the hall below there was a whirr and clatter as the casement clock prepared to announce the hour. The chimes scattered silver into the noonday silence and Henry sighed as the hours began. One, two... his eyelids fluttered... by the strike of twelve he was asleep.

Chapter 11

I took Meggie's advice and went to see Joane. The tale she told me of their troubled family was not wholly unexpected; fragments of it had already been conveyed to me long ago by Mistress Anne, inasmuch as she learned any of it from Henry. But the bleakness of Joane's memories struck me afresh, for unlike Anne, she had been there. She could still envisage that harsh winter when their lives began to change and over the years, as she became more and more perplexed by Henry's disinterest, she had even begun to reconstrue the story from his point of view, to go back to their time in Wandsworth and look at it through his eyes as if this might lead her to discover him afresh.

Wandsworth 1561

Four o'clock, the end of the school day, and outside, a leaden sky full of the promise of snow. Hardly had the chimes in the church clock ceased before the boys were shutting their Latin readers, John Edwin's prayer of dismissal scarcely reaching 'and defend us from all perils and dangers of this night' before they were scraping back the benches and picking up their satchels. Even the older students had been restless today, rushing through Cicero with an enthusiasm born more from haste than comprehension. Grey clouds had been gathering since noon, and the raw cold that rushed in did nothing to dampen their spirits, stirred by the prospect of slides and snowball fights.

Light spilt onto the path as Edwin opened the door. Across the lane the first hesitant flakes of snow settled silently, no stirring amongst the cold tombstones, not even a bird searching for food on the hard ground. Up above the church the wind whipped the last of the leaves off the tall elm trees, in the lane below a lone traveller pulled his jerkin tightly about

him, thrusting raw hands into the sleeves, whilst down on the common the farmer's boy called the cattle in.

‘Henry, Henry... over here.’

‘To me, Simon...’

‘No... over there. Robbie, watch out!’

The boys couldn't resist this last chance of a game, their breath white, their faces red raw as they kicked the football round the yard. But the old over-worked pig's bladder gave up under the pounding of feet and the lads groaned in disgust as it sagged open. Picking up satchels, laughing, jostling, shouting promises of snow fights on the morrow, the boys made their noisy progress down the track, soon to disappear into the cottages on the green, or up back alleys behind the slaughterhouse, where gutters stank with offal and the overflowing cesspit ran sluggish in the street.

A little dog waited in the shadow of the lych-gate, ears alert, head to one side, until, with a bark of recognition, he launched himself at the last boy, who was still fastening his coat. The boy bent down to greet him, but remembering his manners straightened up and turned,

‘Bid you good night, Master Edwin.’

The man in the doorway acknowledged the courtesy with a smile. ‘Good night, Henry,’ he replied, and stood for a moment watching as the boy and his dog walked slowly away.

Henry shivered slightly as he passed through the churchyard. Over in the far corner, under a tall elm, his own brother and sister lay in the cold earth; it seemed a sorrow to him that they should be there in the frozen ground and he walked quickly by.

Out on the common, the dog ran this way and that, scenting something in the frosty grass, nose into the earth, growling. Several ducks rose up noisily and flew away.

Rent's been due since All Souls day, and I doubt that Grundy will have patience for much longer.

His father's words had been plaguing Henry all day. From sunrise, when he pulled on his hose, laced his shoes, threw on his hat and ran towards the school; during Master Edwin's Mathematical conundrums; in the yard, as other boys kicked the ball to him and now, staring out over the common, the words reverberated in his head with the insistence of a spinney—full of crows. He kicked a stone viciously, watching it clatter over the ice.

Rent's due...

Streaks of fiery red above the hill gave promise of another clear night but the sullen clouds overhead were already spilling snow. Loud barking interrupted Henry's thoughts as two farm dogs, bounding up the lane, nosed around the puppy, tongues hanging out in greeting. The boy shivered; standing still had made him cold. He started to run, over the brook, a mere trickle of water beneath the ice, on down the lane, past the farm cottages where the bushes were already turning to white, muddy tracks disappearing under a blanket of snow.

He burst in through the back door of their house, the kitchen rancid with the smell of tallow, his eyes watering in the smoke. His mother was by the fire stirring a pot. She turned,

'Cap!'

Henry whipped off his cap and hung it by the back door.

'You're late. I need the logs. Joane's been badly again and I've had no time what with tending to the hens.'

'Is father back yet?'

Elizabeth Smith shook her head. 'If it's cold here it'll be freezing out on the fens. Don't look for his coming tonight.'

Henry, cap firmly back on, stumbled through the half-frozen mud to the little garden, picked up the axe and began to split logs. The words came back again, *rent's been due...*

It was when he was chopping wood last week. His mother and father were having a heated argument in the kitchen, Walter Smith as ever defending himself against an onslaught from his wife, Elizabeth.

‘Master Cudlip, has tried his best to recover the losses.’

‘... and has he?’

‘What ...’ Walter gave a bitter laugh ‘with the summer we've had? Gales lashing the coast, fires going out, waves turning the salt marshes to lakes?’

‘But husband, he must have paid you.’

‘He did what he could. Cudlip's a decent man, but what with that and the pony going lame...’

There was a pause. Henry grasped the logs more tightly, held his breath. Walter's voice had dropped, but now his rising tone of despair was clearly audible.

‘Rent's been due since All Souls day, and I doubt Grundy will have patience for much longer.’

After supper his mother stirred herself sufficiently to say ‘Joane, take the pallet by the fire tonight. I'll stay down here with you. You’ she jerked her head towards Henry ‘get yourself upstairs.’

It was cold in the attic. Henry kept most of his clothes on, kneeling by the bed to utter a perfunctory prayer before dropping into an uneasy sleep.

...then the schoolroom door was banging... Master Edwin was standing, grim-faced arms folded, telling him to go home... to stop wasting his time. The banging grew louder. Henry started out of sleep, knocking his head on a beam and recalled that he was in the truckle bed

under the eaves; he rubbed his head, trying to make out what was happening. The banging came again, but this time he recognized his mother's voice,

'God have mercy, you'll snap the pin! I'm coming... I'm coming...' and the noise of a bolt drawn back, another voice, footsteps.

Downstairs the kitchen was crowded; Mother, John Cudlip, Will from the farm. Joane was sitting up on her pallet, her face pale, staring. Henry followed her gaze. Prostrate on the bench lay his father, white-faced, his eyes wandering. It seemed from the rasping noises he was making that he was trying to draw breath. Everyone was talking at once.

'Give him air'

'He's cold, rub his hands'

'Fetch hot water'

'Ale, warm some ale'

Walter groaned, tried to sit up. Will steadied him, large hands round his shoulders, 'Don't you mither yourself; we'll soon have you to rights.'

Henry stared in horror as Walter struggled to breathe, wheezing with the effort, blood oozing from beneath a cloth above his breeches. John Cudlip was red-faced, shrill with excitement as his words tumbled over each other, ... ice t'other side of the hill, the ponies had lost their footing ... one that panicked got clean away ... t'other was done for.'

'...but father,'

Will tried to reassure him 'Your father's not so bad. Tried to hold the beast apparently and took a bit of a kicking.'

Cudlip was less encouraging 'reckon that leg'll need a doctor... and his stomach's not right neither,' then, catching sight of their stunned faces, '... could just be a flesh wound.'

Cudlip's optimism was not wholly ill-founded – the lacerations on Walter Smith's body mended after a while. But his leg was left with a weakness that would last 'til the end of his days.

For the good citizens of Wandsworth, the end of March came as a relief, bringing folk out of their cottages for the start of a new year and filling the church for the feast of the Annunciation where they gave solemn thanks for mercies renewed and dark days put to flight. But for Henry and his family there was little reason for thanksgiving. With Lady Day came the bailiffs and a confusion of raised voices, threats, pleading and the end of Smith's tenancy.

Henry helped his father to stack their goods and chattels on a handcart fetched from the farm, then stood watching as the farmer's wife, pressing a loaf and a jar of milk into Elizabeth's hands, begged them to take care, weeping for the shock of it as they trudged off down the lane. Henry fought back tears – his father must not see him cry. Poor little Joane was inconsolable, but Henry would always recall that his mother made no move to comfort her, walking off behind her husband, her face lacking all expression.

There were so many questions Henry wanted to ask her. When would she understand that this was not all his father's fault? Why couldn't she have asked their grandfather for help? How could she ignore Joane's tears?

Walter found them lodgings over towards Putney in a ramshackle building that rose like a wreck above the marshes, its upper timbers swaying and sagging as if it had run aground in a gale. It was a malodorous place, full of beggars and vagrants; armies of rats ran freely amongst the pots and pans and over the pallets belonging to the poorest of the poor. There was one vacant room the landlord said – they were in luck; the old man had just died.

Elizabeth Smith was outraged at finding herself in this hovel on Wandsworth marshes. She showed Walter no pity, blaming him for their situation, throwing her father's success in

his face, reminding him of her sisters' felicitous marriages into two of the most notable families in Gloucestershire.

Henry was old enough to understand that his grandfather, Thomas Wolphe, was a wealthy man; old enough to wonder why none of his wealth was destined to come their way. Perchance that was the way of things. Perchance his mother would not lower herself to ask her own kith and kin for help. Nor did Henry hear his father, Walter, suggest that they should throw themselves on Thomas Wolphe's mercy. It seemed that his parents elected to struggle, his father limping around the local farms asking for work, his mother sitting on the pallet staring at nothing, whilst Joane, afraid to leave the room, grew thinner and paler by the day.

I do not know if Henry ever told Anne Smith about his family's troubles. He must have spoken of them to Joane, in later years, for it was from Joane that I was able to glean something of Henry's own disquietude – although one of the tales she related to me was strange; indeed, I vow it was beyond my comprehension. It concerned Henry and his father. Joane was not present at the time, so Henry must have told her of it.

It happened one morning when they were still living out on the marshes. Henry had woken at daybreak to find that his father was not on his mattress. He lay still for a few minutes, thinking that his father must have gone out to the privy and would soon return; then he got up and tiptoed past his mother and sister who were mercifully asleep.

Outside, the marshland was leached of all colour, the great river just visible beyond the reeds, brown water overflowing into the fields below Putney. Gulls wheeled above the fishing boats as they ploughed downstream to London, but here all was still, the silence only disturbed by the occasional 'cauk, cauk' of a heron, and the shy booming of a bittern in the valley, where the Wandle flowed into the Thames.

Henry wasn't sure why he had chosen the path to the river, but a sense of foreboding caused him to quicken his pace until he was by the water's edge. It was hard going, stumbling

through rain-soaked grasses and ditches obscured by rushes. Ducks flew up as he waded through the shallows and clambered up the banks. Soon he was soaked and breathless. Then, where the river changed its course, he noticed the faint outline of a man standing almost thigh deep in the water. He splashed through the shallows and the man half turned. Henry recognised him.

'Father!' he shouted urgently. *'Father, come back...'*

There was a suggestion of hesitation, a slight move towards the faster flowing depths, then Walter Smith turned and began to wade towards his son. Henry stood waiting, his face white as chalk. Walter grasped him by the shoulders

'What are you doing here? Didn't I tell you to look after the others? Have you left them alone in that hell-hole?'

Henry didn't know what to say. He wondered why he should be the cause of his father's anger. They sat on the bank, breathless.

'What were you thinking?'

Henry's breath caught in a dry sob. *'Father, I ask your pardon. I thought ...'*

'You thought...?' Walter laughed mirthlessly, *'What did you think?'* He waved his hand at the river, *'the water's calm, fish rising. I thought if I came out early enough, I might trap some in the shallows.'*

Henry stood up. *'Mother - she'll be waking.'*

'Aye, you lead the way back, I'm right behind.'

As they returned, the sun rose, its dazzling light reflected in a million drops of water. Walter stopped suddenly, pointing towards Putney. *'Well, would you look at that ...'*

Henry followed his finger, the light was dazzling, turning the mist to rose-gold. Across the river, clouds banked above the trees.

'It's like a great city,' Walter whispered. *'I'd swear there were high towers over*

yonder if I didn't know different. 'Then he glanced at Henry and whispered, 'Can you see that man on the bridge?'

'Bridge? There's no bridge there, father.' Henry looked at him in consternation, had he had some sort of seizure?

But Walter was adamant, 'look, son up there,' he insisted, 'there's a man standing above the arches.'

Henry stared at his father; there was a strange look of exaltation on Walter's face, all his anger quite gone. He followed the direction of his pointing finger. The water was dark beyond the sun's light. No, there was no-one there. No bridge, no man – nothing at all.

Interlude

Putney Bridge 2013

Where an asylum seeker [...] receives a negative decision on her/his application for refugee status, s/he will normally have to leave UK Visas and Immigration - formerly the UK Border Agency - accommodation within 21 days of receiving the decision. The asylum applicant may choose to exercise their right of appeal, but if [...] unsuccessful, s/he will be required to leave the accommodation within 21 days of being told the outcome of the appeal. ⁷

The lights of a thousand apartments dance on the water below Putney bridge, as afternoon fades into evening and people return to the warmth of their houses. An east wind races across the river, the lights swirl and scatter and William turns up his collar and thrusts his hands in his pockets. People hurry across the bridge in the late afternoon, huddled in their coats, scarves across their faces. Beneath the arches a boat churns up brown water, slapping it against the stone piers.

William stares down, mesmerized, his mind returning to Kindu, to the Lualaba river. No bridges there, he'd gone across on a log-barge, squeezed between an old man and a motorbike. He remembers the pull of the water against the side, smoke rising from mud banks, river smells of wet leaves, earth and . . . and something more that makes his stomach tighten with the memory, the smells of the cooking pots along a bank hazy with heat.

Sooner or later, he'll have to decide where to go. That park on the riverbank could have been a possibility, but he's been moved on too many times in the last few days. Sadly, 'freedom' has not lasted very long; after a court hearing, his asylum application has been refused and the four weeks that the landlord gave him to leave the house have now come to an end. Patrice has tried to smuggle him back in, but the other men have complained that they

⁷ AVID What is Immigration detention? <http://www.aviddetention.org.uk/immigration-detention/what-immigration-detention> 27.08.20

might lose their accommodation if he is discovered. So now he has joined the homeless, drifting from railway arches to benches, shop doorways to bus shelters ...

Laughter behind him. He turns his head, a family, black, two small girls dressed up for the day, bright ribbons fluttering on tightly bound plaits, hanging on to their daddy's arms, whilst the woman next to them, older than the man, the grandmother perhaps, stops to take a photograph. William's heart lurches.

The group clings together, smiling self-consciously, waiting for the moment of release before they scatter, the little girls running to the parapet, pulling themselves up to lean over the top.

'Careful, Jossi, Hana...' like nanas everywhere, the lady can't conceal her alarm, calling 'don't fall in' whilst the daddy strolls behind, relaxed, smiling.

William is unable to tear his eyes from them. Somewhere, in some place, his daughters, their laughter caught on the breeze... somewhere his girls, his Cecile?

Sorrow slaps into him like water against stone. *Suppose she was still alive ... Cecile.* But it's been four years now, four years since the troops attacked their village... he looks back downstream as a thought hits him hard in the guts. It wouldn't take long to drown in this deep water – nothing would matter after that. No one would care whether he lived or died ... he stands, hands clenched, breathing hard.

A man walks past eating chips out of a bag. His mobile buzzes and he sets the packet down on the wall. 'Yep, coming now,' he says and walks hurriedly away. William waits for a moment then picks up the bag. There's not a lot of chips left, but they're still warm.

As he limps away from the bridge, he thrusts his hands deep into his pockets. There's a hole in the left one and his fingers close over something, down in the lining. He works it up through the hole and pulls it out. The crumpled card looks as if it has been stuck in there for

a long time. Where did this come from? He scans it curiously as it sparks a memory – that lady on the bench ‘here’s the number of a charity, there’s people there who’ll help you.’ William bangs his fist against his head, *quel imbécile*, why had he forgotten this? But it’s here now. And his phone is still charged.

Chapter 12

London 1624

If, perchance, I thought that Henry might be growing too weary to pay full attention to his enterprise, I was soon to discover that I was much mistaken. Although there were days when he was forced to rest after a bout of sickness, there were more days when he was able to sit for hours, checking balance sheets, barking orders at me, scribbling notes, making calculations...

Early one evening, when Henry had hardly paused from eight in the morning to five of the afternoon, Tom waylaid me outside the Talbot. 'God give you good evening, Mr Hene.'

'How did you know I'd be here?'

'You often come this way after a long day with Master Henry.' Tom sighed, 'in truth, I would do the same, had I the opportunity. A pint of the heavy here is a wondrous thing after our poor ale.'

I looked at the sky. 'It's early enough. You could have one now.'

'I have to settle the master for the night.'

'You could have small beer, or ale,' I said.

'What are you drinking?'

'Well,... they have got a couple of barrels of Angel's Food in, so I've heard.' I added, 'there are saffron cakes today too.'

Tom grinned, 'you've persuaded me. A pint of the Angel, then. And if Master Henry can smell it on me, by God it will have been worth it.'

We went in and sat down. Tom looked around at the crowded room. 'It's good to be out of the house,' he said. 'Now then, Mr Hene I have something to report.'

'I was hoping you might.' I rested my arms on the table. 'Tom, let's dispense with "Mr Hene." Call me Robert.'

‘I’m obliged to you. Well, Robert, I found Frazer. Not in the White Hart, but in a dingy place down by the customs’ yard. He didn’t remember me, leastways until I mentioned my brother Will.’ Tom chuckled, ‘Frazer bloodied Will’s nose on more than one occasion.’ He paused as a serving maid arrived with foaming tankards of beer, drank deeply from his and sighed in satisfaction. ‘By thunder, that is good.’ He took another gulp of ale and wiped his mouth with his sleeve. ‘Now, where was I? There’s two brothers he mentioned – one of them’s in klink awaiting trial. Marshalsea, I think. Don’t reckon he’ll come out the way he went in.’ Tom drew his hand across his throat, ‘Frazer reckoned it was for blackmail.’

I shuddered. ‘So, what has this to do with our man?’

‘He said the brothers have contacts all across town. And this could be the other brother. Bellows, that’s the name. Matthew Bellows. Like I said, there’s a lot of shady folk down there, cutpursers, jarkmen.’ Then, noting my puzzled look, ‘forgerers. They copy writing, send fake letters – make a lot of money by it.’

‘Hmm. But if his brother’s been found out, won’t he – this Matthew Bellows – be lying low?’

‘Yes, fair point. But if someone’s been using him to do their dirty work, he can’t just call a halt.’ Tom drained the last few dregs of ale, ‘my thanks for that, Robert.’ He set down the tankard regretfully. ‘Frazer said this Bellows is just the sort of fool to fire up a rumour – like the dog Smith one.’ He chuckled, ‘Bellows by name... Frazer said he’d keep him in his sights anyway. See what’s what.’

‘Good work, Tom. Now then, how do you think Master Henry is faring?’

Tom frowned, shifted uncomfortably in his seat. ‘The physician says that he has a weakness in his bowels. Called it a rupture – whatever that might be.’

‘Aah. Very painful, so I’ve been told. Poor Henry.’ This could only add to his ill-temper I thought and felt immediately chastened that I had censured him in my spirit.

‘There are medicaments,’ Tom said. ‘And Meggie is wondrously skilful at tempting his appetite.’

‘Is he still muttering?’ I asked.

‘From time to time,’ Tom said. ‘Happen he’s going back over bygone days.’

‘Does he ever talk to you about them? I know a lot of old folks who tend to live in the past.’ I laughed, ‘most of them are persuaded that things were a deal better in Queen Bess’s day.’

‘Ay,’ Tom grinned, ‘my grandmother still talks of King James as “the new king.”’ He ran his hands through his hair. ‘Master Henry did tell me something the other night. It was about the great salt pans they had out by the sea, years ago it must have been, when his own father was still alive.’

‘Yes. That was after his fall. Flooding all along the coast; it washed away the salt stacks when they’d already had so much ill luck.’

Tom nodded. ‘He said as much.’ He stood up. ‘I’d better be on my way, else Meggie will be wondering where I’ve got to,’ then pulling at the sleeves of his jerkin, ‘my thanks again for the ale.’

‘You are more than welcome.’ Then as he turned to leave, I added, ‘Tom, I will not be at the house for a week now. I have other business to attend to.’

I watched as he threaded his way through the crowded taproom. I was intrigued by the thought of Henry sharing secrets with him; a little put out too, I had to admit. First Meggie, now Henry ... it seemed as if Tom could do no wrong. But you can’t deny that he makes Meggie happy, the voice in my head reasoned, and I checked myself angrily. Tom was a willing lad, moreover he was proving himself useful to me. And now his words came back. *Forgerers – they copy writing – make a lot of money by it.* Suppose that someone had been

interfering with Henry's mail ... but no, that was a ludicrous notion, what could possibly be gained from it?

I was out of town for a few days. On my return, I learned that Henry had called the members of his Board together; that in my absence, he had decided to revoke the deeds of his legacy.

Chapter 13

All eyes fastened on Henry as he gazed around, thrusting out his chin.

‘Well, gentlemen.’ A sweep of his hand around the room, no niceties, no ‘God give you good day’ or ‘it is my privilege to meet with you all.’ But what did anyone expect from old Mr. Smith? There was silence as he commenced his preamble – how he had desired to build a legacy, how it had become his chief concern...

I confess I was still reeling from the shock of Henry’s decision. I had returned from the country to find a letter awaiting me. I couldn’t make out the handwriting, but Tring told me that it was likely to be from Henry Smith’s house.

‘A young lad delivered it yesterday,’ he said. He blinked at me, ‘from the boy’s manner it appeared to be a matter of some urgency.’

‘His manner?’

‘He *thrust* it at me,’ Tring replied. He wiped a gob of spittle from the side of his mouth. “‘Make sure that your master gets this as soon as he is back,” he said. ‘No “if you please,” or “by your leave.”’

‘Well, it must be important then. Tom would never unwittingly show himself to be ill-mannered.’

‘Oh, it wasn’t *Tom*,’ Tring said. ‘Not if you’re referring to the man who works for Mr. Smith. I think he must have sent the boy round.’

So, Jed must have delivered it, but as I ripped the note open, I saw that Tom had penned it. He excused himself for writing to me but said that he must speak with me as soon as I returned. I was sufficiently alarmed to send Simon round with a message that I would be at the Swan within the half hour. Tom arrived there shortly after me, red in the face and breathless.

‘I thought I should let you know as soon as I could,’ he said. ‘Mr Smith is having a very important meeting and it’s the day after tomorrow.’ Tom went on to explain that two men had called to see Henry.

‘Can you recall their names?’

‘Middleton was one.’

‘Sir John Middleton.’ I frowned.

‘And ... and Sir Francis?’

‘Ah – Sir Edward Francis.’ I could not help wondering what they were up to. I had, after all, seen the evidence of the debts that both men owed to Henry, noted the recalcitrance with which they viewed his continual reminders. I assured Tom that I was grateful to him for his perspicacity. ‘You were right to let me know of this,’ I said. ‘Please to tell Master Henry that I will visit him tomorrow morning.’

The next day I had hardly entered Henry’s parlour or given him greeting, before he barked,

‘Middleton and Francis paid me a visit.’

‘That must have been ... er ... have been heartening for you.’ I said carefully. ‘Were they able to offer you some help?’

‘They suggested that I revoke the deeds.’

‘Revoke?’ Great heavens, why was he not enraged by this?

‘Said they were most eager to help me, Robert. Knew how anxious I had become. Middleton told me he believed that they had found a way through my dilemma, now that Richard Sackville was no more.’

‘Dilemma? How did they know of your troubles?’

But Henry could not answer this and when I asked him what Sir Edward’s view of the matter was, he shrugged his shoulders. ‘Didn’t have much to say. Just nodded. If you ask

me, Robert, he's not long for this world. Didn't look at all well.'

As he spoke, it became clear to me that Middleton and Francis had planted a seed in Henry's mind. The notion that he might not have to bear full responsibility for his affairs was not something he could dismiss lightly. But I was deeply suspicious of their motives.

'They cannot force you to do this, Mr. Smith.' It was as near as I could get to pleading with him.

'It's been a burden to me,' was all he would offer in reply. 'In point of fact, they may be right.' And he went on to tell me about the meeting that he had arranged, adding 'of your favour, I would request that you make careful notes of the proceedings.'

The day of the meeting dawned clear and bright. I arrived to find Tom in his livery, Meggie assisting Jane to put on a clean white cap and Henry himself transformed. Gone was his habitual stubble; apart from a neatly trimmed beard, he was close-shaven. The linen coif that concealed his hair was covered with an embroidered toque, his dingy robe exchanged for one of velvet and his sadly frayed nether garments replaced with more elegant hose. Buckled shoes in place of his house slippers completed the transformation. As he lowered himself into a chair, he regarded me speculatively.

'So, Robert Hene,' he rasped. 'We will see what they make of this now.' Then, looking around the hall, 'good, very good. Meggie make sure the refreshments are ready to bring in at noon. Tom, you must be at the door – and Jane,' he surveyed her critically, 'keep to the kitchen if you please.'

Jane coloured up and flounced out, a show of indignation entirely lost on Henry. Now he turned to me. 'Robert, I want you to sit beside me – here.' Amherst should be placed opposite Middleton, he said, but not too close to Gurney. Wine would be served from the buffet over there – this to Tom – but no sweetmeats with it, they must come later.

Now, as Henry continued his opening remarks, I looked around the assembled company. Sir Geoffrey Blake – not a member of Henry’s trust but crucial to him as an advisor, and in faith I felt glad to see him. Next to him Mr. Gurney, who had already spoiled Henry’s plan by taking possession of Middleton’s chair. Two Williams followed – Wingfield, an elderly, austere figure and Bond, who had arrived on horseback and demanded to know why Mr Smith’s stable-hand was not in attendance. Then, lounging beside Bond, Sir Richard Lumley, a man of such evident distinction that Tom, who was set to announce each arrival, had been rendered speechless, gawping at boots of fine Spanish leather, a richly embroidered coat – the sleeves slashed to reveal a fine lawn chemise – and loose pleated breeches. An extravagant hat only added to the impression of a world-weary fop. But now, as the company assembled, I noticed Lumley’s keen grey eyes resting on each gentleman in turn.

Next to Lumley, Sir Edward Francis sank into a seat, his pallor and air of weariness signalling poor health indeed. Two wealthy merchants, both close associates of Richard Sackville – Sir George Whitmore and George Lowe – took the next two places. John Middleton, arriving just in time to hear Henry’s opening preamble, sat down next to Lowe. Then came Serjeant Amherst, shaking his head at Tom and slipping in unannounced.

All I had seen of Amherst, since my return to London, had been at a distance, at Dorset’s funeral. I remembered him as a lively young lawyer, perhaps a decade above me in years, not precisely distinguished looking but with an air that commanded a certain deference from others. Now his face was full, with every indication that it would run to fat, the same fair complexion tending towards ruddiness and hair still the same startling shade of ginger but flecked with white. I saw that his beard was also greying at the edges but as ever, neat and immaculately trimmed. As his eyes suddenly shifted towards mine, I glanced away from their penetrating gaze, suppressing a shiver. I would not want to face him in a court of law.

I started as Henry rasped, ‘Robert, the book of deeds if you will.’ He leafed through the book, his manner reflective, as he declared that he had set too much store by his own reasoning ... should have trusted his friends... but his voice grew firmer as he vowed that it was his single-mindedness that led to an ambition ‘that has occupied me for a decade or more’ and as he spoke of the ‘additional burdens over these last months,’ there was a general murmur of sympathy during which William Wingfield, his hand cupped behind his ear, took the opportunity to ask George Whitmore what Smith had said, whilst Amherst suppressed a yawn.

Henry spoke of the recent visit from Francis and Middleton. They had, he said, assured him of their support. ‘I confess, my heart was warmed by their loving exhortations, their assurances that they have no desire to frustrate my ...my avowed intention, to use every penny of my estates for charitable causes.’

At this, Middleton moistened his thick lips, like a cat about to clean himself, purring his approval, ‘indeed, quite so.’

‘But now,’ Henry’s voice dropped, causing Wingfield to lean anxiously towards Whitmore again, ‘their proposal, that you, the members of my trust, might take charge of my estates, is something that I cannot countenance without your common agreement that every debt be drawn in.’ There were murmurs of assent at this, but they quickly faded as he added, ‘not only from Dorset’s creditors, but from you yourselves, the members of my trust.’

I looked up from scribbling the minutes. There was silence in the room. Lumley was looking straight at Henry, with a somewhat quizzical expression; Blake gave me a wink and an encouraging smile. Now Henry grew vehement, one hand tapping out a rhythmic accompaniment to his words.

‘Gentlemen, it behoves me to make myself clear. There are many godly merchants in this city who desire to use their wealth for good, for the advancement of the kingdom and the welfare of this land, this nation that God himself has been pleased to prosper. Yet I would

dare to venture that my vision exceeds all others.’ The hand beat more strongly as he repeated ‘all others.’ ‘For I have a strong desire to leave to this city a legacy that cannot be calculated solely in monetary terms but must be seen to carry within it the seeds of a far greater triumph than that of any common endowment. And be assured, gentlemen, that this vision cannot be sustained without the full use of my capital. Every last penny that I have so diligently accrued and invested – his hand tapping out ‘accrued and invested’ – must be devoted to this enterprise.

Henry’s voice sharpened as his eyes ranged around the room. ‘But it is with regret that I must report a severe threat to this endeavour. It does not stem from the levies imposed by our government – the hearth tax, the ship money, what you will – nor from the subsidies wrung from his people by the king for his own relief. Nor do I refer to those dreadful attempts to unnerve me following the unhappy demise of Richard Sackville.’

As Henry paused to sip from a beaker of ale, there were mutterings around the table. Garnet looked puzzled, a flush had appeared on Middleton’s face, Lowe leaned towards Blake to hiss an aside.

Henry gripped the arms of his chair. ‘Vexing though these hindrances have been, there remains a greater concern.’ He nodded his head for emphasis, ‘Let me repeat: the success of my endowment rests upon the sum total of my wealth. And that sum total includes the loans that you currently enjoy from it. Your money – that is, by rights, *my* money – is indispensable to this cause. This vision can only become a reality if the loans I have allowed you are fully invested in this enterprise.’

At the end of the hall, light sparked on the great silver salt, and played across the linenfold panelling on the back wall. Whilst Henry took another slow drink, I put down my quill and flexed my right hand, surreptitiously stretching my legs out under the table. No-one uttered a word; moreover, from where I was sitting it appeared that most of the men were

avoiding each other's gaze. Indeed, I could see that one or two were looking around as if uncertain where to fix their eyes, as if unable to offer any response – in word or in glance – to Henry's accusations. I wondered if perchance they feared to convey any notion of culpability in the matter, whilst at the same time having no strong case to argue in respect of their own probity. What a sorry state of affairs they had found themselves in.

Presently, Henry set down his beaker and turned to me, 'Robert, the deeds of agreement if you will.'

I handed him the parchment, immaculately inscribed in court hand, a gothic array of black minims, the text a formal Latin.

'This document,' Henry said, waving it at the company, 'contains the details of the revocation of my first deeds and the various uses to which I desire to apply my legacy. It has been drawn up in the confidence that you, my trustees, will execute it in accordance with the stipulations here affixed.'

Blake coughed and held up his hand. 'Mr Smith, if your trustees here present agree to take this on, how can you ascertain that all the moneys granted to your various causes will be paid? Will you have free access to the accounts?'

Serjeant Amherst flushed with indignation. 'I can assure you, Sir Geoffrey, that there will be no ambiguity in our records. Mr Smith has made his position very clear.' He gave Henry a curt nod. 'And his vision must be honoured by our allegiance to it.'

Blake inclined his head and addressed Henry again. 'And yet, Mr. Smith, if as you imply, there are debtors amongst your trustees, by what means will you ensure that they will not use your money to further causes other than your own?' This was fighting talk from Blake. His words were met by muffled exclamations around the table.

'I have chosen men whom I esteem, Geoffrey,' Henry said gruffly. 'I have every confidence in them in this matter.'

This was palpably untrue, I thought. Why did he seek to mollify these men? Then Sir Richard Lumley, who had sunk into his chair, now sat a little straighter, and drawled, ‘Mr Smith, forgive me for pressing this point. But as one of your creditors I must confess myself to be hamstrung.’ There was a ripple of nervous laughter, but Lumley silenced it with a wave of his perfectly manicured hand saying languidly, ‘my friends, there is little to be gained by dissembling. We all know that I am not alone in this. And whilst I am not one of your board members, Mr Smith, I confess that your expectations concern me. For I warrant that none of these ... er... worthy ... gentlemen will be able to reimburse you, if none are able to recover their loans on account of the grave forfeitures induced by Dorset’s mismanagement.’

At this, Wingfield was seized by a fit of coughing, Middleton stifled an exclamation, and Amherst, tugging at his collar, rasped, with full parliamentary authority,

‘Mr Smith’s personal fortune is less likely to fall prey to Dorset’s creditors if the management of his estates is handed over to the members of his trust.’ Whereupon he resorted to the language of the court, embarking on a learned discourse seasoned with heretofores, notwithstanding and *prima facies*, that would have challenged the wits of the Chancellor himself.

At length Amherst subsided and Henry, showing admirable composure, responded with a reiteration of his former announcements. His guests looked to be flagging a little, but soon revived at the offer of refreshments and there was a crescendo of noise as chairs scraped back and muted remarks gave way to lively conversation.

Later, I left the house with Blake. He was characteristically blunt. ‘So, Henry has bowed to the wishes of two of his trustees. Do you think the others have the least inkling of what their proposal could lead to?’

‘I doubt if they all do.’ I stopped under the porch. ‘Do you think Henry comprehended the nature of your enquiry?’

‘About the potential for misuse of funds? Yes, of course he did. But he did not want to discuss it.’

‘Did you see the look on Middleton’s face?’

‘Yes, I did.’ Blake said, ‘but Lumley is in just as deep as Middleton; he raised no objection to my enquiries. In fact, he supported them. He may be careless with his money but he’s a thoroughly decent man. Honest too.’ He looked thoughtful. ‘It’s not the debts that count so much – heaven knows, London has made it’s bed on them. It’s the chicanery of men who appear to give with one hand but keep a firm grasp with the other.’

‘Men like Dorset.’

‘You’re referring to Richard, of course.’ Blake’s face darkened, ‘this is all down to him when you think about it. How in the world could Henry have been so naïve as to suppose that Richard Sackville would use ten thousand pounds to improve his properties?’ His voice began to rise. ‘Did he understand nothing of the man’s devotion to the gaming tables? And as for his carnal appetites ... good God, he couldn’t be trusted to keep his hands off his own dairymaids.’

‘I have no idea how much Henry knew.’ I hesitated, ‘perchance he was too gratified by Sackville’s attention to entertain the truth ...’

Blake stared at me, ‘gratified? Yes, yes you may be right.’ Then a new thought struck him. ‘Do you know what became of those dreadful threats that Lindsey made?’

‘The threats of prosecution – the Star Chamber?’

Blake nodded his head.

‘In truth,’ I said, ‘I believe it may have been an attempt to warn Henry. But clumsily done.’

Blake looked sceptical. ‘The bailiff thought to frighten him into action ... hmm.’

‘If I remember rightly, I told you of other threats, before that letter came.’ I could hear the indignation in my own voice but I plunged on. ‘It is hardly surprising that threats of such an appalling nature, of incarceration, even torture, should serve to unsettle him even more.’

Blake’s jaw tightened, but his only rejoinder as he walked away was, ‘please God, this new determination doesn’t plunge Mr. Smith into even deeper trouble.’

Across the street a pair of red kites squabbled over the carcass of a hen, their talons pulling and tearing at the creature. Blake’s manservant advanced towards them, arms waving, and they surged up above the rooftops, offal trailing from their beaks.

Chapter 14

It was a while since I'd seen John Rolfe; I thought to call on him and walked across the town to the house where he lodged in St. Laurence Lane, hard by the bridge. I found him in his parlour, a lute in his hands.

'Good morrow Midge.' He winced as he plucked a string. 'Terrible noise this thing is making, one of the strings is false.' He twanged it again. 'What brings you to this god-forsaken part of town?'

'I shall be leaving London for a while,' I said. 'It's not the most opportune time to go, but...'

John looked curious, 'Why is it not opportune? I'd have thought that fears of the plague would have driven most people away by now.'

'It's Henry – his health has suffered from things that have happened recently,' I made a face, 'I believe he has made some rash decisions.'

'I'm sorry to hear that.' John drew out a chair, 'you'd better sit down.'

I told him about the letter from Lindsey and spoke of Henry's great distress on receiving it.

'Threats of the *Star Chamber*? ' John's face lost all colour, for a moment I thought he would drop the lute, he looked so shaken. But he collected himself. 'The Star Chamber,' he repeated more calmly, slackening a string til it unwound from the peg onto the floor. 'What the devil is Lindsey playing at?'

'I really don't know, John. But if Henry was brought to court it could cost him dear.' John drummed his fingers on the belly of the instrument, saying nothing. I decided to tell him about Henry's decision.

'Now he has revoked his first deeds.'

'Has he now...' John set the lute down.

‘And handed the responsibility over to his trustees.’

‘Well, ... it’s none of my business now, of course. But if he has distanced himself from any claims that might be made in law it could be a felicitous move.’ John upended the lute and peered at the bridge. ‘At the very least calling his trustees together and making such a momentous decision shows a degree of spirit.’

I sighed, ‘I don’t know, John.’

‘What don’t you know?’

‘I just wonder ... I wonder if those men are all as honourable as they would like to appear.’

John raised his eyebrows. ‘Anyone in particular?’

‘Oh, no.’ I felt myself colouring and went on hastily, ‘But if they are as elusive as Amherst has been it will be difficult for Henry to speak to them when he feels the need.’

‘I think Amherst has good reason for his elusive behaviour, Midge. The earl – the fourth earl that is – is keeping him very busy.’

‘Edward Sackville has returned?’

John set the lute down and began to lift papers, sandboxes, pots of ink. Finally, he extracted a small wooden box from beneath them. ‘Ah, here it is.’ He drew out a roll of catgut and measured a length with great care. Then, ‘what is it you were asking?’

‘Edward Sackville.’

‘Yes. Yes, he is back, though I understand he’s not best pleased with what he has found.’

‘Concerning Knole?’

John squinted as he fed the catgut through a hole in the bridge of the instrument. ‘Knole?’ He frowned as the string came away. ‘All the Dorset estates, from what I can gather. He has been away far too long.’ His hair fell forward as he re-threaded the string. He

brushed it away impatiently, ‘if Amherst had not been so occupied with the funeral arrangements, he would have gone to alert Sir Edward himself. Now he’s come home and Amherst is on tenterhooks. Dorset house is not the happiest of places at the moment. Sir Edward seems intent on making changes, saving money wherever he can. And that means letting some of the servants go.’ He paused to tie a knot in the catgut.

‘Aah. And it’s Amherst who would give them their marching orders,’ I said.

‘Indeed. And he knows that as Dorset’s high sheriff he may have to shoulder the blame for Richard Sackville’s debts and the dire state of his properties.’ John laughed, ‘as soon as Amherst knew that the earl was on his way home, he sent old Fotheringhay – the chief secretary – out to intercept him. He crossed half of France before they met.’

He paused to snip the gut with a tiny pair of scissors, then went on, ‘Fotheringhay said the earl bombarded him with questions. Quizzed him about Richard Sackville’s death – seemed to suspect it was foul play. Then once he’d read Amherst’s covering letter, he began all over again. Fothers had to sit with him all the way back to the channel explaining every last detail; said he was jolted about all over the place, his belly would never recover from the shaking. Then, to cap it all he was subjected to the sea crossing.’

‘Poor old man, it sounds dreadful. But what could have been in Amherst’s letter to put the earl in such a pothor?’

‘Ha ... well now, that’s a question I can answer. Not sure if I should, mind, but...’ John looked at me narrowly, ‘I copied it, so I should know.’

‘*You* copied it?’ I must have been gawping like a fool for he laughed easily.

‘I’m working with Amherst now; didn’t I tell you? How else do you think I know all this?’

There was an edge to John’s voice, and I felt myself colouring. An unspoken question hung in the air. Why was he working for Amherst, so soon after telling me he was too busy to

work for Henry Smith? I opened my mouth but John interposed, saying airily, ‘Amherst employs me from time to time. He says I write faster than some of his other boys. He tends to scrawl everything down wherever he is, he has so many ideas he can scarce get them out quick enough. Then he’ll turn up at the library in Dorset House and throw the rough copies across to me to make them presentable.’ John bent the lute string into an angle. ‘Anyway, I had to make a fair copy of his letter to Sackville, put it on parchment...’

I watched him secure the string through a hole and wind it neatly round the peg. He looked up and smiled, ‘Amherst’s language - well he might have swallowed Cawdrey’s Dictionary.’ John adopted a high and mighty tone: ‘*Right Worshipful, my humble duty remembered, hoping in the Almighty of your Health and prosperitie which I beseech Him long to continue ...*’

I held up my hand, but I had to laugh.

‘Then there were paragraphs commiserating with Edward Sackville over his brother’s untimely death, congratulations on his forthcoming investiture,’ John straightened out another length of gut, smoothing it between his fingers. ‘But then, Amherst included a long list of Richard Sackville’s expenses. Columns of gambling debts, rows of names – his creditors, their loans, and a blank column where the payments should have been recorded.’

‘Good God.’

‘Quite. There was not one repayment from Sackville. Not one.’ He glanced sideways at me, ‘small wonder that the good serjeant was apprehensive.’

‘Apprehensive?’

‘If the new earl was to learn the sum of Amherst’s involvement in Richard Sackville’s amusements...’

‘Ah.’ I knew from of old that John could easily descend into gossip and I found I had no appetite for it today. I changed the subject rather clumsily, ‘I have been meaning to ask you if you have seen Ben Jonson’s latest play.’

‘Bartholomew Fair?’ John became animated, ‘oh yes. Several times. You should go and see it, Midge.’

‘I saw it last week,’ I said. Why should he assume that I never went anywhere?

‘Ah.’ John ‘Clever, wasn’t it. He has such a light touch, all his barbs come wrapped in mirth.’ He stroked the belly of the lute. ‘The Queen’s Players are taking it up at the Hope Theatre. Their actor manager, Edmund Daborne has asked me to play in the prologue.’

‘Your fame must be spreading.’

‘More than that, I am being remunerated for it.’ John looked pensive, ‘not a great deal, but it will help.’ He ran a hand over the lute and tried a few notes, adjusting the pegs, then began to play a courante.

I stood up, ‘I would like to hear more of this – more about your work, I mean – of course, I’d like to hear you play as well, but I regret I must take my leave. One of the reasons for my visit was to let you know that I am soon to take a journey into the west country. I may be absent from London for a few months.’

‘Running away from old Smith, are you?’ John grinned at me as he set the lute down.

I laughed. ‘I suppose there may be some truth in that.’ I picked up one of the spent strings, winding it absently round my fingers, ‘I cannot deny that his manner has been tiresome of late – but this is the culmination of a life-time’s toil and he is desperately concerned that it should succeed.’ I ran the string through my fingers, smoothing it out. ‘And unless Henry can persuade all his trustees to pay back what is owing to him, I doubt that his scheme will survive. Even if the threats of prosecution prove to be the cruel trick of a barrator – ’

John looked startled, 'Are you suggesting that someone is deliberately inciting litigation?'

'It has crossed my mind.'

'Midge,' John shook his head. 'I must protest. Henry Smith is no fool. Do you think he is like to be bamboozled by such tricks?' He patted me on the arm. 'Go off and make your fortune. Don't fret about old Henry – most likely his humours are out of alignment. Venus is moving into the seventh house; it will be a trying time for some. Do you know the month of his birth?'

'His birth? No, it is not something I...'

John grinned at my evident confusion. 'Perchance you are the one whose humours are misaligned, Robert. Don't fret so ... you're not Henry's keeper.'

Interlude

Wandsworth 2014

Email: from the London Asylum Network to a volunteer.

Hi Dan,

This is very short notice, but I thought I'd email first, then call you later, when you've had a chance to think about my request. We've got a client who has been sleeping rough. We gave him a place in the nightshelter, but he's really run down. It would be so much better for him to be hosted while we try to appeal his case and get him some medical help.

He's coming back in later today and I am wondering if there's any chance you and Barry could take him for a few days. Do feel free to get back to discuss this with me.

Kind regards

Paula Parry

Hosting Co-ordinator, LASN

Email: response

Hi Paula

Just had a word with Barry, both agree we could give this a go (although we weren't expecting it quite so soon!) Couple of questions, where's he from and what sort of age? And I guess we could do with a clearer idea of how long 'a few days' is?

Speak later

Dan

At last William has a letter about his hearing. He has to go to LASN to collect it. Since they gave him a place with one of their hosts, he's been encouraged to drop in from time to time and to use their office as his address. Today he is introduced to one of their caseworkers. He

is surprised to see that she is black. She holds her hand out to him and after an awkward pause he shakes it whereupon she greets him in fluent Swahili.

‘Hello, naitwa Anisa – wewe ni William? – my name is Anisa – you are William?’

She laughs at his look of incredulity. ‘My family is from Kenya, but we’ve lived in London since I was three or four...’

Anisa takes him down the corridor to an interview room and hands him a letter. She looks at it with him. ‘It’s for your substantive interview. Your solicitor should have explained this to you in the detention centre.’

‘I have not seen him since Campsfield.’

She frowns, taps her hand impatiently on the table. ‘But you do have an ARC card?’ William nods his head. He was given one at Lunar house, he knows it’s important, that it tells anyone who needs to know that his asylum case is pending, that he has a right to make a claim.

‘Rrrright. We have to do something about this.’ Anisa’s accent is warm and her pace measured. There is something wholly reassuring about her manner as she sends a trainee off to collect some more forms and turns back to William. ‘Now, let us discuss your hearing.’ It seems that he must convince the judge that he would be in danger if he was returned to the Congo.

‘You must tell him why you left,’ she says, adding ‘it says here that you were attacked. Can you prove this?’

‘Why ... how you know this?’

‘I have the papers from the Croydon office and a statement from Campsfield.’ She smiles brightly, ‘BID has been helpful too. Don’t worry, it’s all highly confidential and I’ll give you copies of everything.’ She stacks the papers neatly and hands him a folder ‘these are yours. Keep them with you at all times. As soon as I can contact that solicitor, I’ll let you

know. Now then, let's talk through the process of your interview.'

William feels a glimmer of hope as he says goodbye to Anisa. It's time something went right for him. He feels as if he has been kicked around like a human football, booted from the house, to the railway arches near the river and on to a night shelter. Once Patrice was relocated to Birmingham, he was left without his friend – but at least he's had the placement with Dan and Barry. They're not men he feels easy around and he can't stay in the flat by himself which means a long day spent in libraries, drop-ins, even the bus station; but if it hadn't been for finding that card, he'd still be on the streets begging for food. He isn't sure how much longer he can stay with them though; he's already gone beyond the agreed time. Still... he checks to make sure he has the papers, then hoists the bag on his shoulder for the long walk back to Wandsworth. Hopefully, by the end of this month he'll have been given leave to remain and he won't need their help anymore

Chapter 15

London 1624

Henry's new deeds became engrossed in law just before Michaelmas. This should have been a momentous event for him, his years of labour transferred to the shoulders of men who could guard his 'Great Enterprise.' Perhaps now he could sit back and enjoy some respite in the late evening of his life. I went across to his house to offer him my felicitations.

I arrived to find Tom in the yard, mending a loose panel on the stable door. Good, I could talk to him first; there were matters I desired him to know before Henry heard of them.

'As you know, Henry has surrendered some of his affairs to his trust,' I began. 'Now that he will no longer need me, I am of a mind to leave London for a while.'

'No longer need you?' Tom was sceptical. 'I doubt Master Henry will agree with that. You'd best be warned, Robert, he is even now at his desk – says there is much to do before he can hand his papers over.'

'Oh dear.' But why had I unexpected it to be otherwise... 'Well, I am persuaded that I should go to my family's house to visit my brother. His health has been somewhat precarious of late and he would value some help with the management of his estates. But I will make certain that Henry has everything in hand, before I go.'

I had a sudden picture of John Rolfe's face, as he catechized me. *You're not his keeper, Robert.* The voice in my head echoed his protests, but I silenced it sternly. A few days, that was all... 'Have you seen Frazer, of late?' I asked Tom.

'Yes, once or twice. He has his spies out. He says he's puzzled; it isn't like the Bellows brothers to work beyond their patch.'

'Their patch?'

‘Well, it seems they don’t often go much further than Stepney.’ Of a sudden, Tom was seized by a paroxysm of coughing. ‘Your pardon...’ he gasped; his face red as he struggled to compose himself.

‘Tom, take your time,’ I said.

Tom wiped his face with his sleeve, ‘It’s just the dust in the streets,’ he said. ‘It’s been a long hot summer Robert. To tell the truth we’ll be glad to see it out.’

‘Yes, indeed. You were speaking of Matthew Bellows.’

‘Frazer reckons that the bailiff – Lindsey – would have too much sense to use the Bellows brothers.’

‘Just ask him to keep his eyes and ears open,’ I paused, then added, ‘truth to tell, it will be interesting to see how Henry’s estates perform without his direct intervention. If there are...’ but I stopped myself in time. It was one thing for Tom to know that there might be people threatening Henry; quite another for him to understand that they were the members of Henry’s trust. ‘Perhaps Frazer can let you know if he hears anything amiss,’ I said.

Tom looked awkward, ‘he won’t do that without its worth his while, Master Robert.’

‘No, of course not. Let me see... when I come next, I’ll sort something out with you.’
I thanked Tom for what he was doing.

He inclined his head, ‘It won’t be the same without you coming round to support Master Henry,’ he said awkwardly.

As he picked up his hammer, I noticed how his smock hung loose, how thin his wrists were protruding from sleeves that seemed too wide. When I turned and walked into the house, I could hear him coughing again.

Henry was sitting at his desk as Tom said he would be. He gave me a hasty greeting then proceeded to tell me of his plans for the next few weeks. ‘We must make a full inventory of my estates, Robert.’

‘Oh. In truth Mr Smith ...’

‘...to ensure their safety.’

‘But ... but Henry,’

‘Rents, issues and profits, checked and double checked. I’ll not hand them over to those men until I have accounted for every last penny.’

But I had no intention of allowing myself to remain embroiled in Henry’s affairs. It was time to look to my own interests. I took a deep breath, ‘Much as I would like to help you, Mr Smith, I have accepted an invitation to visit my brother in Berkshire.’ I waited for his outburst, but Henry merely looked a little surprised.

‘Ah. Well,... well, I suppose the legacy is safe enough for now. I shall have to ask Serjeant Amherst to keep a close watch on the accounts...’ his voice trailed away. Then looking up at me, he added, ‘how long do you intend to be gone ?’

‘At least three to four months,’ I replied. ‘But I will attend on you next week in order to finish checking the ledgers.’

I left Henry’s house feeling somewhat deflated. He had looked quite perplexed, as if he might miss my company. But of course, he would never say such a thing to me.

Back in Holborn, however, Tring made no attempt to hide his agitation. ‘Going away, Master Hene? But ... but Mistress Tring will not be able to withstand the change.’

‘Come now, Tring, she has borne it all before.’

Tring shifted from one foot to the other, the whiskers on his chin quivering. ‘But Mr Hene, she is – that is, *we* are – now more advanced in years. We do well with you.’ He fastened his hands together in the manner of a suppliant as he continued ‘anybody else...well ...’ his voice grew uncertain. ‘You know our ways,’ he finished helplessly.

Grinding my teeth at my own compliance, I suggested that I might pay him a retainer.

‘But you will have to do without Simon,’ I said, ‘for he comes with me.’ And somewhat waspishly I added ‘moreover, I expect both you and Mistress Tring to keep the house in good repair. I may return at any time.’

Whilst Tring did not quite fall at my feet, the gloom of his countenance diminished as he assured me that he and his wife would manage ‘as best they could without Simon,’ adding that they would pray earnestly for my safety as I embarked on this hazardous excursion into the inhospitable wastes of the countryside. ‘And I will keep your all silver polished,’ he promised.

The day before I left for Berkshire, Henry and I spent the morning scrutinising some particularly problematical papers. We closed the ledger with a mutual sigh of relief and at table, Henry – being of surprisingly good appetite – called for a jug of wine and declared that we would linger over our dinner.

‘For in truth it is a while since we have conversed about anything but lands and leases, rents and rates,’ he said. Whereupon he began to talk of the Star Chamber threats.

‘Serjeant Amherst has assured me that I will not be impeached,’ he said. ‘Those warnings – he gave short shrift to them.’

‘Lindsey’s letter?’

‘Yes. Indeed. Lindsey’s letter. It was badly timed ... badly timed.’ Henry crumbled a piece of bread between his fingers. ‘Amherst reckons that Lindsey was distraught, that Richard’s death went deep with him. Lindsey served Richard’s father, y’know, Robert Sackville. And the estate ... Knole... Sir Robert trusted Lindsey with it. Amherst said he would wager that Lindsey would be discomfited now to recall how near he came to panicking – that he was ever fond of Richard and no doubt devastated by his death.’

I was sceptical about Edward Lindsey's part in Henry's recent troubles. The bailiff's recent letters had been perfectly civil, business-like, with no hint of hostility and certainly none of the previous antagonism. It seemed absurd, now, to think of old Lindsey as a fearmonger.

'I can understand Lindsey's apprehension,' I said 'but the Star Chamber ...'

Henry nodded, 'dreadful thing, to be dragged before the council ...' He looked down at the bread, ink-stained and turned to dough in his hands, 'I've won a few cases in my time Robert. But I would never lodge a complaint unless I was persuaded beyond all shadow of doubt that I had the grounds...'

'How good it must be, to know that you will not have to answer for this.'

'Yes. Indeed.' Henry stared at the table for a long moment. 'It is a thing to be feared, to fall into the hands of the law,' he muttered. 'A thing to be feared...'

Clerkenwell 1567

A young apprentice glances nervously over his shoulder as he hurries down Chancery Lane. There's a burning over at Smith's Field, his eyes are smarting from the smoke. The lanes throng with people, avid for excitement – you'd think they were on the way to Bartholomew's fair. The boy suppresses a shudder as he elbows his way past a group of black-robed law students, casting bets as to which of the two Scripture men will take the longest to die. But if he imagines that it will be a relief to leave this circus for the calm of Westminster, he will soon find himself thrust into another kind of conflagration. For his mother, Elizabeth, widow of Walter Smith, has lodged a Bill of Complaint.

He watches Elizabeth as she stands in Chancery beneath the great hammer beams of Westminster hall; a small woman, shabbily dressed, in stark contrast to the gowned and bewigged figures in front of her. She is fiercely resolved to retain two properties – mills that were Walter Smith's undoing, the last throw of a dice that brought him to ruin and an early grave – they belong to her, she says. She is persuaded that she has a perfectly logical case for claiming them, although the conniving and scheming that has brought her to this place has been anything but perfect or logical.

Henry Smith has hurried to Westminster at his mother's behest. He stays in the shadows at the back of the courtroom, his face burning with humiliation at Elizabeth Smith's shrill tones. The defendant, Robert Kinge, her Wandsworth neighbour, does not even attempt to hide his glee as the widow stares at the judge in red-faced fury; the clerks of the court can scarcely conceal their supercilious smiles as her case is summarily dismissed. Henry will not wait to see his mother scurry away from the court even though his sister has asked him to meet them outside. Never again, he vows, as he half runs, half walks across Westminster yard, never in all the days remaining to him will he let himself be exposed to such folly, such mortification as his mother has visited on their family today, in this place.

Interlude

Clerkenwell 2014

The 'Substantive' interview is very important. As the main interview it provides the basis of the asylum claim and what happens there affects any subsequent appeals and submissions.⁸Your interview will happen after your 'screening' - it could be anything from a week to a year or even later [...]It's really important that you get advice before your interview. Your case is more likely to be successful if the evidence you have is prepared properly - it's hard to do this on your own.⁹

William is sitting in the reception area in Taylor House, the tribunal hearing centre in Clerkenwell. He looks up as the door swings wide, sending a gust of cold air along the passage. The man that bursts in is smartly dressed. He glances along the corridor.

'How many have we got today, Muriel?'

The woman at the desk picks up a list. 'Eleven sir. One's a family case – the rest singles. Mostly men.'

'Right. Let's get going.'

William is trying to rehearse answers to questions that might come up when the door opens again and another man enters, young, clearly nervous as he stares about. He looks vaguely familiar to William and as their eyes meet, he stares at William in amazement.

'You on the plane,' the boy says. 'Remember me?'

They start towards each other and shake hands,

'Guillaume' William reminds him, 'but here I am called William.'

'Pierre,' the boy laughs, 'but here I am still called Pierre.'

'It's a long time since that journey.' William says.

'Yes. Too long. Too long for waiting.'

⁸ Smith, D. 2016 p.152

⁹ Citizens Advice., "Prepare for an Asylum Interview" Retrieved 26 July 2021, from <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/immigration/prepare-for-asylum-interview#>

As William relates his experience of detention, Pierre is wide-eyed. 'They take you from reporting centre ? Oh my God, that's crazy.'

'Then I have to leave NASS house.'

Pierre says he has a cousin in Wandsworth who found him some work, stacking shelves in a cash-and-carry at night. 'But when I ask for my money, they just make excuse 'the boss is not here.' No good making a fuss, they tell me they'll report me.' He shakes his head, 'My cousin's wife does not want me there anymore. I can see it in her eyes.'

The men fall silent. After an hour Pierre is called. He turns as he gets to his feet, 'wish me luck,' and William replies 'bonne chance.'

There are bursts of laughter from behind a door, somewhere a phone rings, buzzers sound. A pain nags at the back of William's head and he shuts his eyes. He is dozing when Pierre returns and slumps onto a chair, head in his hands.

'Mon Dieu, qui était horrible. Ils m'ont traité comme un fou – they treat me like a fool.' He bangs his hands against his head, my God how can they do this. Two women in front of them stop talking and turn to stare. Pierre gets to his feet and William follows him, hoping to get him out of earshot.

'That judge . . he say where is your country of orig . . . of . . I don't know the word he use. I look at him, I said I not know . . . then he say, you not know where you from? So, I tell him I am from Congo, but he look at me and say you not telling the truth. It says here that you come from Rwanda. Then he say, why you left? He say how can I leave family?' Pierre tugs at his hair. 'He asks me 'how you prove you work for Government . . . where are papers?' His voice rises, 'he not believe. He treat me like I am stupid. He the one is stupid. He say I make things up. He say ...'

An official comes across, an expression of concern on her face. She ushers Pierre out of the door, his protests echoing down the hall. William glances around, he needs the toilet.

He stays in the cubicle for some time, there's no-one else about and he needs to be quiet. Too many thoughts ... his head is throbbing now; he mustn't forget the ones that are important.

An hour later he is still trying to order his thoughts. He faces the smart-suited man.

'Your name?'

'William. William Muambi.'

'Hmm ...' a long silence. The man looks up.

'We are here to determine your right to remain in this country. You have claimed asylum on the grounds ...' papers shuffling 'on the grounds that it is not safe to return to your country of origin.' He smiles pleasantly at William. 'You are from the DRC ...the Democratic Republic of Congo. From the east?'

William says nothing. The judge repeats,

'Are you from the east of the DRC?'

'I ... I come from Kivu. I go to Goma. I leave ...I run.'

The judge turns to another man who is writing. They seem to be discussing William's language. He hears the words 'French, Swahili.'

Then he hears the word 'solicitor.' He recognizes that word. The judge says

'Have you got a lawyer?'

'Please?'

'A solicitor.'

'er... yes ... but he ...'

How can he explain to this man that the Home Office gave him a solicitor from somewhere near Croydon, a Nigerian who he has spoken to once on the phone who just said 'Leave it with me...'

The judge turns to the clerk again. 'Has this man no-one to represent him?' There is a muttered conversation, papers are consulted. He sighs, taps his pen on the table several times

then says, 'when you came to the UK, where did you board the plane?'

'Board?'

The man's tone tightens with impatience. 'Where did you come from?'

'Uganda – from Kampala.'

This prompts a series of questions. Why was he in Uganda, how had he got there, who took him to Kampala. Then,

'What is the name of the airport at Kampala?'

William thinks hard. What is it called? He takes a deep breath,

'We go by road to the sea ...the lake. The place was Entebbe.'

The judge seems satisfied with this. He asks William, 'why did you come here . . . to the UK?'

'Goma not . . .was not safe.'

'Why?'

'People say they will – would – kill me.'

'What people?'

'They were Tutsi . . .'

'Why would they kill you?'

'I am Hutu.'

'But it says here that you are from the Congo. Hutus are from Rwanda.'

'Many Hutus in Congo. My mother was Hutu. She go . . . she went to Kivu when she had to run.'

'Hmm...' the judge returns to his papers. William's hands are clenched, the nails dig into his palms. In the silence a fly buzzes frantically, trying to find a way out.

The judge looks up, 'It says here you have scars on your legs. Will you show me please?'

An officer steps forward as William rolls up one leg of his jeans. The man looks briefly at William's calves and nods to the judge. 'Seem to be quite old scars, sir.' He peers more closely, 'could be a machete, I suppose.'

'Tell me how you came by them.'

William is sweating as he tries to recount the attack, the arguments – *not Hutu, from Bukavu – dense forest, silence ... cowering in a gully fingers dug in the dirt... dust clouds in the distance ... nearer and nearer two lorries, men waving rifles, don't cough, don't move a shot rings out then silence again he waits and waits before he stands ... but there's a third one, a land rover coming silently he tries to turn but a bullet hits the ground by his feet. Someone yells at him to stop. A door slams...*

His voice trembles as he tells the man how they tied his hands with twine, how it cut into his wrists. Then the man lifting a Kalashnikov and he thinks he will die. He has lived this over and over but now the judge's face does not change; he simply nods and returns to his papers. William's hands are wet, his breathing rapid. Thinking back to that time is not good ... please God this man thinks he is telling the truth.

Chapter 16

Clerkenwell 2014

Out along Rosebery Avenue a minibus turns away from Taylor House towards Chancery Lane – no glass fronted offices here, but stones and russet bricks, mullions and hammer beams. No doubt there are video links nowadays, online collaboration and shared workspaces, but to the uninitiated it is still a place of rolls and scrolls, affidavits and arraignments resting quietly under centuries of dust, although dark suited lawyers emerging with their apprentices have no miserable petitioners to confront, no waiting supplicants to harass them as they hurry to court.

At the lights the driver of the minibus winds down his window just as a pneumatic drill begins to hammer through the pavement. He closes the window hastily, but not before catching a whiff of smoke – sharp, acrid. He stares to the left,

‘Must be over Smithfield way, can’t see anything.’

‘What?’ The officer next to him leans forward.

‘There’s a fire somewhere, thought the drills might’ve sparked something.’

‘Can’t smell nothing,’ the other man sniffs, ‘no, can’t get that.’

The van driver brakes at the next set of lights, the smell seems stronger here and a sound along the road, not the drill, more like . . . he listens, more like a distant crowd of people, shouting, only muted, indistinct.

‘There must be something going on ...’

‘Nah, what you on about?’ The officer turns to stare at him, then as a horn sounds behind them, ‘get a move on can’t you, its green.’

The driver steps on the gas, then swerves as a man emerges from the shadows, dark leggings beneath some sort of blue smock.

‘What the . . .?’

‘What’s the matter now?’ The other man is getting angry. What’s this guy thinking, he’s normally ok. ‘Have you had a drink?’

‘Me? No, you know I don’t . . .’ he glances in his wing mirror, then up at the rear one, ‘did you see that man? He just came out of nowhere. Weird clothes too . . .’

‘Probably a lawyer. They always look weird. Reckon they put it on for the tourists.’

If William smells the fire, he gives no indication of it. He has been told that he must be dispersed to a town in the north of England where he will wait to see if he will be granted leave to remain. He slumps in the back of the van with two other men, his eyes tightly closed against the headache that threatens to engulf him.

Chapter 17

Berkshire 1624

I travelled alone to Berkshire – Simon would join me later in the month. I determined to leave all my worries in London and as town fell away to heathland and my spirits rose, I urged on my mount – a fine steed, standing above seventeen hands at my particular request. The very ground seemed to rise to meet my sense of exaltation, trees in their full autumnal glory bent down their heads to greet me, clouds scudded across a wide sky drawing me on towards adventure...

...you are becoming absurd, Robert, I told myself; overly poetical and not a little sentimental. Of course, it was on account of Henry Smith – I corrected myself, on the absence of Henry Smith, and laughed aloud. Dear old Henry, I thought, I have no need to concern myself with you – Meggie and Tom are more than capable of looking after you; they know when to call the doctor, they are mindful of your humours, Meggie will have no truck with your refusal to eat properly – and I smiled at the thought of her warm brown hands spooning sauce over the roast fowl, declaring that the master must eat up every last morsel...

I reined in hastily as the sound of a post horn broke into my reverie. The coach careered past, four steaming horses with two carriers on the box and the post boy behind. Of a sudden I recalled a memory of Meggie asking Henry for a ride in his carriage; she must have been no more than seven summers and her eyes had widened as he had alighted at the front of the house. Henry was quite unable to refuse her, returning her smile of delight, as off they went hand in hand, down the steps into the street. Time was, she was like a daughter to him, though it was not often that he showed such pleasure.

Where that had gone, that easy companionship? Nowadays Meggie was little more than a servant to him. It was as if he kept her at arms' length – or she, him. Perhaps it was after her marriage to Tom; had Henry not wanted it; did he think it was a poor match?

I shook myself. *Robert you fool, you vowed to put this out of your mind.* Did I really intend to exchange my obsessive thoughts about Henry with ones of Meggie? I really must not spend this journey reminiscing about her. No-one was about as I spoke aloud in castigation of myself, but the horse pricked up his ears and blew out his nostrils for all the world as if he was agreeing with me.

I had decided to combine a visit to my uncle Samuel's house with a business appointment in Croydon. Couzens, a local farmer, was the tenant of a country squire whose property I held in mortgage. The farmer had a mind to buy his farm outright, but I suspected that this might lead to a maze of legal entanglements and had engaged the assistance of a local agent before putting the matter to the squire himself. I knew him to be hard pressed at this time and had no doubt that he would be open to my suggestions.

The visit would hardly be worth mentioning had it not led to a chance remark that would be of importance to me in the days to come. As I bade farewell to the farmer, our business having been more-or-less concluded, he turned to the agent, Stanshaw, a look of curiosity on his broad red face.

'Hear your son's marrying one of Goodman Green's girls.'

'Yes,' Stanshaw looked interested, 'Do you know Green?'

'Aye, see him every time I go to market. Bought a ram off him last Michaelmas.'

Couzens grinned, 'He has a lot of daughters to get wed.'

'Yes, Mary-Anne's the third and there's a few more besides. '

'She the one in service to the old lady?'

'That's right. Dairymaid, been there two or three years now.'

'Old lady still alive?'

Stanshaw's face creased into a smile, 'Lady Griselda? Aye, more'n four score years now, she is. Sir Andrew only died a couple of years back.' He gazed across the fields, 'well-liked, Sir Andrew. Matter of fact, all the Joyners have been. Looked after their tenants.'

'Joyners?' I broke in.

They turned to me. 'Aye,' the farmer said. 'D'you know them?'

'I think I might. It's just the name – Griselda. I do some work for ... for an old fellow who had a cousin by the name of Grisogon, who married a Joyner.'

'Grisogon? Well, I s'pose it might be ... any road, she was most respectable born,' Stanshaw's mare shifted restlessly, and he held her head steady, 'easy girl.' Over his shoulder, he said, 'they had a big house, away in the Cotswolds. Her family that is. Near Campden.'

'That sounds like the same, Combe House, I think it was,' I said. 'She was the daughter of Sir Thomas Smith.'

The farmer looked doubtful 'Oh, I don't know about any Smiths.'

But Stanshaw broke in eagerly, 'yes, old Sir Thomas used to visit her,' he pointed his chin towards a hill behind some woods. 'Up there at Norton Manor. Folks used to talk about it, every time he came, great old coach lumbering through the lanes. 'S'pose he's long gone now.' He chuckled, 'a real character, Lady Griz. Mary-Anne says she still wears a farthingale and a great ruff like old Queen Bess.'

I smiled at that. It left me in no doubt that this was the same lady.

We said our farewells and parted at the highway, Stanshaw heading south for Purley and I to the west for Foliejohn, my uncle's residence.

Samuel Hene was my father's younger brother, although there was little physical resemblance between them. My father had been taller than most men and inclined to leanness, two characteristics that I had inherited. Samuel was more solidly built, of no great

height and robust in both frame and appetite. They were both good humoured men, but Samuel had an inclination towards strong views, particularly concerning the government of the country. His apprenticeship in London may have accounted for this. It certainly gave him an air of urbanity that my more provincial father did not share.

Samuel's apprenticeship coincided with Henry Smith's and he put in a good word for me when my father decided that I should learn a trade. I was grateful to my uncle for his part in this, although as it turned out, my employment with Henry Smith did not end well. Uncle Samuel, thinking I had been unjustly served, tried his best to intervene with Mr. Smith on my behalf, but without success. The remembrance of his loyalty to me still warmed my heart; I had always found a welcome at his home, but now he was a widower I visited him whenever I could, for he had no sons of his own.

Uncle Samuel greeted me with his usual affection. A room had been made ready for me he said, and dinner was to be served shortly. The sun was already going down as I surveyed the array of dishes before me and I could only surmise that my uncle's solitary status had not robbed him of his taste for fine foods, or superior wines. Over roast beef and an excellent claret, we talked of family matters, my father's farm, my brothers' families, of events in the city and of my own affairs. When I mentioned the conversation I had had earlier in the day regarding the owners of Norton Manor, Samuel chuckled.

'I have been acquainted with Sir Andrew Joyner and his good lady for many years. In truth I miss Andrew. We enjoyed hunting together – and the many convivial evenings that followed.' My uncle turned his glass, the wine glowing richly red in the candlelight. 'Andrew was not averse to the finer things of life,' he smiled. 'It's still said around our neighbourhood that the only person who could drink him under the table was his wife.'

'Lady Grisogon?'

'Indeed. I suppose she lives in stately solitude now. I really should pay her a visit.'

‘Did you know that she is Henry Smith’s cousin?’

Samuel shook his head, no, he didn’t know that. So I explained that her father, Sir Thomas Smith, was a man of some standing in the court of old King Henry.

‘But his youngest brother, Walter – Henry’s father – didn’t do so well for himself,’ I finished.

Later, we wandered out into the tranquillity of a warm evening. There was a terrace behind the house, giving onto a rather neglected knot garden. All the scents and sounds of early summer seemed to gather in that one place – perfumed guelder roses breaking into bloom over the latticed railings, night-scented stock, doves calling in the dark woods below. We stood side by side, at ease in the silence. A couple of herdsman hollered at their cattle as they drove them down the hill towards the common, where the long grass grew. I could see that the beasts were good red Herefords just like the ones my father raised. Perhaps I should retire to the countryside, I thought. A rustic life without all these cursed problems. I could marry again, raise a family, it wouldn’t be too late.

Then Samuel asked me, somewhat hesitantly, if I had encountered Henry Smith, now that I was returned to London.

‘Indeed, I have.’

‘Ah.’ He looked sideways at me.

I laughed. ‘It was certainly not in my plans.’

‘I imagine he must be enjoying his wealth after all this time,’ Samuel said dryly.

‘Master Smith? Enjoying ... no, not really. He is beset with problems.’

‘He’s not getting any younger, he must be well past his three score years and ten.’

Samuel lowered himself carefully onto a garden bench. ‘I’m heading that way myself.’ The bench creaked in protest, but I positioned myself at the other end, determining to balance his girth as best I could. ‘Beset with problems, you say.’

‘Master Smith’s health is not what it was,’ I replied.

Samuel grimaced, ‘Old age has few advantages.’ The bench protested as he turned himself sideways to look at me, hazel eyes peering out inquisitively from beneath bushy eyebrows. ‘I confess I am intrigued, Robert. Tell me, pray, how came you to meet him again, after all this time?’

I explained about my reunion with an old friend, John Rolfe. He had cajoled me into taking his place as Henry’s man of business, I told Samuel. ‘I visit Master Smith once or twice a week,’ I said, not wanting to appear to be at his beck and call. ‘I have given him some assistance with accountancy, scribing, that sort of thing.’

‘Really?’ Samuel’s eyebrows went up. ‘Forgive me, but I thought you never wanted to see him again, least of all work for him.’

I sighed, ‘Did I really say that?’ And as Samuel nodded, I explained briefly about Henry’s ambition to build a legacy and his need for a scrivener, adding lamely, ‘time can change things.’

We sat in silence as the last of the light began to fade. Over in the south, a bank of clouds turned to amber in the final rays of the sun. Rooks chattered impatiently in the elms below.

‘Did you know that a gathering of rooks is called a ‘parliament’?’ Samuel said.

I laughed. ‘They’re aptly named, such a cawing and clamouring.’

‘And sounding so urgent, so full of their own importance.’ Samuel added. ‘Speaking of parliament, the members have every reason to caw and clamour at the moment, to my way of thinking.’ I looked at him enquiringly and he continued. ‘The way the king’s been badgering them to raise revenues.’ He shook his head, ‘how can parliament increase the customs rates again? I tell you Robert, if they make it hard for the merchants, the common people will suffer.’

We watched as the birds wheeled restlessly around the trees, until finally, they came to roost. Samuel broke the silence. 'So, Henry Smith. Do you think it is supportable, this undertaking of his?'

'Well, I do. He has admirable tenacity. But he has had a very difficult time of late.'

Samuel's eyes grew round as I explained about the threats of the Star Chamber. 'What a terrifying thing to happen,' my uncle said.

'Yes, Henry was much afraid at first. Then he became belligerent.'

Samuel's jowls quivered, 'now that, I do remember.'

'But the work and its problems have taken a toll on him.' I hesitated, 'And now he has withdrawn into himself. Even his own family sees little of him.'

Samuel became more reflective. His voice was puzzled as he asked, 'Robert, forgive me but I must ask you to explain to me, why have you really agreed to become involved with Henry Smith again? After the things he accused you of ...?'

My stomach lurched. Henry's accusations may have been made more than a decade ago, but they were still raw in my memory. I took a deep breath and replied, 'I had time on my hands. Then Rolfe persuaded me to accompany him on a visit to Henry. I confess I was a trifle apprehensive, but I found that he is so consumed with his plans that he scarcely acknowledged me as a one-time apprentice. I doubt he can remember what passed between us. It was a long time ago.' I waved my hand to brush away a swarm of midges. 'Besides,' I said, 'my work is done now.'

'Well Henry could hardly have asked for a more able assistant,' was all that Samuel said. But he still looked bemused.

Later, Samuel's manservant showed me to my bedchamber, a peaceful room with windows open to aspects both west and south and a large four poster bed hung with embroidered

damask. A wing chair was placed beside the window. I sat down heavily, Samuel's words still playing on my mind.

After the things he accused you of ...

Of a sudden, I felt a great weariness. In truth it had been a long day and I had spent much time on my journey, but I vow that the heaviness that now came upon me was not born from the day's toil. Indeed, I should have been enjoying a feeling of satisfaction, for I had accomplished all that I set out to do in my transactions with the farmer and as for tonight, Samuel's company had been most agreeable. No, this was a sensation that I did not want to address. The harrowing remembrance of Henry Smith's fury as he raged at me so long ago roused a familiar resentment which I had fought to put away. Yet even as I acknowledged it, it seemed to dwindle and pale before the image of a helpless old man muttering in his distress, his voice trembling, his mind in turmoil. For all that Rolfe had declared that Henry was 'no fool,' he had endured a severe blow to his spirits in the past few weeks. How could this not affect him?

I drew one of the drapes back and stood looking out into the deepening night. But all I could see was a dim reflection of the candles on the wall and my own form, splintered between the lozenges of glass. Did Henry really remember nothing of our falling-out? Could something that had threatened to devour me in these intervening years, really have made so little impact on him? It wasn't as if it was a sudden squall. The roots of it were set long before his dreadful accusations.

I turned away from the window. The memory of Henry's suspicion early in my apprenticeship left me shaken. Mistress Anne's death haunted me still - and the years that followed it, when a worm of distrust gnawed its way into Henry's bruised heart and found itself a home.

Chapter 18

London 1590

According to Mistress Anne it had been commerce that had brought her to the attention of Henry Smith. I can still remember the mischievous twinkle in her eyes as she told me about the afternoon they first met – she was clearly diverted by the notion that such an unremarkable encounter turned out to be so propitious; though Henry's own thoughts on the matter – could anyone have been party to them – would surely have been more prosaic.

Anne had taken a boat down to St Katherine's wharf with John Pelham, brother of her late husband, Francis. Francis had left a thriving business, three ships to his name, and she was determined to manage them, to turn a profit as good as any he had made. They were walking away from a consultation with the shipwright about some repairs to one of the vessels, when John Pelham happened to recognise a man who was standing close to shore, looking out across the wide stretches of the river.

'Henry Smith,' he said to Anne. 'Have you met him?'

She looked doubtful, 'I think Francis might have spoken of him, but I don't recall...'

'It might be to your advantage ... knowing him,' John said.

Henry Smith turned as they walked towards him, nodding his recognition to John. He was not a man who would stand out in a crowd, she thought; thin, medium height. His face seemed more youthful close to, plain, slightly troubled. When he looked at her, she saw his eyes were a deep dark brown, but his gaze held little warmth and even less interest, until John introduced her. Then his eyes widened slightly, and he became more animated.

This was his ship, he said. He gestured towards a neat sea-going vessel and said that it had just dropped anchor. They watched as the men lifted the gunnel to get to the hold; it had almost foundered in the March tides, Henry said, and the hold had taken in water. Besides many barrels of salt, there was a consignment of high-grade Portuguese tableware that he was

sure would fetch a deal of money at the Exchange, if, please God, it had not been damaged in the gales.

‘So, you’re still tied to that salter.’ John said

‘I work with Master Cunliffe, not for him.’

‘I had no idea old Cunliffe was trading beyond our shores.’

‘This is my vessel. Master Cunliffe is a shareholder.’

‘How many men are involved?’

Henry reddened ‘What’s it to you?’

Anne was discomfited. Her brother-in-law was not usually so intrusive, but then neither would he have expected such a curt rejoinder. She moved aside, pretending interest in the busy river scene, but still within hearing distance of John.

Now he said, ‘I have a number of contacts ... Francis Pelham, my brother... God rest his soul, left three good cargo boats, established a thriving trade, ivory, cloth ... that sort of thing ... wine too, of course.’ And he waved his hand expansively.

‘Where do I come into this?’

John looked sideways at him. Always was a plain-spoken sort of fellow, he told Anne later. But he was known to be honest and hard working. ‘We could do business together – you and I.’ He broke off, raised his voice to include Anne, ‘Mistress Pelham too of course. She ... er ... she has possession of the ships.’

‘And *she* has not relinquished her interest to you, brother John.’ Anne turned, lifted her head, two bright spots of red on her cheeks.

‘I merely thought...’

‘You thought to turn a profit.’

‘To save on some of the victualling, Master Smith being in the salt trade.’ John looked unhappy, ‘upon my honour I meant you no disrespect.’

Henry Smith had his head bowed; it was clear he had no intention of being party to this wrangle. But suddenly the widow was by his side, her face level with his, blue eyes above a generous mouth, her manner composed but not unfriendly. He caught a trace of her perfume, a honeyed blend of orris and rose, as she spoke softly.

‘Master Smith, I must ask your pardon, my brother and I, we are but newly come to this arrangement and there are ... er... details that must be resolved.’ She swallowed, ‘In truth I know of your sound reputation. I seem to recall Francis speaking of you.’

‘Francis ... Master Pelham?’

‘Yes. My ... my late husband.’ She tilted her head to one side and looked him in the face, then with an almost undetectable twitching of her lips, added, ‘in truth, Master Smith, I believe we could come to some agreement. I have no objection to you victualling my ships.’

Three months later they were wed.

The parish of St Dunstan’s where Henry now lived with Anne was a prosperous area populated with well-to-do merchants – goldsmiths, salters, iron manufactures and the like. As a single man, Henry had spent little time going abroad in society, unless to mingle with those who might advance him. Now, with this tall graceful woman by his side, a lady of good reputation and considerable social standing, he had the opportunity to meet all manner of worthy citizens, numbering aldermen, lawyers and the nobility amongst his acquaintances.

But if Mistress Anne expected Henry to accompany her on a round of social visits, she must have been sadly disappointed. Henry Smith had little interest in social advancement for its own sake. His time was precious to him, a devotion to the pursuit of wealth his most pressing concern. Two days after their marriage, he was back at work in his library, out in the town meeting agents and tradesmen and – more crucially for Anne – going abroad into the country.

Small wonder that the servants, used to old Mr Pelham, were quick to notice how restless Master Smith was compared with their former master; that the steward, who had served Mistress Anne throughout the years of her first marriage, was heard to complain that the master's head was a ledger of profit and loss, a map of trade routes and plans for advancement, that there was little room left in it for Mistress Anne.

They had been married for nearly ten years when I arrived in London as an apprentice; I was in awe of them both and dazzled by my first sighting of Pelham's Mansion. Sanders, Henry's man of business, had to chastise me on more than one occasion for gawping at the carriages that drew up at the door and staring at the nobility as they emerged in all their finery when I should have been hard at work. But as I became more involved in Henry's business ventures, I saw that this was not a house of great content.

If Anne felt neglected, I was not at first aware of it. She may have been left alone in London with only her servants for company, but I was a mere apprentice; what could I have known of the workings of her mind? Only later would I see how resourceful she was, temperate in her behaviour and not given to idleness or despair. Back in Mr Pelham's time she had worked side by side with her husband and could correct a balance sheet, write a good letter and give instructions to the clerks and agents who busied themselves at the house. Now that she found herself excluded from her husband's commercial ventures, she turned her attention to pursuits of her own. But this time they were of a different kind.

It must have been in the spring of that year – I recall the season because of the heavy rains. The master had to make a journey into Kent to visit his iron foundry and as was his custom, he took his senior apprentice, Bartholomew Hardaker, with him, riding away early one Monday morning as soon as the bridge opened.

The poor were at our gate that morning. Every two or three days there would be a huddle of people begging for alms or food. Master Henry viewed their presence with some reluctance, but in this matter, Mistress Anne was insistent that she would maintain the custom set up by her late husband. There were always a few familiar faces. Jed Burrows, as I recall, with his crazed hare-shotten daughter, and old Goody Renshaw, clutching her begging bowl ... but there were others that week, one or two we had not seen before. I noticed a dark-eyed girl, woefully thin, a small child beneath her shawl. I handed the girl three pennies and a small loaf and as she raised her face, I saw that she was very dark-skinned. This was something unusual to me and I confess I stared at her with great curiosity, whereupon she pulled her shawl across her face and grasping the child's hand, hurried away. We saw her once or twice more but after a few weeks she came no more.

As spring gave way to summer, I noticed that Mistress Anne seemed to go abroad more frequently. I often went with her into the town and sometimes escorted her to the gatherings – those meetings of like-minded puritans that she attended with Joane. Whilst I was aware of their friendship, I must have believed it to have stemmed from their mutual interest in studying the scriptures. I certainly did not detect anything untoward in their conversation. Now that I look back, it is so apparent that they were concealing something, that I am mortified by my near sightedness. There is no doubt that they were compelled by the depths of their own compassion. And as I was a party to the hotter sort of preaching that roused them to this – by which I mean that, in accompanying Mistress Anne, I was bound to hear the Puritan gospel – I can understand something of the zeal that led to their actions.

Looking back, it seems clear to me now, that Joane Jackson and Anne Smith were persuaded by godly men in their endeavours to help the poor. But at the time, my own apprenticeship blinded me to the merciful nature of their actions. For I listened to my peers, who persuaded me that we were ill-used and that I should join in protesting against foreigners

who were intent on taking employment from us. Once when Master Henry was far from home, I even stole away from the house to join the rioting in the streets, though as I chanted and hollered, I burned with shame at my own audacity. In truth, I believe I was more afraid to refuse my fellow apprentices than I was of being caught. But when some of them were apprehended and charged with sedition I went out no more.

What has this to do with Mistress Anne and her secrets, you may ask? Well, you could say that what happened next brought me back to my senses and thus kept me from harm. Hard by Joane Jackson's dwelling in Whitechapel was a shabby collection of houses where Huguenots lived cheek by jowl with other foreigners. Whilst my fellow apprentices were stirring up trouble by proclaiming that 'the foreigners' had come to London for their own gain, these poor strangers were in hiding. Like others of their persuasion, they refused to bow to popery and had fled from the Netherlands, France, or even further afield; but unlike their fellow countrymen they had no wealth to bring and no skills to share.

When Joane heard of their plight, she began take them food from her own frugal supplies. Once Anne Smith discovered what she was doing, she opened her purse as wide as she was able. But then she went a step further and found room for some of the most desperate in her own house.

Anne managed to do this without Henry knowing. It was another continuation of her husband's charity – he must have been a remarkable man, old Mr. Pelham. Master and Mistress Frobisher, who had always aided and abetted him, now continued the practice right under Master Smith's nose. The great house boasted both attics and cellars and a warren of rooms behind the kitchen, mostly used as still rooms, butteries and laundries. It was quite possible to put a pallet on the floor in one of the smallest chambers behind the main chimney, where the ground was warm and dry. Master Henry never visited these places. He may not even have known that they were there.

None of the strangers stayed more than a week or two. As soon as Mistress Anne put the word about that she had a young girl or boy ready for service, one of her Puritan friends would come and take them into their own house. They arrived as half-starved wastrels and left as useful servants and Anne had the satisfaction of knowing that their lot would continue to improve.

I knew little of this at the beginning. Both Master Frobisher and his mistress were wary of the apprentices finding out the truth. If one of us spied a black stranger washing the pots, we would assume that they had been taken in for service. Until one afternoon when everything changed.

It was around Michaelmas, two or three years after the start of my apprenticeship, when Master Henry departed on a long journey to visit some properties up in the north of England. Sanders, his man of business, set me to work in the library, then left to make some calls in town. I was writing letters when Frobisher came in looking perplexed. 'There's a boy out in the yard, wants to speak to you.'

'Me?'

'Aye, you.' He scratched his chin, 'unkempt little tyke.'

I got up reluctantly, 'do you know what it's about?'

'Hard to make him out,' Frobisher said. 'Something about Mistress Anne ... I don't know ... I told him to be off... but then I thought I'd better go and find her ... the mistress. But she doesn't appear to be at home...'

'She must be with Jenny, maybe they have gone out.'

Mistress Anne must always have her maid with her in the streets of London. Master Henry had made that clear, in truth it was one of the rare signs of his care. So, unless the mistress asked for me, Jenny always accompanied her.

But Frobisher shook his head, 'No. No, Jenny is in the buttery.' He hesitated, 'there are occasions when the mistress has er ... taken leave to go out alone.'

I did not understand the import of this at the time. It was only later that I realized she would have to be alone to meet the 'strangers' who she assisted. Now I became alarmed, seizing my jerkin to make for the yard. Outside, the rain was hammering down; there was no sign of a boy anywhere so I wandered towards the back gate, my jerkin over my head. A hoarse little voice stopped me in my tracks.

'She sez you're to follow me.' The boy stared up at me, lank hair dripping into his eyes. 'Sez as you're to come quick.'

'Where ...?' But he was off down the street and I followed, slipping and sliding on the greasy cobbles.

Henry and Anne's house stood in a quiet backwater behind St Dunstan's church. There were less salubrious streets nearby but none of us would have expected Mistress Anne to frequent these. So, it came as a shock when the boy led me down to the river and past the old warehouses, their timbers sunk halfway into the water. Beyond them the streets narrowed into mean alleys where sailors could find a night's lodging, and whatever comforts might be had beside. It was certainly not the kind of district where a merchant's wife would care to be seen. The boy pointed down a dark street and said 'Soke Lane. Over past the tavern.'

I stood peering through the rain. If daylight ever visited this place, it was not a frequent occurrence. I told the boy he would have to lead the way. As we picked a path through the mud, the houses seemed to lean in until their gables almost touched, scarcely allowing light to penetrate from a fast-fading sky. No lamps shone in the half-shuttered windows, no panes of glass to reflect anything back, or give away the secrets within. The street was strangely silent, as if the houses were deserted, despite the dismal day outside. I wondered how Mistress Anne had found her way here in the first place and shuddered as a rat ran over my

foot. A dog, its muzzle buried deep into the piled-up filth, growled as I stepped carefully past. I paused to wind my kerchief over my mouth, trying not to breath too deeply.

The boy pointed down an alleyway. ‘She’s along there,’ he said, and held his hand out. I gave him two pennies, and he ran off before I could change my mind, leaving me to peer through the gloom, willing my eyes to focus. A gust of wind sent a sheet of water from the gutters but by now I was so wet that I hardly paused to brush it away. Down the side of a tall house was a narrow passage, beyond it, a pinprick of light. Dear God, I thought, there’s another dwelling down there, is it possible anyone can live in such a hole?

I stopped to listen. No sound but dripping water. The dog lost interest in the rubbish and wandered on, tail hanging down disconsolately. This is a fool’s errand, I thought, there’s nothing here for me. But as I turned to pick my way back to the highway, I heard a cry, the wail of a child. I stood still, straining to hear and there it was again. No doubt this time. I pressed on through the gloom, steadying myself against the timbers of the house, as the gutter was running with filth. Then came another cry, this time more of a moaning. Yes, there was certainly something – or someone – there. I saw the light again behind a small window, pushed against a narrow door, and cried out

‘Who’s there?’

There was a scuffling behind the door. A latch moved on the other side; a grimy hand pulled the door back. Lank hair framed a scared white face.

‘What’s your business?’

The stench was overpowering. Rank smells of blood, ordure, sickness. I took a breath

‘I ...I heard crying ...I thought mebbe...’ but my stammered explanations were cut short.

In the corner of the room a girl lay, grey faced, barely able to draw breath. Next to her

stood a little child, clutching the skirts of a tall woman who turned and said, 'Robert – thank God.'

I leaned on the doorpost, suddenly breathless, 'My lady...Mistress Anne ...in God's name, what are you doing here?'

The girl died with the bairn that she had failed to deliver. We had to leave her with the woman who'd answered the door, promising that we would send a midwife who could wrap her with her poor babe in a shroud and arrange for a burial. There would be no bell tolled for her, nor a coffin to rest in, no headstone to mark the spot. A hurried internment in a dark corner beyond the town walls would have to suffice.

We took the child with us. It was only as we made our way back up the filthy streets that I realised where I had seen the poor dead woman before.

'Mistress Anne,' I half turned, brushing water from my face, 'was that? Did that girl...?'

She anticipated my question and nodded, 'Yes Robert. She was at our door. If only I had known...' Her voice faltered as she put her arm around the child.

We walked back in silence; the little girl seemed to be caught in a kind of stupor. She was pitifully thin and lost without her mother, so maybe her mind chose to stay in a vague, wandering place where she seemed temporarily suspended, 'twixt heaven and earth. If there were any memories of her ordeal, then that is where they remained.

That year was a bad one for the plague, hundreds perished. In the streets by the old wharves the pestilence raged in the shabby dwellings. Some blamed it on the girls around the docks, said that they carried the sickness as a warning from the Almighty, that a sailor had scarce to leave his ship before he was mortally afflicted. People tended to stay away from London in times of plague. That may have accounted for Master Henry being gone so long. But I have never understood why he did not come back for Anne, or at least make

arrangements for her to go to her family in the country. Perhaps he did not comprehend the gravity of the situation, being so far away himself. Or perhaps he just put London out of his mind. Now that I do understand – that was ever his way. Once he had one of his schemes in his head, there was no room for anything else.

But now, as I write this, another thought occurs to me – that perchance this was none of Henry's doing, that Anne herself elected to remain where she could be of use. For those refugees were not mere recipients of her patronage but the objects of her love and of her compassion. And now her affections found their centre in the child, and in her resolve to shield her from the pestilence that swept through the town. The little girl blossomed under her care, the two of them running through the garden, playing 'catch as catch can,' sitting in the parlour together stitching skirts for a rag doll. Laughter swept through the house, where lack-lustre order had formerly prevailed. Sometimes Anne would call me to join them and I still remember the sparkle in her eyes, the life that seemed to return to her, to reinvigorate her. I vow that she must have been making plans for the child, thinking of ways to persuade Henry that they could take her for their own and raise her as their daughter.

But by the time Henry returned to London, Anne herself was dead. It was not the plague that took her in spite of her proximity to the poor of the parish. Indeed, once the child came to be with us, Anne took more care with the visits that she made, only going abroad in the town when she felt it to be necessary. When she took ill it was with a fever that made her shake and sweat, tremble and gasp. The rest of the household were terrified; it pains me to say it, but I was as worried as anyone. The house was shut up, no-one allowed in or out and Anne was kept in her own room with only Jenny appointed to attend her. We did our best with the poor orphaned child. Goody Frobisher took her to her heart, rocking her to and fro in the kitchen as she whimpered and called for Anne.

By the time Henry returned from his travels, his wife was a month buried. The house searchers, knowing that there was sickness, had summoned the plague cart and for all that Master Frobisher pleaded with them, they took her out of town beyond the walls, to the common burial ground.

I cannot forget the plague men knocking at the door. It has haunted me since. Hooded men, like figures from the morality plays, their faces white in the dusk, the bump of her body on the stairs as she was carried down; Mistress Frobisher standing by the door asking them to be careful, her voice trembling. Then a thud as she was hurled into the cart on top of a dozen corpses, one hand escaping from her shroud ... the weary creak of the harness as the pony trudged along the silent road.

And I could bear it no longer and pushed past the servants to walk behind the cart, staring at that pure white hand, not caring if the watchmen caught me. It was hours later that I returned. No doubt my face was streaked with dirt where I had been weeping and rubbing my hands, but I cared nothing for my appearance, for what was the use of looking neat as a pin without Mistress Anne to see me?

We burnt all the bedding and scoured the house. Master Frobisher penned a letter to Master Smith, but he did not return at once. He was still quite young then, a man in his prime. They'd been happy enough, but none of us saw him weeping for her. According to Frobisher, Henry listened to his account, asked a few questions, then went into his inner sanctum, his small library on the upper floor of the house and shut the door. He was there for a very long time, maybe it was days. I find it hard to remember now. But I do recall that he asked for me and demanded that I tell him all about his wife's last hours. And I was at least able to persuade him that Anne was decently buried, in a row with other ladies, facing east as she will be found on the day of the Lord's return, may God forgive me my deceits.

The Frobishers told me that, as I had been in Mistress Anne's confidence, I must explain the child to our master. I thought that Henry might expend his wrath on her, so I could not bring myself to say where she had come from. I merely said that Mistress Anne took her in after her mother – a respectable girl known to the parish – had died in childbirth. I remember saying how Mistress Anne had loved the child, how full of concern she had been for her care and he shook his head,

‘She was ever thus. But now it has been her undoing.’

And I found that hard, because he seemed to indicate that the child was to blame for Anne's death. But I durst not say a word about it. For all Henry knew, the girl was the daughter of a serving wench in one of the big houses. The rest would have to remain untold, unspoken.

It was odd though, how he didn't immediately demand her dismissal. I think now that it might have been out of respect for Anne. Keeping the little girl was a way of keeping faith with her wishes. I don't know, but that's what I think.

The name of the child was Margeurite. She was from Morocco, in the north of the country, the child of a foreign woman and an Englishman, or so Mistress Anne told us, as she sat rocking her that first night. She came with her mother on a ship, the mistress said. The man – her father – had sickened and died at sea, so they were left without provision. Somehow, they made their way to London from Dover - the exhausted girl with her small daughter and the babe that she was carrying.

We couldn't get our tongues round Margeurite, so we called her Meggie. She grew up amongst the servants, who all came to love her. As her health returned so did her beauty, the amber skin and lustrous black curls ...and those deep dark eyes, that would light up whenever she saw me. For after Anne's death, I was her nearest friend.

Interlude

Manchester 2014

It's clear that our asylum system can leave anyone destitute, including individuals who the Home Office has deemed in need of international protection. No one should be left homeless after fleeing devastating conflict or persecution.¹⁰

“Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us. Give strength to the weak, comfort the sorrowful.”

The priest moves across the sanctuary in front of the altar. William watches as people stand up to file slowly forward and kneel at the altar rail. A choir sings, the sound cold, somewhat reluctant. William has no idea of the words, back in Kivu the songs were in French. Back in Kivu, there was a small mission church in the next village. It was a long walk but they made it most Sundays. It was nearly always full. When the Bishop visited there were lines of villagers from all over the region, stretching along the tracks in the sun, waiting for the blessed body and blood of our Lord.

Here, in Manchester, there's just a handful of people in this great echoing space of red brick and dim light. Still, it's good to be in here, out of the rain. And William, sitting well back in a corner where no-one will see him, has tried to pray, to join in, crossing himself with everyone else, muttering the words of the Hail Mary.

He has been in the north of England for five months. After his case was heard – his substantive evidence – he was dispersed, put in a van and taken north. They renewed his Section 95 support, but he'd only been in the place for a few weeks when he got his refusal letter. It was two weeks out of date, there was some mix up with the address so the four weeks' notice he should have had dwindled to two. The housing agent didn't even try to look regretful as he sent William on his way. If it hadn't been for Pierre, he would have been

¹⁰ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/number-of-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-falling-into-poverty-soars-in-a-year-show-figures-a8195746.html>

destitute. As it is, there are many days on the streets and quite a number of nights too. Pierre said he'd be here today. William looks around, just as he slips in through the door.

Afterwards Pierre introduces him to the priest, Father John. Father John looks troubled as he listens to William's story.

'My problem is,' he says, 'I am not really allowed to house people. Overnight, that is.' He looks from William to Pierre as the boy translates into French, stumbling a little over *pas... pas vraiment ...permission ... permis.*

'We did have a night shelter,' Father John says, 'but you're not allowed more than two nights ... council regulation.' His voice is regretful, there's an edge of anger. Bloody council, it's already October. What do they expect these men to do when winter kicks in?

Chapter 20

London 1625

As soon as I returned to London, I sensed a change in the city. The quays below the bridge seemed strangely quiet, with little unloading of goods and a mere handful of porters shouting their orders; even the rumbling of the carriers' carts was muffled. Out on the river, ships were still at anchor, their sails hanging listless, though the tide was at the flood. Even the great wheels beside the bridge were desultory, churning slow against leaden water, whilst gulls picked at the refuse as if too weary to take flight.

In the town many shops were shut up, hawkers scarce on the streets. And although it is not uncommon in London to see bailiffs, I had never witnessed such a tangle of collectors' carts as were there in the lanes that afternoon, or such a number of poor folk wandering the highway.

The changes that I witnessed in London, that afternoon of my return, were to spread further and further afield in this, the year of our Lord, sixteen hundred and twenty-five. This, the twenty-third year of James was to be the final chapter of the king's reign; an ague, contracted in February, advanced mercilessly, until, shortly before Easter, James Stuart was dead.

The king's passing was alarmingly swift. Rumours of foul play occupied the tongues of his subjects and preoccupied his physicians. Londoners poured onto the streets to witness their sovereigns' funereal rites, a lavish spectacle that outshone even that of his much-lamented son, Prince Henry. The solemn extravaganza set the country back by more than sixty thousand pounds.

The king's meddling in commerce, the monopolies that had made life difficult for merchants and common craftsmen, the pressure he subjected parliament to, set the seal of his unpopularity. But if the City fathers were hoping for a measure of relief when Charles, his

son, was proclaimed king, they were soon to be disappointed. Against all advice, Charles proceeded to pursue the same path as his father before him. His need for money outweighed notions of popularity; the royal purse was empty; the list of his creditors grew apace.

Whilst Henry Smith was resting from the re-administration of his vast fortune, other merchants in the city were occupied in salvaging what they could of their own reserves. Even members of the most prestigious guilds felt the threat to their businesses. Further afield, in seaports and industrial towns tradesmen struggled with increased duties on imports and a corresponding reduction in the value of their exports. How might wool merchants get a good price when contacts with France could be severed at any time? How could salters import bay salt along the Atlantic coast with Spanish ships imperilling the high seas? Word was spread that Charles was to blame. 'Like father, like son,' the common people groaned. Then the country began to point the finger at parliament, deeming the members to be weak and indecisive, incapable of withstanding their monarch's demands.

In desperation, merchants and nobility resorted to the courts – the sale of a warehouse or two, a few hectares of good farmland, a superfluous property, the enforcement of a long-disputed debt. Such ventures would surely serve to assist the release of assets. Pleas were lodged at the King's bench, depositions set before the court of common pleas; lawyers, always in high demand, now found themselves sought after by an endless stream of petitioners. Moneylenders rushed gleefully to meet the needs of their clients, charging them extortionate rates of interest for the privilege.

But someone had to pay. Poverty, never far below the surface, began to ravage the weak and infirm, those too enfeebled to help themselves.

As Simon and I rode through London, an old beldam struggled along the road in front of me, her arms stretched around a great bundle of goods. I reined in as she stumbled and missed her

footing and a pile of pots and pans clattered across the cobbles. Simon was on a hired pony, a skittish young filly, broken too soon to my way of thinking. She reared up at the noise, her flailing hooves scarcely an inch from the poor woman's head. Simon slid from the saddle and grabbed the pony's bridle.

'Sweet Jesus,' he said, 'I'll be glad to hand this beast over to the stables.'

I went to help the old woman to her feet, picked up her goods and after satisfying myself that she was unhurt, gave a lad a penny to carry her bundle. As we remounted, I remembered Uncle Samuel's words, *the common people will suffer*. Right here, not a mile from Whitehall Palace, a miasma of want drifted through the lanes and highways of the city, in sober witness to the new king's intransigence. I shuddered at the thought that this might not be the only pestilence to invade London town; though it was early in the year I had already seen folks with their faces covered against infection.

Curiosity compelled me to pay a visit to Henry Smith – at least that is what I told the voice in my head, although it was quick to demur with the retort that I might also hold him in some affection. And there was a distinct warmth in Henry's eyes as he gave me his greeting. He even expressed an interest as to how I had been spending my time 'since we last laboured together' and I gave him a brief account of my family before enquiring about his own affairs.

It was clear that Henry was not unaware of the hardship in the city; he told me that he had applied to his trustees for additional moneys 'to alleviate poverty in the Cripplegate Ward.'

'I sent a letter to Serjeant Amherst to the effect that I desired the trustees to release some revenue for my personal distribution. They were not very forthcoming,' he said.

'Did Amherst offer an explanation?'

Henry set his jaw stubbornly. 'The times, Robert. It seems that everyone is suffering.

I don't see Amherst very often,' he added. 'Blake reports back to me if there is anything I need to be told. He is a trustee now, did you know?'

'Yes, yes I recall ... so are you assured that your legacy is in good hands?'

Henry lifted his chin. 'I ... I am still persuaded that they have my best interests at heart...'

But not, it seemed, when Henry's own philanthropic impulse extended to those poor citizens living on his own doorstep. I wondered why Henry's trustees should put impediments in his way. Surely it was their privilege to allow him to be personally involved in his own charity – why should they not uphold his cause? I wondered what Blake had to say about this and was about to ask Henry if he had met him recently, when Meggie put her head round the door.

'You'll be staying to dinner, Mr. Hene?'

I glanced across at Henry for confirmation and he nodded,

'Yes, you must stay, Robert. There are things I want to tell you.'

Meggie's greeting that morning had been cordial, if somewhat perfunctory. Tom was nowhere to be seen, but Jane's welcome made up for both as she bounced into the hall to serve us dinner, a beaming smile on her face.

'Faith, but it's good to see you back here again, Master Robert.' She was quite unabashed by Henry's glare, 'Meggie has kept me hard at work all morning preparing this feast. I hope you'll like it.'

'There's an impressive array of dishes,' I said.

'It's that Master Jackson.' She set down a dish of soused herring. 'He's taken to calling with various delicacies.' She flounced back to the kitchen, calling over her shoulder, 'there's a salad too. I'll be back in a minute.'

I chuckled at her retreating figure, 'I see that Meggie's attempts to refine Jane are still not entirely successful.' But Henry made no answer and I recalled that his hearing was much diminished by the echo in this hall, so I adjusted my pitch. 'I hear you have benefitted from Henry Jackson's bounty.'

Henry took a mouthful of pottage. 'This is rather good, Robert. Meggie adds almonds and wine for me. I think they come from Henry Jackson.'

The salad was also excellent – a dish of red sage, spinach and the added extravagance of thinly sliced oranges. I raised my voice to ask Henry if he had seen his nephew of late. Yes, Henry Jackson had indeed been across to see them, he said, but when I asked him about Joane his manner grew vague. As far as he knew, she was in good health, he said. Then I made mention of his great-nephew Joseph. Henry looked puzzled.

'Joseph? Well, I suppose he is working hard.'

'Is he still down in the west country?'

'The west country?' Henry shook his head slowly, 'I don't know, I haven't heard...'

Later, Henry having gone upstairs to rest, I asked Meggie if she could spare me a few moments of her time, whereupon she suggested we sat in the parlour. She called for Jed to stoke up the fire and invited me to sit in Henry's wing chair. Then taking a piece of embroidery from a basket, she selected a skein of silk and sat down on the settle. I enquired as to her welfare and she gave me a brief response. When I ventured to ask her about Tom, she was more forthcoming.

'Tom has not been in the best of health,' she said, her needle suspended above the fabric. 'His cough did not seem to get any worse for a while. In truth, I thought he was done with it ...' she took a deep breath, 'but then, he caught an ague in the winter, the coughing returned, and it has never really left him since.'

‘I am truly sorry to hear this, Meggie.’

She nodded her head. ‘He does not complain, but I can see that he finds the outside work difficult.’ She began to stitch again. ‘I try not to make too many demands on him,’ she said.

‘Should you, perhaps, consult a physician?’ Meggie looked doubtful, but I persisted, ‘I am certain that Master Henry would be willing to cover the expense. After all, he is charged with caring for his household.’

Meggie inclined her head, ‘Well ... I suppose I could ask Tom.’ She gave me a fleeting smile, ‘but he was well enough to attend Sarah’s wedding, for which we were thankful.’

‘Sarah’s wedding? I had not heard...’

‘She was betrothed to William Spurstow, shortly after your departure, as I recall.’

‘Pray tell me more,’ I said, and she pushed her needle into the cloth, laying it down on the bench.

‘Doctor Spurstow. He is a most highly regarded young clergyman, who holds a position at Cambridge as I understand. They are well-suited, for Sarah has a keen interest in the study of scripture and indeed she is well-versed in the Latin tongue, or so Martha says.’ Meggie smiled, ‘I have to say Rob... Mr. Hene ... Grocer Jackson and his wife Martha were delighted with the union of their daughter to a man of such distinction. Indeed, Martha declared that it almost made up for the loss of that Throckmorton girl...’

I must have looked bewildered for she went on to explain that Joe Jackson could have been betrothed to the daughter of an eminent merchant whose wife was of prestigious lineage.

‘Ah ... now I recall Martha mentioning it. Last year I think... and was that not the day she told us of Joe’s departure?’

‘Yes. In the garden, last summer. It must have been around the time when Master Henry had those disturbing dreams.’

This led us on to talking of Henry. Meggie told me that his health had improved somewhat. His humours seemed to be better aligned and he had begun to sleep more soundly. ‘But his hearing has not improved,’ she added. ‘You will find that you must needs raise your voice to him.’

‘Yes, I have seen that already,’ I said. ‘He appears to know nothing of Joe’s disappearance.’

‘Oh, that’s because Martha decided it was better that he did not know.’ She picked up her needlework, ‘he is still absent from their home.’

‘Joe is? So he did not attend his sister’s wedding?’

Meggie shook her head, ‘No. In truth I doubt if he would have had much of a welcome if he had attended.’

‘Ah. But you were able to go?’

‘Yes.’ Meggie’s face brightened. ‘It was timely, not a week before the Lenten fast.’ She rolled her eyes, ‘I vow Mr. Jackson must have used up all his supplies of sweetmeats and delicacies for the feast.’ She paused to extract a tiny pair of scissors from her workbag. ‘It was a most enjoyable occasion,’ she continued. ‘In truth I cannot recall a finer one. Tom and I walked all the way to the church, I was worried that Tom might not be up to it, but we took our time and we did not have to return on foot afterwards, for we were offered a ride back in a carriage. But I run ahead of myself...’

It was a fair step to Hackney, she said. She had borrowed boots from Madame Mountjoy, ‘but being ill-fitting, it was a relief to sit down once we arrived.’

They had taken their places behind the family, she said; it had given them the chance to observe the finery of the assembled guests. She was particularly intrigued by Martha

Jackson's hat. 'I vow that even Madame Mountjoy could not have devised such a confection of lace, gold braid and feathers,' she declared.

'Was Joane able to attend – widow Jackson, I mean?'

'Yes indeed. And another elderly relative of the most startling appearance.' Meggie paused to re-thread her needle, holding it close to her eyes. 'We had just seated ourselves when there was a clatter and a clamour and a very old lady arrived, two maids and a groom in attendance. She stood right in the middle of the church staring about her. I confess I was astonished at her appearance for she wore a farthingale and a high ruff collar the like of which I have only seen in Madame Mountjoy's old pattern books.'

I laughed. 'I think I know who this is. Lady Grisogon?'

'Oh.' Meggie's smile vanished. 'Well, yes. That was her name. I don't know why my description should be familiar to you, but I confess she put me out of countenance.'

'How come?'

'She ... she looked right at me and said, "what is that blackamoor doing here?" Meggie swallowed, "then she added, "we have a negro coachman now. Very handsome, but *he* has to sit at the back of the church with the servants."'

'Aah. That must have been disquieting for you, Meggie.'

'In truth, I was a little distressed. But I am not unused to it. I hear worse in Wood Street Market.'

I was discomfited by this. It had not crossed my mind that Meggie should have to endure such insults. 'What did Tom say about it?' I asked then.

'Tom? Well, there was not much he could say. And in truth she was most civil to me once we were introduced and she learned that Tom and I dwelt in Master Henry's house.'

'I remember her visiting Henry with her husband. It must have been before your time, Meggie. She took to Mistress Anne – she may not have returned so often after her death.'

‘She mentioned her visits to Henry. And she listened most attentively when I came to tell her how Mistress Anne had rescued me and taken me into her home.’ Meggie smiled, ‘there is a lot more I could tell you about the wedding but in truth I have already told Jane the niceties of dresses and hats, comfits and sugar-work, Rhenish wines and claret – so you must go to her for the details...’ and for a moment her droll expression reminded me of the gleeful little maid that I had known in my youth.

I stood to take my leave. But Meggie did not immediately move to see me to the door. She sat still, frowning slightly.

‘There is something else I think you should know, about Joe,’ she said.

Meggie proceeded to tell me that she had spent some time talking to Sam Jackson on the afternoon of the wedding, that he was low in spirits, on account of his brother not only absconding from the family home and business but refusing to come back to London for such an important occasion. I sat down again as she continued. Sam told her that he had tracked Joe down to a fishing village near Portsmouth, that he was still with the girl, who Sam couldn’t like.

I recalled Martha’s indictment of her. ‘The girl of ill repute.’

‘Indeed. Sam said they were living in an awful hovel, holes in the roof, hardly a stick of furniture ... Anyway, Henry and Martha had written Joe a letter just on the chance that Sam might be able to find him. Joe read the letter and reckoned he might get a lift back from a carrier over Dorchester way before the wedding. But from what Sam told me, the girl was not too pleased... poor Sam said he listened to them arguing over it half the night.’ Meggie shook her head, ‘he felt so helpless when Joe decided to stay there. And Sarah is furious with him. She says it is as if the family no longer matters to him.’

‘Oh dear...’ I didn’t know quite what to say.

‘And the worst of it is that they – Sam and Sarah – do not feel they can tell their parents where he is, for then they would know that he has rejected his family for a ... for this girl.’

‘It’s a sorry state of affairs,’ I said. ‘I can see that it’s difficult for Sam, and Sarah too. But in the circumstances, it does seem wise to keep this from Henry.’

Chapter 21

I was intrigued to learn that Lady Grisogon had visited London, having but recently discovered from my uncle that he was acquainted with her. I wondered if Sir Geoffrey Blake knew of this connection. His nephew Charles – John’s older brother – had inherited a sizeable property not far from Foliejohn, quite close to the Joyner’s country estate. My uncle knew him as well – and he had mentioned something in passing about the Rolfe family, something vague about land disputes. I could not quite recall it. It was time I saw Blake again, I thought. I wanted to know how John was faring. In the event, Blake contacted me first.

One morning at breakfast, Tring, who had been exceedingly attentive since my return, brought a letter to me. His long face was unusually animated.

‘I do believe this is from that grand gentleman who came to visit you last year, Master Hene.’ He turned it over and inspected the seal, ‘this seems to be his. And the groom that delivered it said as he’d come all the way from Chelsea or some such place.’

‘Thank you, Tring.’ I wrested the letter from his grasp and broke open the seal. The writing was indeed Blake’s – generous curves and flourishes flowing in a black scrawl across paper the colour of thick cream. I read,

From your loving friend Sir Geoffrey Blake.

Robert, having had neither sight nor sound of you for far too long, I write of my desire to see you soon. This both for the Goodwille that I hold towards you and for another Matter too Labyrinthine to communicate except in person.

Accordingly, I entreat you to call upon me when it is next convenient to you that I may apprise you of developments relating to Mr. Smith’s Trust. As his man of business, it is Imperative that you should know of them as soon as may be.

Tuesday at ten of the clock at my office if it would suit.

I frowned at the term ‘man of business.’ If Blake thought that I had returned to take up Henry’s cause again, then presumably others might think the same. But I needed to see Blake so I duly attended on him the following Tuesday.

Blake was in his upper office. His greeting was warm but perfunctory. Whilst he did not quite dispense with the formalities, he seemed to be somewhat abstracted.

‘Come in, come in, you’re thrice welcome. I trust that I find you in spirits – haven’t seen you for an age, what have you been up to? Do have a seat.’ Then, to his page, ‘Charles, go tell Marriott to bring us ale.’

Blake sat down heavily behind his desk, grasping the arms of his capacious chair, the same look of healthful prosperity, the same pleasant countenance. But his eyes narrowed as he began to speak.

‘Robert, I won’t prevaricate. I have to tell you that I have repented of my readiness to join Henry’s board.’

‘Er – your pardon, Sir Geoffrey, are you saying that you have resigned?’

‘No, not at all, not at all. But Mr Smith’s board of trustees is a nest of vipers. If I had known...’ he broke off, breathing heavily. I hastened to reassure him.

‘Sir – Sir Geoffrey I must assure you that Henry is most grateful to you for consenting to become involved, indeed, I would say honoured.’

‘Humph, never mind all that. Let me tell you what I have discovered then you can decide how I can best be “involved” as you put it.’ He paused while his servant brought in two tankards of ale, drank copiously from his, then set it down, resting his elbows on the arms of his chair, his fingers interlaced. ‘Now then, as you may recall, two of Henry’s trustees were particularly insistent that he should rescind his first deeds.’

‘Middleton and Francis.’

‘Precisely. And Sir Edward Francis having gone to his Maker, God rest his soul...’

Blake broke off as I uttered an exclamation ‘You didn’t know?’ he said.

‘No, I had no idea.’

‘Hmm. Strange that Henry made no mention of it.’ Blake, looking appropriately grave, added ‘poor old Francis had been ailing for some time. Couldn’t face another winter it seems.’

‘Did the obsequies take place here in London?’

‘No, they returned him to Norfolk,’ Blake lowered his voice, ‘I believe that Lady Elizabeth desired him to have the last rites read in the old manner.’

‘Faithful to her popish convictions then.’ Lady Elizabeth’s insistent harbouring of recusant priests had, in the past, landed her in the courts.

Blake set his lips. ‘Sad to say, the lady’s past misdemeanours were more than matched by Francis’ recent mistakes.’

‘No doubt he’s left her in debt.’ Sir Edward’s financial entanglements were no surprise to me.

Blake nodded, ‘he had his creditors pressing, he’d got in too deep and he wanted to keep Thornley’s – the family’s stately pile. But word has it that his son will have to sell up to keep the bailiffs off his back. Anyhow,’ he added briskly, ‘now that Francis has gone, Middleton has lost his ally.’ He tapped his fingers on the desk. ‘And now it seems he has inveigled Amherst to put his man in to handle the trust’s finances. Henry Smith’s trust, that is to say.’

‘Amherst’s man?’

‘No. Middleton’s.’

‘Hmm.’ I traced the oak leaves carved into the arm of my chair then looked up at Blake. ‘Do you think Amherst is ... is in connivance with Middleton?’

Blake looked shocked. ‘No Robert, that can’t be right. Richard Amherst has been like a rock to Henry.’ He saw the look on my face, ‘in the past that is. I know he is somewhat

remote at present but there is nothing to suggest...' then he added, 'he is highly regarded Robert. You should take care ...'

I felt his rebuke. 'I ask your pardon. But you were telling me about Middleton's man.' Blake curled his lips, 'an unctuous fellow who trails after his master like an overgrown pup. Bloated both in body and his own self-regard. Rejoices in the name of Hardcastle.'

'Hardcastle?'

'Yes, James Hardcastle, I think. D'you know him?'

'No ... no, it just reminded me of someone...'

'Anyway,' Blake reached across his desk and picked up a bell. 'I'm going to ask my stationer, Collins, to come up. I've forewarned him of this. You need to hear what he has to say about this Hardcastle. Then you might comprehend my reasons for feeling so ill at ease.'

Arthur Collins was a slight man, advanced in years and low in stature but what he lacked in presence he made up for in scrupulous honesty. His manner on entering the office was somewhat agitated.

'I do want to make clear that I would not have repeated this to you Sir Geoffrey, if I had not been sufficiently concerned...'

Blake interrupted him, 'Collins, stop fretting. It is at my express wish that you relate what you have learned to Mr. Hene.'

'Very well, but I take no pleasure...'

Blake pounded the table with his fist. 'Just get on with it, man.'

Collins flushed. 'Some weeks since, a regular customer, a scrivener and I believe secretary to one of the nobility, came into the shop to place an order for paper and inks. As he is a frequent customer, and the shop was not busy, we struck up a conversation. I happened to

mention that the number of my customers was dwindling.’ Collins darted a rueful look at Blake, ‘on account of the rising cost of imported goods.’

‘I have to agree that the shop has not done so well of late,’ Blake interposed. ‘The times are dull. But we will recover, people still need to write. Perhaps even more so now.’ Then he added dismissively, ‘and they seem to take much consolation from reading, so the books are still selling. Anyway – back to your story, Collins.’

‘Yes. Well, er ... Mr. Hardcastle, who I confess I cannot like, said that even the wealthiest of men were not escaping now; he happened to know that his own master was in process of advising “a good friend” how to rid himself of a mountain of debts.’ Collins moistened his lips, ‘and he went on to excoriate his master and his cronies as charlatans, high and mighty hypocrites, puritan pretenders, or some such nonsense.’ Collins wrung his hands. ‘He said they knew nothing about holiness ... that Mid ... that his master was heading for a fall.’ He turned to me, his eyes wide, ‘I wouldn’t be telling you this Mr. Hene, had not Sir Geoffrey asked me to. I only told him because I was so troubled by what the man said next.’ And he went on to tell us that Hardcastle had hinted at blackmail.

‘Blackmail?’ I was puzzled. ‘Do you mean he thought his master was blackmailing someone?’

‘On the contrary, Mr Hene. He said as he himself was thinking of blackmailing his master.’

‘You would think the fool would at least keep it to himself,’ Blake muttered.

‘I think he had spent rather too long in the tavern, if you understand me,’ Collins replied, a glimmer of a smile on his face.

‘But did he give you any substantiation for blackmailing his master?’ I asked.

Collins looked unhappy. ‘He went on to say that this master of his and a friend, an earl no less, were in hock to an old money-lender; that they had access to his accounts.’

‘An old money lender?’ I leaned forward in my chair.

‘Yes. I became angry then. I asked Hardcastle how he could have found this out. He said that it was his business to check all his master’s correspondence. Well, I wouldn’t have it. I told him it was all nonsense, that he was making it up, but he just jeered at me, said I hadn’t seen the letters, that they were definitely up to no good.’

I stared at Blake. ‘What a scoundrel.’ Then on impulse I asked Collins for a description of the man.

‘I’d say he’s shorter than most, fleshy ...’ Collins scratched his head, ‘and now I come to think on it, I mind his hands are flabby – soft like a woman’s – and white too.’

An hour later I stood at Temple Stairs uncertain as to how I’d arrived there. My mind was reeling. Boats ploughed up and down the broad river, a wherryman shouted at me to get on board but I just shook my head and stood back from the landing stage.

The tale I had just learned from Blake’s stationer filled me with foreboding.

The description fitted, I thought. That’s why the name had stirred a memory. Hardcastle, Hardaker. I would not put it past Bartholomew Hardaker to change his name, to seek a degree of anonymity because of some earlier transgression. He would stop at nothing to advance his own cause.

Hardaker had been senior apprentice to Henry Smith when first I entered Henry’s house. From the day I arrived to the day that Hardaker left, he made no secret of his animosity, vexed that I had a greater ability to grasp Mr Smith’s accounting system, that I was more amenable with the clients. Then one day, when Henry was absent from the house, I discovered that Hardaker was cheating him.

I was on my way to fetch a paper from Henry’s study. As I walked down the passage, I heard voices and drew back. Clearly Bartholomew Hardaker had a client with him. The door

was not quite closed and I heard the man say,

‘It will save me the duty. And of course, you’ll get your cut.’

‘I’ll tell Smith that you were unable to purchase the goods at the right price.’

‘Yes. But just this time, lad. Don’t you be thinking you have a monopoly on me.’

And I heard their laughter as the deal was closed. Innocent fool that I was, I told Henry as soon as he returned, without thought of the consequences. Hardaker denied it all of course, but after that, Henry was watchful. Hardaker left shortly afterwards and Henry said no more about it. But then the wretch returned, no longer an apprentice but a belligerent young fellow with a grievance.

Now, as the wind from the river whipped about my face, I shuddered. Had my own ejection from Henry’s house been Hardaker’s doing? I chastised myself impatiently. *Robert you fool, all that is in the past. It’s Henry’s legacy that is in danger, not you.* Besides, I had no proof that these men were one and the same. And yet ... Hardaker had gone to work for an iron merchant. It could well be Middleton. And whoever this man was, he was right in one respect. Middleton and his cronies *were* hypocrites.

I walked home slowly, seeing the growing poverty of our city – beggars on the streets, children in the alleyways, ill-clad, pinched with hunger. Must I spend my time investigating the very men who ought to be Henry’s main supporters, I thought, when those men should be urging Henry on to improve the lot of these indigents?

The voice in my head was petulant. *You vowed that your work was done now.*

But this time I had a response. ‘I can do something about this before it’s too late.’ I felt suddenly resolute. It was time for me to meet Frazer; we could look into this together.

Interlude

Manchester 2014

Father John is not the only one concerned about the plight of asylum seekers this winter. In an office not far from his church, another man is working on a plan for a seasonal night shelter. This is Harry Smith, the director of MAP, the Manchester Asylum Project. Harry knows that the city council has a couple of hostels in Greater Manchester, but these are for locals; there are occasional spaces available for ‘the odd asylum seeker,’ but this seems somewhat tokenistic, in a city with so much need. So, Harry has devised a means whereby both the law and his clients can be accommodated.

There’s a drop in temperature mid-October, as he begins his annual round-up of volunteers – men and women who will commit to a weekly routine of setting up sleeping arrangements. He makes a note of indispensable items – mats, sleeping bags, washing facilities, evening meal, breakfast, drinks, transport to a series of venues around the city. As he enumerates the list, he’s struck by the significance of the number seven; a minimum of seven volunteers in each of the seven venues, seven days a week for seven months. It’s a great biblical number.

But it’s a ridiculous amount of work for just twelve homeless men, he thinks. If MAP wasn’t so strapped for cash it could be a separate branch of the charity on its own. If they had their own venue ... and if he wasn’t already so busy ... the phone buzzes by his elbow and he picks it up, listens to a girl from Refugee Action, starts to write down names, dates of birth, details...

‘Send them across, tell them they must come before eleven, we’ll see what we can do.’ Two Eritrean girls have lost their right to remain. Three days to find them a place to stay.

Well at least there’s a designated staff member for hosting now; Emma Wilson, legal background, nice woman seems really keen to help. They’ve found funding for two days a

week, though they'd like to give her more hours.

Harry lifts his head to stare out at the grey Manchester sky. How many old mill chimneys are out there, he wonders? One day he'll count them all. He sighs as he looks back at the screen. There are so many ways he could make a difference, so many things he'd like to do ... as it is, he seems to spend all his time 'fire-fighting,' pushing back against things that shouldn't even occur in a civilized country, finding shelter for people who should not rightly be homeless.

He picks up the phone to call Emma.

Chapter 22

Summer 1625

The George and Dragon Inn had been in Southwark for longer than most people could remember. It was well placed near the river, on the west-bound road across London bridge, an old coaching inn much frequented by theatre folk, as well as travellers, market traders, wherrymen and sailors. When I was an apprentice we would often ride by, even stop there sometimes if Master Smith was not in too much of a hurry. Most times I went there with him I was left out in the yard or in one of the tap rooms while he went into the middle bar to meet a client. Now I was here for a meeting of my own, with Tom's acquaintance, Jeremiah Frazer. With Tom not yet returned to health and the worrying news from Blake about Henry's affairs I decided that I must speak to Frazer in person.

I had a quiet word with Jed. I did not want Tom to be troubled by this, I said. But if he could find out where Frazer lived, I needed to get a message to him.

'There is no immediate hurry,' I said. 'I can ask you for the reply next time I come to the house.'

But Jed did not wait for me to return to Silver Street. He came to my door two days later with instructions to meet Frazer at the George, across the bridge. I pressed a silver sixpence into his hands. 'Upon my word, you did not waste any time,' and he stammered his thanks and dashed away before I could change my mind. Accordingly, the next afternoon, Simon and I took a boat across to Bankside.

The George was much as I remembered it, the old sign still swinging from its timbered gallery, a brightly painted picture of the knight and his fiery foe as a reminder that it must have been named for the saint.

We waited in a small tap room towards the back of the inn and stared about – the place seemed hardly to have changed. I took a sip of beer and attempted to avoid the gaze of a highly painted young woman who was swaying towards me.

‘Roses for your lady-love?’ she murmured, leaning over my shoulder, a mass of fair curls brushing my face. Simon sniggered as I attempted a man-of-the-world dismissive laugh that didn’t deter her at all.

‘Sweet lavender?’ she continued, turning to Simon and pulling a sprig from her bodice. Simon blushed to the roots of his hair.

‘No, no really. I don’t have ...’ He held out his empty hands.

‘You don’t have ...?’

Her eyes seemed to glitter behind the paint as she slid into the seat next to him, pressing her thigh against his. I was beginning to feel hot, my collar tightening, as her hand slid across the table to stroke my arm.

‘Oy, scarper.’

I looked up in relief at a pock-marked face. The man winked at me, small inquisitive eyes in a florid face, a generous mouth beneath a bulbous nose.

‘Reckon you must be Mr. Hene.’ He nodded across to Simon, ‘and you his boy.’ He kept his voice low, so no-one else would overhear him, his inflection that of a local man but with none of the roguish drawl that I had been expecting. I gulped, rose from the stool and banged my head against a beam.

‘Yes. That’s me. I mean, I’m happy to make your acquaintance. You must be Frazer ... er, forgive me, Mr. Frazer.’

He grinned, ‘Frazer’ll do,’ and slapped the flower-seller on the buttocks as she stood up hastily. ‘Choose your conquests more carefully, my lovely,’ he said, and laughed as, pouting, she flounced away to find other victims.

I sat down again, rubbing my head. 'I don't know why she lighted on us.'

Frazer guffawed loudly. 'She?' he leaned in and whispered 'She 'aint no more of a lady than you or me.'

Simon gawped at him, 'What? How ... why . . but she had ...' he gestured at his chest and Frazer's mirth increased.

'*She's* one of the stage-hands from the Swan. Hangs around the docks with the sailor boys.' He winked knowingly. 'Tighten a bodice enough, add the powders and the lotions ... you saw what you wanted, young feller.'

He clicked his fingers at a serving hand. 'Fetch these bewildered innocents two pints of the heavy, lad, and I'll have one as well.' Then he settled back on his stool and regarded us quizzically.

'What's to do now? Your boy seemed very keen that I should meet you here. Practically ordered me to come.'

'Jed?' I laughed. 'He's not my boy. He works with Tom Davasour but ... well Tom is not in the best of health. Besides, I thought it was time I spoke to you myself.' I nodded my thanks as the tap boy set down the tankards. 'Make it a proper arrangement, if you get my meaning.'

Frazer drank deeply and belched his approval. 'They know how to keep their beer here.' He looked at me, 'know you're a straight 'un. I've kept a tally of my expenses.' He turned his tankard over and shook a few last drops onto the sawdust. I laughed and called for more. Then I said,

'You know we believe Matthew Bellows to be the man who has been used to threaten Henry Smith.'

'Your master the property man?'

I winced, ‘not precisely my master. I help him out ... from time to time. I was his apprentice quite a long time ago.’ I hurried on, ‘there’s another man I wanted to ask you about.’ I glanced at Simon but his attention was on the flower seller and ‘her’ customers. I turned back to Frazer, dropping my voice. ‘There’s a secretary, in the employ of a merchant by name of Middleton. Sir John Middleton.’

‘Heard of him alright. What’s his man called?’

‘Hardcastle. But I have reason to believe his real name could be Hardaker. James, or perchance, Bartholomew.’

‘Bartholomew Hardaker’s a rogue,’ Frazer said at once. ‘But I’ve heard nothing of him for a while.’ His eyes narrowed. ‘What’s he done?’

‘It’s not so much what he’s done – at least, not that I know – it’s what he’s been saying.’ Frazer raised an eyebrow and I launched into my tale.

‘One of my close acquaintances is a printer who owns a shop on the Strand.’

‘Blake’s place, is it?’ Frazer said at once. ‘Good God, you must move in gentrified circles.’

I smiled, ‘the very same. His bookseller, one Collins, had a visit from Hardcastle not many weeks since. Reckoned he must have supped a bit too well as he started to tell Collins a lot of things he should’ve kept to himself. Said that his master was intent on draining Mr. Smith’s coffers. Well, it was more guarded than that but Blake – Sir Geoffrey – and I reckon that’s what he meant. Then he boasted that he was thinking of blackmailing his master; that he has his own ways of damaging “Dog Smith.”’

‘Sounds like Hardaker to me. He’s an ale-soused blabbermouth,’ Frazer said. He leaned forward, ‘D’you think the good Serjeant is in on this?’

‘I don’t know. He is not one of the two men that Hardaker mentioned.’

I ran my finger round the rim of the mug. Sir Geoffrey Blake’s words came back to me,

No Robert, that can't be right. Richard Amherst has been like a rock to Master Smith.

I turned to face Frazer. 'We have to be careful, Serjeant Amherst is very influential. If a breath of my enquiries were to reach him ...' I stopped and shook my head.

'I get your drift.' Frazer said. 'We'll leave him alone unless ... well ... there are certainly people in Dorset House who might not stand up too well to investigation and even if he is not one of them, he'll not take kindly to snoopers.' He drained his tankard in one gulp. 'You'll have to trust me on that one, Mr. Hene.' He got to his feet, 'it's getting too noisy in here. Let's get out, I've questions to ask you.' As we got to the door, he added, 'we'll take a boat to Queenhithe. Have you got the fare?'

I summoned Simon who had wandered across to another room. A blind harpist was strumming along to his own ballads – songs that would have made his mother regretful of him but roused his listeners to cheers and catcalls. Simon looked somewhat abashed as I arrived to haul him away.

On the river, we made plans. Frazer would make enquiries. He had a watch on Bellows he said. If this Hardaker fellow was in cahoots with him, he might manage to trail them. His eyes gleamed as he looked out across the water. It was clear that he relished a challenge.

'That great house you spoke of,' he said 'Knole, is it?'

I nodded, 'the earl of Dorset's country house – well one of them anyway.' I thought that Frazer might have something to say about 'those as had too many houses,' but instead he asked,

'Does that bailiff send his letters to Smith by carrier – the post, I mean?'

'Oh no. There are hundreds of documents going to and fro between Knole and the London house. They come in bags on Dorset's coaches. As I recall, Lindsey's letters to Master Smith are delivered to his door by one of the Dorset grooms. Henry sends his back the same way.'

‘The same way? Back to Dorset House, then on to the other place?’

‘Yes. Yes, I’m sure of it.’

‘Hmm. Most enlightening.’ He brushed a splash of water off his face. ‘It might help me if you could let me see some examples of your Mr Smith’s handwriting. And of your own. And have a word with that Collins about ink.’

‘About ink?’ I was puzzled by this. ‘Whatever for?’

‘It’s just an idea. Not all the great houses use ink from the suppliers you know. They make their own. And inks have their own variations. If you want to find out if a document is really from a particular place or person, it can help to know where they’ve got their ink from.’

This was intriguing. ‘Sir Geoffrey will be most interested when I report this to him.’ I said.

Frazer’s eyes narrowed, ‘if you’ll take a word of advice from me –’

‘Of course –’

‘Say nothing to him about the ink. Most likely he’ll know about the changes that happen anyway. But I think we should keep this to ourselves. You never know who may be listening.’

Surely, he couldn’t suspect Blake? I opened my mouth to protest but then the thought came to me that Frazer must have his reasons. ‘Very well,’ I said. ‘I’ll likely send Simon to you with the papers – I may have to go away myself.’

‘Local lad, is he? From round here, I mean?’

‘Yes. Londoner born and bred, like Tom.’

‘Good. He seems bright enough.’ Frazer’s face grew solemn, ‘Give Tom my good wishes. Always liked the Davasour boys. Decent lads.’

We parted company at the Queenhithe stairs. After the comparative calm of the river the streets were crowded. I side-stepped a crier hung about with boots and shoes and cannoned into a woman carrying a basket of hot pies on her head, much to Simon's amusement. By the time we had retrieved the pies and mollified the wrathful vendor, Frazer was nearly out of sight, a short stocky figure disappearing into the throng, his shoulders thrust forward, walking with intent. There was something likeable about him, I thought, for all he was such a scrounger.

Chapter 23

One morning in late summer, Sam Jackson came across to Cripplegate on the pretext of delivering a basket of foodstuffs for Henry. In truth he had some startling news. The first I knew of it was when Jane pushed open the door to the library and announced his arrival.

‘Samuel Jackson’s here, Mr Hene, come with a fardel of fruits, figs, pigeons’ eggs. Asked if there was aught else we’d like next time.’ She giggled. ‘Didn’t know where to start, I could think of a few things.’

‘Jane, you brazen hussy, keep a still tongue in your head lest Mistress Davasour hears you.’ But she heard the amusement in my voice and pranced back to the kitchen with her head high. Then Sam came out to speak to me in the hall and my amusement vanished. I confess that I struggled to greet him with a smile, such a pale figure as he presented, his face so wan.

‘That girl,’ he shook his head.

‘She brings good cheer to this house, Sam,’ I said. ‘And Meggie has the measure of her.’

‘She wouldn’t stay long at our place.’ Sam grimaced. ‘My mother is sunk in melancholy; my father is angry most of the time. I vow it was a relief to get away for the morning. It’s affecting the shop, Mr Hene.’ He sighed. ‘We’ll start to lose customers if it gets any worse.’ And before I could ask what had caused this, Sam continued, ‘I’ve just been speaking to Meggie about it. She thought perhaps I should tell you too.’

Sam’s voice was so low, his manner so dispirited, that I had to lean forward to hear him. He told me that he had written to Joe about Sarah’s wedding but Joe had moved on and the carrier took an age to find him. The letter convinced Joe to return home, Sam said. In a

way it was the excuse that he had been waiting for. But it had taken him a week to get back to London, and by the time he got there he was half starved.

‘I think he was hoping Father would greet him, recognize what a hard journey he had.’ Sam sniffed. ‘He told me later that he meant to go straight round to the house but when he reached Bucklersbury he saw the shop was open, thought there was a chance I’d be there and walked in through the door. The baker had just delivered fresh bread and hot pies. Joe was that famished he couldn’t resist the temptation. So, when father walked in from the back, the first thing he saw was Joe standing by the counter, stuffing a pie in his gob.’ Sam looked at me and shrugged his shoulders. ‘Father was livid, accused him of thieving. Not a word of greeting, nothing ...’ Sam glared at me, his fists clenched. ‘Would you credit it, Mr Hene? He called Joe a worthless lump. Told him he stank like a hog-house.’

I stared at him. ‘What a dreadful homecoming. But surely your mother must have been delighted to see Joe.’

Sam shook his head. ‘She didn’t see him.’ He clenched his hands, ‘no more did I – not that day – by the time I had a moment to go back to the store-room, Joe had gone.’

Sam found out later that Joe had run to his grandmother’s house. Of course, Joane took him in and Sam had guessed he might be there, so at least the two brothers were able to spend some hours together. But Joe was by now in a bitter rage of his own and flatly refused to go to see his mother. In spite of the pleading from his brother and grandmother, he left London that same afternoon.

‘I wanted to go with him,’ Sam said. He bit his lip, ‘I think I should have.’

‘But you had work to do.’

Sam nodded. ‘Yes; besides, I could not leave father without explaining myself. That would have been a coward’s way out – and then there was mother. I could not have done that to her.’ He squared his shoulders, ‘but I will go soon. Joe’s going further west this time, from

what he said. He mentioned a friend, another labourer, in a place on the other side, below Bristol.'

'Ah, you mean on the Bristol channel. That could be in Somerset, or Devon.'

'Devon, I think he said.'

That was a long way, I thought. Too far for Sam to go by himself.

'Do you know when you'll leave?'

'There's a journeyman coming back from Dorchester any day now. Father has an assignment for him in Exeter – I think that's the place. Is that Devon?'

'Yes, yes it is. If you go with him, I'm sure you can find other men, farmers, journeymen, making their way to the north coast. Will your father allow it?'

Sam gave me a wry smile, 'I don't think he'll try to stop me. He'd have to answer to mother.' He opened his bag and brought out a folded paper. 'My grandmother has given me a letter for Uncle Henry.'

'I'll see that he gets it,' I said. 'He's resting this morning but as soon as he is up and about, I will make sure he has it.'

Chapter 24

High summer – all of London held its breath. The plague had returned, sweeping from Holborn across to Whitechapel like a great wave. Some said it started in the same manner, they even whispered that it was the same house. Not since the first year of King James had so many people died. And now Charles was forced to postpone his coronation, just like James himself. Murmurings of divine retribution spread through the town, God's wrath against the nation. Preachers declared that the new king had opened a door to popery, marriage to a catholic princess was as good as idolatry. Whispers of apostasy spread through the land, murmurs of judgement. England would not escape this time.

London was caught in a haze of dust and heat. The sultry weather was no respecter of persons – knights of the court, aldermen and rat catchers alike went timidly about their business, glancing over their shoulders. Around the wharves by the water's edge the stench was unbearable, the Thames a stinking cess pit, sluggish on the ebb tide. Townsfolk held nosegays to their faces, the theatres on the south bank dismissed their actors and shut their doors. Shops began to close from Southwark to Smithfield, highways thronged with carts and carriages as merchants hastened to their summer residences, the nobility to their country seats, all London it seemed, on the brink of departure. King Charles and his court fled to Theobalds, with an extensive retinue of courtiers and servants, leaving the Palace of Whitehall eerily abandoned, save for a few forgotten beldams in their alms houses.

Holbourne fell victim to the sickness from the outset of its evil rampage through London. My house escaped, by the mercy of God. We laid low for several weeks, only sending Simon into town for needful supplies. I myself stayed at home, few of my acquaintances would have opened their doors to me, for fear of infection.

But one morning, the plague having somewhat abated, I held a nosegay to my face and walked across to Cripplegate to find how Henry Smith was faring. There were still crosses on the doors, even signs of houses abandoned and boarded up and when I knocked at Henry's front door there was no answer. My heart began to beat faster as I went round to the yard.

In the kitchen I nearly fell over a pile of loosely stacked logs, all hugger mugger by the back door. I stared at the disorder, the table cluttered with unwashed bowls, ale dripping from an overturned jug, the sickly smell of burnt milk ...

A heavy tread on the stairs suggested that Jane was about to enter but it was Meggie who came through the door, carrying a covered bowl. Her apron was soiled, her coif askew.

'Mr. Hene, I didn't expect...'

At the sight of my face, she became defiant. 'Eh heh, it's a sorry sight. Things have changed since you were last here. As you can see ...'

She set down the basin and I saw that the cloth was stained with streaks of red...

'Where is everyone?'

'Oh ... Jane is in the parlour; Master Henry wanted the casements closing. It's far too hot in there but he cannot abide the stench of the brook. And Jed had to go across to his father's house. They're pressing him to return but I don't think we could make do without him.'

'And Tom?'

'He's upstairs, resting.' She straightened the bench, picked up a jug, took a cloth to the spilled ale.

'So, he is no better.'

She shook her head. 'He has become diminished.' She began to stack the dishes, then stopped, a beaker in one hand. 'Even the smallest tasks,' she said, 'filling a bucket with

water, carrying it across the yard, it's all too much for him. Jed does most of the heavy work now.'

As she pushed the hair back from her face, I saw strands of silver among the black curls. Her eyes were weary and bloodshot, the skin dark and bruised beneath them. She went on, 'Only last evening...Tom was putting the ladder back in the old stable and Jed came in, 'Mistress Meggie' he says to me, 'I think you need to come; Tom's got an awful look on him.' Her lips trembled. 'And he was right, Tom was leaning against the door, his face grey. And it was only a ladder...'

'Poor Tom.' I could think of little to say. We stood in silence.

Presently she said, 'I ... I do not expect him to recover from this sickness.'

There seemed little point in disagreeing with her.

'What do you think is best for him?' I asked.

'He has no other family apart from his mother. And she's old now, she couldn't do much. He has nowhere else to go from here, Mr. Hene.'

'Nowhere to go – Meggie, why should he go anywhere else?'

'Well, once the master knows how ill he is, he will not want to be near him for fear of sickness.'

She brushed flour off her apron, picking at the stains on her sleeve. The number of deaths was still rising around here, she said. Why, only last evening, Mistress Mountjoy had told her of one on Foster Lane. Her words came out in a rush, she had asked Tom to go with her to speak to Master Henry, to suggest that he might consider removing to the country. But the master, as anticipated, scoffed at the notion that he would retreat now. Silver Street was not amongst the most affected parts of London, he said. Besides, he had lived here a long time and he had never allowed fear of the plague to drive him away before, why should he do so now? They must trust their lives to God's mercy. She

set her lips, paused. Then, ‘he said that if God must judge the city yet again, then Londoners must accept his chastening.’

‘I see.’

‘He says that those of a stout heart must remain. He told us to look to Minister Flint. If he had not been struck down, then why would we be?’

‘Minister Flint?’

‘The parish priest. He has been tireless in his efforts ... he’s a good man. But Tom was vexed.’ Meggie sniffed, ‘He said to me, later, does that mean poor victims of the plague deserve to die because they’re ungodly? I know what he was thinking, Mr. Hene. He was thinking, what has he done to make God angry?’ She turned and gathered up a pile of spoons and forks, thrusting them into a pail. ‘There are days when he seems to rally, when he can sweep the yard or help Jed in the garden,’ she went on, ‘but at other times he can hardly climb the stairs.’ Her voice cracked ‘he used to be such a strong man. He could lift hundred-weight sacks with no trouble at all.’

‘Yes, I know.’ And he not yet a score and ten in years, I thought sadly. ‘Who is waiting on Master Henry – helping him dress and go to bed?’ I asked now.

‘Jane and I ... well we have to do most of that now.’ She lifted her head, listening, ‘I can hear Tom coughing again. I’ll call Jane.’

I sat in the kitchen considering what to do. Could I send someone over? But I only had old Tring and his wife and they did little enough as it was. Could I dispense with Simon? I was still pondering when Meggie came back in.

‘Jane’s taken a syrup up to him.’ She began to stack up dishes on the table. ‘I confess she has been a tower of strength to me since I told her the truth about Tom’s cough,’ she said. ‘And that’s in spite of her own worries.’

‘What worries does Jane have?’

‘One of her brothers has the sickness. His house is shut up and their baby – named for Jane – has been fretful these past few days.’ Meggie’s eyes filled with tears, ‘Jane can’t go in to see her, the poor wee thing.’

Jane’s niece was not to live much longer. There were so many poor babies that year. Bills announcing the deaths were posted on the church doors every week as they had been so many times before. Only now, when people were expecting the lists to start getting shorter, they seemed to grow even longer. Meggie had never been one to give way to despair, but I could see that she was hard pressed. Here she was, trying to cover some of Tom’s work, comfort Jane, keep Jed in order, make sure Master Henry was properly cared for...

Now she grew agitated. ‘If Master Henry would agree to us hiring another servant, a manservant to look after him, then we could make shift. I mean,’ she wrung her hands together, ‘I’m not saying that the master should expect me to stop waiting on him, but it’s the house really, I can’t ...’

‘Meggie...’ I held up my hands. ‘You’ve no need to explain to me. But I’m not sure another manservant is the answer.’ Her face fell, but I hurried on. ‘If Henry could be persuaded to stay with one of his friends in the country, like he has before, then do you think you could manage here?’

‘Well yes, but could you persuade him of that?’

‘I’d like to think so, Meggie. I’ll certainly see what I can do.’

In the end, it was Henry himself who decided to make the change. The heat of the city had become intolerable, the stench from the ditch at London’s wall was enough to turn his stomach. And the rats ... Henry was used to rats, everyone in London had to learn to put up with them but these were bigger, blacker, menacing. He saw the first one as he was sitting on the bench by the back wall, enjoying an unusually fresh summer breeze. They couldn’t even

summon the rat catcher with his dog, it had been rounded up with all the rest for drowning.

How did anyone expect him to work in these conditions?

I seized my chance. Why did he not take up Sir Geoffrey's offer of a visit to Hale House? Yes, Henry agreed, he must go as soon as he could. A period of quiet reflection would enable him to mull over the many decisions that he had to make. He might even discuss them with Blake in the tranquillity of the countryside.

I wasted no time, writing a polite request to Blake who sent a speedy response that he would be more than happy to receive Henry at Hale House. In fact, he would particularly relish his old friend's company, as Lady Mary had but recently departed to Hampshire.

Blake's letter continued:

Mary is trouble by our proximity to the city and desires to ascertain for herself that her grandchildren are enjoying good health. Moreover, we have heard that John Rolfe and his wife are at present with Charles in Berkshire and Lady Mary will visit them on the way. For you may not know that Beatrice – John's wife – has been gravely ill following the sad death of her daughter, born to them in April last.

I had not known of this. Poor John Rolfe. And poor Beatrice, his wife. I set down Blake's letter but found myself suddenly undone as sorrow ambushed me.

A stifling upper room, the stench of blood ... and the midwife pushing past me with a soiled little bundle ... that shrunken figure on the hastily covered bed ... and the dreadful silence.

I leaned hard on the table for support, half turning to check that the door was shut. I wanted no-one else to witness this, in truth it had not occurred for an age. I waited, breathing hard, it would surely pass.

Henry was clearly gratified by Sir Geoffrey's willingness to accommodate him. Thus, on a bright morning at the end of July, Meggie and Jane helped him into Sir Geoffrey's carriage, sent for the occasion and Jed, tasked with the master's safe delivery to Hale, folded himself in after, with a pretty show of self-consequence. Jane was full of it when I next called round.

'Faith, Master Robert, we couldn't help but laugh. Jed taking Master Henry all that way... when he can't even hoe a row of peas without something goes wrong. And Master Henry might have calmed down a bit in the last few days but – well – you've seen him when he gets cross with Jed... can you imagine, 'Jed, put the blanket over me, Jed, tell the coachman to slow at the corners, Jed, draw the window up the dust is choking me.' I could hardly wait for Jed to get back so I could ask him if he got Master Henry there safe.'

'And did he?' I smiled at Jane, suddenly glad of her, for Meggie's sake, relieved that they would both find the house calmer for Henry's absence. And I reflected how advantageous it would be for Henry, now that he had left the city, to set aside the concerns of his legacy.

Interlude

Dallas Court 2014,

Dallas Court is the Immigration Reporting Centre in Salford that serves most of Greater Manchester. It is a grey, single storey building on an industrial estate, well away from any residential properties. Those reporting have to queue outside, whatever the weather. There is no shelter. The nearest bus-route is a quarter of a mile away.¹¹

Dallas Court. A car draws up, a young woman heaves herself out to stand behind William in the queue. William has walked across the city and he's started to cough again. At first the girl looks at him warily but as the line moves slowly forwards, they fall into easy conversation. She is tall, confident, different from some of the other poor women William knows. She tells him she's from Zimbabwe, caught up in the struggles against ZANU- PF.

'I was MDC – Mugabe's men did not like me. Not at all.' Her eyes widen as she spreads her hands, 'I stay as long as I could, but then they threaten my daughter ...' she shrugs her shoulders.

William doesn't understand all the details; he hasn't heard of Morgan Tsvangurai or his Movement for Democratic Change but he knows enough about Mugabe for the story to be familiar. The girl – Liliane – seems to know a lot about the Congo though. Presently she says,

'The UK have started to send people back. They say it's safe to return.'

William stares. 'To the Congo? How they know?'

Liliane shrugs. 'It's what they want to believe. But it's too dangerous now, with ebola.'

'Ebola?' William is alarmed, 'in my country? Where? Where is it?'

'The borders, towards Rwanda?' She looks at him enquiringly, 'is that near your place?' William nods.

'Best to stay then,' she laughs. 'No ebola, the west is free of these things.'

¹¹ Smith, D. 2016 p.154

Besides, there is medicine and health service, nothing like that could ever happen here.'

William opens his mouth to ask for more information when a woman appears with a clipboard, 'Liliane Tshuma.'

Liliane gasps, picks up her bag. 'Wish me luck.'

A woman gets out of the parked car, watching as the girl disappears into the building. She pulls her hood up against a gust of rain and as her eyes scan the queue, they meet William's for a second. He feels a jolt of recognition, he's seen her somewhere before, but no, he can't place her. The woman gets back into the car and shuts the door; there's the faint sound of music. The minutes tick slowly by. Two more people are called but Liliane does not reappear.

Suddenly there's the muffled noise of a mobile from inside the car, a door bursts open and the woman rushes towards the building; she hammers on the glass, there's the sound of raised voices ... William feels a fluttering in the pit of his stomach as she comes back out, glued to her phone.

'Yes. Yes, it's me, Harriet. Liliane, Liliane Tshuma ... holding centre ... sorry? No, the airport.'

The car roars out of the car park. Words fly up from the queue, *prison, airport, removal*. Someone starts to moan. Then William hears his own name called and follows a uniformed guard into the building.

chapter 25

With Henry out of the way at Hale I had the chance to make a thorough search through his books. It was Blake who put me up to this – I had been all for running straight to Henry to expose the deceits of his trustees but Blake counselled me to caution. As yet Collins's story was only hearsay, he reminded me. It was one thing to know that some of Henry's trustees were dragging their heels in the matter of their repayments but quite another to suspect them of treachery towards him. Henry must surely be advised of this, but only if we could produce evidence to substantiate it.

Despite the threat of the plague and the presence of his house guest at Hale, Blake still came into London every week to visit his office. We agreed to meet from time to time in order to exchange any information we might uncover. As I was already thoroughly acquainted with Henry's books, I was fairly certain that I would find nothing more of interest; then one afternoon Blake handed me a sheaf of papers recently issued to the trust, that he had somehow 'come by.'

'Robert, cast your mind back. As I recall, you were perturbed to find that certain gentlemen owed Henry large sums of money. So, scrutinise his accounts – those that he may still retain – and see if these match up to Henry's own statements.'

I sat over the papers that night. They gave details of the current situation and the amounts still owed to Henry by his defaulters. The list should have included several of his trustees but there was no mention of them. The next day I looked in Henry's library. Still, I could find no record of their debts. Puzzled, I began to search through his old ledgers. Middleton, Francis and Wingfield's names came up several times in the common ledgers. Lumley was mentioned, as was Amherst, but these were petty amounts compared with the loans that I had seen before. It appeared that the trustees' debts had been deliberately

expunged from the current balance sheets. But there must be a record of them somewhere...

Henry himself had urged them to pay him last year, at the time of his revocation.

I racked my brains and recalled taking a book back upstairs to Henry to ask him about... about... William Wingfield. It was very early on in my dealings with him, during the first few weeks of my return. Henry had dismissed my queries about Wingfield's debts. I had gone upstairs to speak to him and that's when I saw their names. Of course.

I scanned Henry's shelves. As I recalled, the cover was blue, not brown like the others. There was no sign of it, but I knew that Henry had other papers in his dressing room so I went upstairs to look. The book was not hard to find. I took it from the shelf and on an impulse, added several more. Out on the landing I paused, recalling the last time I had been there, when I had heard those strange utterances from Henry's bedchamber; as I understood, he was more settled now. So it was doubly distressing to stand there between the two floors and hear Tom's painful coughing overhead, this poor young man who seemed unlikely to make a recovery.

The door to the kitchen opened and Jane came out. 'Poor Tom, he's having one of his bad days,' she said. She shook her head as she looked up at me. 'Meggie is with him, but I think I'll go up to see if they have need of anything.'

'I haven't seen him for a while. I'll ask Meggie if I can speak to him later.'

Jane nodded. 'I fear you'll find him much changed, Master Hene.' She lowered her voice, 'Master Henry's friend, Sir Geoffrey, called in the other day. Tom was up and about but poor Sir Geoffrey looked very shocked to see him so worn down.'

Why had Blake come here? Henry was at his house ... 'Jane, was there something that Sir Geoffrey needed?' I hastened to explain myself. 'It's no great matter, but I see him every week. I'm just a little surprised that he said nothing to me.'

‘Oh, he just said as he was passing and that Hen... Master Henry had spoken of a book that he wanted to show him. Some sermons by somebody, I don’t recall ... he went off to look for them in the library.’ She started up the stairs, ‘must get this to Tom before it cools,’ then, remembering her manners, ‘if you’ll excuse me, sir.’

Back downstairs I leafed through the books until I found some dates in March, just before Sackville’s funeral and stared at the list of names, there they were – all of them. Francis, Middleton, Wingfield, Lumley, Amherst... Amherst as well ... Blake had said as much. And John Rolfe mentioned this last time I saw him. But how would Rolfe have known about Amherst’s debt to Henry, if Henry had kept this volume hidden? Anyway, Amherst’s arrears paled into insignificance beside Wingfield’s...

Six thousand pounds. What was it that Henry had said ... I scratched my head, thinking hard ... hadn’t he asked me to sign a letter to Wingfield? The words came back to me. *It’s a complicated matter. Leave it to me if you will.*

I drew a fresh sheet of paper towards me and wrote

Discrepancies in HS’s Accounts

Arrears from Members of H S’s Board

Francis £3000

Middleton £5000

Wingfield £6000

Lumley £1000

Amherst £1000

Then I took out the other papers that Blake had put into my hands and began to make a note of Henry’s rates of interest compared with the trust’s recent rates.

Rates of interest at 8 p c on Hardaker’s-castle’s accounts as against

6 p c on H. S. papers.

Interest on 'certain poor citizens' nil. Same names on Trust accounts at 6 per cent

I paused. Someone must be pocketing the difference. This had to be Hardaker – he must surely be in league with Middleton in this matter. But in order for me to be sure, I should look at some other documents too. I opened the great chest and stared into it. Surely I had left these rolls neatly tied, now they were in disarray, the smaller parchments all hugger-mugger with the great vellum rolls. I shut the lid and went across to his shelves. There were far fewer books than usual, no doubt because Henry had taken some of them to Hale. I leafed through the remaining volumes but these were more-or-less as I remembered. I resolved to summarise my findings, then leave. But as I tried to push one of the heavier volumes back into place, it caught against something. I looked around and picked up Henry's footstool, balancing on it to see above the rim of the shelf. At the back lay a few crumpled papers. I took them down and smoothed them out.

The writing was Henry's, I thought, his signature affixed. I turned a few more over and my eyes widened as I saw Lindsey's signature – the loops and flourishes – but with another hand above it. The same ink, the same paper. So most likely the same pen too. Frazer's caution about inks came back to me.

If you want to find out if a document is really from a particular place or person, it can help to know where they've got their ink from.

Was it my fevered imagining or did this sample of Henry's writing look slightly different as I scrutinised it again? I put the papers in my bag, replacing the accounts on the shelves in careful order and began a letter to Blake, detailing the discrepancies in the rates of interest. Henry must know about this, I said. It must be dealt with before matters became any worse.

I was about to continue to the effect that that I had stumbled across some more mysterious papers that he should see. But a sudden unwelcome thought gave me pause. Must I inform Blake about everything? What was it that Frazer had said?

Say nothing to him about the ink ... I think we should keep this to ourselves.

Blake's own nephew, John Rolfe had, after all, been one of Henry Smith's scribes. Try as I might, I could not entirely exclude him from my enquiry. No, I would take these papers back to my house and show them to Frazer at the next opportunity.

That night I could not sleep. I felt as if time was running out. Henry might have survived this year's plague but he was old now, anything could carry him off. The immensity of the debts still owing to him were of grave concern, but the chicanery of his trustees concerned me more. And beyond this there was the question of that writing – those attempts to forge signatures. For this was what I now saw those crumpled papers to be. I tried to quieten my thoughts; perchance I was overstating the matter. I told myself that whatever might befall, Henry would surely have a generous handful of charitable donations and respectable bequests to pass on. But his vision was so much more than donations and bequests. I clenched my fists, resolving to do whatever was needful to salvage this work.

Almost if I had uttered a prayer, I received a letter the very next day.

To Mr Hene, greetings &c.

Hale House, xii Aug.

Robert, I have need of your help. I have prevailed upon Sjt. Amherst to attend me at two of the clock on Thursday of next week and require you to be present. Of your favour come to Hale House before noon in order that I may apprise you of my plans. Bring the rolls marked Deeds 1620, there are three joined together. Bring also the bundles of letters marked "Amherst"
Henry S

Post scriptum : Bring letters receivd from Middleton and Francis from the bundle marked "Board 1st of Charles"

Well, well. Sir Geoffrey must have spoken to Henry already. And now Henry wanted to meet Amherst again. And there I was thinking that he would have left all this behind in London. I should have known him better. What was Henry intending to do, what plans did he want to 'apprise' me of? I read the letter again, then began to reply, assuring him of my prompt arrival on Thursday next. I sat drumming my fingers, today was Friday. He would need those papers as soon as possible, if he was to face up to Amherst. I dipped my pen in the ink.

Be assured Henry, that I have no desire to interfere with your plans, but I make bold to suggest that the papers you requested might be useful to you straight away and thus I send them to you with all speed. Furthermore, may I humbly propose that Sir Geoffrey be present on the occasion of your meeting with Serjeant Amherst? I am persuaded that his presence as both witness and trustee will be of use to you.

I sealed the note. Please God, Henry would take heed to my plea. Then I wrote a second letter directed to 'my loving friend, Sr Geoffrey Blake.'

Following my Communication, the xxii of July, wherein I apprised you of the Severity of the debts held against Mr Smith and Having myself received a communication from him today, I must presume that you have shared with him that part of the Information I sent to you that I deemed fit. Allow me to offer you My Felicitations on your success. I have accepted Henry's invitation to Hale House on Thursday next and have urged him to request your Presence. Whilst I am in no doubt that Henry is adept at Plaine speaking, I believe that on this Occasion he will require a Champion to support him.

I needed to change my tone for the next part. I sat deliberating, as the clock on the mantelpiece ticked away the minutes. Presently I picked up my pen again,

Regarding our conversation with your Stationer, Collins, I humbly ask your Permission to speak with him once more.

It would be prudent to have Blake's approval regarding Collins, I thought, as I sealed the letter. But I would show neither him nor Henry the loose papers that I found on Henry's top shelf. Those would be my secret.

Now to Silver Street to collect the documents that Henry had requested. I might even slip a few more into the bag ... the town was almost silent as I walked across that afternoon, empty of street criers and hawkers, and I wondered how they were managing to survive and mused how their livings must suffer when the sickness was rife, the taverns shut, the shops closed...

... it was a relief to come at last to Silver Street. But as I drew close, the porch was blocked by the bulky frame of the grocer, Henry Jackson. His face was sombre as he told me his news. His mother, Joane, was dead.

Chapter 26

Old Joane, gone.

I confess that I hardly knew what to say. Goody Joane had been such a friend to me. There are few who have that gift of such encompassing kindness. Poets write of a lover's passion, men even wax lyrical of a mother's love, but surely the constancy of a faithful friend is something to be cherished.

Joane was the one I turned to when her own brother cast me out.

She was Mistress Anne's most constant friend.

The gatherings Joane held in her home drew those simple believers like herself, whose love for God transcended religious ceremony.

It was to Joane that Joe Jackson fled, after his father turned him away.

I looked at the grocer now, standing in the doorway. I must have murmured something fitting to him. We made our way back into the house where he recounted the manner of Joane's passing.

'Mother was never one to make a fuss,' he said, 'but we knew she wasn't long for this world.' He stood awkwardly in the hall, big hands clutching a high crowned hat. 'She declared that the summer heat had quite worn her out and that she would go early to bed. Then she bade farewell to Spinster Frobisher, lay down quietly and never got up the next day.' His voice was full of awe. 'They found her looking as peaceful as a little baby, her hands folded like she was praying. I don't see as she can have suffered much.' She'd reached one and seventy, he said, 'not as old as her brother but a good age nonetheless.'

Meggie came out from the kitchen in time to hear him. 'We must tell Master Henry the news straightaway,' she said. 'I don't suppose that he will be able to come back for her funeral.'

'No, I do not think so,' I began, but Henry Jackson cut in.

‘We can’t have many in attendance anyway. The parish officials reminded me this very morning that there must be no more than eight mourners.’

‘But this isn’t a plague death,’ Meggie objected.

‘Even so, they have to keep to the rules.’

‘Mr Jackson is right,’ I said. ‘They have to try to prevent crowds for fear of infection. And am I right in thinking that it will have to be at dusk?’

‘Yes, I fear it will,’ Jackson replied. ‘But she will be properly interred in the graveyard – her parish church is St Mary Matfellow, its across in Whitechapel.’

‘I was that fond of Goody Joane,’ Meggie’s voice trembled, ‘I would come if I could but... well Tom can’t, and I can hardly expect Jane to accompany me.’

‘When will it take place?’ I asked.

‘Wednesday,’ Jackson said. ‘We can’t waste any time. Whitechapel is in a poor state, the parishes are struggling to cope with all the corpses – not that they’re putting them in the graveyards of course.’

The memory of an open plague pit ... I suppressed a shudder, it was no time for dwelling on the past, I told myself sternly. ‘I could take Meggie on Wednesday’ I said, ‘if it would not over increase the numbers.’

Jackson assured me that this would do very well, that Martha would be comforted to have Meggie with her.

But Meggie herself had some concerns. ‘Will it be safe, do you think, walking all that way right through the worst parts of the city?’

‘I’ll hire a closed carriage,’ I promised her. ‘I’m certainly not expecting you to go there and back on foot. Besides, you’ll be needed back here.’

Jackson took his leave and Meggie turned to me. ‘This is kind of you,’ she said.

‘Not at all,’ I was brisk as I walked across the hall. ‘I’ll use the library to write to Henry

and tell him of Joane's death. He should know at once.' Then I asked her how Tom was faring.

Meggie shook her head. 'The physician came yesterday. He doesn't see any improvement.'

I could see the strain in her eyes. There was little time left for the work I had to do, let alone to go in and see Tom. I thought rapidly.

'Meggie, can Jed go to my house with a note? Simon – my man – can come and help me sort out Henry's papers. Most likely there are far too many for me to take on my own. Simon can put them in the saddle bags and ride to Hale tomorrow. But now let's go in and see Tom.'

Joane Jackson was interred in the old graveyard of St Mary Matfellow, next to her husband Thomas, who had lain there for many years. The offices were read in an almost empty church, the family seated close together in the three front pews. Sam sat beside his mother, conscious of the spare place where Joe should have been, whilst Meggie and I took seats on the other side of the aisle. If the sexton noticed one more above the authorised number of mourners, he made no remark on it.

The internment was brief, the church as chill as a midwinter's night and though Martha pressed us to return with the family to Joane's house, we could not stay for long. Dusk was fading rapidly into night as we made our farewells.

'I hope they didn't mind, Master Henry not being there,' Meggie said, as the carriage rolled slowly along the deserted streets.

'No Meggie, I think they understood. Mistress Martha was far more concerned about Joe's absence.'

'Yes.' Meggie had spoken to Martha too. Even so, her own presence at the gathering

was niggling her. ‘Do you not think it might have struck them as odd, one of the servants standing in for the master?’

‘Meggie, you know that you were more than just a servant, to Joane. As far as she was concerned, you were family.’

‘She was a kind-hearted lady.’

A laden cart rumbled past, and Meggie pressed a posy of herbs to her nose. Now that night had fallen, the plague burials must begin in earnest. She sighed,

‘It does not seem to have diminished at all since Queen Elizabeth’s day.’

‘Some memories are harder to forget than others.’

‘You were there, weren’t you,’ she said.

‘Where?’

‘When Mistress Anne Smith was buried. You went out and walked behind the cart.’

I was incredulous, ‘How did you know that?’

‘Some things stay in your mind...’ she said. ‘I suppose I was but five summers in age – maybe six – but I do remember that night. I should have been abed, but no-one thought to take me. I can see it still, the servants all bunched together, Goodwife Frobisher weeping as they took her away.’ Meggie’s voice softened, ‘Then one of the young apprentices, pushing past them saying ‘I’ll not let her go alone.’’

I was unable to see Meggie now, but I sensed her turning towards me.

‘It was you Robert, wasn’t it. The young man who followed her, who wouldn’t let her go alone?’

‘Yes.’ My voice hardened ‘Yes, Meggie. I went along and I saw them tip her into the pit with all the others, like so much rubbish. And when I got back, I told everyone how respectful the corpse-men had been and how she was nicely arranged facing east so that she would rise to face her Saviour on the last day.’

Meggie put a hand to her mouth. 'Oh, Robert.' The horse ambled down Cheapside and we sat in a silence broken only by the groans of a man in the Colechurch pillory and the watchman calling 'hasten along,' as the carriage slowed for the sharp turn up Wood Street.

Eventually I murmured. 'Those are not all the memories I have – like that.'

'No?' I could hear the caution in Meggie's voice as she went on. 'You had a wife, I think...'

'Yes. Yes, I did. And a child. They both ...' I breathed hard. 'They were both taken together.'

There was a catch in Meggie's voice as she turned to me. 'How dreadful ... I did not know about the child.'

It was a strange relief to have told her. I said no more, nor did she question me further. Presently I remarked, 'it was good to see Tom again on Monday.'

'But you saw a change in him.'

'Yes, yes Meggie I did.'

'Well, he was glad to see you Master Robert.' She gathered her skirts as the carriage turned into Silver Street. 'I hope you can call again soon.'

'Much as I would like to, I fear that it will not be possible for a while. I have a journey to make into Kent, but I will return as soon as I can.' I helped her from the carriage and took her to the door. A light was burning in the porch, the lamplight turning her cheekbones to amber, as she looked up at me. And I saw an expression on her face that I could not read ... fear ... trepidation ...? On an impulse I took her hand for a moment and uttered the only words that seemed to suffice, 'God be with you, Meggie.'

Interlude

Homeless 2014

There's a child crying somewhere.

William stirs restlessly, opens his eyes. His throat hurts, he feels round for his water bottle. For a moment he thinks he's back in the camp in Uganda. But no, he looks up and sees steel girders under a dull sky, rain dripping onto the concrete floor. He's in a derelict warehouse down near the canal basin. People come and go during the night, but most have moved off by morning when the rush hour starts. There are more men here than women. Some of the women drift off in the evening, returning as daylight appears; that Eritrean girl, Zhara, is huddled in her bag, a few feet away. She won't stir now until noon. He knows what she's about, strange, he would never have willingly spoken to the street workers back home, he would have thought that they were bad girls, but here – well, Zhara is not a bad girl, she just has to find a way to keep living.

He blinks hard to loosen the tight grip of pain around his forehead. He might as well be in the camp, as here he thinks. He had a hut there and all he has now is a sleeping bag. In the camp the hut sheltered him from the worst of the weather. Of course, it was hard to keep the mat dry when the rains came – or to keep his food from rotting. And there was always the fear of sickness – it could sweep through the place so fast – whispers of typhoid would cause panic; malaria was a constant threat ... at least they didn't have those things here.

He remembers the little girl in the next hut who cried a lot, too sick to feed properly; how early one morning, when the rain had fallen for days the cries became a high-pitched wailing. William shudders. It wasn't the voice of the child but the mother, grieving for her daughter.

This won't do, he tells himself now. He struggles to his feet and begins to roll up his sleeping bag. He must go and sign again. Last time they said he had to go every three weeks.

They didn't say why. Perhaps he can persuade Zhara to come with him when she wakes up.

When he asked her about it the other day, she just stared at him.

‘Sign?’

‘At reporting place – Dallas Court.’

And she shook her head. ‘They will take me to airport. My friend, she go Dallas Court,’ her eyes filled, ‘then she return to ... to her country.’

‘But’ William said urgently, ‘but they’ll return you if you don’t go – once they find you.’

Asylum seekers awaiting a decision on their application to remain in the UK are required to regularly report to the UK Visas and Immigration Agency. Reporting frequency is determined by the Home Office, according to the likelihood of someone being detained and deported, and typically is set at a weekly, monthly, or six-monthly basis.¹²

¹² Burridge, A.(2017) “Reporting to the Home Office: exploring connections to detention and solidarity” Retrieved 12 May 2018, from <https://righttoremain.org.uk/reporting-to-the-home-office-exploring-connections-to-detention-and-solidarity/>

Chapter 27

Hale House 1625

A few days after Joane's funeral, Simon and I left Cowcross Lane for Hale. As we threaded our way through Holborn, Simon shuddered at the sight of several houses marked with a red cross upon the doors and 'Lord have mercy' written above.

'By my troth, I'm glad to leave this city,' he said. Then, as we were obliged to rein in our horses at Holborn Bridge, 'how long do you expect to stay at Hale?'

'That rather depends on Mr Smith's state of mind,' I replied. 'If I find him to be melancholic, I may have to stay for a while.'

Two plague doctors hurried past, sinister in their long white robes and hawk-like masks. The smell of the Fleet was overpowering, and I called for Simon to draw his kerchief over his face. But the lad's eyes were on a crowd of people standing just beyond the parapet.

'What are they up to?' he asked.

I pointed to a booth, its awning covered in crude representations of stars and suns. 'Looks like a fortune teller. They're springing up all over London.' As we pushed our way through, we caught a glimpse of a wizened old magus clad in a robe spangled with silver symbols. 'People have an urgent desire to know their fate,' I said, and was minded of Henry's abhorrence of such superstitions. Fortune telling was akin to witchcraft in his view, any such deception was the work of the devil. 'That wretched sorcerer will pocket their coins and tell them to consult him again next week.' I added.

'If they're still living,' Simon said. 'Standing around out here could seal their fate before they might even know it.'

At Hale, Henry was in a truculent mood. He gave me a perfunctory greeting before thrusting one paper after another under my nose. 'Look at this – George Lowe's debts – hardly

changed. Lowe will have his usual excuses no doubt.'

'Excuses?'

'Reasons why he is unable to repay me. His arguments are well-honed, they have been refined over a number of years.' He pointed to another column, 'Middleton's promise to increase the interest payments – no advance at all. Wingfield... well the tax on wool has stretched him too far. Even so ...'

'How have you come by these figures?' I asked, my voice assuming an innocence I did not have.

Henry lifted his head and stared at me blankly. 'Come by them?'

'Well, you have not been party to the committee's discussions.'

'Oh, I see. It was thanks to Sir Geoffrey. He wanted to know more about the details of the trust, and we looked at a few papers together. He brought a copy of the quarter's returns with him and I came to understand that things have not developed as I intended.' He paused, gasping for breath. 'It was a shock, I can tell you, Robert.'

'It must have been...'

'I only agreed to Middleton's absurd idea, in order to protect my legacy.'

Henry pressed one hand to his side, leaning against the table for support. 'Then Lumley got involved,' he stopped, breathing deeply, 'he might still be in my debt but he's loyal. Always has been.'

'Master Henry, come and sit down. You'll wear yourself out ...'

Henry allowed me to lead him to an armchair. I pulled up another chair and brought a sheaf of papers over from the table. 'So, Lord Lumley...?'

As if he could read my thoughts, Henry wheezed,

'Lumley has never had much time for Serjeant Amherst. Thinks he's inclined to sail too close to the wind. Geoffrey said that he – Lumley that is – wants to do all he can to

smooth my path.’ A bit late for that now, I thought. But Henry swept on, ‘good man, Richard Lumley... just like his father. I bought Longley from him way back in Elizabeth’s time. Both inclined to extravagance though ...’ He lapsed into silence, his face working.

Was Lord Lumley taking Sackville’s place in Henry’s affections I wondered? I had no doubt that he wished Henry well. Even so, was Henry putting too much faith in rank again? Please God he knew what he was doing...

The sun was well past its zenith by the time Serjeant Amherst swept in, full of amiability towards his host, solicitous towards Henry, enquiring as to the state of his health, even favouring me with a brief nod. He made a pretty show of expressing his regrets – he had been too busy to spend as much time on Henry’s affairs as he would have liked, he assured Henry that he had his best interests at heart – whereupon he spread out a number of letters on Sir Geoffrey’s large library table, saying,

‘I have received these from the members of your trust, Mr Smith. They are all in agreement.’

‘In agreement?’

‘They ... that is, your trustees... are all of one mind. They commend you for your perspicacity in acceding to their recommendations last year. Moreover, they remain resolute in their determination to carry this burden for you, onerous though it may be.’

Henry was unimpressed with such high-flown language. ‘I see little evidence that they have even understood the nature of the burden,’ he snapped whilst Blake giving, shooting a side-long glance at Amherst, added drily,

‘I would have been very happy to write to Henry myself, *as one of his trustees*, had you required it of me.’

Beneath the ginger of his beard, Amherst’s face flushed red, but he refrained from a response, instead protesting to Henry that his board, being men of exceptional intelligence,

most certainly comprehended the magnitude of their task, but alas, they had their hands tied by the new king's unwarranted levels of taxation. 'It has hit them hard,' he declared, lowering his voice. 'The king has shown a vexatious tendency to ignore Parliament and to take matters into his own hands.' He warmed to his theme, 'They say that when his coronation finally takes place, he will even levy new taxes on properties. Any man of means will feel the pinch...'

'But the new deeds expressly stipulated that their debts must be repaid.'

'Not precisely, Mr. Smith.'

'Not precisely? Let us debate precise stipulation; let us explore the one-sided agreement that you allowed me to make when my desire to revoke my first deeds was mooted.'

'What precise...' Amherst corrected himself hastily, 'what exactly are you saying Mr. Smith? What one-sided agreement?'

'I am saying that I agreed to this with the understanding – false as I now see – that these men would honour my intentions. So convinced was I of their good will that I was persuaded to seal deeds revoking my original agreement, *without any valuable consideration* – these last words accompanied by a skeletal drum beat of his fingers on the table-top – 'and now,' he continued, 'I would remind you that before I signed those deeds, I enquired of you whether or not I might have my estates again, if at any time I was given to doubt that they were being incorrectly managed.' Henry glanced at me then. 'Robert, you were there, were you not?'

'Indeed I was, Master Henry.'

'But Mr Smith,' Amherst objected, 'you must understand that taking matters back into your own hands exposes you to great risks.'

‘Great risks?’ Henry’s voice rose. ‘Pah!’ A gob of spittle landed on his beard, but he took no heed. ‘It appears that I have already been exposed to great risks through the betrayal of my trust. No’ – as Amherst attempted to interrupt – ‘hear me out. You have all let me down.’

Henry was facing Amherst squarely now. His voice was thin and quavering but his mind was clear. ‘Serjeant Amherst, barely a twelvemonth has passed, and I am compelled to bring this matter back to the table. The reason that I consented to Francis’ and Middleton’s suggestions was because I believed them to be offered in good faith. They exhorted me most lovingly and I truly believed that they – and the rest of the gentlemen involved – would invest a significant degree of commitment to my affairs.’

‘As they have, Mr Smith.’

But only Henry could ever be truly committed, I thought. None of these men could ever emulate his diligence; none of them fully share his vision.

‘I agreed to the revocation in order to protect my property,’ Henry said now. ‘But I can assure you that this was not my only motivation.’

Serjeant Amherst looked puzzled. ‘But what other reason...?’

‘Richard,’ Henry levelled his tone, as if explaining something to a slow-witted child. ‘I do believe that you are forgetting the central purpose of my design, to alleviate distress in our great city and even further afield, if God so willed.’

Amherst inclined his head, his eyes wary. Henry continued calmly, his voice matter of fact. ‘I trusted these men ... I hoped that ... that they would expedite my cause with the same zeal with which I created it.’ We waited in silence. ‘I had hoped... I thought ... that the revenues from my properties ... particularly from Knole ... could be used within my lifetime to form a backbone ... a bulwark, against the vagrancy and disorder of our great city.’ He

drew a breath, 'I had hoped ... that even as I amassed a fortune I could, like the priest, John White, lead the way for a new beginning, another Dorchester, a city on a hill,'

Amherst did not appear to have a fitting reply.

'Another Dorchester. It must be ten years since Dorchester town went up in flames.' Geoffrey Blake said.

I looked across at Henry who sat straight and resolute, his weariness forgotten. I marvelled at the impression this incident had made on him. Dorchester, destroyed overnight, then that priest, John White, with his extraordinary pronouncement that the town should rise again.

'A crown of beauty instead of ashes.' I was hardly aware that I had uttered this aloud and for all that my voice was muted, Henry picked it up. He beamed at me.

'Well said, Robert. That was precisely the passage that White used.' Henry turned in his chair and looked at Amherst, his eyes bright. 'White's plan was radical, you know. Almshouses for the poor, a hospital, work for the idle. Marvellous.'

'White put those words in a pamphlet,' I said. 'He likened his vision to a miracle, a new Jerusalem.'

'A new Jerusalem,' Blake echoed. 'I printed copies of it. They were distributed across London and beyond. The king himself knew of it.' He blinked several times, 'my word Henry, is this what you dreamt of too?'

'But London has not been destroyed,' Amherst said testily.

Henry turned in his chair. 'No Serjeant Amherst. But whilst there are idle poor begging for bread, the seeds of its destruction are surely being sown. Must it burn down before it can rise again? And that was the other reason for acceding to the trustees' suggestion,' Henry raised his head. 'I had a mind to spend more of my time amongst the humble poor before I might become completely infirm. To determine why they should fall so

easily into want. Indeed, Mistress Davasour, wife to my steward, had already begun to assist me in this matter. But then what happened? I learned that the monies that I required were not forthcoming.’ He faced Amherst. ‘Tell me truthfully, in this last twelve month, have my trustees shown the same alacrity in ordering my investments as they did when they sought the right to administer my money?’ Amherst opened his mouth to respond but Henry had more to say. ‘And you yourself, Serjeant Amherst. Whilst giving me your word that I might have my own estates again, was it already your intention to discharge yourself from repaying me?’

Amherst stood up and put out a hand to steady himself. Tufts of red hair sprang from his brow, his beard quivered as he glared at Henry. ‘You know full well that I will not go beyond the confines of the law. How *dare* you seek to threaten me, sir?’

‘I merely seek to assure you that I will not allow any defaulter to bamboozle me. *I* will not be robbed – *the poor* will not be robbed in this way. If it’s the law I have to fight, then I will write to the Chancellor.’

But Amherst had not finished. ‘The Chancellor, Lord Keeper Coventry, will tell you to go through the appropriate channels,’ he barked. ‘You will have to lodge a Bill of Complaint.’

‘Then I will go to Chancery – lodge a complaint – and demand my estates back.’

Amherst banged his fist on the table. ‘I have laboured hard for you, Mr Smith. You have cost me dear, made demands on my good will without thought of remunerating me. I confess I am sorely tempted to leave you to your own devices.’

Henry put his hands together and nodded thoughtfully. ‘If that is what you must do, then I must thank you for your past services and release you.’ He kept his composure as he added, ‘furthermore, I will advise the rest of the board that they too can be released from my trust.’

I had been labouring to record an account of this meeting. Now I put my pen down

and stared at Henry; what could he be thinking? Beside me, Blake sat looking grave.

Amherst's colour mounted as he rose to his feet, 'That is a most ill-considered proposal. I advise you to think carefully as to how you proceed.' With that, he gathered up his papers and turned to Blake, breathing deeply, 'I think it is time for me to take my leave.' Upon which, he marched out, Blake hurrying behind.

I turned to Henry and saw that his eyes were red rimmed with fatigue. But he managed a half-smile, 'well Robert, I hope you have this all documented. I may need proof.'

I nodded my head. 'I ... yes Henry, it is all in writing ... and ... and may I just say ...'

'Yes Robert?'

'You outdid yourself today.'

Henry smiled mischievously. 'I am inclined to agree with you,' he said.

Now I must needs go to Knole, to visit Edward Lindsey. I told Henry that I would be away in Kent for a time, giving him to believe that I had business of my own to attend to. This small duplicity was supported by Blake, as we made short work of a jug of Rhenish wine that night. He agreed that any mention of Knole, or of Knole's bailiff, might add to Henry's anxiety, adding his assurance that he was as keen as I was to see Henry's plans succeed.

'But I will discourage him from further discussion after today's drama,' he smiled. 'We will sit in the sun as befits two old men and converse on past times and the splendour of the rosebushes.'

'I believe that that is what Henry needs now,' I replied. 'He has had a most taxing time of late.'

Blake snorted. 'Haven't we all, Robert.'

'Indeed. But Henry's declaration to lodge a complaint shows a degree of courage.'

Blake was dubious. 'I cannot see it going uncontested,' he declared. 'I wonder if he has given it sufficient thought.'

I assured him that, in light of Henry's own family's history, this could not have been a casual decision. I gave him a brief account of Elizabeth Smith's attempt to twist the strong arm of the law and the dreadful consequences of her failure. And he agreed that, in light of this, Henry's resolve was remarkable.

'But I still wonder if it was wise,' he finished.

Now I recalled that I had made no mention to Henry of Joane's death. 'He did not enquire about her funeral nor did I tell him of it.' I said to Blake. 'How remiss of me.'

'Remiss of *you*... come Robert, he's the one who should have thought of that.' Blake poured more wine into his glass and handed the jug to me. 'Besides there's no need to fret. Sarah wrote to him. She assured him of their understanding regarding his absence and promised to visit him soon.' He patted me on the arm, 'it's high time you made that journey, Robert. You need some respite from Mr Smith.' He added that he was somewhat bewildered by my request to converse with his bookseller.

'It's a technical matter,' I told him.

His eyes twinkled, 'I am sure that you know what you're about, Robert,' and he promised to scribble a note for me to give Collins the following day.

Chapter 28

Knole House 1625

Back in Holborn I made ready for my journey to Kent, instructing Simon to pack our saddle bags with the utmost care. Let there be nothing to excite the interest of another traveller, I told him; we would use the old packs, not my fine new leather ones. And I would hide the most important papers beneath my saddle. Tucked securely into a folder were several documents – letters, lists and so forth, taken from Henry’s study in Silver Street. I would have to make sure they were returned, or there might be all hell to pay, but at the very least, Lindsey’s response to them might give me some clues as to any part he might have played in this subterfuge – not that I believed now that he had played any part at all.

After crossing the river, we made our way down Long Southwark past St Georges’ church and out to Newington. Simon stared around open-mouthed and I was obliged to shout at him to ‘have a care’ as carts and coaches rumbled past. He gave me a rueful grin as I pressed against the flanks of his mare, forcing him into the gutter whilst the post swept by.

‘You’ll have us under those wheels, look to your mount...’ and I grabbed his reins, pulling up with a jolt.

‘Tis a while since I ventured past the bridge,’ he said. ‘I confess I’ve never seen so many carriages. I thought the carters were meant to wait at the standings.’

‘They are, but there’s nowhere for them to pull in when the markets are on.’ I gestured towards the packmen staggering along, great dossars of fruit tied to their backs. ‘Come apple time, there’s a constant stream of deliveries from Kent, up to Gracechurch market.’

Once we had left the highways the way became more peaceful. Deeper into Surrey, common land gave way to narrow lanes; tracks down here could be treacherous and I was glad of company in the strange silence of the woods. There was a new nervousness in the air that summer, talk of increased violence amongst robbers and highwaymen; talk of pirates,

too, tales spread of young men kidnapped from coastal villages and taken for slaves. Strange ships had been spotted in the English Channel, although in truth they were far away, west of Plymouth. Nevertheless, yeomen's wives bolted their doors at night, in the towns goodwives glanced over their shoulders if they caught sight of a black face – a groom on the box of a nobleman's carriage, a dark-skinned page accompanying his lady; this in spite of the fact that Barbary pirates had never ventured near the capital, nor even into the estuary as far as anyone knew.

Simon slowed to steer his mare round a fallen tree and as I waited for him, he began to tell me a tale that he had from the maid next door.

'Her cousin is in service over Lambeth way, a family by the name of Bucley, Irish they are. The master disappeared one morning, sent a letter back to the mistress saying that he'd taken ship for Algiers.' He turned in the saddle, taking both reins in one hand. 'Why would anyone want to do that, Master Robert?'

'Most likely he was in debt,' I said. 'I've heard of others gone to the Salley Rovers...'

'Sally rover?'

'Sallee. It's a place somewhere down the African coast. Men like Bucley take ship for Morocco to join the pirates.'

'What do they do that for?'

'Money. Clearing debts.' I considered. 'The harder the times, the more men there are forced to find any means they can. Some of the nobility even take their own ships to join the pirates. But the ones who are captured by the Moors are sold for slaves. They have a terrible time of it.'

Simon shuddered. 'I hope never to see a pirate,' he said.

'Well, you won't see one round here,' I laughed.

'But what about highwaymen?'

I reassured him. 'There's a party of travellers ahead, and several journeymen walking behind. Besides, have you not seen the gibbet?'

'Gibbet?' Simon stared around, 'where?'

I pointed with my riding crop 'Over yonder, on that hill.'

Four bodies hung on makeshift gallows, high above the track. Though I was well used to seeing such sights in London, it seemed strange out here amongst the woods and fields.

Simon grimaced. 'The wild beasts'll get them,' he said.

'Looks to me as if they already have,' I said. 'Well, birds at least.' I tugged on the reins, 'but you can be sure the forests have at least been cleared of robbers over the past few days.'

As we progressed through the valleys, we saw that poverty was rife, whole families sprawled by the road, children ill clad and filthy. In the villages, thatch on the cottages caved in, windows gaped. Beggars loitered at the cross-roads, taking travellers by surprise. Simon lifted his crop to one of them, but I put out my hand,

'I vow they're desperate with hunger, Simon. I know the law is against them but...'

'Well,' he looked back at the man, 'the law must be a cruel master if the rich can sit long at table, lingering over their meats, while the poor must beg for bread.' I looked at Simon with a new respect, until he added, 'though he could most likely find work to do if he tried hard enough.'

By mid-afternoon I reigned in my horse, shouting at Simon who was lagging behind; the horses must be watered, there was an inn at the next crossing. Simon brightened considerably at this, no doubt thinking of food and drink as well as relief for his buttocks, sore from too long in the saddle.

'You've the soft arse of a maid,' I smiled as he drew level, groaning faintly.

But later that night, as he snored on his pallet, I had to confess I felt the safer for his company. Besides, Simon was a London lad and his gratification at leaving the city for the wilds of the countryside had added a degree of enjoyment to the day. It kept me from dwelling over much on the problems ahead. And I had scarcely spared a thought for Henry Smith.

The next day we covered the ground to Sevenoaks in two hours. As we climbed the hill from the town there was no sign of Knole. Then we rounded a corner past an avenue of beeches, flushed with the first tints of autumn. But it was the scene beyond that excited our gaze. Simon's jaw dropped in astonishment. I had been looking forward to his reaction when he first set eyes upon the house and I was not disappointed. Now, reining in before the bridge, I laughed at the lad's obvious amazement.

'Tisn't a house,' he whispered, 'tis a whole town.'

I nodded. It was good to be back, even in these strange circumstances. 'It's a marvellous sight,' I said.

Knole was spread out before us, the imposing gatehouse perfectly square beneath its four crenellated towers, buttressed by the long gables of the West wing. Beyond the mullioned windows and high stacked chimneys, several towers dwarfed a profusion of red tiled roofs.

I dropped one of the reins and pointed. 'Look, you can see the clock tower right in the centre. It was Sir Thomas's pride and joy. And there, through the arch, you can just catch glimpses of the Great Court. There's a smaller one beyond, a beautiful private space they call the Stone Court. Beyond that's the Great Hall.'

I had sent a message ahead of my visit, so that Lindsey would be expecting me. For much of the ride, I had been rehearsing a conversation with him, trying to work out what I

would say. But now, sitting here, my stomach turned over. I had little hope of cordiality from him.

We made our way round the side of the house through a gateway and in past a series of courtyards. A huddle of workshops – stonemasons, carpenters, wheelwrights – led into a brewer's yard, the pungent smell of malt, sacks of grain spilling over on the cobbles, a melee of servants coming and going, shouts of command; then on into the Stable Court where dogs barked, horses stamped and an ostler broke off his conversation to come and take our horses. It was a relief to get out of the saddle and follow one of the grooms to an office where a man in the blue and gold livery of the Dorset estates enquired as to our purpose. I brandished a letter from Lindsey as evidence of my identity and he checked it thoroughly before handing it back and ordering another lackey to take a message to Lindsey's 'under-secretary.' In due course a harassed young man appeared to tell me that his master, the bailiff, would see me in his office within the hour.

'Meanwhile, if you would be so kind as to wait, I will send ale and refreshments to you.'

Simon watched as he hurried off. 'Tis a great grand household that needs secretaries to serve the secretary as serves the bailiff,' he said.

I laughed. 'It's like a whole world here, it never fails to amaze me.'

As we sat waiting Simon plied me with questions. Who lived here now that the earl was dead? What was it like, staying here? Had I ever supped with the lords and ladies? I recounted the memory of an occasion when Henry was invited to Knoles as a guest.

'He was shown to one of the upper tables, next to Edward Lindsey and the other superior orders. For my part I was content to stay below the salt. It gave me the chance to look around.' I dropped my voice as a man passed by, richly gowned, a page walking behind him. 'The Great Hall was a wonder when all the candles were lit and the nobility seated at the

top table, all dressed very fine under a canopy of crimson velvet.'

'Was that one of the family?' Simon stared after the man and his servant.

'Great heavens, no. They wouldn't be seen near the kitchens. He's probably just one of the household stewards. There must be hundreds of people living here Simon, scholars, tutors, musicians, as well as the household servants. They say its second only to the king's court.'

A page appeared, very respectful, Master Lindsey would see me now. I brushed down my jerkin as I left Simon to his ale, smoothing my hair as I climbed the steps up to the Green Court and the entrance to the bailiff's office. My heart was pounding and I took a few deep breaths as I walked towards the door. It wouldn't do to appear agitated.

Lindsey had aged. As he rose from his chair, I could see how stooped he had become. His hair, tied back in the Puritan fashion, was grey, his face, once full and florid, was lined and somewhat gaunt. There was a distinct wariness in his eyes as he greeted me, a slightly acerbic note to his voice.

'God give you good day, Mr. Hene.'

I stumbled a little, but remembered to smile, 'a... and to you sir.'

'Pray, sit down.'

The bailiff's office was just as I remembered, two great desks back-to-back in the centre of an uncarpeted floor, to one side a huge chest, the lid raised to reveal a multitude of neatly rolled documents. Rows of shelves along the length of the opposite wall were meticulously tidy, everything ordered and arranged. Even the black elm chairs with their cane seats were precisely placed on either side of the empty hearth, just as before.

Lindsey did not appear to be in a hurry. I coughed, fidgeted a little, aware of the loud ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece as he thumbed through a folder before extracting a paper and handing it to me.

‘I think you will find that we have made some progress.’

‘Pr . . . progress?’

‘In the matter of the sales.’

I stared down at the paper . . . long lines densely written; the lettering so small that I had to hold it to my face. Why had I not read that last communication more carefully? I berated myself for a fool as I studied the columns of figures, but the numbers seemed to march up and down and I struggled to decipher their meaning. Lindsey watched me impassively.

‘These are the properties that we have been endeavouring to sell. Manor houses, farms, tenements – all originally purchased by Sir Thomas and his son Robert.’

‘I understand that Sir Edward Sackville is keen to pay his . . . to er... settle with Sir Richard’s creditors.’

‘Sir Edward has instructed us to find purchasers, that is true. But alas the times are hard; there is little money in the coffers of those who we would have expected . . .’ Lindsey broke off and ran an ink-stained finger down the column of figures. ‘See here . . . and here, these properties in Tottenham – a manor house, worth at least six hundred pounds; here, tenements off Fleet Street, Bishop’s Court – they had a purchaser, but his harvest failed . . .’

Was he making a play for my sympathies, I wondered? I must be staring, for Lindsey looked at me quizzically. ‘Come, Mr. Hene, surely Serjeant Amherst must have apprised your master of these things?’

‘Not of Knole, sir. But regarding the other matters I only know that Serjeant Amherst told Mr. Smith to wait.’ I hesitated. There was something here that I did not understand. I had been expecting Edward Lindsey to be openly hostile . . . or markedly conciliatory; either still smarting from Henry’s belligerent response all those months ago, or maybe, in the light of his own threats, treating me – as Henry’s envoy – with cautious consideration. Yet here he

was, withdrawn, hesitant ...

I tried a different tack. 'In truth, Serjeant Amherst has been somewhat preoccupied by ... by parliamentary events,' I finished lamely.

'Naturally. He may be High Sheriff of all Richard Sackville's estates, but he is a member of parliament too.'

'But we thought – that is, Mr. Smith hoped – that Amherst would assist him in countering the threats of the Star Chamber. Yet, despite our pleas, he failed to respond.'

'The *Star* Chamber?' Lindsey started to his feet, his voice trembling. 'Oh no, I had hoped that poor Henry ... oh this was what I most wanted to avoid ... what a dreadful thing to happen.' And he grasped my sleeve, his rheumy old eyes full of concern. 'Tell me, how has he borne this. Is he well?'

I stared at him. Surely, he must know ... 'I thought that you must be fully informed,' I stammered.

But Lindsey broke in, his voice cracking, 'I did my utmost to warn him. The letter I sent ... that he might be in danger ...' Lindsey's lips trembled; he looked to me as if he might break down.

I could not prevent my voice from rising in indignation, 'I can assure you that he was indeed aware of these threats. Good God sir, it was that letter that caused Mr. Smith to revoke the right to manage his estates and hand them over to his trustees.'

'Revoke ...? But ... but I understood from Henry that he was very much at the helm of his great enterprise. Those were his very words, Mr. Hene. "Edward, I must steer my own ship if my plans are to succeed."'

I was thoroughly perplexed now. I pulled at my collar, took a deep breath. 'Allow me to explain. After Sir Richard's funeral, and the exchange of letters between you and Mr. Smith, I took it upon myself to deliver another letter to Serjeant Amherst.'

Edward Lindsey put out a hand, a look of confusion on his face.

‘Sir, pray, what is it?’ I asked

‘Please to continue,’ he said.

‘Well, the Serjeant – that is, Richard Amherst, penned a reply ... eventually.’

‘And what was the nature of this reply?’

‘He told Mr. Smith to take no heed.’ I swallowed. ‘He said that you must have been somewhat overwrought to have made those threats in the first place.’

‘Threats? What threats ?

What game was he playing? ‘Master Lindsey, I am referring to your messenger.’

‘What mes ...?’

I grew bolder. ‘Master Lindsey, on the day of Richard Sackville’s funeral, hard by the conduit past Cornhill, a man appeared as if from nowhere, and threatened Mr. Smith most cruelly.’

Edward Lindsey sat down suddenly. ‘And you say that this was my messenger ?’

‘Indeed. He told Mr. Smith that there was trouble brewing for him.’ I took a deep breath, ‘his parting shot to me was “the old fool’s got it coming now”’.

‘My messenger you say ?’

‘I ... yes those were his very ...’

‘No ... no, how could you think ... ’

‘Master Lindsey, sir . . . he wore the Knole livery. Besides, you must understand that the letter you sent later confirmed all of Mr. Smith’s worst fears of a summons to the Star Chamber.’

Edward Lindsey gaped at me. Apart from two bright red spots high on his cheekbones, his face was parchment. I feared that he might have a seizure and looked around for water.

‘So that explains Henry’s strange correspondence,’ he muttered.

‘Strange?’

‘Yes. He said that though he valued me as a friend, ‘in light of present developments,’ – those were his words – he could no longer trust me with his affairs.’

‘Oh no ...’ I had no words to express my disquiet. For a moment there was an awkward silence. Then I retrieved my leather pouch from behind the chair and drew a sheaf of papers from it.

‘I have the letter here, Master Lindsey. It bears your signature.’

Lindsey took the paper from me and read it quickly.

Sir, it is my duty to inform you, that following the Demise of the late lamented Lord, Richard Sackville, third Earl of Dorset, on 19th March last, an Inventory of all his estates has been executed and that following this Endeavour various Debts have been discovered. Further that a number of Sir Richard’s creditors are demanding that you as Holder of the properties make reparation for these aforesaid debts. You are consequently fallen into Great forfeitures and Dangers and will be summoned forthwith to the Star Chamber to answer for your actions.

Lindsey gasped, ‘Mr Hene, this is absurd. Let me assure you that however hasty I might be, I never begin a letter without a proper respectful greeting. Allow me to show you another letter to Henry.’

Lindsey went across to the shelves and withdrew a folder. He took out a letter and showed it to me. It began,

To my loving friend Henry Smith Esquire.

‘All my letters to Henry begin like this. Even when ... well,’ there were tears in Lindsey’s eyes, ‘even when I fear I may have offended him.’

It’s true, I thought now. Why had I not taken due note of this? Lindsey was ever respectful.

‘And I’m sure I wouldn’t have said “you will be summoned forthwith,” Lindsey

complained. ‘How could I have known such a thing?’ He stood still for a moment then said, ‘Wait a minute. Cranwood has another folder in his office. There might just be a chance ... yes,’ he summoned a page from outside the door and barked at him, ‘find Master Cranwood forthwith.’

The page returned with a young man who stood in the doorway blinking nervously, pressing ink-stained fingers together whilst assuring Master Lindsey that he had indeed made fair copies of the letters sent in April last year.

‘Yes sir ... yes you may recall you asked me,’ he twisted his hands ‘particularly with regard to Sir Richard’s death, indeed you were insistent.’ He darted a look of anxiety at me ‘that is, it was your wish because... er, because of difficulties...’

Lindsey asked him if he had retained any correspondence from Mr. Smith. ‘Henry Smith the salter, of Farringdon ward.’

Cranwood ran a hand through his locks, disturbing a neatly tied ribbon. ‘Mr Smith? Mr Henry Smith? Oh yes indeed. Always.’ He sent another glance in my direction. ‘Mr Smith ... yes, I can assure you ... as you may recall he made certain stipulations ...’

He hastened from the room and returned with two precisely rolled papers, smoothed them out, then handed them to Lindsey, who dismissed him then perused them slowly. After a few minutes he handed them over to me.

‘Of your favour, I would request that you read these, Mr Hene.’

The first paper was a short note expressing Lindsey’s shock at the earl of Dorset’s death. It was polite, sincere and in light of Edward Lindsey’s long service to the Dorset family, its poignant tone brought a lump to my throat.

The second paper was Henry’s reply to the dreaded letter that he thought to be from Lindsey. I winced as I read it. In light of Lindsey’s own correspondence, Henry’s tone now seemed to me to be most infelicitous. When I reached the sentence ‘I can no longer trust you

with my affairs,' my cheeks flamed with mortification. I must needs explain my position now, I thought.

I sought for a way to convince Lindsey that I was persuaded, that Henry must somehow have been deceived. I began, rather haltingly, to tell him about my consultation with Collins. 'I asked him to look at some different papers – to compare the inks on them.'

Lindsey stared at me. 'So, you were not entirely convinced...'

I handed the documents to him, one at a time. 'Could I ask you to look at them too?'

Lindsey held the papers up to the light and peered at each one. 'Yes ... and yes,' he murmured. 'Now, let's compare these with some Knole papers.' He went across to a row of shelves and selected various papers and some scrolls. 'Now then,' he said, 'the letter from Henry, the curt reply that he made me – can you see that it's still quite black?'

I nodded.

'Now look at these Knole papers,' he handed me one after another, 'here ... and here ... can you see how they have faded?' I nodded. 'We make our own ink here,' he said. 'It cannot be the same as your stationer's.'

Lindsey was right. The Knole scripts had become a faded brown, almost rusty in appearance. He picked up one of Collins's papers, 'This is the same ink as Henry's is it not?'

I nodded 'We buy our ink from Collin's shop.'

'And what about this dreadful letter?' Lindsey picked up the document that I had accused him of writing. His face became more animated. 'This does not appear to match either of these other inks,' he said.

'No. Collins was unsure of this one,' I answered. 'He promised me he would look into it.'

'Ah. But you thought it must be from Knole?' Lindsey peered at me from over the top of the paper.

‘Well, I had other Knole letters sir, and I confess that it did not match those. I did not know what to think.’

‘So, you were already querying it before you even spoke to me.’ There was something of amusement in his eyes. ‘Upon my soul, you’re a sly fellow,’ he said. Then he stared at the paper again for a long time.

‘Mr. Hene,’ he said eventually. ‘Could I ask you to look at this in light of’ – and he took another paper off one of the shelves – ‘in light of my own attested hand?’

I looked over his shoulder as he pointed.

‘This hand is remarkably like my own. But see here – how the letter ‘l’ leans forward. Now look at my hand, no slant at all.’ He smiled up at me, ‘In faith I recall my tutor putting a stick to my wrist whenever I slanted my stalks.’ Lindsey’s smile faded and his eyes were troubled as he looked me full in the face. ‘And allow me to remind you again, that I have ever desired to be cordial in my correspondence with Mr Smith.’

I held his gaze for a long moment. ‘I ask you humbly for your forgiveness.’ I sighed deeply. ‘It is my profound regret that we have caused you this affront.’ I offered him my hand until Lindsey held his out in return. ‘I can only assure you that I have doubted your involvement in this matter from the outset.’

‘And you have taken due steps to clear my name,’ Lindsey said, his voice tremulous. ‘For that, Robert Hene, I am deeply thankful. But if it was not me, then who ... and why?’

Lindsey pressed me to stay overnight but I declined his invitation, adding that it was much appreciated. Still, he insisted, I must partake of refreshment before my journey. He took me to a large room which I understood to be a dining hall for the servants and summoned a page to find Simon. Whilst I waited for him, I wandered across the hall to look at a small portrait set beside the fireplace. It was of Richard Sackville. He gazed impassively

from an elaborate gilt frame, resplendent in an extravagance of lace and velvet. I scrutinised his expression; was it of amusement, boredom, or just a shallow vacuity? As he stared back at me, I felt suddenly cold and turned away. I thought that maybe I would not return again.

Knole seemed to have lost its charm.

My mind was in turmoil as Simon and I steered our hired hacks through the churned-up mud of a dank evening. Best put up at a hostelry for the night, I said, although I had a strong desire to return to London as soon as possible. Simon, having supped well, went thankfully to his pallet, but I lingered in the tap room. I knew I would not sleep yet, there was too much to think about. Thoughts of Lindsey's distress and Henry's confusion crowded my mind.

Neither Lindsey nor I had laid the blame directly at Amherst's door. I confess, I was loath to accuse Knole's high sheriff in front of that honest little man, though I am sure Lindsey was aware that Amherst had profited from this year of revocation; but so had others, I thought. As long as they held out from repaying Henry's loans, they might manage to keep other creditors off their backs; and I recalled what Joane had told me about her husband's highborn customer, that previous earl of Dorset – *his Lordship's understanding of settling his bills was to wait and wait til it suited him – never mind the people who needed paying, or their families.*

I lay down on the pallet, tired now... but I could still see Lindsay's horrified face, hear his appalled response. I must find out who was behind those damaging letters. Whoever it was, someone had evil intent towards Henry's legacy. And with Henry so frail ... I resolved to waste no time in the morning. I must speak to Blake as soon as I could.

Interlude

Manchester 2015

William's fever rises ... he must cross the border ... he can't stay here ...

Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for him. Do not abandon him in his hour of need.

By his side sits an old priest, his hands folded in quiet prayer, a murmured repetition, scarcely audible. *Priez pour lui ... priez pour lui...*

William moves his head, tries to open his eyes. Nothing. He sinks into blackness.

Waves of light, that voice again – a face swimming in the mist above his head.

He's awake, Doctor.

Doctor –then the blackness descends once more.

You are lucky to be alive – a nurse, her words eager, charged with information. UN troops found you by the side of the track. They put you in the back of their lorry and brought you here.

He learns that he has a deep wound in his head, concussion, lacerations in his thighs.

You were beaten, your ribs broken, your kidneys bruised another nurse tells him.

Where will I go?

You will not leave here 'til it is safe. Then they take you to the refugee camp in Kyangwale.

Kyangwale, William moves his head.

'Kyangwale...' he mutters as he wakes up.

The rain is so heavy. The camp ... he must be in the camp... but there's no sound of babies crying, no arguments raging in the huts nearby. A siren starts up in the distance, comes nearer and nearer, changes pitch and gradually fades. When William allows his eyes to open, he sees girders overhead, the frayed edge of a shabby sleeping bag ; Zhara squatting down beside him with a bottle of water.

Chapter 29

Hale House: Autumn 1625

I rode into Hale at a canter, flinging the reins at the boy in the yard and striding into the house by way of the kitchens. We had travelled fast through the early morning, pausing only at Peckham to water the horses. After all that dry weather the rains came with a vengeance and we ended the journey in a downpour. I bade farewell to Simon by the Holborn conduit and, eager to tell Henry what I had discovered, spurred the horse on to Sir Geoffrey's house.

Lucas, Blake's steward, was in the kitchen almost as soon as I arrived. One of the pages must have gone to fetch him. He looked me up and down. 'Mr. Hene! What brings you here?'

I explained myself as best I could, adding that I would like to see Sir Geoffrey.

'Sir Geoffrey is at dinner with his secretary.' Lucas cleared his throat. 'There is also a young lady with them. A Mistress Spurstowe.'

'Mistress Spurstowe? Oh, Sarah. Sarah Jackson, of course.'

Lucas was punctilious, 'I believe that Sarah *is* the name by which Sir Geoffrey addresses her.'

'Lucas, I know that my arrival is unexpected, but I am certain that neither Sarah nor Sir Geoffrey will object to my interruption. Perhaps if someone could help me to remove my boots ... and if it please you, find me a fresh pair of breeches.'

'Very well, Mr. Hene.'

Lucas must have balked at my request, for as I stood, relieved of my boots, my saturated stockings clinging to my legs, Blake burst in.

'Robert. You are thrice welcome.' He was all indignation at my sorry state, taking his ire out on the hapless Lucas. 'Fetch ale for the love of God, mulled ale, can you not see this man is famished? Find dry linen' – then turning to me – 'Robert, you must have fresh clothes

– where the devil is that new page. Lucas? Why do you tarry? We have company, did he tell you, Robert? Ah, Lucas there you are, have you found some breeks for this poor fellow? By all the saints what would Lady Mary make of our abominable hospitality?’

Within the half hour I was clothed and warmed. Rather than disturb Blake’s guests, I requested that my food be served separately, whereupon Lucas informed me that Sir Geoffrey would meet me in his own parlour, ‘where we have laid a table for your convenience.’

I had just placed my napkin across my shoulder and lifted a goblet to my lips when Blake hurried in.

‘Ah. Robert. Do you have all you need?’ He appraised the meats set out before me, counted the number of dishes – which were plentiful – rang the bell for another broiled chicken and more manchets, replenished the wine in my goblet, then sat down opposite me.

‘Now then Robert...’

‘Sir Geoffrey, first I must ask if you know how Henry is faring?’

‘He seemed quite content when I left him in the dining room just now,’ he laughed.

‘Aah,’ I stared at him, a chicken wing suspended inches from my mouth. ‘Then he has not returned to London? Is he in good health?’

‘Be assured Robert, he is perfectly all right. All the better for seeing young Sarah, I would say. Henry has withdrawn to take his rest, but you will find Sarah somewhere around the place, once I have quizzed you about Knole.’

I took a deep breath and launched into my story. Blake listened with scarcely a comment, his eyes hardly leaving my face. When I protested Edward Lindsey’s innocence, he looked doubtful.

‘The poor old fellow may have been duped. But even so, Henry doesn’t deserve...’

‘I am sure that once you have heard all the evidence Sir Geoffrey ...’ I produced Lindsey’s letter from my bag. Blake took the sealed paper, turning it over and over in his hands.

‘You know the contents of this message?’

‘Oh yes, indeed. It will gladden Henry’s heart. I am sure he will be persuaded that Edward was always his friend, that he had never intended him to be double-crossed so cruelly.’

‘And he gave you instructions to deliver it straight to him?’

‘Yes indeed. I shall take it as soon as I have dined.’

‘No, Robert. You must not do so.’

For a moment I thought that I must have misheard him. I stared at him, quite thunderstruck.

‘But Sir Geoffrey ... after all that ...’

‘No, Robert. Henry must not know about this yet.’ Blake was adamant. He rose from the table and took a small key from a niche by the bookshelves, depositing the letter in a carved walnut box which he returned to the topmost shelf. Then he turned to me, ‘Robert you have to trust me here. I would like you to stay for a day ... perhaps for two. We can convince Henry that having come to enquire after his health you would be pleased to spend more time with us. I want to invite Lumley here so that we can discuss this together with you.’ He saw the look on my face and added, ‘Robert, it is imperative that we get this right.’

I confess I was dismayed. All through the splash and sludge of this morning’s journey, I had remained buoyant in spirits, imagining Henry’s face on hearing that Edward Lindsey was not his enemy after all. Even when the rain had dripped off my hat and run down inside my jerkin, I had cheered myself with the thought that I could be of comfort to him. Blake had dealt me a blow with this decision, and I was hard pressed to conceal my frustration. But he

would brook no opposition and I knew I was beaten. However, my discontent was soon to be dispelled by the arrival of Sarah, who peered round the door from one to the other of us, a droll curiosity on her face.

‘Do you object if I join you? ’Faith,’ she carolled, ‘once I learnt that Robert was here, I had to come in to greet him.’

I stood up and kissed her, a gesture returned with some enthusiasm. She beamed at me as she sat down, smoothing her skirts.

‘So, we meet again, but under happier circumstances this time.’

We sat at the table well past the usual hour, speaking of her family, Joe’s disappearance, her mother’s sorrow, Joane’s death. Sarah confided that Uncle Henry’s absence from Joane’s funeral was no surprise to her parents. ‘They knew that he had not seen Grandmother Joane for a long time. Even so ...’ her voice trailed away...

‘...even so they were offended,’ Blake finished for her ‘offended that Henry paid so little attention to his own sister.’ But then he added, ‘he has begun to express profound regrets at his disregard of Joane.’

‘He has?’ I looked at him curiously, ‘what has he said to you?’

‘Not a great deal, but he spends an inordinate amount of time in my chapel. Just sitting. Once or twice, I have looked in and he has not heard me come and I vow he must be praying, or perchance lamenting his folly.’

‘His folly?’ Sarah said. ‘I hope that Grandmother’s death has not plunged him into melancholy.’

‘No. He has made some ill-judged decisions these past few years.’ Blake crumpled up his napkin and threw it on the table. ‘It will cost him a deal of work to set them to rights.’ He stood up. ‘Please to excuse me, I must speak to my butler.’

Sarah watched him as he left the room then turned to me. ‘Ill-judged decisions ... that

does not sound like my Uncle Henry.'

'That was a broad statement,' I said. 'Henry's affairs are in some disarray, it's true. But the blame is not wholly his.'

Sarah poured water into a glass. She waved the jug at me, 'this is Sir Geoffrey's own spring water,' she said. 'I vow it is the purest I ever tasted.' Then she added, 'I myself have found Uncle Henry far more ready to converse than I expected.'

'I suppose my time with him is so spent on business that we rarely speak of other matters.'

Sarah looked thoughtful, 'I am sure that those who work with Uncle Henry must find that there is little time for small talk. It is a pity, for it is generally through small talk that more weighty matters can be introduced.' She rested one hand on her skirt and leaned towards me confidingly. 'I doubt that my uncle has noticed, but I am soon to bear a child. I vow that my condition has rendered me incapable of wise or clever words.' She stroked the swell of her belly, 'so I do not pose a threat to anyone. Least of all to an old man.'

This had us both laughing and I offered her my good wishes. Then I suggested that more time with her might be beneficial to Henry.

She inclined her head. 'In truth, Robert, I had no notion of the breadth of his ambitions. Grandmother Joane hinted that he had a scheme to build some sort of legacy and my father has said more than once that Henry is intent on relieving half the merchants in London of their wealth, but I don't think he knows quite what his own uncle is up to.'

'No, Henry has not spent time conversing with his nephew.' I was about to tell Sarah more of his grand scheme, but she fore stalled me, saying that Henry had explained some of it to her already. 'And Robert,' she beamed at me, 'I have to say from my heart that he must forever be in your debt, for were it not for you, this great enterprise – as he calls it – might have foundered completely.'

I was astounded; not merely because Sarah seemed to believe this but because Henry must have conveyed ideas to her that led her to this conclusion. I was unable to prevent a smile from spreading across my face as I responded, 'my thanks, Sarah. I have done what I can, but there remain matters that must still be dealt with.'

Presently we agreed to walk in the gardens. The sun was by now high in the sky, the rain that had so beset me on the road was quite dispersed, leaving a brilliant clarity of light. We traversed the knot garden, pausing to examine intricate patterns of rosemary, thyme and sage in the square beds. Single blooms of brilliant summer flowers stood in ornate terracotta urns. Statues, framed alternately with dark green box or grey lavender, add to the formality of the scene. Sarah pointed to the borders of rambling roses, her voice rising in animation as she told me about the rose beds that she and her husband planned for their own garden later in the year.

Beyond the flower beds we spied a familiar figure seated on a wooden bench overlooking the meadows. We made our way across the lawn, Sarah lifting her skirts above the rain-soaked grass to where Henry sat in his house robe, staring out across the fields. We paused, instinctively. An embroidered linen nightcap kept the heat of the sun off his head, leather slippers covered his feet. He appeared to be muttering, though we could hear nothing of his words.

Some instinct caused him to look up, his face brightening at the sight of Sarah striding towards him, then a look of mild astonishment as he realised who was behind her. He struggled to his feet.

'God give you good day, Robert.' He stood irresolute. As if unwilling to confess that he had not known of my visit.

'Uncle Henry, please sit down.' Sarah seated herself beside Henry, turning to face him,

delivering her words with measured deliberation. ‘Robert came to speak to Sir Geoffrey not knowing that either of us was here. Is that not a delightful surprise?’

I picked up a cane seat and place it beside the bench. It was still slightly damp but of a good height and there was ample room to stretch out my legs. It was pleasant to take in the warmth of the sun, breathe the scented air and listen to their conversation.

Henry observed that this was his first meeting with Sarah since she had become a married lady. Sarah was pleased to tell him more of her husband Doctor Spurstowe and the high respect he was gaining at Cambridge. Then, recalling that Uncle Henry had not attended their wedding she proceeded to entertain him with a depiction of the gathering. When she mentioned her great aunt, Lady Grisogon, Henry became animated.

‘Grisogon. I have not seen her for ...’ he thought for a moment, ‘for nigh on ten years.’ And after another pause, ‘Grisogon was very good to my sister Joane.’ He peered at me, ‘you must have met her Robert, many years ago?’

This allusion to my former state as his apprentice was the first that I could recall Henry making. ‘Yes, indeed I remember her,’ I said. But I did not divulge my recent conversation with Meggie concerning Lady Grisogon. Sarah clearly had a talent for encouraging confidences and I did not want to interrupt the flow of their exchange.

‘She is your first cousin, is she not?’ Sarah prompted him.

‘Yes. She was the eldest of Sir Thomas Smith’s children. She has outlived most of the others. Born to his first wife. There were the two of them, Grisogon and Robin, her brother. Then a whole host of others when Sir Thomas married again. Robin was just a little older than me.’ A cloud passed across his face.

‘Did you know them well?’ Sarah had to break the silence.

Henry turned puzzled eyes to her. Then, ‘know them? Yes... yes for a time I knew them well.’ He placed his hands in his lap. They were mottled, dry, stained with ink.

Sarah took one of his hands between her own. 'I mind that you always had ink on your fingers' she said. 'Do you remember when we came to your house at St Dunstan's, Uncle Henry?' She waited for his nod, then went on, 'I used to leave my mother and Mistress Anne to their gossiping and run round the house til I found the library. Most times you were sitting there, holding a quill, papers all over your table. I don't think you saw me at all, you were so absorbed.'

'You had a cloth doll you used to rock.' Henry said.

Sarah's eyes widened, 'I did. I carried it wherever I went. The poor thing was threadbare in no time. I remember being entranced by the maps on the wall – and the globe, the one that stood on the floor.'

Henry smiled, 'You used to turn it round and round as I recall. Your mother was wont to scold you for it.'

Sarah laughed. 'She was afraid I was disturbing you. But in truth, she was never too severe with me.' She relinquished his hand and looked away. I wondered if she thought of her father and his harsher treatment of her brothers.

Henry gazed out at the hills beyond the river valley. 'Did you know that we lived almost within sight of the city, when we were children?' he murmured.

'Wandsworth, was it not?' I said.

'Yes ... over there, across the river.' He pointed with his stick. 'My father, Walter, Walter Smith, he was apprenticed to a salt merchant. What was his name? Cudlip. Yes, John Cudlip. They brought salt from the midlands, the Thames was wide enough for a barge at Lechlade and they could bring it down to the city. He made a good living.' Henry stopped. 'Until disaster struck us,' he said finally.

'Disaster?'

'My father had a dreadful accident.' Henry said.

Clearly this was not a memory that he relished. Sarah looked at me, her eyebrows raised and I spread my hands indecisively. But before either of us could reply, Henry went on

‘We ended up in a cottage on my uncle’s estate. Though I was in London by then.’ He sat still, his lips working, then added, ‘now there was a man of property, Thomas Smith. Mark you, he was privileged from youth. *My pueritia aulicus* was the name Henry gave him. My page from boyhood,’ he explained.

‘Ah, *aulicus*, his young courtier, of course.’ Clearly Sarah was not deficient in her knowledge of Latin. ‘But you said ‘Henry,’” she continued, ‘which Henry was that?’

‘None other than the old king himself, Sarah.’ He smiled at her confusion. ‘Oh yes, we have had illustrious connections, humble Smiths though we may be.’ But his sardonic tone indicated that this was not a memory to be cherished.

‘But how did Sir Thomas know King Henry?’ I asked.

He glanced at me as if he’d forgotten I was there. ‘Oh, I doubt that his family was acquainted with the king. But Henry had many courtiers, and the story goes that Thomas was staying at the house of Sir Elwyn Giffard, when Giffard’s son was engaged by a party of players for the entertainments at Nonsuch Palace. It seems that Thomas was invited to go with him.’

Sarah looked puzzled. ‘But you said he was the king’s pageboy.’

‘Indeed.’ Henry straightened his back, wincing. ‘He was but a lad when he caught the eye of the king. He became one of his favourites. He never grew tired of reminding us.’ He chuckled dryly, ‘such a penetrating voice, Sir Thomas’s. There was no getting away from it. At least,’ he corrected himself, ‘that was how it seemed to me then. Maybe I might view it differently now.’ He grew silent, his lips moving as if he was rehearsing an old scene. Then, ‘I can see him now at table chucking his wife under the chin, jesting with her, and another long story would follow about good King Henry’s dislike of eels, his preference for beef.

And all the while Thomas's serving men replenishing the board with roasted meats, fine wine – and my mother, his own kinswoman, sitting at the far end of the hall, below the salt, left to sup on cheat loaves.' '*Below the salt*,' Henry growled again, his hands gripping his stick. Sarah moved instinctively towards him, but he sat back, breathing heavily. 'That was after my father died of course,' he said.

Curiosity compelled me to ask, 'did you return there – to Combe – to visit your mother and Joane?'

'Oh, indeed I did. But whoever decided they would live there, it was an ill-gotten arrangement. My mother loathed Sir Thomas and Lady Katherine. She interpreted their attempts to help her as a form of condescension; even setting Joane up as a nursemaid was an insult.'

There was nothing we could say to this. Sarah turned to him, her tone deliberately light as she remarked, 'you said that Grisogon was kind to Grandmother Joane.'

'Yes. She tried to stand between Joane and her stepmother. Grizzy always knew her own mind.'

'Grandmother Joane loved Aunt Grisogon,' Sarah said. 'I only met her once or twice and I vow there was a bond between them even then, though their lives were so different.'

'Indeed.' But Henry was becoming weary, he was unused to such lengthy converse. He glanced at the sky as the sun disappeared behind a cloud and heaved himself up. 'I think I'll go in,' he said. I started to my feet, but Henry shook his head, 'no, you stay here Robert. I can make my own way back.'

We watched him negotiating the gravel path, leaning heavily on his stick.

'In truth I have not heard him so talkative for an age,' I said.

‘I love to hear old folks speak of their lives,’ Sarah replied. ‘So many things we might never know unless we help to unlock them.’ She gathered her skirts. ‘It’s time I walked a little,’ she said. ‘This child becomes too confined otherwise.’

We made for a gate that opened onto the fields. Sarah seemed to be in no want of her maid, clearly that she had no qualms about propriety, so I followed her down a lane that ran past a crop of ripening corn; beyond were strips of land separately cultivated, fruit trees, sunflowers, rows of peas. An old woman stooped over a patch of onions, tying their withered tops together as she pulled them.

‘There are a lot of market gardens round here,’ I gestured towards the woman. ‘No doubt Henry would approve of such industry.’

‘Why Henry particularly?’

‘Many of these cottars will not have sufficient land around their houses,’ I said. ‘Here they have a chance to grow food for themselves and some more to bring into the markets, if their harvests allow. It is one of Henry’s chief dictums, ‘to set the poor on work’. He makes no concessions for idleness. Indeed, he has strong views about those who may or may not be deserving of his charity.’

Sarah made a face, ‘deserving of his charity ... but who is to be the judge of that? Doctor Spurstowe – my husband – would completely concur with Uncle Henry’s decision to lift the poor from poverty. He believes it is no more or less than the duty of every Christian man or woman. But as to making distinctions – well – he would say that our Lord did not specify that Lazarus was “deserving” of his charity. Merely that he was a poor beggar.’

‘Doctor Spurstowe sounds like the preacher who shared Henry’s name.’

‘Silver-tongued Smith?’ Sarah’s face lit up. ‘My father-in-law knew him well.’

‘We went to hear him preach once, at St. Paul’s Cross.’

‘Truly?’ Sarah stood still, ‘that must have been a marvel.’ She smiled roguishly at me, ‘did he convince you, Robert? Was your life changed?’

‘Perchance – for a while. Silver-tongued Smith could induce birds to fly backwards and gluttons to starve themselves.’ I laughed at Sarah’s expression. ‘In truth, Mistress Spurstowe, there were those who thought he could work miracles.’

Chapter 30

London 1590

Was my life changed by Silver-tongued Smith? I was just a callow youth when, at Mistress Anne's suggestion, I went to hear him. I recall that she was gratified when Henry came too, though she had not insisted on it.

It began with a tract that Anne gave to me, one of Silver-tongued Smith's own sermons, entitled *The Poore Man's Teares*. I have it still, in my library. It must have moved me, else why would I have handed it to my master? I can remember Henry's face as he returned it to me later. I could swear that it affected him too.

'I would like to hear him,' he said, 'when he next preaches at St. Paul's.'

Crowds flocked to listen to the impassioned Puritans at St Paul's Cross, the bishop fearing to incur the queen's wrath with such radical sermonising inside St. Paul's church itself. I can still recall the sound of singing as we crossed Old Change; multitudes, gathered an hour before the preacher was to speak, their voices uplifted in a psalm. Henry stood staring – I could not say what he was thinking, but years later he would tell me that it took him back to Wandsworth, where John Edwin, the godly priest, was wont to lead his congregation in heartfelt praise to God. To me it was a marvellous sound, although in my youthful conceit I affected to be unmoved by it.

St Paul's Cross was in the lee of the church, in deep shadow, gloomy after the bright morning sun. Mistress Anne's maid, Jenny, helped me to secure seats for my master and his wife on one of the benches set out for the occasion. Then we stood together against the church wall at the back of the crowd, gawping at the fine men and their ladies and staring at the Lord mayor, who arrived in the company of a black-robed man with the high crown of a bishop. Jenny told me that he was Sandys, the Bishop of London. I thought he seemed very ill at ease as he sat looking out across the crowd. Jenny said she'd heard that his heart was

with the reformers but that he feared lest the royal guards got wind of the occasion. I asked her how she knew and she said her friend was servant to a priest. I looked at the bishop, sitting with his head bowed.

‘Do you think he’s praying for God to shut the queen’s eyes, or for preacher Smith to watch his tongue?’

Jenny was not amused. ‘Really Robert, the things you say.’ She pursed her lips, ‘I’ll warrant he is praying for disrespectful youths to have a care how they open their mouths.’

I had been expecting the preacher to rail against vestments, crucifixes, even the liturgy, but he did none of these things, only becoming heated when he spoke of greed and selfishness in men’s hearts and their neglect of the poor. I had heard too many praters railing against ungodliness to think I might be moved, but I confess that Silver-tongued Smith’s exhortations stirred something new in me.

Every Commonwealth that letteth any member in it to perish for hunger is an unnatural and uncharitable Commonwealth. But men are now-a-days so full of a covetous desire to themselves, that they cannot abide to part with anything to the poor, notwithstanding that God hath promised He will not forget the work and love which you have shewed in His name to the poor and distressed.

Mistress Anne sat hanging on every word, her lips working in silent reiteration of the scriptures as the preacher’s voice rolled on; Henry, too, seemed to be listening intently.

There are a number that will deny a poor body a penny, ... who will not stick to have twenty coats, twenty houses, twenty farms, yea, twenty lord ships, and yet go by a poor person whom they see in great distress, and never relieve him with one penny, but say, God help you, I have not for you.

Close to where we stood was a cloistered area, empty save for a few benches. As Silver-tongued Smith’s voice rose and fell, I fancied that I heard a low groan coming from beneath an archway and half turned to establish the cause of the noise. Staring into the shadows I

caught a glimpse of a face, white and drawn, a figure huddled against the cold stones, clutching a blood-soaked cloth around his arm. As he turned, I saw his face and gave a gasp of recognition. It was Edmund Skelton, the rat catcher. He was clearly in a sorry state. What was he doing here?

Smith allowed his eyes to roam across the silent congregation as he concluded.

*But now, many gentlemen of the country are content to suffer the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow [...] to starve and die in the streets with hunger and cold, and never receive them to house or harbour, nor afford them any relief or succour. But as the voice of Abel's blood did cry from the earth to God for vengeance against his brother's cruelty; so the voice of the poor and their piteous cries shall enter into the ears of the Lord.*¹³

Once the sermon was at an end, the congregation joined heartily in singing another psalm, said a fervent 'amen' to Bishop Sandy's final prayer and rose from their seats, small groups forming, voices becoming animated. Anne gathered up her skirts and turned towards Jenny. Then, with a nod towards Henry, who had fallen into conversation with some neighbours, she waited as the crowds began to disperse. If she heard a voice nearby hissing "usurer, cheat," it was not one that she recognised, so she took no heed, but made for the bundle of rags in the shadows.

'Edmund Skelton, what brings you here?'

The man stared up at her, his left hand shaking violently, his lips trembling.

'M-mistress Smith.'

Jenny spoke behind her 'Mistress Anne, I implore you, the master, what if he ... ?'

But Anne ignored her and leaned over, 'Edmund you are ill. You should be at home.'

¹³Sermon quotes taken from 'Smith, Henry. The Sermons of Mr. Henry Smith. Ed. Thomas Fuller, London: William Tegg, 1866 <https://play.google.com/books/reader?printsec=frontcover&output=reader&id=vtQTAAAYAAJ&pg=GBS.p.5>

‘I ... I have no home now. They turned us out when,’ he tried to lift his right arm, ‘when they carried out my sentence.’

‘Carried out your sentence?’ Anne stared in horror at the blood-stained rags. ‘What have they done to you?’

But it was plain to see that they had taken his hand.

Skelton gasped for breath. ‘I came here today to ask ... I hoped for ... for some help.’

‘Have you nowhere to live? Where are your wife and children?’

But before Skelton could give her an answer a loud voice cut through the general hubbub of conversation.

‘So, the usurer’s goodwife consorts with vagabonds and thieves. And on the very threshold of God’s house. Such is the holiness of the true Puritan.’

Anne turned sharply. One or two laughed, but others moved aside. I recognized the man as a prosperous mercer, known to my master. I muttered as loud as I dared,

‘My master is no usurer. I take exception to those accusations.’ But I knew as I spoke that the mercer’s words were not wholly unfounded. I hesitated and at that instance Henry turned from conversing with his friends and caught his eye. The mercer stepped forward and raised a hand

‘Why if it isn’t Master Smith the salter. Salted away a few crowns, have you?’

Henry lifted his chin and looked coolly at him, ‘let me assure you, Master Crutchley, that my transactions are not only executed with the full agreement of the other parties but always to the benefit of the less fortunate.’

Crutchley sneered at him. ‘The less fortunate – is that what you call yourself now? The church forbids usury, you know it. Yet you demand a rate of interest in your affairs like a dirty Jew.’

The deliberate insult drew gasps from the other men. Mistress Anne moved towards

them and was listening intently, her face a picture of confused indignation. She grasped Henry's arm,

‘Husband, what’s amiss?’

‘These men think to unsettle me with their jibes.’ His reply was brief. He did not want her to know the full extent of their accusations. Behind him, Edmund Skelton swayed and put out a hand against the pillar to steady himself. Master Crutchley rounded on him,

‘Christ’s wounds, but you have a foul stench about you. What are you doing here, so close to the house of God?’

‘Where else can he go?’ Mistress Anne’s voice trembled, and Henry looked at her sharply, then turned back to his accuser, his chin raised defiantly, but his voice in its customarily even timbre.

‘Crutchley – you and your cronies can denounce me if you must. Yes, I have lent money at interest and my path to holiness may well be strewn with thorns. Nevertheless, I desire to relieve poverty, where I find it to be worthy of relief.’

If this mild-mannered speech could not mollify Crutchley, then I vow that nothing could. But then Henry took a deep breath and seemed to make up his mind to press matters further. ‘There are many merchants here today. Money is our trade, but I vow the preacher spoke well when he adjured us to offer of our bounty instead of empty words.’

At this, Crutchley’s friends began to melt into the crowds and after a brief moment the merchant himself gave a curt nod to my master and departed.

But then Anne stepped forward to Henry and spoke very directly. ‘And now husband, what will become of poor Skelton?’

Henry looked past her to the man. ‘As I understand he was caught stealing a loaf. He has paid the penalty. If you must we can give him a few pence.’

‘When is poverty *worthy of our bounty* husband, and when is it not?’

‘Your pardon, mistress?’ Henry stared at her, but she did not flinch as she held his gaze.

‘This man was cheated from his living by one of those men of means, those *gentlemen* who approach you for help so that they can continue living in a manner that is far from godly.’

‘Wife, I am not judge and jury of my clients. Their lives are their own concern. Now I bid you be quiet.’

Jenny and I exchanged startled looks. But Anne seemed oblivious to all else but her concern for the unfortunate Skelton and – as she now reminded Henry – for his wife and children. ‘For by the looks of the poor man they are likely soon to be bereft of their husband and father.’ Henry’s face flushed as she went on, ‘Skelton has received the punishment for his theft. He has lost his right hand and his wounds appear to be septic. He is likely to die before long. And why did he take that loaf? Because his children were crying out in their hunger. No food, no ale, no victuals to sustain them.’

Anne’s voice was so reasonable in its tone that Henry knew not how to respond. Skelton, meanwhile, had sunk down onto the ground, his breathing laboured. We were standing, uncertain how to proceed, when a man came towards us, a man of medium height and of plain countenance, shrewd eyes above a straight nose, his beard neatly trimmed, his mouth slightly smiling. In his hand he held a stone bottle, which he unstopped and put to the poor man’s lips, supporting his head with great care.

‘We have a dormitory at St Clement’s where we can take you. We will tend to your wounds. Perchance,’ and his gaze swept round our company and came to rest on me ‘perchance this young man may assist me in this matter.’

There was silence. Motes of dust hung in the air, caught in the sun’s rays. The dark stones were lit suddenly with golden light. There was no mistaking that voice. Every word

was stamped with authority as the slight figure rose to his feet. Devoid of his cap and surplice, Silver-tongued Smith had returned unnoticed through the throng. I opened my mouth to assent to his request, but his gaze travelled on to Mistress Anne,

‘You spoke truly mistress; I commend you for your courage. And if Christ himself were present he would no doubt be in agreement with your sentiments.’ Then to Henry, with a direct look that held no hostility, ‘Christ Jesus did not come to condemn – that we seem able to do without his help. Your affairs are your own; I make no comment on those. But I appeal to you, if you were sinking in the mire into which this poor man has stumbled, where would you turn for help and succour – to one who dissembles in his generosity or to a lady whose mercy will have none of such bounds?’ Then turning to me he said, ‘I will return within the half hour,’ and walked away, leaving Skelton in my care.

Henry, whose head was still bowed, seized Mistress Anne by the arm and made as if to walk off, but then stopped, drew a small bag from his belt and gave it to Jenny.

‘See that Robert has all that is meet for this task,’ he said gruffly.

Interlude

Openshaw 2014

William drags himself over to Openshaw. Father John takes one look at him, ushers him into the presbytery and switches on the second bar of his electric heater. 'My friend, you don't look well, come in and get warm.'

The change in temperature starts William coughing, a harsh hacking sound from his throat, travelling down to his chest. He gasps for breath, thrusts his hand into his pocket for a tissue, then shakes his head.

'Just a minute,' the priest fetches a roll of toilet paper 'this'll have to do.'

He looks at William anxiously, at his bloodshot eyes, the tremor of his hands as he holds the tissue to his face. 'I've been wondering where you got to,' he says. 'You look as if you've been quite sick.'

William sinks into a chair and stretches his feet towards the fire.

'I will make tea.' The priest has discovered that William will drink red tea and has begun buying it in industrial quantities from the local health food shop. William laces the tea with sugar and sips it slowly, warming his hands on the mug. After a few minutes, the priest asks him,

'Is Pierre well?'

'I ... I not ... I do not know.'

'You have not seen him?'

William shakes his head. 'I think he go to friend's house in Shef – Shefford?'

'So, no chance of sleeping on his sofa anymore?'

William shakes his head. Steam rises from his trainers as he sips, his silence only broken as he starts to cough again. The priest makes a decision. 'Sleep here tonight,' he says, 'as long as everything's cleared away in the morning before the caretaker arrives, it shouldn't be a

problem.’ He stands up, ‘I’ve got a sleeping bag somewhere, I’ll have a look for it, get it aired.’

Hang the consequences he thinks. If Bishop Francis gets to know, all well and good. Its time they woke up round here.

Chapter 31

‘Faith, Robert, you’re sailing too close to the wind.’

‘I’m simply doing what I deem necessary,’ I burst out angrily. ‘If anyone is going to suffer harm from this it will be the ones who seek to deceive Henry.’

I was thoroughly vexed, inclined to forget who I was addressing, but I had waited two days for Richard Lumley to appear – two days of dissembling to Henry, regaling him with the details of a visit to Kent that I did not make, two days when I could have been urging Frazer on to find the link between Hardaker and Dorset House. Two days, I thought bitterly, when I could have been making some decisions of my own.

Then once Lumley finally arrived and I related the whole account of my visit to Knole, both he and Blake responded with suspicion. I told them that Lindsey was not as hostile as I was expecting him to be. In fact, I said, he was greatly distressed to learn of the threats to Mr. Smith and appalled by the reference to the Star Chamber. But when I added, ‘I cannot see how Lindsey could have written that letter,’ Lumley’s response was not encouraging.

‘Are you suggesting that someone has been using him as a scapegoat?’ Lumley’s expression was of sufficient severity to give me pause. I was still framing my reply when Blake broke in.

‘Robert, I hope you are not referring to Serjeant Amherst again.’

I launched into a lengthy explanation, reminding them of Amherst’s response when Henry declared that he would have his legacy returned to him. ‘Do you not recall, Sir Geoffrey, the look of fury on Amherst’s face, when Henry made his pronouncement?’

‘But a black countenance ...a sigh of frustration ...these are not evidence,’ Blake retorted, then added more gently, ‘Robert, no-one could have done more for Henry than you, but if we are to save his legacy, it profits us to keep within the bounds of the law.’

Sir Richard Lumley lounged in a chair, languidly surveying his embroidered stockings. ‘Amherst is a very busy man, Hene. Sackville’s death came at a bad time for him. A very bad time.’

‘If that was all, Sir Richard...’ I paused. ‘When Henry received the letter threatening him with the Star Chamber...’

Blake explained, ‘the letter from his bailiff, Edward Lindsey,’

‘The letter we *thought* was from Lindsey,’ I corrected him, ‘When the letter arrived, I wrote to Serjeant Amherst to express my concern...’

Lumley interrupted me ‘Please enlighten me, Hene. What do you mean by “the letter we *thought* was from Lindsey?”’

I explained as best I could. It was clear from their expressions that both Blake and Lumley were sceptical. Somehow, I needed to persuade them of the truth. ‘Gentlemen, I believe that Lindsey wrote a different letter to Henry, when Dorset died. By great good fortune, Lindsey has a most meticulous scrivener who makes fair copies of all the Knole correspondence and of course retains the originals. He gave me this copy.’

I handed the paper to Blake, the short regretful note from Lindsey expressing his shock at the earl of Dorset’s death and his fears that it might jeopardise Henry’s ownership of Knole. Blake handed it to Lumley who stared at it for several moments before giving it back to me. He still looked doubtful. I could see that some further explanation was needed. I spread out the papers on Blake’s table – the first threatening letter, Henry’s angry response and Lindsey’s puzzled but conciliatory reply. Lumley whistled softly as he scanned Henry’s letter then read Lindsey’s reply.

‘I confess I am at a loss to understand this. Once Henry received Lindsey’s assurances of loyalty and faith, could he not see that this dreadful forgery’ – he held up the first letter – ‘was no more than a hoax?’

‘But Sir Richard, Henry never received the real letter from Lindsey. Nor the second one ... I believe they were intercepted before he could see them.’

I proceeded to tell them everything that I had discussed with Lindsey. When I reached the matter of the inks, Lumley raised his eyes to the ceiling, ‘*Ink?* great heavens above, is there no end to this?’

I vow that Collins would have been proud of me as I strove to enlighten them about the differences between the various inks. But Blake and Lumley merely looked baffled.

‘The paper seems the same,’ Blake said.

‘I know, Sir Geoffrey. It *is* exactly the same. The imperial paper made for Knole is common to all of Sackville’s houses – Withyham, Seale, Tottenham – and Dorset House.’

‘So, you believe that this is linked with Dorset House.’ Blake shook his head. ‘In truth, Robert, I thought that Middleton was at the back of this. Indeed, my insistence that you kept this from Henry was to prevent him from chasing after one of his own trustees, without real evidence.’

‘Yes,’ I said. ‘I can see that now. But Middleton could still be involved.’ I rolled up the documents and stowed them away in my satchel. Then I ventured, ‘I have had some help from ... from a friend ... in these matters. I must confess that we have found nothing on Amherst, at this point.’

Lumley stared at me in horror, his customary drawl replaced with all the authority of his rank. ‘Mr. Hene, have a care. No-one outside of this room must ever know that you have investigated a serjeant of the King’s arms.’ He turned to Blake then, ‘Geoffrey, see to it that you keep a tight check on this man lest he land us all in the Tower.’

I was mortified. My cheeks flamed as I leaned hard on the table, lest my legs buckle under me. Fortunately for me, Blake was more sanguine.

‘Don’t fret, Richard,’ he said. ‘I can vouch for Robert.’

‘Well, I ...’ but Lumley simply shook his head at me before announcing that he really must depart, he had other matters to pursue *of a more legitimate nature*.

Then it was, after bidding a most respectful farewell to Lumley, that Blake returned to the library and issued his own warning, that it was imperative for me to keep within the bounds of the law – although he was swift to temper this with a glass of brandy; his customary remedy, I thought, as I sat in the library – food or drink or better still, both. Only now it did little to mollify me. Blake’s assurance that I ‘had worked wondrously hard’ was all very well but where had it left Henry’s estates?

However, as the brandy slipped down, I could not but reflect that I had made some progress. Both these eminent men were prepared to take my findings seriously, however censorious they might be. I vowed there and then to continue, but to hold my cards close to my chest. Perchance I should not have mentioned Frazer; at least I had not let his name slip, nor had I told them about the scraps of paper I had found at the back of Henry’s shelves. I swirled the brandy around in the glass; I would not report back to them on all my activities – mine or Frazer’s – unless forced to do so.

Early the next morning I left for London. My first call must be to sound Frazer out about the links with Dorset House; he might help me decide if Serjeant Amherst really was as innocent as Lumley and Blake supposed. One of Blakes’ grooms escorted me to the nearest landing-stage where I left my mount with him to board a boat downstream for St Katharine’s dock.

Chapter 32

My mind was full of my conversation with Frazer as I reached Holborn late that evening. I confess I had given little thought to my household, but now I saw that several houses nearby were still shuttered and barred, crosses chalked on their doors. Old Tring took his time to unbar the door; once he had drawn back the bolts, he greeted me with a look of toothless astonishment. 'I didn't expect to see you, Master Robert.' He grew agitated, 'you'll be wanting some food.'

'No, no. Not now, I supped at an inn back at Tower Hill. Tring, is everything alright here?'

'Well as it happens, Master Robert...' Tring hesitated before adding, 'I suppose it is as it should be, here ... in this house.'

I looked at him doubtfully, 'are you quite sure?'

'Yes, quite sure, we are all as well as we may be.' He pushed the bolts back into the holes, lowering his voice. 'The missus and Janet have been at odds though... I can tell you I've been hard pushed to keep the peace.'

Janet was a recent addition to the household, hired to help Mistress Tring with the heavy duties of washing clothes and general cleaning. She was a pleasant enough girl but struggled to keep a still tongue in her head.

I sighed at Tring's report. 'I'm sorry to hear that. What's been the matter between them?'

'Janet said as how the missus was getting past it. Said the milk would go sour before she'd turn it to butter. Wanted to take over in the dairy. Well,' Tring leaned closer, 'I think mebbe she's right, but the missus will have none of it...'

I suppressed a yawn, 'Well, I'll put my mind to it. But not now, it's been a long day.'

Tring looked crestfallen ‘You sit down Master Robert and I’ll get those boots off of you. Janet can bring hot water ... now then, let me go and warm some ale’.

‘One moment ... where’s Simon?’

‘Er ... I was going to tell you ...’ Tring stopped at the door and turned. ‘He had word from his sister that his mother is unwell. I hope you don’t mind, Master Hene, I said he could go and visit her. We didn’t need him here you see not with you being aw...’

‘No ... no that’s alright. Do you know when he’ll be back?’

‘He’s coming later tonight sir. I only allowed him the one day. Should be here soon.’

‘I hope it’s not the plague...’

Tring looked horrified ‘No... no, no... no Master Robert. No sir, I did ask him that ... he said as it’s her back.’

I commended Tring for his care of the house and he went off muttering. Once Simon returned, I dismissed them both and went to bed.

But next morning Tring was more forthcoming. ‘When I said all was well Mr. Hene, I spoke the truth as God is my witness. But I only meant here, for I cannot be answerable for the rest of London.’

‘What are you trying to say?’

‘It was a young girl who came, yesterday morning.’

‘Yes?’

‘Don’t think I’ve seen her before. Leastways, not round these parts.’

‘Did she say who she was?’

‘Said her name was Jennet, she seemed a bit scared.’

‘Jennet? Why was she scared?’

‘She said she shouldn’t be away from Silver Street.’

‘*Silver Street?*’ I was alert now. ‘What else can you tell me, Tring?’

‘Said she lived across from Mr Smith’s house.’ Tring scratched his head, ‘Henry Smith, the moneylender. Said as she needed to find the man who comes to help him. She was up and down looking for the house, and no-one with her not even another maid.’

‘Why did you not tell me this last night?’

Tring looked wary, ‘You were fatigued, sir. I didn’t think it would do any harm to wait...’

‘Did she say what she wanted?’

‘Oh ... er ...’ The old man looked at the floor, ‘something about Mr Smith’s servants. The sickness ...’ his lips trembled, ‘I hope I have not...’

But I was already dashing out of the room, calling for Simon to bring his coat. We raced across Smithfield, up the alley past St Bartholomew’s and down through Newgate; in Silver Street we were brought up short at the sight of Henry’s front door, barred beneath the porch, a red cross painted on it and the words roughly chalked ‘*Lord hav mersy on us.*’

I stared at it, horrified. ‘God in heaven, no...’

‘It was me, I put that on.’

I whipped round; across the street, a young woman stood at the side gate of the Mountjoy’s house. She looked around uneasily, as if she should not be there.

‘Jennet, isn’t it? You brought a message to my house. How did you know...?’

‘It was Jane, sir. She told me if anything else happened I was to try and tell you. She said you would know what to do.’ She looked up at the cross on the door, ‘reckon you’ve had a shock sir.’

‘Can you tell me ... anything?’

She glanced behind her, pulled the gate to and walked across, ‘It was about two weeks gone, sir. The men came for poor Tom.’

‘The men?’

‘The corpse men – with the plague cart.’

‘The corpse men – for Tom...?’

Jennet’s lips trembled, ‘They wouldn’t let anyone go with him,’ she said. ‘They knew once the sickness was in the house, they’d have to make them stay, so they fixed that plank to the door and painted the cross, but I felt so sorry for them, in there, that I put the words up at night when no-one could see me.’

‘So, who’s there now?’ I asked.

‘Well... only one of them, I reckon.’ Jennet blinked hard, ‘One morning – must’ve been about three days ago – Jane came out, managed to sneak out without the watch seeing. I seen her from the window and followed her down the street. She told me Tom didn’t die of plague, but they wouldn’t believe them, however much they tried to tell them. They just told them to bring him down to the cart.’

I clutched the side of the porch. The thought of Tom thrown onto a cart, the bodies piled high, the sickening thud as they landed in the pit...

Simon took my arm ‘Master Robert, sir, are you all right?’

I breathed deeply, ‘Yes, I’m sorry. I ...’ I waited for a minute, then ‘How many did you say there were?’

‘Only one of them.’

‘Why? Wh... what do you mean?’

‘I saw the corpse men come again yesterday.’ She put a hand to her mouth. ‘The mistress told me to come away from the window, she said it was no use getting upset.’

‘Are you saying that Jane has gone too?’

‘Well, I think one of them has, sir.’ Jennet gasped, her face crumpling.

One of them. Good God above... ‘Has anyone in your house gone to see ...?’

‘No, sir. And they’ll beat me if they find me out here.’ She dropped a quick curtsey and hurried back through the gate, her shoulders shaking.

Simon knocked hard on the front door, but no, of course no-one came to open it. He tried the latch on the yard gate then, but it seemed to be bolted on the inside and would not yield. We stood irresolute, looking up at the windows. Down at street level and on the floor above, the shutters were drawn. Simon shaded his eyes and looked higher,

‘Is that a light, up in the attic window?’ He asked.

I followed his gaze. ‘No, just the reflection.’

But Simon was not convinced and banged on the door again whilst I pushed at the gate. We were about to turn away when there came a small sound, a bolt being drawn back slowly, quietly. Above the gate a line of light broadened as the kitchen door opened a crack.

‘It’s Robert,’ I shouted. ‘It’s me, Robert Hene.’

‘Robert. Oh, thank God.’ A weak voice came from just behind the gate.

‘Meggie, is that you?’ I had to be sure, it could have been either of them.

‘Yes. Yes, it’s me, Meggie.’

I leaned back against the wall. She was still alive. I was suddenly breathless.

‘Can you let us in?’ Simon called.

‘I can’t. I mustn’t open the gate.’

‘Meggie, are you alright?’ *What a foolish question.*

‘I don’t know. I must just wait.’ The catch in her voice wrung my heart.

‘What can I do, tell me. Is there anything I can get you?’

‘Please to let Master Henry know ... he must stay away from here.’

‘He doesn’t know?’ No, of course he wouldn’t. I shook myself. *For God’s sake think clearly.*

Meggie's voice was low, hardly above a whisper. 'Tom...' there was a pause. 'Tom coughed and coughed – there was nothing we could do.'

'Oh Meggie. I am so sorry.'

'He ... he was not alone when he...we ... Jane and I ... we sat with him by turn.'

'But what about a physician?'

'They've all gone. Most people have gone. The surgeon left three weeks ago; we couldn't find anyone to come.' Her disembodied voice sounded unnaturally calm.

'And Jane?'

'She said she would go out to find food.' Meggie paused. 'I ... I said I would go but she said better not. Our supplies were almost gone – most of the shops round these parts were shut up by the end of July. I told her to be careful, but she had to walk a long way to find a shop open. And when she came back, she looked so tired.' Meggie's voice began to shake.

'You don't have to tell us everything...' I began, but she gathered herself,

'No, no Master Henry will have to know.' She took a deep breath. 'She went up to bed and the next day I heard her moaning. She had such a fever and ... and I saw the marks on her... I tried to calm her, to give her water, to sponge her ... but...'

There was a long silence. Finally, Meggie said, 'I had to call the corpse men through the window and one of them came in and helped me to bring her down and put her on the cart. I couldn't even go with her, Robert. The watchmen came and told me to go back inside. It will be another four weeks before this house is clean.'

'So, you don't know ... you don't think?'

'You mean, have I got the sickness?' Her voice hardened. 'I shall have to wait and see. But one thing I'm sure of, no-one else will catch it on account of coming in here. I have burned the sheet from Jane's bed and ...' her voice cracked, 'and Tom's as well and all the mattresses... and his clothes.'

We left her reluctantly. Somehow, I promised her, we would bring water from the conduit, bread, anything else we thought she might need. We waited til we heard the kitchen door shut, the scrape of a bolt pushed back in, then I said to Simon, ‘I must find out if Minister Flint is still here. I’d have expected him to be the first to help.’

But as we got to the church, we saw that the minister’s house was also shut up, a red cross painted on the door. I stood in the street considering. Meggie said she would have to stay in the house for four weeks before the watchmen would allow her to leave; but at the very least, we could make sure she was provided for.

‘Simon, you have my purse, see what you can find in Wood Street. There may yet be places still open. But pull your kerchief around your mouth, it’s one of the worst affected places.’

‘We’ll need vinegar,’ Simon said. ‘If I can find anything for Mistress Meggie, I’ll have to leave it here in the street. But we’ve spoken to her quite close. We must keep ourselves safe, too. I shall go back home for a bottle of vinegar and she can put her money in it when she takes the goods.’

‘Money? She doesn’t need to pay us.’

But Simon was adamant, ‘even so I’m not taking any chances Master Robert. Not that I want to be disrespectful but...’

‘Do what you have to. And I’ll be careful when I get back to the house. I’ll leave my coat and boots outside. But I must ride back to Hale this afternoon. If I find that I need you, I’ll send a messenger... otherwise I want you to do all that you can to keep Meggie – Mistress Davasour – safe.’ Great heavens she was Widow Davasour now, I thought.

I was sore of heart as I walked back home. The last thing I wanted to do was to add to Henry’s troubles but I would have to go to Hale to give him the sad news. But my greater grief was for poor Meggie – I couldn’t help thinking that I should be the one to help her.

After all, even if she no longer cared to remember, it was I who had looked out for her all those years ago. Until I had to leave Henry's household and Tom came along and she had no more need of me.

Chapter 33

Winter 1625

Henry submitted his Bill of complaint while he was still in Hale, at Blake's house. He declared that his trustees had wronged him, that they had not used his estates for the good purpose wherein he had delivered them up and that he desired to take them all back under his own control. Expecting some members of his Board to defy him, Henry was fully prepared to counter their complaints. It was little surprise to him when Middleton behaved like a fish on a hook, attempting to wriggle his way out of any obligation to pay his debts. Nor was he too dismayed when certain other members of the trust followed suit. But Serjeant Amherst took Henry completely off-guard when, with the full weight of the law behind him, he mounted a crafty rejoinder to Henry's allegations.

Amherst's deposition was executed through the production of a royal grant of protection, secured by Richard Sackville in the year before his death. This concession was issued on behalf of King James and renewed by King Charles, personally addressed to the Chancellor, Lord Keeper Coventry.

Thus, on the occasion of Henry Smith's summons to the court to hear the Chancellor's ruling, Amherst, in his full regalia of a serjeant-at-law, shoulders squared, beard oiled to a neat point, stood up and in the presence of the Chancellor declared to the court that Sackville's protected properties extended to those lands and buildings that the late earl had bestowed upon a few chosen individuals.

'And I, my Lord can attest that I am one of those men thus favoured.'

Blake and I sat either side of Henry, our mouths open in mute disbelief, watching this man, who had advised Henry from the very beginning, who knew how desperate he was to achieve his goal, calmly declare that he was 'in law' discharged of any debts to Mr Smith.

‘Therefore, it pains me to say,’ Amherst finished, ‘that my manor house cannot be forfeited to pay off Smith’s loans. I have the papers to prove it.’

I could not suppress a gasp as Lord Keeper Coventry declared that the writ was beyond dispute, and absolved Amherst of his responsibilities. And all this in Henry’s hearing, I thought indignantly, as the Chancellor went on to say that he could find no reason to admonish any of the other trustees for misappropriation of Mr. Smith’s funds.

‘These men are not criminals,’ Lord Coventry declared. ‘In this time of such severe financial restraints they are simply restricted by the current devaluation of lands and property.’

I looked across at Amherst. Well, at least he did not appear to be rejoicing over Henry’s defeat. But would he not view this as a pyrrhic victory? It might have absolved him from any personal costs but he must realise the great strain that it had brought to Henry Smith ... and that Henry’s reaction to it could cost him dear. I rather hoped it would.

Henry himself stood as straight as he could for the ruling, a slight figure, dwarfed in that great echoing chamber beneath the ancient hammerbeam roof. He managed to keep his head held high and to maintain a look of calm resolution in spite of the Chancellor’s pronouncement. The only sign of a struggle came from the slight tremor of his chin and the white of his knuckles as he gripped the back of the bench in front of him.

The rest of the Chancellor’s ruling ought to have been more palatable for Henry. He was to be granted free rein to dispose of the rents and profits of his fortune; further, the trustees indebted to him must pay their dues by a stipulated date. But the Chancellor’s assertion that Mr. Smith’s decision to dispense with his trustees was folly, that his estates must not be managed ‘in such a haphazard manner,’ left Henry quivering with rage.

Outside the courts, he vented his fury. Gone was the impassive petitioner; now the son of Elizabeth Smith was fully unleashed. ‘Haphazard! How *dare* he call me haphazard. Had he

scrutinized my books, seen my accounts, he would understand that there is no justification for remarks of that nature.’ Henry thrust his chin out. ‘Coventry may have thought that those men were innocent,’ he growled, ‘but I am not convinced. Not at all. Mark my words, I have not finished yet. There is more to be done here. Amherst and Middleton have played me false. They may have determined to pay me nothing but I will see that every last coin is returned to this enterprise. I must have my estates restored to me.’

We returned to Silver Street. But two months since I had had the onerous task of telling Henry of Tom’s death, it was now my unhappy duty to tell Tom’s widow, Meggie, that Master Henry’s court case had, as far as he was concerned, been a disaster.

Meggie and I sat in the parlour together. It was my first visit to the house for a number of weeks. Once Henry’s household had started to settle down, I felt as if my presence might be intrusive. I had done all that I could for Meggie – after Tom and Jane died, she had been quite alone. But once the watchmen allowed her to leave the house, she went to visit her friends from St Olave’s and with the help of Goody Price, hired another serving maid, Molly, a good worker, slightly built and fair of face. She was very young and reserved and Meggie confessed that she sorely missed Jane’s cheerfulness. But then, quite unexpectedly, Jed returned from Hampstead. Meggie was far too desperate to berate him for his defection and welcomed him back with relief.

‘So, by the time Master Henry returned from Hale, the house was as he would have expected to find it.’ Meggie told me. ‘Jed was back in his loft above the stables and Molly was in Jane’s old room.’

And if Meggie grieved alone in the attic where she had spent so many nights with Tom, I thought, no-one was there to see it. But Meggie had never worn her feelings too openly. On the day that I accompanied Henry back from Hale House, she had greeted him cordially and

accepted his condolences. Though her eyes brimmed as he said how much he would miss Tom, the tears did not spill over, she merely nodded and smiled her thanks.

‘But how will we go on without him?’ Henry asked. ‘He understood my needs.’

‘Now don’t you fret, Master Henry.’ Meggie summoned Jed. The lad came in looking slightly abashed, he had not really had much to do with the master. He might not be the brightest of lads, Meggie would say later, but he was cheerful and respectful, besides which he came from a large family and was undaunted by Henry’s age and infirmity. ‘Better someone who Master Henry knows than some high-flown lad with dreams above his station,’ she said.

On our return from the courts, I went into the library to replace Henry’s documents. Meggie brought in a jug of ale and I met her enquiring look with a shake of my head. ‘All this evidence, much good it did him,’ I griped as I set his book of accounts back on the shelf.

‘I could see from your faces that it had not gone well,’ Meggie said.

I sat down and indicated that she should sit too. ‘Henry has suffered a set-back,’ I said. ‘But in truth it was not wholly unexpected. Indeed, there were some judgments made to his advantage, but he felt himself to be an object of derision.’ And I proceeded to tell her about Serjeant Amherst’s clever connivings and the Chancellor’s unfortunate sting concerning Henry’s haphazard approach to his work.

‘Oh dear. That will have sorely wounded him,’ she said.

‘It did indeed.’

Meggie listened attentively as I told her about Henry’s subsequent outburst. ‘What will he do now?’ she asked.

‘Now?’ I sipped my ale, ‘I cannot say. I suppose all we can do is to make his life as uneventful as we can.’ I set the beaker down. ‘Is Jed fulfilling his new role to your satisfaction?’

‘Yes, most certainly,’ Meggie replied. ‘Indeed, I had no inkling of how capable he has become.’

‘And you had no qualms in taking him back – after he had deserted you?’

‘It wasn’t really a desertion, Robert.’ Meggie smiled. ‘When he first returned, he was insistent that he was not come in expectation of employment. He simply wanted me to know how sad he had been to hear of Tom’s passing. But I am glad to have him back.’ She hesitated, then added, ‘I feel safer for having him here.’

‘Safer? In what way?’

Meggie’s brow puckered as she considered the question. ‘I am not always confident going abroad ... there are those who call out...’

‘Ah, is that what you meant when you said that Jane insisted on going out instead of you?’

Meggie nodded. ‘Jane knew what could happen.’

I stared at her, ‘Meggie, I ask your pardon, but I never knew ... has this always been a vexation to you?’

Meggie inclined her head. ‘There are those who believe that this country is for no-one but the true English.’ She bit her lip, ‘even the Mountjoys have trouble at times, and they are not dark skinned like me. Tom would not abide anyone treating me ill.’ Her eyes filled up then, but she smiled as she brushed her hand across her face. ‘And now with Jed and Molly here, the house can begin to come alive again.’

She went on to tell me that Jed was perfectly able to take Tom’s place in attending to the master’s needs. Seeing my doubt, she added, ‘he has a grandfather who he has often cared

for.’ Her eyes twinkled, ‘Jed is well used to giving what he terms the “particular help” that the master might require. Besides,’ she said, ‘Master Henry would prefer someone he knows. He does not take kindly to change.’

Meggie had unwittingly detected the most pressing of Henry’s needs – that his life in Silver Street continue with as little alteration as possible; for his experience in Chancery had shaken him to his foundations.

Interlude

MAP 2015

Harry has a good relationship with his board of trustees. But they can't bring rabbits out of hats and now the Manchester Asylum Project is facing the prospect of a budget shortfall. Red Cross cuts haven't helped; Red Cross and MAP work together every Thursday at a drop-in for asylum seekers but now with council cuts affecting charities across the board, Red Cross has had some hard decisions to make.

'They're going to have to limit the food parcels,' Harry tells his trustees. 'A lot of the guys who go to the project are from our houses, so at least they have shelter. Red Cross needs to focus on the ones coming in off the streets.'

'Sounds like a choice between hypothermia or starvation,' one of the trustees says.

Harry nods his agreement as he produces a spread sheet, 'Red Cross have worked out a phased programme. Anyone whose been around for more than three years won't qualify for a food parcel. That's six of our clients straight away. Those who've been attending the drop-in for two years will be phased out in the next six months, then in nine months that will include all those who have been attending for more than a year.' He looks at the list again. 'Roughly speaking, we'll need to fund thirty people by next January.'

The treasurer makes a quick calculation. 'Eight pounds each – that's two hundred and forty pounds a week, on top of the bus fares and other expenses.'

'I'll have a chat with Kate tomorrow,' Harry says.

Kate is a recent addition to MAP, a part-time fundraiser for whom the past few weeks have been something of an eye-opener. She's had some experience working with the homeless, but the negative publicity around asylum seekers is something else. That said, there's some amazing volunteers here and an impressive number of charitable foundations although MAP has already accessed a lot of them. In response to Harry's enquiries, Kate

opens her laptop. ‘We can send out an appeal to our usual donors. And I’ve redrafted the original letter we sent to the charitable trusts. Could you have a look just to see if I’ve made any glaring omissions?’ She goes over to the filing cabinet, ‘I’ve printed out a list of other possibilities as well.’

Harry looks at her letter on the screen. ‘Seems fine to me. Presumably you’ll tailor it to the individual endowment funds?’

‘Sure.’ She hands him a paper, ‘here’s the list. Not many, but some of them might be worth approaching.’

Harry glances at it. ‘I need to go in a couple of minutes – hang on, we had a grant from Ryder Williams last year.’

‘O.K. I’ll archive them. Must have been before my time.’

‘Yes, it was one of the first.’ Harry breaks off, ‘Henry Smith – that’s an odd name for a charity.’

‘I know, I meant to tell you. He’s practically your namesake. You weren’t christened Henry, were you?’

‘Don’t think I was christened at all ...my Mum and Dad weren’t the church going types, Harry’s my second name but I prefer it to ...’

But Kate isn’t listening. On impulse she’s googled ‘Henry Smith’ and is staring at her screen. ‘This lot give away *loads* of money. Where’s it all coming from?’

Harry looks over her shoulder and points to *History*. ‘Can you click on that?’

Kate brings up the page and reads aloud. ‘Henry Smith was a London salt merchant; during his life he created a number of charitable trusts for the relief of the poor. He died in 1628 leaving his Trustees the sum of £2000.’ She looks doubtful ‘I suppose that was quite a lot in those days. No, hang on ...it says here that he became a successful businessman who bought land in various parts of England’ her eyes widen, ‘and his trustees purchased farmland

in the parishes of Kensington, Chelsea and St Margaret's Westminster. That's incredible . . . think what it must be worth today...'

Harry checks his watch 'Good old Henry – must have been quite a character. Gotta dash.' He runs down the stairs and out into the street. It's a brisk ten-minute walk to Refugee Action. He'll just have time to think about some of the points for discussion. But as he hurries on down the road his mind goes back to that name. Henry Smith, London merchant. He stops at the lights, waiting for the green man whilst lorries and buses thunder past. All those years ago, and yet Henry's trust fund is still bearing fruit; and he couldn't have known. Wouldn't have dreamed ...

The lights change and he crosses the road.

Chapter 34

Spring 1625

Down on the corner of St Martin's lane, a clutch of costermongers stood in all weathers selling fruit and vegetables. I must have walked past them a hundred times, but on this particular day a girl caught my eye and smiled at me, a great gap-toothed grin that invited response.

'Sweet oranges, juicy and fresh,' she called and on impulse I opened my purse and exchanged a couple of coins for three oranges and a lemon. She put the coins in a leather bag at her waist and nodded her approval. 'Now your lady will be kind. She'll sauce your meat and make it fine' she sang out, a roguish gleam in her eyes. I looked at her tattered skirts and raggle taggle hair and wondered at her jauntiness. How could she be so light of heart whilst here was I in the lowest of spirits? Perhaps I could absorb some of her good cheer.

Of a sudden I was filled with an almost overwhelming desire to seize her by the waist and take her in the alley behind the church. It would be swiftly done and she would profit from the money... almost I persuaded myself. Then I came to my senses, put the fruit in my satchel, muttered a 'good morrow,' and walked off, disquieted by such unwarranted concupiscence.

But I should not have been so astonished at this impulse. Even as I left the house that morning my spirits were low. I had scarce noticed the hint of spring in the air. Indeed, as I crossed Smithfield, I saw it as a place of death, of burnings and hangings; down the lane, St Bartholomew's churchyard was in deep shadow. They say that if you venture there after dark, you can still see the monks flitting across, where the old nave stood before Thomas Cromwell pulled it down. I vow they didn't always wait 'til dark. Today I fancied I could see them shuffling across the grass, grey-cowled, hands concealed in loose sleeves, muttering a *dies irae*.

I ducked under the arch into the town, I must shake off this ill humour, it wouldn't help Henry; I would walk down St Martin's Lane and clear my head. And then I had met the orange seller *now your lady will be kind* and I thought 'but I have no lady,' and I wondered if she would be kind instead ... well, at least Meggie would be pleased with the lemon. And perhaps she could use one of the oranges to make a sauce for Master Henry's meat. *She'll sauce your meat and make it fine*. Meggie tried her best to please him. Molly tried her best to please him too whilst Jed was becoming more and more devoted to him... but who pleased them? Certainly not Henry, I doubt that he spared a thought for any of them. Who pleased me for that matter... no wonder if I should feel sudden desire, I told myself, considering the rare occasions my needs had known any release. Wed at twenty, widowed within three years and apart from a few fleeting encounters with some country wench, behind a tippling house or after a May day's ale-quaffing, I had lived the life of a monk. Two score years and what was there to show for it?

Lah, but you've a dose of the mulligrubs today, Mr Hene.

The voice came from the past, one of those lasses no doubt, I couldn't recall who ...

Happen you're chapfallen, Mr Hene.

Hah – that was Jennie Rivers, mocking my dismay when she'd turned me down in favour of another. Such a long-past memory brought a smile to my face, for we were but callow youths, her gleeful swain and I, and it soon became apparent that I was well rid of her. But yes – I slowed my pace – I *was* chapfallen today, disappointed that I was still so enmeshed in Henry's business.

Henry's outrage after the Chancellor's ruling had precipitated a feverish reordering of his board. New names were added, old ones removed. Gurney replaced Wingfield, Judge Sir George Croke was appointed, Sir Christopher Neville brought the number of men up to nine.

But by December this outpouring of energy was drained to the dregs, resentment exchanged for a morbid despair. Meggie searched for means to comfort him but even her ministrations did little to allay his fears that all was lost. Such lowering of spirits gave us all to believe he might not be long for this world. Christmas at Silver Street was a sad affair, no greenery hung in the house, no feasting, Henry even turned down the opportunity to go to Hale. He had become worn down with anxiety, he told us, the trials of the last few months had nearly overwhelmed him. Faced with the prospect of relinquishing his hold on his estates yet again, he was beginning to wonder if his legacy would ever be realised.

Much as I desired to leave London and travel to my uncle's house for Christmas, I durst not for Henry's sake, or for the sake of his beleaguered household. My disappointment then gave way to anxiety as I found myself besieged by misgivings of my own. Had I expended all this time and industry to the neglect of my own business interests, perchance to the neglect of my friendships too? It was then that I realised how much I missed Tom – his cheerful demeanour, his willingness to help... I missed John, too. I had not seen him for months. Blake had told me that he was seldom in London.

'He has had a trying time of late, Robert. There was some trouble with the family estates, I believe, and his wife is still low in spirits after that sad loss of their daughter.'

I had written John a brief letter offering my good wishes and hope for a peaceful new year, but I had not received a reply. When I asked Blake about him again, his answers were vague; I wondered if all was well with John Rolfe.

In this fit of despondency, I wrote a letter to my uncle, explaining the reason for my absence from his house. I cannot recall if the tone of my missive echoed my ill humour, but he sent me a reply that lifted my spirits in its goodwill and heartfelt assurances; it was clear to me that he must comprehend the reasons for my absence.

It would appear to me Robert, that you have expended yourself for your fellow men, for Mr Smith, for his household. Now you will ask of yourself the reason for your dismay. But this is not a question that you can answer when your mind is not in its best health.

Trust Uncle Samuel to understand, I thought. He was a wise old bird... but this was not all. Towards the end of his long epistle my uncle had a surprising suggestion to make.

I have of late spoken to an acquaintance in Croydon, who has told me of the marvellous work of Christ's Hospital. It would seem that this is a most remarkable foundation born from the express intention to address poverty in the city, by using the revenues of wealthy individuals for the relief of various persons and bodies of a charitable nature. (I believe my friend to be amongst these benefactors though he is too unpretentious to tell me of it). I understand that upon request, His Majesty will of his grace grant a Royal Licence to Christ's hospital for the appointment of estates and manors into their care, upon which appointment the burden of such said estates and manors falls upon Christ's hospital and is thereby relinquished by the donors.

Uncle Samuel finished his explanation with the simple suggestion that Mr. Smith might care to consider this.

I put this to Henry without much hope of a favourable response, but to my surprise he seized upon it. He had known of Christ's Hospital for years, he told me, but had not been disposed to relinquish his estates, particularly after the recent disappointments he had endured. However, it seemed good to him that his board should make further enquiries concerning the charity and it was soon agreed that an application should be made.

Henry had one stipulation. 'Robert must assist me in the execution of this plan' he said. 'I will not relinquish my papers until I am persuaded that they are beyond censure;' and – still smarting from the Chancellor's criticism – 'no-one will have cause to call me haphazard, Mr Hene can vouchsafe me this.'

I could not deny him. This would be my final contribution I thought; but once Christ's Hospital agreed to take the burden of his charity upon themselves, I would make an end of this arrangement.

When I arrived at the house, I found Henry in the parlour tapping his cane on the floor, muttering calculations.

'Two pounds eighteen shillings and fourpence at twenty-two in the hundred ... seven hundred, one hundred and fifty-four ... so twelve and tenpence ... so, three pounds and ... too much, too much ...'

Clearly, he was out of sorts again. I steeled myself for an outburst. As I bent over his chair, he barely acknowledged my greeting, grunting as he waved a sheet of paper at me,

'They've refused me, said they won't do it.'

My mind had been on other matters; I thought rapidly. Refused ... who? What wouldn't they do?

'That must be a bl...'

'It's a disgrace. They can't know what they're doing.'

'Why do you...'

'Sheer hypocrisy Robert. They've taken on Culpepper, Grimling – even got their hands on Kendrick's legacy.'

Ah, so that was it; I sighed with relief. But then the import of his words bore in upon me. Oh, Mary and all the saints ... I struggled to keep my voice level. 'You mean that Christ's Hospital won't take on the distribution of your revenues, Henry.'

'That's what I said,' he snapped. 'Why can't they take it? God's teeth and bones, they've let me down.'

I drew in my breath. Never, in the worst of moments, had Henry ever uttered God's name in vain. 'Er ... did they give you reason?'

Henry handed me the paper. I looked at it carefully, turned it over then handed it back to him. 'I confess this is a puzzle to me. It says nothing of note.'

Henry glared at me, 'They think I'm a usurer. That's the truth. Someone has told them... someone who must know me...'

This must be a huge blow for him, I thought. Better to humour him. I opened my mouth, 'surely not Hen... Mr. Smith,'

But Henry's voice was rising. 'It could be any of you.' He slammed the letter down on the table. 'Any of you. I don't know who to trust anymore.'

I stood still my mouth open. 'Any of us? In truth, I must protest.'

Henry swept on, 'Amherst warned me. He said I should watch my back. "There are those who seek to betray you, Mr Smith." That's what he said.'

'Do you seriously accuse me ... *me*... your ... your one-time apprentice ... your *friend*?'

Henry stared at me, pointing his finger, 'for all *I* know, you could have opened your mouth in the taverns, started a rumour ...'

I swallowed, tried to keep my voice from shaking, 'I have had precious little time to waste in taverns of late, Henry.'

'Precious little ...' Henry looked suddenly triumphant. 'So where have you spent your time these last weeks? Scheming and planning eh? Plotting against me?' His voice rose. 'I have to know who it is who blackens my name and seeks to drag me down.'

I was appalled. 'That's enough Henry. What right do you have to charge me with ... with such perfidious gossip?'

He glared at me; veins stood out on his forehead. ‘What right? Don’t forget who took you in, who invested precious time on your training. And what became of *that*, pray?’

‘That is unjust. You left me with no alternative but to leave your service.’

‘Pah ... it’s a pity you didn’t consider that before you made free with Mistress Anne.’

‘Made free with...?’ I grasped the back of a chair as the ground rocked beneath me.

‘Then there was Meggie... even Frobisher remarked on that.’ Henry’s voice rose accusingly, ‘and the money. Don’t forget the money.’

‘Are you still suggesting that ... do you really think after all this time...’ my mouth was dry, I tried again. ‘Henry, how could you ... have you no thought of the ... the cost of this return ... to me... after those dreadful accusations ... ?’

This was monstrous. I stared at him. Was he losing his mind? Of a sudden, I recalled the vow that I had made more than a twelve-month past, *to do whatever I could to salvage Henry’s great enterprise* and my throat ached with the sudden unexpected need to hold back tears. ‘My life has been bound up with yours in a way that you can scarce imagine,’ I said.

Henry turned his eyes away.

I continued, ‘do not think that my loyalty to you has been for any reward. That would have been folly. But to look upon me as a ... a ... as a dishonourable servant,’ I breathed deeply, once, twice, ‘if indeed you see me at all ... or if indeed you see anyone.’

Henry opened his mouth. ‘This is absurd ... no Rob...’

But anger emboldened me. I swept him aside, ‘I am bound to say, sir, that you appear to be entirely ignorant of those nearest to you. Your sister, yes, and even your own household. You may wax sententious, prating and preaching about the needs of this city, yet your own housekeeper has suffered most cruelly, your household is diminished and never – by either word or look – have you encouraged any one of them to bring their complaints to *your* door.’

My words hung in the air. There was silence while Henry looked all around the room, as if attempting to find someone to take his part. Perhaps he expected me to come to my senses, to cough politely, retract my opinions. But the silence continued. Finally, he returned his gaze to me. He shifted in his seat, muttered a bit, cleared his throat. Began, 'Robert, I... I did not know ...'

But I could not wait for his words. I walked across to the desk and picked up the refusal from Christ's Hospital.

'This is your affair now Mr Smith,' and I thrust it into his hands. 'Include me no longer. I cannot remain here for another minute.' And with that I stormed out of the room, slamming the door behind me.

Chapter 35

Berkshire

I went down to see Uncle Samuel. Here was a man I could trust, a man, moreover, who trusted me. In his wisdom he did not show undue concern over my sudden appearance; if he could see that I was spent, he made no mention of it. On the morning after my arrival, he was obliged to go out. In his absence, he said, I might enjoy a walk in his grounds. I took a slow stroll around the estate then rested for most of the afternoon, whiling away the hours in the library, lifting one book after another, reading a few sentences, putting them back on the shelves, staring from the windows...

On Samuel's return that evening I tried to make an explanation for my impromptu visit, but I could not find the words. It was only as my tongue gradually loosened in the following days that I sought to make sense of all that had happened. One evening we sat before a great fire of sweet-smelling apple logs. As they fizzed and crackled in the hearth Samuel handed me a glass of brandy and shot a question at me that I was not expecting.

'I have never asked you about the girl you married, Robert. Are you able to talk about her?'

'Dorothy.' It felt strange saying her name. 'Her father was the leader of a Puritan group. At least...'

'At least ... why do you hesitate?'

'I have friends in London who are Puritans. Good people, who I would trust anywhere. Joane Jackson, Henry's sister was one of them. Sarah Spurstowe and her husband – and Meggie Davasour. Cannon was not like them.'

'Cannon?'

'Dorothy's father.' I spoke haltingly. 'I met Cannon when I was smarting from Henry Smith's accusations, furious at what I took to be his hypocrisy... shortly after my arrival in

Ledbury I attended a gathering of believers at a house near my lodgings. I was impressed by Cannon's simplicity. He was loud in his judgement of deceitful men. Forceful in his condemnation of popery. I think he saw me as an eager convert to his cause.' I moved restlessly in my chair. 'To my everlasting shame, Samuel, I allowed Cannon to offer me work,'

'Work, Robert. What manner of work?'

I hesitated. 'I can hardly ...' then I raised my voice 'the work of persecuting those men and women who refused to abandon their popish ways. He offered me work, I had to earn my living, so I took it.'

There, it was out now. Samuel neither condoned nor condemned. All he said was, 'now that you have made a beginning it would be as well to go on.'

And having opened my mouth I told Samuel of my marriage to the daughter of a man who was hell-bent on ferreting out recusants, or, as he saw it, men who differed from him in any small matter of the scriptures. How in my anger I had agreed to join him, only to become disabused, as I witnessed the cruelty with which he interrogated his victims and confiscated their property ... how his daughter, Dorothy was practically thrust into my arms.

'She was a strange, shy creature, given to bouts of ill-humour. She ... she did not ...' I looked across at Samuel and he nodded his understanding. 'I suppose we were happy for a while, once she understood ... but there was no warmth in her response. It was not long before she came to believe that I had been inveigled into marriage with her. She sensed that I could not love her as she loved me ...'

And my ardour cooled, a voice in my head told me. Scarcely surprising that she became bitter... even more so when I started to question her father's judgements. I searched for words, 'I confess I felt trapped. Then she died, giving birth to our son. And I was ridden with guilt... and yet...' I could not finish.

‘Oh Robert ... and no-one to counsel or comfort you.’

There was a pricking behind my eyes. I bent down on the pretext of mending the fire, added a few logs, stirred it with the poker. At length, I looked up and took the glass that Samuel was proffering, laughing shakily as I held the brandy to my lips. ‘In truth you must meet my good friend Sir Geoffrey Blake,’ I said. ‘He effects the same remedy as you do for all manner of ills, whether of mind or of body.’

Samuel smiled. ‘And when you returned to London you thought to engage in some sort of penance?’

I winced. ‘That’s a severe judgement.’

‘I hope I am not making any judgements, Robert. Merely helping you to understand where you are now. Perchance to comprehend the depth of your disillusionment.’ He drew a breath, ‘might I suggest that sorrow – particularly sorrow that carries remorse – may worm its way into our souls and lead to all manner of ills.’

‘In truth, I believe that that is what happened to Henry.’

Samuel tapped his foot impatiently, setting his glass down with such a thud that he lost a few precious drops. ‘There you go again, Robert. I am not speaking of Henry Smith. I am speaking of you.’ He drew a breath, ‘your life is not all ‘Mr Smith this and Mr Smith that,’

‘For certain it is not that now... not anymore.’

‘It has never been that Robert.’

There was an uncomfortable silence. What was Samuel suggesting? Had I strayed into Henry’s life as a means of distraction from my own? I stared at him, but he held my gaze.

‘Robert, I am not suggesting that you have taken a wrong path. Indeed, your support of Henry is admirable. Nor do I believe that you seek to sacrifice your life on his altar as a vain striving for holiness. You know that I am not one of those radical Puritans who advocate a form of righteousness that most of us would despair to attain – men like Cannon I suppose –

In truth I attend church without compunction, I say my prayers regularly and I read the scriptures with a deal of wonder and a measure of incomprehension.’ He stared into the fire for a long moment, then added, ‘may God forgive me if I am wrong, but I have always hesitated to denounce others for their different opinions or to delve into their souls.’

‘Indeed, I ...’

But Samuel put up his hand ‘yet, in truth Robert, I see in you such ... such loss of spirit ... that I find I must venture to suggest that in... in abandoning the dogmas of those heinous radicals who enticed you into recusancy, you have also abandoned the foundations of your faith ...’ He gazed at me steadily, ‘and thereby the great comforts of your God.’

My throat tightened; his words were so gentle yet so exceedingly persuasive. But still I persisted ‘In truth, Uncle, those bigots were preposterous in their conclusions ... relentless in their pursuit. I do not want to know a religion whose God is so vengeful.’

‘Indeed, indeed.’ Samuel’s voice grew reflective. ‘In faith Robert,’ he stared at the amber liquid in his glass, ‘as I see it, there are yet good men and true who acknowledge their God to be merciful and uphold the right of man to think freely.’ He looked at me, ‘but to barricade your soul against the love of God ... and indeed against the love of his people... on account of the machinations of foolish men ... well, methinks that must be a lonely place.’

I wondered at my uncle’s boldness. But whilst I could not answer him, I realised that his probing questions stemmed from his affection for me. And his understanding afforded me a place to reflect, to argue, to confess, that I had never before experienced. Though my uncle said little, he listened much and the comments that he did make were spiced with wisdom; and as I began to unravel the particulars of the past few months, I came to understand how Henry’s recent denunciation of me had rubbed salt into my wounds – wounds that I had not acknowledged – and how those sorrows from the past, the untimely death of Mistress Anne,

the loss of my own son... were all in some strange way bound up with Henry. Small wonder it was that I had desired to disentangle myself.

On the morning following this conversation I woke with a feeling of resolution. Over breakfast I asked Samuel if he could make use of me around the estate. 'In truth, I might find that some exercise is beneficial to me,' I said.

Samuel smiled wryly, 'Well, you've missed lambing but the men would be glad of another pair of hands scything the orchards and the riverbanks, if you're up to it.' He stood up, 'I'll ask my man to find a smock for you.' He clapped me on the shoulder, 'I have business in Windsor. I'll see you this evening.'

Accordingly, I donned the workman's smock that I found laid out ready for me and reported to one of the tenant farmers on my uncle's estate. I soon discovered, if indeed I did not already suspect it, that this was to be no pastoral idyll. For the work was hard and it was years since I had engaged in such labour. But I was determined to endure it, for as I toiled in the fields, my mind settled into a state of inertia. And it was pleasant at the end of the day to plunge into the river with the other men and to wash the dust and sweat of a day's labour clean away, then to sit under the trees in the orchard sharing stories over flagons of cider. But I confess that by the fourth day, the appeal of this bucolic life was beginning to wane, my hands were blistered red and raw. I made request of the farmer that I should have a change of job, whereupon he laughed heartily and said,

'By my troth, I had not expected you to last more'n a day at most.'

And I laughed too, and thanked him for the labour, for in truth it had tempered my defeated spirit.

That night I told Samuel that I was resolved to return to London. There were matters concerned with the threats to Henry's legacy that I must either put aside or attempt to settle.

'I suppose now that I no longer feel I can work for Henry, I should abandon these

things altogether,' I said. But to my surprise, Samuel, who had never much cared for Henry, shook his head very firmly.

'No Robert do not even entertain such an idea,' he said. 'You must at least attempt to bring this investigation to a proper conclusion, not just for Mr Smith's success but for your own peace of mind.'

'But you have seen how I have been misunderstood.'

'Indeed, I have. But this is still the worthy pursuit of a just cause. To call a halt now would be to leave yourself and others in a very difficult place. You must strive to bring those miscreants to justice.'

'I am not certain that I know how to proceed.'

Samuel counselled me to sleep on this and said that we might talk again in the morning.

The next day I found him at the breakfast table as usual, but he waved at me distractedly as I greeted him, his attention taken by a broadsheet that he held up close to his face.

'Dear, dear,' he muttered. 'What a to-do.' Then, 'preposterous. How can they...'
He set the paper down and saw me looking anxiously at him. 'Appalling news, Robert. This sheet,' he looked at the date printed at its head, 'I bought it in Windsor but I've only just seen this. Look here...'

I stared at the print, 'Salley Rovers have advanced to our shores again.'

'What does it mean?' I asked.

Samuel spread his hands, 'as far as I can tell, there has been a new invasion of Barbary pirates to our shores. But this time, they have invaded the waters that border the north side of Devonshire up towards Bristol.'

‘Good heavens...’ I recalled my conversation with Simon the previous year and his nervous apprehension that pirates would sail up the river Thames to London. Suddenly it did not seem so absurd.

‘There is a small island in the channel – Lundy – that they appear to have annexed as their own,’ Samuel explained. ‘So that they can make raids on the local villages.’

‘Raids?’ I put down my knife. ‘What are they taking?’

‘Not ‘what,’ but ‘who.’’ My uncle’s face was grim. ‘Local lads to man their corsairs, their fast-moving ships. Then once they are back in Sallee – in Africa – they fetch a good price.’

‘A good price ... they are sold?’ This was beyond belief.

‘Yes. Sold on into slavery. Who would have believed that men from so far away could wreak such havoc on our shores?’ Samuel put a slice of beef in his mouth and chewed thoughtfully. ‘It’s no wonder that people from those lands land up on our southern shores seeking shelter. The times are troubling, Robert, though there’s little that an old magistrate like me can do about it.’ He took a great gulp of ale, ‘but I can assist you in the pursuit of law and order.’

‘What do you mean?’

Samuel smiled at me. ‘I’ve been considering what we discussed last night, concerning your investigation. I understand that you have sufficient room in your house for a guest.’ He went on, ‘I would like to invite myself to stay with you for a while. I believe I may be able to assist you. Besides, I would enjoy spending time in London, it is many years since I was last there.’

‘Uncle, I ... I really do not know what to say. You are more than welcome.’

Samuel clapped me on the shoulder. ‘Then say yes Robert, for I have the feeling that this will be advantageous to us both.’

Openshaw 2015

Muriel is one of the ladies in Father John's congregation. She's lived in Openshaw all her life and knows most people around here. At least, she used to, she tells Father John. Only nowadays there's more and more new folk coming in, half the streets are taken over by people who don't even speak English, it's all changed from when she was a kid. She can remember when there was one black girl in her class, the only one in the whole school. But her daughter says that there's more of them now than the locals – they've even got special teachers for second language support – it's not that she has anything against them, but she just wonders where it will stop. Then, seeing the look on the priest's face, she stops.

It's quite a shock to Muriel when she learns that her neighbour, Joan – a woman who has also live here most of her life – has got a girl staying with her who's an asylum seeker. Not that Muriel knew she was one of those people, until she'd seen her leaving the house and had asked Joan – the next time she met her – if she had a lodger. Joan had explained that the girl had nowhere else to live, that she was destitute. Muriel thought that if you're destitute you should go back to where you came from, but she decided not to say this to Joan – at least, not straightaway.

Then she meets William. He's in the kitchen at the Presbytery when she first encounters him, standing over the sink washing up. Muriel has always been quick to notice 'those who do' and 'those who don't' – and rather to her surprise, William is one of those who 'do.' And he doesn't just wash his own mug, she sees, but everything that's been piled up on the counter. Then he cleans round the sink. All the while that she's talking to the priest – and she has a lot to tell him today – William carries on cleaning. Presently Father John introduces him to her and he nods at her, his face serious and respectful.

'I am glad to meet you, Mama.'

Muriel is entranced. No-one has ever called her 'Mama' before. She finds herself telling Joan about him. Then Joan tells her about the Manchester Asylum Project and a few more things as well. How so many of the asylum seekers are in real danger – and how some can't go back home even if they want to. How the little girl who lives with her has come all the way from a country called Eritrea. 'She didn't choose to come to the UK,' Joan says. She tells Muriel that the poor girl is too frightened to speak to men anymore. Joan looks meaningfully at Muriel as she says this and Muriel's mouth forms a round 'oh' as she cottons on.

A couple of days later Muriel returns to the Presbytery and notices that William has a nasty cough. 'You want to get something for that, love,' she says, and on a sudden impulse goes back down the street to return a few minutes later with a bottle of cough mixture.

'Is he sleeping rough?' Joan wants to know. Muriel hasn't even thought about that. She asks Father John and he looks a little uncomfortable.

'Actually, Muriel, I'd appreciate it if you didn't say but he stays here sometimes.' And he explains that there's a camp-bed in one of the empty rooms down the corridor, that not everyone would be happy about it, so it's only occasional.

'Where is he when he's not here then?'

The priest sighs. 'Wandering around like the rest of them.'

This is duly relayed to Joan who then tells Muriel about the night shelter. 'It's only over the winter, but they get a hot meal and transport there and back. I'm thinking of volunteering, actually.'

Muriel gives the contact number to Father John. She can't help noticing that he appears to be quite amused by this; she can't think why – there doesn't seem to be much to laugh about. Anyway, a few days later, William tells her he has got a place in the night shelter.

'Thankyou Mama,' he says, in his deep serious voice. God love him.

Chapter 36

Back in Holborn, I took heed of Samuel's advice and turned my attention to the mystery of the counterfeit letters. At my next meeting with Frazer, he dismissed Bellows as the centre of the operation.

'He's just a fopdoodle,' Frazer sneered. 'Hardaker's using him. Nah, you mark my words, there's someone in Dorset House – Gilly's on the case, she'll find them for me.'

I told Frazer how perturbed Lumley and Blake were about my suspicions regarding Richard Amherst.

He dismissed this with a shrug. 'Blackmail might not be in the good serjeant's bailiwick, but you can bet he's up to something ... trust me, we can wait that one out 'til it's all sewn up.' He tapped the side of his nose, 'reckon I've got a lead on him, Robert, but least said...'

'Strangely, he warned Henry himself, not long ago. He said that there were those who sought to betray him. I wonder what he meant?'

'It sounds as if he knows something, but doesn't want to give it away, for some reason. Now I wonder...' Frazer grew thoughtful. 'You know Robert, you may have just told me something important.'

I left Frazer to it and began to think about Samuel's forthcoming visit. A brief inspection of my house sufficed for me to see that I had become penny-pinching in my habits. At the very least, I should try make my lodgings more comfortable before my uncle – who was to be admired for the lavish hospitality of his own house – should arrive on my doorstep, take one look at the place and return forthwith to Berkshire. But who could I turn to? Formerly I would have called upon Meggie for help, but I had little desire to return to Henry's house. I thought of my neighbours, William and Jenny Turner; they would certainly

be pleased to welcome us to their table but I was not sufficiently acquainted with them to ask for domestic advice. Then I remembered Martha Jackson's easy friendship and thought she would give me good counsel; moreover, I could follow a visit to her house in Bishopsgate by calling at Jackson's emporium. The very next morning I put on the smarter of my two cloaks and called for Simon. I explained my plan to him.

'The Jacksons live in a fine house just outside Bishopsgate,' I said. 'No doubt someone can direct us there.'

We found the house in a pleasant square of newly built properties. When I knocked at the front door, the groom who opened it was polite but hesitant. Yes, the master and mistress were both at home, but ... but it might not be altogether convenient... 'Your pardon, sir but I must go and enquire of the master.' He turned away to return a moment later escorting a tall familiar figure.

'Sarah,' I exclaimed, and bent to kiss her. She returned my embrace with affection but as I drew away, I saw that she looked troubled, her eyes red-rimmed with exhaustion.

'Robert, I regret that neither of my parents are able to speak to you today,' she said. 'If you'd like to step into the small parlour, I'll explain.' As she opened the door, she added, 'your visit is opportune, for someone will have to apprise Uncle Henry of events.'

Events ... what could she mean. Had someone died? 'Sarah my dear, what has happened?'

She paced the floor distractedly. 'Are you aware that pirates have returned to our seas, these past few months?' she asked me.

'I have heard something of it. On the north coasts beyond Cornwall, I seem to recall.' This was what Uncle Samuel had been reading about. I racked my brains to think what he had said.

'Did you know that they have been making raids?' Sarah added.

I nodded, feeling suddenly uneasy. Sarah stood with her hands on the back of a chair as though she needed support.

‘Two months ago, not long after easter, Sam travelled to the west country to search for Joe. He found out that Joe had gone north to Bideford, a small fishing town on the coast of Devonshire. Sam sent a letter back home to say that he’d found him, that they were both in good spirits and that he hoped to bring Joe back to London with him forthwith.’ Sarah’s lips trembled. ‘My father and mother received it two weeks ago, it had been three weeks on the road. But a day later a journeyman arrived in the shop and told them about the raids. He was in a terrible state, he had witnessed some dreadful scenes ...’ she shuddered. ‘He said that as far as they knew both the boys were taken.’

‘Great heavens ...’ I gasped. Then foolishly, ‘are you sure? I mean ... is there any ... any chance it is not true?’

‘All we can hope for is that they are still alive,’ Sarah replied. ‘We have made a number of enquiries ...’ she spread out her hands ‘in faith Robert, you would be astonished at how many people there are even in London who can attest to their husbands or sons being taken.’ Her voice began to rise, ‘but on the coasts in the west there have been fishermen, sailors on trading vessels, even journeymen. And now there are whole families who have to beg for bread because they have no money.’ She stopped and collected herself. Then she said, ‘we cannot really hide this from Uncle Henry. He needs to know the truth,’ and looking at me, ‘do you think I could leave that to you Robert?’

I returned her gaze. ‘Of course, Sarah. I will make sure he knows.’

Sam Jackson’s story was heart rending. Yet even with the knowledge of his suffering I could not bring myself to see Henry again. I stifled my conscience by sending a brief note to

Meggie to say that the Jacksons had received some grave news; that I would leave any decision as to how Henry came to learn of it to her, and to them.

Simon returned from delivering the note to say that Meggie thanked me 'for my consideration of Mr Smith's feelings' and that she herself would go forthwith to Bishopsgate to visit Martha. I did not expect her to tell me how Henry had taken the news.

Chapter 37

Summer 1626

I had heard no more of Sam or his brother, nor did I have any news from Henry Smith's house. Then, one afternoon, towards the end of July, there was a knock at the door and Tring being downstairs and unable to hear, I went to open it. I stood back in surprise. Meggie was on the step, her face concealed beneath the brim of a large hat; beside her stood Molly, beaming, entirely at ease.

'Mistress Meggie – and Molly too. You'd better come in.'

Meggie glanced around then walked into the house. Simon came hurrying into the hall,

'I ask your pardon master, I meant to answer... oh.'

'I have come to make a request, Mr. Hene.' Meggie's voice lacked warmth.

'Is it Mr. Smith? Is he unwell?'

'Not exactly.' She glanced at Molly. 'If I could speak to you alone, please.'

I turned to Molly, 'If you would like to wait downstairs ...'

'I'll take her, master.' Simon was all eagerness.

'Then bring some refreshment for Mistress Meggie.'

'No, no Mr. Hene, I will not take up more than a few minutes of your time.' Meggie sounded so resolute that I raised my eyebrows at Simon and shook my head.

'At least come and sit down in the parlour.'

I waited while she untied the ribbons of her hat and took off her gloves, then I opened the door and showed her to a chair. 'Please sit down. Now then,' as she settled herself, 'a request, you say. If I can be of any assistance to you, you know you have only to say the word.'

She did not waste time. 'I have come to ask you to ... to consider coming back to help Master Henry.'

‘To help Henry...’ I sat down abruptly.

‘Believe me, I do not make this request lightly.’

‘Is this ... is this request as a result of the bad news he has received? In truth Meggie I would not have burdened you with the task...’

Her hands were fastened together. Now she stretched them out. ‘He is entirely undone by his great nephews’ disappearance. He has begun to blame himself; he is full of regrets.’ She looked at me, ‘in all sincerity I believe that you could be of great comfort to him.’

‘*Great comfort?* Hah...’

She winced at the acid in my voice, ‘I know that he was unpardonably rude to you, Rob... Mr. Hene. But if you could only reconsid...’

‘No, no you ask too much of me.’ I took a breath, ‘his accusations went far beyond mere discourtesy.’

‘Yes, I know.’

‘You know? I doubt that ...’

Meggie frowned, ‘Mr. Hene, he was beside himself with disappointment. He is an old man; he has worked so hard ... he deeply regrets the accusations that he made.’ Her eyes did not leave my face, ‘he told me everything.’

I was standing beside the fireplace. Now, perplexed, I steadied myself against the wall. ‘Everything?’ I repeated. The room seemed to rock as I turned to look at her. ‘Did he say that he brought up a charge against me from many years ago?’

Meggie held my gaze. ‘Yes, yes he did. And that is partly why I am here today.’ She took a deep breath, ‘you see, that charge was my fault, in the first place.’

‘*Your* fault?’ What could she mean? ‘Meggie, are we talking about the same thing?’

‘That he blamed you for ... for having your way with me,’ she said. The words came out in a rush. ‘That is what I am talking about.’ She looked away then, twisting the ribbons of

her hat tightly round her fingers, whilst I stood dumbfounded. ‘Robert, Mr. Hene, if I had known that the master had accused you of this, I would have confessed this years ago...’

‘If you had known?’

‘If I had had the least idea... that he thought that you...’ she broke off in confusion. ‘I ... I did not know until ... until he railed at you that day.’

‘You heard?’

‘Only a little. I was out in the hall. You went by so fast that you never saw me. But I went into him and demanded that he tell me what he had done to make you so enraged.’

‘He had accused me ... of ... of *using* you.’ It discomfited me to say these things to Meggie. ‘But why did he even suspect me of such a thing ... he knew what firm friends we were. Surely, he must have trusted *you* to behave with propriety, even if he didn’t trust me.’ I stopped and stared at her, ‘You’re not telling me that ... no ... no please don’t say that *you* made this up.’

‘No ... no, Robert how could you say such a thing?’ Meggie’s voice tightened in anger. ‘Somehow Master Henry had convinced himself that you were to blame. I can’t believe that all these years... even these last two or three ... Robert if I had only known... but I was so utterly undone when it happened.’

My mouth went dry. ‘What are you saying ... I thought it was just a tale...’

‘Oh no. It happened. That was no tale.’

A fly buzzed frantically at the window. The clock on the mantelpiece measured the minutes, a relentless ticking that must surely be growing louder. Finally, Meggie lifted her chin. ‘It happened in the master’s own house. In a stable behind the drying yard and again in the still room.’ Her voice was harsh, ‘I could not cry out because he threatened me. ‘You tell Mr Smith,’ he said, ‘and I’ll say it was you that led me on.’ He called me a black witch, a whore... worse ...’

‘He?’ I couldn’t think who else was in the house at that time. ‘Was it one of those stable boys?’ I asked. She shook her head. ‘Meggie, for the love of God – I must know.’ And when she did not respond, ‘I cannot think it was an apprentice – I was by far the oldest by then and there were only two young lads in my charge.’

‘Yes, I recall them.’ She stared at the floor. ‘He ... the man who ... he was the master’s apprentice before. But then I was just a young girl. He came back to visit Master Henry... he remarked how changed I was ... and ... and gloated over the fact that you were still there and that he was rising in the house of a wealthy iron merchant somewhere in ... in Sussex I think ... he stayed about a week.’

‘Oh, sweet Jesus. Oh no ... oh not ... Hardaker ... good God...’ My legs nearly buckled under me and I crashed back down on the chair.

‘Yes.’

‘Are you saying that Hardaker made free with you ... did you not try to resist?’ She stared at me as I burst out, ‘but why did you not tell me of it at the time?’

‘Why did I not tell you? *Why* Robert?’ She stood up, her voice rising, ‘because that is the kind of question that you would have asked, just as you have asked it now.’

‘The kind of...?’

‘*Why did I not try to resist.* Of course I tried,’ she said scornfully. ‘I fought and kicked and scratched. But who would have noticed *my* bruises? If I had had the fair delicate skin of a fine English lady it would have been all too evident.’ She compressed her lips together.

‘Meggie, please...’ I put out my hand but she went on, her words streaming out.

‘Joane noticed the marks, even before I was inside her house ... anyway he frightened me, said he could have me thrown out of the house; that the master would not want to keep me now that I ... now that ...’ Her lips trembled violently as tears began to course down her face, but she made no move to still them, smoothing the ribbons of her hat over and over in

unconscious agitation, before she added, ‘by the time I determined to speak out, it was too late.’

We could not look at one another. ‘How did Henry find out?’ I asked. She shook her head mutely; then it dawned on me. Like one of those tumbling towers that my nephews played with, this piece caused the collapse of the whole structure. I groaned aloud, my head in my hands. ‘It was Hardaker ...’

Meggie’s eyes were empty of light as she replied, ‘the master came to me and asked me if it was true that I had been con... consorting with you.’ She put a hand to her face, ‘I said no, of course not. But he told me that there were witnesses. That Bartholomew and Master Frobisher had both seen you with your arms around me.’

‘Seen me ... with you?’

‘Do you recall that day Robert, when I came up to the library in distress – when I was about to tell you why – and you held on to me to stop me shaking?’

‘I think ... yes. Yes, you were somewhat dishevelled, breathless. I thought you must have been running. Oh...’ I stopped. She nodded at me, her eyes telling me what I did not want to believe.

‘I lifted my head and looked over your arm and there was that horrible, horrible boy smirking at me. And Frobisher...’

‘But did Henry not ask you to explain yourself?’

‘No. No, he did not want to talk to me of it, Robert. I thought he must have believed me. If I had known that he blamed you... but I swear I had no idea ... until ...’

‘Until last month,’ I finished for her.

‘And I did not know that he ... that he caused you to leave because of those vile accusations,’ she added.

‘You did not know why I left in disgrace?’

Meggie bit her lip. 'I left the same night,' she said. 'I was so afraid that the master would turn me out of his house, that I ran to Joane's.' She looked at me sadly, 'it was many months after, that Martha persuaded me to go back to see him. You were long gone.'

'And he never told you ...' my mind was reeling. 'Then it was Hardaker who hid the coins in my chamber,' I said.

'Coins? What coins?'

But I shook my head. 'No matter ...' so she had not heard everything. She didn't need to know now anyway. I moved across the room, 'in truth Meggie, if I had known what Bartholomew Hardaker did to you, I would have beaten him to a pulp. But now ... now, I am at a loss.'

Small wonder I found her manner so strained when I returned, I thought. She was afraid that I would ask her why she had left Henry's house – whilst I in my turn hoped that she knew nothing of the accusations of theft made against me. But for her to let Henry think ...

Sunlight played on the ceiling. Down in the kitchen someone laughed. I looked down at her and sighed. 'I cannot see how I can return now,' I said.

Meggie's face crumpled but she held back her tears, looking at me defiantly. 'We could make this right, Robert – for Master Henry's sake. In truth it has been a sad misunderstanding but we will gain nothing by holding onto it.'

But I could not countenance this. I shook my head. 'You don't know what you are asking,' I said.

She stood up. 'Very well. The master does not know that I called today, nor shall I tell him.'

I assured her that I would keep my own counsel too and she nodded.

She could not look at me. 'I must go home before the master starts to ask questions,' she said, 'please to call Simon, for Molly.' She straightened her shoulders and held her head

up as she put her hat back on, tying the ribbons under her chin with slow precision. I was determined not to yield although her shoulders were shaking. I stood in silence as she drew on her gloves, finger by finger, and the words from Solomon's proverb came unbidden to my mind *strength and dignity are in her clothing*. I had to clasp my hands behind my back, lest I put one out toward her.

She turned, 'I am sorry if I have offended you with this visit, Mr. Hene.'

I saw her out with as much courtesy as I could muster, insisting that Simon should accompany both ladies back to Silver Street. As they left, I put my head in my hands, went back into my parlour and slammed the door.

Bartholomew Hardaker... he had made me his scapegoat. He had ever been envious of my friendship with Meggie. Well, he had nothing to envy now.

As the afternoon wore on into the evening I brooded over our conversation. I had become like a brother to Meggie after Mistress Anne's death. Memories crowded in of the mornings teaching her to read and write, guiding her hand as she held the short stubby quill, her face comical in its concentration, lips pressed together as she scratched the letters on fragments of pedlar's paper; her childish insistence that it must be Robert (not Bartholomew) who helped her to draw, Robert who helped her to read, Robert who reached up to bend the branches down so she could pick apples from the old tree in the garden. I saw how I had aroused Bartholomew's jealousy and groaned at the memories of his attempts to gain her favour and my callow amusement when he was rebuffed. How could I have been so near-sighted? All that time Hardaker's fascination for Meggie must have been mounting slowly and steadily. It only needed a spark to burst into flame – a spark that I had provided when I accused him of malpractice with that client of Henry's.

I rehearsed every last detail of my conversation with Meggie. My head was a cavern of echoes ... *he was unpardonably rude to you...* well that was true; I vowed again that I would

not bend to Henry's demands. What else was it that she had said? *He deeply regrets the accusations that he made.* It was too late now for his regret however deep ... but a small voice at the back of the cave whispered that it was not Henry who had asked me to return. I groaned aloud. I would lament Meggie's loss as much as Henry's – no, I would lament it more, far more ... when I had opened the door to her, the light from the street shone like a halo behind her head. *But I was still only a small child, Robert.* A small child who had found a place in my heart from the very beginning – but because of her, I had been living under Henry's accusations ever since. And the worst was, that I had not known the half of it

Chapter 38

Uncle Samuel arrived at the end of August. I was enormously glad to see him. He was a most agreeable companion at the best of times but now his visit to London was welcome for more reasons than he could know. I was at liberty to spend time with him – if liberty is what the barren space in my head might be called – and for the first few days we made the most of the summer sunshine by taking leisurely walks out towards the hills north of the town.

One afternoon we strolled past the gardens behind Chancellor Lane towards Fickett's Field. A profusion of dog roses and honeysuckle opened to the sun, filling the air with fragrance.

Samuel breathed deeply, 'Upon my soul, I had forgotten how near to the town these fields lay,' he said. 'I could almost believe myself to be back home.'

My own mind went to a summer's afternoon in Ledbury, a green lane, Dorothy's hair spread across a bank of wildflowers ... not all our days were bitter, I realised. There had been times ... my uncle was asking me a question. I tore myself away from my memories and requested that he repeat it.

'I was enquiring if you had heard any more news concerning those poor boys.'

'Henry's great-nephews?' I had told him of the tragedy when he first arrived. 'No, I'm sorry to say there's nothing new. I would think that by now ... if they were still alive...'

Samuel shook his head, 'I was not blessed with children, as you know Robert. But to lose your sons like that. And to have no notion of where they might be ... I can think of nothing worse.' He patted me on the shoulder, 'in faith I thought there must be something troubling you as soon as I laid eyes on you. It must have been a shock for you too, for you knew them well did you not?'

I did not undeceive him. Let him believe that this was where my dejection came from, I

thought. I had no desire for him to suspect otherwise. And I resolved not to visit my low spirits upon him, but to take pleasure in his presence as the source of much good cheer to our small household.

The servants had spent a deal of time preparing for my uncle's coming. It was evident that they were gratified by his effusive appreciation of everything, from the small but comfortably appointed bedchamber to the blinding brilliance of my candlesticks. Even Tring, acknowledged as the cause of this wonder, seemed to lose some of his gloom in Samuel's presence. I could do no less.

But alas, Samuel's visit had thrown poor Goody Tring into a panic. The notion that she and Janet would have to prepare food for 'so many people' was just too much for her. For two or three days she tried her best, but in truth her efforts caused distress to us all, until one morning Samuel rose from breakfast, slapped me on the back and declared that he would have to find a good tavern to dine in.

'Robert,' he said cheerfully, 'unless by some miracle I can survive on a diet of Master Jackson's excellent butter, I cannot countenance the prospect of another meal under your roof for one more day.'

We went to call on Master and Mistress Turner, who pressed us to stay for a good dinner. Afterwards I asked Jenny Turner how I could go on for a cook. She vowed that her man would be pleased to teach Janet; she was a sensible girl, she declared, she was bound to learn quickly.

I resolved to manage my household better; once Janet became more confident, I thought, I could even invite guests to dine with us. In the meantime, I suggested to Samuel that we frequent the Salters' Hall, where both dinner and company cheered us greatly. For the sake of variety, we then visited the Bell in Holborn, where we made short work of roasted veal and mutton pasties. Meanwhile Janet spent much of her time next door, to the relief both

of herself and Mistress Tring. Soon she declared that she knew enough to put her skills to the test back in my house.

Sir Geoffrey Blake was my first visitor. I was sure he and my uncle would do well together, and I invited him to come and dine with us on a day when he was up in town. Janet took her friend's advice, serving good plain food and purchasing a variety of sweetmeats. We lingered at table for several hours, eating and drinking to general satisfaction. Our conversation was lively, ranging from politics to printing, farming to fishing. I confess I was gratified that we had made no mention of Henry Smith, but my relief was premature, for as we made an end of a walnut tart, Samuel turned to Blake and said, innocently,

'I understand that you are on Mr Smith's board of trustees.'

I felt Blake's eyes upon me, but I did not look up.

'Yes, yes I am,' he answered Samuel.

'It seems an admirable endeavour – Smith's enterprise I mean, from what Robert has told me in the past,' Samuel remarked.

'It is indeed. Hmm ... yes, indeed.' Blake made play with his napkin, brushed his sleeves down, fiddled with his collar.

'And Smith? I confess I knew him well at one time but have not met him for many years ...' and Samuel proceeded to tell Blake about his early apprenticeship and his acquaintance with Henry.

'In truth, he would be very interested to meet you again,' Blake said. 'It might be a diversion for him. He has had a terrible shock.'

I coughed, wiped my face with my napkin and found myself saying, 'a terrible shock? You must be referring to the Jackson boys' disappearance. So, Mr Smith was perturbed by that?'

Blake winced. 'Yes. Henry blames himself. He has been in an agony of remorse.'

‘Remorse? Henry Smith?’

Blake looked exasperated. ‘Robert, he is not without feeling.’

‘Well,’ I said. ‘You’d better tell me the reason for his remorse.’

‘He feels his negligence, that he has been delinquent in his duties to his own kith and kin whilst preoccupied with helping others.’ Blake looked at me sternly. ‘Robert, you must believe me. Henry was distraught at the news. In fact, I would go so far as to say that it has disturbed him more than any other thing that has happened in the last few years.’

‘More than Dorset’s death? Surely not...’

Blake drew in a breath, ‘Yes, and more than Middleton’s actions, more than the underhand way that his trustees have behaved, their debts to him and so on ... even more than his sister Joane’s death.’

‘Joane’s death?’ My voice rose, ‘that hardly affected him at all, Blake.’

‘No, but it has now.’

‘Well, that’s as may be, but Henry hadn’t seen his great nephew Joe for years,’ I blurted out. ‘Furthermore, he only saw Sam because the lad called at his house with gifts of food. I find it hard to believe that their disappearance could have moved him to any great degree.’ I could sense both men’s disquiet at my behaviour but now that I had made a beginning it was hard to stop.

Blake laid his hands on the table, tapping his broad manicured fingers. ‘This ... this tragedy – if indeed it is that – seems to have acted on his conscience as ... as a goad Robert. It is as if he has awoken to something...’ he paused, searching for the right words.

Samuel broke in, ‘there may be something here that there was not in those other situations.’ He looked at me, and smiled, ‘perhaps it is to do with you, Robert. With the pain that he caused you...’

‘He has expressed his profound regret over that, too.’ Blake said gently.

‘Has he now. And has he told you what he accused me of?’

‘Yes. Yes, as a matter of fact, he has.’ Blake lifted his chin, looking at me coolly. ‘It was outrageous.’ He hesitated, ‘if you were to agree to speak to him...?’

‘Has he asked you to say this?’

‘No. No I don’t think he feels that he can. But poor Meggie wondered if you would consider...’

I stood up, knocking my chair over, ‘Oh no. No, no no...’

‘Then how can this be resolved?’ Blake demanded. ‘Robert, we all know he has wearied you. We know too that you have had to put up with his ill temper, his ingratitude. But we also know you for a man of Christian charity, who is wonderfully forbearing.’

I shook my head, ‘Christian? Forbearing?’ Neither of these things could in any way describe my present sensations.

Samuel was looking anxiously at me. ‘Sir Geoffrey ... I do not know if you are aware ... but,’ he saw the expression on my face and held up his hands. ‘No Robert, have no fear. I will say nothing more...’

We changed the subject after that, but our conversation was desultory, the occasion was spoiled. Presently Blake took his leave, embracing me warmly with a silence eloquent in its unspoken-ness.

The following day I had business to attend to. I returned home in the late afternoon to find my uncle reading in the parlour.

‘Ah, Robert,’ he put down his book. ‘There is something here that you ought to see.’ It was a letter, he said, arrived that morning from the country. ‘It’s from Sir Ralph Saunders, a friend of mine. He’s a Justice of the Peace. He stood in for me at the quarter sessions last

week and sent me some notes afterwards.’ Samuel ran his finger down the page, muttering to himself. ‘Here,’ he said finally, ‘take a look at this.’

The hand was neat, easy to decipher. I read,

Most of the Cases these last weeks have been as usual – market traders selling shoddy goods, vagrants, beggars – but for today, when I presided over the Case of a fellow in service over by Basingstoke. His master Accused him of having sold three valuable rams at Basingstoke market but with-holding some of the profit, on the pretext that in these hard times he was unable to gain a Good price.

I looked up, ‘I would have thought that this would be well-nigh impossible to conceal in a rural area like yours,’ I said.

‘Quite so. It says here that he was found guilty, so you’re right. He didn’t manage to conceal it at all.’ My uncle pointed to the next paragraph. ‘But see what he has to say next.’ I read on.

When I pronounced him guilty, the man shook his fist at his master and shouted aloud so that all might hear ‘It is your brother who should be in jail. He was the one as told me to do it.’

‘Oh dear. But forgive me, why do you think I must see this?’

Samuel coughed, looking quite out of countenance. ‘I daresay it was nothing but a desperate bid to besmirch the family, on the servant’s part. But I regret to say that you may know the name of his master – or at least that of his brother. He’s connected to Smith, if my memory serves me correctly.’

Samuel reached for the letter and pointed out the name of the petitioner.

Sir Charles Rolfe

Until this moment I had been only politely interested. I looked up at him, ‘but I don’t think I know...’ then it hit me. I rocked back on my heels. ‘Oh no. No, it can’t be. Sweet Je... but there must be others of this name.’

‘So you think you know who this was?’

‘Uncle Samuel, he was my dearest friend.’ I blinked, swallowed hard.

Samuel looked concerned. ‘But the name is not so unusual ... and mayhap it was a deliberate ploy of the defendant, to implicate him...’ He cast the letter aside dismissively.

‘Yes, quite possibly. It’s like to be unfounded.’

I shook my head. ‘I fear it is not.’

I had a dreadful sense of foreboding. As I mounted the stairs to my bedchamber I could not but wonder at my own words *he was my dearest friend*. When had I started to doubt John? But no, he could not be entangled in this wretched imbroglio – could he? Yet I had to admit that if there was any substance to this accusation, even the smallest chance that it was John who was involved, then it might well confirm my suspicions concerning the links between the forged papers and Dorset House. I hoped, most fervently, to be found mistaken but I could not neglect this matter. Tomorrow, I vowed, I would find Frazer and ask him to make further enquiries. Samuel’s counsel, down at Foliejohn, had been shrewd; to call a halt now would be to leave us all in a very difficult place. I must strive to bring those miscreants to justice, whoever they might be. But John ... why would he have need of this money? Surely his family could assist him, if only with a loan. Then I groaned aloud as I suddenly recalled Blake’s words, back at Hale all those months ago.

No, Robert. Henry must not know about this yet.

Had Blake been trying to shield John? Had he suspected him too? Jane’s words chimed in,

Master Henry had spoken of a book that he wanted to show him. Some sermons by somebody, I don’t recall ... Sir Geoffrey went off to look for them in the library.

Could Blake have been looking for something more? Something that might implicate John?

It occurred to me that he had not balked at the idea of papers being forged between Knole and Dorset House. But by then he could have checked that there were none left in Silver Street – save for the scraps that I had found, quite by chance.

That night I had the strangest dream – I vow that it came from the remembrance of a tale I was once told, back when I was an apprentice. I had been waiting at the Customs' Quay for Smith to conclude some business, when I fell into conversation with a sailor. The lad was bragging of the places he'd seen, the voyages he'd taken.

'It's a rough life, on the seas ... you get into a storm, you don't know as you're ever coming out alive.'

'I've been on one or two voyages myself,' I boasted, 'seen some mighty great fish off the end of Cornwall.'

'Ever seen a whale?'

'Yes, not close though.'

'I seen a gigantic great whale once, a real monster, nearly got eaten by sharks.'

I must have looked mistrustful of this, for the lad pressed the point. 'Wouldn't tell you false, it got itself into the shallows – tide was going out.' He paused to spit out a gob of tobacco.

'Sharks circling round and round, wouldn't leave it alone.'

'Did it get away?'

'Dunno... must've had to wait for the tide to turn.'

Memories can wash up again without warning. The sharks in my dream were tawny-finned, quite small, stirring the water, snapping and tearing at the great fish. I was in a skiff, just a single mast, rowing amongst them, trying to hit them with an oar. Then one came straight towards me, lunging and snapping, and broke the oar in two.

I woke in the small hours, drenched in a cold sweat, shivering...

Interlude

Nightshelter 2016

Harry Smith's night shelters are centred round the Friends' Meeting house in the middle of town, just along from Albert Square. The building opens around half past six for clients and a van takes them to a different venue every night, seven sharp.

This particular Wednesday, it's been what Father John's friend Muriel calls 'real manky weather,' a constant drizzle broken only by sharp showers. Father John himself has to be in Liverpool all day so William has had to leave the presbytery first thing in the morning. He walks into the city centre, then takes a slow wander through the Arndale centre, up and around Market Street, down across Piccadilly and back into Albert Square. The arcade behind St. Anne's Square is dry, but after a while William starts to shiver so he makes for the bus shelters down by Victoria station. Back on the streets he sees beggars, hunkered down in front of the shops. Some of them have cartons of drink, he notices a man handing a sandwich to one. Perhaps he should try begging too ... except he might get picked up. The last thing he wants is to end up in detention again.

It's a relief to hear the town hall clock strike six as he wanders back up King's Street. There's already a small queue outside the Meeting house, but once the doors open and the men can get hot drinks and sit in the warm, there's a palpable sense of relaxation across the group. William wraps his hands round the mug, breathing in the smell of tea, ladling it with sugar. There's no time to shower but at least he can use the toilet and wash his face and hands, before the minibus leaves. He buries his head in a towel, breathing in the clean smell.

They are driven to a church hall somewhere outside the city, no-one talks much on the way, most of them are half asleep. A man welcomes them at the doors as if he's really pleased to see them. It's warm in the main room, there's a buzz of conversation, more mugs

of tea, the smell of food. A cheerful lady in an orange fleece serves up rice and some sort of curry. 'That's meat, this one's veggie,' she says. 'Don't be shy, take some bread too.'

William looks around warily; three of the men seem to know each other well; another, sitting next to him, hardly raises his head, but coughs incessantly, a rattling throaty noise that makes William wince. The man only picks at his food before he goes off to his sleeping bag without a word to anyone. The lad across from William raises his eyebrows as he leaves the table. 'I hope he is not sick or we all catch it,' he says.

One of the helpers comes and sits next to William. He introduces himself as Chris. He's easy to talk to, tells William a bit about his own family, asks politely if William has a family 'back home' and is evidently affected by his cautious reply.

'I have wife, two girls. But I do not know where ...' and he spreads his hands. When he has a sudden fit of coughing, Chris asks him if he has seen a doctor. William shakes his head, tries to stop, but his eyes are watering and his chest hurts.

'We should get you some help,' Chris says. And he tells him about MAP then, what the charity can do, how there are people living in their houses. 'I tell you what,' he adds, 'there's a drop-in tomorrow, it's a bit of a way from town but I'll show you how to get there.'

As the evening goes on, the boy at the table – Teri – tells him he's from Nigeria. He starts to talk about the attacks on his town. His eyes are wide as he describes cars set alight, gun battles, looting. This is not what William wants to hear; he goes into the other room sure that he will sleep straightaway, but once he is zipped into his sleeping bag memories crowd in, jostling for space.

Loggers moving downhill to the river. Shouts, laughter, the dull thud of machetes.

Then a rustling behind him, a cough, a low hiss 'Ondoka ... ondoka hapa, haraka haraka ... go, leave quickly, quickly.'

A woman creeps out from beneath the tangled branches of the sapele trees.

'Mama Rita?'

She is holding her side, panting as if her lungs will burst.

'Mama, ni nini?' What is it?

'Lazima kukimbia,' William you must run ...' she gasps for air 'run, run ... don't stop.'

Then shrieks ... the hollering of male voices and a crackling that turns his blood to ice.

'Fire,' he grabs hold of her, 'I will come as quickly as...'

'No, no not there . . . you must leave... go, now...'

'Mama.' He forgets to whisper 'where is Cecile? Where are the girls?'

'They are gone ...' she moans, wrings her hands, 'your house it is burned ... they made us tell ... they know where you are.'

He stares at her in horror you have to come, come on, mama come ... he tries to pull her with him, but she's caught ... co ... com ...

He wakes to his own voice. Someone mutters a complaint. William stares into the blackness, soaked in sweat, shivering violently, listening ... listening ... but all he can hear are the grunts and snores of the other men.

What would Cecile say if she knew what happened to Mama Rita?

In his head he tries to explain. 'I begged her to come with us. She could not walk she said it pained her ... the boys tried to help her but ... but it was no use ...'

Cecile is standing over him, hands on her hips. 'Could you do *nothing*?' she spits.

It was no use, he says again ... no use ...

But if you not help her, then ... then what ...

He tells her they speak a prayer for Mama Rita. He closed her eyes; they made a bed for her under the leaves ...

When he wakes in the morning, there are tears on his face.

Chapter 39

Frazer was not at the White Hart. No-one seemed to have seen him for weeks, so I downed a pint of the heavy before going in search of him. The landlord was doubtful when I asked if he knew Frazer's whereabouts, but I made it worth his while, and he walked to the door and gestured across the street.

'Third turn on your left, keep going, through an alley by St Ninian's. You'll see a butcher's shop across the way, not very big, probably shut now. Go along towards the Conduit then next alley, turn right – if you get to Thames Street you've gone too far. Past the archway, second door.'

The town was thronged with people. I pushed past hawkers, water carriers, maids and their mistresses, muttering the directions to myself. Even if I could find the place, Frazer would most likely not be there. But when I arrived at a dubious alley and rapped on the second door, it opened almost immediately.

'Oh, it's you.' Frazer looked at me as if we had but recently been conversing.

'That's a fine welcome.'

'You'd better come inside.' He looked both ways down the street before slamming the door and bolting it. I raised my eyebrows.

'Are you expecting someone else?'

'In a manner of speaking.' Frazer scowled. 'How would I know she had a husband? Now I find out he's a prize fighter, handy with his fists; and he's threatened to come and find me.'

I began to laugh, 'faith, Jeremiah, it's a pleasure to see you again.' Then a thought occurred to me. 'If you want to run to earth for a few days, I could suggest a bolt-hole.'

I sent Frazer down to Foliejohn with instructions to find out more about the master of

that miscreant. I told Frazer that I needed to establish his identity, to be absolutely certain. I also needed to know if he had a brother.

‘If he has, find out precisely where he has been in the past twelve months. He may have been in London or down at this man’s house. Anywhere else is not quite as important but I want dates and places. Oh, and make very discreet inquiries to discover if any of the servants there know of Hardaker or even Hardcastle. I’m sending Simon with you – I’m sure you can make use of him. But I have another job for him to do as well, whilst he is there.’

Interlude

Drop-in 2016

The weekly drop-in is a joint enterprise of MAP, Red Cross and St. Clement's church, on the border of Whalley Range, not far from Hulme. It's a vital link for asylum seekers, a place to get food parcels, clothes, advice; to sit and talk with people who understand what you're up against.

On this Thursday afternoon, Emma, the MAP hosting co-ordinator, turns into the street and parks next to a deserted playground. The wind whips litter across the road and slams against the car doors as her passengers struggle out, jackets pulled close against the rain. Emma waits for a few minutes, watching them mount the steps into the church. It's a sixties-style concrete building, not much to look at but inside it'll be warm, comfortable chairs in the foyer, food on the table. A cluster of people gather outside, some chatting together, others standing alone, one or two slumped wearily against the wall. Emma notes a couple of people with suitcases . . . looks as if they're in transit; could be a tricky afternoon.

There's an all-too-familiar knot in her stomach as she assesses the length of the queue. She has a sudden urge to turn round and drive away. There's a large Asda nearby, with a café, muffins, magazines ... she breathes deeply. Every Thursday's a challenge ...

Eventually she walks in through the entrance to at her table at the back of the church, nodding to the Red Cross workers who are clustered in a group, talking in low voices. She is spreading out files and papers in preparation for the afternoon rush, when there's a tap on her shoulder, and a familiar voice.

'Tea, love?'

'Harriet!' Emma swivels round, a smile of welcome on her face.

'Now I'm not here to take up your time. But I don't want to be a passenger either, so give me something to do. Or if you're too busy tell me to go away and I'll fold some clothes or wash up or help the girls at the welcome desk or... or something.'

'Harriet, slow down...' Emma is laughing now. 'It's really good to see you and of course I've got time for you.'

'Oh. Oh good. I think I'm a bit nervous actually.' Harriet pulls out a chair and collapses into it fanning her face with a leaflet.

'But you've been before.'

'I know love. But not officially, if you know what I mean. This is different. Now I'm here to help *you*.'

'We-ell... I have to say, tea would be a good start... then we can look at a bit of paperwork before the first client.'

Emma watches as Harriet returns to the foyer. Two Eritrean girls waylay her with exclamations of delight, then a young lad from Sierra Leone. They've probably all stayed in her house, Emma thinks. Harriet and her husband Chris have been volunteers, hosting for MAP right from the start, long before Emma herself joined the charity.

She grasps the mug gratefully as Harriet returns with the tea, 'thanks, you're a star.'

'So how many new ones today?' With a 'may I?' glance at Emma, Harriet picks up the list.

'Three – at the moment. Two of them are not urgent as far as I can see... but the third...' Emma shows her the fax from Refugee Action ... Rita, Ethiopian ... loss of temporary accommodation... asylum support suspended ...the week to leave her house ends tomorrow. 'Usual story,' she says, 'case thrown out, solicitor needs her to find new evidence to make a fresh claim, the letter "went astray," no time to find anywhere else...'

'You know we've got a room at the mo.,' Harriet says.

‘I thought your daughter was home.’

‘She wouldn’t mind. She’d have them sleeping on her floor at the Uni if it was allowed...’

It’s a hectic afternoon. When Emma is not interviewing a client, she’s on her mobile in the corner of the room, calling prospective hosts. Rita needs a single lady with her history of abuse; another girl, a Nigerian, is terrified of dogs so that rules out that couple in Chorlton... a lad from Afghanistan is insistent that he must have a place, then turns it down abruptly once he understands that he’ll be some way from the city. He walks off muttering loudly. It’s clear that Harriet is shaken by this, but all she says is that it’s a bit of an eye-opener, she hadn’t realised how complicated everything could be.

By four o’clock most of the clients have begun to drift away, carrying bags full of tinned food, rice and bread that will get them through the week. A lot of them are familiar to Emma now, but there’s a man talking to one of the Red Cross workers who she hasn’t seen before. Kate, the Red Cross supervisor comes over to speak to her.

‘There’s a guy just come in – French speaking. He seems a bit desperate. I think he’s street-homeless, Antoine’s had a chat with him,

Emma looks across the room. The man sits against a radiator, holding his head in his hands.

‘Has anyone offered him a drink?’

Kate shakes her head. ‘Not yet.’

Harriet puts down her pen. ‘I’ll make him a cuppa.’

Antoine brings the man across to Emma’s table. ‘Emma this is William. He’s been over here for about two years. Comes from the Congo – DRC.’

Emma stands up and shakes his hand. ‘Are you Father John’s friend?’

He nods gravely, ‘Yes, mama.’

As she offers him a chair, she sees that he's dark skinned, but fatigue has left him grey, eyes yellow, cheekbones prominent in a haggard face. He makes an effort to sit up but is racked by a fit of coughing. Harriet arrives with the tea, waits until the cough subsides then offers it to him. He takes it, big hands cradling the warm mug.

'Thank you, mama,' he whispers.

'I'm sorry, I didn't catch your name.'

For a moment he looks confused, then replies carefully

'Pardon, je m'ap . . . William. My name is William.'

'William. I am Harriet.' Her eyes sting with sudden tears. 'I think we have met before,' she says.

Chapter 40

Autumn 1626

Simon returned from Foliejohn within the week. He had a message from Frazer. ‘He wants to see you at once,’ he said. ‘But not where you could be easily recognized.’

I arranged to meet Frazer in an old outbuilding, well-concealed behind the Salter’s Hall. I asked my uncle to come with me and we walked together as far as Bread Street, where I stopped. ‘Stay here a few minutes, then take the next turn left by an old well. It’s very narrow.’ I left Samuel staring up the street at the Red Lion tavern and went straight on past the hall to an alley running between the Salters’ alms-houses. A shadow crossed my path as Frazer fell in behind me. I knelt down beside an old door and inserted a heavy iron key into the lock. I turned it once, twice – as it gave, I heaved a sigh of relief. Good – I had expected it to fit.

Samuel caught up with me. ‘Robert what on earth...’

We went inside, Frazer hard on our heels. I felt my way along the wall to a high shutter and pulled it half open. We peered at one another in the gloom of a small, stinking chamber.

Frazer grinned. ‘Well, Mr. Hene. How’d you know this place was here?’

I laughed. ‘Last time we came here for dinner – the Salter’s Hall, that is – I recalled that the apprentices used to gather round the back whilst their masters set the world to rights. One of us would always have a skin of ale to pass round. I reckoned they might still do the same now and came to see if the key was in place. And it was, in the same hole as before.’ I brandished the key in my hand. ‘Simon helped me to obtain a copy.’

‘You’re a sly one...’ Frazer whistled, and I shrugged to conceal my satisfaction.

‘So Mr. Frazer, I trust my men looked after you both?’ Samuel said.

‘Yes, yes ... er ... Mr. Hene.’ Frazer straightened his shoulders and coughed, ‘I ... I found your house to be most agreeable.’

I had a number of questions to put to him and began with the infamous court case. ‘Did any of the other servants to talk?’

Frazer said that they most certainly did. ‘Once I’d given them a bit of a warning. Nothing too heavy you’ll understand.’ Furthermore, he said, one of the servants gave him to believe that not only was Sir Charles’s brother a bounder but that he had been visited during the summer months by a friend answering to Hardaker’s description. ‘To the last hair on his head,’ Frazer declared. He added, ‘the man I spoke to reckoned they had set up the stockman and left him to take the blame.’ He licked his lips, ‘we’re closing in on Hardaker alright.’ He gave me a crumpled sheet of paper, ‘there’s a lot more on there.’

It was a list of dates and places.

5 of December, seen in King Henry tavern in Croydon.

February week before Lent took coach to London from Basingstoke.

March 15 back to Croydon.

‘Thankyou Frazer.’ I sighed heavily, ‘this is exactly what I needed.’ *And exactly what I didn’t want*, I thought.

Frazer coughed, ‘But I have to tell you that Serjeant Amherst is most likely not involved.’

‘Why do you say that?’

‘Ahh...’ Frazer winked. ‘Because he has been much occupied elsewhere. Gilly told me the story.’ He smirked, ‘I told you she’d be worth her while.’

‘Much occupied ? Elsewhere?’ My mouth was wide open. ‘What on earth...?’

Keeping his language nicely tailored out of respect for my uncle, Frazer reported that Amherst had been ‘closely involved’ with the wife of one of his grooms, Bessie Longden.

‘Longden? *Andrew* Longden? Are you sure?’

Frazer looked slightly indignant. ‘There’s plenty of evidence Mr. Hene.’ He went on to explain. ‘It seems Amherst sent this groom – Andrew – back and forth to Knole, Withyham, even up to the north country with messages for Lady Anne Clifford, the last earl’s widow. Longden was already becoming sceptical, his wife couldn’t resist decking herself out in finery that she said her sister had given her. Something about getting ribbons and silks from a hat-maker in Cripplegate.’

‘That’s Jennet,’ I said. ‘Bessie’s sister. She works for the Mountjoys, French hat-makers. They live across from Mr. Smith’s house.’ I paused, ‘In truth, she could have got her clothes from there...’

‘Well, that’s as may be.’ Frazer shrugged. ‘But Longden went across to see her – Jennet if that’s her name – asked her if Bessie had her new attire from there and she had no idea what he was talking about.’

I was astounded by his report. The ever-upright Serjeant Amherst playing cuckold to his own servant. ‘So what’s to do now?’

‘Now? Gilly said as Longden is out for Amherst’s blood. And once he comes to know of it, I would think that the good Serjeant will be shi... er ...’ Frazer glanced at Samuel, ‘very concerned lest word gets out.’ He looked at me and sniggered, ‘you seem to be somewhat befuddled Robert. But I swear I have not known Gilly wrong before.’

I was most certainly befuddled. All my suspicions seemed to blow in front of my eyes like chaff in a strong wind. I would have to reflect on this in the peace and quiet of my own company, I thought. For now, I simply said,

‘Well, we can leave him out of the picture unless anything happens to make us change our minds.’

‘I think you’ll find that we can’t leave him out of this. But I’ll come to that.’

‘Oh. Well, how must we proceed?’

‘Aah. This brother of Sir Charles. You think you know him?’

‘Indeed.’ I sighed heavily. ‘I am well acquainted with John Rolfe.’

‘Well, he may have been in league with Hardaker, but that lump of lard is blackmailing him.’

‘What?’

‘Thought it might shock you. I’ve all the evidence here.’ He pulled a sheaf of papers from inside his jerkin. ‘Have a look at these.’

I hardly had to open them before I was convinced. Most of the messages were short, threatening demands for money.

If you want your family to know of your deceets do nothing.

Meet me at the usual place same time. Bring twenty sovereigns

You have three days before I send the dogs

But written on thin paper in a hand that I knew were several replies

Not able to acquire the money

Need more time

Leave Longden out of this

Wordlessly I handed the sheets over to Samuel.

‘It’s the same paper as before,’ Samuel said.

‘The replies are Rolfe’s’ I said sadly. ‘But who has written the threats?’

‘These are Hardaker’s.’ And Frazer handed me one of the scraps of paper I had given to him from Henry’s shelves. ‘Look at the writing. There’s no doubt it’s Bellows who’s written that and we know now that he is working for Hardaker.’

‘So what are the “deceets” that he refers to?’

Frazer shrugged, ‘I reckon, all things being equal, Hardaker is threatening to expose Rolfe for his part in that business with his brother Charles’s servant. And I suspect that

Longden and Rolfe have been attempting to blackmail Amherst.’ He looked from one of us to the other. ‘I don’t think your man Rolfe has been involved with the forged letters. He might have had a go at trying to falsify handwriting but the letters are Bellow’s imitations. Believe me, I know his style now.’

Well, that was some relief. ‘I recall John being truly discomfited when he heard about those threats of the Star Chamber,’ I said.

Frazer was dismissive. ‘Oh, that was Hardaker, with Bellows.’ He pulled out another sheet. ‘This is the really crucial one. Read it then I must destroy it.’

I looked over Samuel’s shoulder. *Next time we meet at the mill. Do not come empty handed.*

‘What does ‘the mill’ signify?’ I asked Frazer.

‘It’ll be by the river.’

‘Most likely.’ Samuel looked worried, ‘but there are a great many mills along the banks. We can’t even tell which side it is.’

‘Reckon it has to be this side, the bridge will be closed. Unless they come across by boat, but if it’s late at night that’s too great a risk without lights.’ Frazer looked at me. ‘What do you reckon?’

I hesitated. There was a memory I was struggling to retrieve. ‘I seem to remember...’ I began, ‘back when I was an apprentice, we used to say we would meet ‘at the mill.’ Most of us would know that to be the ramshackle place by Broke Wharfe – it’s at the end of the lane running next to Timberhythe, hard by the Salt Quay. Not far from here. I used to know it well. Hardaker would know it too,’ I added.

‘Hmm.’ Frazer looked thoughtful. ‘It’s certainly got a bit of a history... if you’re right we would have to muster enough men to cover all three lanes down to the river.’

‘Why do we need so many?’

‘I think this is a summons, a threat, mayhap. Reckon they’ll be on to him if he hasn’t got the readies. Or even if he has...’

We spent the next hour working on a plan that could be put to immediate effect. Then we left the room at separate times to make our way back home by different routes. Once in the house, Samuel became reflective.

‘This needs very careful consideration,’ he said. ‘A man who you have admitted being a friend – a close friend even – has gone in too deep – far too deep, Robert. Now he finds himself involved in another man’s treachery. Probably more than one man’s treachery. There may be others involved.’ Samuel bit the side of his thumb, his brow furrowed. ‘Have you considered how you will uncover this nest of thieves?’

I have spent little time considering anything else, I wanted to say. Instead, I replied, ‘Indeed, I have, uncle. And I need your help to write some letters.’

Chapter 41

The summons came four days later. There was no written message, just a pedlar who nearly collided with Simon as he crossed the street at the quarter after nine, as he had done every morning that week, to buy fruit from the vendor.

‘It’s tonight,’ the man hissed. ‘Frazer says to be in place by ten.’ He turned to go then turned back, ‘place you thought it would be.’

With that he disappeared down the busy street, leaving Simon to saunter back to the house as carelessly as he could. Once there he rushed in to tell me the news.

‘Master Robert, it’s tonight. Ten of the clock. Place you thought. A man just came to tell me ... couldn’t see his face.’

Tring appeared before I could reply. ‘Master Hene, do we really have need of any more apples?’ he demanded. ‘I have begged Simon to desist in this purchasing of fruits, but he pays me no heed.’

‘I ask your pardon, Tring. Simon, you must desist forthwith.’ I watched as Tring disappeared into the kitchen and turned back to Simon who was doubled over with laughter.

‘Now then,’ I said. Simon’s smile faded as he saw the look on my face. ‘I want you to listen very carefully. Tonight I must go out at six of the clock. You will follow me at some distance then leave me as I reach the Theatre. Come in behind me but join the crowd in the pit. Don’t look round for me. As soon as the players take their bow I will leave. Try to keep me in sight.’ Simon nodded, his lips working as he repeated the instructions to himself. I continued, ‘let me remind you, do not, on any account, acknowledge Frazer or anyone else of our party if you see them.’ Then as he retreated, I called out, ‘Simon, send Tring back to me – I need him to take a message. And take my black cloak from the press, you’ll be wearing it tonight.’

In the parlour, Samuel was at breakfast, a news sheet spread across his place, crumbs all down his waistcoat. He peered through a magnifying glass, a smear of butter on his hand.

‘Humph ... unctuous poppycock.’ He lifted his head as I came in. ‘Good morrow Robert. I’m reading about Buckingham’s campaign.’

‘I’ve had word from Frazer.’

‘Ah.’ Samuel set the broadsheet down and wiped his mouth. ‘What’s to do?’

‘Hardaker is meeting Bellows tonight. I think he hopes to see the third party there too.’

Samuel’s eyes gleamed, ‘Upon my soul, I must congratulate you on your sense of timing. This corresponds with your visit to the Theatre.’

Two mornings previously, Samuel had wished me ‘good-morrow’ as I came into the parlour, then added, ‘oh, by the way, I have something here for you.’ He handed me a thin paper.

‘This was folded into my news-sheet this morning.’ He shook his head, ‘these fellows are becoming more and more cunning with their advertisements.’

I took the paper, a poorly printed slip that gave details of some theatricals.

‘For one performance only,’ I read. ‘John Lyly’s *Gallathea*. The King’s Players with Musicke from the King’s Consort.’ I looked at the date. ‘It’s tomorrow, at half past the hour of six.’

‘Yes. The King’s Consort. Isn’t that the sort of thing that you most particularly enjoy?’

‘It is indeed. Perhaps I can go to this, if the other matter won’t prevent me.’

‘But it doesn’t seem to specify where it is,’ Samuel said. ‘It just states “the Theatre.” But which theatre? You would think they would make it clear...’

I suppressed a smile ‘That’s what it’s called, Uncle. Richard Burbage – the actor manager – built it a few years ago outside the town by Shoreditch. It’s what he named it.’

‘How very confusing.’ Samuel replied.

I returned the paper to Samuel. 'I would like to attend, but I won't decide now. We may have word from Frazer tomorrow.'

Samuel did not need to know that my visit to the Theatre was the result of a precise arrangement between Frazer and myself. I smiled and accepted his congratulations that our plans could come together so fortuitously. 'Yes. Everything is in place.' I looked at him. 'You do know that we could be exposing ourselves to danger?' I held Samuel's gaze as he stared back. 'In faith uncle, I would rather you did not become involved tonight.'

'Oh, but Robert, you know I will take care...' his mouth turned down with the petulance of a thwarted child, and I laughed aloud.

'Uncle, I know you can handle a musket with the best of them, but I think we will leave that to Lumley's men, if indeed weapons are needed at all. Please God this matter can be executed without any bloodletting. But there are the two requests we talked about.'

'Indeed. I have the letters at hand.'

I had asked Uncle Samuel to use his influence to write letters to Blake and Lumley, requesting urgent assistance. This he had done in the past three days and their replies had been in the affirmative. Now it was up to Samuel to alert them. 'Give your notices of confirmation to Simon as soon as you may,' I said. 'He has already gone to the stables and will be back within the half hour.' A thought occurred to me. 'Perhaps it's best if you don't tell Sir Geoffrey about my visit to the theatre. But the rest should not surprise him to any great degree. As for Lumley, just make sure he knows Blake is involved with us too.'

Samuel gave me a quizzical look, but merely nodded his agreement.

It was starting to rain as I left the house, not the grey drizzle of a London mist but a heavy downpour. By three o'clock a high wind battered the housetops and sent smoke from the chimneys swirling every which way. I was struggling out of my dripping coat as Simon

burst in. His boots and topcoat were splattered with mud, a look of exhaustion on his face. He handed me two sealed papers.

‘Their replies, master. I’d have come sooner but Sir Geoffrey made me wait whilst he wrote his own note to Sir Richard. And I left the poor mare at the stables. She earned her oats today.’

‘And you have Sir Geoffrey’s note too?’ Simon nodded. ‘You’ve done well,’ I said. ‘Go and get yourself dry; and tell Tring I don’t need you until much later. We must both be well restored for tonight.’

I tore the letters open and scanned them quickly. Judging by these responses, Samuel had made his case with consummate skill. Both men assured me of their trust. Moreover, they agreed to comply with all my suggestions, save that Lumley added a post-script.

I would repeat to you your vow, to eschew any altercation with officers of the law and serjeants at arms. I trust you to abide by this, Mr. Hene.

Well, I thought, the involvement of any *serjeant at arms* seems to be less likely now. Then I tore open the letter that Blake had penned to Lumley. It would not go to him now. Thank God I had acted on my suspicions. I set it aside with a heavy heart.

By six o’clock the storm was beginning to abate but the streets were running with mud. I pulled my hat close over my head, donning an old pair of boots as I left the house to splash through the puddles towards Moorgate and out to the Theatre. In spite of the inclement weather there was a queue gathering outside. I paid my three pence to go upstairs to the gallery from where I could look down on the stage.

I cannot recall much of that play. It was a light-hearted romp, in the popular comic vein, but with many opportunities for musical interludes and songs. And it was the music that I had come to hear, the playing that transfixed me. For Rolfe was amongst the players, as I thought he would be, and I watched, mesmerized by his hands on the *chittarone*, his fingers

dancing a Galliard, then caressing the strings in a stately Pavane; charmed by the timbre of his voice, as he sang a love-song, Gallathea pouring his heart out to Phillida. Nymphs and other fantasticals pranced around the stage, weaving their way through leafy bowers; Neptune trumpeted his wrath as the deep bass notes thundered ... but the audience, rarely silent in any of London's theatres, appeared to be momentarily lost for words, suspended in a kind of ecstasy, whenever Rolfe was playing.

But I saw that, beneath his painted mask, Rolfe's face was strained, his cheeks thin. To a careful observer – and how carefully I observed him that evening – his hands could be seen to be shaking at times. As I walked away through the crowds at the end of the play, I recalled his words, back at the Feathers, *I need to be free to pursue my musical ventures*. I wondered how free he would be now.

Down towards Cheapside a noisy gang of players overtook me. From their conversation they had been amongst the actors at the Theatre. I waited until a familiar figure pushed past them, a long case slung across his shoulders.

'John Rolfe, as I live and breathe.' I started towards him.

For a moment John's eyes looked puzzled but they widened as he saw who was calling him. 'Robert Hene.' He set down the case and embraced me, his astonishment matching mine.

'John, it is so good to see you. When did you return to London? I had thought ...'

'Oh, very recently. I just came up on a matter of business but then I got this wonderful opportunity to play.'

'I was there, John.'

'You were?' His face lit up. 'Why didn't you wait outside for me?'

'Well, I ... I thought you might have other plans.' I smiled brightly, 'John, it was truly a delight to hear you again. Will you be there tomorrow?'

‘No, it was just for tonight,’ he replied. ‘Regretfully, I must leave tomorrow.’ He gave a short laugh, ‘things to do back home.’

Another man had stopped beside John. Now I glanced at him and said, in astonishment, ‘Simon Burbage, what brings you here?’ For a split second a look of bewilderment passed over Simon’s face, but he recovered himself quickly, ‘Well met, Mr Hene. My father told me that Mr. Rolfe would be playing and I could not resist coming to listen. I was so delighted that I wanted to offer him my sincere congratulations. But I regret that I must hurry away for I have to see my father before he leaves town.’

Simon bowed, lifted his hat to Rolfe and melted away into the crowd. I moved to help John lift the lute-case back on his shoulder but he shook his head ‘I can manage, Midge.’

‘I did not expect to see Simon,’ I said, as we moved aside. ‘I thought his father would have left London by now.’

‘Burbage? James Burbage ? I thought he’d died years ago...’

‘Oh no. Richard – James’s nephew as I recall.’

‘Oh, of course.’ John turned as one of the players grasped his arm, bowing theatrically.

‘Our thanks, Mr. Rolfe. We could not have conceived such heights of fantasy save for your marvellous melodies.’ He pulled an extravagantly feathered hat from his head, releasing a shower of curls. His companion chimed in. ‘I found the song in Act Two particularly affecting. I could scarce recall my lines for the emotions that it conjured in me.’

‘Particularly affecting,’ John laughed as he shook his head at their retreating figures. ‘They posture and primp,’ he said, ‘but you will never find a more loyal band of men. Actors may have a reputation for back-stabbing, but these fellows stand fast together.’

‘Were they on stage tonight?’ I asked John.

He shook his head, ‘faith Robert, I cannot see who it is once they are disguised. They may have played some part or another...’

We walked round the corner to the Mermaid, where I called for ale.

‘I was hoping visit you at some point’ John said, ‘having not seen you for so long... and now I am about to leave London to rejoin my family. I only stayed tonight out of duty to the players.’

‘It must be wonderful to be able to play your own music and have it so well received.’

John pulled a face, ‘I suppose so.’ He sighed, ‘sometimes I wish I was a travelling player... just to conjure tunes, fashion poetry from the words.’

‘But you have a family... and a number of thriving business interests.’

‘Hah... thriving?’ John stared into his drink. I saw that his brow was ridged with fatigue.’

I ventured, ‘Have ... have times been hard for you?’

‘I’m not about to succumb to starvation, if that’s what you mean.’ He gave me a crooked smile. ‘You would take the troubles of the world upon your shoulders if you could, Midge. No, thank you my friend, but my concerns are rather too complicated.’ He drained his tankard. ‘But talking of troubles, what’s Henry Smith up to these days? I regret I haven’t seen him for an age.’

‘No more have I, John. Our ways have diverged.’

‘Have they now?’ John was intrigued. ‘The old fellow too much for you, was he?’

I gave him the briefest of explanations, but John could see that I had no desire to elaborate. The conversation was somewhat desultory, we talked a little of our youthful adventures, but John seemed to be weary. At one point I mentioned Bartholomew Hardaker.

John looked at me over the rim of his tankard, ‘Bartholomew who?’

‘Hardaker. You must recall him, John.’

John set his tankard down. ‘Hard ... Hardaker?’ He shook his head, ‘the name is familiar, but I don’t think I ever met him.’

I leaned back on the bench, ‘Well. He was not someone who I would particularly like to meet again.’

‘Played you false, did he?’

‘Something like that.’ I saw that his glass was empty, ‘do you want another?’

John shook his head. ‘It’s been a long day.’ He pulled a small leather bag from his coat and turned it inside out. One silver ha’-penny fell to the floor and he stooped to retrieve it, a comical look of woe on his face. ‘By my troth I thought I had more than that,’ he said.

‘No matter, it is my pleasure to stand you a drink.’ I took a deep breath. ‘Remember me to your wife, to Beatrice. It is an age since I met her.’

John nodded, drained his tankard and stood up. ‘I must depart. I leave early in the morning. I may not see you now for a while – who knows?’

As he turned to go, I reached down to lift his lute-case. John elbowed me aside.

‘No, leave it. I’ll take it Robert.’ He gave a shaky laugh. ‘I ask your pardon; a man becomes wary with such a valuable instrument to protect. Those stage-hands can be very clumsy.’ And heaving it up he added, ‘by God, it seems to have grown more weighty.’

And he was gone, loping out of the door and across the street, a spare figure with a lute slung across his shoulders. I had a lump in my throat as I watched his departure; he had been out of sorts tonight as if struggling with some burden that he could not share.

There was no need for me to rush to the trysting point. I stayed in the tavern watching the world come and go, keeping my eyes open for any sign of Hardaker or Bellows. Was it absurd, I wondered, this desire to protect Henry’s legacy, coming from someone who had walked out of his life, vowing never to return?

Doubting yourself again, Robert? The voice sounded unconcerned; it had heard all this before.

‘I cannot live with myself if I neglect this injustice,’ I thought. ‘At the very least I must

strive to bring resolution.’ And I thought then of the times when there was no resolution, when matters had been taken out of my hands – the sight of Anne’s body slung onto a cart, the smirk on Bartholomew Hardaker’s face as Henry showed me the door, poor Dorothy lying cold, her babe wrapped beside her.

My thoughts shifted to the Jacksons. If Henry and Martha Jackson never found justice, how were they to find peace? And a small spark of determination flickered into life. If I could find justice for Henry Smith then he might find a measure of peace.

But what about you Robert? It was Uncle Samuel’s voice and I smiled at the thought of him. *No time to think about that now, uncle,* I replied.

The tavern was beginning to clear; the landlord and his boy were collecting up jugs and tankards, sweeping up ale-sodden sawdust and slopping grubby cloths over the boards. It was time to go. I saw that the booth nearest the door was empty. Good, Simon had left already. Please God I had given him enough time. Outside, the sky was clear, the rain entirely gone as I made my way towards Broke Wharfe. Timberhythe alley was black as pitch but down at the end there was a glimmer of light where the river must be. I inched my way along until I found something soft against my shoulder. It grunted and moved.

‘Frazer, is that you?’

‘Course it is, who were you expecting?’ he hissed.

We moved on together. I could sense by his gait that Frazer was carrying something heavy in his left hand, whilst, like me, using his right hand to feel his way to the end of the building, the shell of the old cornmill that gave onto the wharfe. We concealed ourselves behind splintered timbers and crumbling plaster, unseen but not quite unseeing, the light on the water allowing us to fix the direction of the quay. By now Simon should be making his way down Ratten Lane, parallel to Timberhythe; four of Lumley’s men should be standing in

wait at the entrance to both alleys. Further to the east, beside Salt Wharf, steps led down to the basin at Queen's Hythe where more of Lumley's men should be waiting in a skiff.

At the top of the street the chimes of St Mary's were soon joined by St Nicholas Olave, sounding the three quarters. Under cover of the sound I whispered to Frazer, 'any sign of them yet?' He shook his head, 'reckon they'll come round by way of Darke lane.'

'Who's been stationed there?'

'One of yours and one of mine.' The chimes ceased and we fell silent.

We stood in the thick darkness, waiting. Frazer had begun to grow restless when I clutched his arm and muttered, 'over to your left.' A pinprick of light was advancing towards us and the muffled sound of furtive footsteps. The light moved along the riverbank towards Broke Wharfe then stopped. Whoever was holding it covered it over and there was silence.

'Good. One in place.' Frazer's voice was scarcely audible.

I became aware of someone else stealing up along the wall. There was a slight thud as they set something down then moved away. But where had they gone? Frazer and I held our breath. Then the light from the wharfe reappeared and a very quiet murmuring began. We stole from behind the wall and moved across the alley until we reached the corner. The tide was up, a rhythmic slapping of water against the wharfe. Frazer tensed as another light appeared down the lane to our left. I wondered if Simon was creeping along in pursuit. Surely there must be three men there now? Time for Frazer to give the signal ...

But as Frazer moved forward, one of the lights came towards us and we stood still almost within touching distance of the man. He passed us by and for a moment I caught the gleam of his eyes and the impression of a long thin nose ... Bellows. It must be. He seemed to be kneeling down and grappling with something then he heaved it onto his shoulder and staggered forward.

At that moment, a muffled cry came from the wharf, sounds of a struggle, whilst over to our left Simon and two of Lumley's guards ran towards the group, lights blazing. Bellows dropped the bag and crept towards the guards, a knife in his hand. Frazer crouched low and followed him, his cosh poised to strike. The gasp turned to a gurgle and in the light from the boat I saw Hardaker, his arm round the throat of another figure, throttling him. I shouted and rushed at him.

'Get off him you fool.' I hit him as hard as I could but he hit back even harder and as I crashed onto the cobbles, I saw the man he had released running for the water, where a wherry hove into view, a lantern in the prow,

I groaned, turned over and tried to get up, my hand to my jaw. Round the corner from Queen's Hythe, Lumley's men, lanterns held high, shouted in pursuit of Bellows, who was making for Darke Lane, a bag slung across his shoulders. Behind him a body lay sprawled out on the quay.

The man Hardaker had attacked reached the steps to the river but it had rained hard all day, the ground was as slippery as a Thames eel and he lost his footing and plunged into the black water.

'We've got him,' a familiar voice boomed from across the water. Samuel? What on earth was he doing here? In the half-light I could see men pulling the villain up into a boat. I tried to stare out into the darkness to determine who he was. Not Hardaker, that was certain. Even in this light I could have identified the form of that stout little man. This one was taller, thinner ...

I turned as Simon panted up beside me, 'Master Robert, Hardaker's in the old mill. Frazer's after him ...'

'Go and get some more help,' I said. I stumbled across the lane, rubbing my jaw, as the moon slid out from behind the clouds and shone a pale light onto the wreck of the mill.

All that was left of the upper storey was a broad wooden beam reaching from one wall to the other, a few broken joists either side, some rotten boards where once the floor had been.

Hardaker had risked a flimsy ladder set against the beam, and now stood on the timbers above – they looked as if they would hardly support the weight of a cat, let alone a man of his girth. Below, Frazer had begun to climb, moving stealthily from one rung to the next, up into the light. I inched along the wall, catching Hardaker's attention so that he faced away from the steps.

'Give yourself up,' I shouted. 'We know what you've done.'

'Well, well. Mr. Hene. What a pleasant surprise.' I could scarcely make him out, but the voice was unmistakeable, that rasping tone, the laboured breathing as he moved along the beams.

'Hardaker, it's not safe. The floor's rotten...'

'Oh poor Mr. Hene, are you worried about me?' His voice floated back, 'You were always worried about someone, were you not? Meggie ... worried for her virtue as I recall,' he took a step sideways, 'but I had her before you could.'

'You ... you lard bloated...' I clutched my dagger, 'you don't know what you're saying.'

But he laughed – a thin hysterical bleating – 'Then there was Mistress Anne ... you worried for her whenever the master was abroad – worried so well that she needed your comfort every night ... and what about the sweet little pot-boy who never dared to go out in the dark alone? And now there's Mr. Smith.' He began to cough, wheezing from his own wit.

I held my breath as Frazer reached the top of the steps and put one foot onto the floor. The boards creaked and groaned, but Hardaker hadn't finished, 'Mr. God-almighty-Smith,' he sneered, 'that bald-arsed ninnycok, after all he did to you...'

Suddenly aware of a movement, he turned. Frazer stood not a yard away swinging a ball of lead, ready to strike.

‘Robert’s worth a thousand of you, you scurvy lump...’

Hardaker let out a scream of rage, lifted the dagger and plunged, shifting his weight. Frazer side-stepped him as a gap opened between the boards. I was aware of others around me now. There were cries of ‘get down you fools,’ ‘you’ll bring the whole floor down,’ ‘look out...’ this last as the board gave way and Hardaker slipped on the timbers. Frazer swung his cosh and stepped forward into open space. He shouted as he fell, but managed to grab the beam, hanging on with one hand. Hardaker heaved himself up and made as if to stamp on Frazer’s hand but as he lifted his foot the floor caved in and he fell, plummeting down through the rotten boards into the black depths of the grinding pit, a thin scream fading into silence.

I made for the stairs, inching my way across the void to grab Frazer by his doublet. ‘Drop your truncheon, you fool,’ I yelled and Frazer released it with a clatter. I spread my weight out across the great beam and stretched towards him, clasping the beam with my legs as it began to sway. I grasped hold of Frazer and pulled with all my might until his body was slung across the beam. The two of us lay panting with the effort, Frazer taking great gasps of air. Then, as I moved back, searching with my feet to find a footing on the ladder, the whole edifice began to roar and sway.

‘Frazer,’ I yelled, and tried to grab him.

‘Stand back,’ someone shouted, and all the lanterns were lifted as we held tight to the joists. My feet found purchase on one of the rungs and I leaned across to steady Frazer as he wormed his way back along the beam. As he grabbed the top of the ladder it gave way beneath me. The last thing I remembered was a great blow to the side of my head and a falling... falling...

‘Mr Hene ...’ The voice was muffled. ‘Mr Hene, can you hear me?’

I tried to sit up, groaned, lay back down. Everything was rocking, I heard the splash of water, saw a few faint stars overhead.

‘It’s me, Mr Hene, Simon.’

‘Simon,’ my voice sounded thin, I coughed, tried again, ‘Simon, what ... what happened?’

‘You took a blow to your head. We’ve put you in the boat, we’ll be taking you down river to Lumley’s place.’

‘No... no...’ I struggled to sit up and gasped as a pain shot through my thigh.

Firm hands held me steady, Jed’s face just visible. ‘Be still, Mr. Hene,’ he said, ‘we’ll get you there safe and sound.’

‘Will he live?’

The voice was all too familiar. Staring down at me, his hands tightly bound, two of Lumley’s men holding him fast, stood John Rolfe.

‘If he does live it’ll be no thanks to you,’ Simon said bitterly.

Rolfe’s teeth were chattering with cold, his clothes clinging to his body. His face, already pale in the thin moonlight, looked wretched.

‘You knew,’ he said.

I sighed, ‘yes ...yes John. I knew.’ My voice was hardly audible, even to me.

‘How long...?’

‘Leave him be, John.’ I realised it must be Blake, standing behind the guards, his voice shaking as he went on. ‘Your ... your friend, Bartholomew Hardaker, has perished. Bellows may suffer a similar fate. As for you ...’ Blake broke off as if he could not trust himself to continue.

‘That leg’s going to need a surgeon.’ It was my uncle’s face that seemed to swim above me. The last thing I remembered was his smile and his voice cracking as he said ‘everything is in hand Robert. We will see you on the morrow.’

‘But Frazer ...’

‘He’ll live,’ Samuel said. ‘Thanks to you, Robert, he made a soft landing.’

Chapter 42

November 1626

Lumley's house was the finest I had ever stayed in – or so my uncle assured me.

‘It's a marvellous place, Robert. Truly marvellous.’

But the great chambers, galleried halls and cloistered courtyards were but fantasies to me, for I was confined to my bedchamber whilst I was Lumley's guest; although this was, admittedly, a wondrously comfortable room with a small parlour adjoining and most respectful servants who – for the four weeks that I was there – were unremittingly attentive to my every need.

It was a while before I understood all that had taken place that night. The blow to my head had not been severe and I was able to sit up and take note within a few hours, but a splintered shaft of wood had penetrated my thigh as I fell from the ladder, causing a deep wound. Once the bleeding was staunched and my leg was bound up, I vow I would have made a rapid recovery, had I not contracted a morbid infection.

For many days and nights, I lay racked with fever. Troubles rose up in front of me, faces haunted me. I was told that I had cried aloud many times, maybe I uttered words that should not be witnessed, memories that I would fain reveal to another soul. No doubt Henry Smith's name issued from my lips a time or two, and others, Anne, Dorothy – perchance I even shouted Rolfe's name...

One night I reached a point of delirium. Simon had come and gone, others of Lumley's household had attended on me – even Lumley's ancient nurse, who fussed and fretted over me as if I was a child – all this I learned later. They told me that this night I would not be consoled and called one name repeatedly. I know not what time of day or night it was that my feverish quest was granted. I know not who identified the name that came so often to my lips. All I can recall is that in the darkest hours there was someone beside me – a cool hand on my

forehead, a steady voice, brown eyes brimming with love – someone who refused to leave my side...

Then one day I awoke, returning to the world gradually, as a man looking for the emergence of a long-remembered land catches a faint sight of the shore. I found myself in a spacious chamber, the curtains drawn back on my bed, light streaming in through a tall window. I saw a fire, a stand hung with white towels. I stretched my arms, first one then the other, turned my head to one side to see a wall, turned it again to see a woman in the corner of the room, bending over a table, her back to me. She looked somehow familiar, her kerchief white against bronze skin, black wiry curls escaping at the nape of her neck.

‘Meg... Meggie ...’ my voice came out in a hoarse whisper. She was stirring something over a small flame and could not have heard. I tried again, ‘Meggie. Is that you?’ She whipped round, almost dropping the beaker, setting it down with a clatter.

‘Robert,’ she was by my side in an instant. ‘Robert, oh ... oh I thought ...’ and she lifted my hand to her face.

‘Meggie, my dear ...’ tears began coursing down my cheeks. I pulled my hand from her grasp and lifted it shakily, stroking her face as I wept.

Interlude

Hosted 2016

William wakes to the sound of singing. He has no idea where he is for a few seconds, but he seems to have slept for a long, long time. He shuts his eyes again, opens them. He's in a small room, just a bed, a desk by the window and a cupboard. His bag is on the floor, his clothes on a hanger. Of course, Harriet's house.

He had the feeling yesterday afternoon that the other woman wanted him to remain in the night shelter. She was very regretful, there really was nowhere... but once Harriet saw that he was the man she had spoken to in London, it seemed to take hold of her.

'No Emma. He needs looking after.' And he found himself in her car and it was warm and comforting, the rain pouring down outside, music from her radio very quietly in the background. She had to wake him when they reached her house.

He lifts his head at the sound of feet pounding downstairs and a voice, 'Mum, I'm off now.'

Another voice urgent, quiet. 'Sshhh, you'll wake Wi...' and the door shuts on the sound. The daughter, Chloe. He met her briefly last night. And Chris, the man from the night-shelter, Harriet's husband. He shuts his eyes and drifts back to sleep.

Three weeks later and Emma has to concede that the arrangement is working well. Harriet has called the office a couple of times asking to speak to Mike, the male caseworker and, from what he reports, it seems that between them they've managed to link William to all the right agencies. 'She's already fixed up a GP for him,' Mike tells Emma, his eyes twinkling with amusement, 'and got him a bus pass. I've taken him back to Refugee Action to check on his solicitor – hard to trace, surprise, surprise... but they've said that the Medical Report

should help towards a fresh claim. And they've fixed some sessions with Freedom from Torture.'

Harriet and Chris are glad that William is going to have some counselling. They've learned from experience that it's no use them prying into their guests' lives. Chris isn't worried by this, but Harriet has been forced to admit that she has had to temper her curiosity. Besides there's the issue about 'client confidentiality;' it doesn't do to discuss other people's lives and she winces as she remembers the early days, when all this started. She's had a lot to learn, the main thing being that their role is just a stop on the journey.

'Like a motorway service station,' Chris says. 'A place to stop, to refuel, to move on.'

'I suppose so.' Harriet considers this. 'And like service stations some of the places they stop are dreadful and some are great.'

'I guess that hosting is generally great,' Chris laughs.

'Whilst NASS accommodation ...' Harriet suppresses a shudder; she's picked up a few clients from their temporary housing. Much of the time it's been unspeakably awful, it isn't surprising that the people they've taken in are so exhausted; one or two have hardly left their room, talking in whispers on their mobiles, going out without warning, unwilling to say where they've been. It's really disconcerting, knowing that some people are never going to trust you.

'When you consider what they've already faced in their own countries, then they come here, and it starts all over again...' Chris says.

William seems to think that he shouldn't stay around the house and spends a lot of his time going up to a charity in Openshaw run by a Catholic priest. Most mornings, if she's not already out, Harriet hears the quiet click of the front door closing and stands at the kitchen window watching him walk slowly down the avenue, his limp less pronounced at the

beginning of the day. There's something courageous about him, she thinks, he looks so calm. If only people knew. He has told them very little. What they have heard is heartbreaking.

'It's odd,' she says to Chris. 'We've had all sorts here and a lot of them have dreadful stories to tell. But William is so resilient. I've hardly heard him complain.'

Chris agrees. 'He seems to have put up with so much. When you think how we feel when our plans don't work out – travel delays, traffic jams, even a flat tyre – but his whole life is on hold, has been for years...' His face puckers, 'it's a disgrace, Hatty. We call ourselves a civilized nation ...'

They'd love to give William more help. But Harriet doesn't think he'll be staying long. There's a place in one of the men's houses coming up soon. It would suit him to be nearer the town.

It would suit him even better to get his leave to remain and be able to get on with his life, Chris says.

Chapter 43

Lumley's Mansion-House

Once she had satisfied herself that I was out of danger, Meggie returned to Silver Street. I vow that both of us lamented the parting, though we were content to know that it would not be for long.

As I began to mend, I was able to welcome company. Uncle Samuel stayed in London, becoming a regular visitor, bringing me sweetmeats from Jackson's store, books from Paternoster Row, broadsheets from Collin's shop – and entertaining me with a very droll mimicry of Tring and his goodwife. Simon surprised me with a visit and informed me of all the London gossip, whilst Blake's wife, Lady Mary, came to London twice to see me, saying that she 'thoroughly enjoyed the river journey,' and offering to read to me – although I confess, I did not find Bishop Andrew's sermons as uplifting as she did.

One afternoon I was in the small parlour adjoining my bedchamber, when Blake arrived. His countenance, usually benign, was deeply perplexed. As he sat down, his large frame – and the daintily carved chair – trembled with agitation. He seemed lost for words until, making a beginning, expressions of regret poured from his lips.

'I cannot forgive myself for John's manipulation both of Henry and ... and of you Robert. He is one of my own kin. I promised his poor father that I would watch over him and I have let him down.' Blake wiped his brow. 'I blame myself for his perfidy.'

'Why should it be any fault of yours?' I asked.

'I offered him Heytesbury. I thought to do him a favour, it was a good price and in truth I was somewhat in need of funds myself, but if I had only known...'

'Heytesbury?'

Blake explained that he had persuaded John to purchase Heytesbury Manor, an imposing residence in Wiltshire, 'in order to allow Beatrice a place to recover, away from the confines

of the Rolfe estate. It must be almost two years past. But alas, John soon found himself quite unable to meet the payments. I should have foreseen...’

I was attempting to explain to him that John Rolfe’s ‘perfidy’ had, regrettably, begun long before this purchase, when my uncle appeared, accompanied by Richard Lumley. Lumley was seldom present in his London house, preferring the rustications of his country estate in Gloucestershire where he could ride to hounds whenever he pleased. Now he greeted me with profuse congratulations on my evident recovery vowing that he could scarce equate me with ‘that pitiable fellow who had but lately been at death’s door.’

Blake collected himself and greeted them both amiably. ‘Now that you’ve both come ... perchance Robert, you might explain...now that you are clearly so much improved,’

Lumley guffawed, ‘Geoffrey is agog to know what it was that finally led you to those villains. I confess I have a few questions, too.’

I told them about the letter Samuel had received from his magistrate friend. ‘Seeing Rolfe’s name on it ...’ I swallowed, ‘it was a dreadful thing. But I must confess it was not a complete surprise. Once I had sent Frazer down to meet with Charles Rolfe’s servant, I was left in no doubt that John was the younger brother of this man and therefore implicated in that stockman’s duplicity.’

‘My dear fellow, I could have told you straightaway that my nephew Charles lived near Basingstoke,’ Blake said.

‘I could not divulge my suspicions, Sir Geoffrey. Not until I was sure.’

‘For all he knew, you might have been a party to it,’ Lumley joked. But Blake could not smile.

I moved my leg into a more comfortable position. ‘Once my eyes were opened, I traced John’s involvement right back to my return to London. I never could fathom why he had left Henry’s employ in such a hurry.’

‘Does Mr Smith know what Rolfe was up to?’ Lumley asked.

‘Not from me.’ I looked at Blake, ‘have you...?’ but he shook his head.

‘I would wager that he had some qualms,’ I said. ‘If he does question me, I will be measured as to the amount of information I give him. I do not want to cause him further distress.’

‘Then Frazer found evidence that Hardaker blackmailed John,’ Samuel said. ‘Some of the notes were in his own hand...’ he turned to me, ‘I don’t expect you have told these gentlemen of your little ruse to make certain of Rolfe’s presence in London that night.’

‘No.’ I rubbed my leg, ‘it was Frazer’s idea actually. Simon nearly put paid to it.’ Lumley and Blake looked mystified, so I let them into the secret.

‘Frazer has a friend who helps out at the theatre; he persuaded the actor manager that Rolfe would be an asset to their play, that his presence would draw the crowds. Which it most certainly did.’ I sighed. ‘It ensured that he would be in London that night and once Frazer had leaked the information to Hardaker and Bellows and intercepted their notes, he knew it had worked.’

‘Ah, but I have not told you what else he did,’ Samuel’s eyes were twinkling.

‘Frazer? When ...?’

‘Those rather doubtful actors you saw, with the preposterous wigs and hats? The two who had the audacity to congratulate Rolfe for his playing... did not one of them seem familiar to you?’

I stared at him, my mouth open, ‘What... who... not ... not *Frazer*?’

Samuel nodded. ‘He couldn’t resist. I’ll warrant he is a master of deceit and the opportunity was too tempting to resist.’

‘Well, ...’ Lumley blew out his cheeks. ‘I congratulate you Hene, for your perspicacity in employing this Frazer. In faith, he could be useful as a spy. If the old queen’s pygmy was

still alive, he would no doubt be swift to employ him.’¹⁴

Sir Geoffrey had listened to all of this without comment. Now he said, ‘I don’t think John can have realised what he was caught up in. He was shaken when he heard about those threats of the Star chamber levelled at Henry.’

Lumley was having none of this. ‘You are forgetting that Rolfe connived in causing great grief to Mr Smith’ he said sharply. ‘And three men are dead because of it.’

‘Three men?’ I said.

‘Oh yes. Not only was Hardaker killed but that villain who worked for him went to the gallows yesterday.’

‘Matthew Bellows? Hanged?’

‘He attacked one of my guards,’ Lumley said grimly. ‘The man was mortally wounded; he leaves behind a widow with a young child...’

‘How dreadful. I had not understood that...’

Lumley’s face softened as he looked down at me. ‘It’s been a cruel entanglement that you’ve unravelled, Hene. But I do believe you have brought an end to it.’

‘Not quite. Not yet.’ But rather than elaborate, I pleaded fatigue.

Presently, Lumley made a graceful farewell and departed, but as Blake rose to follow him, I said, ‘of your leave there is one other matter.’ At which Samuel nodded his understanding and said, ‘You had better sit down, Sir Geoffrey.’

Blake sank back into his chair, a look of trepidation on his face. And I confess my own heart was pounding as I began,

‘About Heytesbury – you were telling me, Sir Geoffrey, that you offered it to John.’

‘Indeed. But he could not find the means...’

‘...as in truth, you could not.’

¹⁴ Robert Cecil nicknamed ‘pygmy’ by Elizabeth I owing to his hunchback and low stature.

Blake's colour rose, 'what do you mean Robert?'

'He means, Geoffrey, that the reason you tried to sell your manor-house was because you yourself were desperately in need of money.' Samuel's tone was cold as he faced Blake.

'And the more Rolfe's debts mounted the more you feared that he would be unable to help you,' I said, 'then, when you knew that he was involved in Hardaker's schemes,'

'And with Andrew Longden,' Samuel interposed,

'Yes, with Longden too,' I shook my head, 'you did nothing to prevent them. Nothing at all.'

All the colour drained from Blake's face. He turned his eyes to the floor. But I was resolute as I sat before my friend, this man who had been so warm to me, so cheering of my spirits. Lumley was right. This was indeed a cruel entanglement. And Blake could have at least tried to prevent the worst of it.

'Geoffrey,' Samuel's voice was dispassionate. 'What do you have to say for yourself?'

'How... how did you know?'

Samuel folded his arms. 'Once we began to harbour the suspicion it was simple. Your nephew Charles has a steward who is brother to the Joyners' man of business.'

'The Joyners?'

'Lady Grisogon – an old friend of mine. She also happens to be Henry's cousin. Robert here,' with a nod towards me, 'sent Simon down to my place with Frazer and he went across to meet her. They got on famously. Once she knew what was going on, she was only too happy to allow her man to visit his brother, the steward, and to report back to her about John Rolfe's comings and goings.'

'And we found that on many of the occasions when you said he was in Berkshire, in reality he was on his way to Horsham, to Middleton's house,' I said.

‘On one occasion he even met with you,’ Samuel added. ‘I think you told Robert you were in Hampshire at the time.’

‘I was. I met with him on the way home.’ Blake’s voice was muffled. ‘I tried to warn him...’

‘But three men have died because of this,’ I clenched my hands, ‘and I am lucky not to be the fourth. And as to Henry’s legacy...’ I breathed heavily, gritting my teeth. ‘Surely you could have said something to warn us ... all that time I came to you and shared my plans with you. And I never once accused Rolfe in front of you, even as I began to doubt his integrity.’

‘But ... but you assented to staying at my house a time or two.’ Blake began to bristle. ‘Did you think to spy on me?’

‘Oh, Geoffrey. No ... no I did not.’

‘You have no cause for self-justification.’ Samuel’s voice was harsh as he turned to Blake. ‘We also know that you tried your damndest to scupper our plans at the wharf.’

Blake’s colour rose. ‘How do you prove that?’

‘The letter you sent to Lumley,’ I replied. ‘It was returned to me. I sent him another one. As he does not know my hand, he is not aware of your subterfuge.’

‘Why do you think I was out on the river in a boat, in the dead of night?’ Samuel demanded. ‘I only had to pay those hapless men off, substitute two of Lumley’s and hire another vessel to follow after you.’ He folded his arms, ‘and by the way, we sent Lumley’s boatman to the ship to inform the captain that John Rolfe would not be boarding it.’

Sir Geoffrey seemed to collapse before our eyes; his portly frame to shrink, his ruddy complexion to wither. He put his hand over his eyes and bowed his head. ‘John has always been ... but he is my nephew.’ His voice was muffled as he went on. ‘Robert, you must believe me, I did try to warn Charles.’ He shook his head, unable to continue.

Samuel was brisk. 'It behoves us to make some decisions, Geoffrey. With your imminent elevation in the Commons, it is clearly not in your interest for this matter to come to light. Now then, if you are able, hear us out, for Robert and I have a proposal to put to you.'

The afternoon faded into early evening, the servants lit candles and mended the fire, they brought in ale and cakes and a message from Lumley that he would be glad to welcome Samuel and Geoffrey for supper – and took a message back to him with a regretful dismissal of his gracious offer ... and still we sat and schemed until we were fully persuaded of our course. Above all else, Henry Smith's charity would benefit from Blake's property. The debts owing to Henry would be met from the sale of land, our silence would be bought from the gifting of Hale House.

Samuel pronounced our decision. 'I would offer that it is incumbent upon you, as a member of his majesty's parliament, a position of unquestionable power and authority both in the eyes of the people and under God, to strive above all else for the protection of your integrity. You still have Heytesbury. You yourself have said that Lady Mary would like to live closer to her children. That can be your reason for leaving London. When you come to Parliament you will have to tolerate the domestic comforts that most of your constituents are compelled to endure – that is to find lodgings where you may live without undue expense.

As we finally reached an agreement Blake had only more question. His manner was still dejected, his voice scarcely audible as he asked, 'whatever can I tell Mary?'

'Sir Geoffrey,' I leaned forward, 'I cannot see that it will accomplish any good thing for us to distress Lady Mary. I am sure you can find a way to explain reasons for the path that you are about to take.'

Samuel concurred with this. 'Nor do I think that Henry needs to know any of this, save that we have fashioned a plan to retrieve as much of his money as we are able.'

I told Blake that I would be leaving in the morning. 'It is time for me to return to Holborn.' Then, grasping the arms of the chair to steady myself, I struggled to my feet and held out my hand to him, 'Sir Geoffrey, please believe me when I say that I shall ever be grateful to you and Lady Mary for your friendship.' And I turned away, unable to say anything more.

Interlude

Medical report

William receives a message from MAP to tell him that his medical report has arrived; that if he can come in to collect it, Mike, the caseworker, can go through the details with him. For Mike it makes grim reading, for William it is a confirmation of what he has already known, not that this makes it any easier for him to hear.

Medical Legal Report [MLR] 14.01.16

Name of patient: Muambi, William

Result of Examination

Scars on both legs, right upper suggestive of severe trauma; left leg, damage to ligaments behind knees. Consistent with machete attack.

Scars on head: long abrasion parietal [r] to frontal

Smaller abrasion temporal [l]

Notes

I met Mr Muambi on 13.01.16

Mr Muambi has been intermittently street-homeless for approx. 12 months. As a direct result of this he is undernourished and in poor health.

The physical scarring is highly consistent with the attribution he gives. There is no discrepancy between causations and approximate timescale.

Mr Muambi has clear features of PTSD.

There are some inconsistencies given in his account, in my opinion due to loss of memory and subsequent stress.

I ~~have~~ / have not referred Mr Muambi for a specialist opinion.

In response to your specific queries, my answers are summarised below.

The clinical justification for my comments and recommendations is based on the WHO diagnostic criteria for research, the ICD-10 classification of mental and behaviour disorders.

I advise the following steps

That Mr Muambi attends Freedom from Torture's North West Centre in Manchester for trauma focussed therapies

That Mr Muambi is referred to a GP for regular health checks and is sent for CT scan to be assessed for intracranial damage

William clenches his hands when Mike reads out the phrase *consistent with machete attack*.

Mike notes the strain on the big man's face; he must have been strong once, he thinks, but now he looks worn down. There's such an air of weary resignation about him, in some ways anger might be more welcome. But William has no energy left for that.

Why have the authorities not believed him, Mike wonders? Why has so much time been wasted when he could have been properly cared for? He knows that one of the answers to this is that William should have been better prepared for his substantive interview. Ideally, he should have had a good interpreter, stronger evidence, even put in a request for the conversation to be recorded.

Even so ... not for the first time, Mike wonders how these highly qualified officers of the law can look into the eyes of someone as guileless as William and still question his motives. Not for the first time, he considers the possibility that there may be other agendas in play. But this notion makes him uneasy – surely here in the UK any person in a position of power must, above all else, strive to protect their integrity

Chapter 44

January 1627

The gate was open. I walked into Henry's yard to find Meggie struggling down the steps from the kitchen, an overflowing basket of linen in her arms. She turned at the sound of my voice, her face a picture of confusion. Was there some relief there or was that my foolish fancy?

'Robert !' The cloths tumbled to the ground and she dropped to the floor to pick them up. I bent down to help her retrieve them but collected myself as Molly crossed the yard to join her.

'No matter, they're for the wash anyway.' Meggie said. I put my hand under her elbow and helped her to her feet. Her head brushed against my shoulder and she moved hastily aside.

'I was hoping to see Mr Smith.' I kept my tone formal.

Meggie's lips twitched. 'He is down at the gate, Mr. Hene.' She followed my eyes across the garden to where a small crowd had gathered. 'Tis the day for the poor of the parish' she explained.

Molly was keen to elaborate, 'most Fridays now there's folks waiting, always a few new faces, but old Goody White is always here, and Abel Woodman with his poor lame boy. Adam Saunders too ... the master makes sure he speaks to them all.'

'His ... his wife, Mistress Anne ... she used to do this, at St Dunstan's. I would carry her basket.'

Molly looked at me curiously, 'not the master?'

'Oh no. Not Henry.'

'Well, it's Jed as helps now.'

Down at the end of the garden Jed was handing out bread, pressing the small loaves

carefully into the waiting hands, smiling and chatting, whilst Henry leaned on his stick, his head tilted, the better to make out what Goody White was saying.

‘What a strange pairing,’ I said. ‘Whoever would have thought to see Jed and Henry dispensing largesse?’

‘It was after those lads disappeared...’ Molly’s eyes were solemn. ‘The master could not forgive himself.’

‘I suppose forgiveness is never easy. Even of oneself.’

‘Particularly of oneself,’ Meggie said softly. She turned to Molly, ‘I’ve left a pot on the fire. Please to see to it.’

Molly dropped a curtsy and turned on her heel. Meggie said, ‘he will be delighted to see you Robert.’

‘As delighted as I am to see you?’ I asked and laughed at her evident confusion. We watched as Henry said a final farewell to the group. ‘I’ll go to him now,’ I said. ‘But if you have a few moments to spare later...’ and walked away before she could reply.

Jed led Henry along the path behind the apple trees, and as they reappeared, walking slowly back towards the house, I stepped forward, my heart pounding. I was distressingly ill at ease, having no idea of what I must say. But as Henry looked up, the sun poured out from behind a cloud and he put one hand up to shield his eyes from the sudden glare. He stood still.

‘Who ... I ask your pardon, I cannot quite ...’

‘Master Henry, its Robert. Robert Hene.’ Jed stooped over him, his voice raised.

‘Well. Well, Robert.’ Henry dropped his stick and stumbled towards me and I caught him as he cried out. ‘Robert, it is so good to see you. I had thought never...’ He lifted his face towards mine and I saw how deep were the creases in his brow, how lined his cheeks.

‘Did you ... did you receive my letters, Robert?’

I nodded, 'I ... I should have replied.'

It was remiss of me, no doubt of that at all. But each time I picked up my pen, I had found nothing to say. I muttered a short apology. Henry just said,

'Robert, I fear I cannot stand here for long. But if you will consent to come inside and sit with me for a while, I would be most grateful.'

There was a cheerful fire burning in the parlour. Jed brought a blanket and fussed over Henry, placing a footstool under his slippered feet.

'There. Now you get warm Master Henry. I'll fetch you your caudle directly.'

'Jed seems to have settled into his position,' I said, taking the chair beside him.

'Yes. He is a good boy. I miss Tom though,' Henry said. 'He left such a gap ... then you ...' he peered at me closely. 'Robert, we must set all to rights, don't you think?'

I did not know what to say. How could we 'set all to rights' whilst the cruel memory of his insults still burned in me? I began, 'Henry, there are things that can never be unsaid. Even though the circumstances may have precipitated a ... a level of response that in the end was ... er... unfortunate.'

'Oh no, Robert. I cannot agree with that.'

I started, angrily. 'What are you saying?'

Henry put a hand on my arm 'no, no hear me, Robert.' He gave me a look full of warmth. 'No circumstances should have ever precipitated such remarks as I made to you. Before God, I vow that I have regretted my words ever since...' he leaned back in his chair and pulled the blanket closer round his body. 'But there is so much that I regret.'

I swallowed and found that I could not make a reply. There was a muffled thud of barrels out in the yard, Jed's voice and Molly's shrill laughter in response, out in the street the rattle of a cart and the raucous cry, *any work for the cooper?*

Henry put his hand on my arm, ‘Robert, I will address the matter of my vile accusations presently. But of your favour, hear me out, for there are other things...’ He lifted his head, willing me to hold his gaze. ‘Sam came to see me before he went to seek out his brother Joseph.’ Henry gripped the arm of the chair. ‘He was puzzled that I knew so little of Joseph’s plight.’

‘Joe’s ... Joseph’s plight...?’

‘That his father had been so harsh with him ...that Joseph ran to his grandmother when his father refused to take him in; that Joane had urged him to stay with her, promised that she would do all she could to help him, whatever he might have done to incur his father’s wrath.’ This was eloquent for Henry, I thought, as if he had rehearsed it over and over in his mind.

‘Why did Sam expect you to know this?’ I asked. But already the truth was beginning to dawn.

‘... I found out that my sister – just before she died – she sent me a letter that I ... I neglected to read.’

‘And was this what Joane was trying to tell you ... in this letter?’

‘Yes. I’ve found it since.’ Henry’s voice was so low that I had to lean towards him.

‘So, where... what did you ...?’

‘It was just as I was leaving for Geoffrey’s house. Last year. It must have been June – or July. Jed gave it to me, he said I’d left it on my table. He handed it to me in the coach. ‘Now, make sure you read this Master Henry,’ he said. And I was quite haughty with him, told him to mind his manners, it wasn’t for him to tell me to make sure... and I put the sealed paper into a folder ... I had so many papers with me...’

‘Yes, I recall ...’ It must have been the letter that Sam brought across. I had a sudden memory of standing there as he handed it to me, promising I’d see that Henry got it.

‘And then, only a week or two later, Joane died. And she never knew ...’ Henry paused. Two spots of red stood out against the pallor of his cheeks. ‘I might have stopped him,’ he said.

‘Stopped him?’

‘Stopped Jem from leaving London. Helped him to make peace with his father.’

I was casting about for something to say when Meggie came in with Henry’s caudle. She leaned over him and set it carefully in his hands.

‘Now you drink all of this,’ she said, smiling at him and he lifted it obediently to his lips. She turned to me, ‘I ... I thought you might enjoy a goblet of wine.’

As she handed the drink to me, I put both my hands over her’s and looked into her face.

‘My thanks,’ I said and mouthed, ‘for everything.’

The response in her eyes told me all that I needed to know. As she extricated herself from me and left the room, I saw Henry looking at me quizzically.

‘Am I to understand that Mistress Meggie nursed you back to health?’ he asked.

‘Indeed she did.’

‘They told me you met with an accident. Your leg ... is it quite recovered?’

Ah, so that was the story. I settled back in my chair. ‘It will take time. It was a cut from ... er ... from a foolish slip that I made, sawing timber. Then the wound became septic.’

Henry shook his head, ‘Meggie was distraught, Robert. She came to me and asked leave to visit you.’ He set his beaker down, ‘I have to say, she has been far more cheerful of late – since your recovery.’ He gave me a knowing look, but all he said was, ‘she has been my salvation too, you know.’

‘Your salvation?’ I was intrigued. Henry nodded.

‘After our ... our ...’

‘Our altercation?’

‘Yes ... our altercation. After that, I was distressed ... with myself ... then the news came about the boys and I did not know how I could bear it. But Meggie, she sat with me, she let me talk to her of ... of many things.’ He passed a hand across his face, ‘of my folly, my selfishness...’

‘ But Henry you are not ...’

‘ ... then she asked me if I would like to see Mr. Flint, the minister, and I thought it was a good idea. So he came here and listened and prayed... and spoke to me of God’s forgiveness.’ His voice quavered, ‘and of the forgiveness of his people.’ He turned to me, ‘I have seen Henry Jackson, you know. And Martha. They were all kindness.’

Henry stopped then as if that would suffice for now; I did not feel inclined to probe, besides I could see that his eyes were closing. I stared at the fire as he dozed, thinking about his confession. Uncle Samuel’s words came back to me, *to barricade your soul against the love of God ... and indeed against the love of his people... well, methinks that must be a lonely place* and I felt a measure of hope dawning as I understood that at least my own soul was now open to ‘the love of his people’— perchance Meggie would be my salvation too...

Jed came in to add some logs to the fire and Henry stirred himself and declared that it was time he had his dinner.

‘I must go home,’ I said. But as Jed left the room Henry put out a hand to detain me.

‘Tell me of your work, Robert.’

‘My work?’

‘Your business ventures – those things you do that you think have gone unnoticed.’

‘Ah. well, I ...’

‘Your alms houses ... the ones that you and your uncle have purchased, to accommodate the impecunious...’

‘How ... how on earth have you learnt of them?’

Henry's expression was positively gleeful. 'Meggie attends a weekly gathering at Mr. Flint's house. They welcome all manner of people, Robert. Some are impecunious. Some are even refugees... and there are those who speak of a certain Mr. Hene who has made it possible for them to live and work in this city.'

I tugged at the linen band of my shirt; I could feel my face growing hot. 'As God is my witness, I have not wanted this spread abroad. There are people in the city who might oppose my ideas...'

'Well, Robert Hene, that's as may be, but I can assure you that God most certainly is your witness. And for all you might doubt him, I have to say that you appear to have a remarkable understanding of what most pleases him.'

'But this is nothing like the magnitude of what you do...'

'My work has been mainly monetary, Robert.'

'Yes, but in years to come your work will allow the fostering of merciful deeds – those small ambitions, services rendered of peoples' charity – ' I was waxing lyrical now. 'Do you not see Henry, that we are both dependent on one another for these matters to succeed?'

A light shone in Henry's eyes. 'It was Henry Smith, his words.'

'I beg your par ...'

'Henry, Henry Smith.'

I wondered if his mind was beginning to wander. 'Henry Smith? But sir, you are ...'

He smiled then. 'No Robert, Henry Smith the preacher. They called him 'Silver-tongued Smith. Mr. Flint lent me a book of his sermons and I read his words again ... just as he spoke them that day ... oh, so long ago now ... I was with Anne.' He peered at me, 'you were there, were you not?'

'Indeed.' Silver-tongued Smith ... there was that name again.

Henry grasped my sleeve, his fingers bony, insistent. 'Henry Smith, God's true orator,

He said that many who number themselves as Christ's are content to leave fatherless children and widows to starve and to die, in the streets.'

'But you have not . . .'

'He said also that where a child lies cold or naked, Christ himself lies naked.'

'But you have already . . .'

'Oh Robert, I may have given a moiety of succour to a few, but my ambition ... to build ... I vow I had begun to neglect the people for whom I was building. My own family,' he bit his lip, 'my dear sister, God rest her soul, my household ... even those whose lives I hoped to benefit from my legacy. In truth, I had not looked upon them or spent time in considering them for many a long year. But since Mr. Flint ... I find my heart has become stirred ... not for a great enterprise ... but for the children ... and their children ... generations yet unborn...' He stared at something then, something that only he could see, with awe in his features. 'It is Christ that we clothe, here in the streets of London.'

I drew in my breath. Fewster with his mangled hand, Meggie's poor mother ... the dark man in the shadows.

'He is much changed, Meggie.'

I was shaken by my encounter with Henry, encouraged by his eagerness to endorse my work; nevertheless my reconciliation with him was not the only reason for my visit today. My friendship with Henry now standing secure, there was another person to speak to and I was not about to let the opportunity pass me by.

I intercepted Meggie as she walked through the hall. Now I stood beside her in the library. Henry was at his dinner in the warmth of the parlour, Molly was serving him and at last I had Meggie to myself. I told her very briefly about my conversation with Henry and she laughed a little as I attempted to chastise her for her part in it.

‘I thought he should know what you have been up to.’

‘Oh, not all of it Meggie. Not the other things.’

‘No,’ her voice was gentle, ‘we do not need him to know of that.’

‘Unless he could know how much you helped me ... to recover.’

‘Oh, I ...’

‘He told me that you had been his salvation.’

‘Oh, I’m not sure ... I think Mr. Flint ...’

‘I think Mr. Flint must perform a service for me too,’ I said.

‘You want to speak to him?’

‘Yes, indeed I do.’ I took her into my arms, ‘I have a question for him concerning matrimony. But first, I have one for you ...’

Interlude

Pennine House 2016

Pennine House is the Holding Centre for up to twelve people at Manchester airport. You can be held there for up to five days before being transferred to an Immigration Removal Centre.¹⁵

William bends to the wind as he crosses the road and goes up the path to his house. Six o'clock – it's been a long day, first the walk to the counsellor on Oldham Street, then the journey to Salford and on to the drop-in centre. Hardly surprising his right leg is hurting again. Perhaps he should go back to the doctor. He shivers as he sets the key in the door, the wind has a bitter edge to it and now a stormy afternoon is turning into another wild night... it'll be a relief to be back in the house.

The reporting centre was quiet for once. He was into a routine now anyway, he only had to go once a month. He didn't recognise anyone in the queue, and the officers signed him in without comment. When he said he was with MAP the man stared at him; Mike had told him it was best to give the UKBA their office address. The officer must be used to this – his only response was to write something on his notepad. And then he let him go, so that was all right ... it was always a relief to walk away.

The drop-in was quiet too. One of his housemates was there, he nodded at William, but didn't stop to talk. It was all right in the house, William thought, except that the other three men were from the Sudan and they hardly spoke any English and no French. Sometimes they looked at him and talked very fast, laughing a lot. He couldn't help wondering what they were saying...

He was about to leave the drop-in to go for the bus, when Harriet appeared from the kitchen. She was wearing her usual purple fleece but her hair seemed different ... perhaps it

¹⁵ Smith, D. (2016) p.46

was the colour ...

‘William! It’s so good to see you.’ She gave him a hug and sat down next to him. He asked about Chris and Chloe and the cat. He was missing him he said, and showed Harriet his hands – look, no scratches... she chuckled. ‘You must come over soon.’

‘Yes Mama’

‘You have our number still?’

‘Yes, is in my phone. Maybe next week ...’

Before he left, Harriet slipped him an extra packet of biscuits and gave his arm a squeeze. ‘Don’t forget, you can call us any time. Day or night.’

In the house, he puts his bags down, flexing his shoulders. He has the place to himself; the others won’t be back for a while. He has not seen the black van turning into the street, he doesn’t hear it pulling up outside. He is in the kitchen stirring his tea when the two officers get out. At the sound of the bell, he puts his cup down and limps towards the door.

There’s a party atmosphere at MAP. The award from the Henry Smith Charity has come through. Everyone congratulates Kate, she’s done a great job, Harry says; it’s a really generous grant, now the trust can begin to think about advertising for a new caseworker, even start to consider taking on more houses. Time to hand round the chocolates.

It’s a while before anyone hears the phone in the inner office. Eventually Kate goes to answer it. She comes back and hands it to Harry, ‘You need to take this, its Harriet. William Mlonga has been picked up.’

Everything stops. Then as Harry disappears there’s a burst of noise, questions and exclamations. He’s a long time on the phone, they can see him through the glass, writing on his pad, listening intently. Finally, he comes out. ‘He’s at the holding centre in Manchester

Airport. I've called Graham, the solicitor. He's onto it.'

Mike is sitting on one of the desks, his hand thrust over his chin, thinking hard.

'William has a medical report, trauma injuries. That should count for something.'

'Sure, but I doubt there's time to prepare submissions, even if Graham manages to see him.'

'What about a new assessment? Mental health stuff?'

Harry sighs, 'you'd need an expert. But if Graham can push for that ...'

... and Graham could. Two days later, a doctor sees William and writes a report confirming that he is a victim of torture.

Harry gives the news to his staff. 'They released him early this morning. Graham will help him put in a fresh claim,' he says. It might work, he thinks, if William can find enough evidence; perhaps that priest over in Openshaw can help him. Meanwhile they all have plenty to do; there's a queue of clients outside waiting for bus money, for forms to be signed, appointments to be made. Life must go on ... MAP must go on. Harry clenches his fists. However long the problem lasts, hope will last longer.

Epilogue Foliejohn, 1667

How to end? I sit in the library, staring at the final page. I suppose it would be fitting if this was Henry's library, but it's here in Foliejohn, in Samuel's old house that I have made my home.

In the drawer beneath my desk lies a thick pack of white paper; it is closely scripted, covered in a hundred thousand words or more. Henry's story – or perhaps mine. Well, I have set it down now. I have said far more than I meant to say and not nearly as much; but where I could, I have endeavoured to speak what is true. I have one final sheet before it is completed and I mind how many sheets I covered back in Henry's library when I was his scrivener.

Henry's Great Enterprise – how it consumed him. Even to the last, his determination was undimmed. I can see him now, those final months that we worked together, his mischievous delight as he perfected the plans that Samuel and I had devised. Not one of his defaulters would escape payment he declared.

'It warms my heart to think that the poor and needy will finally profit from those idle bloodsuckers, even though I won't be here to see it.'

And in truth it would warm Henry's heart yet, could he see the increase of his scheme, although it has ever been a troublesome thing to administer and I myself have not been unscathed by the conflicts that have dogged our steps. But no matter, for there are many other things to record of as much worth and more interest.

... our two children Samuel and Sarah Jane – and I more than two score years and ten when my son was born.

... Sam Jackson returned to his family, although poor Joe was never found.

... the fantastical memory of that strange afternoon when old Grisogon arrived in her great battered coach to visit Henry and declared, before the whole gathering, that I 'really should

marry that dark-skinned gel, for you cannot take your eyes off her, Robert Hene.’ And Meggie and I confessing that we were soon to be wed ...

... Amherst huffing and puffing and refusing to pay his dues, but this time getting no quarter from the Chancellor and living but three more years.

... Blake and his great memorial, erected in the church at Hale to celebrate his charity ... ah well, I don’t begrudge him that, not now. He was a good friend and I missed him sorely.

... Frazer who really did excel as a spy in the end, though not in Lumley’s army, for Frazer was one of Cromwell’s men.

... Simon and Molly and their six strapping lads, two of them still farmers here at Foliejohn.

... John Rolfe ... such a capricious character. He left a mountain of debts but persuaded Henry Smith’s charity to a number of valuable bequests. Perhaps he sought to redeem himself.

I flex my hands and look up to see light streaming through the long windows onto the great silver salt cellar and I smile to think of old Tring and my candlesticks. Behind the salt, the Holy Family, now faded beyond repair, look down indulgently, returned to the wall after ten years concealed beneath the floorboards. Now that the second King Charles has taken his rightful place, there will be many tapestries raised to life, many hidden statues re-emerging. Strange times...

And thanks be to God that I placed Henry’s salt and his Holy Family here, all those years ago, for had they remained with the Jacksons in Silver Street, they would have utterly perished. There wasn’t a house left standing on our side, after the fire, barely a stone left of St. Olave’s save for the great font.

A memory teases the edges of my mind and once more I hear Henry’s voice, ‘must London burn down before it can rise again?’

Well, London did burn down and they tell me that it's rising is a marvel; yet poverty continues to stalk the streets and the children are still acquainted with hardship. Henry's charity is needed more than ever now.

The door inches open and Molly, my youngest grandchild, sidles in. I pretend I haven't seen her, but I can hear the creak and click of the great globe as she turns it round and round... she sings abstractedly, as she spins Britain's islands out of sight, watching as the new territories emerge. And as I watch her – my new territory – I know that I too shall soon be spun out of sight. Molly comes over to my chair, dark eyes sparkling under long lashes. I place a hand on her wiry curls and they spring back as I take it away.

'Still full of bounce?' I say and she giggles.

'Grandpapa, your hand is covered in ink.' She fits her strong little hand against mine, bronze skin, nails like tiny pink shells and I see that yes, my old fingers are black, the skin on my hand mottled with age. 'Best not be late for dinner' I say, and she skips out of the room.

I grasp my stick and get slowly to my feet. Best not be late too ... but I take a moment to survey the room. If I narrow my eyes, I can almost fancy that Uncle Samuel sits in his chair beside a great blaze of apple logs, a glass of fine French brandy in his hand.

Through the window, beyond the long line of chestnut trees I can just see the church tower. Beneath it, my dear love lies at rest in the quiet earth. It will not be long now before I see her walking down the avenue towards me ...

I stare back at the desk, scarred now with age and ink. Henry's old desk. And as I turn to leave the room, I swear I can hear a faint voice,

'Robert, can you find the last two years' returns for Kemsing?'

'Did you receive a reply from Lindsey?'

'Where are the returns from Knole?'

Critical Reflections

Contents

Introduction	381
Part 1 The Salter's Journey	383
1.1 Starting Out.....	383
1.2 Smith the Salter	384
1.3 Pursuit of Truth.....	385
1.4 Salt Routes	387
1. 5 Worth His Salt	389
1.6. Flavouring	395
1.7 Below the Salt.....	403
1.8. Salt of the Earth	406
1.9 Sal Volatile	411
1.10. Transport	413
Part 2 Saline Solutions.....	414
2.1 Understanding Practice-as-Research.....	414
2.2 Metaphor	415
2.3 The Gorge, the Helix and the Fish.....	417
2.4 The Third Space.....	422
2.5 Tacit Knowledge.....	424
Part 3 Crystallization	426
3.1 In Quest of Genres	427
3.2 Biography.....	427
3.3. Positioning Myself.....	438
Part 4 Research Methodology – a Ledger of Profit and Loss	442
4.1 Old Salts	442
4.2 Writerly Reading Reviewed	452
4.3 The Cast	460

4.4. Salt Baskets	468
Appendices	470
References.....	478
Additional Bibliography.....	488
Historical Research:16 th &17 th centuries	488
Primary Sources	488
Secondary Sources	489
History of Salt.....	493
History and Theory.....	494
Contemporary Issues of Asylum and Immigration	495
Wider Reading.....	496
Biography	496
Historical Novels	496
Asylum and Immigration Novels	497
Innovative Writing	497
Theory and Criticism	498
Writing Techniques	501
Dictionaries and Reference Books	501

Introduction

In *Salt in Winter*, Robert Hene, as the authorial voice, begins his account of Henry Smith's life with a question:

But how to set down his story? ... some things that went on behind my back can only be conjectured ...

In spite of his misgivings, Hene resolves to pursue his goal.

Somehow, through invention and calculation, by gathering up fragments ...and by my own understanding and re-creation, I shall set down a form of Henry Smith's life.

In the following critical component of this thesis, I echo Hene's dilemma in my search for the man behind the Henry Smith Charity as I become 'drawn into the fragments... the chances taken up or lost'(Davis, 2015, p. 89), in my quest for the shreds of evidence and the conjectures that constitute my fictional representation of Smith's life.

The central objectives of my research are to bring to public attention the extraordinary inception and lasting contribution of Smith's legacy; to employ techniques of fictionalised biography, bridging gaps in Smith's history with speculative material in order to celebrate the audacity of his vision and his persistence in securing its advancement; to draw a thread of connection between his generosity and the poverty faced by a specific group of his current beneficiaries.

In the opening chapter of these reflections, my treatment of Smith's life – as epitomised in Lukacs' idea of "vast heroic human potentialities which are always latently present..." (Lukacs, 1962, p. 52) – will be seen to add value to the broader field of literary enquiry in its demonstration of how a seemingly ordinary life may be laudable in its outcome. Further value may be gained from my proposal that Bakhtinian theories of chronotope have compelled me to address the enigma of time, exploring ways to situate characters in their

physical location but also in and beyond their temporality.

In the second chapter I will suggest that practice-as-research, as a reflexive methodology, has facilitated my recognition of parallels and connection between the disparate temporalities of my characters; that it is within such reflexivity that “the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p.19) and a liminal space may be found to attenuate the boundaries between history and fiction; further, that eidetic memorabilia from my field research, has promoted tacit knowledge, the knowing ‘how’ of experience as differentiated from factual codification, to advance intuitive understanding where historical data may not.

The third part of these reflections takes inspiration from Frow’s understanding of genre as a means whereby the creative impulse may be served rather than as restrictive categorisation (Frow 2006). Bakhtin’s concept of ‘unfinalizability’ (in Holquist, 2003) will be seen to promote intimations of connectivity that argue for a hybridised story, situating Smith within a wider composite narrative and informing my own decision as to where I situate myself, as Smith’s fictionalizing biographer. The inter-weaving of time frames will be acknowledged as one of the primary technical challenges of my research; the voice of Robert Hene – my amanuensis for the historical strand – standing in contrast to, but maintaining connections with, the more succinct account of one of Henry’s beneficiaries that constitutes the contemporary material.

An over-view of the historical and literary research, detailing various components that have informed the crafting of my novel, and writers who have most influenced my practice, comprises the fourth and final part of these reflections.¹⁶

¹⁶ Here I should point out that within my reflections I will at times use the word ‘novel’ to refer to my text; this for the sake of brevity, but only with the understanding that ‘the novel’ as a genre accommodates fictionalised biography as the sub-genre that categorises my work.

Part 1 The Salter's Journey

1.1 Starting Out

Salt arrests and hinders the process of decay. Salting - a vital process before the advent of modern technology - was indispensable to the preservation of food and therefore, particularly during long cold winters, to the preservation of life itself. (Poulton Smith, 2010, p. 122.)

My acquaintance with the salter Henry Smith began in an office in the northern quarter of Manchester, where the charity that I worked for became “salt in winter” to the destitute asylum seekers in north-west England. For many, the long cold winter of their appeal for justice was one of no fixed abode, no recourse to public funds and – denied permission to work – no means of supporting themselves. This harsh period of their lives was – and for others, still is – unnecessarily protracted. Some found themselves threatened with near starvation; many despaired of having a future, a few faced death; until a small local charity – the Boaz Trust – became salt to them, seeking to preserve their dignity and to arrest a downward spiral of mental and physical decay.¹⁷ (Salt – in a number of allusions – has become an extended metaphor for this project; metaphor itself, as relevant to both parts of this thesis, will receive further exploration in the second chapter [see 2.2]).

Like most humanitarian charities, “Boaz” depended on voluntary contributions and foundational grants. One of the most significant of these grants, vital to the establishment of Boaz as a long-term venture, came from the London-based Henry Smith Charity (hereinafter referred to as HSC). Henry Smith, its eponymous founder, born in 1548, lived through the reigns of four English sovereigns, and into a fifth, Charles 1st, finally succumbing to old age in 1627 or 1628 (allowing for the vagaries of the two calendars in use at the time). The discovery that HSC donations totalled a yearly average of 27 million pounds during the last

¹⁷ www.boaztrust.org.uk

decade¹⁸ led me to wonder how Smith could have acquired the means to sustain such an enduring enterprise. Intrigued by both his antiquity and longevity I became convinced that here was a story waiting to be told.

1.2 Smith the Salter

Henry Smith was a London merchant and a member of the Worshipful Company of Salters, one of the twelve most prestigious London Guilds. Lethbridge and Wales (2015, p. 8) note that he “almost certainly entered the company as an apprentice” in which case “his master may well have been ... a salter by trade.” There are no detailed records of Smith’s early apprenticeship, but his training would, in all likelihood, have left him with an understanding of the variety of skills involved in processing and transporting this most valuable of commodities. Andrew and Annelise Fielding (2006) offer graphic descriptions of both the skills and the risks involved in the processing of salt.

[They]employed their own blacksmiths, carpenters and joiners ...bricklayers and other building tradesmen [...]men and children fell down unfenced boreholes and mineshafts, were crushed beneath salt pans [...] fell into crushing mills or drowned in the canals (Fielding, 2006, pp. 29, 33).

Peripheral details such as these are useful to the storyteller. Here, intimations of Smith’s youthful experience as a salter might be seen as generating a degree of resilience in his later life, when the exigencies of his financial affairs required him to exercise both courage and perseverance.

In his middle years, Smith expanded beyond the salt trade into a variety of commercial ventures; chief amongst these was the acquisition of property. Like so many merchants of his era, he lived close to the heart of London’s commercial centre, many of his transactions no doubt negotiated at Gresham’s Royal Exchange, established in 1566 (Mortimer, 2012, p. 34).

¹⁸Today, The Henry Smith Charity is amongst the largest independent grant makers in the UK, distributing £31.7 million in 2019.” <https://www.henrysmithcharity.org.uk/about-us/15.12.20>

The site of this building is still to be found within reach of the Stock Exchange; it's imposing structure occupies the exact footprint of the original. Even this tenuous link with Smith affords not only biographical context but facilitates a reimagining of him as an astute businessman. Lively (1993, p. 17) suggests that writers of fiction "have the advantage over writers of history, because they are able to re-imagine people and things in their context [...] as the rainbow survivors of some vanished grey moment of reality." In my reworking of his life, I show that Smith's business acumen – though a somewhat pedestrian topic for a novel – would result in a legacy that now brings a rainbow of hope to his beneficiaries.

1.3 Pursuit of Truth.

Lively's submission that history itself may dissipate into "a vanished grey moment" acted as my incentive to touch the moments of Smith's life with colour. This I have done by introducing fictional links – imaginative connections between established facts – in compensation for a dearth of historical information. Hilary Mantel (2017) describes this speculative approach as imagining "what it felt like from the inside, [that although] the historian and the biographer follow a trail of evidence... the novelist puts the past back into process" (Mantel, 2017, Reith Lecture).

Categorical distinctions between history, biography and fiction will merit further exploration; here I offer that both biographer and novelist, in putting the past back into process, are prompted to reimagine lost history through "a different kind of truth."¹⁹ The controversial nature of such truth claims will be addressed more fully in 3.2.3. Here it must suffice to say that Suzanne Lipscomb (2016) avers that even historians may differ in their representations of truth. "Is anyone under any illusions that what historians write is ever anything but an interpretation?" (Lipscomb, 2016, p. 33), whilst Arend Flick (2001, cited in

¹⁹ Believing that "a different kind of truth" must be a quotation, I checked online to find that it is in fact the title of an album by Van Halen released 02.07.2012. There may of course be deeper roots, but I have been unable to discover them. <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-album-reviews/a-different-kind-of-truth-189365/>

Winter, 2002) suggests that some assertions made about the past “have a much higher probability of truth than others,” adding that truth claims must be tested “against verifiable evidence” (Flick, 2001, p. 94). This argues for the creative writer to be mindful of her own subjectivity as she seeks to integrate the historical and speculative elements of her work. In my location as Smith’s biographer, I have endeavoured to remain faithful to historical events whilst using fictional links to fashion a novelistic representation of Smith’s life. This facilitates the means to convey significant truths about an obscure historical figure, whilst the historical realities of his persona remain tantalisingly obscure. Furthermore, the character of William is used to convey vital truths in the parallel account of an asylum seeker, whilst remaining loosely representative of many refugees.

Here I offer three disparate texts, as exemplars of composite narratives that can be said to convey truth, shining a light onto the past, in parallel with a present-day character.

A.S Byatt’s novel *Possession* opens a window into the world of Victorian poets Randolph Henry Ash and Christabel LaMotte, fictional characters that are representative of historical poets Robert Browning and Christina Rossetti. Their lives are researched by two present-day academics who, in Lena Steveker’s words, facilitate Byatt’s assertion of “the desire to acquire knowledge of the past, exploring literary genres, poetry and imagination as various means of opening the past to the present” (Steveker, 2017, p. 445).

Flaubert’s Parrot, created by Julian Barnes in 1984, employs the fictional novelist Geoffrey Braithwaite to channel a degree of perplexity in an attempt to understand Gustave Flaubert. Barnes’ own biographer Peter Childs (2011) avers that this multi-genred book “challenges the homogeneous formal approach of conventional biography,” describing it as

a strange kind of life-writing about the real Gustave Flaubert, a portrait of whose life becomes ever more complex as the identification of his parrot becomes more complicated, and the fictional Geoffrey Braithwaite, whose life-story slowly emerges

in glimpses, but in a way that leaves the reader with questions, as Braithwaite has of Flaubert (Childs, 2011, p. 46).

Thirdly, Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* (1985) deals with the investigations of the eponymous detective Nicholas Hawksmoor, into murders committed on the sites of eighteenth-century churches constructed by architect Nicholas Dyer. This is a fantastical reconstruction of historical events; the light that it shines on the past is antiquated and obscure whilst remaining astonishingly well-researched. I return to this later in 4.2, where I discuss authors that have influenced my work.

1.4 Salt Routes

1.4.1. Two Tracks

The notion of connection between past and present holds potential for “inhabiting the lives of other people ... [whereby] readers are able to discover new ways of understanding their own world, their own lives” (McGlynn. 2013, p. 113).

As I considered the implications of Smith's charitable impulse, the idea arose to include current beneficiaries of his charity in his story. In my role as a volunteer with the Boaz Trust, I acted as host to a number of homeless immigrants. My thoughts went to a Congolese asylum seeker who lived with my family for a few weeks. Why this particular man should come to mind, I cannot say. Maybe it was the memory of his dogged resilience that caused me to link him with Smith. ‘William’ (as I now renamed him) would become representative of the ‘living ghosts,’ with whom I had been involved.²⁰ This idea of juxtaposing two temporally distant characters suggested a framework within which to develop a composite narrative.

²⁰ The “Living Ghosts” Campaign was an initiative launched by the Church Action on Poverty charity in 2006 to support destitute asylum seekers. Details in: https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/latest/news/674_could_you_live_on_10_a_week/

Further connections emerged between the time frames, societal prejudices in both Jacobean and modern London, crises of destitution, problems of immigration. The most recent of these links, the outbreak of a deadly virus, was the least expected. The virus's chilling resemblance to plague in early modern England – both afflictions requiring extended periods of isolation, both having a high mortality rate – suggested opportunities for a marriage of form and function – the far-reaching philanthropic ambition crossing temporal boundaries to connect the specificities of social needs over different eras – serving as a reminder of the value of Smith's work as it pertains to his current beneficiaries.

1.4.2 Crossroads

The suggestion of parallelisms between Smith's and William's worlds developed into the notion of paths meeting at the crossroads, a collapsing of historical time for disparate lives to impinge, however briefly, on one another's. The notion of slippage between time frames is well established in fiction writing and sits comfortably within drama on both large and small screens. But the provocation for this idea of establishing transitory links between my subjects, stems neither from Gothic fantasy – I would suggest that Peter Ackroyd is the master of the haunting London scene and I would not presume to attempt an emulation of his style – nor chilling tales of the supernatural, as, for example, Susan Hill's *The Woman in Black* (1983). My impulse towards liminality owes more to Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope, of which more presently [1.6.4] and to the intriguing phenomenon of déjà-vu, that strong recognition of having already visited a place when arriving there for the first time. My own familiarity with the experience of déjà-vu may have influenced my decision to pursue the idea of slippage, to 'play' with time and see what might happen – as for example in the scene where two prison officers drive through Clerkenwell; one can detect the smell of fire, while the other remains unaware of it (p. 136).

This concept came as a whimsical leap of imagination, whilst I was reviewing

preliminary drafts of the story. Smiley (2005, p. 96) suggests similarities between writerly and readerly imagination “just as the novel is read intuitively it is composed intuitively ...[within] the limbic brain, knowing that intuition is a faster, more efficient, but less knowable and controllable method of creation.” This will be further explored [see 2.3.3.] For now, I can only comment that if this was all that constituted the creative process it would save many hours of research and redrafting. But in my own practice, this, and other intuitive ideas required the establishment of Smith in his role before I could allow myself to play at the edges of his life.

1. 5 *Worth His Salt*

Some sources cite the use of salt as barter for slaves, so that "worth his salt" would have a quite literal meaning²¹

1.5.1 Flaws

The demands of Smith’s life as a salter have already been noted. Now establishing Smith’s role in the novel produced demands of its own. Gwilt (1837) Smith’s chronicler, found that the dearth of material posed challenges for him. “Of Smith’s early life little is known. The records [of the Salter’s Company] which would probably have elucidated his parentage, were unfortunately destroyed by the fire of London” (Gwilt, 1837, p. 22).

I had resolved to be as truthful as possible, but reading Gwilt, I began to wonder if there was enough evidence about Smith to proceed; whether, as a central character, he would be worth his salt.

I drafted Smith’s story using a triangulation of contextual information – archival and desk-based historical research, peripheral material comprised of general historical background, and fiction. The initial research was augmented by a more generic exploration of Smith’s socio-historical context; his identity as salter, alderman, London merchant, located

²¹ Culinary Lore. (2012). Origin of the expression ‘Worth Your Salt.’ Retrieved 20 July, 2017, from <<http://www.culinarylore.com/food-history:worth-your-salt>> accessed 20.07.17

within both Elizabethan and Stuart cultures. The wealth of material that this yielded is explored in the fourth chapter of the thesis [see 4.1], with a summary of the development of historical and fictional characters, whose diverse viewpoints served to illuminate Smith and his world [see 4.3].

Without Smith's unwavering devotion to the meticulous construction of his legacy, there would be no story to be told. But I began to discover discrepancies in his character and questioned whether Smith's 'worth' would be deserving of a release from obscurity. Those who worked closely with him evidently found him difficult. His lawyer, Richard Amherst, for example, is recorded as having been

Drawn into the affairs of the London philanthropist Henry Smith, to whom he owed £1,000; but he declined to provide for the debt, claiming he had "painfully deserved" so much "at his hands, and much more" as one of Smith's trustees. (Thrush & Ferris, 2010 n.p.).

Further evidence of Smith's controversial nature comes from his notoriety as a moneylender who charged interest – a usurer. Such allegations of lending at interest were highly defamatory and treated very seriously by the church, particularly by the Puritans. Merchants like Smith justified the practice by arguing that the interest on their loans offset the cut in their own investments therefore they "could legitimately demand compensation for the sacrifice [of] 'escaped gain'" (Kish-Goodling, 1998 p. 330). Smith's utilisation of the practice is evidenced from a request made to his scrivener, William Rolfe, that he might "move Mr Smith to give some moneys by his will," provoking a comment from an attorney, that approaching Rolfe for Smith's money was "thought unfit ... using a Scrivener to get money from a usurer" (Calder, 1987, p. 63).

Some of the loudest protests against usury came from the Puritan preacher Henry 'Silver-tongued' Smith. Both the names Henry and Smith were in common usage at this time, but there is no evidence of these two Smiths being related. 'Silver-tongued' Smith's criticism

of London's wealthy merchants is well documented. Fuller (1866) reported him as proclaiming "Of a stranger saith God thou mayest take usury, but thou takest usury of thy brother; therefore, this condemneth thee, because thou useth thy brother like a stranger" (Fuller, 1866, pp. 97-8). The preacher's habitual urging of the wealthy to repentance and to greater expressions of charity, has earned him a place in my account of Smith the salter's life.

The risks that Smith took in order to maximise his profits are suggestive of a contradiction between his perception of monetary values and his moral principles. The tone that he brought to a deed of uses composed two years before his death is illustrative of this, a scribbled note in the original document reading, "accounts to be fixed" and next to it a further comment stating plainly "not for vicious persons" (P71/TMS/1129). This hectoring tone is reiterated in his will where his beneficiaries were not to be amongst those who were:

given to excessive drinking, whoremongers, common swearers, pilferers, or otherwise notoriously scandalous, [and must not include] any persons that have been incorrigible or disobedient to those whose servants they have been, or to any vagrant persons...but [should instead only benefit]"such poor People as keep themselves and their Families to labour and put forth their Children as Apprentices" (Gwilt, 1836, p. 28).

Both the rich vocabulary of Smith's deed of uses and the discovery of his own hand in the margin are rewarding biographical material – scraps and fragments, marginal evidence of historical realities.

With regard to the tone of this deed, such a synthesis of magnanimity and control seems to be at odds with the notion of Smith as an altruistic philanthropist; yet his stipulations are entirely in keeping with the Puritan reformers, described by Archer (2002, p. 223) as "those who urged the needs of the poor insistently [who] contributed a sense of evangelical urgency to the proper ordering of social relationships."

It is at such points as these that history and fiction may collide or connive. The evidence for Henry's habitual lending at interest is substantive, but his motivations for

accruing wealth by such means can only be surmised. Hayden White (2006, p. 30) asks whether historians can really record the truth “about events and persons of the past ... within the constraints of both unambiguous referentiality, on the one side, and the fictionalizing effects of narrativization, on the other.” White maintains that the recognition of a potential synergy between fiction and history promotes possibilities of a loosening of both historical and biographical boundaries, a territory where both biographer and historical novelist can roam freely, for the former a place in which to construct meaning – motives, desires and ambition – for the latter, a space for speculation and even playfulness.

As evidence of Smith’s character traits gained strength, so the concept of the man as conventional hero weakened. Lukács (1989) has much to say about what constitutes a hero in novelistic fiction. He cites Walter Scott as a writer who, by laying bare “those vast, heroic, human potentialities which are always latently present in people” was able to “bring the past close to us and [...] to experience its real and true being.” Scott’s ability to situate his characters within the real social and economic base of popular life, in congruence with their own era, is in Lukács’ estimation, predicated “in the fact that the official big events and great historical figures were not given a central place” (Lukács, 1989, pp. 52, 3, 6). It is worth noting here that both oral history and current events may promote under-represented characters of history, exploring and celebrating their contributions, as for example in the tale of Jeanie Deans in *The Heart of Midlothian* (Scott, 1818), based on a true story that was sent to Scott from an anonymous source.

Such opportunities for fictive re-working are reassuring to the writer whose own researched may uncover flaws in their chosen subject. As my realisation of Smith’s fiscal controversies grew, I was forced to admit that this historical character was in danger of becoming something of a disappointment; rather than fiction disrupting historical fact, now fact threatened to undermine fiction. It is not unknown for biographers, finding that they have

inadvertently developed a proprietorial defensiveness towards their subject, to be dismayed upon discovering that their ‘hero’ is no saint – although, in an intriguing reversal, it appears that the biographer Andre Maurois became so besotted with his subjects that he was blinded to their faults, a blindness that he himself viewed as allowing him greater access to their emotions through his heightened understanding. Edel (1984) describes Maurois’ assumptions as “blindness that resides in idealization.”

He [Maurois] was simply forgetting that love is blind; and that this blindness was exactly what leads to retouchings, erasure of wrinkles, and even alterations of character and personality (Edel, 1984 p. 286).

The nineteenth century French writer Marcel Schwob, cited in Jefferson (2007, pp. 207-8) stated: “the best biographical subjects are not necessarily the major actors in the events of history but the unknown figures whom history is liable to overlook.” Schwob declared that by confining themselves to the lives of ‘great’ men, biographers ran the risk of depriving readers of some of biography’s most promising subjects. It is intriguing to speculate that Schwob, a near contemporary of Maurois may have had his fellow countryman in mind.

Whilst I understood that Smith’s worth must be weighed in the light of his historical particularity, the long lens through which I viewed him was already becoming tinted by my own experience, my own worldview. Jenkins and Munslow assert that there are unconscious connections made by the writer between the historical facts and her own values, whether or not she can “show a logical entailment from the one to the other” (Jenkins & Munslow 2003, p. 43). These, and Edel’s, words were timely. Smith must neither be cast as a product of my worldview nor idealized as a superhero. I would suggest that Fuller’s assessment of Smith as outlined in the next section, is perilously close to the second point of view.

1.5.2 A Pinch of Salt

Fuller was a near contemporary of Henry Smith and fully persuaded of Smith’s heroic

status: “I am afraid that our infidel age will not give credit thereunto, as conceiving it rather a romanza or fiction than a thing really performed, because of the prodigious greatness thereof” (Fuller, 1662, p. 365). There is an irony here, considering my own use of fiction to portray Smith’s life; but while Fuller seems to have expected his readers to doubt him, he remains committed to his view, continuing:

the best is, that there are thousands in this country can attest the truth therein, and such good deeds publickly [sic] done are a pregnant proof to convince all denyers [sic] and doubters thereof (Fuller, 1662, p. 365).

And here Fuller and I are on the same page, for it is in this attestation of “good deeds publickly done” that the veracity of Smith’s achievements rest.

We will meet Fuller again in his role as a hagiographer [3.2.2]. Meanwhile his expressive language provides a rich source of vocabulary; moreover, his inclusion of Henry Smith in a list of ‘worthies’ that numbers Sir Francis Bacon, Sir Thomas Coventry and Walter Rawleigh [sic] among its designees, bears witness to Smith’s significance within his own lifetime.

Subsequent historians have differed in their estimation of Smith, particularly regarding his authenticity as a philanthropist. Jordan (1960) confirms Fuller’s pronouncement that Smith was a remarkable man, stating that he showed “true prescience concerning social needs for the next three centuries ... lifting scores of parishes out of the area of blight into the area of opportunity ... one of the founders of modern England” (pp. 9,122).

Others have challenged Jordan accusing him of discrepancies in his accounting, although they, too, have come in for criticism. Appendix 1 offers details to suggest that Jordan’s methodology has rightly been called into question, but that his assessment of Smith’s contribution is not wholly insupportable. An aggregation of my findings – as seen on this report – led me to the pragmatic conclusion that Smith’s achievement neither rests on

Jordan's evidence, nor is it negated by his critics, reasoning that Jordan's accolade of Smith as "one of the founders of modern England" has gained in credibility as the impact of Smith's legacy has increased.

1.6. *Flavouring*

1.6.1 Salt Solutions

Smith held a position of significance amongst those London merchants who acquired their wealth through moneylending. Recipients of Crown lands were particularly in need of funds at this time. Bindoff (1961, p. 249) tells us that lands were leased from the sovereign on the understanding that the tenants made down-payments of two or more years' rent and surrendered their copyholds. This was beyond the means of most, but rather than lose face with either the king or their contemporaries, the hapless tenants had no choice but to apply to a moneylender and submit to paying interest on his loans. It would not take long for their mounting debts to force the tenants to relinquish the properties completely – more often than not to the moneylender.

Smith acquired a considerable number of properties in this way, numbering members of the king's court among his clients. The jewel in his crown was Knole House, the illustrious palace of the Dorset family, mortgaged to Smith in 1616 and later purchased outright from Richard Sackville, the third earl of Dorset, a gambler and renowned philanderer. But whilst Dorset's considerable debts were mounting, he met a sudden untimely death. According to Lethbridge and Wales (2015), this was a disaster for Smith:

Dorset's death risked not only the stability of all Henry Smith's legal arrangements with the family, but it exposed him to debts of £9,000 owed by those trustees [...] who had their fortunes linked to the earl, his family or to his influence in Sussex (Lethbridge & Wales, 2015, p. 20)

This wholly unexpected event caused Smith immense trouble and near bankruptcy as

Dorset's creditors closed in. Many of them were in debt to Smith himself but Dorset was indebted to them all. Smith, as the guarantor of Knole House, was warned that he could face prosecution. "There was word sent to Mr Smith [...] that he was fallen into great forfeiture and dangers and would be prosecuted" (Gwilt, 1836, p. 25). Prosecution was a terrifying prospect, particularly with the additional threat of the Star Chamber:

Only the Star Chamber has the power to authorize the use of torture. You should worry if you are summoned to one of its sessions: privy counsellors will try you on the basis of written depositions from witnesses – you yourself will not be allowed to say anything (Mortimer, 2012, p. 294).

In my novel, I make much of the warning of prosecution that Smith received from Dorset's bailiff, Edward Lindsey. Gwilt (1836, pp. 26-31) suggests that this threat was intended to intimidate Smith, forcing him to repay Dorset's creditors. But in a footnote, Gwilt makes it clear that Smith escaped prosecution and – with admirable tenacity and determination – pressed on with the protection and final establishment of his legacy. Gwilt's words evoke the picture of a frail old man well past his three score years and ten, compelled to stand up to both his entitled trustees and aristocratic creditors. Such small clues are a gift to the writer, adding fresh perspective to the historical facts, allowing for a more dramatic retelling of Smith's achievements as offset against the disadvantages and vulnerability of his position. Further validation of Smith's attainments comes from the charitable trust that still bears his name, as demonstrated in the following paragraphs.

1.6.2 The Henry Smith Charity

Trueblood (1951, p. 58), a Quaker from the last century, is one of many who has been attributed with the saying, "One has come to the full meaning of life when he is willing to plant shade trees under which he knows full well he will never sit," a concept apposite for Smith's charitable impulse. His stipulations to his trustees were foundational to his charity,

the purchase of land in Kensington, for example, enduring as witness to the magnitude of Smith's achievement. Stroud (1975, p. 14), a twentieth century trustee of Smith's charity, reports that the land was developed following the Restoration.

The indenture enumerates the various parcels then making up the Charity's estate, most of them lying between the road from Brompton to Earl's Court on the north and the road from Knightsbridge to Fulham on the south.

The range of current charities that benefit from the trust is also representative of the visionary nature of Smith's ambitions. His desire to meet the needs of the deserving poor, finds a contemporary echo in the charity's aims today: "empowering people, encouraging integration and personal independence, helping people to ... move on [by] raising aspiration – equipping people with new skills."²²

This has not always been the case. Wales (2004) states that by the eighteenth century the trust was losing focus: "Smith's prescriptions were [...] adapted by generations of parish officers and the poor themselves." The initial vision seems to have deteriorated still further by the nineteenth century, when the charity commissioners censured the "indiscriminate nature of [the charity's] distribution to a clamorous poor who expected it as a right." However, we learn from Lethbridge and Wales that today HSC is firmly back on course; moreover, that it adheres to the original spirit to the extent that

The one bequest that seems now particularly archaic, the money to be used for the redemption of Barbary pirates, has found an outlet that is both modern and completely timeless [in supporting many who have been] working as modern-day slaves or trafficked into prostitution (Lethbridge & Wales, 2015, p. 118).

The charity's strong financial condition also reflects Smith's aims. From a recent Annual Report:

²² <https://www.henrysmithcharity.org.uk/about-us/strategy/> accessed 13.10.2019

The Charity's capital endowment now consists of a substantial portfolio of stock market investments, property and investments in Hedge Funds, Private Equity, and Venture Capital. Its grant making, which totals many millions of pounds each year, addresses a wide range of causes and extends throughout the whole of the UK (HSC, 2009).

Examples of small charities as beneficiaries include the Re-Place project in Brixton that provides temporary housing for trafficked women. The Anneli Project in Leeds has similar aims but offers additional rehabilitation support. Homestart in Sheffield enables people to return to “mainstream life” providing “a learning and development project for pre-school-age children” (Lethbridge & Wales, 2015, p. 118).

My own experience of Smith's charity validates these testimonies [see Appendix 2]. Evidence as to how the HSC has supported the work of the Boaz Trust includes the running costs of two asylum seeker houses for three years and staffing to the extent of one FTE caseworker for three years. Subsequently I have learned that:

The money also enabled the Boaz Trust to provide warm, safe housing for asylum seekers who were previously destitute and [to] support hosted accommodation with local families. Hosts and local communities also benefited from increased positive contact with asylum seekers, helping to break down misconceptions, and promote integration (personal letter from CEO, Boaz 2014).

The mention of ‘hosts and local communities’ in this report – ordinary people venturing to perform extraordinary services – returns us to the “power of the ordinary” as it relates to Smith; the challenges posed in writing the life of a man who in his own day was neither remarkable for his pedigree, nor celebrated for his benevolence.

1.6.3 The Power of the Ordinary

Would Smith's values – both altruistic and ideological – have been acknowledged by his contemporaries? Jordan (1960) describes charitably disposed Puritan merchants of this time as “a remarkable generation of philanthropy,” declaring that, in their concern for the poor

they were “God’s vicars among men.” Many Puritan merchants enjoyed a lifestyle that reflected their wealth, but Jordan seems to regard Smith’s move from the prestigious area of St Dunstan’s parish, to the comparative backwater of Silver Street, as signifying a degree of humility, stating that Smith eventually “died resident in the parish [...] the only merchant living in this quite humble parish” (Jordan, 1960, pp. 119, 364, 122).

Smith’s rise to the illustrious office of alderman that could – arguably – have been the zenith of his political ambitions, lasted for scarcely four months before, unaccountably, he stepped down from the role, apparently unconcerned with the distinction that this could have brought him.²³ Mortimer (2012) describes London’s civic society at this time as “hierarchical: a great spectrum of wealth, social status and authority” emphasising the prestige that a wealthy merchant could expect from “becoming an alderman, [...] lord mayor or the master of the livery company” (2012, p. 51). Smith’s rejection of the role of alderman would have resulted in forfeiture of further influential roles and raises queries as to his motives for taking this step. Whether taken from a desire to live frugally in order to devote himself to charitable endeavours, or to shun society because of his incipient deafness, this decision surely set him apart from his peers and could conceivably have exposed him to charges of evading his responsibilities.

Such anomalies offer the writer potential for speculation. The eighteenth-century diarist John Evelyn was adept at exploiting such potential. According to Gwilt (1836) Evelyn affixed the story of a man known as “Dog Smith,” who travelled about the country as a beggar in the company of a small dog, to “one who was a general benefactor to the whole county; his name was Smith, once a silversmith in London” (Gwilt, 1836, pp. 33-4). This whimsical connection has been repudiated by subsequent researchers including Gwilt

²³ Henry Smith Salter, nominated Feb 9th, 1609, sworn in as Alderman Feb 14th, Discharged May 15th, 1609. Beaven A.B.E. 1908. *The Aldermen of the City of London, temp. Henry III– [1912]* p. 159.

himself.²⁴ I have suggested previously that my creative interpretation of Smith argues for a degree of authenticity, a place where “the writer, through historical research creates a sense of probability, the way a narrative fits the world it imitates” (Shaw, 1983. p. 21). But Smith’s identity as a beggar with a dog strays into improbability. Such impulses as Evelyn’s, particularly where they are so easily refuted, serve as a warning to the historical biographer, lest she compromise the integrity of the known facts. Even so, myths such as these are a gift to the writer, for whom the slightest hint of eccentricity may be utilised as a nod towards unconventional behaviour.

It is clear that Smith was not a conventional hero, yet even an unremarkable character may, by his or her deeds, be credited with generating historically significant changes, as Lukács (1989) expresses: “those historical, social and human forces which [...] have made our present-day life what it is and as we experience it.” (1989, p. 53). Lukács proposes that “these tendencies that have really led up to the present” serve to validate the individual’s authenticity. In Smith’s story there are rich seams that within my novelistic practice, may be seen as generators of change. Smith’s determination to address social needs in London in spite of financial double-dealing, even amongst his own trustees, finds echo in the present-day nexus of charitable enterprise and preoccupation with wealth.

1.6.4 Bakhtinian Chronotope

A retrospective summation of Smith’s achievements brings authentication to his determination that his legacy should develop beyond the constraints of his temporality. Bakhtin (1986) asserts that time and space together constitute the individual’s location, the lens or chronotope through which to view their world and from which they view others. Yet

²⁴ “It is evident that the information given by Evelyn [...] was incorrect in many particulars, and no serious account would have been taken of so absurd a narrative [...] had the propagator of it been a less respectable authority [...] he seems to have been confounded with the Lambeth pedler [sic] the representation of whom, together with his dog, still remains in a painted window of Lambeth church; but he lived long anterior to Smith” (Gwilt, 1836, p. 36).

this chronotope, this “time-space,” is not constricted to a finite time or fixed location; rather it serves to confirm the individual’s position within the “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships” that need “never to be [...] regard[ed] as a closed circle [...] each unity enter[ing] into the single process of the evolution of human culture” (Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 6). The Bakhtinian theory of chronotope compels me to address the enigma of how time can move in my novel, how I can situate a character in their physical location but also in and beyond their temporality.

As an expansion of his premise, Bakhtin sees the advantage to the writer of viewing another’s culture from an exterior position, for whilst immersed within one’s own culture, “one cannot really see one’s exterior and comprehend it as a whole.” Further, he asserts that the questions and new perspectives that we bring to a temporally distant world leave both worlds “mutually enriched” whilst “each retains its own unity and *open* totality” (Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 6,7).

Applied to my own practice, this insight enables me to view Henry Smith not only within his chronotope but also within that “single process of the developing human culture” – an old sick man with a big heart who would never know the full value of his achievements but would continue to nurture the dream that he could somehow enrich a distant future. By choosing to step away from the limelight and develop his legacy in a quiet backwater, Smith may not have appeared to be anything other than ordinary. But subsequent generations, viewing his life from an external position, and acknowledging the immensity of his achievement, may perceive that here was someone who, in his ‘real and true being,’ developed beyond his known capacity, whose legacy far transcends the constraints of his temporality. Thus the ‘ordinary’ can become a gift to the writer of fiction, particularly where such a doubtful quality can be disrupted to reveal aspects of the extra-ordinary.

There are several pointers towards a sense of the extraordinary in Smith's story. Foremost is his remarkable persistence. I have already referred to Smith's business entanglements that, with the earl of Dorset's death increased in complexity. Smith's dogged refusal of failure reveals a laudable tenacity, yet the motivation behind his steadfastness of purpose is open to question. It might have stemmed from his Puritan understanding of scriptural imperatives to have regard for the poor, or from faith in an afterlife where he would give an account of himself and receive just reward for his deeds. Whatever inspired Smith to continue, I have endorsed his Puritan convictions by weaving a noetic quality into his reflections, as in this extract:

Henry grasped my sleeve, his fingers bony, insistent.

'Henry Smith, God's true orator, He said that many who number themselves as Christ's are content to leave fatherless children and widows to starve and to die, in the streets.'

'But you have not . . .'

'He said also that where a child lies cold or naked, Christ himself lies naked.'

I find my heart has become stirred not for a great enterprise but for the children and their children generations yet unborn.'

He stared at something then, something that only he could see, with disquiet in his features. And I felt a strange presentiment as he murmured,

'How can I let Christ lie unclothed, here in the streets of London?' [p. 357]

Here, notions of prescience allow me a space to explore Smith's religious convictions, to present his Puritan ideals as fundamental but also open to change, affected by the challenges that he is forced to face. Many writers attest to the development of their characters beyond the available historical evidence. Mantel (2017, n.p.) maintains that the historical novelist will find meaning "where the satisfactions of the official story break down" adding "the novelist knows her place. She works away at the point where what is enacted meets what

is dreamed, where politics meets psychology.” Thus, through a judicious development of her subject, the use of dialogic techniques for example [see 1.8.1], in which to explore the subject’s interiority, the writer may engage the reader in a more profound understanding of her character. The circumstances of Smith’s childhood and their later effect on his social standing merited such exploration, as speculative pointers towards his reactions to the pressure he faced in his final years (as in chapter 11, page 96).

1.7 Below the Salt

We have seen that Henry’s initial introduction to London life was as an apprentice to a salter. In the sixteenth century, salt was a valuable commodity, highly necessary and heavily taxed. Fielding (2006, p. 4) informs us that the status of salt was such that “special containers were made to show it off at table, the wealthy using silver and gold table salts.” These ‘salts’ delineated social status, the gulf between nobility and all other classes. Poulton-Smith (2010, p. 123) states “to sit ‘above the salt’ and to sit ‘below the salt’ [suggested] a demarcation line ... as it was the norm for the rich to sit at the higher tables and the rest lower down” in an assiduous preservation of the distinctions between self-made traders and high-born nobility.

It is tempting to reconstruct Henry Smith’s life in binaries: the victim of an inferior class, seeking to rise above his station, offended by the patronising attitudes of his wealthier relations. But lived experience is seldom as straightforward as this. Mortimer (2012, p. 39) states that the social order was not simple, “only the extremes [can] be described without fear of contradiction.” Yet, he reminds us that at one of these extremes, the nobility, were recipients of significant privileges: they could not be imprisoned for debt, they paid very little tax, enjoyed freedom from the threat of torture and were able to borrow money without fear of redress.

Thomas Sackville, a quintessential Elizabethan nobleman, was given his magnificent mansion, Knole House, for services rendered to the queen. It was acquired by Henry Smith

some thirty years later and, germane to the story of his life, became a vital focus for field research.

As I stood on a hill above the turrets and spires it seemed as if I was taking my place in a line of visitors that spanned centuries; monarchs, nobility, men of the cloth, statesmen, and tourists, all visited Knole. Whilst some, there to visit the Sackville family, must have been gratified at the condescension shown to them, I wondered if others felt envy for the Sackvilles, or perhaps even a sense of incredulity at the immensity of the place. I had explored other impressive stately homes and historic buildings, but this one took my breath away.

We have seen that Smith acquired Knole as payment for a debt, but it was not his family seat even when he had control of its finances. The hereditary nature of the property must have been a stark reminder to him that he would never aspire to the social level of the Sackvilles, or experience their sense of entitlement, however wealthy he became. He was, without doubt, useful to Dorset but it was not a relationship of equals. Tensions such as these offer potential for intrigue to a fictive account, where historical records must remain factual.

1.7.2 Contemporary Links

Connections between Henry Smith's life and contemporary stories from asylum seekers open a space to observe current British attitudes, revealing complexities of the rich – poor divide that are as disquieting as those in Henry's time. We have already seen how Bakhtin (in Holquist, 2003, p. 40) speaks of the link between discrete temporalities. These he further describes as “a vast web of interconnections” in an event “that manifests itself in the form of a constant, ceaseless creation and exchange of meaning” (p. 40).

Yet Lukács warns that an exchange of meaning may be hazardous, that the writer may unwittingly transpose “attitudes and ideas of a later development of religious and moral consciousness [...] to an age or nation whose entire outlook contradicts such modern ideas”

(Lukács, 1989 p. 19). I concur with Lukács that there may be problems, but challenge his use of the word “entire,” submitting that participants in the web of interconnections, despite dissimilar cultural attitudes, may echo similar hopes and desires across history. As Mortimer (2012) says of contemporary misperceptions regarding the sixteenth century, “there is not one standard for Elizabethan England and a different one for us: rather there is a wide range of thresholds of tolerance and senses of shame, both then and now, and a wide range of solutions” (2012, p. 267).

How may the writer engage with these solutions? Within Mortimer’s ‘wide range’ of thresholds, investigative journalists blow the whistle, whilst storytellers address the same issues through fictional representation, exposing the same levels of neglect and poverty and addressing the same prejudices. Another Smith, founder of Manchester’s asylum charity the Boaz Trust, has used non-fiction to callout injustice and societal ignorance whilst Ali Smith’s *Spring* (2020), Rose Tremain’s *The Road Home* (2007) and Chris Cleave’s *The Other Hand* (2008) exemplify the power of fiction to address the same concerns.²⁵ Earlier texts that could be included in this list are Dicken’s *Bleak House* (1853) and Zola’s *Germaine* (1885), and support the premise that literature can do the work of historical writing.

In my narrative, Meggie, of mixed Moroccan and English parentage and servant in Smith’s household, provides a historic link with Britain’s current asylum problem. Her presence as a *mulatto* (in Jacobean terminology) in seventeenth century London, would not have been uncommon. In the narrative, she is generally accepted in her neighbourhood, but neither Henry Smith nor his peers can be portrayed as having the compassion of a twenty-first century humanitarian aid worker. Even when Meggie is in deep trouble, it would be misrepresentative of Smith’s personality and cultural locus for him to stand as her advocate.

Mantel (2017, n.p.) reminds us that “a good novelist will have her characters operate

²⁵ Smith, D. 2016, *Refugee Stories: Seven Personal Journeys Behind the Headlines*.

within the ethical framework of their day.” When Meggie’s situation becomes untenable, Smith is too preoccupied to rush to her defence and she is too ashamed to ask for his help. Fictionalised additions, such as Meggie’s ethnicity, afford a level of understanding that historical research, of itself, may only conjecture, adding a singular distinction to the concept of biographical practice. Lisa Jardine (2011) proposes that such a venture beyond “perfect fidelity” facilitates a bridge into lives that might otherwise remain inaccessible, concluding that:

Silence comes between the historian and the truth he or she looks to the sources to reveal. Thank goodness for the creative imagination of the fiction writer who can re-connect us with the historical feelings as well as with the facts (Jardine, 2011, n.p.).²⁶

Where the subject’s cultural values present a challenge to a contemporary audience, the writer must work to establish these connections.

1.8. Salt of the Earth

One instance of this in Smith’s life is his religious stance, a conventional belief in God with mandatory attendance at the parish church. In order to further understand Smith’s ‘moderate’ faith, it is useful to know something of the denominational classifications of his age.

Regarding terminology, Collinson (1980) explains:

‘Protestant’ will have to serve for many purposes ... All but one of a number of Protestant types, the Separatists [...] must be considered more or less obedient members of the Church of England by the only criteria available to us. To use a term which disguises their common membership is prejudicial to historical understanding. Both ‘Puritan’ and ‘Anglican’ have proved prejudicial in this respect (1980, p. 485).

I have chosen to portray Henry Smith as a moderate Protestant. However, as a nod to our own cultural confusion, I refer to him as from Puritan stock, rooted in a culture where conviction

²⁶ Jardine, L., (2011) A Point of View www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qng8

compelled its adherents to frequent and fervent expressions of faith. This decision requires further explanation.

It is reasonable to conjecture that Henry Smith would have held unhesitatingly to a belief in the existence of God. Mortimer reminds us that for the seventeenth-century man, “Not believing in God is like not believing in trees. Most people cannot conceive of a line dividing the metaphysical and the physical ... creation cannot exist without its Creator” (2012, p. 73). Like his fellow merchants, Smith’s spiritual beliefs were formed by a more immediate engagement between life and death than might be comprehended today, in Mantel’s words (2017, n.p.) “an exquisite tension between the claims of time and the claims of eternity.” In the context of London’s burgeoning affluence, Smith was typical of his era – a merchant who acquired wealth and was moved to use it for the relief of those less fortunate, whilst eschewing the word ‘Puritan’ to describe his own identity. In my novel he is seen to be among “those who merely conformed to the queen’s religion” who, as Collinson (1967) tells us, were referred to as “‘neuters,’ those who quietly enjoy the word.” Whilst weekly church attendance would have been obligatory to him, he chose to avoid mid-week ‘gatherings’ that were favoured by the “hotter sort of Protestants,” that included his sister Joane. These house meetings were, in Collinson’s words (1967, p. 375), “the Puritan ‘church within a church’ [that] had a tangible local expression.” But ‘Puritan’ – a descriptive term given to the more fervent Protestants – was ranked with more derogatory categorisations: “Scripture men, those who run to hear preaching, the hotter sort of Protestants” (Collinson, 1967, pp. 26). Moreover, it was the common people, particularly in London, who were most strongly influenced by Puritan preachers. My portrayal of Smith is of a man, certainly influenced by religious changes, who embraces the need for social reform, yet, out of protection for his own social advancement, distances himself from the more fervent Puritans. However, he has changes to face in later life.

We learn from Picard (2003, pp. 291, 2) that the Charitable Uses Act, passed in 1601, built upon the 1580 “Act for the Setting of the Poor on Work and for the Avoidance of Idleness,” in condemnation of those who were deemed to be thriftless, “the rioter that hath consumed all, the vagabond that will abide nowhere ... and finally the rogue and strumpet.”

Slack (1990) maintains that it was Puritan rhetoric and action that led to municipal reform. “Puritanism did not cause welfare reform; but the two flourished and interacted in the same social and civic circumstances” (Slack, 1990, p. 25). I have already referred to one of the most persuasive of the Protestant preachers, ‘Silver-tongued Smith.’ There is little doubt that Joane and her husband Thomas would have heard him preaching and in my account, Anne Smith persuades her husband Henry to hear him too. We have Fuller to thank for publishing volumes of Silver-tongued Smith’s sermons. His plea for a commonwealth counters the populist idea of the idle poor, instead, attacking those wealthy who paid lip-service to matters of welfare:

Every Commonwealth that letteth any member in it to perish for hunger, is an Unnatural and uncharitable Commonwealth. But men [...] cannot abide to part with anything to the poor, notwithstanding that God hath promised He will not forget the work and the love that you have shewed in His name. There are a number that deny a poor body a penny and plead poverty to them, though they seem to stand in never so great extremes (Fuller, 1866b, p. 29).

Entering into the concerns of another era brings thought-provoking insights regarding our own temporality. Are such convictions as those evoked by Silver-tongued Smith comprehensible to the majority of western citizens today? By situating a scene within proximity of the remains of St Paul’s Cross – the site of the preacher’s orations – I introduced a link between Henry Smith’s era and the present day in which a volunteer with an asylum charity offers practical help to William, an asylum seeker. Later in the narrative, Silver-tongued Smith’s exhortation towards charitable impulses will be seen to have relevance for

the current philanthropy made available to William and other recipients of Henry Smith's charity.

1.8.1 Dialogic Devices

As I explored ways to convey these links through fiction, I reflected on the Bakhtinian idea of dialogic relationships, the counterpoint of internal or external communications, both spoken and unspoken, that Bakhtin suggests "exist among all elements of novelistic structure," first identified by him in the dialogic utterances of Dostoevsky's novels:

And this is so because dialogic relationships are a much broader phenomenon than mere rejoinders in a dialogue, laid out compositionally in the text; they are an almost universal phenomenon, permeating all human speech and all relationships and manifestations of human life – in general, everything that has meaning and significance (Bakhtin, 1984 a, p. 40).

Here I show how I have put this to work in my own writing by using Robert Hene – the mediator of Smith's story – to express his views on his employer as he makes his way to Smith's house, worrying that he will be late:

I hurried from the house, pulling at the sleeves of my doublet.

'Most unseemly, Mr. Hene.'

The accusing voice was Henry Smith's although Henry himself was snug at home, no doubt already at his papers. As I reached Smithfield, I raised my hand to stifle a yawn. Why had I tarried so long at the Talbot last night? I should have been abed like all good Christian men, instead of gazing gloomily into a pint-pot.

'And what hour of the day do you call this, Mr. Hene?'

Only a novel can sustain this sort of double-voiced discourse. Such communication between speaker and interlocuter, where the speaker is quite alone, is defined by Bakhtin as "discourse with an orientation towards someone else's discourse" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.188-9). Of the complex distinctions that Bakhtin makes, Dentith says:

...the point is not to give the reader or critic some elaborate set of pigeon-holes into which stretches of novels can be slotted, but to provide some vocabulary for understanding the diverse ways in which the immersion of novelistic prose in a multiplicity of voices can be understood (Dentith, 1995, p. 47).

Another example from my own writing is, as previously, the dialogic exchange between Hene and Smith as Smith draws upon his memory, recalling the words of his namesake, the preacher Henry “Silver-tongued” Smith. I quote only one line here:

‘He said also that where a child lies cold or naked, Christ himself lies naked.’ His voice falls to a whisper. ‘How can I let Christ lie unclothed, here in the streets of London?’

As Silver-tongued Smith’s words re-emerge, Henry’s double-voiced utterance shows him in agreement with the preacher, in both his recollections and his manner, mediated through the perceiving consciousness of Robert Hene, who records this memory of Smith’s words and his underlying internal struggle.

Double-voiced utterance is used to great effect in Mantel’s, *The Mirror and the Light* (2020) as, at the end of his life, Cromwell faces his executioner. Memories of his father return in a chilling double-voiced utterance, a stream of consciousness from his childhood that resurfaces for the last time.

*He is face to face with his executioner.
He sees the spectators spiralling away from him growing very small.
He can smell drink on the man’s breath. Not a good start.
He can imagine Walter beside him, “Christ alive, who sold you this axe?
They saw you coming! Here, give it to my boy Tom. He’ll put an edge on it”*
(Mantel, 2019, p. 894).

Bakhtin’s assertion that dialogic discourse permeates “all relationships and manifestations of human life” (as above) is borne out as Cromwell puts his head on the block. Here, the juxtaposition of fact with fictive internal dialogue, allows the reader into the

workings of the subject's final thoughts, again making the case for the novelistic treatment as more effective than a historical record, in its ability to delve into the subject's inner consciousness.

1.9 *Sal Volatile*

*Smelling salts ... can help revive a person who has fainted.*²⁷

The value of dialogic utterance cannot be overestimated. Of similar worth is the use of the cathartic event, both to imbue a narrative with tension and to maintain the dramatic arcs of a long-form text. As Steel (2007) advises, “if you let the tension dip it should only be to allow the reader to catch their breath before you re-apply the thumb screws” (2007, p. 46).

The following three examples illustrate the many opportunities to inject an increase of tension in Smith's story. The first concerns his legacy trust, formed about five years before Sackville's death. Although Smith was meticulous in drawing up the deeds of his agreement, he was strangely naïve in ceding control to his trustees, ‘without consideration.’ This archaic phrase was used by Gwilt to describe a one-sided agreement that was not protected by a promissory note or any documented guarantee of commitment from the other party. This, in Smith's practice, was a foolish omission that was to have serious consequences as most of the members of his board – drawn from the ranks of the nobility – were deeply in his debt.

Once Smith found himself facing the loss of his fortune, he was forced to admit that he had no safeguards in place. Gwilt tells us, “He had trusted he should have had the management of his estates and that, upon his desiring it, they would have been reconveyed to him” (Gwilt, 1836, p. 25 footnote). Smith set about revoking his first agreement, but this led to a prolonged battle in the courts. It is not difficult to presume the loss of confidence that followed, as he recognised the folly of his decision. Nor is it beyond the bounds of possibility

²⁷ <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/smelling-salts> accessed 21.11.19

to speculate that his aristocratic friends were laughing at him behind his back. Even the Lord Chancellor's stipulation that they should repay Smith in full was ignored by most of them.

Richard Sackville's death, the inciting incident of Smith's legal disputes, was both shocking and disruptive to Smith's aspirations and I have portrayed his immediate response to it as a panic-stricken slide into despair. Here again, it is a novelistic treatment that affords me a route into the inner workings of Smith's mind, "that evanescent, pervasive, slippery internal landscape known to no-one else [...]without it you would not be yourself" (Lively, 1993, p. 242).

Lethbridge and Wales (2015, p. xi) remind us that "Henry Smith was a self-made tycoon from a respectable landowning family that had gone down in the world." His father's descent into poverty was made more shameful by the success of his cousin, Sir Thomas Smith. Disturbing memories of his father's history rise up to haunt Henry Smith as he attempts to work his way out of his own crisis.

Within my limited experience, I found the writing of Henry's haunting memories to be challenging. My 'relationship' with him had scarcely commenced when I made the decision to view his story through the eyes of his servant, Robert Hene. Now, I had to put Bakhtin's dialogic theories to work again as I explored the means whereby Henry's inner torment could be mediated through Hene [see also 4.2.2.]. As Robert questions his own judgement, reasoning with himself over Henry's response to pressure and assessing the significance of his employer's confused 'ramblings,' I employ Bakhtin's idea of multiple consciousnesses by bringing in Henry's sister Joane as the framing voice for a narrative about the siblings' early life – the locus of Henry's agitated thoughts.²⁸

This triadic device offers the reader clues as to how Henry's past has acted as provocation to his current status; how he aspires to out-manoeuvre the noblemen whose

²⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (ed. and trans. C. Emerson; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p.40.

chicanery poses such a threat to his legacy and to secure the foundations of that legacy for the future – to be worth his salt.

1.10. Transport

Like Robert Hene, I struggled with personal concerns regarding my own ‘worth.’ As Smith’s researcher and biographer, would the finished product be worth *my* salt; could value be attributed to the text as well as re-attributed to the person of Henry Smith? We have seen how in his early life, Smith dealt in the transport and processing of precious white salt; how in his subsequent development as a financier, his ambitions towards wealth became fixed on the pursuit of a vision that would take centuries to realise.

Now Smith’s story must be conveyed, his qualities of planning, vision, and focus not only foregrounded but emulated by my transportation of words. The wheels of my conveyance would be the poetics, the conveyance itself practice-as-research – the process of reflective and critical enquiry – through which to interrogate and assess the decisions required to develop Henry’s story. It is to practice-as-research that I now turn.

Part 2 Saline Solutions

2.1 Understanding Practice-as-Research

Every practice-as-research process is by definition a unique experience. Concomitant attempts to articulate the experience must also be unique to the practitioner who may find, with Robin Nelson, that “the material established through the research is often fugitive and resists a satisfactory definition” (2004, p.1).

At the commencement of this thesis, I regarded my writing as dual progressions of praxis and theory, discrete disciplines that I had little desire to intermingle. As the research progressed, theoretical studies – both literary and historical – seemed to tower over me, a range of impenetrable mountains, one peak revealing a dozen more. Creative writing was the backpack that I carried. As any hillwalker will testify, false summits, even when anticipated, can be demoralizing; back-packs can become heavier as the gradient steepens.

Nelson, observing that “the symmetry of creative work and exegetical text is a hard task-master”(2004, p.6) reminds us that “experimentation in arts practices [aims] not to establish findings by way of data to support a demonstrable and finite answer to a research question, but to put in play elements in a bricolage which afford insights through deliberate and careful juxtaposition” (Nelson 2006, p. 109). Within the remit of my own practice-based research, I have attempted to reach through the methodological process into a place where I can develop my artistic practice. Nevertheless, the functional distinctions between the improvisatory nature of creative composition and the analytical disciplines of a research-based methodology may be perplexing (as above) and provokes further exploration.

Kazim Ali avers that “the mind... is a collection of senses, sense responses, and memories. Chemically it is invented in the brain. Thought *is* matter” (Ali, 2013, p.28). Whilst this summary might be regarded by scientists as somewhat reductionist, if the sensate responses of the mind are chemically induced, then an investigation of the effects that

creative practice might have on the brain could lead to some interesting discoveries. Whilst it is not within the remit of this paper to attempt a scientific discourse on the neurological functions that regulate creative practice, recent findings by neurologist and musician Charles Limb, make compelling reading. Limb's focus on the effects of an intense period of creativity on the functions of the brain, initially concerned with musical improvisation, may also have relevance for creative writing and are illustrative of the differences between creative and critical practices. Limb's exploration of the human auditory system has its own fascination and merits further attention, but for this thesis I have confined my research and conclusions to the appendices [see Appendix 3].

The imagery of my research as impenetrable mountains, and the creative elements as a heavy load, have become less applicable as my research journey has progressed. Whilst the demands of the journey are still comparable, this analogy envisages creative writing and research as completely different entities and finally may be seen to negate potential for mutual validation and development.

In the following section I will show how, within my practice-as-research journey, the critical and creative components of my practice – rather than opposing forces – have become more like companions on the road, engaging in a mutually beneficial exchange of information. Such metaphorical illustration exemplifies a technique that began intuitively; nevertheless, I would offer that this metaphor has become facilitative to the melding of the disparate components of my work, affording a greater degree of conceptual awareness that has suggested the development of a 'third space.'

2.2 Metaphor

Salt spilled over into the language of my text, as my understanding of Henry Smith was informed by his identity as a salter, offering aphorisms and paragraph headings. Other

metaphors followed. Kevin Brophy (2007, para.7) claims that communication through language “is a sub-set of human behaviours” placing a high value on metaphor as:

One of the most daring, creative, and common moves made in language, and especially in written communication. [...] A willingness to think one’s way critically through the implications of new and old metaphors is at the forefront of any creative writing that is truly scholarly, philosophical, critical, poetic, fictional or confessional (para.15).

Not all writers are as affirmative about the use of metaphor. Joe Moran (2018) dismisses it as “literary embroidery” and – in an unfortunate visual image of his own – suggests that “it is how we nail the jelly of reality to the wall” (p. 53).

As both reader and writer, I place a higher value on metaphor than this. Even my endorsement of this technique makes use of the technique itself – like a bridge, metaphor can cross the gulf between information and insight, a span to link knowledge with a more intuitive understanding.

In the first chapter of her second Cromwell novel *Bring up the Bodies* (2012), Mantel opens with a ‘truly scholarly’ extended metaphor that plunges the reader into a ‘more intuitive understanding’ with vivid intimations of the blood-soaked horrors to come:

His children are falling from the sky. He watches from horse-back, acres of England stretching behind him; they drop, gilt-winged, each with a blood-filled gaze. Grace Cromwell hovers in thin air [...] her breast is gore-streaked and flesh clings to her claws.

These ‘children’ are Cromwell’s own falcons, named for his deceased daughters, but the language is indicative both of past and imminent tragedy. As the imagery continues, it evokes Cromwell himself brooding above the throng of common humanity, in themes of predation and sinister detachment that will be woven through the novel.

Weightless they glide on the upper currents of air. They pity no-one. They answer to no-one [...] When they look down, they see nothing but their prey (Mantel, 2012, pp. 3-4).

I envy Mantel her facility with metaphor. Whilst there are examples in my own narrative, I have found them to be more readily available as conceptual illustrations for this exegesis than for the story itself.

Peter Stockwell (2002) describes the ground of the metaphor as “the mapping of properties between two spaces or domains” – that is, the metaphorical figure as one domain and the target, or concept, as the other – asserting that a metaphor may be seen to advance the meaning of its target, as imagery projected onto the target in an act of illumination (2002, p. 106).

In my experience, metaphorical illustration is more likely to occur within spontaneous conversation than within my writing process. The only explanation I can offer for this – a wholly subjective observation – is that of the two, the act of speech is more fluently connected to my ‘inner voice,’ than the process of writing; that rehearsing sentences aloud is of more value to me than reading them on the page. Here, I outline three examples of metaphor that have become significant to the production of this thesis.

2.3 The Gorge, the Helix and the Fish

2.3.1 Gorge

My first example alludes to my understanding of Smith’s mentality – his preoccupation with financial affairs allowing him little room for self-reflection. It is reasonable to suppose that he would not have been inclined towards nostalgic memories, nor to considerations of his early years or their influence on his later actions. The memories of his childhood could therefore be likened to neatly concealed linen-fold panelling, as in an Elizabethan parlour, with no immediate signs of disorder (fig.1) If anything was amiss it was well hidden.

Whilst engaged in speculating about Smith’s personality, I visited relatives in Taiwan,

touring the deep gorges of the mountainous east coast. As a volcanic island, Taiwan has had its share of turbulence, and the compressed layers of convoluted rocks that line these precipitous valleys are a stark reminder of dramatic upheavals over thousands of years (fig. 2). The sight of such long-hidden contortions of rock, became the embodiment of Smith's childhood troubles, lying dormant for decades until disturbed by later upheavals, including the earl of Dorset's death, an event that shook Smith's confidence and threatened to undo the work of decades. There is more potential to be found in this gorge metaphor, as the strands of the story become interwoven, and William – the asylum seeker – becomes caught up in events that mirror some of the experiences of Smith's life. In its centrality to my project, I would suggest that the photograph supporting this metaphor has significance as a vital conceptual illustration [see over].

Fig.1 Linenfold Panelling Boscobel house

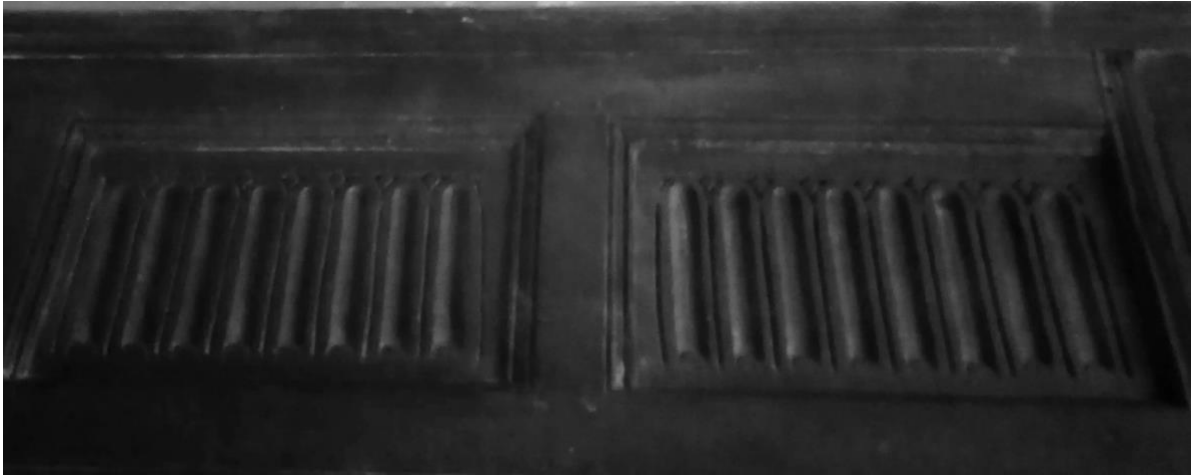


Fig.2 Taroko Gorge, Taipei



2.3.2 Double Spiral Helix

My second metaphor is a double spiral helix, representative of the intertwining strands of Smith's and William's experiences. As with the first example, the 'target' of this metaphor may offer more than one layer of revelation. Close scrutiny of the helical structure of DNA reveals cross hairs that prevent the separate strands of the spiral from spinning out of control. Yet within my experience, Smith's and William's lives could have no interconnection until the two separate narratives were clearly established.

I have already noted that I regarded the two sections of my thesis as discrete processes. The helix metaphor allowed me to appreciate that this was a temporary un-linking for the purposes of creativity and clarity. Whilst my theoretical work was "not written once, but painstakingly argued into existence through ... many rehearsals of communication" (Brophy, 2007. p. 5) my creative text, also much rehearsed, benefited from another form of communication, the engagement with intuitive processes.

Merleau Ponty (2001, p. xxii) speaks of a shared sense of lived experience "where the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other peoples' intersect and engage like gears [within both] subjectivity and intersubjectivity." There are intimations here for a sense of re-engagement, an ultimate intertwining of my disparate character's lives, as the nearly-but-not-quite reconnection of the spirals, a reconnection between exegesis and creative text; intimations too, for a sense of interdependency, a theme that occurs in the novel as Robert Hene, believing Henry to be in need of support, finds meaning for himself through a sense of connection and purpose. The metaphor of the helix, in its allusions to DNA and data storage, offers further ideas of connectivity between writer and reader and between eidetic memorabilia and its written embodiment within the pages of my novel [see 2.4].

2.3.3 Fish

The third metaphor was borne out of a dearth of inspiration, the desire for a more intuitive writing experience, resonant of Smiley's advocacy of intuitive composition, 'in service to the limbic brain;' an immersion in literature that could be said to have osmotic values of its own, as I explore below.

In her book *A Tale for the Time Being*, Ozeki (2013) mediates a similar experience through her character Ruth who is struggling to overcome writer's block. Ruth's partner Oliver tries to explain the meaning and significance of quantum information:

'Quantum information is like the information of a dream,' he said, 'we can't show it to others, and when we try to describe it, we change the memory of it.'

Ruth: 'That's what I feel like when I write, like I have this beautiful world in my head, but when I try to remember it in order to write it, I change it, and I can't ever get it back' (Ozeki, 2013, p. 395).

Ozeki's words were resonant of my own state of mind, a resistance to the retrieval of creative reflections; ideas that seemed full of promise but did not always deliver as text.

Then, in conversation, I was alerted to the phenomenon of fish that could adapt to different environments. Curiosity led me to Remy Melina's online article, *Can Saltwater Fish Live in Fresh Water?*²⁹ Melina (2012) explains that euryhaline fish can survive in both fresh and saltwater, migrating between rivers and oceans, but:

They need to undergo an acclimation period, or time for their bodies to adjust to a different salinity than they are used to. By associating various habitats' salinity with different stages of life, euryhaline fish are able to balance salt concentrations between their bodies and their surroundings (para. 7).

²⁹ Melina, R. (2012). Can Saltwater Fish Live in Fresh Water? LiveScience, Purch, 28 Sept. 2012, www.livescience.com/32167-can-saltwater-fish-live-in-fresh-water.html.

This metaphor became instructive. The phrase ‘acclimation period’ was suggestive of a space between two states, similar to Merleau Ponty’s ‘shared sense of lived experience’ (as above) – in this context, a retreat from both creative and theoretical writing processes, a ‘third space’ for intuitive ideas to develop.

2.4 The Third Space

As a poet, Keats saw the writer’s capacity for the intuitive as contingent upon preferencing levels of uncertainty and mystery over intellectual understanding. He commended his peer, the poet Coleridge, for a ‘negative capability,’ that is, the relinquishment of the impulse to always have answers, “letting go [...] from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge where to ‘not know’ becomes a more intuitive form of ‘knowing’” (Keats & Rollins, 1958, pp. 194, 5).

Bolt’s use of the word “originary” (Barrett & Bolt, 2007), illustrative of this limbic space, reconnects us with the artist’s praxical experience:

“Originary” is a term rarely used, but one that seems particularly pertinent to practice-led research. It is a way of understanding that derives from or originates in and of the thing in question. In this case the “thing” in question is practice. It (originary) is understanding that originates in and through practice (Barrett & Bolt, 2007, p. 30).

Bolt’s analysis, suggesting possibilities of synergy between theoretical research and the creative process, resonates with Goddard’s (2007) view that “the exegesis in parallel with the creative work of the project can provide another arena of creative practice.” He describes his creative praxis as “a substantial practical project” [combining] “photography and moving images with a soundtrack [of] composed music, location sounds and a personalised vocal address” (pp. 113-14). His exegesis draws on the strongly participatory nature of his creative work, surely fertile ground for the ‘other arena of creative practice’ to grow in. This idea of participation resonates with Nelson’s (2006) suggestion that:

Innovative practice-as-research approaches, in the domain of phenomenology, aim to construct ‘encounters’, sometimes actively involving ‘experiencers’ in a practical engagement, or at least denying a fixed and comfortably separated viewing position (Nelson, 2006, p. 110).

There are qualitative differences between Goddard’s ‘practical project’ and my creative writing experience — as there are between Nelson’s description of a practice-as-research approach that involves ‘experiencers’ and my more ‘fixed and comfortably separated viewing position.’ However, Nelson supports his verbal description with a triangulation model that does have relevance for my practice. Despite his qualification that “it is not entirely appropriate for practice-as-research,” I have found it to be of value in its promotion of balance between practitioner knowledge, critical reflection and conceptual framework as “a conscious strategy to reflect upon established practice as well as to bring out tacit knowledge” (Nelson, 2006, p. 113).

For Nelson, the area of practitioner knowledge constitutes the third creative space, comprising tacit knowledge, embodied knowledge and phenomenological experience. For me this denotes residual memory, a form of understanding that, in its experiential nature, can be hard to express in words. Further, I would offer that, for Ozeki this is “the information of a dream,” for Keats a “negative capability;” for Merleau Ponty “where the paths of my various experiences intersect.”

As part of my contribution to knowledge, my fictionalised biography draws on tacit knowledge from notes and reflections that began as *aides memoires* for historical evidence, field visits, pictures of artefacts and ancient country seats. These evoke sensual possibilities, through which to absorb Henry Smith’s world, broadening beyond the visual – the sound of a lute above the noise in a crowded tap room, the smell of smoking tallow in a poor cottage, the feel of rough wool from a simple weaver’s loom, the scratch of a pontayle (metal nib) across parchment, the taste of salt as a south wind blows across the Thames.

Merleau-Ponty (2002) considers such context-specific embodiment to be “a certain way of patterning the world which the historian should be capable of seizing upon then making his own” (pp. xvii, xx). Here, the key must be ‘seizing upon’ – identifying and taking ownership of tacit knowledge, finding codification for it to bring colour to the text, making space for “the creativity and play that is attractive to arts practitioner-researchers” (Nelson, 2006, p. 109).

2.5 Tacit Knowledge

My own engagement with ‘tacit knowledge,’ that is to say, within my own perception and in the imagined perceptions of my characters, is expressed through episodes of liminality in the novel, experimental shifts between chronotopes, that in their value to Henry Smith’s story, constitute part of my unique contribution to knowledge. This time-slippage is facilitated by eidetic memorabilia, a bricolage of images – Putney marshes where Smith’s father contemplates his own death, the same ground upon which William will stand centuries later, the same chill wind, the smell of the river, the slap of water against the piers.

The term ‘liminal space,’ could be said to imply impressions of a dreamlike state, diffused light and slow motion. But Smiley’s analysis of intuitive thought as ‘a less knowable and controllable method of creation,’ acts as a reminder that a dreamlike state may not always be a positive experience. It can also be a place of terror, invoking remembrances of disturbance and danger. In my novel, William’s life as an asylum seeker is in a perpetual state of turbulence and uncertainty; Henry Smith finds his memories to be beyond his control following a severe shock. The smells sounds and sights of London in Smith’s era, detention in gaol and subsequent destitution for William, could be supposed to infuse their memories with tacit knowledge that might be painful to retrieve and impossible to articulate. In my novel I have endeavoured to reference a spectrum of sensual possibilities and to present the characters

as people whose behavioural responses, rather than their words, communicate their sub-conscious emotions.

But from my own perspective as a writer, tacit knowledge allows for a more intuitive grasp of my material. Reading other writers can be regenerative for this process. King (2000, p.147) asserts that reading is “the creative centre of a writer’s life – constant reading will pull you into a place where you can write eagerly and without self-consciousness.” Welty (cited in Burroway, 1992) detects a synergy between reading and writing, “Now I don’t know whether I could do either one, reading or writing, without the other”(p. 20). As a musician I can attest that music performs a similar function for me in that it provides a residue of tacit knowledge on which I can draw. I have attempted to convey something of this within John Rolfe’s character, both in his playing and Robert’s responses to it.

2.6 Application

In summary, I can acknowledge that the arc of my practice-as-research experience has not been smooth. Both my cognition of the process and my appreciation of it have been hard won. Yet I can conclude that this process has both broadened and deepened understanding for my praxis. Perry (2009) puts forward the idea of the act of writing as redemptive “as I wrote I learned my own lessons ... I wrote as I learned and I learned as I wrote” (p. 39).

This artless approach resonates with Bakhtin’s advocacy of ‘carnival,’ the spontaneity and playfulness that can be so easily mislaid amongst the complexities of a thesis. “The principle of laughter and the carnival spirit ... frees human consciousness, thought and imagination for new potentialities” (Bakhtin, 1984b pp. 49,66.)

In the following chapter, further crafting of my poetics is facilitated through the exploration of genres – biographical, fictional, historical and the hybridisation between them – that leads finally to my decision to ‘categorise’ my hybrid of Henry’s life as a fictionalised biography.

Part 3 Crystallization

Crystallization - the process of forming a crystalline structure from a fluid or from materials dissolved in the fluid³⁰

The slow process of evaporation to form salt crystals from a saline solution is an apt metaphor for the crafting and shaping of my original ideas into a recognizable form. Whilst the reflections in the previous chapter may be said to constitute part of my poetics, here I will specify how aspects of my creative writing, begun intuitively, have begun to crystallize.

Seminal to this process are the three elements of tacit knowledge, slippage and unfinalizability that bracket Henry Smith and William together within the wider composite story. Tacit knowledge has already been explored [2.5] and slippage is referenced more fully in [3.3.1]. The explanation and application for unfinalizability may be seen in [3.3.2].

Sheppard (1999) labours the point that ‘poetics’ has no single definition; “poetics, as the thinking about how something is made, can be used with reference to all kinds of writing (and not just writing, and not even just art)” (1999, p. 3). Of Shepherd’s multiple descriptions, his assertion that poetics is “to come upon that which one already knows, but with the force of revelation as if discovered for the first time” (Sheppard 1999, p. 5) is strongly resonant of my writing experiences, both within the novel and the critical reflections, as ideas, begun intuitively, have become ‘pinned’ to literary techniques – as above.

Nelson’s (2006) assertion that “nobody works in a vacuum” and that creative work is arguably “informed by the lineage of work of [the same] kind” (2006, p. 113-14), invites the practitioner to turn towards a more specific analysis. It is to genre, as a context for my own practice, that I now turn.

³⁰ <https://sciencestruck.com/salt-crystallization> accessed 02.05.19.

3.1 In Quest of Genres

In Holquist (2003, p. 69) we learn that Bakhtin described genres as “great heroes,” essentially discursive, rooted in “the rules that govern speech activity in our everyday conversations.”

Holquist asserts that Bakhtin’s fervent affirmation of genre was in part a reaction to the institutionalization of literary development under Soviet rule. Perceiving such formalism to be governed by the fluctuations of political and social change, Bakhtin stated,

They (literary critics) do not see beneath the superficial hustle and bustle of literary process the major and crucial fates of literature and language, whose great heroes turn out to be first and foremost genres, and whose ‘trends’ and ‘schools’ are but second and third-rate protagonists (2003.p. 68).

Holquist claims that Bakhtin’s concept of speech genres “constitute[s] the primary material out of which all other particular kinds of utterances are constructed,” thus elevating the organic development of everyday language above generic formulae (p. 69). Frow (2006) also advocates freedom from categorical restriction, noting that genre descriptors are vessels with which to serve the creative impulse, rather than impositions, citing biography, diary, letter as supportive to the novel, that is “dependent on other genres” (Frow, 2006, p. 44). I would offer that genre, useful as a structuring tool, may prove constrictive as a predetermined conveyance, unless – in line with Frow’s point – the writer allows for subversion of the generic code, in establishing her own precedence over genre rather than allowing genre to lead her.

3.2 Biography.

At outset of my research journey, I could not refer to my story of Smith’s life as “biography,” understanding the term to imply a commitment to historically verifiable facts. Southgate (2009) queries such a definition, as a “totality needing no external vindication, an autonomous discipline marked by its concern with truth” perceiving that there is an “enduring

and close relationship between history and fiction, [that] both are concerned essentially with the same task: with the construction of meaning, with making sense out of . . . the chaotic data of human lives” (Southgate, 2009. pp. 24,12). Woolf (1967) also struggled with the limitations of biography as she perceived it within her own era, asserting that

The biographer must go ahead of the rest of us, like the miner’s canary, testing the atmosphere, detecting falsity, unreality, and the presence of obsolete conventions. His sense of truth must be alive and on tiptoe (Woolf, 1967, p. 226).

We will see shortly how Woolf challenged both the meanings of ‘truth’ and of ‘biography.’ Meanwhile in light of both Woolf’s and Southgate’s admonitions towards biographical restriction we will see that there has always been potential for subversion of the genre; that in finding many ways to chronicle a life, biographers have differed in their interpretations of the same individual. Indeed, that the anomalies and ambiguities of historical biography reveal the arbitrary nature of the historiographic record, a many-headed hydra with a complexity of interpretations.

3.2.1 Historical Precedents

Cixous and Calle-Gruber (1997, p. 177) submit that “all biographies like all autobiographies, like all narratives, tell one story in place of another”. In asking whether or not this statement pertains to Smith’s era as well as ours, it will be seen that even in his day there were complexities of categorization, that modern writers are by no means the first to make adjustments to generic conventions. My enquiries concerning the chroniclers of Smith’s time reveal a variety of scholarly accounts and quixotic treatments of bygone characters, historical authenticity seemingly a reason for concern long before postmodernist debates on the subject.

With the spread of the printing press, England’s early modern history bears witness to a remarkable rise in book publishing. Mortimer (2012) records that there was an unprecedented outpouring of literature at the turn of the sixteenth century. At the outset, Latin

texts comprised almost half of the books produced, but by the end of Elizabeth's reign, eighty-eight percent were written in English. Amongst a proliferation of bibles, astrological charts and almanacs, there was a growing number of historical and contemporary biographies (although the word 'biography' would only come into use in the next century.)³¹ The following brief exploration of biographical output references three life-writers contemporaneous with Smith. A fourth – Ben Jonson – is included as an example of someone who fell victim to pseudo-biographical misrepresentation, serving as a reminder that even then, life-writers had the power to make or break a reputation.

3.2.2 Chroniclers

Aubrey was the most prolific chronicler of the seventeenth century. Lawson-Dick (1949) as both chronicler of Aubrey and editor of Aubrey's 'Chronicles,' describes Aubrey's style as remarkable for his ability to "give even the shortest of his biographies a vividness which has never been excelled." Despite this endorsement, Lawson-Dick suggests that out of the 426 lives that Aubrey penned, "many of them are of no interest whatsoever, consisting either of extracts from books or of mere lists of dates and facts." Nevertheless, Aubrey's obsession with trivia reveals a salacious appetite for scandal that may be viewed as a gift to the social historian. An extract from his 'life' of Francis Bacon reads like a rapidly flowing stream of consciousness.

In short all that were great and good loved and honoured him ...the Aviary at Yorke House was built by his Lordship; it did cost 300 pounds ... None of his servants durst appear before him without Spanish leather bootes; for he would smell the neates leather, which offended him. His Lordship was a good poet ... he was a pederast. His Ganimedes [sic] and Favourites took bribes ((Lawson-Dick, 1949, pp. 155,13, 171-73).

³¹ The word "biographer" was first used by Thomas Fuller in his *History of the Worthies of England*. See Fuller, T. (post. 1662). *Worthies of England* (3 vols.) London. See also Hamilton, N. (2007). *Biography: A Brief History*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. p. 80.

Among Aubrey's 'lives' is that of another chronicler, Thomas Fuller, referenced several times already in this thesis. Fuller's *History of the Worthies of England* contains succinct portraits that give us clues to the man himself, a person of evident convictions and little impartiality. As an example, this excoriation of a 'Romish' professor leaves us in no doubt where Fuller's own religious convictions were placed:

Nicholas Sanders... bred Bachelour [sic] of the Laws in New-Colledge [sic]. Going over beyond the Seas, he was made ...King's Professor thereof at Lovain. Pity it was he had not more Honesty, or less Learning, being Master of Art in malice; not hoping the whole body of his lies should be believed but being confident the least finger thereof finding credit could prove heavy enough to crush any innocence with posterity; presuming the rather to write passages without truth. (Fuller, 1662, p. 364).³²

It is interesting to compare this excerpt with Fuller's enthusiastic promotion of Smith [see 1.5.2] both, in their extremes, revealing a predisposition towards partiality. Interesting also to discover an unlooked-for research bonus – Nicholas Sanders' residency in Louvain chimes with a footnote in Gwilt's history of Smith, a report that Smith's cousin absconded from his Puritan family "to Lovane ...becoming a scornful scoffer of that religion which before he professed" (Gwilt, 1836, p. 4, footnote). Marginal references such as these offer potential to the novelist for added intrigue to the narrative.

From my own perspective as a writer, the readerly scepticism engendered by both Gwilt's and Fuller's overt prejudices acts as a timely warning. Even so, Gwilt's account of Smith's life has sustained his memory to a degree, whilst Fuller's prolific output was still appreciated long after his death. Coleridge commented that "wit was the stuff and substance of Fuller's intellect" whilst Charles Lamb "admired his golden works."³³

³² Fuller's book was published posthumously, hence the date 1662 although he was writing during Smith's lifetime.

³³ Coleridge, S. T. (2005, July). *The literary remains*. The Literary Remains, by Coleridge. Retrieved November 11, 2021, from <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/8533/8533-h/8533-h.htm>. vol. 2 (1836), pp. 389–90.

3.2.3 Subversions

Fuller's *Worthies of England* was published posthumously, thereby avoiding the censure of his contemporary subjects. Other writers did not fare so well. Sir Walter Raleigh, described by Hamilton (2007) as biography's first martyr, was confined to the Tower of London for his seditious writing. Hamilton argues for Raleigh as possessing a deeper biographical experience than that offered by Aubrey and Fuller in his desire to explore "the documented sayings of men in order to see into their souls," adding that Raleigh's understanding of "the very diversity of opinion and interpretation possible in judging the life of an individual," prevented him from indulging in the flattering and fawning that he so despised in the works of his peers (Hamilton, 2007, pp. 76,7). Raleigh displayed profound insights into the human condition; not only did he inform his readers about the past, but he applied principles *from* the past to his own era, making implicit connections in his *History of the World* that so incensed King James, as to lead Raleigh to imprisonment and eventual execution.

Outraged response can still be seen today. Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* was met with such acrimony as to necessitate his protection from death threats. Lest it be thought that the objections stemmed only from Islamic sources, Andy McSmith (2011, p. 96) states that one of Britain's foremost politicians of the time, Norman Tebbit, caused a furore by condemning Rushdie as an "outstanding villain" whose "public life has been a record of despicable acts of betrayal of his upbringing, religion, adopted home and nationality."

But whilst feelings may run high, for the life-writer variances of opinion may elicit opportunities for speculative reinterpretation, the better to consider a character's motives or delve into the inner workings of his mind. I have already recorded my own research experience regarding Amherst's animosity towards his client Henry Smith [see 1.5.1]. Situating myself as Smith's ficto-biographer allows me to cast a shadow over this relationship from the outset of the narrative.

Here I would add that such speculative interpretation entails awareness of the writer's own subjectivism. As an example, I may express links between past and present attitudes to 'foreigners' in London, by comparing Smith's response to Meggie with the hostility apparent in the same city towards today's asylum seekers. A careless treatment of this subject could lead towards an unwarranted denigration of Smith's actions or even expose me to accusations of instrumentalism. Attridge (2004, p. 7) describes such an approach as "a means to a predetermined end," whilst Bausch (cited in Welty, 2002, p. 10) says of an instrumentalist agenda: "The 21st century writer is often faced with an unspoken but very clear expectation that . . . [she] must be about the business of engineering better human beings, correcting social ills, or redressing social grievances."

One of Smith's contemporaries, the playwright Ben Jonson, seems to have become a wholly unwarranted victim at the hands of his biographers. Kirwan considers Jonson's treatment to be a cruel relegation with "Shakespeare as absent presence in a way that arguably haunts all treatments of Shakespeare's contemporaries" (Kirwan, 2014, p. 11). O'Brien (2016) tells us that Jonson's proximity to Shakespeare, both chronologically and artistically, provoked highly politicised readings of his life, that both his character and his achievements have been falsified by a significant number of writers. "Jonson's presentation as pedantic, ponderous and ultimately outdated and outclassed is therefore a by-product of the fictional Shakespeare from whom he is commonly inseparable." Noting the added difficulty to Jonson's later biographers of the "paucity and distance of recorded fact," O'Brien sends a warning to any writer who desires to engage with a character over the distance of several centuries (O'Brien, 2016, p. 172).³⁴ Yet Mortimer reminds us that even Shakespeare himself is a product of his age: "It makes him, it gives him a stage, a language and an audience"

³⁴ O'Brien references Nick Tanner "in the online edition of the Cambridge *Works of Ben Jonson*" who castigates Orloff and Emmerich's portrayal of Jonson as "a second-rate and colourless hack, slow-witted and humourless." O'Brien comments "This...is especially strange because Jonson's colourful life, in comparison to Shakespeare's, is much better documented in the historical record."

(Mortimer, 2012, p. 362); and Mortimer's further observation that history is "a simple linear story of change and survival, [that] there are a thousand contrasts and [...] a range of experiences" (2012, p. 362), provides incitement for a writer to continue her journey of discovery, rather than to draw back. For this writer, the hardly-known Henry Smith is not so much a by-product of his age as a valuable – if somewhat tarnished – coin, lying deep in the earth, awaiting detection.

But the understanding of history as vulnerable to redaction – or 'post-truth' – is not exclusive to recent decades. Indeed, it resonates back at least to the fourteenth century, when William Chaucer demonstrated the ease with which false stories might be spread. The characters in his *Canterbury Tales* are known to have enjoyed a gossip. Elsewhere, in his poem *The House of Fame*, Chaucer drew attention to the complex levels of communication that bridge the gulf between truth and falsehood. Parker (2017) describes *The House of Fame* as an intriguing description of a dream-vision, a castle where Fame receives the utterances of the whole world and decides which of these she will preserve, opting for the same quantity of lies as truths.

What Chaucer understands and brings sharply to life ...is that truth is rarely the most important factor in determining whether a story will spread. We are all capricious readers who respond to ... stories that in some way accord with our own understanding of the world (Parker, 2017, p. 25).

Parker reiterates the timelessness of this phenomenon but, as she reminds us "what is different now ... is how rapidly false stories and fake news can circulate," suggesting that the willing connivance of the public may encourage a rise in sensationalist reporting, that public opinion, then as now, is shaped "more by emotion and personal belief than by facts" (Parker, as above.). Where personal beliefs are repeated as truth claims, fiction and fact can become dangerously entangled. Pihlainen (2013, p. 238) explains that meaning behind even the most

verifiable facts “always remains subjective. This is because factual truths are never enough. Instead, vested interests and desires regarding particular outcomes continue to create problems.” Here, I would suggest that the writer’s ‘vested interest’ to produce a publishable book may tempt her towards sensationalising a life. Yet I would offer that a judicious use of artistic licence may produce a more lucid account of a life than the facts themselves where they are skewed.

Here, I return to Mantel’s concept of “putting the past back into process” [see 1.3]. Furness (2015) in a newspaper article, reported that Mantel, in her desire to look beyond caricature for a more complex reading of Cromwell’s personality, fell victim to the criticism of the historian David Starkey who attacked her with:

If you’re a novelist, you can imagine whatever you want. I gather Hilary Mantel imagined this wonderful tender experience of Thomas Cromwell losing wife and children ...this is total fiction. There is not a scrap of evidence for it at all (2015, para 1.3)

I would suggest that Starkey’s outburst was woefully lacking in objectivity. His admission that he had neither viewed the televised drama nor read Mantel’s book left him open to the same accusations of ill-judgement that he condemned in her. Starkey’s assertions that as a historian and a “massive believer in fact,” he could “actually know what happens” any more than a well-researched novelist, are open to dispute where facts are difficult to verify, and feelings seldom recorded. Mantel’s rejoinder to Starkey rejects the binaries that Starkey had affixed to Cromwell and More.

Readers are not simple-minded. They can entertain ambiguities, appreciate complexity. My story about Cromwell is not finished. I am still dwelling on those complexities and ambiguities, looking for a shape in them. One thing I can be sure of: the man who emerges will not be a hero or a villain: why should he be? (Mantel, 2015, para 5.)

Mantel maintained that her readers in “actively request[ing] a subjective interpretation,” were well able to evaluate her version of events. Moreover, in her self-identity as a writer of historical fiction, she drew attention to the weight of responsibility on a historical novelist:

These erasures and silences made me into a novelist ... [but] I didn't like making things up, which put me at a disadvantage. In the end I scrambled through to an interim position that satisfied me. I would make up a man's inner torments ... because his thoughts can only be conjectured (Mantel, 2017 n.p.).

The ‘erasures and silences’ of Henry Smith's history, have compelled me to search in the margins of his life, to re-imagine what might have been recorded in lost and destroyed papers.

This is not to descend into historical parody, rather to make a virtue from necessity, to shine the light of enquiry on more speculative areas. Such genre choices may only be confirmed as the journey progresses, but here I must return to the track I have already taken, in order to discover how biography attained its current liberated status, and how biographers became incentivised towards innovation and experimentation.

3.2.4 Revolutionising Biography

It was almost a century before Mantel that Virginia Woolf acknowledged her own struggle with ‘truth,’ and with the Victorian life writers who preferenced factual truth above the essence of the individual. Woolf voiced the impossibility of blending these seemingly incompatible elements,

If we think of truth as something of granite-like solidity and of personality as something of rainbow-like intangibility and reflect that the aim of biography is to weld these two into one seamless whole, we shall admit that the problem is a stiff one and that we need not wonder if biographers failed to solve it (Woolf, cited in Benton, 2009, p. 13).

Woolf found a creative way through this dilemma in *Orlando*, where she rejected biography in favour of a novelistic treatment, describing it in a letter to her lover Vita Sackville-West, as

“all about you and the lusts of your flesh and the lure of your mind” (Hamilton, 2007, p. 161).

This liberated Woolf’s imagination, enabling her to convey potentially scandalous truth by presenting it as fiction. Winterson comments,

It was playful and bold to write a novel as though it were a biography, and to call a fiction a life, and to invent that life around a woman the author was in love with, and to stretch her over 400 years, like a body freed from the problems of gravity (Winterson, 2013, n.p.).

Here we see biography breaking free from the conventions imposed upon it in the preceding century, derided in Orlando, for the “widows’ weeds and bridal veils ... crystal palaces ... memorial wreaths ... whiskers and wedding cakes.” (Woolf, 1967, p. 229). In contrast, Woolf taps into the desire to see into the soul, as did Raleigh before her.

It is not within the scope of this thesis to offer more than this brief analysis of Woolf’s contribution, except to suggest that her refusal of constraints and generic restrictions have credited her with encouraging subsequent biographers towards their own playful and bold reinterpretations of the genre (as later, Nelson 4.2.3). As examples I would offer Julian Barnes’ treatment of Flaubert, in *Flaubert’s Parrot* (1984), Peter Ackroyd’s celebration of the historical character *Hawksmoor* (1985) and his innovative treatment of London in *London, the Biography* (2000). Ackroyd begins the preface to *London* with this statement,

The image of London as a human body is striking and singular; we may trace it from the pictorial emblems of the City of God ... [as] the form of a young man with his arms outstretched in liberation ... here might be found the ‘heart of London beating warm’ (Ackroyd, 2000, p. 1).

Such a depiction of London as a living organism takes the biographical model into another realm. Chalupský (2016, p. 276) regards this as an anthropomorphic leap of imagination “as well as being a setting his London also assumes a meta-chronotopic role as a character.”

Ackroyd’s inventiveness blurs boundaries of temporality, but more profoundly crosses the

divide between animate and inanimate matter. David Bodanis in his book *E = mc²*, (2000) is also unapologetically biographical in his treatment of the ‘life’ of an equation rather than the life of Einstein, the man behind the equation.

Everyone knows that a biography entails stories of the ancestors, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood of your subject. It’s the same with the equation.

The book begins with the history of each part of the equation - the symbols *E*, *m*, *c*, =, and 2 [...] the equation’s “ancestors” (Bodanis, 2000, p. viii).

Such a wealth of disparate materials logged under ‘biography’ creates space for the biographer to entertain a wide array of creative possibilities. Yet this also raises questions regarding the particularity of the genre.

Here I would suggest that if the parameters of life-writing have become so attenuated as to obscure the distinctions between animate and inanimate matter they have, by the same definition, blurred the lines between fact and fiction. Abbott (1988, p. 603) avers that “The difference, then, [...] lies not in the factuality of one and the fictiveness of the other but in the different orientations toward the text that they elicit in the reader.” But this suggestion of readerly rather than writerly distinction casts doubt on whether or not biography can still claim to keep authentic historical records, indeed, whether the reader, having an expectation of biography – by its reliance on attestable evidence – as distinct from fiction, may regard such boundaries as they have understood to be between biography and fiction, to have become irretrievably erased.

With regard to these indistinctions, Holroyd (1988, p. 103) asserts that, “in the creation of 'emotions, thoughts and laughter,' such novelistic effects mean that 'literary biography will increasingly be seen as a specialised branch of fiction.” It might therefore be more helpful to regard discrete classifications as closely entwined branches on the same tree, rather than as completely separate entities, referencing the metaphor of the helix again.

3.3. *Positioning Myself*

3.3.1 Defying Definitions

Here I must admit to a degree of vexation regarding taxonomy, concurring with Singer and Walker that “literary genres are notoriously difficult to theorize or define. We think of literary genres as clearly bounded when in fact transgression is the norm” (Singer & Walker 2013 p. 3). Setting and plot are essential components of my narrative but in its resistance to categorisation, the story that I have constructed is a hybrid, pulling on the leash of historical fact, towards fictional possibilities. This is inconvenient as a generic description as it precludes the simple categorisation of ‘historical novel.’ Smith’s servant, Hene, presides over the historical material in his auto-biographical role, but the composite nature of the story, in its near collisions with the twenty-first century, challenges these historical perspectives.

Whilst the two strands of the story do not ultimately collide, such elements of slippage can be seen to provide opportunities for a fluidity between myself as ‘omniscient author’ and Hene as my historical amanuensis. Moreover, in calling this work *ficto/biographical*, I do not seek to minimise the importance of historical events. The narrative is woven through – albeit thinly – with a significant degree of historical material including specific outbreaks of plague, a terrible fire in Dorchester in 1613, the death of Richard Sackville, Elizabeth Smith’s court case and appearances of Henry Silver-tongued Smith.

There is a degree of parallelism between these elements and the contemporary strand of my story. This could hint at the reflexivity that Hutcheon (1988) explains as ‘historiographic metafiction.’ She uses this term to denote “novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically lay claim to historical events and personages” (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 5). But here the self-reflections are not mine, they belong to Robert Hene, as he considers the life of Henry Smith (1.8.1). The technical challenges of this approach are somewhat ameliorated by the liberty that this brings to Hene – and thus to me; for in using

Hence as my mouthpiece I relinquish the evaluation of Smith's character to him, broadening the idea of genre beyond "external template," by opening the "semantic possibilities that lie within it" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 5).

3.3.2 Unfinalizability

The hybridisation between time frames and authorial voices confirms Smith's life as situated within the unfinalizability of a wider composite story. Bakhtin's concept of "unfinalizability" – the assertion that no existence is complete of itself, that each individual "enters into the single process of the human culture" (as 1.7) – supports the concept of Henry's and William's chronotopes as discrete, but within a wider context. Not only does this facilitate parallels between both their emotional and political experiences, but it promotes a liminal space, an intuitive discourse, between the two separate stories where "the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire" (Merleau-Ponty, as 2.6).

Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being* (as 2.4.2) is illustrative of this near conjunction between two fictional characters, mutually enriching but never physically connected. Ozeki's story is a multi-layered text that incorporates the writer's autobiographical narrative with that of a Japanese girl, Nao. Ozeki herself, as the authorial voice, Ruth, frames Nao's autobiographical experiences and her musing on the meaning of her life, mediated through Nao's exercise book, washed up on the shores of a North Pacific island discovered by Ruth. Of Ozeki's novel, Davis (2015) suggests that the "key conceit is its continual reference to and curiosity about the writers within it, all of whom labour, with varying degrees of success, over multilayered life writing projects."

As a reader, I found the layers of Ozeki's narrative so complex as to become mind-numbing (a point noted for my own practice). Yet Davis's insight that "we are drawn into the fragments, the coincidences, the chances taken up or lost," offers a valid reason for the reader's continuing journey with the writer. Further, Davis suggests that "critical engagement

with the concepts of writer and reader suggests avenues of agency for both parties within the narrative act” (Davis, 2015, pp. 89, 91). Nao’s story operates within Ruth’s narrative self-consciousness. Ruth, as writer, becomes the agency for Nao’s story.

Ceding my own authority to Hene gave me the agency to inject elements of critical engagement, not between writer and reader, but between the contemporary and historical aspects of my novel; to find ways of communication across centuries.

3.3.3 Fictive Biography

Interweaving fiction and history may afford the writer possibilities of throwing a new light on history itself. As Shaw suggests (1983, p. 22) a work can be “more historical, not less historical, if it rearranges aspects of the historical record for the sake of demonstrating a larger pattern.” Back in the seventeenth century, Montaigne, a contemporary of Smith’s had himself discovered the benefits of “rearrange[ing] aspects of the historical record.”

And, also, ... our manners and notions, testimonies, and instances, how fabulous soever, provided they are possible, serve as well as the true; whether they have really happened or no, ... and among the various readings thereof in history, I cull out the most rare and memorable to fit my own turn. (Montaigne and Florio pp. 92,104).

It appears from this unapologetically subjective approach to the historical record that Montaigne’s agenda was to entertain rather than to concern himself with historical accuracy. Sue Monk-Kidd’s (2014) novel *The Invention of Wings* is illustrative of a rather more circumspect approach. Monk-Kidd attempts, in her own words “to remain true to the broad historical contours of Sarah’s life” – that is, the life of abolitionist Sarah Grimke - whilst acknowledging conscious divergences from the record:

My aim was not to write a thinly fictionalized account of Sarah’s history, but a thickly imagined story inspired by her life. During my research, delving into . . . a huge

amount of biographical material, I formed my own understanding of her desires, struggles and motivations (Monk-Kidd, 2014 p. 451).

In my own attempts to write a fictionalized account of Smith's life, I concur with Monk-Kidd's aim that it must be unapologetically (thickly) imagined. Tanner (1990) records Henry James as stating that a life must be clearly written "but we also want it thick, and we get the thickness in the human consciousness that entertains and records, that amplifies and interprets it ..." and James continues that the way to achieve this is through "a particular kind of narrator: 'By so much the affair matters *for* some such individual, by so much do we get the best there is of it'" [Tanner, 1990, p. xix].

By mediating my ficto/biography of Smith's life through the voice of Robert Hene, I employ a "particular kind of narrator" for whom Smith's life matters, and who desires to "get the best there is of it." Moreover, by remaining true to "the broad historical contours" in my fictive biography of Smith's life, I have, like Monk-Kidd "formed my own understanding" in my estimation of the motives that inspired his legacy, in order to engage the reader in a reimagining that conventional biography cannot do; a reimagining that is authenticated by the current success of Smith's legacy.

In the following chapter I outline the pleasures and pitfalls of my historical research, reviewing the literature that most informed my poetics and showing some of the means whereby I developed the characters of Henry Smith and those peripheral to him. In his role as Smith's biographer, Robert Hene will be seen to legitimise my acknowledgment that this is one interpretation, that there could be many other readings.

Part 4 Research Methodology – a Ledger of Profit and Loss

4.1 Old Salts

*much of the history and traditions of mariners are passed from generation to generation as told and retold by old salts.*³⁵

4.1.1 Introduction

The scales of my historical research are finely balanced between profit and loss. The weight of the profit lies in the record of historical details, bundles of theoretical documents, files of writing techniques and evidence of auto-ethnographical insights.

Set alongside, in invisible ink, is a list of further historical discoveries, theoretical observations and many drafts of the novel that include unused characters, and a wealth of autobiographical experience. These are lost to the main body of this thesis but are not entirely redundant. In a sense, the additional insights and knowledge gained have become the cross linkages on the ladder of the helix, preventing it from spiralling out of control. I could wish that there was room for their inclusion, but I can console myself that their value lies in the authentication they bring to the story: “beneath the mullions and hammer beams, the rolls and scrolls, affidavits and arraignments, resting quietly under centuries of dust” (p. 135).

A scrutiny of Henry Smith’s name and dates in historical websites uncovered archival references from Kent to Glasgow. Questions elicited more questions, developing dual methodologies of pursuit and consolidation, tantalizing clues supported by material evidence. The text of Smith’s Will, an on-line discovery, necessitated painstaking transcription from early modern English. This revealed intriguing links to endowments that included poor victims of Barbary pirates, destitute poor in London and the surrounding parishes and money

³⁵ Old salt. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 13:20, November 11, 2021, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Old_salt&oldid=1033481702

for impropriations – the provision of ‘godly’ preachers in churches across the nation.

Henry Smith’s personal control of his Will contrasts with “the more conventional manner [of] bequeathing [a fortune] to be run by a livery company” (Lethbridge and Wales, 2015, p. x). Smith’s form of micro-management is indicative of an obsessive nature, a suspicion confirmed as I embarked on a paper trail of his legal proceedings, details that allowed me, as Smith’s chronicler, to intuit character traits that might have been otherwise concealed. Litigation was in the ascendant in Smith’s time “legal business boomed – pleas at the King’s Bench rose tenfold during the sixteenth century – and the legal profession expanded to meet the taste for litigation” (Porter, 2000. p. 84). More light is thrown on Smith’s legal involvements in Appendix 4 *Lawsuits and Events Leading to Them*.

Baker’s *An Introduction to Legal History* (2002) became the basis for my understanding of seventeenth century law, supported by further books, online journals and Parliamentary Papers.³⁶ Whilst few personal records remain [see 1.5.1], the tone of Smith’s Will offers clues towards his motivations, religious beliefs, and the cultural particularity of his social conscience.

The following section demonstrates evidence of my wide-ranging historical research, an experience that I revelled in and would willingly take up again. This can be evinced from the ‘Bonus’ comments throughout the timeline. This is recorded as a timeline of data, loosely categorised, the better to personalise my experiences, to add a certain order to the text and show the length and breadth of my research. It comprises a representative assortment of field visits, archival exploration, palaeography classes at the National Archives [TNA], and desk-based enquiry in note form. The subjectivity of much of my research experience draws attention to the autobiographical stake I hold as Smith’s biographer [see 3.3.2 and 4.1.4].

³⁶ *Parliamentary Papers* (11). London: H.M. Stationery Office. Retrieved from [https:// books.google.co.uk/books?id=9joSAAAAYAAJ&dq=Henry+Smith+charity+Shrewsbury&source=gbs_navlinks_s](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=9joSAAAAYAAJ&dq=Henry+Smith+charity+Shrewsbury&source=gbs_navlinks_s) (*Parliamentary Papers*, 1831).

Some of the dates when the research took place are approximations. Additional comments are in italics.

4.1.2 Timeline of Historical Research

12.12. 2013 Primary Sources – breaking new ground

Phone call to HSC. Explain decision to write Smith's story.

HSC Secretary sends copy of 'inhouse' publication *The South Kensington estate of Henry Smith's charity: its history and development* (Stroud, 1975.).

From this I access Gwilt's *Notices relating to Thomas Smith of Campden* - nineteenth century account from descendant of HS. Will become primary source. Copy in John Ryland's library Manch. *Have to use white gloves to read!*

26.02.2014 Archival support

Meeting with academic archivist Ian Johnston [Uni of Salford]. Offers support for access of C16th mss. and papers. Signposts me to National Archives and Baker's (2002) *An Introduction to English Legal History* (ordered for U of S library and loaned to me for 2 yrs.)

15.04.14 British Library: *Spontaneous visit. Persuaded librarian to let me register.*

Difficulty in accessing information but in the end, I struck gold with "Rymer's Feodora"

Amherst's deposition to Charles 1st to renew King James' Grant of protection³⁷

**Bonus – Valuable insight into Sjt. Amherst's chicanery, use of law to evade responsibilities towards Henry Smith – classic case of 'pulling rank.'*

23.07.14 London's square mile: Into Smith's territory

Much subsequent field study generated from this walk. London streets, particularly city area. Old names Swan Lane, Cloak Lane, Bread Street, Old Jewry, Grocers hall, Cheapside.

³⁷ Found in a footnote in Gwilt, p. 30, cited Rymer's Foedera, Vol. XVIII p. 722., &c. A.D.1626

* Bonus – Dick Whittington’s memorial in St. Michael Paternoster Royal. Guidebook informs me “explorations have unearthed a mummified cat” and that “a glass window on the west wall honours both the man and his furry friend” (Kettler & Trimble, 2001 p. 119).

Whilst not included in the final text, I like to think that many intriguing facts that will be regretfully set aside are enriching to the research process.

24.07.14 London Metropolitan Archives [LMA] accessing ancient documents:

Feel like imposter as I register with the LMA and give reasons for visit. Documents arrive in bundles. Trawl through for specific numbers/ dates. Three documents, all in English but hard to decipher. Fourth in Latin- impossible.

- P71/TMS/1130

Post-mortem financial arrangements of HS’s trustees (c. 1649)

Sealed at the foot with three signatures: Lumley, H. Jackson, H. Hene.

* Bonus – I have already begun to write about these men! Signatures offer potential for character dev. Lumley’s casual, large, flourishing. Hene’s neat, spidery, joined up. Henry Jackson’s is wavering, uneven, possibly not as used to writing as the other two.

- P71/TMS/1129 Abstract of HS’s deed of charitable uses.

* Bonus – Marginal notes in his own hand: accounts to be written, read, affixed, and not for vicious persons. [see 1.6.1]

This affirms Gwilt’s notes (Gwilt, p. 27). Add colour to HS’s character.

- P71/TMS/212 –pencilled note on back of document “Particulars of the estate at Sevenoaks in Kent belonging to the trustees of Henry Smith Esq. deceased.”

Interesting - gives idea of type of dwellings and work on large estate; shows how HS might profit from lands and rents.

11. 08. 2014 Second visit to LMA to look through registers

- Parish of Wandsworth/ online access to Ancestry.co: Found Joane Jackson's burial
08.08.1625 St Mary Whitechapel
- Collin's Peerage: vital information re Dorset family. "Richard Sackville born 1589:
lived with great magnificence and hospitality at Knowle. Died March 28th, 1624,
Easter Sunday, buried April 7th from Great Dorset House, next to St Bride's, Fleet
Street"

After leaving the LMA I cross a few hundred metres and four centuries to

- Clerkenwell and Shoreditch County Court

**Bonus – Inside knowledge from daughter [immigration lawyer] that public are allowed entry. Sit at back of two hearings. Impressed by 'ordinariness' of court rooms and procedures of law that have dramatic implications for applicants. Eventually advised to leave.*

12.08.14 The London Museum

Walk through Smithfield for atmosphere. St. Bartholomew's Church fascinating, sinister and full of history. Also the venue for many films including *Four weddings and a Funeral*.

Then towards the Barbican, back to St. Olave's for a reminder of Smith's parish church and into the London Museum – a walk-through timeline of its own, from Roman Londinium to Victorian London.

**Bonus – A map of pre-1666 London streets, now every well-worn and my 'go-to' for every journey that Robert takes across the town. Also, Stow's 'Survey of London' full of details about each of the London wards.*

18.09.14 Kent County Archives: Purpose of visit: to research Knowle House home of Dorsets.

Rich lasagne of memories: Kent County Library a mile from childhood home in Maidstone, Kent. First visit for 40 years. Excitement at discovering more of Henry Smith's ownership of Knowle House mixed with nostalgia.

Rewarding discoveries, e.g.

- U269 A1/7 89/3/ Book of payments from bailiff Edward Lyndsey to various persons. Inscription in his writing on first page: "Paiments made by Edward Lyndsey one of the feofees [trustees] of the Rt Hon. Richard Earl of Dorset."

22pp of accounts from March 25th - June 24th, 1625: year following Dorset's death.

*Bonus– Page of accounts with scribbled notes on reverse: see pp 446/7

19.09.14 Knole House: Dorset's home "The splendour of the place was breath-taking" [1. 8]

*Bonus – *Much-anticipated visit. Did not disappoint.*

*"Simon's jaw dropped in astonishment.
'Tisn't a house,' he whispered, 'tis a whole town'" (p.220).*

But for telephone/ overhead lighting, Lindsey's office could be unchanged.

03.10.2015 The Burrell Collection: purpose- built treasure house

first visited in 2010 - have returned whenever distance allows.

Sir Wm Burrell gave life collection of "paintings, sculpture, tapestries, ceramics, stained glass, furniture, silver, metalwork and objets d'art of every kind from three continents and every period" to city of Glasgow, in 1944 (GCC 1997, p. 7).

Purpose of visit: to view late 15th and early 16th century tapestries / artefacts for domestic, social, and artistic background; embroidery on 16th century jackets and smocks; stained glass 'roundels.'

*Bonus *Broadens horizon of expectation regarding skills of C16th craftsmen, and global wealth of merchandise.*

15.01.2016 and 26.02.2016, National Archives: Postgraduate Archival Skills Training [PAST]

"Historic records of financial transactions are often the most ubiquitous of all and, despite their apparent dryness, can cast significant light on contemporary relationships and priorities." (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

Part 1: palaeography – how to access records/transcribe and translate documents

Part 2: interpretation of archival sources available for study of early modern period / examination of State Papers.

Both courses have facilitated my understanding of early modern government.

Conclusion: 10.03.2020

Return to notes of field visits – overwhelming amount of information. Struck by my nerve in accessing locations. Some blunders – e.g., asking British Library if I could take book home.

Grateful to archivists for not laughing at me.

There was valuable biographical material found in even the most mundane of records, fulfilling the work of the writer to explore these “fragments [...] taken up or lost,” [as Davis 3.3.1] to exploit every opportunity of immersion in historical background and add authenticity to the narrative

4.1.3 Historical Texts

Concomitant with archival and field research was desk-based ‘reading around the subject,’ a continuous roaming through peripheral sources on all matters domestic, social and political. Smith’s life bridged two eras, Elizabethan and Jacobean, necessitating the research of both. I found Elizabethan history to be the better documented: there is a comparative dearth of literature covering the early seventeenth century. However, as Smith himself grew up during the reign of Elizabeth 1st, Mortimer’s *Time Traveller’s Guide to Elizabethan England* [2012] and Pickard’s *Elizabeth’s London* [2003] covered much of his life, becoming my primary sources for historical information. Nichol’s *The Lodger – Shakespeare on Silver Street* and Sackville-West’s *Inheritance* provided invaluable details for Smith’s Jacobean years in London and the life of Knole House in Kent, respectively.

For a comprehensive list, see Bibliography: Historical Research, primary and secondary.

4.1.4 Henry Smith His Life and Legacy

I have already noted comparisons between the perils of Smith's journeys as a salter and my own practise-as-research experience [1.10]. My research journey became most closely analogous to Smith's travels when I experienced a cathartic incident that threatened the survival of my whole project.

Early in my 'discovery' of Henry Smith, I communicated my intentions to write his story to the HSC [4.1.2.] The secretary to the chair of the charity expressed great enthusiasm for the idea.

A few months later I opened the HSC website to find some information. I was surprised to see Smith's memorial on the front page with the announcement of a new book beside it. It appeared that steps had been taken to create an updated biography of Smith. This required the skills of two journalists and the employment of professional researchers. As one of the incitements to write Smith's story was to bring his achievements to the attention of the public, this notice of the publication of another book came as a shock to me. I feared that it might compromise the uniqueness of my research, negating all my work as one of his biographer.

Feeling that some sort of response was called for, I took my courage in both hands and phoned the charity, asking to speak to the chair of trustees. A lively conversation ensued, and it became clear that he understood my distress. The following morning a copy of their new publication, *Henry Smith His Life and Legacy* (2015), arrived by post. I spent a few days comparing details, checking references, and finding, to my considerable satisfaction, that most of the data was identical to mine, but that mine had been researched and documented in the year previous to this publication. Better still, I had made several discoveries that were not included in this book [see below].

I was encouraged by the realisation that some of my own research was still unique to me, that I had a few secrets of my own, still intact. With hindsight I can acknowledge that although my confidence was severely shaken, the novelistic reimagining of Smith's life, already emerging in my own imagination, gained a new clarity of focus.

The image below is a discovery unique to me, unearthed in the Knole House papers in Kent County Archives. The first page [left] is a list of accounts clearly marked April – September 1621, the exact period when Richard Sackville the third earl of Dorset was causing disquiet because of his extravagant lifestyle. The name 'Edward' appears on the other side of the page – the first name of the bailiff, Lyndsey – amongst a series of scribbles; to the right can be seen the words 'Enter in at the strait gate for wide...

The whole text from the gospel of Matthew, in the King James Bible, reads:

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (Matt. Ch 7 v. 13).

It could be surmised that Edward Lyndsey, reflecting on the mounting bills, began to jot down his thoughts about his master's spendthrift habits. This, for a fictionalized account, provides invaluable opportunities for speculation.

Fig.3 Knole House Accounts U269 A1/7

Received of the right honorable Richard Earle of Devon for the redemption of his health charged by him from the Institution of one year 1621

23 March	Received	100	0	0
27 April	Received	100	0	0
14 May	Received	100	0	0
2 June	Received	100	0	0
8 June	Received	100	0	0
23 June	Received	100	0	0
27 June	Received	100	0	0
14 July	Received	100	0	0
26 August	Received	100	0	0
29 September	Received	100	0	0
12 October	Received	100	0	0
14 November	Received	100	0	0

Sum of all the above 1000 00

Received of the right honorable Richard Earle of Devon for the redemption of his health charged by him from the Institution of one year 1621

Sum of all the above 1000 00

Received of the right honorable Richard Earle of Devon for the redemption of his health charged by him from the Institution of one year 1621

Sum of all the above 1000 00

4.2 Writerly Reading Reviewed

Another significant strand of my research has been the study of novels, biographies and historical fiction. Immersive reading and theoretical study have already been noted as seminal to this thesis. Here I propose that, adjunct to immersive reading is what I term as ‘writerly reading’ a conscious exploration of classical literature or innovative texts not so much for their attraction as for intellectual curiosity, to expand the capacity for understanding. It is my contention that such readerly experiences are twice rewarded inasmuch as they expose the reader to new ideas and broaden her capacity for intellectual enjoyment. Examples I can cite from my own experience are Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamozov* (1880) and Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (1871). Eliot’s illuminating portrayal of life in a provincial town with its elevation both of the novel form and of ‘ordinary’ characters is representative of her own era, yet as a slice of social history, it resonates with Southgate’s observation that

Novelists ... might be more free than historians to look at the past in fresh ways - and so as individual observers, catch sight of alternative people and events from alternative perspectives [and] foreground topics that have otherwise been ignored or side-lined. (Southgate, 2009, p. 10).

Excursions into such classics as Eliot’s suggest that, whilst the writer carries a responsibility to attract and engage her readers, this third way of reading advocates a transference of responsibility onto the reader, destabilising the populist assumption that every new work of literature must be immediately accessible.

4.2.1 Putting the Past Back into Process

“Rigour, integrity, unsparing devotion and scepticism ...to write it semi fictionally we need all of those and more – putting the past back into process, into action”

(Mantel, Reith lectures, 2017.).

Amongst the authors who have most influenced me during this project are several novelists whose ability to create compelling journeys for the reader, within both fields of biography and historical novel, have informed my decisions as to where I situate my own practice.

Representative, but not exclusive to the list, I include Penelope Lively, Hilary Mantel and C. J. Sansom for historical fiction, Anthony Burgess and Peter Ackroyd for a more idiosyncratic experience of historical writing and contemporary novelists, Jon McGregor, Ali Smith and Ruth Ozeki for the different experimental techniques that they perform in their novels. As above [1.7.2] I include Ali Smith, Rose Tremain and Chris Cleave as contemporary authors with the ability to make use of the power of fiction in order to address current social concerns.

I have already made reference to Mantel and to Ackroyd. Here, I include them both for a profound historical awareness – Mantel primarily with her characterisations, Ackroyd with his evocation of place and atmosphere. The work of both authors, in their striving towards authenticity, are redolent of Merleau-Ponty's (2012) assertion:

It is a question of uncovering the Idea in the Hegelian sense the unique formula of behavior [*sic*]towards others, Nature, time and death; that is ... a certain manner of articulating the world that the historian must be able to take up and adopt. These are the dimensions of history. And in relation to them, there is not a single word or human gesture – not even those habitual or distracted ones – that does not have signification (Merleau-Ponty, 2012, p. lxxxiii).

In my novel, Smith's habitual "words and gestures" are those of a man who has been raised in a Puritan household in "a certain manner of articulating the world" but who has essential characteristics of his own. Whilst we do not have the advantage of reading Smith's mind, we are allowed glimpses of Smith's fragility, born from his early life, mediated through Hene's authorial voice.

In a critique of Mantel's *Wolf Hall*, Suneetha (2014) states that the author "competently puts the readers inside the head of Cromwell, a secretive, and complex man, whose illuminating motives are often misunderstood."³⁸ The complexity of Cromwell's character is given additional piquancy by Mantel's choice of his subjective point of view. From her own perspective, this came as a form of revelation: "once I saw this boy lying on the ground, I was looking through his eyes - and it was unfolding like a film" (2011, par. 2). Such a capacity for immediate visualisation is to be envied. Mantel's sense of revelation is a reminder that the very essence of history is contingent on the individuals that inhabit it and on those who attempt to rediscover them. Without both it remains lifeless.

Mantel deserves further mention for her Reith lectures (2017). These contain epigrammatic insights into the possibilities of history mediated through fictive reinterpretation of the biographical subject. As with Mantel's evocation of history through her characters, so, I would suggest, Ackroyd evokes a sense of historical atmosphere through place and setting.

4.2.2 Crossing Boundaries - Experimental Texts

In Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* (1985) London is infused with a sinister, psycho-geographical redolence of past evil,

He walked back to St-George's-in-the-East, [where] it was worth examining the blackened stones in detail ... and he had an image of a mob screaming to be set free as he guided his steps towards the Tower (p. 114).

Playing with both place and time, Ackroyd melds fiction with history, crossing temporal boundaries that "exceed the limits of the Bakhtinian chronotope" (Chalupský, 2016,

³⁸ Suneetha, P., 'Homo Homini Lupus': A Note on Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall* (October 25, 2010). The IUP Journal of English Studies, Vol. V, No. 3, pp. 45-53, September 2010, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1697456>. Accessed 30 May 2018.

p. 276), to the edges of credibility and beyond, in time shifts that retain the past as a dark turbulence beneath the present. By pushing spatial boundaries Ackroyd creates disturbing heterotopias, sinister and contradictory.³⁹ Both *Hawksmoor* and *The House of Doctor Dee* (1993) are novels inspired by the lives of historical figures, as chilling as ghost stories, evocative in their fictionalisation of the past.

Chalupský's appreciation of Ackroyd's deliberate connections between time and space as "complementary and mutually determining quantities" (p. 47) serve as added inducement to the inclusions of transtemporality within my own writing. Regarding Ackroyd's space-time as an "interesting variant of the Bakhtinian chronotope," Chalupský states that:

Most of Ackroyd's minor chronotopes are heterotopic in nature, in the sense of Michel Foucault's definition of heterotopias – as places of otherness, which are both real and imaginary, mythic, physical and mental, existing in and outside time" (2016, p. 50).

Such employment of temporal slippage adds a sense of menace to Ackroyd's eponymous characters Dr Dee and Nicholas Hawksmoor. My own sortie into crossing spatial and temporal boundaries is not to add menace but to articulate a sense of history as unfinished, the inhabitants of Smith's era as still able to have some influence – albeit unforeseen – on the twenty-first century.

Burgess, like Ackroyd, has the ability to play on the borders between fantasy and historical truthfulness. In his novel *Nothing Like the Sun* (1964) Burgess demonstrates the skills of an experienced navigator. His many allusions to Shakespeare's sonnets and plays and his background knowledge of late Elizabethan culture, show evidence of an intensive research methodology that underpins and gives plausibility to his portrayal of 'WS.' In a review of Burgess's novel, Kermode (2002) questions the authenticity of Burgess's

Shakespeare, but concedes, “His Shakespeare is in the end a great man because he told the truth about the evil of his world and the world generally and always” (para.14).

I would suggest that the crucial phrase in Kermode’s statement is “his Shakespeare.” By acknowledging himself to be at the extreme end of the probability spectrum, Burgess does not insist on his interpretation of events as ‘the truth;’ rather, he demonstrates a historiographical awareness of his position, disarming potential criticism with honesty, “the reader will recognise the fiction writer at work and, I hope, will make due allowance.”

Kermode quotes Burgess as saying that *Nothing Like the Sun* contained “a great deal of guesswork, as well as some invention that has no basis even in probability” (Kermode, 2002, para. 3). This is resonant of Foucault’s rejection of “the idea that history is knowable through any single narrative account” (Foucault in Currie, 1998, p. 87). Burgess’s disarming admission of his fantasising acts as incentive towards experimentation. More particularly, for an aspiring writer, it exemplifies a form of mimesis that displays an aesthetic awareness of Shakespeare’s literary genius, a form of homage paid to his biographical subject. Mediated through Burgess’s creative imagination, Shakespeare’s character displays the linguistic style of the playwright himself.

One of Burgess’s narrative techniques is his stream-of-consciousness helter-skelter of word play. Elizabethan language and dream sequences evoke the idea of *bricolage* - the juxtaposition of many ideas or impressions [see also 2.1] – a technique with which I was already experimenting when I came upon this novel. Here, Burgess’s character ‘WS’ constructs a letter, converses with himself as he walks through London.

I know not how I shall offend ... Spring waking in London, crude crosses on the doors but the wind blowing in the smell of grass and the ram’s bell tinkle. Pie-men and flower sellers cried ... ‘in dedicating my lines, no, my unpolished lines, to your Lordship,’ from a barbershop came the tuning of a lute and the aching sweetness of treble song ‘... nor how the world will rebuke for choosing so strong

a prop... 'There were manacled corpses in the Thames, that three tides had washed (Burgess, 1964, p. 109).

Emboldened to continue my own attempts at stream-of-consciousness writing, I compared this scene with one of my own, where Robert Hene's panic-induced dash from Cripplegate to Chancery Row, references the sights and sounds of London streets. After noting the sensory range of Burgess's writing, I resolved to broaden the sensory range in Robert's scene, to include touch, taste, sound and smell. Burgess uses all of these.

Smith lacks the brilliance of a Shakespeare. His sparse historical record casts him as externally unremarkable – like a geode, any brilliance is hidden within. The challenges posed for a biographer by the 'ordinary' have been dealt with previously (as in 1.5.1 with Lukács' understanding of "vast heroic human potentialities" in obscure lives). Whilst I do not doubt that Smith merits attention for his contribution to history, a biography of his life may not capture the imagination to the same extent as that of a world-famous playwright. Where historical evidence is in short supply and the character remains enigmatic, alternative strategies must be found. Though the works of Ackroyd, Burgess and Mantel were instructive, their brilliance generated a degree of anxiety in me, as I wondered how best to engage the reader's interest.

4.2.3 Experimental Writing

The innovative techniques that I observed in these writers tempted me towards experimentation as a means of telling the story more effectively. I began by playing with framing devices – amongst these was the contemporary story framing the historical; the narrator, Robert Hene, writing in virtual exile during the Civil War; the story of Henry Smith discovered and retold by a present-day charity worker – none of these drafts were finished but all provided material for later use.

Then I turned to imbrication. The Oxford English Dictionary describes this as “An overlapping as of tiles; a decorative pattern imitative of this.”⁴⁰ Here I use this to mean a partial intersection of the experiences of my characters, involving the overlapping of temporalities, one temporality colliding with another, in ever-more-fragmentary episodes.⁴¹ This attempt to layer Smith’s life with William’s was not successful. It seemed to me that the juxtaposed sentences sat awkwardly, like marble pillars on a modest bungalow, adding incongruity rather than interest to the narrative; such forms of experimentation might compromise the coherence of what was becoming a highly complex text. Nevertheless, this experiment proved to be instructive in instigating the choice between artistic risk and intelligibility. I concur with Bolt’s assertion that “the quest for the new can be a misguided objective of creative arts research that results in self-conscious attempts at transgression in the belief that this somehow will produce the new” (Barrett and Bolt, 2007, p. 31). Although I would add that any exploration into an undocumented life can, in itself, become a “quest for the new.”

Hurley (2011) notes that “innovative or experimental texts take many different guises. ... conventional in some ways and experimental in just one respect. Alternatively, they may be experimental in many ways at once” (Hurley 2011, p. 368). Whilst it was never my intention to construct an experimental text for its own sake, hindsight allows me to suggest that my narrative, in its other temporal collisions, may be considered as “experimental in just one respect”.

Nelson (2006) refers to the experimentation in “much post-structuralist thought and writing” as “a deliberate playfulness [that] consciously draws attention to the problematics of discourse” (p. 109). I would question whether such experimentation has always to be the

⁴⁰ “imbrication, n.”. OED Online. September 2021. Oxford University Press.
<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/91720?redirectedFrom=imbrication> (accessed November 15, 2021)

means to such an end. Here I offer Jon McGregor as an example of a writer who can handle experimental techniques so effortlessly that the reader is drawn into his narrative rather than into his post-structuralist agenda. McGregor has a compelling originality that allows for a reaffirmation of ordinary lives within a contemporary setting. His novel *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things* (2003) has a style that has been described by Neal Alexander (2013) as “imaginative alignments with common people, places, and things” (Alexander, p. 721). Taking a dramatic accident as his trigger, McGregor interlaces a polyphony of responses with first- person, closely focalised narrative, whilst in the background, the restless city hums along in counterpoint with its inhabitants, adding itself to the multi-voiced discourse.

A further provocation comes from Ali Smith’s writing, in her ability to express intensity of feeling in a few short lines. Smith’s *Spring* (2019) opens with two short chapters, the first a protest against the fatuousness of irresponsible media reporting, the second an ingenious spring song, both celebration and warning of the power of returning life:

*The truth is a kind of regardless
The winter’s a nothing to me.
Mess up my climate, I’ll fuck with your lives.
I’ll carpet your house with the river.
But I’ll be the reason your own sap’s reviving* (2019, p. 8).

Both Smith and McGregor, in somewhat contrasting styles, have the enviable ability to convey relevant information. McGregor’s brief cameos have meaning that will later be seen to be apposite for each individual.

A tall thin girl with a short short skirt and eyes smudged with glitter, a boy with beige slacks and a ring through his eyebrow, a girl with enormous trainers and army trousers [...] a very short girl wearing nothing but shorts and a bra [...] a boy wearing an almost clean white shirt (McGregor, 2003, p. 13).

Ali Smith makes constant use of dialogue – external/internal – to convey information about the speakers beyond their own answers.

Thought your name was Florence, the man says.
I am capable of being a person of more than one name, the girl says.
Me too, Alda says.
I meant Cassandra like the legend, the security guard says [...]
The security guard is the girl's friend or family.
Her name is Britt, like Ekland, he supposes.
(Though she is actually nothing like Britt Ekland, more's the pity.
Sexist. Man, with no emotional intelligence.
Very true. But maybe a little harsh on yourself, his imaginary daughter says.)
 (Smith, 2019, p. 234).

This embedded information draws attention to one of my primary challenges, that of subtle character development. The first few drafts of Smith's story included tortuous information – prolonged court scenes, complete with legal terms and architectural descriptions – whilst my characters struggled for my attention and were in consequence slow to develop.

Mantel suggests that “You are always writing out of your own time and your own sensibility. But you educate yourself towards your characters and that's why it takes such a long time” (Mantel, 2015, p. 5). This has certainly been my experience; it is to my characters that I now turn.

4.3 *The Cast*

4.3.1 *Finding Henry*

The secondary characters of Henry's story seemed to form themselves, in a metamorphosis that Smith himself resisted, remaining stubbornly obscure. The dearth of primary material was partly to blame, whilst his memorial contributed to the notion of his inscrutability. The commemorative monument in Wandsworth parish church shows an unprepossessing face – pompous, mildly irritated, and entirely lacking in humour. Where was the man of compassion?

I decided to employ a simple process of ‘story-boarding’ – a technique first used by film makers but familiar to most primary school pupils and their teachers, myself included.

Here, I ask the other characters to educate me towards Henry, by offering informed answers as to what he might think about them (see table 1 below).

Table 1: Storyboard

<i>Character</i>	<i>How did you know HS?</i>	<i>Describe him in a word</i>	<i>What might he say about you?</i>
Anne Smith	I was his wife	unreachable	I really cannot say ... perchance, 'she was once my wife, a long time ago ...'
Robert Hene	Mr Smith? Well, he was my master for nearly ten years. Later I went back to work for him, God help me.	exasperating ... no, indomitable.	about me? That's a very difficult question. He might say – I hope he'd finally say that I worked hard for him. Perhaps that I was loyal?
Meggie	He gave me shelter. I was but a child and not of his country. He could have turned me away, but he did not	aloof	I would like to think he would say that I looked after him well, but in truth, I doubt that he noticed very much.
Richard Amherst	Smith? I was his lawyer. Why do you want to know?	Hah! He was infuriating – no other word for it.	Great heavens above, why should I be remotely concerned with what he thought of me?
John Rolfe	I acted as his scrivener for a short time – it became my undoing.	pontifical	I think that he admired me at first...
Sarah Spurstowe	Uncle Henry was my dear Grandmother Joane's brother	ambitious? anxious to do right ...	In faith, I believe he did love me but he was not able to show it.

Historian Alice Kessler Harris (2009) speaks of discovering history through the lens of an individual rather than through placing that individual into a carefully researched background, “Suppose, then, that we imagined the life of an individual, not as a subject to be studied for its own sake, but as evidence that could provide a different path into the past.” Referencing E.P. Thompson, she continues:

Our effort would then lead us to search for what Thompson calls “the nodal points of conflict”: the tensions between our subject and the social/political world, the world of ideas that he or she encountered. Our object, as Thompson so succinctly puts it, would be to explore “the way his mind meets the world” (Kessler-Harris, 2009, p. 626).

Placing Smith in dialogue with his own world, viewing him ‘slant,’ through the perspective of someone already in that same world, allowed for a sharpening of focus. Story boarding was followed by ‘hot seating’ – allowing Henry’s contemporaries, towards the close of his life, to ask Henry for answers to their own questions [see table 2]. ‘Hot seating’ is a device that can be used with very young children and is particularly effective at encouraging reticent children to engage, although the exercise needs to be handled sensitively by the teacher, lest some less-reticent pupils become too intrusive.

Sadly, sixteenth century adults seemed to lack an arbitrator for their intrusive questions. Both Henry’s replies and his body-language reveal that he is confident in his business-oriented answers but less so in his personal ones. This was not quite the Henry Smith that I had known at the beginning, nor is it the man that he will finally become. This man has begun to mellow, although the rapid responses to Amherst and Lindsey indicate that he still desires to have mastery of his own situation.

These simple improvisation techniques allow for a variety of viewpoints to be exposed in the insight that they bring both to the central character and to his questioners.

Table 2 Hot seating

<i>Character</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Henry's response</i>	<i>Henry's body language</i>
Robert Hene	Did you really think I acted so appallingly all those years ago?	Oh Robert... in truth I have much regretted this matter...	twists hands, swallows, voice falters and trembles
Anne Smith	Can you truthfully tell me that you loved me?	Loved you? You know that I loved you ...do you not? ...I never left you in want of anything.	Voice rises indignantly, but his face reddens and he turns away.
Joane Jackson	Did you miss Mistress Anne, your wife?	Yes... there were times. But nowadays, I do not think of her often.	He stares at Joane in distress.
John Rolfe	Are you aware that you are a laughingstock in the town?	Well, I ... I know there is a legend about that man Dog Smith, but as for anything else, I have not the least idea what you are talking about.	Henry thrusts out his chin, folds his arms across his chest.
Joe Jackson	Why don't you live in that great house in the country?	I expect you'd like that, young Jem. But just consider the expense. It would eat up my money.	He laughs at Jem, not taking him seriously.
Meggie	Do you remember when we used to feed the poor outside the gate at St Dunstan's? Would you like still to do that?	Yes, I do remember. It was Anne's doing. If she was still here, she would go with you. As for me ... I have my work to do...	He smiles and stares into the distance, scratches his head
Edward Lindsey	How can you call yourself a Christian man if you exact interest from people?	Edward, what I do might cause God offence, but what others do not, must offend him the more.	He is not perturbed; his answer is confident.
Sjt. Amherst	What drives you to sit up at night poring over your papers?	Well, it began as ambition - good will as well. I pray that it will end in as much good will but less ambition	Grasps the arms of his chair, pulls himself to sit up straight.

4.3.2 Hene as narrator

Henry Smith referred to Robert Hene as his “one-time servant” in his will. This was a huge understatement – in Henry’s lifetime Hene was his helper, his trustee and after Henry’s death, the mainstay of his charitable trust. Hene lived to a great age, finally dying in 1668, two years after the great fire of London. His role as biographer acts as a link between Henry and historical events, and, following Henry’s death, between Hene’s own position as trustee and the subsequent achievements of the trust.

Handing my responsibilities to Hene caused logistical problems. How could he know the details of Henry’s early life? How would he discover what had happened in his absence? In the Prologue, Hene voices a historiographical concern of his own, as he contemplates the unreliability of his memory:

But how to set down his [Henry’s] story? At the time I knew scarcely the half of it, and now, after all these years, there may be discrepancies. Some of the things that went on behind my back can only be conjectured, although much has been revealed to me since Henry’s death.

Hene performs the biographical process here, mirroring my own position in his insinuation that a re-imagined version of the story is better than none at all.

Somehow, through invention and calculation, by gathering up fragments of those who now rest in the dust, and by imagination – yes, by my own understanding and re-creation, I shall set down a form of Henry Smith’s life. I must set it down.

This is to discover and express a different kind of truth as Hene joins me in playing at the borders of history; “the biographer carries in his voice the power to define people and their places in history [...] to support or undermine accepted cultural values” (Backsheider, 2001. p. 9).

There are layers of ‘accepted cultural values’ here; both those that were acceptable to Hene’s generation, much of which may be either lost or incomprehensible to subsequent

generations, and also those assumptions that have become later caricatures; not forgetting the unwitting imposition of one's own cultural values on another age.

There is (as 3.3.1) both benefit and constraint to a methodology that employs Hene as narrator. He is a shy seventeenth-century man, not given to emotional analysis, although an imaginary exercise in “thought tracking” allowed me to access a greater degree of spontaneity from him.⁴² This is not to say that I can completely believe him – whilst allowing Hene to add a voice contemporary with Henry's time and culture, I am aware that his observations may be slanted from his own perspective. But I would suggest that this is one of the privileges of fictional biography, to allow this “hall of mirrors” distortion-upon-distortion and by its very admission, to discover what is arguably a form of honesty in an understanding of Henry Smith.

4.3.3. William

Henry has remained somewhat obscure. William has received even less attention, but his emotional responses are nearer the surface. My original proposal included stipulations to

- evaluate Henry Smith's contribution to 21st century society in the UK, by means of a narrative thread, relating to asylum seekers, as beneficiaries of his trust.
- draw on personal experience with respect to the current treatment of asylum seekers in the UK.
- include stories of their progress as beneficiaries of the HSC, within the wider narrative of Smith's own story.

I offer two reasons for the brevity of William's story. The first and foremost is my absorption with Smith's story and all that his narrative has entailed in terms of research. In comparison, my research for William, having been documented from the auto-ethnographic experiences of

⁴² “Thought tracking” is a useful exercise in drama classes, where each participant assumes a deliberate pose and when tapped upon shoulder, voices a specific emotion.

my role in an asylum charity, has required less attention. This is not to say that the plight of this asylum-seeker merits less consideration, indeed, the factual ‘sound bites’ of William’s story are intended to punctuate Smith’s history with vital interruptions. These have been taken from selected experiences of more than one individual.

The second reason for the brevity of the contemporary material is that I believed it to allow for a degree of objectivity. On my desk is a heavy book dealing with asylum law. The name inscribed inside it is that of a man who was studying to become a barrister, when he died alone in a bed-sit, not far from my home. He did not lack friends but was fiercely independent – as William is – and ‘chose’ to make his own way rather than to ask for help. He was highly intelligent but even after he was granted leave to remain in the UK the only work open to him was as a security officer for a car park. His death was unnecessarily premature. He – and others – really deserve their own separate stories; here, ‘William’ serves as a composite overview of the numerous casualties of a broken system.

I have already noted Lukács’ view that the writer can unwittingly transpose her own values on her characters and their world. Lukács applied this principal to a temporal gulf, but I would suggest that such recasting can also pertain to the cultural values of a Western caseworker as she pens the life of a contemporary third-world immigrant; this particularly where the writer holds strong convictions of her own, and where current “political correctness” might prevent a faithful retelling of another’s life.⁴³

So, I set my story aside as too subjective – more confessional than compelling – but I have allowed elements from it, viewed through the lens of the charity’s workers. Further, I have injected hints of correlation between Henry’s and William’s stories, notions of flight, of loss, cathartic crises that span the centuries in the impact that they have on their subjects.

⁴³ Political correctness prevented me from writing ‘an alien’s life,’ although this is an accurate description of both the status and feelings of many destitute asylum seekers. ‘Stranger’ might do, or ‘destitute’ but both sound derogatory within the current climate.

There are several voices in the current contemporary strand. One is authorial observation, reflecting William, but aware of the handful of characters who play a part in his journey. This voice makes use of the second person plural, “breaking the fourth wall” to allow the narrator to address the reader.⁴⁴

In for example, Interlude 4.

William is still here, in Campsfield. It's no use asking why. 'Why' is not a question that asylum seekers can profitably ask, so there's not a lot of point in you asking it either ... unless you're prepared to challenge the system...

Elsewhere the voice allows for a more empathetic reflection of William's position, as the 'nice lady,' later identified as Harriet, encounters him.

You might think she'd be feeling pleased with herself, but no – anyone watching her now would see a look of resignation on her face.

Another voice is formal, from past conferences, papers and pamphlets pertaining to asylum matters in the UK. These are not completely up to date. The Home Office is constantly reassessing and revising its policies, generally to the detriment of most immigrants, however legitimate their claims. William's journey takes place in the decade between 2007 -2017 so the facts as I knew them at that time, still pertain to him. Initially, I dramatized his own problems of asylum, but re-reading my account gave me to understand that they might be dismissed as sensationalist. Statistics cannot be so readily ignored.

4.4. *Salt Baskets*

My writing techniques are tools that do not yet sit comfortably in my hands. I look to a day when they might acquire the heft of the well-worn implements of a craftsman. King (2000)

⁴⁴ There is no direct reference to the first occasion where the 'fourth wall' was breached. It may go as far back as Greek drama, loosely referring to the actor addressing their audience rather than confining themselves to the 'three walls' of the stage. My own most vivid memory of this is Michael Dobbs' "House of Cards" in which shifty prime Minister Francis Urquhart turns to face the camera to reveal his treacherous intentions.

proposes that “filling your toolbox with the right instruments” is one of the keys to a writer’s success. “We are talking about tools and carpentry, about words and style” (although King also reminds us that great writers “the Shakespeares, the Faulkners, the Yeatses, Shaws and Eudora Weltys ... are geniuses, divine accidents, gifted in a way which is beyond our ability to understand, let alone attain”). But King’s second key is the value of intuition. “As we move along, you’ll do well to remember that we are also talking about magic” (King, 2000, pp. 160,155). Without this “magic” the notion of a toolbox has its limitations. It conjures images of neatly compartmented instruments for drilling, cutting, shaping, every object having a place and everything in its place. How simple, to pick up the right tool and wield it with precision; but how much more satisfying to experience moments of magic ...

If I can lay claim to magic, it is in the benefits of insights gained, firstly from the critique of biography and historical fiction that has served to offer solutions as to how best I can situate my story. Secondly, magic both in the recognition of parallelisms between my temporally distanced characters and articulation of the connections between their chronotopes. Finally, magic in the revelation of Henry Smith’s unfinalizability; that this “old sick man with a big heart who would never know the full value of his achievements ... would continue to nurture the dream that he might enrich a distant future.”

It is my hope that telling Smith’s story will contrive to open some eyes to see this remarkable man for who he was – and for what he has become through the inestimable worth of his legacy.

There are remarkable things all the time, right in front of us, but our eyes have like [sic] the clouds over the sun and our lives are paler and poorer if we do not see them for what they are (McGregor, 2003 p. 239).

Appendices

1. The Jordan Controversy : W.K. Jordan's findings and the responses of his critics
2. Beneficiaries of the Henry Smith Charity
3. Practice-as-research and the neurological discoveries of Charles Limb
4. A table of lawsuits and events leading to them
5. Poem written for Castlefield Gallery Exhibition

Appendix 1 The Jordan Controversy:

Table 3: Challenges to Jordan's accolade of Smith as "one of the founders of modern England."

	Jordan	Bittle and Lane	Archer	Hadwin
Hypothesis: that first two decades of 17 th century showed a spike in philanthropy	Aggregated data from ten counties and applied it to England as a whole, to show that "the Philanthropic impulse reached a great climax of giving in the first generation of the seventeenth century, when basic institutions of the modern society were securely established"(p.9,1960).	Jordan abandoned this approach to his data, instead presenting ever greater absolute amounts designated for charity in general without reference to the size of the estate of which they were a part (Bittle and Lane p.204).	Evidence shows that there was increased participation in giving but possible that Londoners were responding to dramatically increased needs. "The Reformation created a vacuum in charitable provision". (p.168 Pursuit of Stability)	Bewails Jordan's failure to 'deflate' his statistics of the amounts donated to charity between 1480 and 1660. "[Jordan] takes secular donations away from the 'religious' giving including money for prayers to be said for the donor so not really 'charity.' ...and finds, 'a dramatic rise to treble the 1590's level by 1611-20."
Main proponents	An enormous shift toward philanthropy itself. Here, the merchants and gentry are the heroes of the work.		The reformers urged the needs of the poor insistently p.228 paper	Gentry and nobility: 'the burden of hospitality and generous almsgiving in the forms of surplus food was constant and heavy' (Stone, loc.cit 259).
Motivations	'Prodigal generosity '[of merchants] animated by a most pronounced Puritan bias' (The Charities of London, p.268).		Contemporary misunderstanding of the causes of poverty has skewed understanding of philanthropic urge.	
Shifts in aspirations	momentous shift from primarily religious preoccupations to secular concerns. ² five general categories – poor relief, social rehabilitation, municipal betterments, education, and religion – "	"Jordan adopted a sound approach to documenting the first of his propositions by illustrating the changing percentage of the philanthropic pie" (p.204).		
Querying his claim		Injudicious to show an increase in absolute amount, divorced from the total of which it is a part.	The most frequently reiterated criticism is that Jordan failed to take account of inflation	⁴⁵ Hadwin accepts that Jordan's data is flawed but also queries Bittle's and Lane's [see above]. He concludes, 'the new peak is still there, though its scale is somewhat diminished.'
Inflation	Complex nature of the data: "prices and values in one English region in the late 16 th century bore almost no relation to prices in another"p.35.	Existence of inflationary pressures during this period is blithely ignored (p.25).	Jordan failed to take account of inflation	What we ideally require is an index that would tell us by how much the existing stream of [private] charity was swollen or narrowed in each decade.

Appendix 2 Beneficiaries of the Henry Smith Charity

The Oasis Centre⁴⁶

Since receiving the financial support of The Henry Smith Charity in the past 6 months we have been able to move vulnerable residents living and sleeping rough in East Manchester from chaos to Stability, social isolation to full Inclusion and from feelings of hopelessness about their future to Aspiration.

In the past 6 months:

We have referred each client in need of Emergency Food Provision to our Community Support and Advice Team. This has helped our often isolated and vulnerable clients to access both support and advice from the Oasis Team and be directed to other relevant agencies and services who can help promote independence and control over their lifestyle. We strongly believe that helping clients suffering with food poverty deal with the root problem issues such as debt, housing, benefits, threat of eviction, homelessness, addiction, mental health issues and lack of basic life skills is a proactive approach to enabling them to take control of their life situations and escape a relapse into food poverty.

We then offered each client in need of Community Support the opportunity to enrol on our Basic Adult Life Skills Training Programme and Getting Work-Ready Scheme supporting clients in volunteering, Literacy, Numeracy, Cookery, Art, and IT courses and Educational Trips.

The Oasis Centre's aim is always for clients to 'exit' The Oasis Centre in a planned way, having achieved the changes we seek to bring about and then liaise with other support agencies who clients can move onto for the next stage of their development into volunteering, education or employment (some for the first time in their adult life).

Since receiving financial support from The Henry Smith Charity:

- 256 two-week emergency food parcels have been given out to individuals and families in desperate need.
- Over 400 people have benefited from our free café serving hot and nutritious breakfast and lunches (for some this has been the only hot and nutritious meal they receive all week).
- The Community Support and Advice Team dealt with 852 client crisis issues.
- 55 clients enrolled onto our Adult Basic Life Skills Training courses and Getting Work-Ready scheme.
- And best of all 13 clients left The Oasis Centre achieving their goals, moving into volunteering, education and employment in just 6 months!

⁴⁶ oasisgorton.org used by permission 2015

Appendix 2 cont.

The Boaz Trust

Re. Henry Smith.

- They have funded the majority of running costs (energy, utility, council tax, insurance) of two asylum seeker houses for three years. They have also funded our hosting co-ordinator over 2.5 days ... and 2.5 days of a service manager / housing manager. This funding has been for three years and ends in Sept 2014.

This support has enabled Boaz:

- To provide warm, safe housing for asylum seekers who were previously destitute
- To provide hosted accommodation with local families
- Hosts and local communities will have also benefited from increased positive contact with asylum seekers, helping to break down misconceptions, and promote integration etc.

The Henry Smith funding hasn't directly paid for the development of the business plan that led to the Refugee Housing Social Enterprise. The funding did, however, give us the space to start thinking how to make Boaz housing more financially sustainable. Knowing Henry Smith had committed three years of funding, gave us some breathing space, but at the same time, the push to start developing a more sustainable model. The Social Enterprise was launched in October 2013 and is being headed up by the Supported Housing Manager. At present he is not funded by Henry Smith, but I am in the process of writing to them and seeking part funding for his post.

Appendix 3 Practice-as-research and the neurological discoveries of Charles Limb

Music may be regarded by its audience as memorable in its performance, useful as a distraction or soothing as background. However, neuroscientist and musician, Charles Limb, asserts that the composition and improvisation of music constitute one of the most advanced areas of mental sophistication that can be accomplished by the human brain.

Limb (2011), suspecting fundamental distinctions between creative and other neural activities, began with the following hypothesis.

Artistic creativity is a neurological product that can be examined using rigorous scientific methods. I think - how can this possibly be? How can the brain generate that much information, that much music, spontaneously? And so, I set out with this concept, scientifically, that artistic creativity, it's magical, but it's not magic, meaning that it's a product of the brain (Limb, 2011).⁴⁷

Using data from the MRI scans of a fellow musician, Limb discovered scientifically measurable changes to the functions of the brain, as the subject performed pre-learned music. He then moved the musician on to spontaneous improvisation, as together they performed jazz improvisations, with the subject still in the scanner, finding measurable evidence of increased stimuli to the brain's neo-generative impulses as learned performance gave way to spontaneously generated improvisation.

But what Limb found even more intriguing was physiological evidence of concurrent deactivation within the areas of the brain that control reflection, self-monitoring and observation. Limb's studies were not limited to instrumentalists, his research then broadened to include a number of skilled freestyle rap artists. In an online article, Talitha Ford (2018) reports that these artistes used:

⁴⁷ Limb, C. (2011) *Your brain on improv*. https://www.ted.com/speakers/charles_limb

the same memorized-versus-improvised system, comparing a pre-written rhyme to ones generated entirely by the artist, using intermittent single word prompts. When their brains were monitored in the MRI, similar areas of deactivation and expansion of the brain's function were noted (2019, para.8).⁴⁸

Within the emergent research, Beaty (2015) suggests that these experiments have “implications not only for the study of artistic expertise, but also for understanding the neural underpinnings of domain-general processes such as motor control and language production” (Beaty, 2015, n.p.).⁴⁹

Here I would argue for a case to be made for the recognition of functional distinctions between the neurological responses concerning academic research and creative writing. To return to Limb, a recognition that the “increased stimulus of the brain's neo-generative impulses when the subject [moves] from learned performance to spontaneously generated improvisation” might affect attempts to combine the disparate thought processes of creative impulse and structured research. I would suggest that this offers a partial explanation as to the necessity for creative writing, with its ceaseless undercurrent of internal dialogic discourse – surely another form of improvisation – to require a quiet space removed from other mental stimuli. It also strengthens the case for an immersion in reading (or in listening to music) as immeasurably facilitative in expanding the intuitive currents of creative thought that flow beneath both creative processes

⁴⁸ Ford, Talitha, posted 13.11.2018 <https://littlevillagemag.com/dr-charles-limb-explores-how-creativity-affects-the-brain/> accessed 07.11.19

⁴⁹ Beaty, R. E. (2015). The Neuroscience of Musical Improvisation. Retrieved 08.11.19, from *Neurosci Biobehav Rev.* 2015 Apr;51:108-17. doi: 10.1016/j.neubiorev.2015.01.004. Epub 2015 Jan 16. Abstract, n.p.

Appendix 4 Lawsuits and Events Leading to Them

Table 4

DATE	EVENTS	LEGISLATION AND LAWSUITS	SOURCE
1595; 1605	Purchase of first properties: Southwick and Eastbrook; Longney.		Stroud p.7
1608	Purchase of Dorset's estates for £10,000		Gwilt p.30 footnote
1620 Oct 20th	Henry Smith's Trust formed	Henry's deed to convey his property to seven nominees to distribute rents for charitable purposes, allowing Henry £500 per annum	Gwilt, p.24 Stroud Bray
1624 March	Sudden death of Richard Sackville [3rd earl of Dorset.] Amherst, Lindsey, Rivers, Dorset 'borrowed upon bond' from several creditors.		Various Gwilt p.30
1624 April	Funeral of Dorset	Threats of prosecution made to Henry Smith	Gwilt p.30
1624 May	Return of Edward Sackville to become 4th earl. Estates in disarray.	Consent given by courts for disposing of property to pay for Richard Sackville's debts.	Lethbridge, L. & T. Wales p.
1625 March	Death of James 1 st		
1625 June	Henry revoked his original trust 'released the power of revocation.'	Lord Keeper Coventry decrees that estates and manors should be vested in trustees, defendants and any others 'as the plaintiff should appoint.	Gwilt p.24,6
1625 June 25th	Appointment of new trustees	Lindsey, Amherst and Rivers had their Court order – a grant of protection-renewed by Charles 1st exempting them from prosecution on behalf of the affairs of Richard Dorset.	Gwilt p.31
1626 January 20th	Smith asked trustees to procure a Royal license, to the effect that Christ's Hospital should oversee his estates: this was never effected.	Deed of uses: Smith filed Bill in Chancery to regain control of estate: original agreement was declared a 'nudum pactum' a one-sided agreement	Gwilt p.31
1626-April 1627	Henry works hard to establish his Will, making some significant changes.	Final Will established in law: Date worked from title of will 'third year of Charles 1 st 's reign.'	Gwilt p.37
1628 January	death of Henry Smith		Gwilt p.48

Appendix 5 Poem written for Castlefield Gallery Exhibition

Salt March

The inspiration for this poem was a long march of non-violent protest that involved women as well as men, the “satyagraha” led by Ghandi on 12th March 1930 in response to the British monopoly of coastal salt farms.

so many years
we sift the salt
sun-dried crusted layers
sun born from
small inlets of the vast
Arabian sea

down on the shore
surf breaks on
sea green brine
heavy with salt
and a line
long, languid
wandering through the foam
heads high, arms upstretched
to steady jars
of clay

we walk to covered cottages
pause at the shoreline
to watch
dolphins
leaping the waves
waders foraging for shrimps
the spiny shells of sea urchins
littering the shore

troops arrive
scatter us
shots and shouts and
salt spilt on the ground
crops shatter as salt
slips to sand

how can our Indian sea
be their sea
our Indian salt
be their salt
seized from
sea dwellers
they have their sea
their island fortress
their Britannia...

we rage beside the waves
'til one day
one gentle man
enters our world
to stand
with us

and this is the beginning

References

- Abbott, H. Porter, "Autobiography, autography, fiction: Groundwork for a taxonomy of textual categories." *New Literary History* 19, no. 3 (Spring, 1988): 597-615.
- Ackroyd, P. (1994). *The House of Doctor Dee*. Penguin Books: London.
- Ackroyd, P. (1985) *Hawksmoor*. Penguin Books: London.
- Ackroyd, P. (2000). *London: The biography*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Alexander, N. (2013). *Profoundly ordinary: Jon McGregor and everyday life*. *Contemporary Literature*, 54(4), 720–751. <https://doi.org/10.1353/CLI.2013.0046>
- Ali, K. (2013) *Genre-queer: Notes against generic binaries*. In Singer, M., Walker, N. (Eds.) *Bending Genre: Essays on creative nonfiction*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- Archer, I. W. (2002). *The charity of early modern Londoners*. *Transactions of the RHS*, 12(2002), 223-244. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3679345>
- Attridge, D. (2004). *The singularity of literature*. London and New York: Routledge.
- AVID *What is immigration detention?* Retrieved 27 August 2020 from <http://www.aviddetention.org.uk/immigration-detention/what-immigration-detention>.
- Backscheider, P. (2001). *Reflections on biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baker, J. H. (2002). *An introduction to English legal history*. London: Butterworths Tolley [Reed Elsevier UK Ltd.].
- Bakhtin, M. S. (1984a). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bakhtin, M. S. (1984b). *Rabelais and his world*. (H. Iswolsky, Trans.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Bakhtin, M. S. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

- Barrett, E., & Bolt, B. (Eds.) (2007). *Practice as research: Approaches to the creative arts enquiry*. New York: I.B. Tauris & Co.Ltd.
- Beaty, R. E. (2015). The Neuroscience of Musical Improvisation. Retrieved 8th Dec. 2019, from Neurosci Biobehav Rev. 2015 Apr;51:108-17. doi: 10.1016/j.neubiorev.2015.01.004.
- Beaven, Kirstie, Tate Debate: *When is craft an art?* October 2013 [http:// www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/blogs/tate-debate-when-craft-art](http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/blogs/tate-debate-when-craft-art).
- Beavens, A. *The Aldermen of the city of London Temp. Henry III - 1912* (London, 1908), *British History Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.british-history.ac.uk>
- Benton, M. (2009). *Literary biography: An Introduction*. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.salford.idm.oclc.org>
- BID. (2009). *Out of sight, out of mind: experiences of immigration detention in the UK*. <https://hubble-live-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/biduk/>
- Bindoff, S.T. (1961). Mr. Myddleton, the merchant of Tower St. In A.H. Dodd (Ed.) *Elizabethan Government and Society Essays presented to Sir John Neale*. The Athlone Press, London.
- Bodanis, D. (2000). *E = mc²*. London: Macmillan.
- Bronner, Simon. 1996. *The Carver's art: crafting meaning from wood* (The University Press of Kentucky) EBSCOhost. Accessed 12 February 2018.
- Brophy, K. (2007). Writing PhDs: Integrational linguistics and a new poetics for the PhD. *Text: Journal of writing and writing courses*, 11 (1), pp.1-18
- Burgess, A. (1964). *Nothing like the sun*. London: Heinemann.
- Burridge, A. (2017). "Reporting to the home office: exploring connections to detention and solidarity." <https://righttoremain.org.uk/reporting-to-the-home-office-exploring-connections-to-detention-and-solidarity/>

- Burroway, J. (1992). *Writing fiction, a guide to narrative craft*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Calder, I. M. (1987). Activities of the puritan factor of the Church of England 1625-33. In I. Scouloudi (Ed.), *The Stranger community in the metropolis*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Chalupský, P. (2016). *A horror and a beauty: the world of Peter Ackroyd's London novels*. ProQuest eBook Central <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/>
- Childs, Peter. *Julian Barnes*, Manchester University Press, 2011. *ProQuest Ebook Central* <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/>
- Citizens Advice., “Prepare for an asylum interview” Retrieved from [https:// www.citizensadvice.org.uk/immigration/prepare-for-asylum-interview#](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/immigration/prepare-for-asylum-interview#)
- Cixous, H., & Calle-Gruber, M. (1997). *rootprints* (E. Prenowitz, Trans.). London: Routledge.
- Cleave, C. (2009). *The other hand*. London: Sceptre; Hodder and Stoughton.
- Coleridge, S. T. (2005, July). *The literary remains*. The Literary Remains, by Coleridge. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/8533/8533-h/8533-h.htm>. vol. 2 (1836), (pp. 389–90.).
- Collins, A., & Brydges, E. (1812). *Collins's peerage of England: Genealogical, biographical, and historical*.
- Collinson, P. (1980). A comment: concerning the name puritan. *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol 31(04), (pp. 483-488). doi:10.1017/S0022046900044791
- Collinson, P. (1967). *The Elizabethan puritan movement*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Cook, J. (2013). Creative writing as a research method. In Griffin, G. (Ed.). (2013). Research methods for English studies. ProQuest Ebook Central. Accessed 12th Feb.2021.
- Cornford, T. “A new kind of conversation: Michael Chekhov's ‘turn to the crafts’”, *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 4:2[2013],(pp.189-20). doi: 10.1080/ 19443927.2013. 794158

- Culinary Lore. (2012). *Origin of the expression 'worth your salt.'* Retrieved from <http://www.culinarylore.com/food-history:worth-your-salt>>
- Currie, M. (1998). *Postmodern narrative theory*. Houndmills: Macmillan.
- Dentith, S. (1995). *Bakhtinian thought: an introductory reader*. London: Routledge
- Dick, O. L. (1962). *Aubrey's brief lives*. London: Penguin Books / Secker & Warburg.
- Edel, L. (1984). *Transference: the biographer's dilemma*. *Biography*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (pp. 283-291). Published by: University of Hawai'i Press on behalf of Center for Biographical Research Stable. Retrieved 22nd Feb. 2021 from [https://www.jstor.org/stable/23539110/](https://www.jstor.org/stable/23539110)
- Fielding, A., & A. Fielding (2006). *The salt industry*. Princes Risborough: Shire Publications.
- Frow, J. (2014). *Genre* (2nd ed.). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Ford, T. (2018). "Dr.Charles Limb explores how creativity affects the brain." Retrieved from <https://littlevillagemag.com/>
- Fuller, T., (Ed.) (1866-67a). "The examination of usury: the first sermon." In *The Works of Henry Smith*. (Vol 2 of 2). Edinburgh.
- Fuller, T. (1866b). *The sermons of Mr. Henry Smith, together with a preparative to marriage, God's arrow against atheists certain godly and zealous prayers, etc. printed according to his corrected copies in his lifetime*. London: William Tegg.
- Fuller, T. (post. 1662). *Worthies of England* (3 vols.) London.
- Furness, H. (2015). Why do we love Wolf Hall? the Tudors were just like us. *The Daily Telegraph*. Retrieved 26th Jan. 2016 from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk>
- Furness, H. (2015). Retrieved 26th Jan. 2016 from [Wolf-Hall-is-deliberate-perversion-of-history-says-David-Starkey.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/bbc/11369868/history-says-David-Starkey.html). <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/bbc/11369868/>
- Goddard, S. (2007) A Correspondence Between Practices. In E. Barrett and B. Bolt (Eds.) *Practice as Research* (pp.113-22). I.B.Tauris &Co. Ltd.: New York.

- Gwilt, C. P. (1836). *Notices relating to Thomas Smith of Campden, and to Henry Smith, sometime alderman of London*. Retrieved from <https://play.google.com/books>
- Smith, H. P. (1859). Henry Smith's sermons. *Notes and Queries*, s2-VIII(207), 501–502. <https://doi.org/10.1093/nq/s2-viii.207.501c>
- The Henry Smith Charity. (2019). *About Us: grant making review*. Retrieved from <https://www.henrysmithcharity.org.uk/>
- Holroyd, M. (1988) "How I Fell into Biography" in *The Troubled Face of Biography* ed. Eric Homberger and John Charmley (New York: St Martin's Press, 1988), 94-103
- Holquist, M. (2003). *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World*. London: Routledge.
- Hurley, U. (2011). *Truths and their telling*. (PhD Thesis), Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester.
- Hutcheon, L. (1988). *A Poetics of postmodernism*. London: Routledge.
- Independent. (2018). *Growing number of refugees and asylum seekers falling into poverty in Britain* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/number-of-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-falling-into-poverty-soars-in-a-year-show-figures-a8195746.html>
- Jardine, L. (2011). *Finding family: a point of view*: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qng8
- Jefferson, A. (2007). *Biography and the question of literature in France.*: Oxford University Press. Retrieved 27 Apr. 2021, from <https://oxford-universitypressscholarship-com.salford.idm.oclc.org/view/>
- Jordan, W. K. (1960). *The charities of London, 1480-1660: The aspirations and achievements of the urban society*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Keats, J. *The letters of John Keats*, (Ed. by H. Rollins 1958), 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
- Kermode, Frank. "Pillors of Fier." Review of *Nothing like the sun*: reissue, by Anthony Burgess. *London Review of Books* 24 no.13 (2002): doi: 0 7490 0512 2

- Kettler, S. V., & Trimble, C. (2001). *An amateur historian's guide to Medieval and Tudor London*. Stirling, Virginia: Capital Books Inc.
- King, S. (2000). *On writing*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Kirwan, P. (2014). You have no voice! Constructing reputation through contemporaries in the Shakespeare biopic. *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 32.1, 11.
- Kish-Goodling, D. (1998). Using the Merchant of Venice in teaching monetary economics. *Journal of Economic Education*, 29(4)
- Lethbridge, L., & Wales, T. (2015). *Henry Smith, his life and legacy*. London: The Henry Smith Charity.
- Limb, C. (2011). *Your brain on improv*. Retrieved 07.11.19, from [https:// www.ted.com/speakers/charleslimb](https://www.ted.com/speakers/charleslimb)
- Limb, C. (2019). *How creativity affects the brain*. Retrieved 07.11.19, from [https:// brainworldmagazine.com/creative-zone-interview-dr-charles-limb/](https://brainworldmagazine.com/creative-zone-interview-dr-charles-limb/)
- Lipscomb, S. (2016). A Question of interpretation. *History Today*, 66.2, 32-33. Retrieved from ISSN 0018-2753
- Lively, P. (1993). *Cleopatra's sister*. London: Quality Paperbacks Direct.
- Lukács, G. (1962). *The History of the novel*. London: Merlin.
- Lukács, G. (1989). *The Historical novel*. London: Merlin.
- Macdonald, Stuart. (1970). *The History and philosophy of art education*. (London: U of London Publishing).
- Mantel, H. (2010). *Wolf Hall*. London: Fourth Estate.
- Mantel, H. (2012). *Bring up the bodies*. London: Fourth Estate.
- Mantel, H. (2015,) *Hilary Mantel on Thomas More*. [https:// www.historytoday. com/focus/hilary-mantel-thomas-more](https://www.historytoday.com/focus/hilary-mantel-thomas-more).

Mantel, H. (2017) *The Reith lectures, Hilary Mantel: The day is for the living*. BBC Radio 4.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08tcbrp>.

Mantel, H. (2019). *The mirror and the light*. London: Fourth Estate.

McGlynn, D. (2013). Traumatized time. In Singer, M. & Walker, N. (Eds.), *Bending Genre: Essays on Creative Nonfiction*. (pp. 111-122). New York: Bloomsbury.

McGregor, J. (2003). *If nobody speaks of remarkable things*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

McSmith, A. (2011). *No such thing as society: a history of Britain in the 1980s*. London: Little, Brown Book Group.

Melina, R. (2012). Can saltwater fish live in fresh water? *Live Science*,
<https://livescience.com/32167-can-saltwater-fish-live-in-fresh-water.html>.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2002). *The phenomenology of perception*. London: Routledge Classics.

Monk-Kidd, S. (2014). *The invention of wings*. New York: Penguin Books.

Montaigne, M., Lord. (1910). Chapter (unnamed) in 1155964741 868552638 (J. Florio, Trans.) *The Essayes of Michel, Lord of Montaigne* (Vol. 1, pp. 92-104). Everyman.

Moran, J. (2018). *First you write a sentence*. London: Penguin, Random House.

Mortimer, I. (2012). *The time traveller's guide to Elizabethan England*. London: The Bodley Head.

Nelson, R. (2004). *Doctoralness in the balance: the agonies of scholarly writing in studio research degrees*. Retrieved from <http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue3/nelson.htm>

Nelson, R. (2006). Practice-as-research and the problem of knowledge. *Performance Research*, 11:4, 105-116. Retrieved from DOI: 10.1080/13528160701363556

Nicholl, C. (2007). *The lodger: Shakespeare on Silver Street*. London: Allen Lane.

- O'Brien, R. (2016). Put not beyond the sphere of your activity: The fictional afterlives of Ben Jonson. *The Ben Jonson Journal*, 23.2, (pp.169-191). Retrieved from www.eupublishing.com/loi/bjj/
- Oxford English Dictionary Online. September 2021. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/91720?redirectedFrom=imbrication> (accessed November 15, 2021).
- Ozeki, R. (2013). *A Tale for the time being*. London: Canongate Books Ltd.
- Parker, E. (2017). Chaucer's post-truth world. *History Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.historytoday.com/out-margins/chaucers-post-truth-world>
- Parliamentary Papers* (11). London: H.M. Stationery Office. Retrieved from https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=9joSAAAAYAAJ&dq=Henry+Smith+charity+Shrewsbury&source=gbs_navlinks_s (*Parliamentary Papers*, 1831).
- Perry, G. (2007). History documents arts reveals: creative writing as research. In E. Barrett and B. Bolt (Eds.) *Practice as Research: Approaches to the Creative Arts Enquiry*, 35-46. New York: I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd.
- Picard, L. (2003). *Elizabeth's London: everyday life in Elizabethan London*. London: Phoenix.
- Pihlainen, K. (2013). Escaping the confines of history: Keith Jenkins, Rethinking History: *The Journal of Theory and Practice*, 17(2), 235-252. doi:10.1080/13642529.2013.778126
- Porter, R. (2000). *London: A social history*. London: Penguin.
- Poulton-Smith, A. (2010). *The salt routes*. Stroud: Amberley Publishing plc.
- Rocío G. (2015). Fictional transits and Ruth Ozeki's "A tale for the time being". *Biography (Honolulu)*, 38(1), 87-103.

Rymer's Foedera, Volume XVIII ed. Thomas Rymer (London, 1739-1745), *British History*

Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rymer-foedera/vol18>

Sackville-West. (2011). *Inheritance*. London: Bloomsbury.

Shaw, H. E. (1983). *The forms of historical fiction*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Sheppard, R. (2008) *Poetics as conjecture and provocation*. *New Writing*. 5:1, 3-26,

doi:10.1080/14790720802237170

Singer, M., & Walker, N. (2013). *Bending genre: Essays on creative nonfiction*. New York:

Bloomsbury.

Slack, P. (1990). *The English poor law, 1531-1782*. Basingstoke: The MacMillan Press Ltd.

Smiley, J. (2005). *Thirteen ways of looking at the novel: what to read and how to write*. New

York: Random House.

Smith, A. (2020). *Spring*. London: Penguin Books.

Smith, D. (2016). *Refugee stories: seven personal journeys behind the headlines*. Watford:

Instant Apostle.

Smith, H. (1781). *The decree deed of uses, and will, of Henry Smith, esq: by which divers*

estates are settled to charitable uses. By order of the trustees. [https:// play.google.](https://play.google.com/store/books)

[com/store/books](https://play.google.com/store/books)

Smith, H. (1866). *The sermons of Mr. Henry Smith*. London: William Tegg. Retrieved from

<https://play.google.com/store/books>

Southgate, B. (2009). *History meets fiction*. Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd.

Southgate, B. (2000). *Why bother with history?* Harlow UK: Pearson Education Ltd.

Steel, J. (2007) *Wordsmithery: the writer's craft and practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave

Macmillan.

- Steveker, L.(2017) Possession. In C. Reinfandt, (Ed.), *Handbook of the English novel of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries*. De Gruyter, Inc. Retrieved from [http:// ebook central. proquest.com/](http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/)
- Stockwell, P. (2002). *Cognitive poetics: an introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Stroud, D. (1975). *The South Kensington estate of Henry Smith's charity: Its history and development*. London: Private Publication.
- Suneetha, P., 'Homo homini lupus': A note on Hilary Mantel's Wolf Hall (October 25, 2010). The IUP Journal of English Studies, Vol. V, No. 3, pp. 45-53, September 2010, Available at SSRN: [https:// ssrn.com /abstract=1697456](https://ssrn.com/abstract=1697456).
- Systematic Failure: Immigration bail hearings 2019, The view from Taylor House. <https://bailobs.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/>
- Tanner, T. (1990) "Introduction" in *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1926 reprinted with an introduction and notes. London: Penguin. pp. vii-lvi.
- The Burrell Collection, (1997).) Great Britain: HarperCollins Publishers in association with Glasgow Museums.
- Thrush, A., & Ferris, J. (Eds.). (2010) Amherst, Richard [1565-1632] of 'The Vine' High St Lewes; and Serjeants' Inn, Chancery Lane London. In *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1604 -29*. London: British Library.
- Tremain, R. (2007). *The road home*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Trueblood, D. E. (1951). *The life we prize*. New York: Harper.
- Wales, T. (2012). *Smith, Henry (1549–1628)*. Retrieved from <http://www.oxforddnb.com>
- Wellek, R and Warren, A. (1996). *Theory of literature*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Welty, E. (2002). *On writing*. New York: Random House Inc.
- White, H., Burrell, A., Lehtimäki, M., Pihlainen, K., et al. (2006). *Tropes for the past: Hayden White and the history/ literature debate*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

- Winter, K. J. (2002). Life writing/writing lives. *Biography*, 25(4), 674+. [https:// link. gale. com/apps/doc/A97073687/LitRC?u=salcal2&sid=bookmark-Lit RC&xid=b7ccd6e4](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A97073687/LitRC?u=salcal2&sid=bookmark-LitRC&xid=b7ccd6e4)
- Winterson, J. (2013) *Shape shifter: the joyous transgressions of Virginia Woolf's Orlando*. Retrieved 15th July, 2019. from www.newstatesman.com/
- Woolf, V. (1967). *Collected essays*. London: Hogarth Press.

Additional Bibliography

Historical Research: 16th & 17th centuries

Primary Sources

- Bray, W. (1800) *Collections relating to the estate of Henry Smith Esq. sometime Alderman of London*. London: Self-published.
- Fuller, T. (1866b). *The sermons of Mr. Henry Smith, together with a preparative to marriage, God's arrow against atheists certain godly and zealous prayers, etc. printed according to his corrected copies in his lifetime*. London: William Tegg.
- Gwilt, C. P. (1836). *Notices relating to Thomas Smith of Campden, and to Henry Smith, sometime alderman of London*. London: George Woodfall.
- Kettler, S. V., & Trimble, C. (2001). *An amateur historian's guide to Medieval and Tudor London*. Stirling, Virginia: Capital Books Inc.
- Lethbridge, L. & T. Wales., (2015). *Henry Smith his life and legacy*. London: The Henry Smith Charity.
- Rymer, T. (1626). *Rymer's Foedera* (held in the British Library ed. Vol. XVIII). London.
- Smith, H. (1781). *The decree deed of uses, and will, of Henry Smith, Esq: By which divers estates are settled to charitable uses*. By order of the trustees. [https:// play.google. com/store/books](https://play.google.com/store/books)

- Smith, H. (1866). *The sermons of Mr. Henry Smith*. London: William Tegg. Retrieved from <https://play.google.com/books/reader?printsec=frontcover&output=reader&id=vtQTA AAAAYAAJ&pg=GBS.PP5>
- Stroud, D. (1975). *The South Kensington estate of Henry Smith's charity: its history and development*. London: Private Publication.
- Thrush, A. & P. Ferris. "Amherst, Richard [1565-1632] of 'The Vine' High St Lewes; and Serjeants' Inn, Chancery Lane London" Retrieved 9th June, 2015.
- Turner, E. 'Memoirs of Henry Smith Esq., commonly known as "Dog Smith"; with a brief acct. of his Sussex charities'. *Sussex Archive Collections*, 487- 496.

Secondary Sources

- Allen. (1829). *History of Surrey and Sussex*. London.
- Alsop, J. D. (1989). Religious preambles in early modern English wills as formulae. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 19-27. doi: 10. 1017/ s00220 469 00035405
- Akbar, A. (2007). "Shakespeare's inspiration: relief of the poor in Bristol from late Elizabethan times until the Restoration era". *The Independent*, 10-11.
- Archer, I. (1991). *The pursuit of stability: social relations in Elizabethan London*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Archer, I. W. (2002). The charity of early modern Londoners. *Transactions of the RHS*, 12(2002), 223-244. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3679345>
- Aubrey, J. (1972), *Aubrey's brief lives*. Penguin Books Ltd.: Bungay, Suffolk.
- Aune, M. G. (2003). [Review of *Daniel J. Vitkus, piracy, slavery, and redemption: Barbary captivity narratives from early modern England*]. *Journeys*, 4(2), 97– 8. Berghahn Books, Inc.
- Baddeley, J. J. (1900) *The aldermen of Cripplegate Ward*. London: Printed for Private Distribution.

- Bartels, E. C. (2006). Too many blackamoors: deportation, discrimination, and Elizabeth I. *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 46, No. 2, 305-322. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3844644>
- Beavens, A. (1908). The aldermen of the city of London, temp. Henry III–[1912] (2 vols. (1908–13)).
- Bishop, M. (2009). Tudor philanthropy. Retrieved from <http://philanthrocapitalism.net/bonus-chapters/tudor-philanthropy/>
- Bittle, W., & Lane, R. (1976). *Inflation and philanthropy in England: a reassessment of W.K. Jordan's data*. *Economic History Review*, pp. 203-229.
- Brook, B. (1813). *The lives of the puritans, in three volumes*. (1). London: James Black.
- Burton, E. (1973) *The Elizabethans at home*. London: Arrow Books Ltd.
- Byrne, M. S. C. (1954). *Elizabethan life in town and country*. London: Methuen.
- Calder, I. M. (1987). Activities of the puritan factor of the Church of England 1625-33. In I. Scouloudi (Ed.), *The stranger community in the Metropolis*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- Cawdrey, R. (2007). *The first English Dictionary 1604*. Oxford: The Bodleian Library.
- Clarke, G. (1972). *The seventeenth century*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Collinson, P. (1967). *The Elizabethan puritan movement*. London: Jonathan Cape
- Collinson, P. (1980). A comment: concerning the name puritan. *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol 31(04), 483-488. doi.10.1017/S0022046900044791
- Collinson, P. (1983). *English puritanism*. London: The Historical Association.
- Cumming, V. (1984). *The seventeenth century, a visual history of costume*. London: B.T.Batsford Ltd.
- Dodd, A. H. (1961). Elizabethan government and society: *Essays presented to Sir John Neale*. London : The Athlone Press.

- Donne, J. (1959). *Devotions upon emergent occasions*. Michigan: Ann Arbor paperbacks, the University of Michigan Press.
- Dover Wilson, J. (1944). *Life in Shakespeare's England*. Pelican Books.
- Elton, G.R. (1987). *The practice of history*. London: Harper Collins.
- Elton, G. (1958). *Star Chamber stories*. London: Methuen and Co Ltd, 1958.
- Evans, R. (1997). *In defense of history*. London: Granta.
- Fairholt, F. W. (1885). *Costume in England*. London: Unknown.
- Fuller, T., (Ed.) (1866-67a). "The examination of usury: the first sermon." In *The Works of Henry Smith*. (Vol 2 of 2). Edinburgh.
- Fuller, T. (post. 1662). *Worthies of England* (3 vols.) London.
- Goose, N. The rise and decline of philanthropy in early modern Colchester: The unacceptable face of mercantilism? *Social History*:31 (4), 469+.2006
- Gray, B. K. (1905). *A history of English philanthropy*. Westminster: P.S. King & Son.
- Gwilt, J. (1828). *Evidences relating to the estate of Henry Smith Esq.* self-published.
- Gwynn, R. D. (1987). *Patterns in the study of Huguenot refugees in Britain: past, present and future*. In I. Scouloudi (Ed.), *Huguenots in Britain and Their French Background*. Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd. pp. 217-232.
- Hadwin, J. (1978). *Deflating philanthropy*. *Economic History Review*, xxxi. pp.105-17.
- Harris, J. G. (2004). *Sicke economies: drama, mercantilism and disease in Shakespeare's England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Harrison, W. (1968). *The description of England*. (G. Edelen, Ed.) New York: Published for the Folger Shakespeare Library by The Cornell University Press,
- Jordan, W. K. (1959). *Philanthropy in England, 1480-1660: a study of the changing pattern of English social aspirations*. London: Allen and Unwin.

- Jordan, W. K. (1960). *The charities of London, 1480-1660: The aspirations and achievements of the urban society*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Jordan, W. K. (1961). *The charities of rural England, 1480-1660: The aspirations and achievements of the rural society*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Kaufmann, M. (2017). *Black Tudors*. London: Oneworld Publications.
- Lock, C. S. (1910). Charity and social life: a short study of religious and social thought in relation to charitable methods and institutions. *The English Review, 1908-1937*, pp.184–184. The English Review Ltd Etc.
- Nicholl, C. (2007). *The lodger: Shakespeare on Silver Street*. London: Allen Lane.
- Oldfield, Pamela. (2001). *The great plague: The diary of Alice Paynton*. London.
- Picard, L. (2003). Elizabeth's London: everyday life in Elizabethan London. London: Phoenix.
- Porter, R. (2000). *London: a social history*. London: Penguin.
- Ridley, J. (2002). *A brief history of the Tudor age*. London: Constable & Robinson Ltd.
- Rowse, A. L. (1973). *The England of Elizabeth*. London: Sphere Books Ltd.
- Sackville-West. (2011). *Inheritance*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Salgado, G. (1977). *The Elizabethan underworld*. London: Dent.
- Schen, C. S. *Charity and lay piety in reformation London, 1500-1620*.
- Schutte, K., & Harris, A. (2013). Marrying out in the sixteenth century. *Journal of family history*, 38(1), 3-16.
- Scouloudi, I. (1987). *The stranger community in the metropolis: Huguenots in Britain and their French background*. Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Shapiro, J. (2005). *A year in the life of William Shakespeare*. London: faber and faber.
- Sim, A. (2011). *Food and feast in Tudor England*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd.
- Sim, A. (1999.) *Pleasures & pastimes in Tudor England*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd.
- Slack, Paul. (1988). *Poverty and policy in Tudor and Stuart England*. London: Longman.

- Slack, P. (2011). *Poverty in Elizabethan England*. Retrieved from [http:// www.historytoday.com/paul-slack/poverty-elizabethan-england](http://www.historytoday.com/paul-slack/poverty-elizabethan-england).
- Spring, E. (1993). *Law, land, and family*. Chapel Hill: U. North Carolina Press.
- Stow, J. (2005). *A survey of London written in the year 1598*. Stroud: Sutton Publishing.
- Thomson, J. (1965). Piety and charity in late medieval London. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, xii.
- Thrush, A. & J. Ferris., (2010). *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1604-29*.
- Tinniswood, A. (2004). *By Permission of heaven: the story of the great fire of London*. London: Pimlico.
- Tomlins, T.E. (1797). *The Law-dictionary*: Ed. A. Strahan Volume 1. London: T. Longman.
<https://play.google.com/store/>
- Turner, E. (1836). "Mem. of Henry Smith Esq., commonly known as "Dog Smith"; with a brief acct. of his Suss. charities." *Sussex Archive Collections*: pp. 487- 496. Unknown.
"Notices of Henry Smith [Review]." *The Gentlemen's Magazine* 5: vol 6.
- Wales, T. (2012). 'Smith, Henry (1549–1628)'. Retrieved from
<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/66536>, 20 March 2014.
- West, D. *The Cheshire salt industry in Tudor & Stuart times (1485-1714)*. Cheshire: a salt museum publication, Cheshire libraries and museums. n.d.
- Willis, C. and P. Cunnington. (1960). *English costume. The picture histories series*. London: Vista Books.
- History of Salt*
- Fielding, A., & A. (2006). *The Salt industry*. Princes Risborough: Shire Publications.
- Kurlansky, M. (2002). *Salt: a world history*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Poulton -Smith, A. (2010). *The salt routes*. Stroud: Amberley Publishing plc.

West, D. *The Cheshire salt industry in Tudor & Stuart times (1485-1714)*. Cheshire: A Salt Museum Publication, Cheshire Libraries and Museums. <https://www.middlewich-heritage.org.uk/>

Culinary Law. *Origin of the expression 'worth your salt.'* Retrieved from <https://culinarylore.com/> Sept. 22nd. 2012.

Old salt. In *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved 13:20, 11th Nov., 2021. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Old_salt&oldid=1033481702

History and Theory

Guyver, R. Philosophy and traditions of enquiry in the great history debate. *The Philosopher*, LXXXVI No.2. <http://www.the-philosopher.co.uk/guyver.htm>

Jenkins, K. (1999). *Why history? Ethics and postmodernity*. London: Routledge.

Jenkins, K. (2009). *At the limits of history: essays on theory and practice*. London and New York: Routledge.

Jenkins, K. & A. Musgrove., (2003). *Rethinking history*. London: Routledge [New Ed.].

Lyons, M. Making history: between fact and fiction. *History Today*, January 2016, 46.

Munslow, A. (1997). Authority and reality in the representation of the past. *Rethinking History*, 1:1, pp. 75-87. doi: 10.1080/13642529708596304

Pihlainen, K. (2002). The moral of the historical story: textual differences in fact and fiction. *New Literary History*, 33(1), 39-60. Retrieved 12th July, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20057709>

Roberts, D. D. (1995). *Nothing but history: reconstruction and extremity after metaphysics*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Retrieved from <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft3q2nb26r/>

- Roth, M. S. (2004). Classic postmodernism [review of *Refiguring History: new thoughts on an old discipline*, by K. Jenkins]. *History and Theory*, 43(3), 372–378. [http:// www. jstor. org/ stable/3590649](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3590649)
- Southgate, B. C. (1992). “The power of imagination”: Psychological explanations in mid-seventeenth-century England. *History of Science*, 30.3, 281-294. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1298077032?accountid=8058>
- Southgate, B. (2000). *Why bother with history?* Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Southgate, B. (2009). *History meets fiction*. Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd.
- White, H. (1978). *Tropics of discourse: essays in cultural criticism*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.

Contemporary Issues of Asylum and Immigration

- BID. (2009), *Out of sight, out of mind: bail for immigration detainees*, [https:// www.biduk. org/pages/62-bid-research-reports](https://www.biduk.org/pages/62-bid-research-reports).
- Bradstock, A.(2003). *Asylum voices*. London: Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.
- Bloch, A. (2000). Refugee settlement in Britain: The impact of policy on participation. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 26:1, pp.75-88.
- Bloch, A. (2002). *The migration and settlement of refugees in Britain*. London: Palgrave, Macmillan.
- The Boaz Trust. www.boaztrust.org.uk
- Collinson, S. (2011). *Refugees in international relations*. London: OUP.
- Harding, S. (2006). The stranger within: towards a more progressive asylum policy. *The common good: Christianity, progressive politics and social Justice*, 194 (Summer).
- Right to Remain (2014). Campaigning toolkit. Retrieved from [righttoremain. org.uk/toolkit/entering-the-uk.html](http://righttoremain.org.uk/toolkit/entering-the-uk.html)

Rutter, J. (2015). *Moving up and getting on: migration, integration and social cohesion in the UK*. Policy Press.

Smith, D. (2016). *Refugee stories: seven personal journeys behind the headlines*. Watford: Instant Apostle.

Snyder, S. (2012). *Asylum seeking, migration and church*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Spencer, N. (2004). *Asylum and immigration, a Christian perspective on a polarised debate*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster.

Stevens, D. (2004). *UK asylum law and policy, historical and contemporary perspectives*. Thompson Sweet and Maxwell.

Winder, R. (2004). *Bloody foreigners: the story of immigration to Britain*. London: Abacus.

Wider Reading

Biography

Ackroyd, P. (2000). *London: the biography*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Aubrey, J. (1972). *Aubrey's brief lives*. Bungay, Suffolk: Penguin Books Ltd.

Bostridge, I. (2015). *Schubert's winter journey: anatomy of an obsession*. London: Faber and Faber.

Burton, J. (2015). *The miniaturist*. London: Picador

McCloskey, M. (2012.) *Circles around the sun*. London: Penguin.

Rogers, D. (2010). *The last resort, a Zimbabwean memoir*. London: Short Books.

Shapiro, James. (2005). *A year in the life of William Shakespeare*. London: Faber and Faber.

Smith, L. (2006). *Our Betty: scenes from my life*. London: Simon and Schuster UK Ltd.

Woolf, V. (1978). *Orlando*. London: The Hogarth Press.

Historical Novels

Ackroyd, P. (1994). *The house of Doctor Dee*. Penguin Books: London.

- Ackroyd, P. (1985) *Hawksmoor*. Penguin Books: London.
- Mantel, H. (2010). *Wolf Hall*. London: Fourth Estate.
- Mantel, H. (2012). *Bring up the bodies*. London: Fourth Estate.
- Meredith, G. (n.d.). *Diana of the Crossways – Complete*. Project Gutenberg.
- Moggach, D. (1999). *Tulip fever*. London: QPD.
- Oldfield, P. (2001). *The great plague: The diary of Alice Paynton*. London: Scholastic Children's Books.
- Sansom, C. J. (2007). *Sovereign*. London: Pan Macmillan Ltd.
- Sansom, C. J. (2013). *Lamentation*. London: Pan Macmillan.
- Schulman, N. (2012). *Graven with diamonds*. London: Short Books.
- Tinniswood, A. (2003). *By permission of heaven: the story of the great fire of London*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Tremain, R. (1990). *Restoration*. London: Sceptre.
- Weir, A. (2007). *Innocent traitor*. London: Arrow Books.

Asylum and Immigration Novels

- Cleave, C. (2009). *The other hand*. London: Sceptre; Hodder and Stoughton.
- Gupta, R. (2008). *Enslaved, the new British slavery*. London: Portobello Books.
- Jason, W. (2010). *Out of the shadows*. London: Andersen Press Ltd.
- Nazer, M. & I. Lewis., (2008). *Slave*. London: Virago.
- Ondaatje, M. (1989). *Running in the family*. London: Picador.
- Rogers, D. (2010). *The last resort, a Zimbabwean memoir*. London: Short Books.
- Smith, A. (2020). *Spring*. London: Penguin Books.
- Tremain, R. (2007). *The road home*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Innovative Writing

- Ackroyd, P. (1985) *Hawksmoor*. Penguin Books: London.

- Barnes, J. (1984). *Flaubert's parrot*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Faulkner, W. (1963). *As I lay dying*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Lively, P. (1993). *Cleopatra's sister*. London: Quality Paperbacks Direct.
- Mantel, H. (1990). *Fludd*. London: Penguin.
- McCarthy, C. (1993). *All the pretty horses*. London: Picador.
- McCloskey, M. (2012). *Circles around the sun*. London: Penguin.
- McGregor, J. (2003). *If nobody speaks of remarkable things*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- McGregor, J. (2007). *so many ways to begin*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Mitchell, D. (2005). *Cloud atlas*. London: Sceptre.
- Ozeki, R. (2013). *A tale for the time being*. London: Canongate Books Ltd.
- Woolf, V. (1978). *Orlando*. London: The Hogarth Press.

Theory and Criticism

- Alexander, N. (2013). Profoundly ordinary: Jon McGregor and everyday life. *Contemporary Literature*, 54(4), 720–751. <https://doi.org/10.1353/CLI.2013.0046>
- Attridge, D. (2004). *The singularity of literature*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Backsheider, P. (2001). *Reflections on biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M., & Holquist, M. (1981). *Dialogic imagination: four essays*. University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. S. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays*. Austin: Uni. of Texas Press.
- Belsey, C. (1980). *Critical practice*. London & New York: Methuen and Co. Ltd.
- Bocharov, S., & Liapunov, V. (1994). Conversations with Bakhtin. *PMLA*, Vol. 109, No. 5, 1009-1024. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/462968>
- Culler, J. (1997). *Literary theory: a very short introduction*. Oxford: OUP.

- Demoen, K., Borghart, *et al.* (2010). *Bakhtin's theory of the literary chronotope : reflections, applications, perspectives*. Academia Press.
- Fletcher, J., & Mann, A. (2020). *Illuminating the exegesis: an introduction*. Retrieved from www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue3/fletchermann.htm.
- Gardiner, M. (1993). *Ecology and carnival: traces of a "green" social theory in the writings of M. M. Bakhtin*. Retrieved 2nd Feb. 2015. [http:// www. jstor. org/stable/657997](http://www.jstor.org/stable/657997)
- Halperin, J. (Ed.). (1974). *The theory of the novel: new essays*. London, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hans, J. S. (1990). *The value(s) of literature*. Retrieved from eBook Collection (EBSCOhost) - printed on 1st July 2015, via University of Manchester AN: 7943; Account: 4280246
- Hirschkop, K. H. & D. Shepherd., (Ed.). (1989). *Bakhtin and cultural theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Holquist, M. (2003). *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his world*. London: Routledge.
- Hutcheon, L. (1988). *A poetics of postmodernism*. London: Routledge.
- Kessler-Harris, A. (2009). Why biography? *American Historical Review*, June, 625-630.
- Kristeva, J., & T. Moi, (1986). *The Kristeva reader*. Oxford: Blackwell's.
- Lukács, G. (1989). *The historical novel*. (H. & S. Mitchell, Trans.) London: Merlin Press.
- Lukács, G., & A. Bostock, (1971). *The theory of the novel : a historico-philosophical essay on the forms of great epic literature*. London: Merlin Press.
- Morris, P. (Ed.). (1994) *The Bakhtin reader: selected writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Morson, G. & C. Emerson. (1990). *Mikhail Bakhtin: creation of a prosaics*. Stanford USA: Stanford University Press.
- Nelson, R. (2006). Practice-as-research and the problem of knowledge. *Performance Research*, 11:4, 105-116. doi:10.1080/13528160701363556

- Pearce, L. (2006). *Bakhtin and the dialogic principle*. In P. Waugh (Ed.), *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide*. pp. 223-231. Oxford: OUP.
- Reid, I. (1984). *The making of literature: texts contexts and classroom practices*. Np: Australian Association for the Teaching of English.
- Robinson, A. (2011). *In theory Bakhtin: dialogism, polyphony and heteroglossia*. Retrieved 30th Jan. 2017. <https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/>
- Shields, D. (2011). *Reality hunger: a manifesto*. London: Hamish Hamilton.
- Slater, P. (2007). Bakhtin: on hearing God's voice. *Modern Theology*, 23:1, pp.11-25. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=shib,cookie,ip,url,uid&db=aph&AN=23718662&custid=s2888710>
- Southgate, B. (1992). "The Power of imagination": Psychological explanations in mid-seventeenth-century England. *History of Science*, 30.3, pp. 281-294. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1298077032?accountid=8058>
- Stockwell, P. (2002). *Cognitive poetics: an introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Stone, Donald D. *Meredith and Bakhtin: polyphony and bildung*, Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900 Vol. 28, No. 4. (Autumn, 1988), pp. 693-712
- Voloshinov, V. (1986). *Marxism and the philosophy of language* (L. M. A. I. R. Titunik, Trans.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Wellek, R., & Warren, A. (1976). *Theory of literature* (3rd ed.). Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Welty, E. (2002). *On writing*. New York: Random House Inc.
- White, H. (1994). *Tropics of discourse: essays in cultural criticism*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- White, H. (1973). *Metahistory: the historical imagination in nineteenth century Europe*. Baltimore :Johns Hopkins University Press.

White, H. (2006). *Tropes for the Past: Hayden White and the history / literature debate*, In K. Korhonen (Ed.), [http:// ebookcentral.proquest. com/](http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/)

Writing Techniques

Graham, R. (2005). *The road to somewhere : a creative writing companion*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Graham, R. (2007). *How to write fiction and think about it*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

King, S. (2000). *On writing*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Moran, J. (2018). *First you write a sentence*. Milton Keynes: Penguin.

Smith, H. (2005). *The writing experiment : strategies for innovative creative writing*. Crow's Nest, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin.

Steel, J. (Ed.). (2007). *Wordsmithery : the writer's craft and practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan

Dictionaries and Reference Books

OED Online. September 2021. Oxford University Press. [https:// www.oed. com/view/Entry/91720?redirectedFrom=imbrication](https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/91720?redirectedFrom=imbrication) (accessed November 15, 2012).

Knowles, E. (Ed.). (1999). *The Oxford dictionary of quotations*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rymer, T. (1626). *Rymer's Foedera* (British Library ed. Vol. XVIII). London.

Tomlins, T. E. (1797). *The law-dictionary* (Volume 1). London: T. Longman.