

# **Policing Print: The novel before the police**

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## ***Three Card Trick*** **A Novel**

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**Abstract:**

This thesis is presented in two sections; the first, ‘Policing Print: The novel and the practice of law enforcement 1720-1750,’ is a critical essay examining the interrelated development of the novel and the culture of policing in eighteenth-century London. ‘Policing Print’ investigates what D.A. Miller refers to as ‘the possibility of a radical entanglement between the nature of the novel and the practice of the police.’ While Miller’s book, *The Novel and the Police*, engages with post-1860 novels and policing practices, this thesis takes his subject back further and argues that the eighteenth-century novel was already engaged with the culture and practice of policing.

The second, though primary, section is the historical novel, *Three Card Trick*, which is a fictionalised telling of the confrontation between the notorious housebreaker, Jack Sheppard, and the thief-taker, Jonathan Wild. *Three Card Trick* is an attempt to write a crime novel differently; to bend and stretch the genre in order to make it speak to the specificities of my historical characters and the milieu in which they are embedded. *Three Card Trick* therefore derives its narrative structures and strategies from the acts and institutions of crime and law enforcement which it describes; Wild is at once criminal and policeman, antagonist and ally, Sheppard both self-interested criminal and ascendant folk hero.

These two parts of the thesis are significantly in dialogue with each other. ‘Policing Print’ argues that the novel and the culture of policing informed and were informed by one another. Attention to this movement between novelistic and policing practice produces new readings of Daniel Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* and Henry Fielding’s *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great*. In turn, these readings directly shape the creative methodology of my novel, *Three Card Trick*, by enabling it to engage creatively with the arguments made in my critical work.

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# Policing Print: the novel before the police

## Introduction:

### I - Police before *police*

At the turn of the eighteenth century, there was no such institution as the police, and no such person as the policeman. For much of the century, there was barely the word *police*. In its modern sense, *police* was entirely non-existent as verb, noun, institution, and concept. No *police*, no *policing*, no *policework*.<sup>1</sup> Where *police* did appear, it was as a borrowing from French, signifying variously ‘policy,’ ‘civilization,’ or, to those who associated it with continental statism, ‘absolutism.’<sup>2</sup> The century would be more than halfway done before *police* took on something approaching its modern meaning and began to refer to practices and institutions of professional law enforcement and crime prevention.<sup>3</sup> Even after the new meaning appeared, the older, broader meanings persisted, as theories of police in the sense of ‘policy’ became central to the workings of government, and *police* in the sense we understand it remained a rarity.<sup>4</sup>

So no *police*. In the absence of the word, the ideology, or the institution, the work we now call policing was shared between private citizens and a haphazard agglomeration of local institutions with

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<sup>1</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary dates the modern sense of ‘the civil force of a state, responsible for the prevention and detection of crime and the maintenance of public order’ to the early nineteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed history of the changing meaning and use of *police*, see Leon Radzinowicz, *A History Of English Criminal Law And Its Administration From 1750* (London: Stevens, 1948), III, 1-8; F. M. Dodsworth, ‘The Idea Of Police In Eighteenth-Century England: Discipline, Reformation, Superintendence, C. 1780–1800’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 69 (2008), 583-604; Elaine A Reynolds, *Before The Bobbies* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>3</sup> John B Bender, *Imagining The Penitentiary* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 1; Contradicting the *OED*, Bender identifies John Fielding (half-brother of Henry and co-founder of the Bow Street Runners) as the first Englishman to regularly use *police* in its modern sense, but provides no specific citation. *Police* in the sense of a body dedicated to the prevention and detection of crime is used unambiguously in the title and text of John Fielding’s 1758 pamphlet *An Account of the Origin and Effects of a Police Set on Foot*, which recounts the formation and operations of the Bow Street Runners.

<sup>4</sup> Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries On The Laws Of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), II, 161; Blackstone defines what he refers to as ‘police and oeconomy’: ‘The due regulation and domestic order of the kingdom: whereby the individuals of the state, like members of a well-governed family, are bound to conform their general behaviour to the rules of propriety, good neighbourhood, and good manners; and to be decent, industrious, and inoffensive in their respective stations.’ Blackstone’s use contains a germ of Fielding’s new sense, but the infection is mild; although Blackstone specifies systems of ‘due regulation,’ the sense is of a governmental strategy rather than an institution or a class of action.

no central organizing force. London was divided into twenty-six wards, each of which was further divided into precincts of varying sizes. These divisions overlaid the older parish lines, creating a palimpsest of ancient and modern divisions and boundaries.<sup>5</sup> In this fragmented political and geographical structure, even the localization of power was not straightforward, and the institutions and practices of law enforcement emerging from London's diffuse civic organization were themselves fragmented and inconsistent, differing widely in both scale and strategy. Constables, for example, were recruited by the precinct, but their sphere of duty encompassed the whole ward.<sup>6</sup> This meant that, since the number of precincts per ward was highly variable, the number of constables in each ward also varied wildly. According to recruitment figures provided by John Beattie, Bread Street ward had thirteen precincts and 331 households, which meant that in Bread Street ward there was one constable for every 25.5 households. By contrast, in the ward of Cripplegate Without, which was composed of four large precincts, and so could nominate only four constables, there were 486.5 households for every officer.<sup>7</sup>

Official practice varied from ward to ward and precinct to precinct, and responsibility for the prevention and detection of crime was distributed between a number of institutions and groups whose co-operation was limited.<sup>8</sup> Beadles, constables, and watchmen made up the main body of the city's official policers. These officers derived their powers separately from the city, ward, precinct and parish respectively, though a loose chain of supervision existed with beadles co-ordinating the activities of the constables in their wards, and constables directing the efforts of the watch within their precinct. However, this limited organization depended for its cohesion on the discretionary willingness to co-operate of individual officers, rather than on any central mandate.<sup>9</sup>

The duties of these officials comprised a fraction of those we associate with the modern police. Constables held the power of arrest, but had no duty to investigate crimes in which there was no readily available suspect, and they were expected to spend the majority of their hours of duty at home, so as to be available to victims, rather than in the active pursuit of criminals. As John Beattie writes, the constabular oath of office 'makes it clear that there was no expectation that a constable would

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<sup>5</sup> John Beattie, *Policing and Punishment in London 1660-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 6-17. Leon Radzinowicz, *A History Of English Criminal Law And Its Administration From 1750* (London: Stevens, 1948), I, 32-60; Reynolds, 12-14

<sup>6</sup> Beattie, 114.

<sup>7</sup> Beattie, 116.

<sup>8</sup> Reynolds, 18-24.

<sup>9</sup> Peter King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England, 1740-1820* (Oxford: University Press, 2000), 62-70

investigate a crime, discover the perpetrator, formulate and bring the charges'.<sup>10</sup> Watchmen did patrol, walking the streets between the hours of 9pm and 5am in winter and 10pm and 6am in summer, though they held no powers of arrest, and the long, unwieldy halberds which they carried as a mark of office until the second quarter of the century were more suitable for sentry duty than for active patrol in the narrow streets of the city, this indicating their largely deterrent function.<sup>11</sup>

So, with official efforts largely confined to prevention and deterrence, the detection and investigation of crimes and the discovery and apprehension of perpetrators was largely left to victims and their associates. This diffusion of policing powers created a zone of opportunity in which private interests could operate, and in the first three decades of the century a variety of unofficial policing endeavours emerged in response to the problem of crime. Professional thief-takers, most notably the self-styled 'Thief-Taker General of Great Britain and all its Isles', Jonathan Wild, investigated crimes and secured stolen goods for a fee, filling the gaps between the official institutions, though, as I will discuss later in this thesis, and dramatize in my novel, *Three Card Trick*, Wild's organization encompassed crime as well as law enforcement.<sup>12</sup> The social movement known as the Society For [sic] the Reformation of Manners adopted a militant policing role. Believing that minor crimes of public immorality led to larger felonies, members of the Society patrolled the streets armed with sheafs of pro-forma warrants, serving them on those they found engaged in acts of prostitution, gambling and sabbath-breaking. These extra-official systems of law enforcement delivered significant numbers of defendants to the courts, with Jonathan Wild claiming to have brought nearly two hundred felons to the gallows during the eighteen years in which his organization operated, and the Society's members bringing over 100,000 prosecutions for offenses of public immorality between 1690 and 1743.<sup>13</sup> The involvement of these privately-operating law-enforcers did not end with the delivery of the criminal to the justice system; Wild was a frequent witness at the Old Bailey, and the Society's members included many officers of the court, including a number of magistrates.<sup>14</sup>

The discourse around policing was as diffuse and open as the practice. Crime was a persistent source of anxiety for the city's population, and writers of all kinds participated in a culture-wide interrogation of the suitability of existing policing institutions, as well as of the possibility of new

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<sup>10</sup> Beattie 79.

<sup>11</sup> Beattie 180-181

<sup>12</sup> In addition to restoring stolen goods to their owners, Wild also oversaw the activities of a number of thieves. Chapter 3 of this thesis deals with the ambivalence of Wild's organisation in detail, while Wild is one of the two protagonists of my novel.

<sup>13</sup> Alan Hunt, *Governing Morals*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1999) 28.

<sup>14</sup> Hunt, 30

systems and strategies. Throughout the century, pamphlets like the anonymously-authored *Hanging Not Punishment Enough for Rogues, Murderers, and Highwaymen* (1701), Daniel Defoe's *Augusta Triumphans* (1728) and *Second Thoughts Are Best* (1729), and Henry Fielding's *Enquiry into the Late Increase of Robbers* (1751), represented the official policing provision as being woefully inadequate to the problem of crime, with Defoe memorably describing the watch as being composed of 'decrepit, superannuated wretches, with one foot in the grave and the other ready to follow; so feeble that a puff of breath can blow them down.'<sup>15</sup> Other commentators were no more approving; Ned Ward, in his book, *The London Spy*, uses the slang term 'Coniwables', a play on *constable* and *cony*, a slang term for the female sex organ. The expression also evokes *conycatcher*, meaning a thief, a cheat, or a whoremonger, pointing to a suspicion of corruption among officers.<sup>16</sup> Along with these criticisms of existing measures, the popular discourse around policing advocated a range of institutional formations and reforms, including the author of *Hanging Not Punishment Enough's* plan for a brutal deterrent regime, in which theatrical displays of torture and dismemberment would supplement the existing public spectacle of execution, and Fielding's wish to 'rouse the civil power from its present lethargic state' in order that it might pursue the systematic observation and control of the poor.<sup>17</sup> This thesis argues that the novel – particularly the novels of Defoe and Fielding – forms part of this discourse of policing, and further, that this discursive engagement held profound consequences for both the novel and the police, shaping the practice and form of both.

The idea that the novel and the police are connected is not new. In his book, *The Novel and the Police*, D.A. Miller writes 'few of course would dispute that, with Dickens, the English novel for the first time features a massive thematization of social discipline'.<sup>18</sup> However, as I will argue in this thesis, the massive thematization Miller describes was already a feature of the eighteenth-century novel, particularly of Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and Fielding's *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great*. Constables, watchmen and unofficial policers appear frequently in Defoe and Fielding's novels, and the manner of their representation clearly forms part of the authors' wider arguments on law enforcement, and of the wider discourse of policing. In *Moll Flanders*, for example, Defoe stages a series of meetings between Moll and a variety of officials, including constables, watchmen and magistrates. In the second chapter of this thesis I will argue that Defoe uses these meetings to interrogate each element in the hierarchy of

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<sup>15</sup> Daniel Defoe, *Second Thoughts Are Best* (London: W. Meadows, 1729) 2.

<sup>16</sup> Ned Ward, *The London Spy*, (London: Folio Society, 1953) 63; For further discussion of this pun see Steven Earnshaw, *The Pub in Literature: England's Altered States* (Manchester: University Press, 2000) 119.

<sup>17</sup> Henry Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Late Increase in Robbers* (London: A. Millar, 1751) 3.

<sup>18</sup> D.A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) ix.



law enforcement, offering a schematically thematized critique of pre-police culture and practice. I will also explore the ways in which Defoe's complex, ambivalent relationship with the Society For the Reformation of Manners manifests in his social critique. Following this reading of *Moll Flanders*, the third chapter of this thesis looks at Fielding's representations of police, especially the ways in which he engaged with unofficial activities and institutions. The focus of this chapter is the novel, *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great*, in which Fielding deploys a fictionalized, satirical biography of the Thief-Taker General as part of an attempt to reinstate the moral authority of law enforcement. These chapters argue that *Moll Flanders* and *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great* exist in tension, and that the best way to understand this tension is by viewing it through the lens of Michel Foucault's concepts of 'discipline' and 'security'.

## II – An age of discipline?

Studies of the relationship between eighteenth-century literature and criminality have been profoundly influenced by the work of Michel Foucault, particularly by the account of institutional formation given in his book, *Discipline and Punish*. Here Foucault describes the emergence in the eighteenth century of a disciplinary 'prison-punishment system' comprising 'an ensemble whose three terms (police-prison-delinquency) support one another and form a circuit that is never interrupted',<sup>19</sup> This idea of an emergent, dominating discipline forms the basis of Foucauldian studies; John Bender's book, *Imagining the Penitentiary*, for example, uses Foucault's ideas to explore the eighteenth-century novel's contribution to the disciplinary system of punishment which 'sprang suddenly into being' at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>20</sup> Hal Gladfelder's book, *Criminality and Narrative in Eighteenth-Century England*, meanwhile, employs Foucault-influenced methodology to trace the construction of a delinquent subject through the representations of criminality found in a variety of literary and non-literary texts. However, while Bender and Gladfelder have investigated the discursive emergence of the prison and the delinquent respectively, and Miller has carried out a Foucauldian investigation into what he describes as the 'entanglement' between the nineteenth-century novel and police, there has been no such study of the engagement between the novel and the police in the eighteenth century.

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<sup>19</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1972) 282.

<sup>20</sup> Bender, 2.

Apart from *police* not being part of the terminology of eighteenth-century law enforcement, one possible reason for the absence of the police in Foucauldian studies of eighteenth-century literature is that, despite its initial position in Foucault's 'police-prison-delinquency' ensemble, *Discipline and Punish* presents the police as being isomorphic with the prison.<sup>21</sup> As part of the prison-punishment system, the police are seen as one island in the wider 'carceral archipelago', the series of disciplinary organs which observe, channel and contain the activities of the historical subject. This interpretation stems from readings of *Discipline and Punish* which emphasize the institutional consequences of an epochal shift resulting from the adoption of discipline as the dominant form of state power in the early eighteenth century.<sup>22</sup> However, these readings are problematic, not least for Foucault himself. In the second lecture of his 1978 Collège de France series, *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault offers a limited retraction in which he admits to being 'wrong. But not completely wrong, of course.'<sup>23</sup> Over the course of the twelve lectures in the series, Foucault depicts a more complex schematic of power in which discipline, far from being the political spirit of an age, instead constitutes one of several co-existing 'technologies of power'.<sup>24</sup>

So we should not see things as the replacement of a society of sovereignty by a society of discipline, and then of a society of discipline by a society, say, of government. In fact, we have a triangle: sovereignty, discipline, and governmental management, which has population as its main target and apparatuses of security as its essential mechanism.<sup>25</sup>

In place of a linear progression from an age of sovereignty to an age of discipline, Foucault sets up a tension between the 'essentially centripetal' technology of discipline, and the 'centrifugal' technology of government, which operates through the apparatuses of security. In this schematization, 'discipline concentrates, focuses, and encloses', while the apparatuses of security 'have the constant tendency to expand' with 'new elements... constantly being integrated... allowing the development of ever-wider

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<sup>21</sup> Andrew Johnson, 'Foucault: Critical Theory Of The Police In A Neoliberal Age', *Theoria*, 61 (2014), 5-29, 1-4.

<sup>22</sup> Johnson, 7. Though Foucault's work is often seen as describing the development of power through distinct phases (sovereignty, discipline, biopower), Johnson insists that 'the interpretation whereby sovereignty, discipline and biopower are competing paradigms demonstrating continuous epochal shifts in power is facile... They are best understood as political technologies rather than historical epochs.'

<sup>23</sup> Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 44-45.

<sup>24</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 44.

<sup>25</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 107-8.

circuits'.<sup>26</sup> Discipline has the aim of producing order, defined by Foucault as 'what remains when everything that is prohibited has in fact been prevented',<sup>27</sup> while the aim of apparatuses of security 'without prohibiting or prescribing, but possibly making use of some instruments of prescription and prohibition, is to respond to a reality in such a way that this response cancels out the reality to which it responds – nullifies it, or limits, checks, or regulates it'.<sup>28</sup>

So what kind of institutions did this tension between discipline and security produce? While, as Bender demonstrates, the penitentiary certainly rose, the police – at least in the institutional sense – did not. This is not to say that new law enforcement practices did not emerge. As evidenced by Jonathan Wild and the Society For the Reformation of Manners, new policing practices and quasi-institutions certainly 'sprang into being'.<sup>29</sup> However, they did so in an unsystematized, diffuse way, and largely outside the establishment. During the eighteenth century, governmental involvement in the detection of crime and the pursuit of criminals was all but non-existent, and, as John Beattie writes, 'little was to change in this regard until well into the nineteenth century'.<sup>30</sup> Though pamphleteers like Defoe, Fielding, and the anonymous author of *Hanging Not Punishment Enough*, articulated a clear desire for a reform of policing systems, neither Parliament nor the Crown enacted such reform. This reluctance may not have been entirely voluntary, since the government's reliance on archaic statute limited its power to form and change institutions, with even the number of constables being fixed.<sup>31</sup> However, in 1704, public confrontations stemming from the hiring of Hackney carriages led to four 'streetmen' being hired as professionals and sworn with the power of constables in order to help keep the peace.<sup>32</sup> This precedent makes it clear that, despite statutory restrictions, there were mechanisms for the addition of new elements to the official provision for law enforcement. Thanks to this statutory stasis, and the state's apparent reluctance to expand its interference in day-to-day life, official involvement was limited to a system of cash rewards which was designed to encourage victims to seek out and prosecute offenders. Under this scheme, forty guineas were to be paid for the identification and capture of a felon. However, in addition to the intended incentivization of victims to engage in their own investigations and officials to act over and above their duties in the capture of criminals, this system also enabled

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<sup>26</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 66-67.

<sup>27</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 68.

<sup>28</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 68.

<sup>29</sup> Bender, 2.

<sup>30</sup> Beattie, 85.

<sup>31</sup> Reynolds, 20; Beattie 114-118. Beattie cites three occasions in the seventeenth century when the number of constables was raised slightly in a particular ward, but also relates the difficulties faced by the Court of Aldermen in the eighteenth century in achieving an across-the-board increase, and their eventual abandonment of the attempt.

<sup>32</sup> Beattie, 98

private individuals and groups to seize and deploy for themselves the technologies of power. Jonathan Wild, along with many other so-called thief-takers, funded his operations, at least in part, through such rewards. Despite the thief-takers' unsavoury reputations, and the continuing calls for reform, the practice of policing remained largely ungoverned, and the phenomenon of crime subject to neither the forces of discipline nor the apparatuses of security.

If the eighteenth century was an age of discipline, then it was a spectacularly undisciplined one. The eighteenth-century practice of policing, in its variousness, its diffuseness, and its dependence on individual discretionary action in place of state-controlled institutions, does not conform to the pervasive epochal reading of *Discipline and Punish*. In the undisciplined, insecure space that was London at the opening of the eighteenth-century, with its diffuse distribution of policing practice, the technologies of power were in fact more readily available to private interests than to the state, and every level of society was able to generate its own policing institutions largely without official oversight. With its account of co-existing technologies of power, and its emphasis on the tension between the enclosure of discipline and the expansion of security, between prohibition and regulation, between moral and economic views of criminality, *Security, Territory, Population* provides a far more appropriate theoretical framework for this thesis.

### **III – The Police and the Novel**

Studies of the relationship between the novel and the three constituents of Foucault's police-prison-delinquency ensemble tend to fall into two camps. Some, like Hal Gladfelder's book, *Criminality and Narrative in Eighteenth-Century England*, take a Bakhtinian view of the novel as a subversive force, resistive of authority, while others, including D.A. Miller's book, *The Novel and the Police*, and John Bender's book, *Imagining the Penitentiary*, view it as supporting and enabling the development of that authority. Miller's study is the most relevant to this thesis, as it focuses on the police, investigating the possible meaning of the lack or 'invisibility' of the police in nineteenth-century fiction. Miller argues

against the Bakhtinian view of the novel as a subversive genre which celebrates misconduct and mockingly ironizes other rhetorical forms, seeing it instead as a subtly oppressive genre which seeks to impose norms of conduct and expression derived from the institution of the police.<sup>33</sup> Undermining the history of the novel's subversive action found in Bakhtin's essay, *Epic and Novel*, Miller investigates 'the possibility of a radical *entanglement* between the nature of the novel and the practice of the police', in which the novel has internalized the work of the police within the practices of everyday life, and then systematically suppressed the evidence of this operation.<sup>34</sup> For Miller, any 'apparent delinquency' the novel displays is actually a subtly-operating aspect of a 'social order whose totalizing power circulates all the more easily for being pulverized'.<sup>35</sup> In Miller's reading, the novel – even and especially the apparently delinquent novel – is the police.

This conclusion has radical implications for the novel and the police of the eighteenth century. Both were in a similarly diffuse and undefined state, and - in Miller's terms - the pulverization of policing power within the novel was still in an early phase, with the practice of policing still visible and largely undissolved. However, Miller's picture of the entanglement between the novel and the police is incomplete in two areas. First, in accepting the problematic discipline-as-monolith reading of *Discipline and Punish*, Miller's study is limited to disciplinarian attitudes and practices, and therefore fails to take into account those attitudes and practices which Foucault ascribes to the apparatus of security in *Security, Territory, Population*. Second, *The Novel and the Police* places too much emphasis on the nineteenth-century novel, particularly those of Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins, with Miller specifically identifying Dickens as the originator of the entanglement between the police and the novel. This aspect of Miller's argument is in direct conflict with his Foucauldian method, which has no interest or utility in locating points of origin. Miller's assumption appears to be that the passing of the Metropolitan Police Act introduced by Sir Robert Peel in 1829 constituted the founding of the practice of policing in London, and that this therefore represents the originary moment of an institutional and cultural history. However, as I have argued in the opening sections of this thesis, the practice of policing predates both the institution and the word *police*. Miller's identification of Dickens as the originator of the novel's engagement with the police similarly overlooks the fact that eighteenth-century writers, including Defoe and Fielding, participated in the wider discourse of policing, and that the nature of the eighteenth-century novel is found to be significantly entangled with pre-Peel policing

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<sup>33</sup> Miller, 11. For the Bakhtinian view, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Epic and Novel*, 5-7.

<sup>34</sup> Miller, 2.

<sup>35</sup> Miller, 13.

practice.

In his book, *Criminality and Narrative in Eighteenth-Century England*, Hal Gladfelder argues against Miller's rejection of the Bakhtinian rebel novel, and seeks to locate the germ of this rebelliousness in the novels of Defoe and Fielding. Gladfelder writes that eighteenth-century identity is 'constructed under the threat of criminality' and that the eighteenth-century novel is a 'narrative mode adapted to the representation of such criminally configured persons'.<sup>36</sup> For Gladfelder, these representations of the criminal amount to an 'encoding [of] rebellion and political resistance'.<sup>37</sup> Gladfelder sees the representation of rebellious delinquency as being in tension with Defoe's and Fielding's 'ideological and expressive aims,' as a sign of ambivalence or paradox in their views of criminality.<sup>38</sup> However, I will argue that the forms of delinquency represented in *Moll Flanders* and *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great* are not in tension with, but are in fact in support of, their authors' aspirations for the practice of law enforcement. This thesis takes the view that the portrait of criminality painted by *Moll Flanders* does not proceed solely from Defoe's struggle with a 'selfhood' that is, in Gladfelder's words, 'always, inwardly, verging on crime', but equally from a deep concern with the inadequacy of the practice of law enforcement, and with the role of the establishment in preserving a social and moral order which, in Defoe's view, propagated criminality.<sup>39</sup>

Defoe's novels were inextricably bound up in the discourse of policing, particularly with the culturally-pervasive rhetoric of the Society For the Reformation of Manners. This aspect of Defoe's writing has not previously been studied, and this thesis argues that attention to this confrontation produces a new reading of his work. As I will argue in the second chapter of this thesis, Defoe's novelistic practice in *Moll Flanders* is inseparable from his discursive engagement with the Reformation of Manners movement. Despite their centrality to the public debate around crime, and their undeniable discursive and practical impact on the city, the Society For the Reformation of Manners have been entirely overlooked in studies of Defoe's writing. Defoe's later novels, especially *Moll Flanders* and *Colonel Jack*, both written in 1721 and published in 1722, are oriented around questions of criminality and governance, and exist in clear dialogue with the rhetoric and practice of the Society and other disciplinarian bodies. While Gladfelder sees the centrality of the criminal to Defoe's novelistic practice as a method of forcing the reader into confronting 'his or her own likeness

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<sup>36</sup> Hal Gladfelder, *Criminality and Narrative in Eighteenth Century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2001), 10.

<sup>37</sup> Gladfelder, xi

<sup>38</sup> Gladfelder, xi.

<sup>39</sup> Gladfelder, 148.

in the text,' this thesis takes the view that this sympathetic representation forms part of Defoe's campaign against the disciplinarian current in his culture. Seen in the light of Defoe's troubled relationship with disciplinarian bodies, especially the Society For the Reformation of Manners, *Moll Flanders* in particular appears as a persuasive thought-experiment designed to undermine the disciplinarian strategies and aims of the Society and its supporters. Rather than stemming from any innate immorality resulting from her low-class status, the event which funnels Moll toward her eventual life of crime is the failure of manners of her gentleman employer. This sequence of events conforms perfectly to Defoe's criticisms of the Society, which, he felt, focused exclusively on lower-class failures of manners while ignoring the improprieties of the upper classes. Defoe's anti-disciplinarian arguments encompass Moll's whole life; the strategies and tactics of discipline are fully arrayed against Moll, yet at each turn she is able to frustrate, evade, or even enlist the aid of a variety of officials, communicating the same suspicion towards existing institutions which Defoe articulated in his non-fictional writings.

For Fielding, too, the adoption of the novel form was profoundly influenced by his engagement with the policers of the city, especially with officials such as constables and magistrates, and with Jonathan Wild, the central character of Fielding's first novel, *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great*. The Society For the Reformation of Manners and the wider Reformation of Manners movement was fading by the time Fielding embarked on his novelistic career in 1737, yet Fielding's adoption of the novel form was itself driven by one of the Society's final acts of prohibition. The antitheatrical campaign of which the Society was a key part, and which culminated in the censorious Licensing Act of 1737, drove writers – Fielding in particular – away from the stage and towards the novel. For Fielding, the novel offered a way to affect both the discourse and practice of policing, and to comment on the workings of authority without being subject to censorship. The new form not only provided a new venue for the satire that was barred from the stage, but also gave Fielding the opportunity to engage at a deeper level with the ongoing construction of a criminal archetype, and of the institutions required to suppress it. *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great* was likely Fielding's first-written long-form prose work (though it appeared in print after *Shamela* and *Joseph Andrews*), and this first, reactionary move towards the novel constitutes his most direct novelistic engagement with the problems of crime and governance.

This thesis argues that the novel's form, content and manner of reception has been profoundly influenced by Defoe and Fielding's involvement in the discourse surrounding the theory and practice of law enforcement. By representing the criminal in order to effect institutional, practical, and cultural

change, both *Moll Flanders* and *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great* engaged in the first stages of the work of internalization which Miller ascribes to Dickens, bequeathing to the nineteenth century a form already inextricably entangled with – and engaged in – the practice of policing. Taken together, the two texts offer a demonstration of the novel’s role in giving cultural expression to the tension between security and discipline described by Foucault. Where, on one end of the tensile field, Defoe innovates novelistic technique in service of a securitized regulation of human behaviour aimed at all social ranks, on the other, Fielding develops his own practice in order to serve a disciplinarian argument. In the absence of a state-controlled institution, Fielding and Defoe encoded into their novelistic practice entirely separate practices of law enforcement, resulting in radically different narrative approaches and points of view. The eighteenth-century novel, then, being openly part of an ongoing dialogue about the practice of policing, is unable to fully internalize these practices in the way in which Miller suggests that post-Peel novelists did. In the absence of an institution to internalize, Defoe and Fielding instead internalize the tension between their own technological affiliations and their opposites, encoding into the experience of everyday life the competing, incommensurable movements towards the centripetal enclosure of discipline and the centrifugal expansion of security.

The encoding-into-the-real of this tension results in novels which – as with the lives they depict – are entirely configured around the problem of the criminal and the search for an institutional solution. In *Moll Flanders* and *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great*, both Defoe and Fielding present their protagonists as problems insoluble by the opposing technology: Moll is invisible to the checks and supervisions of discipline; Wild is a masterful navigator of the apparatus of security. The readings which make up the following chapters approach these novels and their representations of criminality as part of an ongoing search for the moral and practical basis for the policing of the city. Like Miller, I am interested in the complex entanglements between novelistic and policing practice, and, like Gladfelder, in the ways in which the representation of criminality constituted an interrogation of the complex ambivalences and paradoxes which characterised eighteenth-century attitudes toward the criminal. However, unlike both of these writers, I will view Defoe and Fielding’s constructions of a criminal subject as elements of a larger effort to spur the development of new approaches to law enforcement.

## **Chapter I: ‘The Measure of the Nation’s Sins’ - Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*, and the**



## Society For the Reformation of Manners

### I – Reformation of Manners

Founded in Tower Hamlets in around 1693, the Society For the Reformation of Manners pursued a vigilantist campaign aimed at policing London's morals. Seeking out instances of crime and immorality on the streets, the Society was among the most active policers of the city. In this, they pursued a fundamentally disciplinarian strategy in both their discourse and practice. In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault writes that 'the first action of discipline is in fact to circumscribe a space in which its power and the mechanisms of its power will function fully and without limit'.<sup>40</sup> For the Society, this space was *manners*. While an eighteenth-century reader would struggle to understand the range of institutions, activities and attitudes connoted by *police* in its modern sense, a twenty-first century reader may have similar difficulty with the eighteenth-century concept of *manners*. To us, *manners* is synonymous with *politeness*, an adherence to codes of acceptable social behaviour, but, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – and in contrast with the history of *police* – it conveyed a much broader set of meanings and resonances. Politeness referred to a normative standard of civilised conduct and theological conformity, derived from the courtly attitudes advocated by a range of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers including Joseph Addison, Richard Steele and the Earl of Shaftesbury.<sup>41</sup> Described by Hobbes as 'those qualities of mankind that concern their living together in peace and unity,' *manners* was the collection of dispositions, attitudes and practices which were subject to this normative judgement; manners could be good or bad, well or ill.<sup>42</sup>

For the members of the Society, the problems of crime and delinquency were the direct result of a citywide failure of manners. However, despite the generality of the perceived moral crisis and of their fundamental aims, the Society exclusively targeted lower-class immorality. Though the Society drew into action sections of the emerging middle classes, who were uncomfortably and vocally aware of the improprieties of the aristocratic classes, it took no interest in matters of private virtue, especially in the private immoralities of the upper classes, preferring instead to prosecute the street-level immoralities of

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<sup>40</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 67.

<sup>41</sup> Martin Ingram, 'Reformation of Manners in Early Modern England,' in Paul Griffiths, Adam Fox and Steve Hindle, eds, *The Experience of Authority in Early Modern England* (Macmillan:London, 1996), 47-88.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 108.

the poor.<sup>43</sup>

The phrase ‘reformation of manners’ itself held broad resonance even before its use by the Society, having its origins in the rhetoric of Providentialism, an idea central to Restoration Anglicanism and a pervasive presence in pulpits well into the eighteenth century. The doctrine of Providence, summarized by Alan Hunt as ‘a belief in the coexistence of divine care and divine wrath’,<sup>44</sup> generalized the consequences of individual failures of manners and was the mechanism of the Society’s disciplinary circumscription. God, to the Providentialist, was keeping a detailed account of sin, and the wrath incurred by sinners would be visited on society as a whole.<sup>45</sup> In a sermon on Providence delivered in 1679, and disseminated in printed form for decades after, the Anglican minister John Owen described the various ‘monitory tokens’ of God’s displeasure: ‘We have had judgments which consist in punishments, — the plague, the fire, the sword, great distresses and poverty, that are come upon the nation; enough to make the hearts of men to tremble’.<sup>46</sup> Providentialism and the perceived crisis of manners became the basis for a religious rhetoric in which individual immorality was seen as an invitation to a generalized divine wrath, and the correction of the city’s morals as a duty to all who feared that wrath. As Hunt writes, Providence ‘linked the morality of the populace to the fate and well-being of the nation and provided persuasive grounds for the demand for obedience and good order’.<sup>47</sup> This view was not extreme, and disease, disaster and war – as well as more welcome events like the destruction of the Armada – were widely accepted to be direct interventions from God.<sup>48</sup> In order to protect the city at large from this divine policing, with its strategy of indiscriminate destruction and death, and to promote divine care and benevolence, an earthly disciplining of public morality was required. Providentialism thereby provided a divine mandate for the disciplining of the city’s manners, and formed the ideological basis for the operations of the Society For the Reformation of Manners.

The reformative project of the Society was not a progressive one. The prefix *re* is of prime importance; the Society sought an atavistic *reformation* of an uncontaminated pre-Stuart social condition in which public manners attracted divine reward rather than wrath; Armadas destroyed rather than Great Plagues and Fires visited. The word *reformation* had a resonance with the Tudor

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<sup>43</sup> Alan Hunt, *Governing Morals* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 32-39.

<sup>44</sup> Alan Hunt, *Governing Morals*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 30

<sup>45</sup> Dudley W. R. Bahlman, *The Moral Revolution of 1688*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 1957) 12-24

<sup>46</sup> John Owen, ‘National Sins and National Judgments’, *Seventeen Sermons* (London: Joseph Marshall, 1720) 149.

<sup>47</sup> Alan Hunt, *Governing Morals*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 30

<sup>48</sup> Bahlman, 41. Demonstrating the degree to which the providential mechanism was accepted, Bahlman notes that William Stukely, a member of the Royal Society, included in his book on earthquakes a chapter on their moral causes. While Stukely included a natural explanation for the existence of earthquakes, he did not deny them ‘the first title to the name of warnings and judgments.’

Reformation, and its implication of a strictly national church unallied with Rome, and therefore on the right side of Providence.<sup>49</sup> The idea of regaining divine favour was a central element of the Society's discursive strategy, with the Society-affiliated minister Matthew Henry providing a clear example of its persuasive utility in a sermon of 1708:

To see a land that God has dealt favourably with exposed to his judgements, and ready to be made as like to Sodom and Gomorrah in ruin, as it has been in sin; Shall not God visit for these things, which are to be found among us? Shall not his soul be avenged on such a nation as this? Do we not see how fast the measure of the nation's sins fills? How near full it is, and how ready to overflow in a deluge of wrath?<sup>50</sup>

In order to drain the city's vessel of sin, the Society embarked on a disciplinary campaign of suppression and prohibition which saw over 100,000 prosecutions brought for crimes of public immorality. Though the Society's primary targets were those engaged in crimes of public immorality, such as gambling, excessive drinking, or prostitution, this was part of a wider policing strategy intended to impact upon more serious forms of crime. For the Society, immorality begat felony; Matthew Henry, in his printed sermon, *Sober-Mindedness Recommended to Young People*, wonders 'how many apprentices have been brought by their love of gaming to rob their masters, and so to ruin themselves!'<sup>51</sup> and, in the sermon, *A Friendly Admonition to Drunkards and Tipplers*, 'what mischief may not that man do, who neither knows nor cares what he does, neither fears God nor regards man, nor has any conduct or government of himself?...You who think that it is but a little sin to be drunk, yet, dread it because it may be the inlet of great sins.'<sup>52</sup> This attempt to affect the whole by attention to the detail is exemplary of discipline, whose basic function Foucault describes as 'to prevent everything, even and above all the detail',<sup>53</sup>

In the schematization provided by Foucault in *Security, Territory, Population*, discipline is 'the law framed by mechanisms of surveillance and correction'.<sup>54</sup> The Society For the Reformation of Manners provided a new, disciplinarian framework around existing laws against immorality. In spite of efforts to court the establishment, the Society remained an unofficial organization. Bills seeking to

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<sup>49</sup> Bahlman, 10-14.

<sup>50</sup> Matthew Henry, *Miscellaneous Works* (London: Joseph Ogle Robinson, 1833), 609.

<sup>51</sup> Henry, 569.

<sup>52</sup> Henry, 475.

<sup>53</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 63.

<sup>54</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 5.

advance their cause came before parliament from a variety of sources, but all were unsuccessful, as were their published pleas for royal proclamations against vice and immorality. The Society exemplifies Foucauldian discipline, yet it was an extra-governmental discipline, exerted by citizens, over and above the state's own disciplinary tactics. The Society's structure, comprising four tiers, encompasses the 'series of supervisions, checks, inspections, and varied controls' which Foucault ascribes to disciplinary systems.<sup>55</sup> The first tier was the Original Society of Gentlemen, the ideological kernel of the movement, composed of lawyers, Justices of the Peace, and Members of Parliament. Their role was to devise strategies for the suppression of vice and immorality, and to seek influential support for the society's activities through their contacts in government and church. Below this tier was the Second Society, composed primarily of tradesmen, who took on a practical policing role, suppressing street prostitution and quieting disorderly houses.<sup>56</sup> The third tier was the Association of Reforming Constables, who met every Tuesday at 5:00 p.m. in Hamlin's Coffeehouse to consider the most effective ways to combine the fulfilment of their constabular oaths with the work of the Society. At these meetings each constable was required 'to furnish an account of his week's efforts for the cause'.<sup>57</sup> The fourth and most populous rank was the general membership, composed of tradesmen and artisans, who were expected to carry out systematic surveillance of the streets in order to provide intelligence to the higher tiers.

While the membership of the Original Society of Gentlemen included prominent officials, among them Sir Salathiel Lovell, who, as the Recorder of London, was the city's most senior Justice, their work was fundamentally extra-official. Though they made use of the official juridical mechanism through sympathetic constables and magistrates, and sought the patronage of successive Archbishops of Canterbury, little effort was made to seek official legitimization, and the Society remained independent of governmental authority.<sup>58</sup> The Society's position was that the problem did not lie with the law, but with its non-enforcement. Why exhort Parliament to create an institutional solution to the problem of non-enforcement, when the Society was itself that institution? With the Society deriving civil and sovereign authority from the oaths and offices of its constables and magistrates, and from the policing responsibilities of its ordinary members, Parliament had little to offer.

So, instead of seeking Parliamentary support, the Society focused its evangelical efforts on the

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<sup>55</sup> Security, Territory, Population, 4.

<sup>56</sup> Hunt, 33-34.

<sup>57</sup> Garnet Portus, *Caritas Anglicana; or, an Historical Inquiry into those Religious and Philanthropic Societies that Flourished in England Between the Years 1678 and 1740* (London: A.R. Mowbray, 1912), 44. Quoted by Hunt, 34.

<sup>58</sup> Hunt, 35-37.

culture at large. A massive propagandistic campaign flooded the city with printed sermons and accounts of Society activities, extending their prohibitive efforts into the discursive sphere. Since the power of regulation was, for the Society, in the hands of God himself, it took a decidedly dim view of other forms of moral regulation, seeing them as blasphemous. From its inception, the Society had been highly critical of the immoralities it perceived on the London stage, which its members saw as a hive of blasphemy and criminal idealization. The Society's critiques of the theatre were simplistic and reactionary: On 10 December 1704, in opposition to the playwright and architect John Vanbrugh's productions at the Haymarket Theatre, the Society published a letter addressed to Thomas Tenison, the Archbishop of Canterbury, alerting him to Vanbrugh's 'abhorrence to the church and state'.<sup>59</sup> The letter concludes with a comprehensive list of Vanbrugh's blasphemies, organised by play. The Society's prohibitive drive against the theatre demonstrates clearly their disciplinarian moral view. The Society was not interested in the context or purpose of the blasphemous utterances, but only in their prohibition.

Among those drawn into the Society's discursive orbit was Daniel Defoe, who joined the London wing of the Society For the Reformation of Manners some time before 1707, and the Edinburgh wing of the Society in April of that year.<sup>60</sup> Despite his association with the Society, Defoe had been critical of the Reformation of Manners movement since before the turn of the century. In 1698 he had published *The Poor Man's Plea*, in which he wrote, 'We of the Plebeii find ourselves justly aggrieved in all this work of reformation... This is because the just and necessary laws are enforced against 'us,' but not against 'you'.' The 'you' in this case being 'the vicious part of the nobility and the gentry' whose immoralities remained undisturbed by the Society's policing efforts and unadmonished by its sermons, both of which focused exclusively on the street-level immoralities of the poor, and took no interest in transgressions which took place in private.<sup>61</sup> Defoe sharply criticizes these selective prosecution strategies, which ignored what he saw as the greater immoralities of the ruling classes: 'These are all cobweb laws, in which small flies are catch'd, and the great ones break through'.<sup>62</sup> Defoe continued his campaign in 1702 with the satirical epic poem, *Reformation of Manners: A Satyr*, and its

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<sup>59</sup> Arthur Freedman ed., *Antitheatrical Tracts 1702-1704* (New York: Garland, 1974), 72.

<sup>60</sup> Charles Eaton Burch, 'Defoe and the Edinburgh Society for the Reformation of Manners', *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 63 (July 1940), 306-312; Defoe himself makes no mention of his membership of the London Society. No membership lists survive, and meetings of the London Society were unminuted. However, Burch cites the minutes of the Edinburgh Society in which members discuss admitting Defoe, describing him as already being member of the Society in London, though the length of his membership is not mentioned and remains obscure.

<sup>61</sup> Daniel Defoe, *The Poor Man's Plea*, (London: A. Baldwin, 1698), 6.

<sup>62</sup> *The Poor Man's Plea*, 11.

1703 sequel *More Reformation*, which intensified the critique and leveled the charge that ‘Publick Lewdness is expell’d the nation/ That Private Whoring may be more in fashion’ squarely at the Society and its members. Defoe devoted verses to exposing the private immoralities of prominent Society members, including Salathiel Lovell, characterized as a corrupt magistrate who ‘Trades in Justice, and the Souls of Men’, who solicits bribes, and who ‘never hangs the Rich, nor saves the Poor’.<sup>63</sup> Lovell, to Defoe, was the embodiment of the hypocrisy behind the Society’s Providential rhetoric: ‘Godlike he nods upon the Bench of State,/...Boldly invading Heaven’s Prerogative;/ For with his Breath he kills, or saves alive.’<sup>64</sup>

Defoe’s attacks drew Lovell’s notice, and when he came to preside over Defoe’s trial for libel in 1703, following the publication of *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, he sentenced Defoe to a humiliating three days in the pillory, followed by an indeterminate imprisonment, Defoe only to be released on payment of a huge punitive fine. Since Defoe was at that time near-bankrupt and unable to pay, this could have amounted to a life sentence, from which Defoe was only saved by the intercession of Sir Robert Harley, the Earl of Oxford, who paid his fines and other debts in return for Defoe’s future service as an intelligence agent for the Tories.

Defoe’s contributions at the meetings of the Edinburgh Society in 1707 suggest that despite this bitter experience, he hoped that by bringing the national branches of the Society together, a change could be wrought, and that the Reformation of Manners movement as a whole could begin to address immorality at all levels of society. Since *The Poor Man’s Plea*, Defoe had advocated an exemplary reformation in the upper strata of society to complement the policing of lower-class immorality. Defoe may have been attracted by the Edinburgh Society’s ‘Second Rule’, which read in part, ‘We acknowledge it our duty and shall make it our endeavour in the first place to order our own conversations and families, so that we may not be found in any of those faults which we desire to be reformed in others’.<sup>65</sup> However, less than seven months after he was admitted to the Edinburgh Society, Defoe ceased attending meetings, and in the editorial of the *Review* for April 9 1709, he offers a warning which indicates the depths to which his suspicion of the Reformation of Manners movement had sunk:

While you punish the poor, and the rich go free, while you put the laws into the

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<sup>63</sup> Daniel Defoe, *Reformation of Manners: A Satyr* (London: A. Baldwin, 1702), 8.

<sup>64</sup> *Reformation of Manners: A Satyr*, 9.

<sup>65</sup> Quoted by Burch, 309.

hands of men of vice to execute upon the vicious, while magistrates commit the crimes they punish, you must expect to finish no reformation in Scotland, any more than they have in England.<sup>66</sup>

As with the *Poor Man's Plea* and *Reformation of Manners*, Defoe's criticism in the *Review* centres on the hypocrisy of the Society's policing strategies, and not with the Providential logic of their ideology. Defoe was himself a committed Providential thinker, and, despite his sympathies for 'the poor despicable wretches, whose oaths, drunkenness, and other wickedness are the common subject of our Societies for Reformation,' he remained committed to the idea if not the practice of Reformation.

Over the decades which followed his exit from the Society, Defoe's criticism of the movement persisted and developed. By the 1720s, in addition to the perennial charges of hypocrisy, Defoe began to offer his own ideas on policing strategy, although, as with many of Defoe's writings, these were delivered through a pseudonym, in this case, Andrew Moreton Esq.. In the series of three pamphlets published under Moreton's name in 1728-9 titled *Augusta Triumphans*, *Everybody's Business is Nobody's Business*, and *Second Thoughts are Best*, Defoe presented an alternative to the disciplinary strategies of the Society. The subtitle of *Augusta Triumphans*, 'A Way in which to Make London the most Flourishing City in the Universe', makes Defoe's aim clear.<sup>67</sup> His target is the entire economy of the city, and not just the visible signs of its distresses. Defoe's ideas exemplify what Foucault calls the 'apparatus of security'.<sup>68</sup> For Foucault, security 'inserts the phenomenon in question [in this case the commission of crimes and immoral acts] within a series of probable events'.<sup>69</sup> Throughout this series of pamphlets, Defoe treats public immoralities as effects rather than causes, as probabilistic events arising from a field of institutional influences rather than the result of individual failures of morality. Prostitution, in Defoe's view, is the result of a lack of regulation in the employment of female servants:

unless we prevent our maid-servants from being harboured by wicked persons when out of place, or living too long on their own hands, our streets will swarm with impudent shameless strumpets; the good will be molested; those prone to evil will be made yet more wicked, by having temptations thrown in their way.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Burch, 311

<sup>67</sup> Daniel Defoe, *Augusta Triumphans* (London: W. Meadows, 1728), 2.

<sup>68</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 5.

<sup>69</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 6.

<sup>70</sup> *Augusta Triumphans*, 19.

Defoe's solutions to this problem conform to Foucault's description of the mechanisms of security. Along with detailed proposals for improvements to the night watch, Defoe also presents a series of preventative measures designed to reduce the likelihood of the population turning to crime. These include plans for standardized wages and a register of references for servants' conduct, presented in 'a calculation of cost', placing the expense of creating his new regulatory institutions against prostitution's manifold costs to society.<sup>71</sup> These costs are presented in economic rather than moral terms, the proliferation of prostitution causally connected to a variety of economic phenomena, including the scarcity of reliable servants.<sup>72</sup> Rather than seeing crime and immorality as problems in themselves, Defoe treats them as symptoms of a sub-optimal social system and advocates the proliferation of new institutions to rectify or cancel them out.

Foucault describes the final goal of security as establishing 'instead of a binary division between the permitted and the prohibited... an average considered as optimal on the one hand, and on the other, a bandwidth of the acceptable that must not be exceeded'.<sup>73</sup> Defoe's proposals required the creation of a host of new institutions, including a foundlings' hospital, a centralised night watch, a register of employment, and an inspectorate of tallow-chandlers. This expansively centrifugal proliferation of institutions was designed to secure and enforce the limits of the 'bandwidth of the acceptable,' not through a moralized and moralizing prohibition and punishment on the streets, but through a pragmatic observation and regulation – a securitization – of the economy.

Defoe's public advocacy of a state adoption of the apparatus of security was ultimately unsuccessful. No foundlings' hospital was established, and the city's tallow-chandlers remained uninspected. Defoe's criticisms of the Society For the Reformation of Manners similarly failed to influence the movement, and his ideas about policing found no welcome in government. However, they had already, seven years earlier, profoundly influenced the shape of another developing institution: the novel.

## II – Moll Flanders and the police

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<sup>71</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 6-7.

<sup>72</sup> *Augusta Triumphans*, 19.

<sup>73</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 7.



The Society For the Reformation of Manners is not mentioned in *Moll Flanders* by name. Since *Moll Flanders* is a historical novel set before the Society's inception, and considering the persecution and prosecution which befell Defoe in the wake of his anti-Society satirical poem *Reformation of Manners: A Satyr*, this is not particularly surprising. However, though the Society is not directly represented in *Moll Flanders*, I will argue in this chapter that the novel internalizes and ironizes the disciplinarian anti-criminal strategies advocated by the Reformation of Manners movement, and that, despite its apparent absence, the Society's worldview is the target of a sustained and rigorous critique located just below the surface of the text. Defoe's submersion of the Society follows a similar pattern to the 'massive thematization of social governance' which D. A. Miller attributes to Dickens and the nineteenth-century novel.<sup>74</sup> For Miller, this 'massive thematization' involved the internalization of the workings of the police, followed by the systematic suppression of the evidence of its having done so, resulting in a novel in which the police do not appear, but hover behind the text, proscribing and limiting action and interpretation. For the novels under Miller's study this operation is carried out in tacit support of 'a social order whose totalizing power circulates all the more easily for being pulverized.'<sup>75</sup> However, in *Moll Flanders*, the act of internalization is employed antagonistically, as part of a clandestine critique of the Society's tactics.

Viewed in light of the Society's strategies, the character of Moll appears as nothing less than an exemplary disproof. This aspect of the novel finds its most overt expression in the incident which sets off Moll's journey into vice: her seduction by the older brother of her wealthy foster-family. This episode, and its portrayal of a contagious private immorality passing between the upper and lower classes, aligns perfectly with Defoe's most often-repeated complaint against the Society, first levelled in his 1698 pamphlet, *The Poor Man's Plea*, that their exclusive focus on lower-class immorality ignored what Defoe saw as the equally pernicious threat emanating from 'the vicious part of the nobility and the gentry.'<sup>76</sup> Moll's lifelong seizure of a middle-class 'gentlewoman' identity ensures that she herself would be invisible to the Society's moral lens, her criminality itself lifting her out of the zone of judgment. Even the most basic features of Moll's character can be read as part of a general effort to question the Society's policies, especially the contention that felonies stemmed from minor

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<sup>74</sup> Miller, ix.

<sup>75</sup> Miller, 13.

<sup>76</sup> *The Poor Man's Plea*, 6.

crimes of public immorality such as drinking, gambling and street prostitution: Moll does not drink to excess, she gambles only once in her life while in the company of respectable tradesmen, and her economization of her sexuality occurs not in the streets, but in private. Thanks to her adoption of a middle-class identity, and her habits of disguise and extreme secrecy, Moll and every one of her crimes is – or would be – invisible to the tactics of the Society. She is a perfectly rigorous demonstration of Defoe’s criticism from *The Poor Man’s Plea*, that ‘small flies are catch’d, and the great ones break through’.<sup>77</sup>

Moll is certainly no small fly; despite her fears of destitution, the life she maintains is not one of squalid subsistence, but of gentlewomanly comfort. At the peak of her desperation, following the bankruptcy of her financier husband, when Moll fears that ‘every sixpence that I paid for a loaf of bread was the last that I had in the world, and that to-morrow I was to fast, and be starved to death,’ she is, despite her anxiety, in possession of a modest fortune of several hundred pounds, on which she is able to live comfortably for two years.<sup>78</sup> Moll’s is the desperation of an ambitious tradesman facing a lean market, her language unmistakably mercantile, as when she describes watching as her ‘main stock wasted apace’.<sup>79</sup> Until her perfunctory period of repentance in Newgate, Moll’s despair never leads her into the attitude of moral introspection proper to the protagonist of a work of instructional literature. In emphasising her mercantile, middle-class conception of her own criminal activity, Defoe advances an implied argument for a shift of reformatory focus away from the inflexible and arbitrary moral proscription promoted by the Society, and toward a system which addressed the economic realities of crime.

As part of this argument for moving away from the proscriptive moralism embodied in the Society, *Moll Flanders* incorporates a variety of existing genres and forms which performed a disciplinarian discursive function. Hal Gladfelder notes the particular importance to *Moll Flanders* of the spiritual autobiography, with its focus on repentance and moral accountability, and the criminal biography, with its narration of selves subject to both state and spiritual forces of correction.<sup>80</sup> Srividhya Swaminathan adds to this list the conduct manual, a form with which Defoe had some experience, having published manuals aimed at various demographics, including servants, tradesmen, and fathers. The preface to *Moll Flanders* ironically presents the novel as an instructive work along

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<sup>77</sup> *The Poor Man’s Plea*, 11.

<sup>78</sup> Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders* (1722; New York: Norton, 1973), 250.

<sup>79</sup> *Moll Flanders*, 168

<sup>80</sup> Gladfelder, 115.

these lines, aimed at ‘those who know how to read it, and how to make the good uses of it which the story all along recommends to them’.<sup>81</sup> The conduct manual was one of the Society’s own preferred forms, with members distributing highly-prescriptive manuals known as ‘dissuasives’ to those they caught engaged in immoral acts, which detailed the likely consequences of their crimes and the approved route to personal reformation.<sup>82</sup> ‘*Moll Flanders*’, Swaminathan writes, ‘can be read as an alternative conduct manual, one that explores the options available to women in unstable, often desperate circumstances’.<sup>83</sup> I would add that *Moll Flanders* can also be seen as a manual for citizens under threat of crime, fulfilling the text’s promise of ‘intimating to [readers] by what methods innocent people are drawn in, plundered and robbed, and by consequence how to avoid them.’<sup>84</sup>

The preface presents the novel as being structured around such intimations, with Moll claiming that:

every branch of my story, if duly considered, may be useful to honest people, and afford a due caution to people of some sort or other to guard against the like surprises, and to have their eyes about them when they have to do with strangers of any kind, for ‘tis very seldom that some snare or other is not in their way.<sup>85</sup>

Here, Defoe’s ironic use of the form of the conduct manual undermines the conventional relationship between instructional texts and their readership. The winking transition from ‘honest people’ to ‘people of some sort or another’ ingratiatingly mocks the reader’s own potentially morally dubious interest in the novel’s salacious contents, while the tongue-in-cheek promise of utility in exchange for due consideration ironically invokes the attitude of moral contemplation and self-correction prescribed by instructional texts. However, despite the striking inaccuracy of the preface’s claim that ‘there is not a wicked action in any part of [the novel], but is first and last rendered unhappy and unfortunate’, Defoe’s claims of instructional worth are borne out in the text. These wards against surprise are clearly signaled, as with the incident where Moll is nearly caught in the act of picking a gentlewoman’s pocket:

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<sup>81</sup> The ‘editor’ who claims authorship of the preface is himself a fictional character, deployed to conform to the pattern of criminal biography, in which testimonies of criminals are often mediated by moralizing editors.

<sup>82</sup> Hunt, 43.

<sup>83</sup> Srividhya Swaminathan, ‘Defoe’s Alternative Conduct Manual: Survival Strategies and Female Networks in *Moll Flanders*,’ *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 15(2) Jan 2003, 185-206.

<sup>84</sup> *Moll Flanders*, 3.

<sup>85</sup> *Moll Flanders*, 352.

had [the gentlewoman] with a presence of mind needful on such an occasion, as soon as she felt the pull, not screamed out as she did, but turned immediately round and seized the next body that was behind her, she had infallibly taken me. This is a direction not of the kindest sort to the fraternity, but 'tis certainly a key to the clue of a pickpocket's motions, and whoever can follow it will as certainly catch the thief as he will be sure to miss if he does not.<sup>86</sup>

With this 'direction' Defoe replaces the inwardly-focused moral instruction of the conduct manual with a physical, outward-looking practicality. Taken with Moll's mixed feelings about betraying her 'fraternity' of fellow thieves, the effect is both comic and informative: Since victims were responsible for the apprehension of criminals, this 'direction' offered immediate utility. This ironic, yet productive, reversal of the instructional mechanism is made explicit late in the novel when Moll offers herself as a negative example of conduct:

The moral, indeed, of all my history is left to be gathered by the senses and judgment of the reader; I am not qualified to preach to them. Let the experience of one creature completely wicked, and completely miserable, be a storehouse of useful warning to those that read.<sup>87</sup>

The irony of Moll, who spends the bulk of her life in comfort and happiness, describing herself as 'completely miserable' is clear, but running in parallel to this tongue-in-cheek parody of the conventional conduct manual or Society 'dissuasive' is an invitation to approach the instructional genre in a new way. Moll's abdication of her narrative authority in favour of the 'senses and judgment of the reader' primes that reader for a search for the wider 'moral' of the novel, a moral which is fragmented and distributed through the text, necessitating the reader's 'gathering' and assembling of clues. Even the word 'moral' is rendered ironically suspect and worthy of inquisition. These ironies also have a purpose beyond the satirical. They prime the reader to look beneath and beyond the text, and encourage an increased awareness of the fallibility of moral authority, and of the practical rather than the moral manifestations of crime.

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<sup>86</sup> *Moll Flanders*, 280.

<sup>87</sup> *Moll Flanders*, 251.

For Lincoln Faller, this technique overthrows the ‘already formulated conclusions’ of the traditional criminal biographies which Defoe’s novels superficially resemble, with Defoe’s layered ironies putting ‘special pressures on the reader to organize the text, to make it coherent in ways that they can understand’.<sup>88</sup> These pressures encourage ‘strategies of reading far more complicated than anything required by their putative genre’, and stimulate ‘highly complicated, highly self-conscious, highly abstracted ‘reading positions’’.<sup>89</sup> The familiar position for the reader of conduct manuals was one of prostration before authority, but Defoe immediately places the reader, the text, and authority in a new relation. In the novel’s third paragraph, Moll breaks off from introducing herself to inform the reader that:

in one of our neighbour nations, whether it be in France or where else I know not, they have an order from the king, that when any criminal is condemned, either to die, or to the galleys, or to be transported, if they leave any children... so they are immediately taken into the care of the Government, and put into a hospital called the House of Orphans, where they are bred up, clothed, fed, taught, and when fit to go out, are placed out to trades or to services, so as to be well able to provide for themselves by an honest, industrious behaviour.<sup>90</sup>

This observation immediately conjures a parallel biography for Moll, one in which instead of being left ‘a poor desolate girl without friends’ she is ‘clothed, fed, taught’ and eventually ‘placed out to trades or to services’.<sup>91</sup> By giving readers this glimpse of their wayward protagonist fully and unsensationally embedded into licit society, Defoe slyly implies that Moll’s subsequent life of crime is the direct result of institutional failure, and through Moll’s example of ‘France, or where else I know not’, insinuates that England’s state powers were comparatively lax in their exertion, and might be roused to greater effect. Using this ironic doubling of his protagonist, Defoe invites the reader to take notice of and reflect on the suitability of the organs of authority and governance represented in the novel.

It may appear that there is hardly a more disciplinarian institution than a House of Orphans in which the movements of orphans are controlled so as to produce something resembling the ‘docile subject’ of *Discipline and Punish*. However, Moll’s imaginary House of Orphans, and the orderly progress of her double through it, is exemplary of Foucault’s concept of security, whose essential

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<sup>88</sup> Lincoln B. Faller, *Crime and Defoe: A New Kind of Writing*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1993) 109.

<sup>89</sup> Faller, 31.

<sup>90</sup> *Moll Flanders*, 1.

<sup>91</sup> *Moll Flanders*, 1.

function is, ‘without prohibiting or prescribing, but possibly making use of some instruments of prescription and prohibition, to respond to a reality in such a way that this response cancels out the reality to which it responds – nullifies it, or limits, checks, or regulates it’.<sup>92</sup> The aim of the House of Orphans is to cancel out the reality of Moll’s social marginality and lack of institutional support through a governmental response, replacing it with ‘honest and industrious behaviour’. It is an institute of provision – ‘fed, clothed, taught,’ - which makes use of some instruments of prescription.

This embodiment of the apparatus of security places *Moll Flanders* in direct opposition to the fundamentally disciplinarian rhetoric of the Society. In June 1720, as Defoe was writing *Moll Flanders*, the Reverend John Barker gave voice to the Society’s continued commitment to a moral basis for social disorder, preaching in a sermon delivered to the assembled Society at Salters Hall that ‘Sin is the black fountain, from whence proceed the many streams of publick and national misery, and sinners the cruel hands which draw down confusion and mischief on themselves and others’.<sup>93</sup> Barker concluded his sermon with a concise statement of the Society’s goals:

If religion and virtue be the safety and glory of a nation, and irreligion and vice its reproach and misery; then doubtless whatever is a proper means of promoting the one, and discouraging and suppressing the other, ought to be attempted and pursued. That THESE SOCIETIES are a proper means of doing this, may appear to any considerate person.<sup>94</sup>

Barker conforms to standard Society rhetoric in advocating a strategy of suppression and discouragement, exclusively operating on the public morality of the individual, and asserts the authority of the Society and its tactics of prohibition and punishment as a ‘proper’ organ of moral judgment. These suppressive, authoritarian tactics embody what Foucault describes as ‘the basic function of discipline’, which is ‘to prevent everything, even and above all the detail’.<sup>95</sup> The ‘detail’ in this case being the most outward signs of what the Society defined as immorality: public drunkenness, gambling, and street prostitution among the lower classes. The basic function of security, meanwhile, as exemplified by Defoe’s House of Orphans, is not to suppress but to ‘rely on details that are not valued as good or evil in themselves, that are taken to be necessary, inevitable processes, as natural

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<sup>92</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 68.

<sup>93</sup> John Barker, *A Sermon Delivered to the Societies For the Reformation of Manners* (1721; Michigan: ECCO Print Editions, on demand), 12.

<sup>94</sup> Barker, 14.

<sup>95</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 68.

processes in the broad sense'.<sup>96</sup> Defoe's suggestion for the care of orphans is derived from a probabilistic, economically-figured conclusion that uncared-for orphans are likely to be drawn into crime, and that it is in the economic interest of the state to respond with an institutional intervention which would eliminate their existence and transform them into economically-productive subjects. For Foucault, security 'relies on these details, which are what they are, but which are not considered to be pertinent in themselves, in order to obtain something that is considered to be pertinent in itself because situated at the level of the population'.<sup>97</sup> For the Societies, the criminalization of orphans was not an issue of probability – of the likely effects of extreme need and vulnerability to recruitment – or population, but of the moral character of the individual orphan. A child alone on the street was of interest to the Society only as an accused or potential criminal, to be either arrested or driven from public view.<sup>98</sup> The interventions of the Society For the Reformation of Manners operated exclusively in the realm of morality, in what Foucault describes as 'a sphere complementary to reality', and aimed to affect the real indirectly. By viewing the problem of the criminalization of orphans through a wider lens which accommodates economic as well moral insights, and which penetrates into the private as well as the public sphere, Defoe arrives at an intervention which, in the manner that Foucault attributes to the apparatus of security, 'tries to work within reality, by getting the components of reality to work in relation to each other'.<sup>99</sup>

Among these components of reality are the city's law enforcement provision. Defoe's advocacy of security and rejection of conventional reforming attitudes leads him to engage critically with the culture and practice of official and popular forms of policing. However, while Defoe's treatment of the Society's disciplinarian attitudes makes use of the techniques of pulverization and internalization described by Miller, there is no attempt to suppress the evidence of other forms of law enforcement. This may be because while nineteenth century writers had a coherent system to pulverize and absorb in Peel's comprehensively officialized and institutionalized police, eighteenth century institutions of policing were so diffuse and various that they offered no system coherent enough to internalize. Defoe certainly does not suppress the evidence of the actions of law enforcement within *Moll Flanders*, taking every opportunity to represent and ironize both popular and institutional forms of law enforcement. However, because of the profound changes in the culture and practice of law enforcement since the

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<sup>96</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 68.

<sup>97</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 68.

<sup>98</sup> Hunt, 28.

<sup>99</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 68.

writing of *Moll Flanders*, much of the commonplace knowledge which would make Defoe's implications, ironies, and allusions sensible has been obscured. An increased interest in the representation of crime in the eighteenth century novel has inspired a current of criticism which seeks to further re-embed Defoe's novelistic practice into its social and cultural context, bringing its argumentative structures to the surface. Hal Gladfelder, for example, traces the formal links between Defoe's novels and forms of criminal biography, arguing that Defoe's hijacking of instructional genres implies an argument for a 'cultural emancipation' of the criminal. However, despite *Moll Flanders*' clear interest in law enforcement as well as crime, this aspect of the novel has remained largely unexplored. Of those studies which do address Defoe's representations of policing, the most relevant to this thesis is Jeanne Clegg's paper, 'Popular Law Enforcement in *Moll Flanders*', which examines the novel's representations of arrest as part of a wider effort to 'de-familiarize aspects of law enforcement in Defoe'.<sup>100</sup> However, while Clegg attends to the significance in Defoe's writing of the distinction between popular and institutional policing, and links *Moll Flanders* to Defoe's wider writings on law enforcement, her conclusion that Defoe's 'copious and variegated anecdotes of popular law enforcement show a system which, by and large, works, or rather is made to work by the people themselves', appears unsupportable, failing in particular to account for the fact that the system Defoe describes is, until her final arrest, incapable of discovering Moll's copious criminal activity.<sup>101</sup>

Clegg's conclusion rests on her interpretation of Defoe's 'idealized' portrayal of both popular and institutional policing practices. As Clegg writes:

constables and the magistrates they work with are consistently presented as courteous, civil, correct and far more attentive to the rights of the accused than the laws and manuals of Defoe's time suggested they should be, or than probably was typical of his own experience.<sup>102</sup>

Defoe does indeed present officials in an idealized way. His constables are personifications of their oaths who never step outside the bounds of their duty, and his magistrates exert their discretionary powers in a strictly unselfish manner. Popular policing is also unclouded by moral ambivalence; Defoe's citizen-prosecutors all act out of an earnest desire to secure the criminal, and, as Clegg observes, Defoe ignores the existence of statutory rewards for the capture of criminals, removing any

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<sup>100</sup> Jeanne Clegg, 'Popular Law Enforcement in *Moll Flanders*' *TEXTUS*, vol. 21 (2008), 523-546.

<sup>101</sup> Clegg, 543.

<sup>102</sup> Clegg, 545.



question of material gain from their motivations. However, as with the ironic absence of the Society, this idealization of the law enforcement system functions not to support, but to condemn. Despite their unrealistically-perfect action, both popular and institutional forms of law enforcement are, until her final arrest, unable to apprehend Moll. Even this final arrest is due more to Moll's own failure than the system's success, as she is only captured after uncharacteristically attempting to rob a private house rather than a shop, thereby robbing herself of her usual excuse that she is a customer, and exposing her criminality in an unprecedented manner. Constables may be courteous, civil, and correct, and citizen-prosecutors 'hawk-eyed', but even these idealized efforts are repeatedly shown to result in violence, riot, and other more subtle forms of disorder, and every one of Moll's encounters with popular and institutional forms of law enforcement portray them as being wholly unsuited to their task. With only a few words Moll is able to divert a hue-and-cry, saving her highwayman-husband Jem from arrest, while elsewhere, a customs officer, entirely according to the laws of seizure, assists Moll in breaking into a house and making off with £80 worth of silk. Until Moll's final arrest, every effort to enforce the law in *Moll Flanders* acts to support rather than to suppress criminality.

In his non-fictional writing on crime and governance, Defoe is clearly unimpressed with the state of law enforcement. In a series of pamphlets, titled *Augusta Triumphans*, *Second Thoughts Are Best* and *Everybody's Business* and published under the pseudonym Andrew Moreton, Defoe articulated the need for a proliferation of new institutions designed to prevent crime through the management of the population. In these pamphlets, Defoe treats crime as proceeding mainly from economic rather than moral causes, and his solutions to the problem of crime involve a massive reformation and regulation of the nation's economy and institutions, with his ideas exemplifying Foucault's 'apparatus of security'.<sup>103</sup> As Foucault writes, security 'tries to work within reality, by getting the components of reality to work in relation to each other, thanks to and through a series of analyses and specific arrangements'.<sup>104</sup> *Moll Flanders* guides readers through this 'series of analyses', using techniques of novelistic representation to address the real, and to reveal disjunctions between the components of reality, in order to present the arrangements of security as an urgent corrective to a fragmented governmental system.

One of the most thorough of these analyses is the scene of Moll's first arrest, which employs a heavily ironized scene of mistaken identity to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of existing law

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<sup>103</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 32.

<sup>104</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 68.

enforcement attitudes and practices. The scene begins with Moll in Covent Garden, dressed in widows' weeds. She has disguised herself opportunistically, 'without any real design in view, but only waiting for anything that might offer'.<sup>105</sup> But, before she can make use of her disguise, it backfires: another woman dressed as a widow has just robbed a mercer's shop, and the street fills with 'a great cry of 'Stop thief! Stop thief!' This call and the response to it were enshrined in law. It signified the hue-and-cry, which bound every person within hearing to join in pursuit and capture of the thief. Dutifully responding to this alarm, and to further cries informing them that the thief is a widow, the people of the street turn on Moll, and she is identified as the thief and seized by the mercer's 'hawk's eyed journeyman'.<sup>106</sup> The journeyman takes the seized Moll to the mercer, who admits that he does not recognize her, but chooses to confine her to his shop to examine her. A constable is summoned.

The constable, the name deriving from 'the prop or stay of the King,' was the mainstay of London's official police force.<sup>107</sup> Unpaid, untrained and without uniform, constables were traditionally recruited from the householders of a precinct, and were ordinarily required to serve a year in the office. Constableness was not a profession, but a periodic civic duty. The lack of a salary meant that constables were expected to continue in their ordinary business, however, constabular duties appear to have increasingly been seen as an imposition to those nominated, and, beginning in the late seventeenth century, it became common for unwilling electees to pay a substitute or deputy to take over constabular duties.<sup>108</sup> However, despite this apparent move toward professionalization, the new paid constables had a reputation for being corrupt and unreliable.<sup>109</sup> Moll shares this opinion, approvingly identifying the constable who attends the mercer's shop as 'happening not to be a hired officer, but a good, substantial kind of man (I think he was a corn-handler), and a man of good sense, [who] stood to his business.'<sup>110</sup> It was this kind of constable who formed the ranks of the Society For the Reformation of Manners' Association of Reforming Constables, officers who bolstered their official duties with a commitment to driving vice and immorality from the street. However, whether he was a member of the Association or not, thanks to Moll's respectable disguise, she is – in spite of the journeyman's accusations – not an obvious source of immorality.

While today the term 'constable' invokes a patrolling officer, the eighteenth-century constable

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<sup>105</sup> *Moll Flanders*, 310.

<sup>106</sup> *Moll Flanders*, 311-12.

<sup>107</sup> Saunders Welch, *An Essay on the Office of Constable*, (1708; Michigan: ECCO Print Editions, on demand) 16.

<sup>108</sup> Beattie, 114-140; Radzinowicz 40-49.

<sup>109</sup> Beattie, 117.

<sup>110</sup> *Moll Flanders*, 312.

was not expected to be on the streets. Constables were expected to remain at home so as to be available to victim-prosecutors, and if they went elsewhere, to prominently display their staff of office at the front door. Considering the speed with which Moll's constable is found, he must have been diligent in this duty, more diligent than many of his fellows, to judge by the frequency of Royal and Parliamentary decrees reminding them of the obligation.<sup>111</sup> Though they received no formal training, constables were able to turn to a variety of instruction manuals which detailed their duties and offered advice on constabular practice. A version of the oath sworn by new constables is given in one of these manuals, Robert Gardiner's *The Compleat Constable*, originally printed in 1708, which reads, in part:

You shall do your best endeavour (upon complaint to you made) to apprehend all felons, barretors, or Rioters or persons riotously assembled, and persons making affrays; and if any such Offenders shall make resistance with force, you shall levy Hue and Cry, and pursue them until they be taken<sup>112</sup>

The parenthetical clause '(upon complaint to you made)' reveals one of the most distinct differences between eighteenth-century and modern conceptions of policing: the constable's power to arrest felons depended on their being presented with a specific complaint by a victim, and, usually, being presented with the accused.

The constable's duty on receiving a complaint was to place the accused under legal arrest and to transport them to a magistrate where they would either be dismissed if the crime could not be proven, fined or otherwise summarily punished in the case of petty offences, or, if accused of a felony, sent to Newgate to await a formal trial.<sup>113</sup> In the mercer's shop, the constable is present as Moll's temporary 'jailer', securing her while the mercer and his assistant settle the matter of her guilt and decide whether to press a prosecution. Even in the presence of the constable, the mercer holds the authority, and is able to deny Moll's request to send word to her friends that they might come 'to see me have right done me'.<sup>114</sup> All the constable can do is negotiate on Moll's behalf, thanks to which she is able to send for a porter to act as a witness. Despite the constable's best efforts to calm the waters, the tension in the mercer's shop soon explodes into violence as the journeyman attempts to search Moll's person, only for her to spit in his face. Two other journeymen attached to the mercer return from pursuing the gang of

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<sup>111</sup> Beattie, 117.

<sup>112</sup> Robert Gardiner, *The Compleat Constable* (Printed for Thos. Beaver, 1708) 25.

<sup>113</sup> Beattie, 88.

<sup>114</sup> *Moll Flanders*, 312.

thieves, in company with the guilty widow. The mercer asks the constable to release Moll. The constable replies:

‘Sir, you... bade me do my duty, and charged me with this gentlewoman as a prisoner. Now, sir, I find you do not understand what is my duty, for you would make me a justice indeed; but I must tell you it is not in my power. I may keep a prisoner when I am charged with him, but ‘tis the law and the magistrate alone that can discharge that prisoner; therefore ‘tis a mistake, sir; I must carry her before a justice now, whether you think well of it or not.’<sup>115</sup>

The limits of constabular duty contribute to the rising absurdity of the situation. Though he holds the authority of the King, the constable is bound to hold Moll and bring her before a justice, despite the now universal acknowledgment of her innocence. The constable is, as Clegg observes, ‘courteous, civil, correct and far more attentive to the rights of the accused than the laws and manuals of Defoe’s time suggested they should be, or than probably was typical of his own experience’.<sup>116</sup> However, this extreme correctness does not result in a successful prosecution. The real thief escapes, and Moll is able to turn her opportunistic eye on the machinery of justice itself: Now exonerated by the presence of the guilty widow, she joins the constable in insisting on being brought in front of the magistrate, seeing the possibility of lucrative reparation for the assaults on her person and for her wrongful confinement. Now fully taking Moll’s part, the constable attempts to arrest the hawk’s-eyed journeyman, only to be met with violent resistance. In the fray, the thief escapes.

On the lookout for criminal opportunity, Moll instead pulls off a thorough subversion of the popular and institutional law enforcement systems. Eventually, after she has taken the case to a lawyer, she nets one hundred and fifty pounds and a suit of black silk clothes, plus the choice between accepting the journeyman’s grovelling apology or leaving him in jail to be tried for assault. This is in no way, as Clegg writes, ‘a system which, by and large, works, or rather is made to work by the people themselves’. Rather, the elements of law enforcement, which span the popular and the institutional, are at odds. The hue-and-cry results in a confusion of widows, the journeyman’s eye proves to be decidedly un-hawklike, the thief goes free, and the victim of the crime loses out by a hundred and fifty pounds, a

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<sup>115</sup> *Moll Flanders*, 313.

<sup>116</sup> Clegg, 545.

suit of black silk clothes, plus the fees of his own and Moll's lawyers. This scene is emblematic of the treatment of popular and institutional law enforcement in *Moll Flanders*, with other constables and other callings of the hue-and-cry faring similarly badly.

The final scene before Moll is arrested and sent to Newgate is her encounter with 'Sir T. B., an alderman of the city, and justice of the peace'. Moll has been caught in the act of robbing a goldsmith and, despite offering her usual excuse that she is a customer waiting for the shopkeeper to appear, she is held and accused by the goldsmith's neighbour, who has watched her enter the empty shop. At first, Sir T.B.'s presence appears fortunate for the victim, but it soon becomes clear that he is a boon for Moll, and he sets her free having seen the twenty guineas in her purse, this satisfying him that since 'the sort of people who come upon these designs that you have been charged with, are seldom troubled with much gold in their pockets', Moll must be innocent.<sup>117</sup> Sir T.B. is ideally polite and public spirited, but his discretionary dismissal of Moll goes beyond what his duties would allow, especially in the years in which the action of *Moll Flanders* takes place, when such dismissal was rare.<sup>118</sup> Jeanne Clegg writes that Defoe's idealization of magistrates in *Moll Flanders* is likely offered in support of the 'extension of discriminatory powers of magistrates, especially in the direction of dismissing charges based on weak evidence,' despite the fact that Sir T.B., who has taken it on himself to extend his own discriminatory powers, dismisses a persistent, and in this case guilty, thief.<sup>119</sup>

*Moll Flanders* may not be as blunt in its criticism as Defoe's description of the city watch in his 1729 pamphlet, *Second Thoughts Are Best*, as 'the chief encouragement to our thieves', but, taken as a whole, the picture is of a law enforcement system which was hopelessly ill-equipped to face the problem of urban crime.<sup>120</sup> This view was widespread, with writers including Henry Fielding, Ned Ward and a host of named and anonymous pamphleteers joining in a chorus of disapproval. Far more dissonant, however, were the varied voices of reform. While many, including Fielding, Ward, and the anonymous author of *Hanging Not Punishment Enough*, advocated a heavily moralized disciplinarian response built around an intensification of exemplary punishment and an increased intolerance for lower class mobility, Defoe was drawn to the economically-focused strategies of security.

Foucault describes security as the instrument of a larger tendency of power, which he calls governmentality. For Foucault, governmentality is 'the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures,

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<sup>117</sup> *Moll Flanders*, 313-314.

<sup>118</sup> Beattie 119.

<sup>119</sup> Clegg, 545.

<sup>120</sup> *Second Thoughts Are Best*, 2.

analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument'. It is also 'the tendency, the line of force, that for a long time, and throughout the West, has constantly led towards the pre-eminence over all other types of power – sovereignty, discipline, and so on – of the type of power that we can call 'government' and which has led to the development of a series of specific governmental apparatuses on the one hand, [and, on the other] to the development of a series of knowledges'.<sup>121</sup> *Moll Flanders* is part of this series of knowledges. By resisting the moralizing patterns common to the instructional literature which gives it its form, *Moll Flanders* is able to gather and present a vast corpus of economic data with direct bearing on reality.

As seen in the imaginary House of Orphans with which the novel begins, Defoe's vision of security makes use of the tactics of discipline in order to achieve its regulatory ends. Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than during Moll's time in Newgate, where 'for the first time, [she] felt any real signs of repentance'.<sup>122</sup> As in the criminal biography and the Society 'dissuasive,' *Moll Flanders* uses repentance as a structural element, the climax in which the guilty reader can find moral inspiration for change in their own life. However, while repentance formed the climax and central element of conventional instructional literature, in *Moll Flanders* it exists in almost absurdly perfunctory form, and mainly as a prelude to Moll's discovery of happiness and economic righteousness in Virginia. As Swaminathan points out, Moll's deliverance 'owes more to Mother Midnight than to Christian remorse', Moll's erstwhile companion having arranged for the visit of the minister much as one might arrange for the visit of a doctor. The minister officially responsible for Moll is Newgate's Ordinary, who practices his duty in complete subservience to the mechanisms of discipline, these duties limited to preparing Moll for her punitive death. However, thanks to the intercession of Mother Midnight, Moll's reality-targeting minister sets into motion the apparatus of security, replacing Moll's exemplary punishment by hanging with a regulatory response of transportation. In this apparatus of regulation, repentance is no longer the primary vehicle for the journey from criminal to reformed citizen, but is now significant only as a necessary - and temporary - show of willingness to be re-incorporated into the economic fabric of society. Moll's obediently repentant posture attracts the advocacy of her good minister, who arranges for her to be brought within the bounds of Foucault's 'bandwidth of the

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<sup>121</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 107.

<sup>122</sup> *Moll Flanders*, 340.

acceptable', the spiritual acting decisively in service of the economic. As Juliet Mitchell writes, even the gestures toward moralism are ironic, and point to a morality that is subservient to economic considerations: 'It is not the righteous ending that prevents *Moll* from being a pornographic tale of wickedness but rather the fact that Moll is good even while a thief and a prostitute and just as bad or just as good even while she is a wife and investor'.<sup>123</sup> In *Moll Flanders*, the disciplinarian moralism of the Society is portrayed as unstable and unsuited for its task, while a purely economic figuring of right and wrong allows Moll to be good even when engaged in morally-dubious activities. Defoe's seizure and reorganisation of instructional literature amounts to a melding of economism and moralism, one in which the prohibitive and punitive aspects of discipline are unattached from the individual and instead applied to the population, producing a regulatory framework which sets limits for both the economic and the moral.

### **Chapter 3 – 'A Judge in Every Man's Breast': Henry Fielding's New Discipline**

#### **I – 'Advantageous terms': Fielding's journey from playwright to novelist-magistrate**

Unlike Defoe, whose interventions were largely limited to the discursive sphere, Fielding put his ideas into practice, and his unification of the organs of law enforcement under the authority of the magistrate inaugurated the shift in governmental practice away from victim-led investigation and prosecution and towards a version of the police which we might recognise today. Fielding's magistracy at Bow Street was at the forefront of post-Society discipline in London. Without waiting for a governmental edict, Fielding used the powers of magistracy to institute a new form of law enforcement which would, in the writing of Fielding's brother and fellow magistrate John, become the first organisation in British history to be referred to as 'the police'.<sup>124</sup> Fielding's institution was exemplary of the account of discipline given in Foucault's *Security, Territory, Population*, and bridged each islet in the carceral

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<sup>123</sup> Juliet Mitchell, 'Moll Flanders, The Rise of Capitalist Woman' *Women: The Longest Revolution* (London: Virago, 1984), 204.

<sup>124</sup> Fielding, John, *An Account of the Origin and Effects of a Police on Foot by His Grace the Duke of Newcastle in the Year 1753, upon a Plan Presented to His Grace by the Late Henry Fielding, Esq.* (1755; London), 2.

archipelago, unifying the surveillance carried out by watchmen, the evidence provided by informers, the arrest, as carried out by constables, and the acts of judgment made by the magistrate. In Fielding's Bow Street office, intelligence was collated, indexed and sorted so as to constitute an authoritative resource. Constables were able to use this resource to carry out investigations, to pursue and arrest. A 'Lost Property Office' served as a repository for stolen goods, which could, thanks to systems of indexed records of crime reports, aid in restitution. As John Bender's chapters on Fielding in *Imagining the Penitentiary* show, Fielding was also highly active in promoting penitentiary prisons to replace the existing system of exemplary punishment, which in its simplicity lacked the system of 'supervisions, checks, inspections and varied controls' which Foucault ascribes to the disciplinary mechanism.<sup>125</sup> Through Fielding's magistracy, the formerly unorganised phenomena of investigation, pursuit, arrest, trial and incarceration were now elements in a complete, cohesive system.

It would be easy to assume that, as a disciplinarian, Fielding would be in sympathy if not broad agreement with the Society For the Reformation of Manners. However, one of the Society's last major victories was the Licensing Act of 1737, which instituted a censorious regime over London's theatres, and ended Fielding's career as the most popular playwright in London. While Defoe's dealings with the Society inspired epic poems and novelistic argument, the impact of this disciplinarian social movement had an even more direct and profound effect on Fielding's career, driving his creative efforts from the stage to the page, and his ideas on law enforcement from commentary to magistracy.

The censorship of the stage mandated by the Licensing Act had long been a dream of the Society. In 1702, it had publicly opposed the granting of a license to John Vanbrugh's newly built Haymarket theatre. In a letter to Thomas Tenison, the Society attempted to elicit the support of the church by listing the various blasphemies contained within Vanbrugh's plays, and their general 'abhorrence to the church and state'.<sup>126</sup> However, Tenison, who had delivered the eulogy of Nell Gwynne, and held the City's dramatic culture in high regard, declined to offer his support, and the Society's censorious dreams lay dormant.<sup>127</sup> In 1737, however, the Society found a new ally in the Prime Minister, Robert Walpole, who was enduring a satirical barrage from the capital's stages. This was nothing new; ferocious satire had been at the core of London theatrical tradition since the stages were reopened after the Restoration. Nevertheless, Walpole used his personal influence to drive the Act through Parliament. The intention seems to have been to protect Walpole's reputation from the newly-

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<sup>125</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 4.

<sup>126</sup> Arthur Freedman ed., *Antitheatrical Tracts 1702-1704* (New York: Garland, 1974), 72.

<sup>127</sup> Hunt, 32.



resurgent Tory party. For much of his premiership, Walpole had faced a disorganised, ineffective opposition, but, in 1736, when Frederick, the Prince of Wales, lent his efforts to the reinvigorated Tories, focusing criticism on Walpole's reputation for corrupt dealings, the Prime Minister sought to shore up his reputation, and was happy to align his face-saving efforts with the Society's moral justifications for the disciplining of the stage.<sup>128</sup>

Fielding has traditionally been considered the main target of the Licensing Act.<sup>129</sup> His plays *Tom Thumb* (1730), *The Covent Garden Tragedy* (1732), and *Pasquin* (1736), each deployed, in various manners, the satirical trope – inaugurated by John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* and continually invoked in plays and journalism – of blackening the character of politicians through analogous identification with criminals and deviants, while his plays *The Satirical Register for the Year 1736* (1736) and *Eurydice Hiss'd* (1736) alluded to a culture of corruption and immorality within Parliament. It is easy to see why Fielding was considered a target for the Act. A performance of *The Historical Register* and *Eurydice Hiss'd*, always performed together, was among those hastily canceled by the passing of the Act, and *The Golden Rump* (1736), the play believed to have driven Walpole to rush the Act through Parliament, was widely believed to have been written by Fielding. However, beginning in the 1980s, historians began to cast doubt on Fielding's authorship of *The Golden Rump*, and began to reconsider Fielding's political alliances, resulting in Fielding and Walpole being recast as collaborators rather than enemies.<sup>130</sup> As London's most successful playwright, Fielding certainly lost out by the Act, making his alliance with Walpole seem unlikely. However, the studies of Martin and Ruthe Battestin and J.A. Downie provide persuasive evidence that Walpole compensated Fielding for his losses, paying enough money that Fielding could abandon his career as a playwright and begin his second life as lawyer and magistrate.<sup>131</sup>

With Walpole's money allowing him to pour his efforts into both the literary and judicial spheres, the passing of the Licensing Act paradoxically allowed Fielding the opportunity to affect the culture of the city in even more profound ways than he had as its most successful playwright. His work as magistrate and novelist was closely intertwined, and studies of Fielding's novels, particularly Hal

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<sup>128</sup> Bertrand Goldgar, *Walpole and the Wits: The Relation of Politics to Literature, 1722-1742*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 137-139; J.A. Downie, *A Political Biography of Henry Fielding* (London: Routledge, 2009), 79-80.

<sup>129</sup> For a summary of the traditional view of Fielding as the target of the Act see Robert D. Hume, *Henry Fielding and the London Theatre, 1728-1737* (London: Clarendon, 1988), 249.

<sup>130</sup> For the most persuasive revisions of the traditional view of Fielding as an affiliate of the opposition, see Martin Battestin and Ruthe Battestin, *Henry Fielding: A Life* (London: Routledge, 1989); Hume, 244-260; Downie, 79-94.

<sup>131</sup> Downie, 80-89.

Gladfelder's *Criminality and Narrative in Eighteenth Century England*, have paid close attention to the related development of his judicial and novelistic innovations. Gladfelder is rigorous in his examination of the ways in which the narrative structures at work in Fielding's Bow Street court are reflected in the emphasis on causation and evidentiary proof seen in his novels. However, in addition to what passed in court, Fielding's magistracy was characterized by his unusual attention to areas of the carceral archipelago previously unvisited by the City's justices, including his radical contributions to the development of the prison and the police. In *Imagining the Penitentiary*, John Bender argues the significance of both aspects of Fielding's dual career to the history of the prison-punishment system. However, there has been no such study of Fielding's parallel efforts in the field of law enforcement.<sup>132</sup> This chapter is not that study, but it offers an insight into the earliest stages of Fielding's dual career, as he developed the principles which would guide his later literary and magisterial work.

So Fielding was not the primary target of Walpole's Licensing Act. In fact, despite the Society's general objections to depictions of vice on the stage – no matter how edifying their purpose – Fielding was more sympathetic to their broader aims than the traditional account of his centrality to the Act's passing might suggest. Fielding's interventions in the discourse and practice of law enforcement stemmed from the same disciplinarian belief in the need to prevent and prohibit the immorality of the poor which animated the Society. But while the Society derived its structure and authority from religion, and its goals from the ideology of Providentialism, and largely shunned governmental connections, Fielding's discipline aimed to 'rouse the civil power from its present lethargic state.'<sup>133</sup> and organize the city's diffuse, fragmented civic structures into a single, coherent system under the direction of the magistracy.

Despite, and possibly because of, the success of the Licensing Act, the Society For the Reformation of Manners did not survive the 1730s. Its downfall was swift, and was driven by increasing public opposition to their disciplinarian policing practices. In 1736, Parliament passed the Gin Act, which established a tax on the sale of gin and required gin sellers to purchase an annual license.<sup>134</sup> For the Society, this was an opportunity to crack down on the excessive drinking of gin which it had been demonising since its inception. Drinking was of prime concern to the Society, not just as an immoral phenomenon in itself, but as a cause of more serious crime. As Matthew Henry's

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<sup>132</sup> As noted earlier in this thesis, though Bender, and Gladfelder to a lesser extent, both include aspects of law enforcement in their work on Fielding, both proceed from the view, derived from *Discipline and Punish*, that the prison and the police are isomorphic, which in turn proceeds from the assumption of a wholly disciplinary age.

<sup>133</sup> *An Enquiry Into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers, &c.*, 30.

<sup>134</sup> Patrick Dillon, *Gin: The Much Lamented Death of Madam Geneva* (London: Justin, Charles & Co, 2004) 18-26.

sermon, *A Friendly Admonition to Drunkards and Tipplers*, puts it, in distinctly unfriendly tones, ‘You who think that it is but a little sin to be drunk, yet, dread it because it may be the inlet of great sins.’<sup>135</sup> The Society’s response to the passing of the Gin Act far outstripped any official efforts to enforce its terms, with members of all four of the Society’s tiers taking part in a sustained campaign of surveillance, investigation and enforcement. In addition to its usual patrols, the Society began offering rewards for information, encouraging informers to implicate their neighbours in the illicit selling of gin, and prosecuted the accused harshly.<sup>136</sup> The ensuing atmosphere of paranoia and suspicion, and the general disapproval for the Gin Act and the Licensing Act before it, turned public opinion against the Society. Having robbed the populace of their beloved theatre and beloved gin, membership began to decline in the face of growing disapproval, and in 1738, it ceased its regular meetings and suspended its organised policing activities entirely.<sup>137</sup>

In the wake of the Society’s dissolution, it would, ironically, be Henry Fielding who would extend and sharpen their policing techniques. The blaspheming dramatist became the moralizing magistrate who would institutionalize the very attitudes which had driven him from the stage.

## **II – The Regulator: Jonathan Wild’s apparatus of security**

The Society For the Reformation of Manners was not the only unofficial policing organisation to influence Fielding. Nor, despite its four tiers, was it the most intricate and highly developed system in the city. Between 1713 and 1725, London’s foremost authority on law enforcement was a former bucklemaker’s apprentice turned thief-taker named Jonathan Wild. Wild, who styled himself the ‘Thief-Taker General’, looms over the discourse and practice of eighteenth century policing, usually in the guise of a master-criminal, an underworld overlord whose title served to mask his real operations. For eighteen years, Wild conducted an elaborate thief-taking enterprise from his offices in the Little Old Bailey. His choice of location, close to the court of the Old Bailey itself, and with an address with the ring of officialdom, is emblematic of the way he insinuated himself into the workings of law

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<sup>135</sup> Matthew Henry, *Miscellaneous Works* (London: Joseph Ogle Robinson, 1833), 475.

<sup>136</sup> Dillon, 28-30; Hunt, 32.

<sup>137</sup> Hunt, 33-36.

enforcement and the judiciary, both in the minds of the populace and in his everyday practice. Wild's biography is relevant to this thesis in two ways. First, as one of the protagonists of my own novel, *Three Card Trick*, and second, as the subject of Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*, and as the originator of many of the techniques which would come to define Fielding's Bow Street magistracy.

Thief-takers were privately operating individuals who investigated crimes, pursued criminals, and recovered stolen goods for a fee. While there was no governmental attempt to supervise or systematize the practice of thief-taking, the state did attempt to curtail the activities of those thief-takers whose operations masked an involvement with crime. Hence, the crime of 'theftbote', which is to say, of dealing with a thief for the return of stolen goods, and which had been a misdemeanor since the fourteenth century, was made a felony by George I: 'Whoever shall take a reward under the pretence of helping any one to stolen goods, shall suffer as the felon who stole them; unless he causes such principal felon to be apprehended and brought to trial, and also gives evidence against them'.<sup>138</sup> This meant that those who dealt with thieves – even for the recovery of their own property – were now, in the eyes of the law, equal in guilt and subject to the same punishment as the thief.<sup>139</sup> The purpose of the statute was clear: such dealings with thieves insulated them from the machinery of justice, 'stifling all farther inquiry'.<sup>140</sup> In spite of this effort to suppress the corrupt aspect of thief-taking, the practice continued unabated.

Though Wild's title of 'Thief-Taker General' provides a basic summary of his activities, these activities far outstripped those of any thief-taker before him in terms of scope, intricacy, and ambivalence. Most thief-taking operations were decidedly undisciplined and their techniques unsophisticated. However, the organization operated by Wild, from 1713 until his death by hanging in 1725, was built on techniques of surveillance and control which were far more rigorous not only than those of his thief-taking competitors, but also than any state organization. For twelve years, the organization that was centred on Wild's office in the Little Old Bailey constituted the most rigorous disciplinary system London had ever known. Wild filled in the gaps between the fragmented organs of law enforcement, receiving reports of crime from victims, then working with constables and other officials to identify, pursue and arrest felons. Through information gathered from his contacts in the underworld, Wild was able to track and recover stolen goods and return them to their owners. However, this apparently disciplinary enterprise was in reality part of a larger effort which followed the

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<sup>138</sup> Blackstone, *Commentaries*, 132.

<sup>139</sup> Beattie, 90; Radzinowicz, 135-137.

<sup>140</sup> Blackstone, 132.

regulatory strategies and unmoralized distinctions characteristic of Foucault's concept of security. Wild's organisation amplified the ambivalence of the earlier forms of the thief-taker's trade, and though a network of informers did no doubt exist, a large number of the city's thieves were under Wild's supervision and even direction. They were able to bring their stolen goods straight to one of Wild's representatives, and Wild would then advertise the goods, claiming to have seized them, and sell them back to the victim.<sup>141</sup> Wild transformed the practice of thief-taking into a private institution which fulfilled the needs of both the licit and illicit worlds, offering victims of crime an alternative to the diffuse, only occasionally-coherent official policing provision while at the same time ensuring that thieves were paid more for their stolen goods than from other receivers who did not have access to Wild's wider system.

Biographies of Wild tend to prioritise his criminal activities. Gerald Howson's biography, *Thief-Taker General*, presents Wild as 'the first modern gangster', and, though he acknowledges that he is also seen by historians as 'the first modern detective', Howson largely treats Wild's public persona as an elaborate cover story.<sup>142</sup> His description of Wild as 'a shadowy precursor of Al Capone', taken with *Thief-Taker General's* subtitle, *The Emergence of Crime and Corruption as a Way of Life in Eighteenth Century England*, reveal the biography's slant, and explain the emphasis on Wild's influence as an underworld figure.<sup>143</sup> In casting Wild as a gangster, *Thief-Taker General* neglects his significance to the history of policing. This is not to say that Wild was a supporter of the law. In Defoe's telling, Wild possessed 'a kind of brutal courage' which manifested in a delinquent pedantry that saw him turn the terms of legality in on themselves.<sup>144</sup> Defoe recounts how, early in his life, after entering a contract to buy a horse in instalments, Wild insisted that his own failure to pay the third payment had violated the terms of the contract, rendering it void, and that there was therefore no obligation on him to pay the rest.<sup>145</sup> This same logic was applied on the two occasions Wild faced a magistrate as defendant. In a trial at the Guildhall in 1719, described by Sir John Strange in his book, *A Collection of Select Cases Relating to Evidence*, in which the prosecutor had been robbed and two men had been previously caught, convicted and hanged, Wild was belatedly charged with receiving stolen goods. The Receiving Act (5 Anne c.31) of 1706 allowed a receiver to be treated as an accessory, and was used to bring a

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<sup>141</sup> Beattie, 153.

<sup>142</sup> Gerald Howson, *Thief-Taker General: the Rise and Fall of Jonathan Wild*, (London: Hutchinson, 1970), 7.

<sup>143</sup> Howson, 8.

<sup>144</sup> Daniel Defoe, *The True and Genuine Account of the Life and Actions of the Late Jonathan Wild* (1725), in *Defoe on Sheppard and Wild*, ed. Richard Holmes (London: Harper Perennial, 2004), 74.

<sup>145</sup> Daniel Defoe, *The Life of Jonathan Wild from His Birth to Death*, in Holmes, 5.

misdemeanour charge against Wild. However, Section 6 of this Act had this proviso:

Provided always, that if any such principal felon cannot be taken, so as to be prosecuted and convicted for any such Offence, yet nevertheless it shall and may be lawful to prosecute and punish every such Person and Persons buying or receiving any Goods stolen, by any such principle Felon, knowing the same to be stolen, as for a MISDEMEANOUR, to be punished by Fine and Imprisonment, or other such corporal Punishment as the Court shall think fit to inflict

According to Howson, this was intended to mean that ‘if a receiver was caught and convicted, and if the thieves were not yet taken, then he was guilty of a misdemeanour only... but if later the thief was caught and hanged, the receiver need not fear that he would be tried again and hanged as a felon convict, for he had already been punished according to the law’.<sup>146</sup> Wild turned the language of the statute against itself, arguing that, since the ‘principal felons’ had already ‘been taken,’ then this proviso did not apply. This meant that Wild should have been charged under the main body of the Receiving Act, which stipulated a capital felony charge for receivers in cases where the principal felon could be located. According to Strange, Sir John Pratt agreed, noting ‘A Person cannot be prosecuted for a Misdemeanour in receiving stolen Goods, if the Felon is to be found’.<sup>147</sup> Wild was acquitted of the charge.

This was the end of this case, and no further felony charge was forthcoming, though, as Howson observes, ‘had Wild been charged with a capital felony, no doubt he would have argued that the indictment was wrong because the thieves, being dead, could not be taken... and that he should have been prosecuted for a misdemeanour’.<sup>148</sup> Wild’s conduct during this trial is exemplary of the way he forced the entire judiciary system into submission, making it one arm of his wider empire, with Wild himself as the central organ. However, Wild was rarely required to deploy his ‘brutal courage’ in his own defence, and for much of his career was considered a valuable and even noble public servant. Instead, Wild used his talents to gather the loose strands of eighteenth century law enforcement and form them into an extra-governmental apparatus of security designed not to prevent or prohibit crime in the city, but to regulate it.

While there is no doubt that Wild was engaged in the organization of criminal activity, his

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<sup>146</sup> Howson, 96.

<sup>147</sup> Strange, 67.

<sup>148</sup> Howson, 97.

efforts also fulfilled a clear regulatory function, policing Foucault's 'bandwidth of the acceptable' and constituting an extra-governmental apparatus of security.<sup>149</sup> Those who overstepped, either through excessive violence or by attempting to sell their haul elsewhere, were punished, while those whose activities fell within the limits were permitted to continue. However, these limits were arbitrary, and largely decided by Wild himself, though there is evidence that he both punished and suppressed varieties of crime which caused particular public anxiety: following an increase in attacks on carriages by highwaymen in 1721, Wild arrested and assisted in the prosecution of a number of highwaymen, most notably the infamous Hawkins gang, and he was credited with the virtual elimination of highway robbery within the city.<sup>150</sup> Each felon delivered to justice by Wild could be worth up to a hundred and twenty pounds, and Wild took full advantage of this statutory reward, bringing, by his own count, 194 felons to the gallows.<sup>151</sup> Defoe would later describe Wild's profiteering off the necks of his fellow criminals as 'unjust commerce'.<sup>152</sup> Blackstone, meanwhile, noted that the change to the status of theftbote likely arose largely in response to Wild's activities.<sup>153</sup> However, the contemporary press often presented Wild in a noble, even heroic light, with the *Weekly Journal* for 13 June 1719 relating that

Jonathan Wild, the British Thief-Taker, going down last week to Oxfordshire with a Warrant from the Lord Chief Justice to apprehend two notorious Highwaymen, who infested the country, met them within a few miles of Oxford on the road. But they hearing of his design, met him, and one of them fired a pistol at him: but Jonathan having on the old Proverb for Armour, received no Hurt, and then he discharged a pistol at them, which wounded one of them so terribly that his life is in great danger: the other was pursued and taken and committed to Oxford Gaol, and Jonathan has given Security to appear at the next Assizes to justify his conduct<sup>154</sup>

Wild's efforts stretch from detection to pursuit to arrest and trial, and he is presented as a public servant, pursuing a warrant on behalf of the Lord Chief Justice, whose title lends the self-styled Thief-Taker General a welcome veneer of authority. Before Wild, this kind of coherent, articulated law enforcement strategy was unknown to London.

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<sup>149</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 7.

<sup>150</sup> Moore, 122.

<sup>151</sup> Moore, 141.

<sup>152</sup> *Defoe on Sheppard and Wild*, 86.

<sup>153</sup> Blackstone, 131-133.

<sup>154</sup> *Mist's Weekly Journal*, 13 June 1719.

Until Wild, the only officials empowered to conduct such cross-jurisdictional pursuits and arrests were the City Marshals. Created in the 1570s by the court of Aldermen in response to an influx of beggars, the two Marshals – one Upper- and one Under- – were among the earliest-established examples of professional law enforcement in London. Though their powers were identical to those of constables, they were salaried officers and, unlike constables, their authority was not limited to their ward, but encompassed the whole city, enabling them to pursue warrants over a much wider jurisdiction.<sup>155</sup> Since the Marshals were not tied to the ward or the parish, they were from the loose chain of supervision which existed at the local level, and they were answerable only to the Court of Aldermen, granting a great deal of discretion in their activities.

Despite his reputation as an underworld figure, many of Wild's techniques were first developed during his 'apprenticeship' to an Under-Marshal named Charles Hitchen, who employed Wild as a deputy. Wild had just escaped debtor's prison, having used his ability to navigate the regulations of officialdom to secure a grant to pay off his debts through a parish relief programme, and was the perfect deputy for a man with Hitchen's intentions. Unlike constableness, which was conferred by election, the titles of Marshal and Under-Marshal were bought from the previous incumbent, and although the treasury received a portion of this money, their value was set outside government, based not on statute but on a probabilistic figuring of the likely worth of the post's variety of benefits. As Under Marshal, Hitchen would receive a salary of sixty pounds a year, along with an allowance for clothes and a horse, plus an annual bonus of five pounds for good service. He was also entitled to a share from each prisoner's entrance fee to the prisons within the City, and to collect a tax of a penny from each stallholder at Bartholomew Fair.<sup>156</sup> Hitchen paid seven hundred pounds for the post, which would, if he was diligent in his duties, ordinarily be expected to return his investment in around five years.<sup>157</sup> But Hitchen, like many previous Marshals, had no intention of waiting five years, and Wild would later quote Hitchen as saying, 'What do you think I bought my place for, but to make the most of it?'<sup>158</sup>

The position of City Marshal offered great opportunities for corruption, and Hitchen chose to deploy his newfound authority to criminal ends, using the threat of arrest to cajole into existence a network of some two thousand thieves, for whom he operated as organiser and receiver. John Beattie

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<sup>155</sup> Beattie, 255.

<sup>156</sup> Beattie, 250.

<sup>157</sup> Howson, 34-36; Beattie, 176.

<sup>158</sup> Howson, 58.



notes that Hitchen was unlikely to be the first City Marshal to turn the powers of his post to crime, though he was certainly the most industrious and the most flagrant, and, before his first year as Under Marshal was out, Hitchen was facing a volley of accusations.<sup>159</sup> By October 1712, ten accusations of receivership had been officially leveled at Hitchen, by a variety of influential figures, including Lord Barnard, who co-signed a letter to Sir Gilbert Heathcote, the Lord Mayor, reminding him of the 1706 statute against receivership and pointing out Hitchen's clear violation of it.<sup>160</sup> A Shoreditch constable named Wise provided written testimony to the aldermen in which he described the Under-Marshall's dealings at four of the most notorious underworld taverns of the time. Wise's testimony recounts an incident in which, after Wise arrested six pickpockets in one of these taverns, Hitchen reacted with rage and loosed all six into the city. But, despite the complaints of Wise, Lord Barnard and the other eight assorted respectable accusers, the Under-Marshall faced little censure. The committee investigating Hitchen, headed by the Lord Mayor, took six months to reach a decision, at the end of which Hitchen was suspended for a year, though he retained all rights and benefits associated with his post, save the five pound bonus. Within a year, Hitchen's suspension was lifted, and he regained his right of arrest, however, the aldermen 'forbade [Hitchen] attendance on the Lord Mayor', in what may have been an attempt to distance themselves from his future activities.<sup>161</sup> Thanks to the forbearance of the Court of Aldermen, Hitchen kept his position for a further fifteen years, and was able to continue and expand his criminal operations without further official censure. This response, or, rather, lack of response from the Court of Aldermen to the news of Hitchen's activities is puzzling. John Beattie offers a possible explanation, suggesting that the aldermen may have been concerned that the removal of Hitchen and the precedent it set might devalue the post of Under-Marshall.<sup>162</sup> Whatever the exact mechanics of the Court's decision, Hitchen was able to maintain his position and avoid prosecution thanks to the protection of his title, both because of the authority it allowed him to exert, and, if Beattie's account holds true, because of authoritarian fears over the sanctity of that title.

Hitchen first met Jonathan Wild some time in 1713, while under suspension. Wild had recently been released from the Wood Street Compter, where he was imprisoned for debt.<sup>163</sup> Wild was a fellow Wolverhamptonite, who had come to London first as a servant, then as a bucklemaker's apprentice,

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<sup>159</sup> Beattie, 258.

<sup>160</sup> Howson, 49-51

<sup>161</sup> Beattie, 260.

<sup>162</sup> Beattie, 262.

<sup>163</sup> Moore, 44.

only to abandon his master for the excitement of Covent Garden.<sup>164</sup> Wild was soon imprisoned for debt, but managed to survive and even thrive in gaol by discovering ways to earn the gratitude of the guards. Soon he was given the ‘freedom of the gate’, so that he could leave the prison to aid in the recapture of errant inmates. Following his release, Wild came into contact with Hitchen, who offered him the post of deputy. Wild was a natural factotum for the suspended Under-Marshal, whose ability to conduct his operations in public had been weakened, and he was fully inducted into Hitchen’s operation.<sup>165</sup> In a pamphlet Wild published in 1718, he describes being approached by Hitchen, who told him:

I am very sensible that you are let into the knowledge of the intrigues of the compter, particularly with relation to the securing of pocket books. But your experience is inferior to mine... I can put you in a far better method than you are acquainted with... And when the thieves and pickpockets see us confederate they’ll submit to our terms<sup>166</sup>

Wild learned quickly, forming his own gangs and instituting his own network of receivers, and, soon after the Under-Marshal’s suspension was lifted, he abandoned Hitchen and set up on his own at the Blue Boar tavern.

In abandoning Hitchen, Wild separated himself from the corrupted rank of Marshalsman, which inspired little respect in either the under- or overworlds. Now in need of a basis for his authority, Wild used a variety of techniques to clothe himself in the accoutrements of institution while avoiding being sworn as a constable or taking other office which might render him subject to supervision or censure. Along with the office in the Little Old Bailey and the title of ‘Thief-Taker General’, Wild began carrying a silver sword at his side in imitation of Hitchen’s own ceremonial blade. Wild’s most successful attempt at institutionalising his enterprise came with his improvement on Hitchen’s methods of using the press. While Hitchen was content to wait until victims advertised seeking their stolen wares, Wild published his own adverts listing items found and encouraging owners to visit him at what he began to call his ‘Lost Property Office’. Hitchen’s response to his protege’s tactics was aggressive. He published a pamphlet titled, *A True Discovery of the Conduct of Receivers and Thief-Takers in and about the City of London*, which attempted to expose the workings of Wild’s organisation, linking the public-spirited activities taking place at the Little Old Bailey with the more nefarious goings-on at the

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<sup>164</sup> Moore, 50-56; Howson, 20.

<sup>165</sup> Howson, 30-33.

<sup>166</sup> Jonathan Wild, *A Late Reply To An Insolent Libel*, 6.

Blue Boar, from where Wild controlled the criminal aspects of his empire. Wild responded in kind with *A Late Reply to an Insolent Libel*, which, in addition to describing the Under-Marshall's practices of intimidation, extortion and gang-running, alleged that Hitchen frequented 'molly-houses', or homosexual brothels.<sup>167</sup> Hitchen responded with one final pamphlet, *The Regulator*, in which he gave a detailed account of Wild's recent activities. Referring to Wild as 'The Regulator' or the 'Thief-Maker', Hitchen described one of Wild's recent successes in subverting the justice system to his own ends. The case concerned Obadiah Lemon, one of Wild's favoured thieves. Wild arranged for Lemon to be sworn as an evidence, and saved from hanging, and through him fed the Old Bailey the names of dozens of criminals who refused to work with him.<sup>168</sup>

Despite the severity of Hitchen's allegations, his pamphlets were widely ignored, thanks in part to his poor command of the written word.<sup>169</sup> Wild, however, who had hired a professional on Grub Street to compose his 'Late Reply', managed to score a hit which left the Under-Marshall's reputation in tatters. Hitchen was forced to scale back his activities and pay increased attention to the management of his public persona, which included active membership of the Society For the Reformation of Manners, for whose cause he was reputed to be 'a busy and active fellow'.<sup>170</sup> Wild, meanwhile, unburdened by the need to justify his actions or submit to the oversight of the Court of Aldermen or of any public body, went from strength to strength. Defoe, whose economically-tinted perspective permitted him a degree of admiration along with his condemnation when considering Wild's actions, describes how Wild 'acquired a strange, and indeed unusual, reputation for a mighty honest man'. Defoe also notes that despite Wild's professing 'an open and bare correspondence among the gangs of thieves', Wild's house in the Little Old Bailey became an 'office of intelligence for inquiries of that kind, as if all stolen goods had been deposited with him in order to be restored'.<sup>171</sup> As John Bender writes, 'Wild exercised a new type of power under the guise of public service'.<sup>172</sup> By serving the interests of both thieves and victims, and presenting a face acceptable to public opinion, Wild was able to exercise governmental power while remaining wholly separate from the fabric of public morality in which both his official and unofficial rivals were embedded. Unlike Hitchen, who derived his authority from his title, Wild derived

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<sup>167</sup> *A Late Reply to an Insolent Libel*, 13.

<sup>168</sup> Charles Hitchen, *The Regulator*, 11.

<sup>169</sup> Recounting the failure of Hitchen's pamphlets, Howson describes Hitchen's style as 'excruciating,' but notes his gift for unintended humour resulting from his many grammatical idiosyncrasies.

<sup>170</sup> *Mist's Weekly Journal* 15 April 1727.

<sup>171</sup> Daniel Defoe, *The True and Genuine Account of the Life and Actions of the Late Jonathan Wild* (1725), in *Defoe on Sheppard and Wild*, ed. Richard Holmes (London: Harper Perennial, 2004), 89.

<sup>172</sup> Bender, 141.

his power from a carefully-balanced combination of economic considerations: victims were grateful to him for restoring their property, while criminals were able to enjoy a more stable and generous income from their crimes. Despite opposition to his activities among the magistracy, Wild was able to continue, without censure, even after the passing of the 1713 act that made theft a felony, thanks to the structure of his organization, which obscured or at least distorted the nature of Wild's relationship with the underworld.

The degree to which Wild's power was concentrated in his own person can be seen in the immediate dissolution of his empire, and the return of more traditional forms of thief-taking. Wild's end, like that of the Society For the Reformation of Manners, came with the turning of public opinion. After the very public pursuit and capture of the folk-hero criminal Jack Sheppard (the protagonist of my own novel, who will be discussed in the conclusion of this thesis), Wild fell from both public and governmental favour.<sup>173</sup> Following an arrest for attempting to break an acquaintance out of jail, Wild was tried and convicted of a felony theft on 15 May 1725, and hanged ten days later, leaving the neutered, yet still busily corrupt, Hitchen the heir to the underworld.<sup>174</sup> However, the Under-Marshall's victory was short-lived. After nearly a decade of rumours, in a step which would have pleased Defoe after his objections to the hypocrisy of their prosecution strategy, the Society targeted the Under-Marshall for prosecution for sodomy, and, after being found guilty of an 'assault on the person' of a soldier, Richard Williamson, Hitchen was sentenced to six months in prison, a fine of twenty pounds, and to stand in the pillory on the Strand.<sup>175</sup>

Even after his prosecution, the Court of Aldermen allowed Hitchen to retain his title, and he was able to sell it for £700 to pay for sureties for his good behaviour.<sup>176</sup> But while the aldermen may have been extreme in their delicacy when handling Hitchen, the same cannot be said of the crowd who mobbed his appearance in the pillory: Hitchen was severely beaten by a crowd largely composed of prostitutes from Drury Lane, the very population over whom he had established his authority, and, after less than an hour in the stocks, he was removed for his own safety by the attending Under-Sheriff. Hitchen, who had used his title and its authority to extort and control the population, now found himself without its protection. Hitchen's injuries were severe, though after a few weeks he was considered well enough to serve his six-month prison sentence. Barely a month after he was released,

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<sup>173</sup> Moore 144-153; Beattie, 254; Howson, 126-130.

<sup>174</sup> Howson, 203.

<sup>175</sup> Beattie, 260; Howson, 59.

<sup>176</sup> Howson, 60.

Hitchen died from either infection or complications caused by his injuries in the pillory.

Death was not the end of Wild, or of Hitchen. The set of techniques developed by the Under-Marshall and perfected by the Thief-Taker General constituted the most significant advances in professional law enforcement of the first half of the century. Taking up the strategies used by Hitchen and reorganizing them in a less-obviously-corrupt form which borrowed the legitimacy of a public institution, Wild developed new techniques of surveillance and information-gathering. These allowed him complete control over what John Bender calls the ‘narrative resources’ of power, the ability to present an authoritative version of events which apportioned guilt and established fact.<sup>177</sup> Through a system of indexed registers of criminal interaction, Wild was able to track and locate people and objects around the city, and, in the case that an arrest was made, to present to the court a complete, coherent narrative of the crime. However, though it was built upon this disciplinary web of surveillance and control, Wild’s operation was a fundamentally regulatory enterprise. Despite his hijacking of the first two terms in Foucault’s disciplinary prison-punishment ensemble (delinquency-police-prison), Wild was not a disciplinarian, and his apparently disciplinary activities were carried out in the way in which Foucault describes the apparatus of security as ‘while not prohibiting or prescribing... making use of some techniques of discipline’.<sup>178</sup> The criminals he worked with were, if their behaviour remained within the ‘bandwidth of the acceptable’ which Foucault describes as the object of security, allowed to continue in their crimes, while those who troubled the surface of licit society through violence or notoriety were swiftly dealt with by the policing arm of Wild’s organisation.<sup>179</sup>

### **III – *Jonathan Wild*, the Novel, and the Police**

John Bender, in his discussion of Fielding’s magisterial practice, writes that Fielding was, in part, ‘copying Wild’s methods’.<sup>180</sup> However, while Bender notes Fielding’s attention to the kinds of surveillance and investigation and interrogation which characterized Wild’s organization, he does not elaborate on the ways in which Wild’s techniques manifested in Fielding’s magisterially-led system of

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<sup>177</sup> Bender, 131.

<sup>178</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 68.

<sup>179</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 7.

<sup>180</sup> Bender, 141.

law enforcement, nor does he acknowledge the role played by Fielding's fiction in transposing these techniques from the literary to the official sphere. That Fielding copied Wild is evident. From the name and purpose of the Lost Property Office to the use of networks of informers to track and record the movements of people and property, Fielding's law enforcement relied on an organizational structure derived from Wild's, itself derived from the corrupt practices of the Under-Marshals. In this section, I will argue that Fielding's *Jonathan Wild* forms a key part of the process of transposition, and represents an important and overlooked step in the development of the novel and the police.

Although Bender's focus is on Fielding's contributions to the penitentiary, his analysis of Fielding's approach produces a concept relevant to this study. Bender coins the term 'narrative resources' to describe 'controlled sequences ordered by cause and effect – sequences with explanatory power', and 'the capacity to store up information in tables, lists, registers, and chronicles', and argues persuasively that both Fielding and Wild dealt in these resources.<sup>181</sup> In *Jonathan Wild*, narrative resources are utterly disorganized. No tables, lists, registers or chronicles are kept, and both law enforcement and judicial authority depend instead on oral depositions and outward appearances. Through the careful management of these paltry resources, Fielding's Wild is able to manipulate the machinery of justice. By controlling the oral testimonies of both thieves and prosecutors, and providing the magistrate with a complete, coherent account of the crime, from its earliest stages to its commission he is able to present an account of events so 'clear and strong' that even the utterly innocent Heartfree, a paragon of goodness 'for whom experience only, and not [his] own nature, must inform that there are such things as deceit and hypocrisy in the world,' is convicted of a capital felony'.<sup>182</sup> Fielding is at pains to stress that Wild's account is so well-fitted to its task that the reader, 'when he hears the evidence... will be less inclined to censure' the magistrate for accepting it. Wild's plot against Heartfree, and its eventual undoing at the hands of the 'good magistrate' demonstrates *Jonathan Wild's* interest in narrative resources, and reveals Fielding's concerns over a narrative authority distinct from judicial power.

Wild's narratives are certainly authoritative. The evidence – supplied by Wild – with which the roguish Fireblood condemns Heartfree accounts for all the publicly-known details of the case:

[Fireblood] had been, by Heartfree himself, employed to carry the orders of embezzling to Wild, in order to be delivered to his wife: that he had

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<sup>181</sup> Bender, 140.

<sup>182</sup> *Jonathan Wild*, 175.

been afterwards present with Wild and her at the inn when they took coach for Harwich, where she shewed him the casket of jewels, and desired him to tell her husband that she had fully executed his command.

Wild is himself in possession of the casket of jewels in question, as well as the money paid for them, and is behind Mrs Heartfree's disappearance, having personally abducted her. Nevertheless, the account given to the magistrate is so convincing in its attention to detail that it is immediately accepted, and the magistrate's authority is hijacked to Wild's ends. Even Wild's own arrest for robbery fails to undo the Heartfree plot. The fact which ultimately undermines Wild's narrative authority is the good magistrate's realization, when Fireblood is arrested, that 'of the two persons on whose evidence alone Heartfree had been committed, and had been since convicted, one was in Newgate for a felony, and the other was now brought before him for a robbery'. This moment is a dramatization of the potential of narrative resources, and of the type of knowledge and insight to be gained by gathering and cross-referencing information. In spite of their divergent biographies, Fielding's Wild and the historical Wild share a method which relies on precisely these kinds of insights. The magistrate's realization is the animating spark of a new approach to policing, one which seeks to enshrine narrative power in the records of officialdom. That this blooming occurs wholly inside the mind of the good magistrate only serves to emphasize Fielding's belief in the centrality of the magistracy to a coherent, narratively-authoritative law enforcement system.

On connecting the Heartfree case with those of Wild and Fireblood, and persuading Fireblood to turn on Wild,

the good magistrate easily prevailed for his pardon, nor was contented till he had made him all the reparation he could for his troubles, though the share he had in bringing these upon him was not only innocent but from its motive laudable. He procured the restoration of the jewels from the man-of-war at her return to England, and, above all, omitted no labour to restore Heartfree to his reputation, and to persuade his neighbours, acquaintance, and customers, of his innocence.<sup>183</sup>

In pardoning Heartfree, the good magistrate fulfils his duties, but he also extends his efforts outside the courtroom, restoring Heartfree's property and reputation. This act of apparent generosity towards Heartfree is actually the final act of seizure from Wild. In staking out his own narrative authority, the magistrate is able to dismantle Wild's own narrative structures, which are founded on the chaotic, pre-

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<sup>183</sup> *Jonathan Wild*, .

disciplinarian reliance on testimony and appearance, and replace them with new structures deriving from the ‘series of supervisions, checks, inspections, and varied controls’ which Foucault ascribes to disciplinary systems.<sup>184</sup>

However, Fielding’s discipline was not the discipline of the Society For the Reformation of Manners. In place of the highly selective prosecution policies satirized by Defoe in *Reformation of Manners; A Satyr, Jonathan Wild* advocates a boundless jurisdiction, and embarks on a campaign of moralization, judgment and correction which takes in the whole of society, from the poorest beggar to the highest statesman. This point of apparent confluence between Fielding and Defoe, however, does not slacken the tension between the two novels, but maintains it: in place of the easily-satirized hypocrisies of the Society, next to which the apparatuses of security appear highly developed, Fielding presents an advanced form of discipline, centred on the figure of the magistrate, which is, unlike the Society with its exclusive focus on lower-class immorality, able to satisfy Defoe’s demand from *The Poor Man’s Plea* that ‘the vicious part of the nobility and the gentry’ be made subject to the force of laws governing morality.<sup>185</sup>

In the years since *Moll Flanders*, Defoe’s vision of crime as a largely economic phenomenon had found a broad cultural approval, but, in the 1740s, Fielding remained part of a vocal, influential minority which saw crime as proceeding fundamentally from moral causes.<sup>186</sup> Fielding shared the Society’s belief that crime had its roots in the immorality of the common people. However, while the Society saw the problem of lower-class immorality as a primarily religious crisis, for Fielding, the failure was governmental. In his 1751 pamphlet, *An Enquiry into the Late Increase of Robberies &c*, Fielding suggests that the problem of lower-class immorality stemmed from ‘a state of freedom and independency unknown to this rank in any other nation; and which, as the law now stands, is inconsistent with a servile condition’.<sup>187</sup> This ‘freedom and independency’, and, by extension, the titular ‘Late Increase’ in the problem of urban crime, were caused by the decaying of institutions which prescribed the movements of the poor. Under Fielding’s idealized ancient constitution – which he dates vaguely to ‘the time of King Alfred’ – ‘every Subject in the Kingdom was registered in some Tithing... nor were they at Liberty [to depart from their Dwelling or] to leave the Country, without the Licence of

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<sup>184</sup> *Security, Territory, Population*, 4.

<sup>185</sup> *The Poor Man’s Plea*, 3.

<sup>186</sup> Gladfelder, 161.

<sup>187</sup> *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers*, 28-29.



the Sheriff or Governor of the Same'.<sup>188</sup> In this perfectly-disciplined past, crime was non-existent, and 'a Traveller might have openly left a Sum of Money safely in the Fields and Highways, and have found it safe and untouched a Month afterwards'.<sup>189</sup>

Unlike the imaginary House of Orphans which opens *Moll Flanders*, and the manifold regulatory bodies proposed in Defoe's non-fictional writings on crime, which stem from primarily economic consideration of the crime problem, the institutions suggested by *Jonathan Wild* are governed by a moralizing power concentrated in the figure of the magistrate. The 'good magistrate' who is the novel's covert hero is an utterly moral figure, whose reward for liberating Heartfree from his unjust conviction is a 'secret satisfaction he felt in his mind from reflecting on the preservation of innocence'.<sup>190</sup> The magistrate's 'secret satisfaction' is the moral impulse at the hub of Fielding's vision of a centralised law enforcement agency. In the preface, he uses the phrase which gives this chapter its title, 'The Judge in Every Man's Breast', to describe this innate sense of justice. Present in all but the most 'great' of breasts, this judge condemns the person who would attempt to take 'more than his due'. Fielding's magistrate serves as a conduit for the massed voices of the population's myriad internal judges, replacing the thief-taker as the central repository of criminal information. In seeking to effect a re-concentration of power from the Wildean archetype of the thief-taker, and, by extension, the Walpolean archetype of the statesman, to the magistrate, Fielding's manifesto for magisterial authority is structurally identical to the organisation of the historical Wild. In place of the thief-taker, the magistrate now wields supreme narrative authority, and power is concentrated in him. Concentration of power is the prime issue for Fielding's Wild, who argues that 'Without a head, you know, you cannot subsist. Nothing but a head, and obedience to that head, can preserve a gang a moment from destruction'.<sup>191</sup>

In advancing a disciplinarian regime – even one which attended to many of Defoe's criticisms of the Society – *Jonathan Wild* is in fundamental tension with the ideas of security advocated in *Moll Flanders*. At first glance, the two texts appear to be somewhat of a kind: both follow the progress of a criminal protagonist through career, arrest, and punishment, and both bear a formal resemblance to established forms of criminal biography. Like *Moll Flanders*, *Jonathan Wild* articulates its arguments about the practice of policing through a series of representations of a variety of law enforcement

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<sup>188</sup> *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers* 16

<sup>189</sup> *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers* 18

<sup>190</sup> *Jonathan Wild*, 89.

<sup>191</sup> *Jonathan Wild*, 139-140.

officials and practices, though, unlike Defoe's officials, who are confined to single episodes, Fielding's law-enforcers occupy positions high on the list of dramatis personae. From Geoffry Snap the constable and his hired deputy to the unnamed yet instrumental 'good magistrate' who unravels Wild's deceptions, *Jonathan Wild* is populated by a variety of professional law-enforcers, while its 'hero', Wild, builds his schemes around the practice of informing and the power of citizen prosecution. However, despite these similarities and shared concerns, in their approach to representing the thief's progress, and in their wider arguments on the practice of policing, the two texts exist in palpable tension.

The perfectly opposing strategies of *Moll Flanders* and *Jonathan Wild* begin with their approaches to their protagonists. Where Defoe presents the fictional Moll as a real person, his text as an authentic testament written in the first person, and authorial intervention as the work of the novel's fictional editor, the preface to *Jonathan Wild* presents the historically real person of Wild as an avowedly fictional character. Fielding abandons any claim to veracity with the disclaimer that, 'my narrative is rather of such actions which he might have performed', while also claiming a deeper-than-real, essential authenticity with the claim that these actions are those he 'would or should have performed'.<sup>192</sup> In their approaches to the conventions of criminal biography, and to the novel itself, *Jonathan Wild* and *Moll Flanders* offer opposing reactions to the possibility that, as Michael McKeon writes, 'the delinquent folk hero, whether Spanish Picaro or Tyburn highwayman, is compelling enough in his pursuit of freedom to suggest that the common way of 'error' may in fact be the road to individual truth'.<sup>193</sup> In *Moll Flanders*, Defoe appears to confirm this suspicion, or at least to suggest that the 'way of error' may eventually, through the mediation of attitudes and apparatuses of security, lead back to the way of correctness. *Jonathan Wild* takes the opposite tack, with Fielding's text elucidating a disciplinary project which, by concentrating policing power in the figure of the magistrate, aims to direct the way of error through the carceral archipelago, and to ensure that individual truth is an exclusively licit phenomenon.

Fielding's mode, like Defoe's, is ironic in the extreme, however, while Defoe, operating freely in the hollowed-out husk of the criminal biography, is able to fill the space with bewilderingly complex ironic structures, Fielding's use of irony is restricted by the narrator's assumption of absolute authority over interpretation. The exclusive ironic mode in *Jonathan Wild* is a straightforward sarcasm in which

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<sup>192</sup> Fielding, Introduction to *Miscellanies*, p.xvii

<sup>193</sup> Michael McKeon, *Origins of the English Novel*, 98.

the terms of moral approbation and censure are reversed. In Fielding's inverted schema, 'greatness' is redefined as 'bringing all manner of mischief on mankind', and is usually the preserve of 'conquerors, statesmen, and prigs', and is opposed to 'lowness', which takes the conventional meaning of 'goodness', defined by Fielding as 'removing mischief', with which it is used interchangeably.<sup>194</sup> The character of Jonathan Wild is presented as the perfect embodiment of greatness, an unfeeling, unstoppable force of amoral self-interest, while goodness finds its representative in his former schoolfriend Heartfree, now a jeweller of remarkable kindness and credulity.

Throughout *Jonathan Wild*, Wild's 'great' criminality is mockingly celebrated, while Heartfree's 'low' innocence is derided. Where *Moll Flanders* swirls with cross-currents of irony, the still, reflective pool of Fielding's sarcasm admits no alternative interpretations, and exerts an authoritarian control over the reader's reception of the text. 'Greatness' constitutes a disciplinarian's view of the attitude of security. The subjugation of moral judgment to economic judgment advocated by Defoe and others, which allows Moll's characteristics of ingenuity and level-headedness, and her natural mercantile manner, to be seen as objects of potential value to society, is, in Jonathan Wild recast as 'greatness', with Wild's actions – not so dissimilar and certainly no less ingenious than Moll's – subject to a sustained, punitive moralizing. In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault describes the central goal of discipline as 'to prevent everything, even and above all the detail'. *Jonathan Wild's* action is defined by the competition for control of the detail; details of identity, of occurrence and of character, which, in the undisciplined space preyed on by its 'hero', were free to be taken up and put to criminal use.

In both *Moll Flanders* and *Jonathan Wild*, the scene of repentance – a moment of submission before authority pivotal to both the criminal biography and to the workings of discipline – becomes a demonstration of systemic failure to approach the realities of criminality. In the second chapter of this thesis I argued that in Moll's meeting with the Ordinary of Newgate, the official responsible for securing repentance, she is subjected to an absolute moral judgment which fails to recognize Moll's economic value. In *Jonathan Wild*, the Ordinary's meeting with Wild is likewise portrayed as an institutional failure, but, characteristically, the critique comes from a disciplinarian view utterly at odds with Defoe's economism. Like Defoe's utterly ineffectual Ordinary, whose task of bringing Moll to repentance is delegated to the more practical minister provided by Mother Midnight, Fielding's Ordinary lacks insight, judging the pathologically innocent Heartfree to be 'a cursed rogue'.<sup>195</sup> Where

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<sup>194</sup> *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great*, 3.

<sup>195</sup> *Jonathan Wild*, 77.

Defoe's Ordinary lacks an economic faculty of judgment, Fielding's punch-swilling parson is afflicted by a deficit of moral acuity. In the first chapter of this thesis I argued that Defoe's re-shaping of the repentance scene amounted to a reinforcing of the novel's wider promotion of a system which balances moral and economic concerns. The repentance scene in *Jonathan Wild* similarly reinforces Fielding's wider argument, that moral authority, like the practice of policing, existed in a diffuse, incoherent state, and required unification in the person of the magistrate. The Ordinary of *Jonathan Wild* demonstrates the ineffectiveness of moralization when it is not connected to judiciary power when he tells Wild,

‘I wish you would make a little better use of those instructions which I have endeavoured to inculcate into you, and particularly last Sunday, and from these words: "Those who do evil shall go into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." I undertook to shew you, first, what is meant by EVERLASTING FIRE; and, secondly, who were THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS... I am mightily deceived if I did not convince you that you yourself was one of those ANGELS, and, consequently, must expect EVERLASTING FIRE to be your portion in the other world.’<sup>196</sup>

The disciplinary function of this terrorizing piece of moralization is to reinscribe the moral authority of the police-punishment system. Fielding's ironization of the Ordinary's efforts to bring Wild to a final submission does not question the validity or necessity of this element of the process of punishment, but serves to highlight the need for an absolute moral authority. Instead of submitting to the Ordinary's moralizing, Wild is able to use his knowledge of the Ordinary's hypocrisies to disarm his opponent, and persuades the minister to share a bowl of punch with him, the two ending their conversation roughly where they began it, on either side of a vast moral divide. Wild's final criminal act underscores his unrepentant attitude: at his execution, ‘Wild, in the midst of the shower of stones, &c., which played upon him, applied his hands to the parson's pocket, and emptied it of his bottle-screw, which he carried out of the world in his hand’.<sup>197</sup> The Ordinary's bottle-screw becomes an emblem of the failures of existing narrative and punitive practices to maintain moral integrity.

However, despite this suggestion that the moral authority of public office might be subject to the corrosive influence of individual vice, Fielding is at pains to promote the absolute authority of the magistracy, with Mrs Heartfree relating the cautionary tale of a ‘foreign maigistrate’,

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<sup>196</sup> *Jonathan Wild*, 236.

<sup>197</sup> *Jonathan Wild*, 245.

chosen (as is the custom there) for his superior bravery and wisdom. His power is entirely absolute during his continuance; but, on the first deviation from equity and justice, he is liable to be deposed and punished by the people, the elders of whom, once a year assemble to examine into his conduct.<sup>198</sup>

In addition to this public accountability, the foreign magistrate is bound by a series of absurd regulations designed to subordinate magisterial authority to public approval, including receiving ‘every evening in private, from a kind of beadle, a gentle kick on his posteriors’ intended to regulate his sense of his own authority, lest the trappings of his authority ‘should elevate him too much in his own opinion’.<sup>199</sup> The figure of the foreign magistrate articulates Fielding’s resistance to the proliferation of apparatuses of security which might seek to regulate or limit the actions of the magistrate, and is a key point of tension between Defoe’s security and Fielding’s discipline. Where Defoe’s arguments advocate the kind of centrifugal institutional expansion which might result in a system of legal regulation such as that endured by Mrs Heartfree’s unfortunate foreign magistrate, Fielding is at pains to point out the folly of limiting or circumscribing the actions of magistrates.

This concentration of power is also the guiding principle behind Fielding’s mode of narration. The absolute authority embodied in Fielding’s ‘good magistrate’ finds its literary analogue in Fielding’s authoritarian narrator, who similarly imposes moral judgments and, like the good magistrate, aims to provide a clear, unambiguous interpretation of events in which justice is apportioned and reputation stems directly from action. As I argued in my second chapter, Defoe’s distribution of narrative authority between his lawless protagonist, the fictional ‘editor’ who mediates her discourse, and the reading public who are tasked with assembling a meaning or ‘moral’ from the text, results in a version of the novel which participates in a centrifugal diffusion of interpretive power analogous to the centrifugal action of Foucault’s definition of security. In *Jonathan Wild*, Fielding offers us a competing vision in which interpretive and narrative power is withheld from the protagonist and the reader, and concentrated first in the figure of the narrator, and later in the character of the ‘good magistrate’ whose investigative efforts bring the plot to a close. Lennard Davis argues that these power relations are fundamental to novelistic practice, and sees the novel as ‘a discourse for reinforcing particular ideologies, and its coming into being must be seen as tied to particular power relations’.<sup>200</sup> However, while Davis’ assertion that the novel ‘was presented as an ambiguous form – a factual fiction which

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<sup>198</sup> *Jonathan Wild*, 140.

<sup>199</sup> *Jonathan Wild*, 141.

<sup>200</sup> Davis, 9.

denied its fictionality’, describes Defoe’s approach to the fictional status of his narrative, it is inaccurate when applied to Fielding’s overt fictionalizations in *Jonathan Wild*, and fails to account for the divergent discursive practices unified under the term ‘novel’.<sup>201</sup> Davis acknowledges that the ‘word ‘novel’ during the eighteenth century had no single, precise meaning’, however, he has a tendency to treat it as a stable category, as when he quotes Congreve’s *Incognita*, and its opposition of ‘novel’ and ‘romance’.<sup>202</sup>

Davis’ argument partially obscures the radical divergence between novelistic practices, not only in terms of the differing ideologies which they reinforced, and the ‘particular power relations’ to which they are tied, but in terms of practitioners’ use of, and attitude towards, genre. Where Defoe exploited the latent criminality in the criminal biography, Fielding’s prime concern in *Jonathan Wild* is to purge it, not only from the criminal biography, but from a variety of existing genres. Through a juridical process of examination and sentence, Fielding polices the whole history of literary production, from classical histories to the nascent novel, probing each for its illicit elements before passing sentence. The literary courtroom of *Jonathan Wild* conforms to rigorous rituals. First, a convention is introduced and held up for inspection. The narrator then highlights its various inherent absurdities, before conforming to all of them ‘in the strictest manner’ in order to demonstrate the instabilities it introduces. For example, in the second chapter of the first book, Fielding addresses the conventions of biography, noting the ‘custom of all biographers, at their entrance into their work, to step a little backwards (as far, indeed, generally as they are able) and to trace up their hero’. Fielding inquires into the origin of this practice, proposing three possible reasons for its existence; first, that ‘the hero’s ancestors have been introduced as foils to himself’, second, ‘to obviate a suspicion that such extraordinary personages were not produced in the ordinary course of nature’, and third, to show off the biographer’s ‘great learning and knowledge of antiquity’.<sup>203</sup> With the absurdity of the practice of inventing ancestries now highlighted, *Jonathan Wild* is then given a lineage of legendary thieves and a plausible, though entirely fictional, family and background. Wild’s fabricated lineage is deployed in support of a rejection of the conventions of biography, but, by conforming to these conventions, even ironically, the text is unable to move beyond them and follow its acts of rejection with acts of replacement. This juridically-conducted process of rejection is *Jonathan Wild*’s central concern, even more so than the fortunes of its protagonist. Wild himself is frequently absent from the text, not least for the duration of Mrs

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<sup>201</sup> Davis, 36.

<sup>202</sup> Davis, 197.

<sup>203</sup> *The Life of Jonathan Wild the Great*, 5-6.

Heartfree's extended narration of her travels through foreign lands. From its preface, in which the historical epic is recast as a celebration of tyranny, brutality and cruelty, *Jonathan Wild* moves from genre to genre, through romance, biographies historical, spiritual and criminal, carefully observing any convention which might lead to the promotion of 'greatness' before passing judgment.

Compared to Fielding's other novels, *Jonathan Wild* has been paid relatively little critical attention.<sup>204</sup> Since John Muir's 1957 book, *The Making of Jonathan Wild*, there has been no significant critical work devoted to the text, and what readings there are, including those of Ralph Rader, Michael McKeon and Frances Ferguson, tend to revolve around questions of the text's generic status. So far, I have studiously avoided calling *Jonathan Wild* a novel. From Walter Scott to Ian Watt to the newest edition of the *Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Literature*, *Moll Flanders* is usually considered among the founding examples of the novel form, though Ralph Rader excludes it from the novelistic canon as a 'not-true story.' Yet, despite sharing a similar structure and an antagonism to earlier literary forms with Moll, *Jonathan Wild* is only intermittently accorded the status of novel, being variously described as a satire, a parody or a picaresque. Critical currents have flowed back and forth: For Ferguson, Davis, Bender and McKeon, *Jonathan Wild* is a novel, for Ian Watt and Ralph Rader, it is not. Recent studies tend to fall on McKeon's side and view *Jonathan Wild* as an imperfect early prototype of what Fielding called the 'mock-epic-in-prose' which would later come to be agreed upon as one of the pillars of the early novel along with Richardson's epistolary and Defoe's 'true relation.'<sup>205</sup> As Frances Ferguson writes, the novel, 'having developed in the form of a rejection or negation, is explicable less in formal terms than as the negation of certain elements available to an earlier literature.'<sup>206</sup> *Jonathan Wild* conducts a juridical interrogation of a variety of earlier forms, making the case for their rejection or correction. This is in stark contrast to *Moll Flanders*, which builds on top of the pulverized remains of the criminal biography without much introspection.

*Jonathan Wild* is not a novel. It is a manifesto for the novel. Where Defoe leaps off from his initial point of rejection, abandoning convention in favour of innovation, Fielding surveils his suspect genres, allowing them to go about their business long enough to demonstrate beyond doubt that they are deserving of a swift, merciless excision from literary practice. What is left is a set of disciplinarian tools, the reader placed in a position of omniscient surveillance over the characters, their view mediated

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<sup>204</sup> Fielding himself, despite the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth in 2007, has been getting less and less attention from critics. See John Burke, 'Fielding at 300.'

<sup>205</sup> For a detailed discussion of the recent generic fortunes of *Jonathan Wild*, see Ferguson, Frances. 'Ralph Rader on the Literary History of the Novel,' *Narrative* 18.1 (2010), 91-103.

<sup>206</sup> Ferguson, 94.

by the authoritarian narrator, the excesses of biography and the moral paradoxes of history contained within this single, judging figure. The historical Wild becomes a sacrificial figure, pulverized and dissolved into a demonstration that the same narrative resources which govern fictional worlds also govern our own, and that these resources, left ungathered, serve the ends of criminals just as easily as they benefit the public. By identifying the magistracy as the proper organ for accomplishing the latter, and thus presaging Fielding's eventual organization of law enforcement under his own magisterial authority, *Jonathan Wild* not only constitutes a manifesto for the novel, but for the practice of policing as it has come to be.



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# *Three Card Trick*

*A Novel*

by Jack Reynolds

*July 1724*

*Sheppard*

I pull the door closed as gently as I can so the heavy latch doesn't rattle in its bracket. Not that anything short of a cannonball blasting through the bedroom wall could wake Wood and Pam after their Saturday night round of punch. Wood mixes a demonic bowl. On top of brandy, mashed apple, and orange rind, he drops in an egg for body and a pint of gin for a bite that draws blood.

Still, it's best to be careful, so I creep away from the house, staying close to the wall in case Wood or Pam peek out their window.

All I had was half a glass, but I'm drowsy as a parson after his third Sunday dinner. The heat's not helping. It's half an hour till midnight, but it's still sweltering as if it was noon, and my shirt's stuck to my back before I've walked ten paces.

The parish lamps are long burned out, and Wych Street has been left to the moon. The wooden walkway's deserted but for Paul the bakery cat, who's sitting on his doorstep, licking the dust off his paws.

I make myself walk slowly so I can think. Tonight will be simple. Pick up a few shillings, pay off the Rose and the Craven, then home to bed. Maybe a sip of brandy and a roll of a skittle ball if I've shaken off the punch and come back to life.

I pat the pockets in my breeches to make sure I haven't left anything behind. Two lengths of string, a piece of folded paper, and a pair of slim iron hooks of the kind used to hoist sacks of flour. Everything I need.

The air tastes of soot and dung, so I cram a thumbload of tobacco into the blackened remains of my pipe. I'm fishing in my pocket for a tinderstick, ready for when I pass the lamp outside the Wych End stable, when a voice calls 'Jackie!'

Before I can turn round to see who's hailing me, a brawny arm's across my shoulders and a familiar sour stink's filling my head. 'Drink up!' cries Tom, right into my ear, as he presses a bottle into my chest. 'I thought that was you. Where you off to?'

'Fuck off, Tom.' I shrug off my brother's reeking arm. '*Oh Jackie, I thought that was you!*'

I snatch the bottle and carry on up the lane. Tom trots along at my side in the darkness, saying nothing. 'I looked for you at Poll's,' I tell him, 'but she shut the door in my face.'

Tom just shrugs, so I turn to the bottle. There's only a slosh left and it's so watered down it's hard to say what it used to be. Tom must have saved his last dreg, hoping to butter me up for something.

Sure enough, the moment I swallow he digs me in the ribs with an elbow. 'So can I come?'

'Let me get a look at you,' I say, laying my hands on his shoulders and squaring him up to me.

'What d'you need to look at me for?' he asks, 'I'm the same as ever.'

He's wrong. In the six weeks since he left he's lost his brawn become a stinking scarecrow. His hair's matted with grease and god knows what else, and there's a grimy bristle of beard sprouting from his face and neck in patches, making him look like a half-burned alleycat. The black eye's healed up and the fat lip's gone down, but he's in the same shirt and breeches he had on when they burned him, and there's still a faint, salty tidemark at his crotch from where he pissed himself. 'What?' he says.

'Let's see it.'

He shoves his hands into his armpits. 'Leave off!'

'Let me see.'

'Fine,' says Tom. He draws out his right hand and holds it out, palm down.

I take the hand in both of mine, turning it this way and that to properly survey the ruin. It's been a month since I watched Tom's skin sizzle and smoke under the beadle's red-hot iron, but the circle of burned flesh is still red and glistening. 'You've been picking at it.'

Tom pulls his hand away. 'I have to. If I let it scab it puffs up with pus under the scab.'

'That's because you keep picking it. Let it heal.'

He looks at the brand, sucks at it, then wipes it on his breeches. 'It's not that,' he says, 'it's gone bad. It needs a balm or something.'

'Get a balm then.'

'Balms cost money.'

'And you've got none.'

Tom shakes his head as though I'd asked a question. 'Not after that bottle.' He looks down at his cracked boots, hands behind his back, ready to be told off. I told him it'd end this way. Even so, I



haven't the heart to beat him with that stick. Things must be rough if he's willing to set foot round here and risk getting another kicking off Wood.

I clap him on the back. 'Come on then. Last bit?'

Tom snatches the offered bottle, tips the last of the watered-whatever down his throat and hurls the empty over his shoulder, where it smashes on the cobbles somewhere off in the dark.

By the time we reach Drury Lane I feel as greasy and beggarlike as Tom. The two of us roll along like a pair of dirty farthings. Along the Lane we're joined in the purse of life by brighter metal. On Drury Lane the guineas and crowns roll with the halfpennies, and though the farthings are still thick on the ground, here and there the lamplight glints off gold buttons, silvered wigs, and white-painted faces.

Outside the theatre, tables, chairs, benches and couches have been dragged onto the wooden walk. Men and girls, sweating under silk and velvet, lounge in the glow of the tavern lamps, fanning themselves with wigs, hats, and news-sheets. Drops of sweat roll down the painted faces of dandied gents and candied girls, leaving trails of ruddy skin in their wake.

As we make our way north, things get rowdier, and we plunge into a chattering, jeering, hooting crowd that surges between the taverns, coffeehouses and brandypits. The whole street heaves with flesh like one great sweaty brothel-room. Bared bodies glisten under the lamps, and half the girls are down to their whalebones.

'Where are we going?' asks Tom, idly, 'Long Acre?'

I shake my head. 'Phillips got a dog.'

'Where then?'

'New place. White Horse Yard.'

'What trade?'

'Drapery.'

Tom nods. 'What kind of drapery?'

I catch the scent of something in Tom's voice. I try to give him a stern look but he's busy eyeing up Off-Again Mary. She's doing her usual dance on a barrel in front of the Rose to the screech of Jem Coker's fiddle. Mary's been on that barrel every night since I can remember. She must be fifty, but with a trowel of paint on her face and a tight pair of stockings she still draws a crowd.

Tom digs me in the ribs. 'What kind of drapery?'

I say nothing, and when he fixes me with an inquiring eye, I jab my finger into it. Tom shrieks and staggers, drawing hoots and cheers from Mary's crowd.

He catches up to me outside the Rose, making a show of rubbing his eye as though I'd stuck it with a nail.

'If you come with me, you do it my way. Look where your way got you.'

His mouth tightens into a bitter little bud. 'I'll need enough to get a room.'

'What happened to Poll?'

Tom shakes his head. 'Too hot and too cold by turns.'

'What do you mean?'

Tom sighs. 'She had this bottle of brandy, right? Top-shelf, sixpence at least. She was seeing Hal Gudgeon at the Cheapside Goose, staying round there every Saturday, always coming back with drink. Sundays we'd drink ourselves stupid on Hal Gudgeon. Anyway, two Sundays ago she comes home with this bottle. It looked like a good one. You could see it was good just from the outside. It had this wax seal on the side with a blue ribbon on it, like the kind Dukes have on their carriages so everyone gets

out of their way. Anyway, I've come to think of Gudgeon's bottle as my right you know, for having to do without Poll for the night. So she set it on the windowsill, lay down in bed, then asked me to go out and get us half a roast chicken from the inn. So off I go down the road, thinking of the evening I've got ahead. Duke's brandy and chicken and Poll's legs around me all night. Now, it takes me no more than half an hour to walk to the inn and get the chicken, but when I come home, she's drank the whole bottle on her own. Not a drop left. Not one drop! I turned it upside down just to get a taste of it, but not one drop fell, not one. Like she'd sucked it dry. Now, I'm content to sit at home and make do with my own hand because she's all fucked out on saggy old Goose Gudgeon, but I expect my rights, you know?'

'You've always been a champion of rightness.'

Tom's mouth purses up like a cat's arse.

'All right,' I say, 'what did you tell her?'

'I told her the Duke's brandy was half mine by right, and she broke my fiddle. Smashed it against the wall!'

'You don't play the fiddle.'

'I was learning! If you've got a tune, you've always got a coin or two. That fiddle would have set me up for life. Ten shilling it cost, and she smashed it against the wall just like that.' He snaps his fingers. 'So I left.'

There's no way this is true. Poll's a steady head, and she's been putting up with Tom for years. God knows what he's done to get on her bad side. He fucked her sister and her mam on credit, didn't pay for either, and she never so much as gave him a dirty look. She even ended up paying the debt off for him just to keep him from being locked up in the compter for it. Mind, that was when he lived with us and had a job. She might not have as much time for a burned man with no reason to get out of bed beyond drinking, and no way of getting drink but from her. Without Poll, Tom may as well be adrift on

the far ocean.

'Did she say anything to you?' asks Tom. 'When you went round?'

'She just said you didn't live there any more and shut the door in my face.'

'See?' he says, leaning in and filling my head with his sour stink. 'That's what she's got like. Too cold and too hot by turns. Can't live with that.'

I push him away. 'You need to wash your skin. At least rub a lemon on yourself. Where've you been sleeping?'

'Here and there. Stayed at Squawker's for a bit. Then Ben Pollard's mam let me sleep in their old kennel. Had a horrible time with that. Their dog died last year, and Ben said the kennel was empty, but this mad old toothless mongrel from the alleys used to come in at night. I had to fight him for the place. I'd wake up in the dark with him gumming on my ankles. In the end we made friends and he slept up against me. It wasn't so bad apart from the stink of him, but now I've found this church up the back of St Giles market. It's plum. These masons are rebuilding the spire, and they've put up a scaffold round it. I climb up there, spread myself out and fall asleep. Get woken by the sun in the morning, look out over the best view in town, then climb down before the masons get to work. I tell you, in the summer, there's no better place to sleep than up on a scaffold.'

'Why do you want a room then?'

'It won't be summer forever.'

'I'm glad you know that.' Tom looks wounded. 'Come on,' I tell him, 'we're here.'

I lead the way off the lane onto the wide flagstones of White Horse Yard. When I was little I used to come through here on my way between the workhouse and the joinery. Back then the ground here was mud and this was a market square surrounded by tumbledown wooden houses. Now the muddy market is a paved yard, dotted with black-painted benches and lime trees, and the tumbledown

homes have tumbled or been torn down. The new White Horse Yard is walled by towering merchants' townhouses, four-storey fortresses hewn from pale stone, all freshly scrubbed and clean.

In the daytime squares like this echo with the clicking of footmens' heels, and if you try to sit on the benches they'll halt their business to chase you off. At night, though, the city's everyone's, and tonight in White Horse Yard, as in every square in the city, there's a sleeping body on every bench.

Under the spreading lime tree in the centre of the yard, two boys have set up a pair of boards to play at dice.

'Want a throw?' asks one as we pass. 'Shilling says I roll ten or more.'

'I could throw you, son,' says Tom, 'and have your shilling without a bet.'

'And I could cut your belly open,' says the boy, slashing at the air with a stubby little blade. Tom mimes his belly being slit and a heap of guts falling out into his hands. 'That's right,' says the boy, 'just like that. Then your throat.'

'Good lad,' says Tom.

'Bet a shilling with us?' asks the boy, with a not-sly-enough glance at his friend to signal the bringing out of the loaded dice or the false shilling or whatever the real game is.

'Not tonight.'

'Not got a shilling?'

I take Tom by the elbow and try to pull him away, but he has to have the last word. 'Boys and fools throw dice,' he says. 'Men play cards and bet on fights.'

'Cards is what drunks pretend to play so nobody knows they're drunks,' says the boy.

'And fights are fixed,' says his friend. 'My dad fixes 'em.'

'What about you?' asks the first boy, 'Your breeches are clean at least. Bet a shilling?'

'Come on. We've got work.' I haul Tom by the elbow till he slaps my hand away.

'Leave off, I'm not your dog.'

'I know. Dogs come when they're called. Anyhow, that's us.' I point across the wide courtyard at Bains' house, easily the tallest and broadest on the square. One look at Bains' house is enough to tell you he's got money to spare. He must have spent hundreds on the place. As well as six of the best doors Wood and I have ever hung, he's had new glass in the windows and new yellow paint on the frames. There's new tile on the roof, and the walls have been given a coat of smooth plaster and painted in a shimmering blue that makes it look like the whole house is wrapped up in silk.

'Must be worth two thousand, easy,' says Tom.

'I'll go back and tell that kid with the knife you swallowed a shilling,' I tell him. 'Watch him cut it out of you. Now come on.'

I lead the way across the courtyard to the alley that runs round the back of the tall houses. While the gents get the flagstones and the steps and the scrubbed stone walls, those who use the back alleys are left with grimy brick walls and ground so rutted they risk a sprain with every step.

Bains' back gate is new painted pine, banded with iron and barred from inside, and his high back wall's spiked with railings. With their ornamental roses and vines, the railings will have cost a pretty pound. They certainly look like they'd give a fair going, but Tom and me know how to get over a wall, and we spring up like cats, and land without a sound on the springy dirt floor of the yard.

Tom looks around uneasily. 'Bit out in the open isn't it?' he whispers. The yard's overlooked by dozens of windows, but the only sign of life I can see is a dim nightlight burning three floors up to the west. Every one of Bains' new-glazed windows is shuttered tight.

'This way.'

I lead the way towards the house. The yard may be laid out for all to see, but the cellar door's at

the bottom of a dark staircase, a pit of shadow so dark that if anyone, even Bains himself, were to look outside, they'd see nothing.

It's hard to know what to do with Tom. Thanks to the cellar steps there's no need for a lookout, but there's no way I want to take him indoors with me either. He's never been much of a sneak, and he doesn't know the place. He's certain to bump into something or otherwise cause a racket. It seems a waste to pay him to do nothing though. Still, I don't want him going hungry, and besides, he's come to me in the right way. If he'd begged or asked to borrow, I'd have left him standing in the lane, but him wanting to come along and make himself useful means he deserves a few shillings, even if it's just for standing about. 'Just stay out of sight, and listen for anyone coming,' I whisper, once we're safely huddled in the shadows of the stairwell.

Tom salutes, then puts a cupped hand to his ear. I turn to the door. It looks as strong as a castle gate. Me and Wood are known for our doors, and this is one of our better ones. We built it out of best oak, hammered in iron studs to ward off axeblows, then tarred it to keep out the rot. He said he'd been robbed once by someone who'd picked a lock, so he didn't want one. Instead the door's held fast the old way, with a thick bar of oak braced across two iron brackets set into the cellar wall. Thanks to the oak, the studs, the tar, and the bar, you could take a battering ram to the thing and I doubt it'd so much as creak.

But no barred door is a match for a piece of paper, two pieces of string, and two slim hooks of the kind used for hoisting sacks of flour.

First comes the paper. It's a page torn from one of Wood's woodworking manuals, folded in half. He barely ever looks at them any more, but I took one of the pages that didn't have any pictures just to be sure he won't notice. I tear into the folded edge to make a slit, then unfold the paper.

Next comes the string, two pieces of good twine, each about fourteen feet long. I pass the ends

of both through the slit in the paper, then tie each one off, loosely, so as not to tear the page. This done, I feed the the paper into the crack between the top of the door and the frame. The door's well fitted to the frame, or looks it at least, but when we were making it I made sure to give it a few extra rasps of the file up top, as well as scraping some of the tar off before it dried. Not so much that anybody would see, just enough that there's space for the paper to slither through the gap to the other side, dragging the strings after it. Taking hold of them, I reel out the paper until I feel a slight slackening as its edge touches the cellar floor.

Keeping hold of the loose ends of string, I pull out my pocketknife and open it with my teeth, making sure the blade locks into place, then drop to my knees and use the knife to guide the edge of the paper under the door. Now that the paper's served its use, there's no need to be careful, so I tear one of the strings free and knot its two ends together so that I've got the whole door caught in a snare.

'This a new way?' whispers Tom.

'Quiet.'

'I'm being quiet. Looks clever is all.'

'It's very clever. Just watch.'

With Tom looming behind me and blocking out what little light I've got to work by, I tear the second string free of the paper and tie its ends.

Now the door's caught in two loops of string, it's time for the hooks. Each is the size and shape of a beckoning forefinger and as flat as a shilling piece. They're meant for hoisting sacks, but they could have been made for this job, and once I've knotted one onto each loop of string, they pass under the door as easy as the paper did.

'Oh, I see,' says Tom, 'that's clever all right.'

I ignore him and start pulling the strings, pressing my face into the door so I can feel the



scraping of the hooks as they caress their way up the panels towards the heavy oak bar. One catches easily, while the other takes a couple of passes before it bites.

With both strings taut, I hold my breath, and with one smooth pull I lift the bar clear of its brackets. I can feel the strings twist as the heavy bar swings from side to side, and I keep my breath held and listen as it grazes the back of the door, waiting for it to be still, then lowering it to the floor as gently as I can.

Only when I feel the strings go slack do I breathe again.

I push open the door, as gently as I can, the bar scraping softly over the stone floor, till it's wide enough for me to slink through. 'You stay here. I won't be long.'

'Take your time,' he whispers, 'I've nowhere to go.'

The cellar is pitch black, the air cool and heavy with the damp smell of earth rising through stone. I pick my way between the half-familiar maze made by Bains' assorted bits of old furniture to the rickety wooden staircase that leads up into the house. Putting my weight on the rail to lighten my tread, I creep up the stairs and let myself into the hall.

By day, Bains' big windows flood the place with light, but with the shutters drawn it's pitch black, and I have to go by memory. By the time old Phillips got his new guard dog, I knew every creak of his floor and every tiny thing in every drawer and cubby-hole, and I could scamper about the house without a care. I must have done him fifty, sixty times all in all. This is only the second time I've done Bains though, so I take every step slow and cautious, shifting my weight from one foot to the next, drawing back at the slightest squeal of a board, feeling my way along the wall until my fingers brush the frame of the study door.

The study's the place for tidbits: Bains gets good tobacco, and last time I was here he had a box filled with cubes of some sort of candied jelly, too. But with Tom needing a share, tonight's for treasure,

not tidbits, so I creep on deeper into the house till I come to the dining room.

I found out last time I was here that the dining room door creaks, so I open it as slow as I can, right to the point where the hinge starts to squeal, then slip through the gap. Inside, a few rays of moonlight slope in through the shutters, silvering the edges of the lacquered dining table and gleaming off the little foil flowers that dot the wallpaper. Stepping round the table, I kneel in front of the sideboard.

Three shilling at the Craven Head, six at the Rose. It's a lot to owe at once, but Bains' cutlery drawer will provide. As it slides open, the drawer strains at the runners with the weight of four types of spoon and three kinds of knife and fork, all finely wrought in solid silver, all polished and shining. I could live a happy year on the cutlery drawer. Each teaspoon fetches a shilling everything else two. A fork and a teaspoon to pay the Craven, three knives for the Rose, and six assorted soup and dessert spoons to keep me and Tom warm and well-fed. A guineasworth, all told. It's a lot to take at once, but with Tom taking his share all I'll have left after I pay off my debts is six shillings. It's tempting to take a few more knives so as to add a few more shillings to the pot, but my rule has always been *never enough to be noticed*. If Tom had seen the sense in the rule and stuck to it, he'd never have even thought to try and steal Wood's saws, would never have been kicked out, would never have been burned, would never have fallen out with Poll.

No matter how many times I explained it all to him, Tom never seemed to understand that you don't want to steal a man's cake all at once. If you only take a nibble, just a few crumbs here and there, and he doesn't notice the loss, there'll be more cake every time you come to call. I could probably clear two hundred guineas tonight if I stripped the place for valuables, took Bains' silver-plated dinner service along with his cutlery and carried away his stock of lace and silk and velvet. But if I did clean him out, then I'd have two hundred guineas' worth of trouble on my heels. I must have got near fifty

guineas out of Phillips over the years, and he still gives me a friendly nod when he sees me in the street. If he hadn't got the dog, I could have gone on robbing him forever and we'd have stayed the best of friends.

I pull the rag from my boot and start to wrap up the cutlery. Six shillings each isn't much, but it'll do for now. It's enough for Tom to sleep, drink and eat for a week. For a fortnight if he's careful. But Tom won't be careful, I know. I'll be getting the 'Jackie!' and the arm across the shoulders again as soon as his pockets are empty.

The only thing to do is find a use for him, but as a burglar Tom's got no skill. He's too big and clumsy to be silent, and too magpie-eyed to be cautious with what he takes. Whenever we used to go out together, he was the watchman, but the truth is that he was a poor lookout. I had to hide in Phillips' pantry for an hour once because Tom didn't see him coming in the front door. I stood stock still among the jars of pickled onions while Phillips sat at his kitchen table till he'd burped and gargled his way through his bedtime bottle of port.

The only thing Tom's ever been good for is blocking alleys. His size and his threatening way of loitering always send people the long way round. It's a useful skill. Now that he's back I can take him to Haughley's on Clare Market. I've had an eye on Haughley since we did his floor. There's a window with an old, shrunken frame in his back bedroom, and all it'd take to get in is the slip of a blade between the sashes. The only problem is that to get to the window you need a ladder. Wood's got a twenty-footer that's perfect, but I can't leave it against the house while I'm inside in case I'm noticed. Tom can take it down and put it up again when I'm ready.

I won't have to take Tom with me to sell the haul after, either. Haughley's a vintner, which means his house will be full of drink and cash money, so I can pinch a few bottles of good wine, maybe some brandy or sherry too, and Tom can go away with a drink and a full pocket.

Still, I'm not having Tom depend on me. We need to find him something else to do in the day that'll keep him fed. I'll ask Bess if she knows of anything later.

I stuff the bundle of cutlery down my boot. Just as I'm closing the drawer there's a creak in the hall. I hold my breath and close my eyes. A second creak, then footsteps, the knock of wooden sole on wooden floor.

Edging my way to the door, I peer out into the gloom of the hallway. Moonlight spills from the study. I creep down the hall and peer inside, staying on my toes, ready to make a dash for the cellar staircase.

Tom has opened the shutters to let in the moon, and now he stands over the desk, rifling the drawers. 'What are you doing?' I hiss

He turns his back on me, walks over to the chest in the corner and raises the lid.

'Drapery.' He reaches into the chest and hauls out a big, bulky roll that must have a hundred yards of cloth on it.

I step forward and seize his elbow. 'Leave off!' he growls, wrenching his arm free.

'Put it back.' I make another grab at the cloth, but Tom uses it to fend me off, shoving me back and sending me crashing into the desk. The bundle of cutlery slips out of my boot, and knives, forks and teaspoons skitter across the floor. Tom laughs. 'Leave that,' he says, as I start to scabble around for knives and forks, 'these are better.'

From Bains' chamber, directly above us, comes the scuffling sound of a body getting out of bed.

'You've woken him,' I hiss.

'Best be quick then.' Tom slams the bolt of cloth into my chest. 'Here. This one's yours.' He lets go, dropping it into my arms. The cloth is wrapped in a slippery waxed-paper sleeve, and it's so heavy that I reel back under the weight. 'Go on,' says Tom, 'he's coming.' I could drop the cloth and gather up

the cutlery, but the damage is done and Bains is on the move, so I waddle back to the hall as fast as I can under the weight of the cloth while Tom lifts another bolt from the chest.

Usually I'd use the hooks and string to set the bar back in its brackets, but now there's no point and even less time. Still, the hooks are useful things to have, and it's best not to show the world the trick, so I lean the roll of cloth against the wall while I get the strings off. As I'm getting the second one free, Tom comes bounding down the stairs.

'What you doing?' he says, barging past me, 'your man's on his way.'

I give the hook a yank, breaking the string, and stuff it into my pocket before following Tom up the stairs into the yard. I catch up to him as he tosses his roll of cloth over the wall into the alley. 'Give me that.' He snatches my roll and throws it over too, then leaps at the wall, using the railings to haul himself up.

Bains burst out of his cellar door just as I jump down into the alley. His cries of 'Robbery!' echo off the houses around as Tom and I gather our cloth and scuttle off down the alley like a pair of rats in a gutter.

Instead of heading through White Horse Yard the way we came, Tom ducks into the tight snicket that leads round the back of the Kings Theatre. While I have to hold my cloth on my back and stoop as though I'm carrying a hod, Tom surges forward, head up, his roll nestled under his arm like a loaf of bread. Still, as light as he makes it look, it must be hard enough work, because when we duck into an open yard, he sets down his burden and wipes the sweat from his brow with a grimy sleeve.

I listen for sounds of Bains, but the alley is quiet. I drop my cloth in the dust and stand bent double, hands on my knees, gulping down hot dusty air like a pig sucks swill. The cloth itself is heavy enough, and the rod of heavy timber it's wrapped round doesn't help matters, but the waxed paper wrapper makes it slippery to hold. God knows what's under the wrapper. Silk, velvet, lace even.

Probably just a roll of waxed paper, knowing Tom's luck. Mind you, even a roll of waxed paper's worth a few shillings.

I tilt the roll to catch the moonlight. There's a stamp reading *Thos. Johnson, Lincoln*, and something written by hand beneath, but the writing's so untidy that I can't make it out in the gloom. 'Come on,' says Tom, as he hoists up his cloth onto his shoulder and makes to walk off.

I heft my own roll of cloth onto my shoulder and trot after him. 'Wait!' I gasp, between breaths of sour night air, 'I haven't had a chance to bollock you yet.'

'Been burned now,' he says, striding straight ahead, 'so bollocking's lost its bite.'

'He'll be looking for the cloth.'

'When did you work for him?'

'Two, three weeks ago.'

'Then let him look. Why would he think of you?'

This is fair enough, I suppose, but still. There's the cloth itself to worry about. 'What you going to do with it?'

'Sell it to Blueskin Joe at the Hornbeam. It's twenty guineas, this. Mark my word, we'll live for half a year on it.'

Blueskin Joe's a stone-cold snake. First time me and Tom went in the Hornbeam, he gave us ale after we'd paid for brandy. 'Brandy's for us with hair on our balls,' he said. Tom would have got his out to show him the hair if I hadn't moved us on to somewhere friendlier. God knows how Tom's got in with him.

'You'll thank me later. Should be enough to live a few months here. Besides, we bring in something good like this, he might give us regular work with his boys.'

'Us? I'm not going anywhere near the Hornbeam.'

Tom stops in his tracks and seizes my elbow. 'Why don't you come with me? Joe'll give you a good price, and he can put us in the way of some good places to rob. Couple of good nights' work, we'll have enough money to get a place together, and you can leave Wood.'

'I don't want to live in some shit-hole with you, Tom, or work for Blueskin Joe. In eight more months I get my paper and I'm a carpenter.'

'So you won't come with me?'

'No.'

'Then you're not my brother any more. Traitor.'

He strides off again.

'Fuck's sake, Tom. You want to call me a traitor after that back there? You said you'd do it my way. You're the traitor.'

Tom stops, turns and walks back toward me till he's so close I can taste the gin and rot on his breath.

'No, Jackie. It's you. You stopped being my brother first.'

'When did I stop being your brother? It's you who always-'

Tom plants a broad hand on my chest and shoves me.

'I thought you'd come looking for me when I left, but you never left word anywhere. It's not like I could come back and see you, is it?' He shoves me again and I nearly lose my balance, tottering under the weight of the cloth. 'I thought you'd leave Wood and come with me, but you stayed, even after he nearly broke my leg and got me burned.' He makes to push me again, but I fend off his hand with the roll of cloth.

'You stole his saws,' I say, backing away. 'He's bound to be riled.'

'See? You're on his side. You know what Jackie? You're worse than me. I nicked those saws but at least I'm not a fucking sneak. Fucking sneaky Jack, wants everyone to think he's a good little boy and give him a fig, so he sneaks about in secret, taking just a little bit, and nobody notices. Fuck your never enough to be noticed. If I'd have got away with those saws, I'd have had three guineas in my pocket. Tonight I'll have twenty, and I'm going to live like a lord.' He hoists up his bolt under his arm and strides off.

'You think you got caught because you're brave?' I shout after him. 'You got caught because you're greedy!'

'Greedy!' calls Tom over his shoulder. 'Go home to your bed. Good boys get their sleep!'

Tom's footsteps echo back up the alley until they're gone. Even though I have no brother, I have a roll of cloth. It's not much different to Tom. Both are thick, heavy, and damnably awkward to do anything with. Since being seen with the roll would lead to questions just as heavy and awkward, I stick to the alleys, cutting through the courtyard behind the Queen of Bohemia towards Lincoln's Inn.

There's a pile of empty feed sacks sitting round the back of the Bohemia stables, so I take one and wrap the cloth. The sacking stops the wax paper wrapper from slipping through my sweaty hands, and the going gets easier. Soon I'm tunnelling my way into the dark mass of rickety wood and flaking stone that slumps between the Fields and the Butter Market, till I burst out into the blaze of Portugal Corner, where I join the crush and let myself be carried along by the crowd, keeping a tight grip on the neck of my sack.

All round here the streets are so narrow that the signs hanging outside the shops stick out past each other and walking beneath them's like flicking through the pages of a book. Even the sober stagger on Portugal Corner, tripping over cats and trash and their own feet as they walk with upcast



faces, searching for the Angel or the Bull or the King of Spain. Sudden stops and doublebacks set off waves of jostling and shoving, and when the time the sign of the Green Kettle looms overhead I have to fight the tide to stop myself being carried further down the street.

In the doorway of the Green Kettle, I set my cloth down and try to brush the dust off my shirt. This end of Portugal Corner used to be a scruffy place, but lately it's got overrun with fussy little winehouses where they charge a shilling a glass. Most of the signs are newly-painted, but the Green Kettle's is an ancient and peeling thing, at least for the most part. While the kettle itself is yellowed, the slender pink hand that fondles its spout is bright and crisply-edged.

When Sally From-the-Seashore took over and painted on the hand, the Corner was full of tradesmens' taphouses and the like. Back then, the Green Kettle was a quiet, respectable place where carpenters' wives drank tea made from leaves too foul to be brewed further west. But then came Sally and the hand, and the carpenters' wives took their business along the lane to the China Pot, then on to somewhere else when the Pot turned into Gilbert's Sighing Bottle.

The hand that tickles the Green Kettle isn't the only one on the Corner. The hands are appearing everywhere these days. When I was little, you'd only see them painted on signs in St Giles or in the lanes behind Covent Garden, but now hundreds of them have marched out into the city on their delicate fingers to stroke the lions, fondle the bulls, tickle the rims of the barrels and caress the monarchs' heads.

The whole place is shuttered up tight. On Saturday nights the Green Kettle girls lock the door and throw a party for the regulars. It goes on from 8 till midnight, and costs half a crown. There's usually at least four girls, and about ten men. It's good value, I suppose. Four hours with one girl costs a whole crown, so it sounds like a good deal on the face of things, but I don't like the idea. Bess has offered to pay for me to come, and the thought of her and Hannah and Mary together is past tempting,

but still, I've never taken up the offer. I know they fuck dozens a day, but I'd rather not have to see those dozens, or hear the slap of Bess' flesh against their fat, hairy pig-bellies. Better to save up and have a party all for yourself.

Despite my best efforts, the shirt still looks like it's been fought over by goats, so I spit on my fingers, tuck my hair behind my ears, and bang on the door with the special rat-tat-tat tat that Bess taught me. The door opens a crack, and Hannah peeks through the gap, clasping her unlaced whalebone to her chest. 'It's Jackie Sheppard!' she calls over her shoulder, and surrenders the doorway.

The party's over, but, as usual, Davey Morris has hung on till long after to make sure the end is bitter. Sitting at the card table in nothing but his breeches, Davey's face wears the satisfied, Christian expression of a man at peace with all of creation. Sally sits in his lap while he delves into hers with his big, pale hands. 'You alright Jackie?' she asks, squirming. Behind his back, Bess calls Davey Scaly Balls, and all the girls complain about him always hanging around, but since he's the most regular of regulars, and always brings brandy, Sally never tells him to leave.

'Been better, been worse,' I say, as Hannah leads me to the card table and motions for me to sit.

'She'll be down soon,' says Hannah. 'Mary's been kicking off.'

I nod.

'What's in the bundle?' asks Sally.

'Cloth,' I say, in case she asks to see inside the sack.

She looks at me suspiciously. 'Where'd you get that much cloth?'

'Won it on the cats. Bet against this draper from up by me.'

'What Draper?'

'Fellow named Kneebone, from Cheapside.'

'What cat?'

'Samson,' I say. 'Killed some big mog from up Holborn. Twice his size.'

'He's a good one, that Samson,' says Davey. 'Saw him do a mastiff once. Slit him from chin to bollocks, he did.'

'What did you put up to win that much cloth?' asks Sally, 'You with your scarecrow breeches and wooden buckles on your shoes.'

'I said I'd build him a new front door.'

'And he took the bet?' asks Sally.

'Some people are mad for betting,' says Hannah, as she lets her whalebone fall to the floor, showing the line between her white powdered chest and the pink, swollen breasts below. Davey's eyes light up at the sight.

'Bring 'em over here before you put 'em away,' he says. 'I want to kiss 'em goodnight.'

'Sorry, Davey, they're sore. That Gregggy from the Tuns was at them like a dog on a sausage.' She takes a nightgown from the couch by the hearth and pulls it over her head, then comes and sits next to me. 'I've got a new trick to show you!' she says, as she pours us both a big glass of brandy from Davey's bottle.

Davey gives her a look. 'What?' she asks. 'You won't buy a hard-working man a drink?'

'A hard-working man wouldn't be up at this hour,' says Davey.

Hannah smiles sweetly and lays a hand on Davey's knee. 'Go on, Davey. It's a party.'

Davey gives Sally's thigh a squeeze that makes her wince. 'Who can say no to our Hannah?' he says, and pushes the bottle over the table. She fills up his, Sally's, and her own glass, then pours one out for me. 'Go on lad,' says Davey, when she's done. 'drink up.'

'Cheers,' I say, raising the glass. The brandy's good, better than any I've had for a while, and I swish it round my mouth before I swallow, letting it soak into my flesh till my cheeks are numb.

Hannah holds out the deck of cards. 'I've got a trick for you. Shuffle.'

The deck looks ordinary, with no signs of tricksiness. It's not a cheap paper deck, but proper

board, with an apple tree printed and inked on the back of each card. I count the four aces, and check to make sure it's not stuffed with Queens or somesuch, then give it a deep shuffle. 'Magic is it?' asks Davey. 'Nobody told me I was sticking my cock in a witch!' Hannah throws a hex at Davey with a clawed hand, then takes the deck from me.

'Now, gentle Jack,' she says, waving her hands over the deck. She lays it face down, then, with snakelike motions, she spreads the cards around the table till the green baize is covered with a haphazard orchard of apple trees, its rows swooping this way and that. She looks me in the eye. 'You are going to read my mind. Do you hear, everyone? Jack Sheppard is going to crawl into my mind and read it.'

'What hole does he crawl in?' asks Davey. Hannah gives him a withering look, and he sips his brandy.

'How do I read your mind?' I ask.

'There's no how. I'll put the thought in your head. Now, because I'm a witch, I know every card on this table. You're going to reach out and touch one, and it's going to be the Six of Clubs.'

I look at the cards spread face down all over the table, and try to pick the last one she'd expect, settling on one that's peeking out from a small pile that didn't get properly spread out. She picks it up, looks at it, grins, and holds it to her chest. 'Now you're going to pick the Queen of Diamonds.'

I touch another card, one that's right in the corner away from the rest. She takes it up and holds it with the other. 'Now it's my turn. I'm going to pick the Ten of Hearts.' She digs through the mess of cards, a frown on her face, hesitating here and there, till she finds the one she wants.

'What were the cards I said we'd pick?'

'Eight of Clubs!' cries David, startling Sally, who's started to doze off in his lap now that he's stopped his mauling.

Hannah shushes him with a gentle slap on his shoulder.

'Six of Clubs,' I say.

Hannah grins and lays down the first of her three cards. Sure enough, it's the Six of Clubs.

'And the next one?'

'Queen of Diamonds.'

She lays down the next card. 'And there's she is. What card did I pick up?'

'Ten of Hearts.'

Before I've finished speaking, she lays down the Ten of Hearts.

'She's a witch!' cries David, jostling Sally in his lap, and giving her breast a powerful squeeze that makes her wince. 'Careful,' she says. 'I had Gregggy on me, too.'

David rolls his eyes and loosens his grip, though he doesn't let go. Hannah takes a deep draught of her brandy. 'Know how I did it?'

I try to keep my face still, but I can feel a smile tugging at the corners of my mouth. 'I've got an idea. What do I win if I get it right?'

'Sixpence off my mouth,' she says, 'but it won't be for long. My lips are sore.'

'Mary says she's not doing you any more, Davey,' says Bess, coming down the stair. She looks tired out, her eyes glazed and drooping, her long black curls a tangled, lopsided mass.

Sally rolls her eyes. 'What's she mean?' asks David. 'What did I do?'

'You know,' says Bess, hovering at the foot of the stair, 'I don't mind if you want to do it with me, but she's delicate. Too delicate for Gregggy, too.'

'I know,' says Sally. 'I'll have a word with him, get him to be a bit gentler.'

'You should ban him. Mary's huddling in the corner like she's had a bear chase her. Come on, Jackie.' Bess turns to head back up the stairs. 'We can talk in my room.'

'Talk, is it?' asks David from beneath raised eyebrows. 'Save some talk for the witch's mouth!'

'Brandy!' calls Bess from the landing. 'Bring the bottle up.'

Davey doesn't make a peep as Hannah refills her glass right up to the brim, corks the bottle and hands it to me. I stick it in my jacket, hoist up the bolt of cloth onto my back, and take to the stairs.

'Why are you taking that?' asks Sally.

'I might forget it,' I say. 'I'd rather keep it with me.'

Sally shrugs and rises from David's lap.

'You're not sleeping round here, you know. No sleeping. That's my rule.'

'I know,' I tell her, crossing my heart, 'I'll be down in a bit.'

Upstairs in her room, Bess flops on the bed and rubs at her temples. 'How was the party?'

'Not too bad,' she says. 'Know Morris the ostler from the Silver Slipper?'

I nod, trying not to picture his pale, hairy arms and the pale, hairy body that must go with them.

'He tried keeping me all to himself, cornering me, and trying to get me to come upstairs. When I got off him and went off to see about the rest, he went off in tears. We all laughed and went back to it, then half an hour later he came back with a rope and tried to strangle Greggy while he was having me over the card table. All of a sudden I just felt him - whoosh! - fly out the back of me.'

'What happened?'

Sally started shouting, Davey and the other boys pulled Morris off Greggy, then Morris ran up here crying. I came up to calm him down. He was crying these great big tears, all running down his chest. He said he didn't like the way he was throwing me about and pulling my hair. First time Morris has been to the party. I don't think he's the right sort. When he comes to see me in the week he wants it all kissy kissy.'

'Tonight must have been like watching his wife get fucked,' I say, as if I'd cope any better with seeing Bess get mauled by Greggy. I know she fucks dozens, and I even like the thought of it, all those

men paying for what I get for free half the time, but still, I'd rather not have to watch the dozens fucked. I unslung my bundle and lay it on the bed. 'Can you do anything with this?'

'Big knives and forks,' she says, sitting up to get a better look. 'Did Sally see you with that?'

I unwrap the sack to reveal the roll of cloth, tied with string and wrapped in its paper stamped with *Thos. Johnson, Lincoln*. Bess brings a candle over, and we read the writing beneath. *100yds fine lemon fustian*. 'I said I won it in a bet.'

She thinks about this for a moment. 'Fine, but we'll have to wrap that sack round something else when you go. Sally finds out I'm buying and she'll want in. She acts nice when there's men around, but she's the devil's bitch mother when it's just us here. Where'd you get it from anyway? Not like you.'

'Tom.'

'Is he back?'

I shake my head. 'Just stopped by to ruin a few things.'

Bess sits up so she can untie the strings and open the paper wrapper.

The cloth beneath gives off a buttercup glow in the candlelight. 'Quality ruination,' she says, stroking the fustian with the backs of her fingers. 'Worth a bit.'

'How much?'

She shrugs. 'Don't know off the top of my head. At least five guineas. Could be ten. I'd have to find out.'

'five's fine for cash tonight.'

'I'll give you five, but I don't have it now. I can take it to a man I know tomorrow morning, customs inspector down at Billingsgate. He's always getting rid of stuff like this. Should be at least ten to him, but it'll cost me my morning, so I'll need a share.'

'Of course.'

'How's five for you, five for me? Any more than ten, we go halves on.'

'Done. Can you give me a guinea now?'

'Can you live till tomorrow? Sally's emptied my purse for back-rent and the brandy kitty.'

'What time tomorrow? I finish work at six.'

'I'll be back by then, and here all evening. Come by any time.' She flops back down on the bed again. 'Were you wanting to do anything tonight, only after Greggy-'

'I heard,' I say. 'Don't worry. Hannah said if I guessed her card trick she'd knock sixpence off her mouth.'

'I'll tell you how she does it if you like.'

'I know,' I say.

'The mouth or the trick? Still, I am sorry. For me, too. I'll keep something back for you next time. If you like we can go out and eat on Tuesday night, when I'm off. My treat. We can go to the Queen of Bohemia. They do a rib roast on Tuesdays, and they've got this whistling fiddler who sounds like a whole band. We can have a dance, then come back here.'

Bess knows how to have a good night. When I go out alone I always end up nursing a bottle in a corner, but with Bess the city's a different place. She knows doormen and landlords and pitmasters and actors, and can get us into any place in town. On my own, I'm nothing more than a pair of wooden buckles, but with Bess I may as well be wearing a suit of woven gold. 'Perfect,' I say.

'Tuesday it is, then. Now pass me that brandy. I'm not going down with Scaly Balls still about.'

\*



By the time we've drunk a glass and I've heard all about the rest of the doings at the party, Davey's finally gone and Sally's stretched out on the couch with a wet cloth over her face. Hannah's glass is empty, and she's smoking a pipe with her feet up on the card table. 'So?' she asks, her voice thick from tobacco. 'Do you know how I did it?'

'When I shuffled them, you looked at the bottom card.'

She grins. 'Go on.'

'It was the Six of Clubs.'

'And then?'

'You asked me to find the Six of Clubs, then you looked at the card I picked. That was the Queen of Diamonds.' Hannah throws up her hands, but I carry on. 'You told me to touch the Queen of Diamonds, and I touched the Ten of Hearts. Then you said you'd find the Ten of Hearts, and you hunted out the bottom card, which you already knew was the Six of Clubs.'

'He's got me,' she says.

'You're a bad conjurer,' says Sally from beneath her washcloth, 'We all saw you looking at the bottom card.'

'Well, you have to pay your bets,' says Hannah. 'Come on, Jackie.'

'Sixpence off is still sixpence to pay,' says Sally, holding out a hand.

I lay my last sixpence in her palm and watch her long, ruddy fingers close over it. 'Be gentle on her,' she says, as Hannah leads me to the poky downstairs room they use for quick hand or mouth visits and kneels on a cushion by the narrow bed. I sit in front of her, then lay down as she unties the string that holds up my breeches.

I wish it was Bess kneeling there, but with her looking so worn out I don't want to push my

luck. Besides, Hannah's always been good with her mouth, and in a few seconds I'm a world away from the little room and its stale sweat stink, and all I can feel is her soft, slow tongue and her hand flat on my belly, pressing me down into the bed.

When it's over, Hannah ties my breeches back up and offers me a hand to help me off the bed.

'Thanks for being quick,' she says, as she hustles me back through to the front parlour.

'Got your cloth?' asks Sally from the couch, lifting a corner of her washcloth to get a peek at me.

'Don't you fear,' I say, hefting the sack, now filled with rags rolled up in newspaper, all from under Bess' bed.

'See you soon, then, Jackie.'

'I'll learn a new trick for next time!' calls Hannah.

## *Wild*

First the scent from the bowls of orange water set around the room, then the sound of the city outside: the calls of pedlars, the rattle of carts, the barking and whinnying and scuffling of animals, all flowing down the lane, a river of dirt and life and business. Eyes closed, I lie still and listen to what floats past, till I feel Mary stir beside me.

'Did you sleep?' I ask, propping my head up on my elbow.

'A little.'

'Did you read?'

'A lot.'

'And?'

'She took up with the prince and now it looks like she's going to have a bastard baby.'

'Worth my time?'

'I'd say so.' She sits up and stretches, then runs a hand over her close crop of grey hair, the sound like the tearing of fine paper. 'Breakfast? Lizzie stayed out, so I'm cook.'

'No need for cookery,' I tell her as she stands and opens the drapes. 'Just the end of yesterday's coffee for me.'

'Well, I'm having eggs. There's three boiled from yesterday.'

'Just the coffee,' I say. 'And bring a fresh bottle of brandy. There's too much laudanum in last night's. I'll be slurring in court.'

She leans down and kisses me, then gathers my dressing gown round herself and disappears downstairs.

When she returns with the breakfast tray there's a letter sitting next to the bowl of cold coffee.

I tear open the envelope. Jim's writing. *O promises to fall in line, it says, but he wants our offer in writing.*

I set the note down on the tray and Mary takes it up.

'Is 'O' Obadiah?'

I nod, easing the cork out of the brandy bottle.

'What's your offer?'

'He says what he's supposed to, we'll look after Anna and the kids.'

Mary shrugs. 'Have him killed. There's got to be three dozen in Newgate who'd do it for a shilling.'

'Too late for that. If he doesn't take back what he said, Katie hangs. Pass me the whiff.'

Mary takes up the little black bottle of laudanum from her night table and hands it to me.

I lift out the glass stopper. Mary purses her lips as I let four drops fall into the bowl. 'So you're stuck minding Obadiah Lemon's orphan family. We'll go bankrupt this way.'

'I'm not paying out on Ob's account. They can pay for themselves. The wife's a drinker, but it's gin she likes, so it won't cost much to keep her, and I doubt it'll be for long.'

'How many children?'

'Two. Boy and girl, Seven and eight. Fat little things, used to daddy's treats. We'll put them to work – it'll do them some good. You can have one, or both even, if you want.'

'I don't want some dead man's fat children eating all my figs.'

I take a draught from the bowl, letting the coffee, brandy, and laudanum each sink their teeth into my tongue. I pass the bowl to Mary, who takes a long, slow sip. 'Will he get his written offer?' she asks, once she's wiped her lips.

'What use is a contract to a dead man? He'll say it right or he'll have a worse death than hanging. Besides, I'm not putting something like that on paper.'

Mary nods and takes another sip.

'What's on your plate today?' I ask, as she hands the bowl back.

'As far as I know, it's empty, but no doubt there'll be something unappetising waiting for me out there. The Duke of Norfolk and his party were at the Dean Street house last night. Last time they came one of them went at the wall with his sword.'

'I can send Jim down with you?'

She shakes her head. 'I'll take Sam Button. She wants to take over down there soon, so I'll see how she deals with this.' She leans forward and gives me a slow, soft kiss. 'Right, slugabed. I'm going to leave you in your slime. The day's wasting.' She rises and goes through to her wardrobe to dress, leaving me to my coffee and brandy.

Once the coffee's fully awakened my senses and the brandy's brought them to the requisite dullness, I go through to my own wardrobe to work on a costume for the day. Dressing for court is a tricky thing. Every other person there has a way to dress, the justice in his robes, the clerk in his white shirt and black scribbler's cuffs, the victim in their smartest gear, the wretch in whatever he was wearing when they caught him.

I put on a fresh white shirt, black breeches and a long black coat with silver buttons. For a wig I choose a tight-curved piece with a tail at the back and a scroll over each ear.

Next is money for the day. I keep my purses in a bowl on my desk, and they go in the same pockets every day. In my right inside pocket a purse of ten fresh-minted guinea pieces, to go on big things or get a big job done. In the left pocket, a purse filled with twenty half-crowns for the middling, everyday workings of life. Hanging off my belt, a bag filled with five shillings in pennies, sixty dull brown coins ready to be scattered throughout the town.

The last thing is the sword. Its silver scabbard leans in the corner, but as for the blade itself there's no sign, so I wander down the stairs to the parlour and pick my way through plates piled with sticky chicken bones, crumpled napkins, and the other remains of last night. The sword lies on the rug by the couch, its blade sticky with dried orange juice and streaked with pulp. Taking up one of the cleaner napkins, I wipe the blade clean then hold it up to the light for inspection.

I catch my own eye in the polished steel, and make myself a silent promise: Katie Lynx will not

hang.

## *Sheppard*

Pam's made pancakes for breakfast, or pamcakes, as she and Wood like to call them. When I get to the table, Wood's already mashing his into a bowl of beer. He wears his white hair long and has Pam curl it in rags for him so it looks like he's wearing a wig. She powders it with flour in the mornings, too, to disguise the few black hairs that remain, and every morning he looks, from a distance, like a man in a ten-guinea peruke.

For most of the day Wood's false wig stays fairly respectable, but by the time we down tools, the curls have fallen out and he has gobs of sweat-and-flour dough clinging to his neck. In high summer he's lucky if the false wig survives till lunchtime. When we get home, Pam scrapes them off with the back of a knife, and I'm fairly sure these little neck-dumplings find their way into her stewpot.

'Bring the sugar,' Wood calls, as I take my seat, 'and the milk.' Pam brings these things over, then goes back to her skillet, where my cake is sizzling. While I wait for it to crisp, I watch Wood carefully scrape up a teaspoonful of sugar. Holding a hand underneath to catch any errant grains, he ferries his sugar over to his bowl and sprinkles it over his mashed pamcake before chasing the grains off the spoon with the flat of his thumb. 'Lick of the spoon?' he asks, offering me the spoon as though it were full of honey, though not a single grain remains. I shake my head, thinking of the white sugar

biscuit I will buy once I've seen Bess. 'Suit yourself,' he says, and drops it back in the bowl.

'What've we got today?' I ask, hoping the day will be a short one, the sooner to see Bess and get my teeth around that biscuit.

'Busy one today,' says Wood. 'First we go see Kneebone and find out what he's got for us this week. We said we'd finish his floor for him, too, so we'll be there all morning. Lunchtime we'll go up Leicester fields, get a sausage roll and watch the fight. Golden Harry's taking some young Turkish lad on. Supposed to be a big boy.' He pours out a glug of milk into his bowl. 'Then we come back here for the afternoon and work in the yard. We got that Lincoln fellow's doors to get started on.'

'All measured up,' I say. Not a bad day, all in all. If I go hard at those doors this afternoon I might even get away before six.

Pam sets down a bowl of beer next to me and takes her own seat at the head of the table. 'Good lad,' says Wood. 'And Pammy, what're we having for dinner?'

'Yesterday's suet pudding and gravy.'

'Pudding and gravy, Jackie, what do you say? Better the day after to my mind.'

On any other day I could raise some blood for pudding and gravy and even agree with Wood about day-old being tastier than fresh, but I've got far better dinners on my mind. When I see Bess and she gives me the money, I can take us both out for roast chicken dripping in lemon juice from the Sailor's Home, or braised beef at the King's Head on Holborn, or even a whole blackened goose at the Three Bells, then trifle at the Players after. Even if she's working, with ten guineas in my pocket I can afford to pay for the time.

'I'll be out, so you can eat without me,' I say, mashing my pancake into my beer. 'I'm meeting Billy and Gib for skittles. I'll find a sausage roll somewhere.' I lift the bowl to my face and slurp down a mouthful.

'Bring wine back,' says Pam, tearing a strip off her pancake and dipping it in her ale. 'Two bottles.'

'Remember that, Jack-o. Wine for our Pammy.'

Pam jabs her finger at me. 'And make sure he doesn't get it from round here. If you're going to Kneebone's, get it from the Fleet Market. Good vintners there, not like the ones round here that sell you piss.'

'Denny Hill's not so bad,' says Wood.

'He is so bad,' says Pam. 'Just because you play cards with a man doesn't mean we have to drink his piss.'

Wood laughs. 'Wine's dear at the Fleet though. We'll only be able to get the one bottle.'

'As long as it's not piss, we can make do with one. And make sure you ask Kneebone about a new boy to take over for Tom.'

Wood nods.

'Make sure we get to meet him first, though. We don't want the same thing again.'

Wood and me both look over to the empty place at the table. We both know Tom broke more than he built, idled more than he worked and cost more to keep than he brought in, but we both miss him.

This is some magical thing about Tom. No matter what he does, you still love him. After the black eye and the split lip and the stamping on Tom's leg, and after the burning, where I was the only friendly face Tom saw, I came home one day to find Wood sitting in his chair and crying that his Tommy was gone. Even after last night, him ruining Bains for me and calling me traitor, I can't help but want him to be in his chair.



'I'm just saying,' says Pam.

'I know,' says Wood, 'and you're right. I just don't want to hear it said. He was a good boy at heart.'

'He wasn't, Owen. That's just where he was bad. You know that. But it doesn't matter now, does it?'

Pam sets to mashing up her pancake. Wood lays his spoon down.

'I'll ask Kneebone today. We'll get another boy in.' He laughs. 'Let's hope we get another Jack, and not another Tom, eh?' Pam smiles at this, and she and Wood both look at me with love. I smile back, chewing my pancake.

'Now,' says Wood. 'We got as far as bringing back wine. We'll bring back a marvellous bottle, won't we Jack?'

'We will. I'll remind you.'

'I won't need reminding. It's at the top of my mind, just under my Pammy.'

## *Wild*

The midday sun pours down through the open roof of the Old Bailey, drawing sweat from the assembled foreheads and crisping the dirt floor. A warm breeze wends its way in off the street, carrying with it the stink of fresh horseshit and old meat and tugging at the corners of the papers on the clerk's desk.

Despite the breeze, the heat's stifling, and Jameson looks ready to expire at the clerk's table. The jury, exhausted already after only one hearing, slump on the benches that flank the court, sweating as though they were the accused.

The door to the justice's chamber's opens and emits Lord Justice Tichborne into the drowsy miasma. Tichborne's sagging face looks especially loose and miserable in his heavy black gown and full-bottomed wig. The jurors yawn and grumble at his entrance, and only make it to their feet as the justice takes his place at the bench, beneath a black silk parasol fixed to his high-backed chair. Tichborne mutters something to his footman, who scurries back to his master's chambers.

At a nod from Jameson the clerk, Bradley the sergeant-at-arms, roasting alive in his breastplate and steel helmet, makes his way to the gate that connects the court with the prison to fetch the wretches.

The gallery's already full of the usual crowd of beggars, hacks and relatives of the accused, wearing the usual assortment of haggardnesses: the careworn, bloodshot faces of the distressed mothers, wives and children, the scabbed skin of the beggars, the bagged eyes and grey skin of the hacks who haunt the place hoping for something worth printing. The regulars have brought parasols, and one well-heeled gent in a dazzling yellow coat has thought to bring a wide-brimmed hat, but those who are here for the first time bake in the sun or cower under sheets of newspaper. There's a small awning over the bench in the front row that's reserved for the day's prosecutors. Warboys is among them. A man with a pulpy face that sags off his skull, he sips from a pewter flask and fans his fat red neck with a folded news-sheet.

I used to have to sit beneath that awning, but now Tichborne has me with the bailiffs at the table between the dock and the justice's bench. It's a fine spot, right in the justice's eyeline, commanding a view of the faces of the jury and the accused. The bailiffs are friendly fellows, too. Today Cobb and

Younger are my neighbours, and as well as feeding me candied orange peel, they keep the sun off my head with a wide cotton parasol that they've attached to the back of the bench with a pair of manacles from the bailiffs' closet.

'Another?' asks Cobb, holding out a handful of the peel. I'm about to take one when the prison gate opens with a squeal and Bradley returns, leading the four wretches, all chained together by the wrists. I wave Cobb away and watch the parade of misfortune. Kate comes first, wearing the modest housemaid's dress that I sent her, her hair tied in a tight bun to suppress its wild curl and topped with a simple blue bonnet. After Kate, the shiny red tomato-face of Obadiah Lemon. He gives me a nod, then hangs his head meekly.

It's good that he's seen sense again, even if it took a bribe to show him. Him informing on Katie's taken the shine off his death. Striding behind Ob come his better angels, Parky and Bob Rose, giving me the slyest of looks as they pass. Both appear in good spirits considering their every step takes them closer to the noose. No traitors' truth for Bob and Parky, no sacrificing dignity for skin. If it comes to hanging time, and the cart slowly moves out from under them, they'll have friends to hang off their dangling bodies and hasten their strangling. Ob'll likely gasp on the line for half an hour before his air runs out. No doubt he'll plead repentance when the Ordinary comes to the condemned cell, simulate a conversion to the way of the Lamb, and try and get himself transported that way. Best of luck to him.

They approach the dock to cheers from the gallery. Bob's wife and son stand, both with arms folded, both looking out of the same cold and hating eyes. Annie Parkin stands next to them, weeping into her sleeve. No one has come for Ob, not his drunkard wife or his fat and spoiled children. They'll be at my door soon, no doubt, my family now.

Once Bradley's chained the prisoners' irons to the dock, Tichborne brings his gavel down on the bench with a crack. Jameson stands and, after a silencing cough, addresses the court: 'It is charged that

Obadiah Lemon, Benjamin Parkin, Robert Rose, and Kate Lynx, all of St Giles, did commit fraud and theft on the person of Oliver Warboys of Golden Square.'

Tichborne mops his brow with an already-sodden handkerchief. 'The prosecutor to present the charge,' says Jameson. The clerk beckons to Warboys, who rises, struggling to fasten the buttons on his long blue coat, and walks to the centre of the courtroom. The robbed man looks around, bewildered, from the bench, where Tichborne is signalling to his manservant, to Jameson at the clerk's table, then to each of the two jury benches, as if unsure who he is supposed to be presenting his charges to.

'Spit it out, sir,' barks Tichborne, 'Lot of cases to hear today. Let's have yours.'

'Good morning,' says Warboys, vainly trying to address both jury benches, but only succeeding in setting his jowls wobbling. 'My name is Richard Warboys, and they did just what he said.' There's enough Norfolk bumble to his speech that a few sniggers go up from the gallery, and someone whistles a snatch of *A Clipper in at Yarmouth*. Next to me, Cobb stifles a guffaw. Warboys made his money on herring, and he's yet to lose the stink of it. Ignoring the mockery, he presses on, doing his best to mimic the quick clip of city speech. 'As I say, these four robbed me. How it happened was, I was all set to go down to the country for the summer and I hoped to let my house to someone visiting the town, so I advertised it in *Mist's*. This young lady,' he motions to Kate, 'come- came, to see me. She told me her name was Judith, and that she worked for some wealthy horse trader called Harlow, who'd be in town for the summer, and who needed a place for himself and his family. She looked the place over, asked all sorts of questions about how noisy the street was, how near to the park, you know, all sorts of little things, which I now see were meant to set me at my ease. Anyhow, once she'd done with all that, she said her master would be happy with it, and she paid me ten guineas pending receipt of the balance of the summer's rent, which we had fixed at fifty guineas, she having negotiated some reduction on account of her bringing her own staff and not needing mine. As it was, the day came, and she turned up

in a coach driven by that man.' He points to Ob, who doesn't seem to notice. 'Well, she passed me a bill for the forty, which I later found to be a forgery and which I admit I did not properly look at on the day, as I had already had the ten guineas and thought my Judith in earnest.' He pauses as Tichborne's footman enters from the justice's chambers bearing a tray of bread and meat and a bottle of brandy. The footman sets down the tray on the bench and fills a glass for the justice, who waves him away and takes up a sliver of pink beef, inspecting it with a quizzical eye. 'Please, sir,' he says, 'go on.'

'As I say,' Warboys continues, 'I quit the house in good cheer, took to my coach and departed. Luck had it, we'd only got as far as Southwark when I realised I had forgotten to pick up my lettercase, which contained some personal correspondence, as well as letters concerning some matters of business, all necessary to me, as I am sure my Lord understands.' Jameson rubs at his temples as Warboys waits for some response from Tichborne, but the justice is intent on his beef, and supplies none.

'If you could bring us to the charges, Mr Warboys,' says Jameson, 'particulars are not important.'

'Well, certainly,' says Warboys, ruffled. 'I just thought to give a full picture of the thing.'

'A sketch will suffice,' says Jameson. 'No need for a frame.'

'Very well,' says Warboys, 'we're up to it anyhow. So, as I say, not being far away, I elected to go back and retrieve the case. When we pulled up, I saw the man Lemon loading the dresser from my chamber into his carriage. At first I thought I must be mistaken, and that young Judith, or Kate as it turns out, must have a similar dresser that she was moving into the house, but then I saw these other two bringing out my grandmother's washstand, which is one of a kind, not another like it anywhere, and I knew I was being robbed.' At this accusation, several of the jurors look over at the dock and scrutinize the accused.

All looks as it should. Bob and Parky stand still as palace guards, as though they spend every day on trial for their lives, while Ob's blackened, downcast eyes and grazed, inflamed cheeks give him

a monstrous aspect. Kate plays her part perfectly, her hands clasped penitently, her usual sly grin untwisted into an expression of pious innocence. Warboys continues, 'On seeing this I immediately raised the hue and cry, leading my footman and several others who happened to be in the street to run toward the carriage, but, as soon as the cry went up, the villains began to flee. First Lemon jumped up into his driver's seat and whipped the horses, then, seeing their means of escape disappearing, these other two dropped the harpsichord, which being old and delicate smashed to bits in the dropping, then they leapt up onto the running board of the moving coach. If it weren't for another coach turning off Russell Street and blocking the road, then they would have got right away. As it was, me and some others on the street got hold of the two on the running board, and got them down easy enough, but then your man Lemon got up on top of the carriage, drew a sword and started slashing at anyone who tried to come after him. We had to knock him off with poles in the end.'

Warboys mimes thrusting a pole at an imaginary Obadiah, evidently proud of his exploits in catching the real man.

'So, Mr Warboys,' says Jameson. 'You accuse the four prisoners of collectively attempting to rob you.'

'No accuse about it. They did it. Got a whole streetful of folk can come in and swear to that.'

Warboys bows to the bench, expecting some intervention from the justice, but Tichborne's busying himself with his brandy bottle. Jameson gets to his feet and motions Warboys to sit next to him at the clerk's table. Jameson stands. 'We have certainly received affidavits in support of Mr Warboys' account. We have also received information from the accused Mr Lemon which resulted in the arrest of Miss Lynx.'

All eyes in the courtroom turn on Ob Lemon, who looks down at his irons. Even to a juror wealthy enough to be an upright man, the turncoat thief is a hated breed. In the narrow lanes Ob called

home, he is a dead man.

'Good, good,' says Tichborne. He looks to me. 'Mr Wild, you had something to say in this case?'

I look over at Jameson. He rises and solemnly intones, 'The Thief-Taker General of Great Britain and all its Isles, Mr Jonathan Wild.' As he sits back down, I give him a nod. Getting Jameson to do this when I appear costs me a guinea a month, but it's worth far more than that. If I were to proclaim myself the Thief-Taker General of Great Britain and all its Isles, I'd look pompous, but having the voice of the court name me such makes it ring with the force of majesty. Tichborne either doesn't mind or doesn't notice the dilution of his authority. As long as he gets his beef and brandy, he's a lapcat.

I stand and button my coat, offering a shallow bow to each of the jury benches and a deep one to the justice. 'My lord, and my gentlemen of the jury. In the course of my activities as Thief-Taker General, I gather all kinds of knowledge about all kinds of villainy. In so doing, I have amassed a great deal of information concerning all four of the accused. I will tell you bluntly that these three men, and Mr Lemon in particular, are desperate, dangerous rogues. All three have been burned in the hand, which means that all three will hang if you find them guilty. And they will deserve it.' Bob and Parky both do their best to look worthy of the noose, hanging their heads and peering out at the jury through lank, matted hair. 'These are guilty men, and I have no wish to meddle in their fates. Miss Lynx, however, is a different matter. Her father was a man in my employ, who gave ten years of his life to assisting in keeping this city peaceful. Since his death five years ago, I have looked in here and there on little Katie. She is a kindly, innocent creature without a mischievous hair on her head. The kind of girl who'd help anyone with their burdens, though it might cost her dear.' I cast a fatherly smile in Kate's direction, holding it long enough to make certain the jury see it. 'Now, when I heard that Miss Lynx had been arrested, and on the evidence of one such as Obadiah Lemon, I knew immediately that a grave injustice was in danger of passing through this court, for, though Miss Lynx possesses an upright

character and impeccable moral sense, her tongue is too still and her temper too mild to offer a forthright defence which could meet the machinations of Lemon. With this in mind, I immediately visited Miss Lynx in Newgate, where I heard the whole sorry story, and immediately offered to speak on her behalf.'

Warboys is staring at me, a blush creeping up his neck. I meet his eye, and smile.

'Miss Lynx, it seems, was a victim in all this too. Eager to keep their faces from Mr Warboys, lest they be identified, the three men in the dock used her as a screen for their villainy. Miss Lynx was a neighbour to Mr Lemon, and this devil offered her a guinea to do a favour for a country friend of his, and hire out a certain house. This friend, he told her, was in the process of seeking a divorce, and required a secret place so as to secure his goods against his wife's grasping family, who were intent on robbing him by force if they failed by law.' I pause for a moment to allow thoughts of grasping former wives and scurrilous brothers-in-law to rise to the minds of the jury, watching as brows knit and eyes darken before I continue. 'He instructed her to tell the landlord that the house was for herself, so as to preserve his friend's secret, and that she must use a false name to ensure that nobody could discover the true tenant. She did her job diligently, got her guinea from Lemon, and the next she knew of it was three days later when the constable barged through her door, after Lemon had given her name to the beadle as the ringleader of the whole affair.'

Warboys bites a fingernail as he appraises Kate, looking her up and down from her governess' bun to her modest smock and sturdy clogs. It's a difficult thing, bearing up in court while you're inspected like a carcass at market, but Kate's doing everything I told her to. She has her hands clasped and her head bowed penitently, she doesn't smile or smirk, and she's able to pull off a convincing blush whenever I sing her virtues. To judge from their sympathetic expressions, the jury have taken the tale for true, and even without a word from Ob they'd probably let her go free. Still, it's worth making



certain, especially after all the work Bob and Parky put into the persuading.

'I would like to ask Mr Lemon to corroborate this for the court, remembering that he is under oath.'

'Lemon!' barks Jameson, when Ob fails to step forward. 'Please repeat your charge against Miss Lynx.'

Ob may as well be on the other side of the world, and it takes a nudge from Bob to make him raise his head. 'What?' he spits. For a moment, Kate looks truly terrified, but she quickly wipes it from her face when I meet her eye. She needn't worry. Ob knows what'll happen if he decides to fall out of line now. Better a peaceful strangle than to get kicked to death in the night by men who used to call you friend. 'It were true,' he says, 'She worked with these two well before me. It was them that found the place, and them that hired me to drive the cart.'

Kate's face turns instantly grey. I smile, partly to give her strength, partly from genuine amusement. 'So you are calling me a liar?'

'I am. Liar.' He spits the word from his scabbed lips.

'Do you have any witnesses to support your testimony?'

Ob looks over at Bob and Parky. 'Only more liars.' Bob makes a mock-lunge at Ob, rattling his chains. Ob shrinks back as far as his own irons will allow. 'May I speak plain, my lordship?'

Tichborne shoots me a look. 'Please, Mr Lemon. We wilt in this hothouse at your pleasure.'

Ob draws himself up. 'Your Mr Jonathan Wild is a liar and worse. He has his hand in everything. I wouldn't be surprised if it were him that set this whole thing up.'

Warboys looks over at me, sizing me up. I keep my face still, not letting anything Ob says disturb my surface. Even a mockery of shock would grant Ob's words too much weight. Best to treat

them as they are, the hot air of a St Giles

'He's a spider,' says Ob, 'spinning out his webs while we poor flies kill ourselves to keep him fat. It's him should be standing where I am. I demand you arrest Jonathan Wild!'

Tichborne laughs. 'Mr Wild, is this true? Are you a spider?'

I raise an eyebrow.

Tichborne raps his gavel on the bench, rattling the fork on his plate. 'Mr Lemon's deposition notwithstanding, the charge against Miss Lynx is dismissed.'

Warboys gets to his feet. 'Might I say, my Lord, that if that's the case, she still hired my house under false representation, and she's got to answer for that.'

I catch Jameson's eye. He stands. 'That, Mr Warboys, is not a matter for today. We are here to discuss the charge at hand.'

### *Sheppard*

The smell of the first horseshit of the day has crept over the wall into Wood's cramped little yard. I breathe it in with the sawdust and the faint tang of cat piss beneath, summoning the strength to haul the overladen barrow out of the shed and through the gate. In the alley I put my whole body into pushing till I'm running so fast that the barrow's wheel bounces off the hard-packed dirt.

Wood's waiting at the corner, cleaning his teeth with a splinter. He sets off when he sees me coming. When me and Wood go out together, it's always the same. I push the barrow, loaded up with

tools and timber, while Wood walks ahead with his hands stuck down the front of his breeches, cocking his flat cap at every woman – young, old, pretty, plain – that crosses our path. I usually have an eye out too, but today I trundle along in his wake, thinking only of Bess and the guineas she'll have for me later, and a little of Hannah, too. With a guinea in your pocket, you feel like a lord, but with ten I'll be king: I could walk down any street in town and buy anything I wanted. The best brandy, a fine calfskin jacket, Bess and Hannah both at once.

At this time in the morning, Fleet Street's a parade ground for the army of brickies and chippies and masons and plasterers who keep the city more or less upright. This morning their marching has sent up a cloud of dust that hangs in the air overhead, so thick it casts shade. With me pushing the barrow and dreaming of the fine things soon within my reach, and Wood walking ahead to make room, we trundle our way up Fleet Street toward Kneebone's, heading east along Wych Street till the river comes into view, dull and brown and already clogged with boats and barges.

The sun's barely risen, but already the men lugging cargo on and off the docks are stripped down to their breeches. All down the river walk, backs like old brown leather brace the weight of trunks, kegs, and handcarts piled high with boxes and crates. Wood takes to bellowing at the top of his voice, 'Easy by! Working men coming through!' but still it's slow going.

I hold my nose as we cross the bridge over the Fleet Ditch, but even so I can taste rot and stale piss in the back of my throat. Once we're over I lean to the side and fire snot out of my nostrils without breaking stride, then up towards the Old Bailey, trailing Wood through the babble of pedlars and the dashing of the messenger boys going back and forth between the big four-storey lawyers' houses.

Wood stops to buy himself an orange and cuts me off a slice. 'Here you go, Jackie,' he says. 'A man can go all day on one of these.' I shove the orange in my mouth, biting down on the pulp, and grin at Wood through the skin. He grins back, showing his own slice of orange, then strides ahead again.

It's a tasty piece of fruit, this, better than I've had in a while, and as the barrow bucks in my hands, I suck the pith dry, letting the sweet, sticky juice flood out the sour taste of stale ale and pancake. Tonight I'll buy a bag of oranges and eat them one by one until I'm sick.

When we get to Kneebone's, we pass his front door and head round the back. I must have been to the house a thousand times, but I've never been allowed in the front way.

Wood steps up to the kitchen door and gives it a rap, but nobody answers. He knocks again, and after a moment the window above clatters open and my Mam's top half pokes out, her nightcap still on her head.

'Come up,' she says, tossing down the key. 'He wants to talk to you about Tom.'

'What is it?' I ask.

'Let him tell you,' says Mam, 'I'm sick of hearing about it.'

She disappears and Wood lets us in. The kitchen fire's dead, and there's no sign of any coffee or even a kettle of tea about. Mam doesn't seem to get to work till well after lunch, if at all, but she can usually be relied on to have a pot of coffee bubbling.

In his study on the second floor, Mam kneels in front of the open sideboard, choosing from among the many bottles, still in her nightgown. Kneebone sits on the blue velvet couch by the window, wrapped in a green silk gown patterned with golden birds. His feet are propped on a cushioned stool, a newspaper is in his lap and an empty decanter sits on the table at his elbow next to a pair of crystal tumblers, both down to the dregs. Mam rises from the sideboard with a fresh bottle, refills both glasses and pours the rest into the decanter. She lifts a glass and drinks it right down, then carries Kneebone's glass to him. Kneebone folds his paper, takes the glass and makes room for her to lay her head in his lap. 'When was the last time you saw your brother?' he asks, stroking the hair at her temple.

'At the burning,' I say.

'Not since?'

I shake my head. Kneebone's eyes awl their way into mine, boring for the truth, but I've been lying to Kneebone since I was ten, so I hold his look, beaming out innocence till he gives up and takes a slow sip of his brandy.

'He got arrested,' says Mam, looking at me properly for the first time, her eyes bobbing in a sea of brandy. 'A boy came by this morning from St Giles roundhouse to ask us for money for his board.'

As Kneebone fills her tumbler, Mam rubs his knee.

'What did he do?' asks Wood.

'We don't know yet,' says Kneebone. 'I've sent for a coach, and we're going to visit the beadle to see what can be done.'

Wood nods. 'Not much, I'd think.'

'It all depends,' says Kneebone, 'on what he's done and who he did it to. It might be we can buy off the injured party.'

'It'll have been bad,' says Mam wearily. She looks over at me. 'Don't you think?'

I shrug. 'Who knows?'

Mam's eye turns mean, and she watches my face over the rim of her glass as she nurses her brandy.

'It doesn't matter,' says Wood. 'They burned him last time, so they'll hang him this time.'

'You're right, Owen.' Mam swallows what's left in her glass.

Kneebone reaches for the bottle, tops up mam's glass up, then gives her knee a squeeze. 'We'll see about that,' he says. 'I know the justice at St Giles. Tichborne's his name. He comes to my club. After we've seen the beadle and got the truth out of Tom, I'm going to pay him a visit. It may be that we

can have Tom transported instead. I have a plantation in Virginia, and if I stand as guarantor for the boy, it may be that Tichborne can exercise some discretion in his case.'

Mam drains her brandy. 'I wouldn't bother,' she says. 'You might get him to Virginia, but he'll only run away or steal something. Best to let him hang, I say.'

### *Wild*

It takes the Jury less than a minute to settle on their verdict. Half of them don't even feel the need to rise from their benches to confer with their colleagues.

'How do you find Mr Parkin, Mr Rose, and Mr Lemon?'

'Guilty, your worship.'

Parky and Bob give nothing away, but Ob looks ready to make a bedpan of his breeches. It seems like he's going to cry out, but Parky takes him by the wrist and squeezes him quiet.

'Well then,' says Tichborne, wiping his mouth on his sleeve, 'Miss Lynx may go home and the rest to Tyburn. Hanged at the next session. Jameson.'

The clerk rises obediently and nods to Bradley, who looses Kate's manacles and gives her a little bow as he sets her free. A little of the real Kate finds its way into her face as she cries out in gleeful celebration, not that it matters now. She could bare her behind and screech like a monkey and it wouldn't change a thing. She lances Ob with a parting scowl, then skips over to the gallery, where she loiters near the street-gate, looking this way and that as though she'd just committed a fresh crime.

'The next case-' begins Jameson, noticing too late that Tichborne has risen from the bench and is loping back towards his chambers, pausing to request his next morsel from his footman. The clerk

sighs. 'My lord justice has important business. We will hear the next case in due course,' he says, to jeers and protests from the gallery.

The next case is a matter between two brothers, an event of considerable interest to the gallery. One brother stole the other's wife, then found himself stabbed and robbed in revenge, left in the park bleeding from the belly. Surviving his wound and crawling his way back to town, the wounded brother armed himself with a pistol, knocked on his brother's door, then attempted to blow his brother's brains out on the doorstep, only for the pistol not to fire. It was only the intercession of the people walking by that stopped the would-be assassin from being bludgeoned to death with the butt of his own pistol. There are already several songs about the whole affair, mostly celebrating the stabber-in-the-park and condemning the wounded wife-stealer. The Bailey, as is often the case, will weight the affair on a different scale to those who sing ballads, I reckon, and the stabber will be hanged alongside Ob Lemon.

Tichborne's footman scuttles over and tugs at my elbow. 'If you would, Mr Wild, my Lord asks that you pay him a visit at home in an hour. He says to make sure you arrive hungry. There'll be a joint.'

'Thank you, John. Tell him I'll be there.'

John clicks his heels and goes to do as he's bid. I walk up to Katie, who looks as though she's just run from Brighton to the Fleet Bridge, and we watch together as Bradley leads the three condemned men back through the prison gate. Ob looks miserable, as he should. With a few words from the right people, Bob and Parky have a fair chance of getting transported to Virginia rather than hanging. If they do face the hangman, they'll do it knowing that they stood up straight till the last. But even though he did right in the end, nobody will speak for Ob. He will hang, and when he swings out of the world he'll know that he tried to buy his own life with Katie's. He'll know he was a coward, and that everyone he loves will remember him as a coward, and if he chances to enter the hereafter, it will be to have his face eternally rubbed in his own cowardly muck. 'You're free, then,' I say. 'What'll you do with

your freedom?'

'Drink it,' she says.

'Go to the Boar. You won't need to buy a drink tonight. Dez is expecting you.'

'For what?'

'You need work don't you? I've arranged it. You'll work there. Not skivvying or anything like that, before you wrinkle your nose. You'll help him with the books, help to run the place. Your mam used to do the same.'

'I don't need a job. I got the paper in Newgate, I know of four places up to rent right now. Have Mary lend me a dress and I'll-'

'No more pulling that trick. You're known.'

'I'll-'

'You're known, and you're known to be a friend of mine now. You get taken again, what I said today starts to look like a lie, Ob looks like an honest man, and you look like a menace to be hanged.'

Katie scoffs. 'You've got the justice round your little finger.'

'There's a lot more to justice than my Lord Tichborne and his bellyfull of beef. No more pulling the same trick. If you don't like the books, Dez'll find you something else. I told one true thing here today, and that was that I promised your dad I'd look after you.'

'I don't need to see Dez,' says Katie. 'I can find my own work.'

'Look. I'm not trying to punish you, but you need to understand. Remember, you're only alive because of me.'

'Thank you, uncle Jon.'

'I don't mean for you to feel thankful,' I say. 'I mean that you're only alive because I trust you. If



I thought you'd let me down, I'd let you hang.'

She smiles. 'So not free, then?'

'Not entirely. But who is?' I touch her elbow. 'You'll go to the Boar?'

Katie nods.

### *Sheppard*

When Kneebone's carriage arrived, Wood asked to go along with him and Mam so he could see Tom too, leaving me to get on with the floorboards by myself. We took up most of the boards in here last week after we finished doing the study, so there's not a lot left to do before I start laying the new ones. Usually I work quicker without Wood around to get in my way, but this morning it's going slow, and all I can think about is Tom and how he got caught.

Did Bains somehow follow us down the alley and catch Tom with his cloth after he left me? If it wasn't Bains who got him, what happened? It must have been something to do with Blueskin Joe. You hear about these fellows in the news, turning each other in for the reward.

But it may not have been Blueskin or Bains at all. It may have been Tom's mangy beard and general crustiness that gave him up. Nobody much noticed me with my roll of cloth, but I'm in clean breeches, and there are a hundred reasons I could give for having it. Where would a man as wild and shabby as Tom get a roll of cloth? He could do like I did with Sally and say he won it in a bet, or got paid it for a debt, but Tom's not got the knack for thinking on his feet. He's more likely to have fought anyone who asked him. This seems by far the most likely thing, and I feel my heart settle. Tom will

have been asked about the cloth, started trouble, then been arrested. He can't have told on me. If he had, they'd have been round to get me before breakfast.

If Tom didn't tell, I'll have an angry Wood and an angrier Kneebone unless I get the floor done, and worrying never nailed down a floorboard, so I put Tom from my mind and set to levering up the old boards and stacking them on the landing. They're too warped for Kneebone's standards, but straight enough to be laid in some other more ramshackle home, so I take care not to splinter them as I move across the room with the crowbar, each board crying out in its own voice as it creaks and squeals free of the joists.

Soon every board is silent and leaning against the wall and I set to scooping out the little piles of rat shit from between the joists. Somewhere a bell strikes nine, and the air fills with distant peals from every direction as the hour billows over the city. Kneebone, Mam, and Wood will be with him by now, and Tom may have been waiting to tell them about me before anyone else could, so he can enjoy the surprise. There could be a whole posse with Wood at the head, set on giving me the same kicking Tom got for the saws.

There's nothing to do but wait. If Tom keeps quiet, all could still be well. Once again, I put him from my mind and go back to work. I try to remember as closely as I can the faraway feeling I had when my cock was in Hannah's mouth, and soon the rat shit's cleared and I'm all ready to start laying the new floor. The new boards are in the woodshed out in the yard, so I head downstairs, through the kitchen and out into the sunshine. But instead of going to the shed I find myself loitering in the passage, an odd, hollow feeling in my legs. If I run and Tom's kept quiet then I'll get a bollocking, but if I stay and he's spilled his guts, I'm for burning.

I hoist up a few boards onto my shoulder and head back through the kitchen and up the stairs ready to start hammering down the boards. The first board goes down easy, and so does the second, but

halfway through the third I find myself laying down the hammer, walking downstairs to the hall, opening the front door, even though Mam'd kill me if she saw me anywhere near it. I look up the street towards the cathedral, half expecting to see Wood, Kneebone and a constable at the head of an army of gaol-keepers, but there's nobody but the usual folk. I catch sight of old Laney coming out of his house, so I quickly go back inside in case he lets Kneebone know I've used the door that's too good for me.

Indoors I go from room to room, looking over Kneebone's silver candlesticks and fine upholstery, at the cut decanters and heavy golden drapes. Even before the saws, Kneebone would never have left Tom alone in the house, but with me it's different. I've stolen just as many figs from the pantry as Tom over the years, only Tom didn't bother to pick the seeds from his teeth. Wood, Kneebone, even Mam, they all trust me, which means that if Tom's told them all about Bains, they'll be more furious with me than they ever were with him. A dog that snarls and bites may get a kicking, but a lapdog that turns savage gets drowned in the river.

After ruining three nails I lay the hammer down. Maybe lunch will help, give my stomach something else to work at, so I head back down to the kitchen and inspect the contents of the pot. I can't be bothered lighting the stove, so I draw out a cold ladleful.

The grey stew smells so old and foul it could poison a goat. God knows when it was made. As far as I can tell, Mam and Kneebone never really eat, and seem to live on brandy alone. Mam makes the odd stew or pie, but it's likely to sit for days without being touched before getting fed to me or thrown to the dogs. Still, I'm hungry enough to gobble some down, slurping meat and juice and chunks of jelly right off the ladle.

Though it's foul, the stew settles my stomach, and after a few ladlefuls I'm feeling calmer. There's no need to worry about Tom. If he was going to tell, he'd have told, and I'd be taken already.

## *Wild*

To avoid the crush of Cheapside I swing up the Jewry and into the back alleys that cut along the Wall. The usual back alley folk are doing the usual back alley things, playing dice, sleeping off the lunchtime bottle, skimming stones at cats.

Katie is free. How to keep her that way, though? Since she said goodbye to the brothel she's tried her hand at a dozen trades. She was a clumsy pickpocket-in-training, never getting good enough to be loosed on the crowd, and a poor lookout too, without the patience to keep her eye properly peeled. With the lodging game I thought she'd found a talent that would keep her, but after the Warboys business it's too much of a risk to let her go back to that. I've put enough of my neck out for her that I can't have her being taken again, so it's a quiet, honest job for Katie, though the girl's got roguish tastes, and she's like to spit out an honest day's pay. Mary will talk her round, if it comes to it. She's got a way with the wayward.

Tichborne's maid Clara answers the door, a nervous dormouse of a thing who seems to blush the way the rest of us breathe. Still, she haggled Jim up to tuppence a day for sending us lists of Tichborne's visitors – twice what John the footman gets for the same job – so there must be some spine to her. 'They're through here,' she says, as she shows me through to the parlour, where Tichborne is sharing a bottle of brandy with a tall fellow of around thirty in a square-topped wig, heavily powdered in a purplish grey.

'Jonathan,' says the justice, neither he or his companion rising from their plush, buttery yellow chairs. 'Come and sit. We have a chair for you.'

'And a glass, I hope.'

'Of course.' I take up the vacant seat, He fills me a tumbler, and I take a sip, glancing at the man in the square wig over the rim of my glass.

'Jonathan Wild, this is Matthew Parry. Justice Parry, as of this afternoon. We're just back from our Lord Mayor's with the papers, and now he's ready to sit in judgment on us all.'

'My lord,' I say, bowing my head. 'A great thing you do. We of the plebeii owe you our thanks. Would that more shared your dedication.'

It's a rare thing for me to see another justice besides Tichborne these days. There are twelve aldermen in the town, all sworn as justices, and each one's supposed to take a turn at the bench, but aside from when a friend of theirs brings a case – or finds themselves in the dock – they're never seen within half a mile of the Bailey. Instead of doing their duty, they pay Tichborne to do it for them, and he collects fifty-two guineas a year off each of his fellow aldermen in return for sitting in the Bailey one day a week. If they do turn up, they have so little interest in the cases that don't involve their friends that I have more freedom than I do with Tichborne.

'Yes, yes,' says Tichborne. 'A great thing. But do remember, Matthew, it's no shame to delegate a duty one cannot fulfil.'

'Pleased to meet you, Wild,' says Parry, ignoring Tichborne's pitch and approaching me with a broad smile and a warm handshake. 'I've seen your notices in the papers. *The Thief-Taker General of Great Britain and all Its Isles.*' Tell me, do you take many thieves on the isles?'

I catch a hint of suspicion beneath the mockery, so I decide to play the plain dealer. 'Personally, I don't. But if you need it done, I know the men to send.'

'Mr Wild has men all over the nation,' says Tichborne. 'He's brought fugitives back from Bristol, Ireland, all over. You'll see when you sit the bench. Mr Wild is a useful fellow to have in the court.'

Makes the day go a lot easier. Gets the truth out of these rascals. Without him, these things can drag on for hours. Days! I only wish he was there for every hearing.'

'I've seen for myself,' says Parry. 'I was in the gallery this morning. That was quite a thing with the Lynx girl. I understand from the sergeant that she didn't utter a single word from her arrest till her acquittal.'

'Katie is frail and easily overcome.'

'Please don't mistake me, Mr Wild, I'm not making any sort of insinuation. What I mean is that you effected a great and noble thing. Without you to speak for her, the driver's charge would likely have stuck. She would have hanged, and the driver would have been transported.'

'Just so,' says Tichborne. 'Between the prosecutor and the driver, I'd have sent her to Tyburn even if she'd protested her innocence.'

'But tell me,' asks Parry. 'If you hadn't have known the girl, how would you have got at the truth?'

'I'd have beaten it out of Lemon,' I say.

'Best way,' says Tichborne. 'Better to beat the truth out in Newgate than to worm it out in court. It can take hours, if you ever dig it out at all.'

'It's not always the best way,' I say. 'Worms go deeper the more you dig. You have to get beneath them, observe their motion through the dirt, then drive them out into the light.'

'A city of worms,' says Parry, a smile playing on his lips. 'You're right, no doubt, and you've hit on precisely why I wanted to make your acquaintance.' He leans forward in his chair. 'I want to know this city. I want to know it, and I want to civilize it, and I believe that you can help me.'

Tichborne reaches for another fig. 'You'll find Wild a great help,' he says, 'I have no doubt of

that. Now, a drink, then you're properly introduced and we can call for dinner.'

We stand and lift our tumblers.

'To Kate Lynx's innocent neck,' says Parry.

'A fine neck it is,' says Tichborne.

'Safe on a pillow, thanks to you, my Lord,' I say, raising my glass to Tichborne.

The three of us drain our brandy. Parry shivers, clearly unused to strong drink.

'As you can see, Wild, Matthew is very keen to make your acquaintance,' says Tichborne, once we've trooped through to the dining room and taken our places on his generously-cushioned chairs.

'It's an honour,' I say, as I place a napkin on my lap.

'I have heard about the work you do at your office,' says Parry. 'It's a great thing, to reunite a man with what he thought lost. I've heard from many people – all kinds of people – of how you recovered what had been robbed from them.' He shrugs. 'Well, not how, exactly. Just that you did it. I must say, I am fascinated by the how of it all, though of course I don't expect you'd tell me.'

'I will tell you,' I say. 'Happily. You're a justice. I see you as my superior officer. A general to my major. But I would ask that you do not repeat what I tell you. As you will see, the method relies on secrecy, and the only ones harmed are our enemies.'

'I promise, I will not tell a soul, major.'

I can't help but smile. Every well-bred boy dreams of being a general. 'Then I'll tell you,' I say, laying my palms flat on the table and fixing his eye. 'First, you tell me, what is the hardest part of robbing?'

'I am sure I don't know.'

'It's the getting rid of what you've robbed. Breaking into a place is no hard thing, but finding a

man to buy what you've stolen is a real trick.'

At this, Clara shuffles backward into the room, bearing a tray with a steaming lump of roast beef, tied in string and crusted with herbs and three enormous potatoes, glossy with butter. Parry, leaning forward on his elbows, looks exasperated at the interruption.

'Carry on, Jonathan,' says Tichborne, catching his look. 'I'll carve as you talk. Clara, pour wine.'

'Now, as you will know, the buying of the stolen goods is equal under the law to the stealing of those goods.'

'Carver's choice,' says Tichborne to himself as he slices off the burnt end of the roast and lays it on his plate.'

Parry keeps his eyes on me. 'If you were a receiver,' I ask him, 'How much would you want of the profits?'

'Half, I'd say,' says Parry. 'Both face the same risk if the penalties are equal.'

'You'd be right,' I say, 'If the risk were equal, but consider this: as thief, you steal the thing, probably at night, and take it to the receiver. This is your part done. As receiver, though, you've got to hand over money in advance of your profit, then you've got to hold onto the stuff, bearing in mind that getting caught with it means almost certain death, then you've got to find someone to sell it on to.'

Tichborne slaps a potato onto each of our plates, then lays down a hearty slab of pink beef next to it. 'Gravy's in the pot,' he says, as he takes up said pot and pours the vinous juice all over his meat.

'Now,' I say, mashing my potato with my fork, 'Most dealers in the city, even the dishonest ones, shy off buying actual plunder, which leaves the thieves to either take a pittance off the lowest kind of receiver or try to pass them as honest goods. My method is simple. I approach likely men and women all over the city. Pawnbrokers, innkeepers, jewellers, those who are most likely to be presented with stolen goods. I tell them to buy these goods whenever they come in, at a price just higher than fair.'



Parry raises an eyebrow. I'm not surprised. I've just admitted that I have induced dozens of men to felony. Parry looks to Tichborne to gauge his feeling on the matter, but the old justice is already far away in the land of beef and gravy, sipping his wine through a half-chewed mouthful, so I carry on.

'Once they've got the goods, and the name of who supplied them, they come to me. I locate and capture the rogues, often with the money still in their pockets.'

'Which you keep?'

'Which I return to the buyer, since I have deprived him of his goods.'

Parry nods. 'The whole transaction is undone.'

'Exactly so.'

Parry looks to Tichborne. 'And you feel that this undoes the crime?'

'Of course it does,' says Tichborne. 'You don't?'

'I didn't say that.'

'You'd be wrong if you did. The thing is done and undone in our sight and at our direction.'

'And then you put out one of your advertisements?'

'That's right. *'A silver pocketwatch engraved CW recovered from robbers. Visit Jonathan Wild's Office of Lost Property in the Little Old Bailey.'* Although oftentimes there's no need to advertise. Often the robbed man comes to me and furnishes me with a description of his lost goods, and I am able to put the word out among the buyers. Either way, the robbed man comes to me. '

'And buys his own goods back.'

'He does not buy them, they are his. He pays the cost of recovery, nothing more. Sometimes this is nothing, sometimes the pursuit requires the hiring of men, or the criminals have got shot of their gains before we lay hands on them, leaving the honest buyer out of pocket. Many's the man who's paid

two guineas' reward for a hundred guineas' worth of goods recovered.'

'Tell him about the receivers,' says Tichborne, preparing himself another mouthful. 'That's the real cleverness if you ask me.'

'It's neat, I suppose,' I say.

'Tell me,' says Parry.

'More often than not the thieves have tried to shift their haul to a receiver before they tried an honest broker, and been offended, or at least disappointed, by his offer. A beating, or the threat of a beating, can often make them give a name.'

Tichborne jabs his overladen fork at Parry. 'And we scoop them up!'

Parry looks down at his untouched meal. 'Neat doesn't do it justice,' he says. 'It's like God's own pocketwatch.'

### *Sheppard*

The floor's nowhere near finished. I must have lost an hour to staring out the window. All I can think of is Tom sitting with his head in his hands, crying and sniffing the way he did when we were little. Tom's courage is all on one side of him. Dare him to climb a scaffold or piss off the top of a steeple and there's no man braver, ask him to keep his mouth shut and he'll crack at the first questioning. I force myself to picture Tom standing firm, shaking his head, keeping quiet, and for a moment I'm calm again,

until I look around me and see nothing but bare joists. Even if Tom hasn't told on me, I'm a failure as a carpenter.

When I hear Kneebone coming in the front door, I dash downstairs and out the back door to the yard. If Tom's told, then I don't want to be cornered. Wood comes through the back gate, and I start to sidle round him in case I need to make a run for it. His face is deep red, and for a moment I'm certain the red's from fury and I'm on my toes ready to bolt, but then he gives me a big, lopsided, drunken grin and hugs me to him.

'You're a good boy, Jack. We've all just been saying. Come on. Lots to talk about.'

Mam doesn't look like she's been saying anything of the sort.

'What happened?' I ask her, but she says nothing, just walks into the house.

'To the study!' cries Wood as he merrily bundles me through the back door. 'We've got business.'

Upstairs, Kneebone's as red-faced as Wood, and I can smell the brandy vapour rising off his skin. There's a fresh bottle open and four tumblers on the desk. He fills two nearly to the brim and two barely halfway. Mam stalks over to the desk and seizes one of the full ones like a pigeon swooping down on a crust. She takes a gulp, then sets it down so Kneebone can fill it up again before dropping the stopper back in the decanter.

Mam takes her drink and perches on the corner of the couch, while Kneebone takes the other full tumbler, leaving Wood and me with the stingy drams.

'Your brother beat and robbed a fellow last night,' says Kneebone.

Wood shakes his head sadly. 'Horrible thing, it was. He crept up behind, put a bag over his head and beat him to the ground.'

'He's for hanging,' says Mam, 'and that's that.'

'What about the transportation?'

'Guess who the man was,' says Mam, knocking back her brandy. 'Go on.'

'I don't know,' I shrug.

'The Marquess of Winchester!' Mam laughs a broken, hollow laugh. Kneebone uncorks the bottle and hands it to her. She fills her glass, drains it, then takes a deep swig right from the bottle before setting it on the floor between her feet.

'Needless to say,' says Kneebone, 'the Marquess has a deal more influence than I do. However, I refuse to give in at the first ditch. I will visit the Marquess myself tomorrow and see if he can't be persuaded. We have friends in common, and it may be that I can influence him to abandon the charge completely.'

'Not a chance,' says Mam. 'The boy's dead.'

'Likely transported to Virginia,' says Kneebone, 'The Marquess will certainly agree to that.'

Mam shakes her head. 'Dead dead dead.'

Kneebone takes a slow sip of brandy, then lays a hand on Mam's knee and squeezes. 'Enough about Tom, eh? We've been talking about you too, Jack, and about what we're going to do once you've served your apprenticeship.'

'What do you mean?' I ask.

'I mean,' says Kneebone, 'to offer you a position.' He motions to Wood. 'Owen's getting old, and soon he won't be able to work. When your apprenticeship's done, you and he will be partners. You will be the junior partner at first, with a quarter share, but your share will grow by five percent each year until the fifth, when you will be equals. We'll take on two new apprentices immediately, and you can train them up together.'

'Me and you, Jack-o,' says Wood. 'What do you say?'

I want to ask how much the pay will be, and whether I'll be paying a share of the rent or just my board, but Wood looks so fatherly that all I can bring myself to say is, 'Me and you.'

Wood grabs my hand in both of his. 'Marvellous,' he says. Mam stands. 'Say thank you to William.'

'Thank you, Mr Kneebone,' I say, just like I did six years ago, on the day I signed my paper.

'Call me Uncle William.' Kneebone's eyes flick over at Mam, who's worrying the tumbler in her fingers. 'I've come to think of you as a kind of nephew, you know.'

'Thank you, Uncle William,' I say.

'It is my pleasure, young Jack,' says Kneebone, 'Now, you go and get on with the floor. Owen and I have our own arrangement to discuss.'

'Yeah, you go on, Jack-o,' says Wood, the blood draining out of his face at the mention of the arrangement.

I leave the room backwards with a bow and head back down to the yard. I've never really understood what Kneebone has over Wood. I mean, Kneebone owns the house on Wych Street, but it's not like Wood doesn't pay more than a fair rent for it. If it's a debt between them it's a big one, considering Wood's been giving old Uncle William a day's free labour a week for the whole of the six years I've been apprenticed to him.

Now that I know I'm not spending the night with Tom in the roundhouse, the work goes faster, and by the time Wood comes down, I've got half a dozen boards down.

'How was it?' I ask.

'Never you mind,' he says. 'This all you've done?'

I hang my head. 'I couldn't stop thinking about Tom.' I look up, expecting Wood to grumble and bollock, but instead I get a kindly look.

'He asked after you. You should go and see him. Drop the barrow at home and have the rest of the day. Here you go.' He presses tuppence into my hand. 'You two have a drink on me, and don't worry about the floor. I'll sort Uncle William.' He turns to go back inside. 'Tell Tom I love him. I couldn't say it in front of them. Tell him I love him, and I forgive him for the saws.'

### *Wild*

After the side of beef that Tichborne's cook served up I could do with a bowl of coffee to get my blood moving. I'm tempted to dive into Lawson's for a stiff Javanese, but the day's half done and I need to attend to business, so I forego stimulation and make straight for the office.

Turning off High Holborn, I'm faced with the grimy stone bulk of Newgate, the prison looming over the Old Bailey like a mill over a field. As I walk beneath its walls, hands reach out from the grilles set into the flagstones. I take out my purse of pennies and loosen its strings. Each hand gets two coins, and soon the street is echoing to cries of 'God save you, sir!' and 'God be with you!' They put you in the street cells if you can't afford your bed and board, and two pence is enough to buy a bunk for the night and to have a stew dinner and a bottle of ale. If they're clever, they'll go hungry and bedless, and spend their tuppences on gin. Tuppence will get two bottles from the prison taphouse, but after the taphouse closes for the night at two, there are plenty about who'll pay two, three pence a bottle. All it takes is the will to buy a bottle and sit with it without drinking.

When I was down there, nobody ever gave me more than piecrust, but still, there's things you can do to earn your keep.

A strange, ugly music rises from the grates further down the street. One enterprising soul has got hold of a tin whistle. When I get close, I see that he's made a sign from a piece of old sodden board and pushed it through the bars. It says 'MAY ST CECILIA'S BLESSINGS BE UPON YOU WHO HEAR THE MUSIC OF THE FORSAKEN.'

The music of the forsaken is rightly named. Notes whinge and whine and bleed together in impossibly ugly ways and as soon as I've dropped a penny into each of the grates I quicken my pace so as to forsake it quicker. Suddenly it stops.

I turn to see that a butcher has left his shop to pour a bucket of something down the grate. He stands, tapping the bottom of the bucket, dislodging foul gobbets that drip onto the unfortunate whistler.

I shudder now at the thought of a bucketful of gristle to the face, but when I was one of the forsaken I'd have chewed on a bull's pizzle if one had come my way.

Past the prison, I turn onto the Little Old Bailey and nod a hello at old Warnock the insurer, who's stepping out of the towering brick office where he bilks his clients into betting against themselves. Insurance is nothing but that, a wager against one's own interest, and the insurer is nothing but a promoter of terror. Warnock and his breed stoke the fires of fear, talking of robbers and bandits and pirates, making men expect to be skullduggered the moment they sets out on the street.

None of it is needed. All of the insurers of London together couldn't do what I do from my office. It's small by the standards of the rest of the street, but it's made of the same stone as the court buildings, and with its marble steps and iron-banded door, it has the same look of authority. My office is a comfort. It proclaims that the city is knowable and known, and that there is no need to be afraid.

Before I open the door, I check the keyhole. There's a fresh, bright scratch on the plate, and the keyhole is dented around its edge. I had the smith fit a polished steel plate and black it with soot. That way it matches the cast iron of the rest of the house's fittings, but I can still tell if someone's tried to get in.

Every now and again, someone tries their hand at it, but even if any of them managed to pick the lock, there are six bolts on the inside, and Quilt always shoots them before he leaves by the back door, which has three locks, two of them hidden behind iron plates, and one with a counter mechanism built in that lets me know how many times the key's been turned. Quilt writes down the number at the end of the day, and if it's different when he comes in, we know something's amiss.

Inside, Quilt's already sitting in front of the hearth, his wig hanging off the back of his chair, adding entries to the intake ledger from his notebook. 'Good morning,' he says, his voice as flat and dull as a Cromwell penny. Quilt's always been the most curious combination of dull and bright. He naturally speaks in the lumpen tone of a solitary farmer who only opens his mouth once a month on market day, but he can put on almost any voice you can imagine. He's been a Scotsman, a Yorkshireman, even a Frenchman in his time. It was a trick he learned young, from sneaking out of the workhouse and loitering round Covent Garden. He tried picking pockets, but he was a clumsy boy, and he very nearly got himself caught. But though he was clumsy, he was clever, and he took to following people around, listening, then repeating under his breath until he'd stolen their voices. It wasn't long till he put his skill to use. One day, he walked west to St James, where he climbed a wall into a Lord's mansion and stole a suit of the Lord's son's clothes from the laundry yard. He ran home, got himself dressed up in brocaded velvet, then went to the nearest inn, where, in his best imitation of a brash juvenile viscount, he asked for lodging for his father and his footmen, who were following on on a coach behind him. The innkeep showed him through to a dining room, and the moment Quilt was alone with the beef, he wrapped it in



the tablecloth along with the silverware and disappeared out the window. This trick kept him fed and watered, and by the time he'd outgrown the suit, he'd made enough money from it to buy a new one.

Eventually, word of the false viscount spread, and Quilt had to retire the act. Now he wears a suit made by the same tailor who made Jameson the clerk's shirt, jacket and waistcoat, and he looks just as much a part of the workings of justice as the court itself.

'Good morning,' I say. 'Come here, you two.' Beau and Alex are curled up at Quilt's feet. The two grey whippets rise on their spindly legs and saunter over to lick at my palm.

Quilt rests his pen in the well on the table next to his chair. 'Get out of it, you two. You've had your breakfast. Do you think Beau's getting fat?'

I wrap my hands round the whippet's body while he nuzzles my legs. 'Not fat,' I say, 'but on the way. No tripe for a month.'

Quilt nods, and gives a sharp whistle. Alex responds immediately, curling back up in front of the fireplace, but Beau gives me a final lick on the hand before joining his brother. 'How did it play?' Quilt asks, marking his page and closing the ledger. 'Jim said Ob fell into line.'

'He fell back out again.'

'And?'

'Hanged at the next session.'

Quilt rubs Beau's jaw, the dog's nose disappearing up his cuff as it licks at his wrist. 'What does it look like for Bob and Parky?'

'I'll speak with the Justice tonight.'

'Good. It'd be a shame if they hanged.'

'They won't.'

With a word from Tichborne, Bob and Parky will be spared the noose, and instead they'll be shipped to Virginia, where they'll be auctioned off to a crowd of plantation owners, or their representatives, most of the tobacco owners having grown so rich off tobacco and the labour of poor caught thieves that they never need stir. The happiest of these happy plantationeers is Andrew Tomblin, once a poor caught thief himself, and with a letter from me to my old friend Andrew, Bob and Parky will be bought right off the boat, given a good dinner, then sent back again on the next tide.

'Gibbs still our first appointment?'

'He is. Eleven o'clock.'

'Good. Before he comes, make a list of everything that came out of Southwark last week. Jem Coker tells me Harry Pritchard's been selling elsewhere.'

'I'll bring it through.'

'Good. One more thing. Was the number right on the back lock?'

'It was. Why?'

'Someone tried picking the front door.'

Quilt eyes the street through the window with some concern. 'Who'd bother?'

'The new justice for one,' I say. 'Just had lunch with him, and I half expect him to storm the place with a squad of dragoons by the end of the day.'

'Right you are, Jon. I'll have a boy stay in the yard, too, in case they try the back way.'

'I want him watched too. Matthew Parry is his name. I want to know all about him, and if he ever comes round here, I want to know he's coming.'

In my office, I find my second wife – Quilt's first – with an armful of tulips and a faceful of worry.

When she sees I'm not bearing bad news, she breaks into a smile.

'Where is she?'

'At the Boar, drinking her freedom.'

'Thank God.' She beams. 'I'll go and join her when I'm done here.' She rushes over to the mantel and crams the tulips into the big brass vase, then starts arranging them, turning each bloom so it faces the centre of the room.

I sit down at my desk and open the ledger.

'Is Mary all right?' asks Elizabeth. 'I saw her at Jenny Forest's yesterday. She didn't look well.'

'She's been too busy.'

'She'll be pleased about Katie.'

I nod. 'I expect so. You know how she is.'

'Far away.'

'Far away.'

Elizabeth licks her lips. 'Want my advice?'

'Always.'

'Get the both of you out of the city. Just for a day or two. Take a carriage out to Stoke Newington, stay in an inn, walk together by the river. You're both so bound up in things.'

'I'll ask her. See what she says.'

'You don't have to do that,' she says. 'She'll only say no. Just slip a bit of extra laudanum in her brandy, then when she wakes up she'll be in the park, in the sun, and she won't want to resist.'

'She'll resist. I'll lose an ear.'

There's a knock at the door. Lizzie smooths down her apron and opens it.

'Sorry, Jon,' says Quilt, 'got a fellow out here wants to see you right away.'

'Is he on the list?'

'No. A chancer.'

'Tell him to come back later. I'm not here.'

'He's wearing a forty guinea wig, Jon. A velvet coat too, and gold buckles.'

'Well, send him in. I don't like to disappoint a forty guinea wig. Lizzie, bring us wine.'

While Quilt and Lizzie see to their tasks, I sit down at my desk and crack open the ledger. There's nothing in it I need, but I like to be seen with my face in the books. It gives the right impression, that I have everything in the city captured in ink.

Quilt knocks gently as he opens the door, and I rise to greet the man in the forty guinea wig, which is just as splendid as promised, a twin-towered affair with devilishly intricate ruffling over the ears, powdered in pink and silver and gleaming like a salmon's belly.

'Mr Charles Bains,' says Quilt, his voice a perfect replica of Jameson's Middlesexian hunt-ball clip. 'May I present Mr Jonathan Wild, the Thief-Taker General.'

Beneath the wig is a short, pudgy fellow of about forty, his face lightly painted and his eyes a milky blue. A soft sort, little blood in him, his wig by far the most substantial part. 'A pleasure,' I say, rising from the desk and offering my hand. 'Please, join me. May I offer you a drink? Wine, brandy, Spanish Water?'

'Wine. Please.'

'Wine, then,' I say. Quilt bows and backs out of the room, a picture of clerkliness.

I motion to the armchairs by the window, making sure I get there first so that Bains gets the one with the view of the carved marble facade of the Old Bailey.

'How can I help you, Mr Bains?'

'Charles. Charlie, even. If you help me you can call me Charlotte.'

'I choose Charlie. Now, Charlie, how is it that I can help you?'

'I've seen your advertisements in the papers, the stolen property, you know.'

'I see. And you have been robbed?'

'I have, Mr Wild, I have. Last night in fact. A hundred guineas in silk and fustian.'

I feel my eyebrows rise. Somebody's had a good night.

'Do you have any idea who might have robbed you?'

'I had a lodger. A widow of thirty named Molly who made her money with her needle. A useful sort to have about, I thought. She seemed trustworthy, and I thought I might even be able to find a place for her in my own business. I'm a draper, you see. So she moved in, and for weeks all was well. Then, one morning, my maid told me that some of my silver cutlery was missing. There were other small things, too. A pouch of tobacco, some sweet jellies, that sort of thing. Molly denied it, of course, but three days ago I told her to move out, and she did, and then, last night, I'm woken by a noise from below, and on going down to investigate, I find my shop ransacked and the cellar door wide open.'

'And you suspect Miss Molly?'

'Molly Herbert is her name. Yes, I do, though I'm halfway to suspecting myself. It was me who barred the cellar door. God knows how she got in.'

'Could she have kept a copy of her key?'

He claps his hands. 'I never gave her a key in the first place.'

'The cellar was securely barred?'

'Yes, yes. Fast as can be, I'm sure of it.'

'And your maid? Could she have helped the robbers in?'

'She sleeps two doors down at her mother's. Besides, she reported the loss of the teaspoons, and she arrived first thing in the morning, a picture of shock when she heard the news. She was with me when I barred the door, you see. It was Molly Herbert, I am sure of it. She must have had a copy of the key, panicked when she heard me stirring and made a run for it through the backyard.'

Lizzy arrives with the wine, and fills our glasses. 'Thank you, my dear,' says Charlie, who drains half of his in one gulp before mine's half full.

'And where is Molly Herbert now?'

'In the roundhouse at St Giles. Fool woman sent to me to tell me where she was living so I could send on any messages. I woke the constable and took him to arrest her at two this morning. There was no sign of the cloth, but Molly had some five guineas about her, which she must have got from her receiver as a downpayment. Of course, she denies the whole thing and won't say a word about who has my cloth now.'

'So you came to me?'

'I have heard your name spoken many times, by men I trust and admire. You have a reputation for great successes.'

'I do what I can, where possible. There are no guarantees, of course. Rogues can be exceedingly wily.'

'But is it possible to get my cloth back, do you think?'

'That depends on many things, but there is reason to be hopeful. There's not many have the money to buy silk. I'll put out the word and we'll do our best to get it back for you.'

'And if you find it?'

'We'll send for you, although I must warn you, it may be that your cloth has already left the city, or been cut up into pieces. I may never be able to find it.'

Charlie looks disappointed. 'I may look like a wealthy man, Mr Wild, but I've been sailing close to the wind. I have spent a fortune this past year, I thought wisely. I've made my house a palace, had all sorts of parties, and won some good business from those who came, but it all pays down the road. My house is mortgaged, and I have had to dismiss my cook till my customers honour their debts.'

'And you can't support the loss of this cloth?'

'I can't. Without that cloth, I'm wearing the greater part of my fortune.'

'We live in the Devil's town, Charlie. Much as I'd like to promise that all will be well, I've seen too much of ill to expect anything else.'

I take a slow sip of my wine and lean back in my chair. 'Which do you value more? Seeing whoever bought your cloth hanged for trafficking in stolen goods, or getting your hands on those goods?'

'Ideally both.'

'In my experience, Charlie, things are never ideal. If I speak to your Miss Molly, and can get her to give up the name of the person she sold to, and can surprise this person and seize the cloth, then you'll get your cloth, the guilty will be hanged, and you won't lose a penny. However, this is hardly ever the way these things fall out. It is far more likely that your cloth has already been sold on to somebody who can cut it and sell it on piecemeal.'

I take another sip of my wine.

'What then?' asks Charlie.

'Then there is nothing I, nor anyone else can do.'

'I see.'

I reach forward and offer to refill his glass. He waves me away. 'I suppose there will be a fee,' he says, 'whether or not you get it back?'

'No fee,' I say. 'I never charge for my services. Puts a bad face on the whole thing.'

'Then how do you make your money?'

'From the sale of necks. It was decided by Her Majesty Queen Anne to offer a reward for the capture of felons, and it is this statute on which my trade is built. If I can bring a felon to the court, then I can toddle off to the Treasury and collect forty guineas. Since you got Molly, you'll get the money from her neck, but in my experience, these things are seldom planned alone and I'm sure to find a few accomplices.'

'Forty guineas you say?'

'Forty for Molly, yes.'

'But I get it? It's paid to me?'

'You had her arrested, so it's your money. So says Queen Anne. They don't make it very public, and it takes an age to fill out the necessary documents, but I will help you make the application to the Treasury.'

'Thank you, Mr Wild.' Charlie nods, the thought of forty guineas shining in his eyes like an island to a shipwrecked sailor, 'I should think it does, the number of thieves in this town. A man could make a fine living. I might give up on rags and take up rogues.'

'I fear no competition. As you say, the town's full of rogues. Plenty to go round.'

Charlie laughs and sips at his wine, a healthy glow blooming in his cheeks, eyes shining. He must be poorly off if the thought of forty guineas can do that to him. This is the thing with trade,



always sailing near to the rocks. The danger and the relief by turns set the heart beating too fast and too slow, and twisting the brain in knots.

Once I've helped Charlie into his coat and our now-jolly draper's taken his leave, I call Quilt into my office.

'You hear of a man named Matthew Parry?'

'Man of that name just hired staff for a house up west. Six footmen, a driver, two cooks, four maids.'

'He had himself sworn in as a justice yesterday.'

Quilt raises an eyebrow.

'Find out about him,' I say. 'Where he drinks, who it's with, where he goes to fuck. Everything.'

'Right you are,' says Quilt. 'How much am I to pay out on it?'

'No limit,' I say. 'He's a justice, after all. 'Get at least one of the maids, too.'

Quilt nods. 'Anything else?'

'Bring last night's ledger through. Let's see if we can't help out old Charlie Bains.'

While I throw open the curtains to let the light in, Quilt brings the big green ledger and lays it on my desk. He opens it to the ribbon.

I scan through the entries, through the dozens of watches, pocketbooks, wigs, canes and other assorted booty. A dozen yards of lace came through Bill Harris, who bought it for two guineas off someone called Lucy Baker, and got paid two for it by Dez, but other than that, there's no cloth, let alone a hundred guineas' worth of velvet and fustian. I put on my coat, strap on my sword, and head out, stopping to give Beau and Alex a bit of dried tripe from the bowl on Quilt's desk, making them both twirl in a circle before they get their treat.

## *Sheppard*

The St Giles' Square market's barely worth the name, just a few shabby stalls and shabbier stallholders, selling bruised fruit and grey-green meat to the bruised and grey-green folk who live in the rickety wooden houses that surround the prison.

The roundhouse itself is an ancient granite drum with a slumping thatched roof. From across the square it looks a fearsome place, made from stones the size of sheep, but up close I can see that it's in need of a lot of work. The mortar between the stones has been repaired here and there, but there are huge patches where there's none at all, and the place is more a pile of rocks than a building.

Outside the front gate, a fat, red-faced lump of pudding in a leather coat and cap sits on the hitching rail. Perched next to him is a boy of about twelve in scruffy green breeches and a good leather jacket that's too big for him. They're sharing a bag of barley sugars, not sucking them like you should, but crunching them between their teeth by the handful as though teeth grew like fingernails.

Bottle of brandy under my arm, I start to walk over to the gate.

'You for the prison?' calls the boy.

'I am.'

'That's us. Who you here for? We locked up a molly last night, all done up in a silk gown he was, you his sweetheart?'

'I'm here for my brother.'

'Who's that?' asks the boy, as the lump of pudding chomps down on another handful of barley-sugars.

'Tom Sheppard.'

'Another? Everyone's coming to see our Tommy, ain't they?' He looks me up and down. 'What's that under your arm?'

'Brandy. For Tom.'

The pudding bites down on his barley-sugars, the crack so loud I feel a wincing pain in my own teeth. He holds out a hand. 'Sixpence.'

'I don't have sixpence.'

'The brandy then.'

'But I brought it for Tom.'

'Well if you ain't got a sixpence,' says the boy, 'Tom won't get it anyhow. I'm allowed to ask a sixpence per visitor, it says so right in the parish book. Us taking the brandy instead is us doing you a favour.'

I hand over the brandy. It's a decent two-penny bottle, and a shame to waste on this pair. Still, at least I've still got a quarter-ounce twist of tobacco and a bag of pork scraps in my breeches, so Tom won't have to go wholly without.

'You show him up, Harry,' says the big pudding, leaning to one side to unhook the keys from his belt. He crams another handful of barley sugars into his mouth. Harry, clearly unhappy with his lot, takes the keys, slithers off the hitching rail and leads me over to the gate.

Inside, the drum's dark and chilly, even in the heat. The stone walls are two foot thick, and the few windows are barely wider than cracks. Creaking boards rest on beams wedged between the stones,

and every step sets off creaks and snaps in far off parts of the building.. Harry leads me up the stairs to a room where two men are dozing on a mattress in the corner. 'The beadle's here!' cries Harry.

One of the men sits bolt upright and seizes his jacket from the floor. 'Where?' he cries, getting one arm in before he sees the mirth on Harry's face and flops back down again. 'Don't fall down the stairs, Harry. I'd hate for you to break your head open.'

'Don't worry Gaz,' says Harry, mounting the stair. 'I'll be careful.'

Harry leads me up two windowless flights to the top of the drum, then leads me down a hall and stops in front of a cell door. 'Here he is,' he says, flicking through the keyring. The lock squeals from rust and grime and he struggles to turn it, and has to use both hands to turn it all the way round. Tom lies on a bed below the barred window, face turned to the wall, his shirt brown with dried blood. I take a step into the cell, and see that he has a stickily-bloodstained bandage wrapped round his head.

Harry locks the door behind me. 'I'm going back outside!' he calls. 'Give me a shout out the window when you're done!'

Harry bangs three times on the door in farewell, but still Tom doesn't stir. I sit at my brother's feet and give his leg a shake. He rolls stiffly onto his back and levers himself up on his elbows. He looks a fright. Both eyes are black and swollen, the whole left side of his face is puffed right out of human shape, and his beard's so soaked with blood that it's started to scab over.

'Wood told me to tell you he loves you,' I say. 'How about that?'

Tom hawks up a gobbet of bloody spittle onto the floor. 'You didn't bring a drink?'

'I brought brandy. They took it off me on the way in.' I pull the tobacco and the pork scratchings from my breeches and throw them onto his belly. 'Got you these though.'

He motions to the rickety wooden table and chair that sits in the corner behind the door. 'There's beer over there. Bring it.'

As well as the beer, there's a lump of dark bread and a small bruised apple. 'You hungry?' I ask.

'Just the beer.'

I bring the bottle, slide the chair over next to the bed and sit down. Tom shuffles over slightly, making room for me to put my feet up.

'So? What happened?' I take a swig of the beer. It's stale and there's no bite at all.

'Give that here and I'll tell you. Just you wait.' I hand him the bottle, and he pours a trickle through his swollen lips. 'Fuck,' he coughs, 'that's horrible. Here.' He hands it back and shifts his weight, grimacing with the pain. 'So I sold that cloth to Blueskin Joe for ten guineas, just like I said. We had a drink, played a hand, then he let me pick one of his girls. I got my dick wet, played another hand, then walked home. I told you Joe was alright, and-'

'How'd you get arrested?'

'Right, so I left with just shy of ten guineas after the cards and the drink, and I was on my way to go and get a room at the Rose. I was walking down High Holborn, just past Gregory's, when some lobcock comes up behind me and puts a sack over my head. Next thing I know I'm on my back getting kicked in, then some other cunt comes in and cuts the purse off my belt.'

'How'd you get arrested for that?'

'It wasn't for that. Give.'

I hand him the beer. 'What was it?'

'Well, they left the sack behind, so I thought I'd put it to work and try and make back some of what I lost. I walked up toward Bloomsbury till I see this wiggly cunt in a blue coat who's wandering along on his own.' Tom purses his lips and wiggles his shoulders. 'Little china fellow, you know, skinny legs and too much lace, swaying with the drink, and I thought, that's the man. You got a pipe? Broke

mine.'

I nod, and fish out my tin. The only pipe I've got left is blackened and oily, and the stem's broken in half. Still, it works, so I open the twist of paper and grimace at the smell of the foul ha'penny mundungus. I cram a thumbload into the pipe and set up the tinderbox on my knee. 'Carry on,' I say, as I prepare a ball of wool. 'What happened with your man?'

'Well, I creep up behind him, bag held open, and it goes over his head just like that.' Tom leans forward, hands round an imaginary bag. 'Then I stick my leg out to trip him up, same as the other fellow did to me, but then I'm on my back and my head's getting kicked in again. Turns out my man had a footman who was taking a piss in the alley. He comes out, sees me sneaking up with my bag and fucking tackles me, and him and his boss start kicking my skull about like it's a fucking ball.'

I strike the flint off the steel till a spark settles in the little cotton nest I've made, then start blowing. Tom sticks the pipe in his mouth and sits up against the wall. I pull my little stub of candle out, light it and set it on my knee. I take a match and hold it over the flame. When it catches, I lean over and give Tom a light.

The smoke smells foul, the oil in the bottom of the pipe worse, but Tom drinks it down deep and holds it in his chest.

'So nobody knows about the cloth?'

'Oh ho,' says Tom, releasing a plume of smoke, 'Jack-o's scared for his skin.' He holds out the pipe. Here you go, big brother, you can keep your shitty smoke and your pigskin, too, and don't you worry. Nobody but me knows what a sneaky little thieving cunt you are.' He blows out the candle.

'Come on, take your trash and sneak back to Wood's.'

'Keep it.' I say, ignoring the furiously waggled pipe. 'You'll want it later.'

'I'm going to die.'

'That's nobody's fault but your own.' I walk over to the window and call out 'Harry!'

'Are you finished already?' he yells back.

'I am!'

'Do you really think I'm going to die, Jack? Kneebone said he'd have a word, get me transported instead.'

The way his voice cracks drains all the bitterness out of me, and I stop in my tracks. I don't want to tell him that Kneebone can't help, but I don't want him hoping when there's nothing to hope for. I turn to face him. 'I heard,' I say. 'To work like a dog for the rest of your days on his plantation. I'd rather hang.'

Tom takes this in, along with another draught of the pipe, then offers it to me in a friendlier way than before.

'You keep it,' I say. 'And I'm sorry about the brandy. I'll bring you a bottle in tonight, hide it under my coat this time.'

'Why not go and get one now? Or just give me the money and I can ask Harry to get it. He's alright.'

'Haven't got any money on me,' I say. 'Going to get my cloth money now. I'll bring you a guinea later on.'

Tom nods. 'See that you do. I can only survive so long on beer.'

## *Wild*

When I step into the front bar of the Blue Boar, the place is riding high on the lunchtime tide. Will Wright and Jessy Harries have washed up in one corner to carry on their constant seething row over percentages, Mark Prosser's playing his fiddle by the window, his cap on the table next to him, so far empty, and Doll Cotton and his boys have colonised the unlit hearth, and are feeding Doll's whippet with scraps, throwing them up high so the dog jumps up to get them.

Everyone has a nod for me, except Sarah behind the bar. When she sees me coming, she takes a glass down from the rack and fills it with good brandy from Dez's private bottle. 'He around?' I ask,

'Jim too. I need his legs.'

'They're in the skittle alley,' she says. 'Want the bottle?'

'May as well,' I say. 'Do you need a hand behind the bar?'

'You looking for a new job, Jon?' asks Curly Ben from his usual spot at the counter.

'For Katie Lynx,' I say. 'I want something straight for her.'

'Well I'm not having her,' says Sarah. 'She's a vixen. I only take hens.'

'Can't say I blame you,' I say.

In the skittle alley I find Jim about to take a shot at a pair of straggling pins, his black hat and coat hanging on the wicker stand by the door. Dez leans against the wall by the scoreboard, sipping at his usual mid-morning bowl of brandy and chocolate.

'Jonathan,' he says, his Spanish accent curling up my name. 'Good afternoon.' Though he's never been a soldier, Dez wears a tall Campaign wig with twists of ribbon in regimental colours.



'Alright, Jon,' says Jim, straightening up and making to drop his ball back in the basket.

'Take your shot,' I say. 'Looks like a tight spot you're in.'

Jim rolls the ball between his palms, takes three quick steps toward the line and drops to one knee. The ball rolls toward the left hand pin, striking it on the outside and sending it careening into the other.

'Impossible!' cries Dez, and knocks back the dregs of his bowl of rum and chocolate.

'Impossible for most men,' says Jim, rolling down his sleeves.

'Have you got today's list?' I ask Dez, while Jim finishes being pleased with himself.

'It's a short list. Got it here,' he says, fishing a folded sheet of paper out of his coat and handing it to me. 'What you looking for?'

'Cloth. On the roll. Yellow fustian and black silk.'

'We have had no silk, but Hub Gilbert brought me a bolt of fustian about an hour ago. Yellow, too. It's in the back.' He sidles up to me and points a thick finger at an entry near the bottom of the page. 'There. *Hub Gilbert of the Fleet, 104 yards good yellow fustian, bought for fifteen guineas from Bess Lyon of the Green Kettle.* There, see, we paid Hub twenty for it.'

'Twenty's a bit much,' I say. 'I fold up the paper and hand it back to Jim. I want you to go and talk to Bess Lyon of the Green Kettle, and find out where the bolt of black silk is. It should be in by now. If she's got it, give her twenty, if she hasn't, then find out who has. And ask her how much she got off Hub Gilbert. I can't see a miser like him shelling out fifteen.'

'Too true,' says Jim.

'And I'll need you tonight,' I say. 'You're to present yourself at my Lord Justice Parry's house and take him for a walk.'

'Parry? Who's he?'

'Matthew Parry. Father was something up north. He's a country lad, and he hasn't seen much. He saw you run once, though, against the Duke of Wharton's man.'

'Good race,' says Jim. 'That's where I got these boots. Lasted fifteen years and only been repaired twice. What's he want?'

'He says he wants to know the city. I want you to show him. Show him the whores at Covent Garden, show him the fighting pits at St Giles, point out a pickpocket in a crowd, chase 'em a bit if you really want to get his blood up. But don't catch anybody. He says he wants to civilize the town. I want him quaking in the face of the madness of it all.'

'I've got you, Jon. I'll take him down the docks and let him see the mollies, too. You don't know London till you've seen five men buggering each other over a barrel.'

I smile. 'You do that. Just make sure you never show him any of our stuff. Not here, not within two streets of any of our houses. Nothing of Mary's either.'

'Right you are.'

'I want to know this fellow's game. Tell him that you don't like the way that I pay sixpence to kids on the street for information. Tell him you could get the same information for free with the threat of a beating. I don't like this fellow. I think he's up to something, and I want to know what. If he thinks you're ready to turn against me, he might try and involve you, sound you out for betrayal.'

'I've got you.'

Jim clicks his heels and steps smartly out of the skittle alley. Even after five years he's still got a footman's habits, along with the footman's coat that hangs on the back of his office door. He loves that coat, loves to tell how he won it off a Viscount in some race or other, but even though he's taken off the livery, it's still a footman's coat, not a Viscount's.

'Fancy a game?' asks Dez, once Jim's gone.

'Not for me. I have a widow to visit.'

### *Sheppard*

The Westminster bell chimes seven just as I step onto Portugal Corner and cram myself into the shuffling crowd. I let the pressed bodies carry me on a wave of mixed stink till the Green Kettle appears overhead.

There's no party tonight, so the door's off the latch, open to anybody who wants to come in and choose a girl from the parlour. Inside, Hannah and Mary are dozing on the couches and Sally sits at the card table with Gregg. 'What?' I say, as Sally's face darkens at the sight of mine. Gregg's chair falls sideways as he bulls straight for me.

'Don't move, you little shitbag!'

Spit flies into my face as Gregg bunches up my collar in one hand and shoves me up against the door, raising his other fist, threatening to thump me across the face. Behind him, Sally rises.

'Where's she gone?' she asks.

'Leave him be,' pleads Hannah, sitting up on her couch.

'Kill him if you want, but do it quietly or in the street,' says Mary, not stirring. 'My head's split.'

'Shut up, Mary,' says Sally, pulling a pin from her hair and hurling it at her.

Gregg tightens his grip on my collar and gives his fist a menacing shake. 'Where's Bess?' spits

Sally.

'I don't know,' I say. 'I was supposed to meet her here.'

'She hasn't run off with you then?' asks Greggy, giving me a shake me so hard that my head snaps back and bounces off the door.

'Do I look like I've run off anywhere?' I ask, my skull still ringing, 'What do you mean run off?'

'I mean,' says Sally, shoving past Greggy so she can jab a long, bony finger into my chest, 'that your Bessy's taken my dresses, my old wedding band, and every coin and candlestick in the house.'

Greggy looks over his shoulder at her, and starts to say something, and I take the chance to slip out of his grasp. I duck to the side and try to wrench his hand open with both of mine, but he brings his knee up and pulls my head down at the same time, and before I know it I'm slumped against the door.

'Let him be, Greggy,' says Sally, heading back to the card table. 'He don't know. She's robbed him too.' Greggy wrenches me to my feet, lets go of my collar and stands there, breathing heavily through his nose like a bull.

Sally stands, slowly shaking her head, over the sideboard. She sloshes brandy into her tumbler, then bolts it back in one. She sets down her glass, looking like it's taking all her power of will not to hurl it against the wall. 'You had that bundle last night,' she says. 'The one that was heavy when you got here and light when you left?'

'She was going to sell it.'

'She will have. She just won't be sharing it.' She refills her glass, and bolts it back again.

'Thought you were clever with your little magic trick didn't you? Well, magic don't work on me, Jackie.'

I open my mouth to speak, but Sally slits the air with a fingernail. 'Time for you to go,' she says.

'And I mean go. Come back and I'll lock you in the cellar and sell your arse to the pansies. Greggy.'

Greggy lurches forward, but my hand's already on the latch and I'm out in the street and adrift on the human current before his foot hits the floor..

### *Wild*

'The Justice is here,' says Quilt, his head poking round my office door. 'The new one.'

I pause in buttoning my coat. 'Parry?'

'That's him. He's got a carriage outside.'

'Best show him in.'

When Quilt leaves, I take the sword and stow it in the cupboard in the corner. For men like Bains, a silver sword's a comfort, but it's like to rile a man like Parry, if I've got the measure of him. I wipe the rim of Charlie's glass and put out a new bottle of wine, placing the empty in the basket by my desk.

Quilt returns, in character as the epitome of all clerks, and shows the Justice through. 'My lord,' I say, touching my forelock. Parry holds out a hand.

'Matthew. Please. It is good of you to make time for me, Mr Wild. I can see that you are a busy man. Are you on your way out?'

'Call me Jonathan. And I am,' I say, showing him to the chair and pouring a glass for us both.

'Were you going out on business?'

'I was. To exonerate a widow who is locked in the constable's house in St Giles.'

'I have my carriage outside. I could give you a lift.'

I catch a flicker of something in his eye. 'I'd be delighted,' I say.

In the carriage, Parry pulls a wicker basket from beneath the seat. Inside are two bottles of wine and a set of glasses.

'Here,' he says, handing me a pair of the glasses, 'you hold, I'll pour.'

As the carriage sets off, Parry pulls the cork of one of the bottles and pours us both a glass of thick, dark, red wine.'

'There we are, now it's a party.'

I raise a glass. 'Was there a reason for you visiting me today?'

'Ah, yes. Well, yesterday, after I got back from the Lord Mayor's – from my confirmation – I sent notice that every beadle in the city must attend me at chambers first thing this morning. Of the twenty six beadles, only ten deigned to turn up, though four more sent boys in their stead.'

'A difficult thing, a beadle,' I say. 'I daresay they don't like to be reminded that there exists a higher power than themselves. What was it you summoned them for?'

'I did not grow up in the city, and I must admit, I have never set foot on the great part of its streets. Before I sit the bench, I'd like to feel prepared, so I asked the beadles to order the constables in their wards to furnish me with a description of the ward, a character, if you will. I asked them to undertake a patrol before the week was out, and to record details of the numbers of whores, beggars, street-sellers and so forth that they encountered.'

'And?'

'This was waiting at my house when I returned from meeting you and Justice Tichborne.' He pulls a paper from his inside pocket and hands it to me.

*My Lord Justice.*

*Respectfully. We cannot and will not follow the orders handed down today by your noble self. We are constables, and have sworn the Constable's Oath, which confers and limits our duties as follows: we are to remain at all reasonable times at home, so as to be available to those who may send for us to assist in arrests. It is not our duty to engage in patrols, nor to perform any other onerous work. The exceptions to this are: where directed by a beadle, we may assist in the control of the crowd, and we may lead the hue-and-cry in case of a pursuit. It is out of our own generosity that we serve as constables; we all are men with trades and shops and other concerns, and such patrols as you describe would be injurious to our livelihoods. At such time as you have a named warrant, we will spring into action. Until then, we humbly suggest that you issue your orders to the city watch instead, and let them who are outfitted and paid for patrolling supply your needs.*

*Yours,*

*Mr Tobin Richards, Secretary, the Constable's Club.*

'What do you make of that?' asks Parry when I hand him the paper back.

'To be expected. The constable is even more stubborn than the beadle, and both make the mule look like a well-trained footman.'

'And their suggestion?'

'I wouldn't waste time giving the order. The watch are the chief encouragement to the city's thieves. Old men, infirm men, idiot boys. I doubt you'll find half a dozen in the town who can read or write.'

'What would you do?'

'I wouldn't think twice about beadles or constables or watchmen,' I say. 'If you want to know the town, you'll need to see it for yourself. Go out walking in it. In the day, after dark, north and south of the river.'

'Is that safe? I heard the Marquess of Winchester was robbed on the road last night.'

'I can lend you a man. One of my most trusted. He'll walk with you, show you what there is to see, and keep you from harm. When would you like to begin?'

'Tonight,' says Parry. 'What's the man's name?'

'You may have already met him, if you've ever been to Blenheim. His name's Jim Sykes, but they used to call him Hell-and-Fury.'

'What, Marlborough's footman? The runner?'

'The fastest man in England. You saw him run, then?'

'I did. Years ago, against Wharton's man. Marlborough had five hundred on it, as I remember.'

'And won, I'll wager.'

'That he did. Your Hell-and-Fury fair girdled the earth before Wharton's man had lifted a leg. How did he come to work for you?'

'Did you know the Duke?'

'A little.'

'A boisterous fellow.'



'To put it mildly. A Blenheim dinner lasts three days, then takes a year to recover from.'

'So I've heard. If you'll forgive a humble bucklemaker's son for speaking ill of his betters, he grew too boisterous for Jim, and he left the Duke's service.'

'Too boisterous?'

'The Duke liked to visit a certain house in Covent Garden, where they have ladies from every corner of the world. Any colour you can imagine, there will be a beautiful face of that exact shade if you just knock on that certain door. Now, one of these ladies, a Portuguese girl who the Duke had long been fascinated by, had a daughter of eleven, and she inspired an even greater fascination in the Duke. He negotiated with the mother, and the bawd who ran the house, and they settled on the sum of two hundred pounds in return for the girl's maidenhead.'

'Marlborough?'

'I am sorry to say, but yes. Now, on the day when the exchange was to be made, Jim was given orders to take the two hundred, in ready cash, in the Duke's carriage, and to bring the girl back to Blenheim. Jim elected not to fulfil his orders.'

'What did he do?'

'Took the money, gave it to the girl, and had her move in with his aunt in Southwark. Tore the livery from his coat and sent that back in the carriage.'

Parry smiles. 'Quite the most upstanding theft I have ever heard of.'

'Tell that to Marlborough. The Duke had Jim arrested for the theft. Jim got his hand burned and locked up for the debt. He'd still be there if his aunt hadn't come to me. I knew her when I was a young man, you see, and when she told me what happened, I paid his debts, gave the man work, and now he's nearly paid me back.'

'Your Hell-and-Fury will do nicely,' says Parry. 'And you'll send him over tonight?'

'I will. Expect him late, after eleven. That's the time when the city shows its belly.'

Parry looks as pleased as punch, and takes a hearty gulp of wine.

'There was one other thing I wanted to tell you,' he says, when he's swallowed. 'I wanted to say that I hoped you didn't get the wrong impression of me yesterday, at Henry's.'

'I hope so too,' I say. 'My whole business depends on the quality of my impressions.'

'Then tell me what impression I made. And be truthful.'

I sip my wine, eyeing the justice over the rim of my glass. Truth is often asked for, seldom welcomed. 'I take you to be a young man with an earnest desire to see justice done right.'

'That is very kind, Mr Wild, but I asked you to be truthful.' He sets down his glass. 'I know you think me a naif, Mr Wild. I caught it at Justice Tichborne's house. It's true. I am naïve. I grew up in the country, in my father's hall, and I don't know the city or its ways. But I do know something about the world, and about justice. May I return your story with one of my own?'

'By all means,' I say, refilling our glasses. 'I live for a tale.'

'This is not a good tale, I am afraid. But it is an instructive one. It is about my pursuit of justice.'

He takes a deep draught of his wine and sets the glass down. 'My father had an orchard. I used to run about there, slash at imaginary Dutchmen with my father's old rapier, that sort of thing. Now, I noticed one day that the row of trees at the bottom of the orchard had only half the apples, and all those near the top, and so, being an inquisitive little fellow, I asked my father's estate manager about it. He told me those apples had been scumped, and then, when I asked him what this rather wonderful new term meant, he explained what scumping and poaching and coney-catching were, and about how men and boys from the village were always snapping after our stocks. I was outraged. I took a blanket and the rapier, and I camped out in the corner, right under the hedge where nobody could see. I never closed

my eyes, not even to blink, and I passed the time by counting the stars till I heard a rustle in the hedgerow, just a little way down from where I was hiding. There were two of them, and they were whispering to each other. 'Watch that thorn,' one said, then the other must have scratched himself on it, because I heard him cursing to himself. I waited for them to start climbing the tree before I sprang upon them, but they were quick as squirrels, and they leapt down out of the branches and took flight. As they scrambled back through the hedgerow, I gave each of them a sticking with the rapier, nothing fatal you understand, just a little flick of the blade each, one on his calf and one in the arm below the elbow.

'When I'd recovered from the excitement of the adventure, I returned to my own bed in the house, and then, in the morning, I told my father what had happened, and demanded he ride with me down into the village. He had four horses saddled, and we rode with two footmen, both armed with sword and pistol. When we reined up in the market square, all the people of the village stopped what they were doing and marvelled at us. My father strode up to the steps of the market house and called for every boy between eight and sixteen to present himself in the square within the hour or face a whipping. While one of the footmen went and got the parish census book from the church, what boys were in earshot gathered in front of the stalls, while all the mothers and aunts ran off to fetch their boys from the fields and workshops.

'My father was a well-feared man in his bailiwick, and all twenty of the village boys were before us within a quarter of an hour. My father told them we were looking for a pair of poachers, and asked each boy to bare his right arm and left leg. My mind was racing with excitement, and my heart was pounding in my chest as sleeves and breeches were rolled up. My breast swelling with the righteousness of my cause, I congratulated myself for the ingenuity of my methods. For the first time in my life, I felt that I was increasing the goodness in the world by driving out the bad. But do you know what happened when the boys bared their flesh, Mr Wild?'

I pause, and take a sip of wine, letting its sour warmth spread to every corner of my tongue before swallowing. 'Every lad had a cut on his arm and on his leg.'

'Exactly! Do you know, I've told that tale to a dozen lawyers and scores of other men who love to bloviate on the way of the world, you know, the sort who put forth projects for the elimination of thievery while your dinner's settling. You are the only one to ever have the right of it.'

'If it weren't for what I know of lawyers, I would consider that high praise indeed, my lord justice.'

'Matthew, please.' He smiles and leans in closer. 'And what do you suppose my father did with the village boys?'

'Whipped all twenty of them, I should think.'

'That's right. And was that justice?'

'The guilty boys were whipped.'

'So they were. And I daresay the innocent boys had also done their share of scrumping and deserved their whippings too. But the two I caught in the act were not proclaimed guilty in the eyes of the world, before God and King. That is justice without judgment, and not the way I want my court to run.'

'What would you have instead?'

He gives me a sidelong look. 'Judgment, justice. Order.'

'Best of luck ordering London,' I say.

The driver raps on the roof of the carriage, and we slow to a halt.

'Here we are. Best of luck with your widow.'

'No luck needed,' I say, my hand on the latch. 'Just judgment, justice, and order.'

\*

Molly Herbert sits on the narrow bed, her back against the wall, shaking like a kicked kitten. 'I never stole anything,' she says. 'I told him but he wouldn't listen.'

I hear the constable's footsteps as he goes back down the stairs. He's a portly corn-chandler whose only condescension to his duty seems to be the taking of his free daily loaf.

'I believe you, Molly,' I tell her, laying a hand on her knee. 'And I promise, I'll get you out.' Even if she had done it, it does me no good to hang her. Better to help her out of this snare and find some likelier necks to present to the Treasury.

I pull the cork from Parry's second bottle of wine and hand her the bottle.

'When?' she asks, taking a sip, her voice small and tremulous.

'As soon as we've had this drink. I've got a coach waiting outside, with a man to drive you home. Do you have somewhere to stay?'

Molly shakes her head. 'I pay by the night at my lodging. I had four guineas and sixteen shilling. They took it, Mr Bains and him.' She nods at the constable, who studies his buckles.

So Bains has had a few guineas back, even if they weren't his to begin with. Miss Molly will need righting too.

'Then we'll get you somewhere. A week's bed and board somewhere with a good cook. Will you be able to find work?'

'I've got my needle,' she says. 'I can always find work.'

'Doesn't pay much, though, does it?'

She shakes her head again.

'I have a job that pays four guineas and sixteen shilling,' I say.

'What job?'

'Telling a lie.'

'If I don't will you still let me out?'

'Yes,' I say. 'Here.' I reach out and take the bottle from her, then pull the cork and hand it back.

She takes a slow draught, swallowing again and again like a calf at the udder.

'How big a lie?'

I hold up two fingers so close together that they nearly touch.

'All you need say is that one day last week, a man came to the door, handed you your landlord's front door key, and told you it had been left in the lock. Nobody will doubt you, I promise.'

'A guinea?'

'Let's say two.'

'Done.' She wipes her hand on her gown and holds it out for me to shake.

Outside, Rob the driver's got down off the coach to talk to Morgan and Harry. When he sees us come out, he says a hurried goodbye and starts walking over.

'You remember all I said?' I ask Molly.

'I remember, Mr Wild, and I'll say it just like you said.'

'Good. Now, Molly, this is Rob. He'll see you home.' Rob gives Molly a grin. I reach into my pocket and pull out a crown piece. Molly's hand is clammy. I can feel the feeble tremor in her wrist, but she grips the crown piece with all the strength she's got. 'See you get something for dinner,' I say, as Rob helps her into the cab. 'And Molly?'

She pauses, one foot still on the running-board. 'Yes?'

'If I paid you, could you teach a girl to sew?'

### *Sheppard*

I need a drink to chase Sally's venom, but there's no way Charlie Clark at the Rose'll let me have another drop on credit, so I make for the Craven and the friendlier face of Joe Hind.

Drury Lane's ready for another big night. Most of the broken glass and dogshit's been swept off the walk, and the taverns are filling as people finish work and set about their evening's refreshment. Men in hundred guinea wigs walk up and down the Lane in twos and threes, idling till the theatre starts up. They talk, and drink good brandy straight from the bottle, chase the hot air off their necks with newspapers and feathered fans, and eye up the tavern girls they'll chase when the play is over.

The whole city is built for men like these, who never see a thing they can't afford. Even the gnarliest landlord will bow and lick their buckles clean to give them drink on credit, and free girls and beef besides. Every night's the same for them. Find the best brandy, the best beef, the best play, the best girl. For the rest of us, the best we can hope is that they take a liking to us and let us ride their tails and peck at their leavings.

The Craven's not the best place on the Lane, though it's far from the worst. The front room may be a gloomy, grimy cage for brandybirds, but the back room's always full of actors and actresses after the shows. Every now and then, some fancy set of curls will step in off the Lane and try to impress them, and we'll all drink on his purse till his footman loads him into a carriage and takes him home to his featherbed.

But this afternoon the only wig in the place is the twin-towered monstrosity that moulders on Joe Hind's head. The thing must be at least two kings old, a ragged mass of unravelling curls . Joe sits behind his counter presiding over the usual nodding afternoon crowd. Ben Pollard beckons me to the table by the unlit hearth where he's playing dominoes with Will Just the pot mender, but I shake my head and make for Joe's counter.

'From the look on your face I've got bad news coming,' says Joe, folding his newspaper.

'I'll have the money tonight,' I say, though God knows how I'll get it. 'Can I have one more penny bottle?'

'Get the money, then you can drink.'

'Please, Joe.'

'One more,' says Joe. 'But you're paying threepence for it, and you're going to fix every broken stool in my cellar.'

'I'll build you an ark if you'll pop me a cork, Joe. I promise.'

'You promised I'd have my money last night. You've got to keep your promises or they stop holding weight, Jack. How do you think I've stayed in business so long? Never broken a promise. Want to know how I did it?'

'How?'

'I never promise anybody anything. No promises. I won't borrow, I won't marry, I won't ever let myself get nominated for constable, and because of that I'll live a happy life. Promising to pay me was your mistake.'

Joe takes a bottle from the rack behind the bar and pulls the cork. 'Tonight,' he says, setting it down on the counter, 'and no later.'

He sets a glass down, but I leave it on the counter. 'You want the next game?' calls Ben Pollard, 'Will's knocking.'



'I knocked once,' says Will. 'You've not won yet.'

'Maybe later on,' I say, and take the bottle to the little nook by the door to the skittle room.

I take a deep draught, swallowing a good quarter of the bottle. Usually a big belt hits me hard, but I feel like I've just taken a swig of ale, and it does nothing to cheer me. Bess has still robbed me, Tom's for hanging, and I still owe a month's wage.

'Mind if I sit down?' asks a smooth, gentish voice, and I look up to see a tall, thin man in a black tailcoat and cornered hat, his hand already on the back of the chair

'There's other tables.'

'I like this one. It's quiet.'

'It was,' I say. 'I'm off anyhow. You have it.'

I snatch up the bottle and make to leave the booth, but he blocks my way.

'She robbed you too then?' He takes off his black felt hat and tosses it onto the table. 'I saw what you just did to that poor bottle of brandy.'

'My name's not Jack, and I'm thirsty.'

I try to push past him, but he pushes me down onto the bench. 'If you're thirsty, stay and have a drink, Jack. You need it, no doubt. Robbed of what, ten, fifteen guineas? I'd have a thirst. Go on.'

'My name's not Jack.'

'Joe! What's this lad's name?'

'Jack Sheppard,' says Joe, betraying me as casually as if he'd been asked the time.

'I've got to go,' I say, trying once more to get past the man with the black felt hat.

'But you're thirsty! Come on. Take a drink.'

'I-'

'Drink.'

I lift the bottle to my lips and take a swig, my mouth suddenly so dry that it soaks half the brandy up before I can swallow it.

'There,' he says, 'you look better already. Now, before you tell me another lie, let me tell you who I am and what I'm about.' He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a fat leather purse. 'My name is Jim,' he says, fiddling with the purse strings. 'This morning I bought one of the bolts of cloth you stole from the house of Mr Charles Bains,, and now I want to buy the other. Lie to me once more and I'll take you straight to the constable's house.'

'She told you my name?'

'Who? your Bessy? No. Never met her. I bought off the man who bought off her. I asked for more, and he told me to talk to Bessy, but Bessy can't be found, so I talked to Sally Fromtheseashore at the Green Kettle and she told told me about you and your suspicious bundle.' He empties the purse onto the table, fat guinea pieces spilling out onto the scuffed wood. 'I'm hoping there's another suspicious bundle you can help me to.'

'I haven't got the other one.'

'Then who has?'

I pick up the bottle by the neck. It's not as if Tom can get in more trouble. 'Blueskin Joe at the Hornbeam.' I take a swig and swallow it straight down.

'You sold it to him?'

I shake my head. 'Not me. The man I was with.'

He sweeps the guineas to the edge of the table and back into the purse. 'And who was that?'

'It doesn't matter.'

'It matters to me, and I've a carriage outside. You could be locked in the constable's cellar

before the next bell.'

'He's my brother.'

'His name?'

'Tom.'

'And where's Tom?'

'Locked up in St Giles.'

'For the cloth?'

'No. He sold it, got robbed himself, then tried robbing someone else.'

'Unfortunate family. Your dad once cross a gypsy?' He sets the brandy bottle down with a bang.

'I'll tell you what,' he says, 'You come with me and see Blueskin Joe about your brother's cloth, and I'll see what I can do about him getting hanged.'

'He's been burned.'

He puts his hand to his mouth, bites the middle finger of his glove and pulls it off. Between thumb and forefinger, a hard, shining circle of mottled purple flesh.

'So have I. And I should have been hanged a dozen times since, but here I am.' He stands quickly, unfolding like a trestle. 'Come on. We'll get another bottle for the ride. Joe! Bottle of best, please.'

On the way out I nearly trip over little Matty Harper the butcher's boy lurking outside the front door. 'Fine work, Matty,' says Jim, and presses a coin into his hand.

'Sorry, Jack,' says Matty, and dashes off.

'Don't you be holding this against him,' says Jim. 'He knows me, and he knows you don't say no to me unless no's the answer I want. Now, come on. We'll take a cab. May need it later.'

‘I thought you had a carriage?’

‘I thought your name wasn’t Jack.’

He sets off down the lane toward the Silver Slipper, walking so fast on his long legs that I have to run after him. He must be six and a half foot if he's an inch, with a back as straight as a new chimney. They seem to know him at the Slipper. Morris orders his boys to harness the black lacquered coach with the bright yellow wheels that he usually keeps for his own, while his wife Mary hangs fresh cotton covers on the sheets.

When Morris comes to close the door and see us off, I think about telling him that Bess has run off, just to share the hurt, but Jim gets there first.

‘Have you heard from Bess Lyon since you left the Green Kettle last night?’

Morris flushes at the mention of Bess’ name and he looks over his shoulder to make sure Mary’s gone back indoors. ‘No,’ he says, softly. ‘I don’t know a Bess Lyon.’

Jim shakes his head. ‘Everybody’s so secretive today. Listen, Morris, I heard all about you trying to hang some poor oat-sower last night. I also hear you carry a torch for her. Do you know where she is?’

‘Isn’t she at the Kettle?’

‘She robbed the place and ran off first thing this morning.’

Morris’ face turns the colour of tallow. ‘I lent her two guineas.’

Jim laughs. ‘Full pockets, our Miss Lyon. If she comes to you, and you don’t send for me, I’ll know. Maybe not straight away, but I’ll find out soon enough, and when I do, you’ll have to explain those two guineas to Mary.’

‘I’ve got you, Jim. I’ll send straight away. Just please, don’t say her name around here.’

'That's up to you and your secretiveness. Now, shut us up and let us get on our way.'

Morris pushes the door shut and closes the latch. He looks like he's in a daze. All of a sudden he leaps up on the footplate and stick his head through the window.

'Please, Jim, if you find her ask her for my money. I won't be able to hide the loss for long.'

'I'll ask,' says Jim.

The springs wheeze as the driver climbs aboard. He gives a knock on the roof, and we're off.

'Shutters closed or open?' asks Jim.

I shake my head. 'You choose.'

'I choose open,' says Jim. Nice to watch the city go by.'

I lean back and settle in. I can't remember the last time I was in a coach. I had a cart ride at Easter out to the Fair, but the last time I was in a carriage, with a roof and seats, must have been years ago. Back before we were apprenticed, Kneebone used to let me and Tom ride about with him sometimes, and his is even more plush than this one, with a sideboard full of food and drink set into the space under the driver's seat. But since then it's been me and my feet.

'Right,' says Jim. 'I want you to tell me all about you, your brother, and what you did last night. Hold up.' He sticks his head out of the window and calls one of the stable boys to bring a light. He sits back down. 'Want a smoke? I love a pipe in a coach.'

'I gave my last pipe to my brother.'

'So you should have. I have a spare. Here.' He reaches into his pocket, draws out a pair of pipes, the clay fresh and white, and hands me one. 'You can keep it. I have a box full of pipes at home.'

'Thank you. I haven't had a fresh one in months.'

'It's nothing,' says Jim. 'But since you're the beggar' –his hand returns to his pocket and he

offers me a silver tinderbox– 'You can make the flame.'

## *Wild*

Mary does most of her business from a booth in the back of Jenny Forest's teahouse, listening to the troubles of her girls and boys and laying down the law to those who troubled them over a constant stream of black tea.

Jenny gives me a smile and a nod when I step through the door, and waves a teacup at me. I shake my head. Here and there a cup of tea's a fine thing, but it does strange things to my belly, and I don't know how Mary drinks it all day.

In the back room, Mary's hands circle her cup. 'Go on,' she says to the pink-wigged boy who sits over the table from her. 'Get down Bidy's and have her take a look at it. You won't be working this week, so you'll have to owe me the rent, unless you want to do laundry instead.'

'I'm not doing laundry,' says the boy. 'I'll cook, though.'

'Fine. Go through and tell Jenny you're her new cookmaid. She does the meals for the Piazza house and the Holborn house.'

The boy slides out of the booth, smooths his breeches and slinks through to the front room.

'Clap,' says Mary. 'Bad sort going round. Third today.'

She takes a sip of her tea, her eyes closed, inhaling the steam through her nose. Mary barely wears a lick of paint, and in her neat little skullcap bonnet she looks more an abbess than a bawd.

'Katie's upstairs,' she says. 'She's bought a paper, and she's looking at the houses for rent.'

'We'll have to tell her no,' I say. 'I asked Sarah, and she said Katie was a vixen.'

'She is that.'

'But I found a seamstress who'll teach her.'

Mary screws up her face. 'Who?'

'A widow.'

'A widow? Katie won't have it. Learning to darn at the foot of some old hag. I know seamstresses who work for Duchesses, and I doubt I'd get Katie to work for them, even if she got all the lace she wanted. Sarah's right. She's a vixen. Is her doing the lodging game so bad? She did it half a dozen times before she got caught.'

'We can't have it. She gets caught again and that's it. We promised Sam and Betty we'd keep her safe.'

Mary tilts her cup, inspecting the leaves. 'We did keep her safe. We had her looked after, and we set her up. What did she do? Ran off to be a whore, then came back crying about how much she hated whoring. Now she's one step from the noose and she wants to play hopscotch.'

'Try and talk to her about the seamstress,' I say. 'You can tell her it's just for a little while, till her face is forgotten at the Bailey.'

'I'll try, but she won't like it.'

'There's another girl I'm worried about,' I say. 'Ran off from the Green Kettle this morning.'

'Bess Lyon?'

'Has Sally been round already?'

'What do you think? She was in some mood, promising to cut the girl's throat if she got hold of her.'

'Any sign of Bess?'

Mary shakes her head. 'Not yet. I'm looking, though. What do you need her for?'

'She sold some cloth to Hub Gilbert. I sent Jim to the Green Kettle, and he sent word back that Bess had run off with everything in the house.'

'If you find her before I do, bring her here. Sally's promised a month's free fucking to anyone who brings her back, and I'm not having murder done in my houses.'

I nod. 'If she comes here first, ask her how much Hub gave her. His numbers don't look right.'

'How much did he say he gave her?'

'Fifteen guineas.'

Mary takes a sip of her tea. 'Enough to move herself up in the world.'

### *Sheppard*

Of the thousands of places a person can buy a drink in London, the Hornbeam is without doubt the worst. Hornbeam brandy tastes like gin, Hornbeam gin tastes like piss, and Hornbeam patrons look like a bunch of off-duty gargoyles come down off the church towers.

Jim shoves his way through the crowd and right up to the counter, where an ancient lady in an oily-looking black wig is filling bottles from the barrel. When she looks up and sees Jim, she starts as if she'd just seen her own shade.

'Is he upstairs?' asks Jim.



'No,' she mouths, shaking her head. When Jim takes a step towards the door next to the bar, she raises an empty bottle as if to throw it.

'Come on, Amy,' says Jim, advancing on her and plucking the bottle from her hand, 'Not my fault, is it?'

She looks around at her patrons, all fallen silent, all looking anywhere but at Jim.

Her eyes narrow, and she sags in defeat. 'What you want him for? We sent it all over this morning.'

'Did you send black silk?'

'What?'

'Black silk. A whole bolt of it. Brought here last night. Book says you sent a watch, two rings and a wig. No cloth.'

She wrings her hands. 'We didn't get no cloth. Honest! Not a single scrap. Jim!'

'Amy, come now.' He looks over at me. 'Let's go see, shall we? He upstairs?'

Jim opens the door and motions me to head through first. Amy folds her arms and looks sore, but she lets him through.

'Come on, lad.' He holds the hatch for me, then leads me through the tap room.

Upstairs, Jim looks like he knows where he's going, marching down the landing to the door at the far end. He bursts through without knocking.

'Joey!'

I step into the doorway to see Jim advancing on the bed, while Blueskin, tangled in a sheet, rubs his eyes. 'Up,' says Jim firmly.

'Fuck you want?' growls Blueskin.

'Up, I said.' Jim rips back the covers. Blueskin cowers, naked and hairy as an ape.

'Black silk.' Jim grabs him under the armpit and hauls him to his feet. 'I heard you had some.'

Blueskin shakes his head. 'You heard it off a liar, Jim.'

Jim slams Blueskin face-first into the wall and twisting an arm to pin him there. 'He called you a liar,' Jim says over his shoulder. 'Are you lying to me?'

'I know you,' says Blueskin, straining to look at me, 'you're Tommy's brother.' He tries to struggle free, but Jim gives his arm a sudden quarter-turn that makes him shriek.

'That's right, Joey. He's Tommy's brother, and he says you bought a bolt of black silk from Tommy last night.'

'Then he's a liar!' Blueskin draws up his top lip, showing his teeth like a dog straining at the leash.

Jim looks over his shoulder at me. 'He keeps calling you a liar, Jack. You shouldn't stand for it.'

Without easing up on Blueskin's throat, Jim steps to the side. 'Give him a jab if you like?'

'I know you, Jack Sheppard' he says, 'I know where you live.'

'I know where he lives too,' says Jim, directly into Blueskin's ear. 'I can spot a liar, Joey.'

He turns his head to look at me. 'How about a twist for Tommy?'

Jim barely moves, but Blueskin's shriek sets the windows rattling and brings his mother hobbling up the stairs as fast as she can.

'Amy!' Jim yells onto the landing 'If you set foot in this bedroom I'll break his arm off. Right off, Amy.'

Mother Blueskin drops to her knees in the doorway and claws at her arms in anguish. 'Leave him be! We haven't got black silk!'

'Black silk,' says Jim, giving Blueskin a sudden jab in the kidney. Blueskin flinches into the wall, in the process further twisting his own arm. He lets out a sob. 'Under the bed.'

'Go on then Jack,' says Jim, 'you heard him.'

I drop to my hands and knees. In the middle of a rat's paradise of rags and crusts is a bundle wrapped in old bedsheets. I haul it out and lay it on the bed. Bundled up in Blueskin's sweat-crisped sheets is Tom's roll of cloth. The paper wrapper's been cut open, and it looks like a corner of the black silk beneath has been hacked off with a blunt blade.

'There.' Blueskin squirms, trying to ease the load on his shoulder. 'You can let me go now.'

'Let him go!' cries Amy from the doorway.

'Go downstairs, Amy. Now.'

'Please don't hurt him!' she pleads, creeping back down the hall.

'Now,' Jim leans on Blueskin, crushing him into the wall. 'Tell me, what happened to Tommy after he left here last night?'

Blueskin says nothing.

'You robbed him. That's what happened, isn't it? You robbed him, then you robbed us. What did I tell you last time I was here?'

Blueskin mumbles something.

'What did I tell you? I told you to remember it. Let me see if it's still in there.' Jim reaches round Blueskin's head and jams a finger up his nose and delves around. 'I can't feel it in there. It was a small, simple thing.' The finger burrows further into Blueskin's head.

'I remember!'

'Then say it.' Jim twists the finger.

'You said that everything I get comes to you, or I hang.'

'Not just you, was it?'

'Mam too. Everything we get comes to you or Mam and me hang.'

'That's the agreement you made. And did the silk come to me?'

'No, but I was going to bring it, I swear!'

'Were you now? Then why didn't you send it to us with the other bits? I know we had a box from here this morning, and your Mam told me the same.'

'It was too big!' cries Blueskin. 'I was going to bring it myself later! Just stop!'

'You were not going to bring it later, Joey. I know that, and you won't convince me otherwise.'

Jim pulls his finger out of Blueskin's nose and inspects it. 'Where's the money?'

'What money?'

'The money you gave Tommy and then stole back off him.'

'I didn't! Look, I had the silk, and I swear I was going to bring it to you, but I didn't rob Tommy Sheppard. He's a liar if he says I did.'

'Let's stop throwing around the word 'liar' in case it stops meaning anything.. Jack, look in his coat.'

'That's my money!' cries Blueskin, while I hunt around the room till I find a red twill coat hanging on a peg on the back of the door, hanging lopsided thanks to the well-stuffed purse weighting one pocket. I loose the strings and tip it out on the bed.

'Good few guineas there. How many, Jack?'

I count the thick, heavy coins. 'Fifteen.'

'How much did he pay Tommy?'

'Ten's what he said.'

'Then give Tommy his ten back, and keep the rest for yourself.'

As I'm stuffing the coins back into the purse, Jim yanks his arm away from Blueskin's throat and drags him out of the room by the beard. I watch as Blueskin totters down the landing, his bare arse clenched with the pain. 'At least let me get dressed!' he cries out, as Jim tows him down the landing.

'Bring the silk, Jack,' he says.

I pull the purse strings tight, hoist the silk up onto my shoulder and follow them downstairs.

As soon as Jim drags Blueskin into the bar, the place erupts into laughter and cries. 'Leave off him!' screeches Mrs Blake, charging forward to try and pry the hand off her son's beard. Jim fends her off and shoves the naked Blueskin against the bar. Blueskin loses his balance and hangs, shrieking, by his beard. Jim hauls him to his feet, only for Blueskin to try to strike at him, but Jim bobs and weaves like a boxer and Blueskin's fists are left to pummel the air. Before he can wind up for another try, Jim yanks his beard straight down so hard that you can hear the rip of hair being wrenched out of skin.

'That'll do, Joey,' says Jim. 'Come on.'

'Leave him be!' cries Amy, as she tries to get free of the men holding her back.

'I'd like nothing more,' says Jim. 'But we are bound by our agreements. Now, the constable's outside,' he says, addressing the whole bar, all studying their bottles and glasses as though they were made of solid diamond. 'Anyone else wants to meet him, I'll happily introduce you.'

'Jim! Please, let him go! He'll be good!'

'He's coming with me,' says Jim, dragging Blueskin through the bar. 'And he'd better be good if he ever wants to come back.' Blueskin walks, his face cast upward, submitting to being drawn by the beard.

Outside the naked Blueskin draws laughs and hoots. A grocer's boy on the other side of the street picks up a clod of horseshit and hurls it at him, striking him in the back. 'Watch out, lad!' calls Jim, not unkindly, 'You'll spatter my coat!'

'Let me have some clothes,' grumbles Blueskin. 'I'll do what you want.'

Jim ignores him and fishes a short length of rope out of his coat. 'Tie him up for me, Jack, will you?'

Together we force Blueskin's wrists together and I tie them behind his back.

'Good,' says Jim, letting go the beard and grasping Blueskin's bound wrists instead. 'Good lad. Now, you go and buy your Tommy something good to drink, and if anybody gives you any trouble in the meantime, or if you come across something you need to sell, ask for me at the Blue Boar on Lewkenor's Lane. Know where that is?'

'Up by the wall?'

'That's right. Good brandy sold cheap, various goods bought dear.'

### ***18: Wild: At Home, News of Jack, Tom, and Blueskin***

Mary's on the couch when I come in, while Katie reclines in the rocking chair, a bowl of figs in her lap.

'Jonny,' says Mary, shuffling up to make room for me. 'Come. I've sent out for a bottle of arack.'

'We've got brandy, and wine.'

'I know, but arack's more of a celebration. And it's Katie's favourite.'

'Well then,' I say. 'We'll drink arack to Katie and her new job.'

'What job?'

I catch Mary's eye. She shakes her head sadly.

'I've found a seamstress to teach you the needle.'

'That?' says Katie. 'I'm not doing that. Train myself to be a pauper?'

'You can't carry on the way you have been.'

'What else are you going to do?' asks Mary. 'You tried whoring and didn't like that, tried serving, didn't like that either.'

'I can do the lodging game again. Not round here, I mean. South of the river or somewhere.'

Mary opens her mouth to speak when she's silenced by a knock at the back door. 'I'll go,' I say. 'Think on it, though. If you can work a needle, you'll never go hungry.'

When I open the back door I find Jim standing there, hands behind his back. He tilts his head slightly in greeting. 'Sorry to be a goat at the fence, but I've got your cloth for you. Interesting business, it turns out.'

'Who was it?'

'A pair of brothers called Sheppard. From the Wych. One of them sold to the Lyon girl, and the other to Blueskin Blake.'

'When did he sell it? Last night?'

'I've already walked all the way down that road, Jon. It looks very much like old Joey kept it back for himself. And listen to this. After he'd paid the Sheppard boy, he robbed him. Beat him bloody, from what I hear.'

'Where are the Wych boys now?'

'The one who sold to Lyon's named Jack. He's an apprentice to a carpenter down there. I've put it all in the book. He's the one helped me to Blueskin. Sounds like he could be a handy burglar.'

'The other?'

'He's in St Giles. After he was robbed, he tried to make up his loss, and ended up getting caught trying to hold up the Marquess of Winchester, if you can believe.'

'Where's Blueskin?'

Jim points a thumb over his shoulder. 'I've got him in the cab.'

'Good. Take him to the Old House. Tell Coll to give him a good room. He'll need buttering up before he's fried.'

'And the cloth?'

'To the office. Quilt will still be there.'

Jim bows and takes his leave, and I head back to the parlour to fetch my coat and sword.

'You two enjoy your arack.'

'Whatever it is,' says Mary, 'good luck.'

### *Sheppard*

The stalls have all been packed up, but the fancy shops that line the southern edge of the piazza are all still open. Kids run back and forth outside with samples of lace and silk, crying 'Lace for the lady?' at every strolling couple, and 'silk for the sir!' at every strutting dandy. None bother me, with my dun breeches and sweat-stained shirt, my wooden boot buckles and my wigless, unpowdered hair. Outside one tailor's shop I stop to look at a dummy wearing a black velvet jacket, the matching breeches hung



beneath.

The tailor sits in a wicker chair just inside the shop. A little man with rolled-up sleeves and a peaked cap, he has one needle between his teeth and another darting back and forth in his lap as he works his way round the hem of a powder-blue coat.

'Clear out!' cries a girl of about ten, dashing away from trying to bully a beau into the buying of lace, much to his relief, to shoo me off. 'Dad!' she calls, 'keep an eye out!'

The little tailor looks up and scowls at me. 'You heard,' he says, the needle still held between his teeth, 'get out.'

'How much is that coat?'

He looks me up and down, 'It's two guineas.'

'I'll have it,' I tell him. 'And a silk handkerchief.'

He laughs. 'I don't work on credit.' He leans to the side so he can call to the girl in the street.

'Lucy! Fetch John from over the way. This boy's drunk and making a nuisance!'

'I'm not drunk yet,' I say to him, pulling the purse from my breeches. 'And I hope this isn't a nuisance.' I lay two coins on the table by his elbow. He picks one up, inspects it, first feeling its weight, then holding it up to the light and turning it round.

'Here,' says the girl as she comes back into the shop, dragging the hulking great stableboy from the Five Foxes by the hand.

'Come on, mate,' he says, pawing at my elbow like a bear swiping at a pitmaster's stick, 'This ain't your sort of place.'

I look to the tailor, still holding one of my guinea pieces.

'He's passing false coin,' says the tailor to John. 'He's a coiner. Look at the size of that purse!'

How does a boy like this come about money like that?’

Lucy steps round John and makes a snatch at the purse.

‘There’s a hundred pound reward for coiners,’ says John, folding his arms and blocking my way back to the street. ‘We could sell you.’

‘It’s real money!’

The tailor smiles. ‘That’s what you say.’

John makes a grab for the purse. ‘Give that here!’ he shouts, as I duck under his arm and out of the shop. I hear the clatter of heels behind me and look round to see Lucy burst out of the shop. ‘That’s it, you run!’ she cries. I feel something wet hit me in the middle of my back, but I keep running along the edge of the piazza till I can duck into the colonnade.

Two guineas on nothing. I feel like going to the constable and reporting the theft, then making him come with me back to the tailor’s shop. But then there’d be questions, about where the money came from, and Wood might be asked how much he pays me. In some way, I’ll get two guineas out of the little tailor.

I’d hoped to get some money changed before paying my debts, since I don’t want anyone in the Craven or the Rose seeing me in the company of a guinea piece, but after the tailor’s shop, Joe Hind and Charlie Clark seem like beacons of honour.

Since I’m on the piazza, I may as well start with the Rose, so I pick my way to the north side till I get to the crooked little alley where it grows. The place is rammed. Downstairs the bar’s stuffed to the ceiling with chattering mouths, red eyes, and stinking breath, and in the parlour every girl’s been taken except for Lossy Morgan, who’s sleeping on the corner chaise while Jer Tait sits at her feet nursing a bottle, waiting for her to wake. Others sit and wait for the girls to get back from upstairs, barely talking, as if they were sitting on the riverbank fishing.

I push on through to the back room, where the crowd's even thicker, everyone crammed in to get a look at Johnny Foot the Folding Man, who's tying himself in knots by the hearth. Charlie Clark sits at a booth with his boy Abram, sipping at a long pipe and scratching the stubble on his wigless head. I slide into the seat next to him and lay a guinea piece on the table. 'Won a bet,' I tell him when he looks up.

'Didn't ask,' he says, shoving the guinea into his breeches pocket.

'Good lad. All square now.'

'What about the change?'

'No change.'

Abram smirks into his cup of wine. I say nothing. You never want to get on the wrong side of Charlie, even if he shoves that side right in your face. As long as you pay Charlie what he says you owe, the Rose is always open to you. Everything costs double on credit, from drink to girls to tobacco, beef, even news-sheets. Without the Rose, I don't know what I'd do.

Charlie nods approvingly. 'Good lad. Don't think I don't know how you feel, Jack. It's a hollow joy, the paying of a debt, and it's a harsh old swindle I've laid on you. You won't be late again, though, will you?'

I shake my head.

'Tell you what, since you're taking it in your stride, you can have a bottle of tuppenny and five minutes with Lossy, on me.'

'I'll let Lossy sleep and take a fourpenny bottle.'

'You're a sweet lad, Jack Sheppard, which in my book makes you some sort of swindler. A bottle of fourpenny, from one swindler to his fellow, eh?' He puts his fingers to his lips and whistles.

On the other side of the room, little Jackie Puddifer's head pops up like a terrier's, then vanishes when Charlie shouts, 'Fourpenny brandy for Mr Sheppard!'

Charlie takes out his pocketbook and turns to my page. I watch as he crosses out the six shillings owed, and writes in '*fourteen shillings taken in penalty.*' Somehow the fact that Charlie's writing this down soothes the loss. Charlie turns to the back page of the pocketbook and takes out a slip of paper.

'It's good you came in when you did,' he says. 'A boy left this for you this afternoon. If you hadn't paid your dues I'd have burned it.' He pushes the paper over the table. *I have your money, but the plan has changed. I'll be at the Hound on Billingsgate Market between eight and nine every night this week. Come when you can. B.*

'Thought that might soften the blow,' says Charlie.

Jackie Puddifer appears at the table with the brandy and a dull pewter cup. He hovers for a moment, waiting for further orders from Charlie, and scurries off when none come.

I leave Charlie to his wine and take my brandy out the back door and over the yard to the skittle alley. Bess didn't rob me. It's too late to see her tonight, but I can walk up to Billingsgate after work tomorrow and be there in plenty of time. I have twelve guineas in my pocket, and another ten coming.

And Bess didn't rob me. Which means I'm something to her.

Standing in the yard, looking up at the pink glow of the sky, I pour a tot of brandy into the cup and sniff at it. Tom can have his five guineas. I'll spend some on good brandy, and a ham, and a jar of pickled eggs, and give him the rest in ready money. Jim said she sold the cloth for fifteen guineas, which means she's got seven guineas and ten shillings for me. I'll have twenty and a half guineas, less Tom's five is fifteen and a half guineas. More than I'd earn in a year of working for Wood.

That's not even counting what I can get by robbing. If I went out once a month I could save

another ten guineas by the time I get my paper. I tip the whole glass of fourpenny brandy into my mouth, letting the sweetness curl my tongue and the heat stiffen my throat. I can spend like a drunk and save like a miser all at the same time.

The Rose's skittle alley is the best in town. The carpenters who live down the Wych all drink here, except for Wood, who fell out with Charlie before me and Tom ever came to work for him. Every carpenter but Wood has given a bit of their time to improving it. The lane itself's been laid with planed oak and lacquered so smooth you can slide the whole way down it on your knees without getting a splinter, the scoreboard's a thousand times prettier than it needs to be, inlaid with every kind of wood there is, and the pins have the kind of turning you'd see on a King's banister.

When Tom and me first started coming here, we made the chalk duster for the scoreboard out of old rags and an offcut of mahogany from a job we did for one of Kneebone's friends.

Tonight the skittle alley's losing out to the Folding Man. Cath Fox and Billy Walker are rolling while Ned Tait the glazer and his boys wait their turn over a hand of cards. The scoreboard says that Cath's rolling truer, but Billy looks in decent spirits. 'Evening, Jack,' he says, watching as Cath sends her ball down the alley and knocks every pin flying.

Cath straightens up gives me a nod. 'Jack-o. That a fourpenny bottle?'

'It is. Bring your cup and have a splash.'

While Billy rushes to get the pins set up again, Gib takes her last swallow of tuppenny bitterness and sets her glass down next to mine. 'Where'd you get the money?' Billy asks, setting his glass down too.

'I've been saving,' I say, the fourpenny brandy flowing from the bottle like the juice of the sun itself.

'Heard your Tommy's up for a robbery,' says Ned Tait from the corner table.

'Your man's saws?' asks Cath.

I shake my head. 'Tried to rob a fellow, got himself taken.'

'He owes me three shilling,' says Billy.

'What's that to do with Jack?' asks Cath. 'Think that's what he needs to hear? Fucking donkey, Billy. Take your roll.'

'Sorry, Jack,' says Billy.

I shake my head. 'It's all right Billy. They're going to hang him, so I'd kiss those three shillings goodbye.' I take a long draught of the brandy, but even fourpenny brandy's not enough to drive out the bitter taste of what I've just said.

'They won't hang him,' says Cath.

'Course they won't. He'll get transported,' says Ned. 'The strong lads always do.'

'Course he will!' says Cath. 'They're hardly hanging at all these days. There was a bit in the paper about them fighting the Wabinaki out in New France and how much money it costs. Mark my words, they'll take Tommy for labour. Might even make a soldier of him. Anyhow, that's a bad topic for the night. You want to play the winner?'

'Too right,' I say, not that I feel much like rolling, it's just good to be off the subject of Tom.

'You mind, Neddo?' asks Cath.

'Least we can do, my love. Tommy's a good lad. We'll drink to him, too. Boys.'

Ned, Jerry, and John all raise their glasses and hurl their brandies down their throats. 'To Tommy!' they cry. Ned refills the glasses. 'Go and get another bottle, Jer. We'll have a fourpenny one too.'

Jerry doesn't need to be told twice, and sets off back to the bar licking his lips.

'Right then, Billy,' says Cath, 'I'd better finish with you first.'

Cath holds up her glass and turns it in the light, Billy roll while I sit back in my chair and sip at mine. Cath and Billy and Abram and his boys might be drinking to Tom, but I'm drinking to myself.

Ten months left with Wood. If Kneebone thinks I'll stay on after that, even as partner, he's a bigger fool than even Mam takes him for. The day my paper's done, I'll take my stack of guineas and set up on my own. One guinea piece will get me set up in a house, three or four more will pay for tools, another couple for timber, and I'll still have plenty left to keep me while I find some trade. I close my eyes and bathe my tongue in fourpenny sweetness, listening to the sounds of the rolling ball and toppling pins.

Jerry gets back with a fresh fourpenny bottle and fills up my glass on the way back to his table. 'They won't hang him' he says, 'Just you see. They sent my dad to Virginia, and you remember what he was like.'

Jerry's dad's the reason Jerry's mam wears an eyepatch, but all he got taken for was robbing a grocer's moneybox.

The Marqess of fucking Winchester. No matter what Cath or Billy or Abram say, no matter what happened to Jerry's dad, Tom's going to hang. He deserves to hang too, the way he's stuck his head out for the noose. Part of me even wants him to hang, just so he knows at the last that I was right and he was wrong. I told him taking Wood's saws wasn't worth the hazard, and he laughed and called me a coward. If he'd listened then, he'd still have a place with Wood, and if he'd listened last night, he'd have a pocket full of shillings and a hope of outliving the summer.

'You're up, Jackie,' says Billy. 'You asleep?'

I shake my head. 'Just thinking.' I look around and all three of our glasses are empty. 'You be pourer, Billy,' I say, 'and keep pouring till it's gone.'

Billy does as he's told, then sits down and starts pouring the fourpenny down his throat as though it'll turn to piss at the tolling of the hour.

'Challenger gets first shot,' says Cath, handing me the smooth wooden ball, its surface rubbed dark with beeswax and the grease of many hands.

Cath's a far better bowler than anyone I know. She's got a way of spinning the ball that makes the pins go shooting out to the walls, and even when she leaves one standing, she never misses it with her second ball. Tonight, though, my arm's golden, and my first three rolls I take every pin that's standing, matching Cath point for point. On her fourth shot, though, she leaves one spare and when she tries to knock it down with her second ball it goes wide. She grins when I leave three pins standing on my next shot, then breathes in sharply when I knock all three down.

'My mam always said to be charitable to those who are suffering,' she says.

'Want to play me?' asks Jerry.

'I'll leave while I'm top dog,' I say, as Cath shakes my hand. 'Got messages to make.'

'Want a bit of our bottle before you go?' asks Abram.

I wave his offer away and step out into the yard.

Instead of going back out onto the Lane through the bar I climb the back wall and take the alley that cuts towards the Piazza. It must be coming up to eleven, but I don't want to go home yet. I could walk east to Billingsgate and see if Bess is still at the Hound. If she's working there I could pay for some time with her and not feel the loss.

Still, she said between eight and nine, and I can't walk around all night with twelve guineas in my pocket, so I turn south and make for the Wych gate and the straw mattress in Wood's back bedroom.



## *Wild*

The boy leads the way upstairs, his lantern swinging as he skips up the steps. 'He's up here,' he says.

'Good. Now, here's tuppence.' I press the coin into his palm. 'Don't say my name in front of him. Got that?'

'Got it.'

'Good.' I pull my scarf right up over my nose so only my eyes are showing, and give Harry the nod to open the door. The Sheppard lad's asleep, and he looks like he's been bathing in blood. A sodden bandage lies on the floor next to the bed.

'Someone to see you, Tommy,' says the boy. 'He's got wine for you too.'

'Alright, Harry. Leave the door open. I'll lock up when I leave.'

'Right-o, Mr, ah' –He catches himself just in time– 'I'll leave the key in the lock.'

'Do that.'

Sheppard sits up on the bed, grimacing as he leans back against the rough stone wall. Blood crusts his face and spikes his hair. Both eyes are blackened, one so badly that the ball is lost in the inflammation, and he's got a gash along the left side of his jaw that looks like it needs to be slaked in

boiled wine.

'Who are you supposed to be?' he says, watching me out of his one viable eye.

'Doesn't matter.'

His split lip curls into a smile. 'Harry said something about wine.'

'Here.' I pull the cork and hand him the bottle. 'You drink up.'

He takes a dainty sip, swills it round his mouth, then goes in for a Herculean glug.

'Do you know who put a bag over your head the other night?'

He swallows quickly. 'What?'

'Do you know who put a bag over your head and took your ten guineas?'

'What ten guineas?'

'The ten you got off Blueskin Joe.'

He snorts and shakes his head. 'I know your game. You want me to say something about Joe.'

Why would I?'

'Because he's told me a lot of things about you.'

'Like what?'

'Like you selling him forty yards of black silk for ten guineas.' I lean in. 'Like him following you down the road and putting a bag over your head and taking it back.'

'That's not true.' Tom folds his arms, clutching the bottle of wine to his chest, and his face turns stony. I'm impressed. Most men would have jumped at the first morsel. Either Tom thinks too highly of Blueskin or he's got a good spine for questioning.

'Because he got arrested last night for trying to sell that forty yards of silk you stole. He's in the Bridewell at St Anne's. They put him in a little cell the size of a coffin because he tried to stick a knife

in the girl who brought him his breakfast. Right place for him, if you ask me, and they do ask me. Anyhow, he told me all about it. That he got the silk off you, that he gave you ten guineas, then robbed it back off you when you left.'

'None of that's true, and I'm not saying anything.'

'What about Jack?'

Tom's eyes flicker, but he keeps his voice flat. 'What about him?'

'Listen, Tom. I'm on your side. You and Jack pulled off a tidy spot of thievery, and you sold in good faith. As far as I'm concerned, that makes you both innocent men. But not everyone sees things like me. I understand that you left Owen Wood's house before Jack worked for the man you robbed?'

Tom shrugs.

'I don't need your agreement. That's what happened, and it's enough to do for Jack too. Blueskin says you robbed Charles Bains of White Horse Yard. Your brother knew Bains and his house. The minute Bains hears your name, he'll send the constable round to scoop Jack up. He'll probably be in the cell next door by tonight. Unless you do what I say, your big brother's getting burned.'

Tom sets down the bottle on the floor and stares at its neck. 'And what is it you say?'

'First thing tomorrow morning, you're going to call for Harry and tell him you want to turn evidence in a felony. He'll fetch the warden, who'll want to hear what you have to say, but you won't tell him anything. You'll only tell it to the justice. Now, it might be they'll take you straight away, might be you'll wait, but by the end of tomorrow they'll take you to him, or he'll come here. When he's in front of you, you'll tell him it was Blueskin's idea to rob Bains. Tell him that one of Joe's boys was walking through White Horse Yard one day when he spied the key left in the lock, and brought it to Joe. Joe made an impression of the key in sealing wax, and told his boy to put it back where he'd found it, so it might not be missed, then to knock on the door and let the occupier know, so it might not be

stolen by anyone else.'

'That helps Jack and hangs Joe,' says Tom. 'What about me?'

'Tell them Blueskin had lent you a guinea, which you were struggling to pay back. Tell them he threatened to have you locked up for the debt unless you came out with him that night. He took you to White Horse Yard, gave you the key and had you go in first. You crept through the house, found the place sleeping, and beckoned him to follow. The two of you began to ransack the fellow's study till you found his good cloth, but no sooner had you got your hands on it than you hear someone coming downstairs. Now, not wanting to risk going back through the hall past the stairs, you both crept down to the cellar with your haul, unbarred the door, and fled through the back yard.'

'This doesn't sound like it'll help.'

'Wait. You tell them that after this you took your last sixpence to a gaming house, where you spent tuppence on brandy and put fourpence at hazard. You won, and won again, and soon you had half a crown to your name. You knew you should have gone home, but the brandy went to your head. You bet again and won again, and soon you found yourself playing a three-guinea hand against a gentleman in a fine white wig and coat, with silver rings and a silver cane, and you found yourself winning once more.'

'Good for me.'

'You held in your hands two guinea pieces, and you were free of your debt to Blueskin. But instead of feeling elated, you were gnawed from inside by guilt, and overcome with remorse not just for the robbery you had just committed, but for the stealing of your master's saws and the loss of your apprenticeship. You resolved to use the two guineas to find a way back to an honest life, and you rose from the table, much to the disappointment of the gentleman in the white wig and coat, who called you coward and demanded the chance to win back his loss with another hand.'

Tom now looks genuinely interested, and picks up the bottle of wine. 'You were all but deaf to his jeers,' I say, 'and you left and began the walk home, thinking on whether to buy a griddle and set yourself up as a sausage-seller or wake up early and get a basket of apples to sell down by the river walk, when you hear a noise behind you, but before you can turn round there's a bag on your head and you're getting a horrible kicking. Now, though the bag's on good and proper, you manage to get a glimpse of white stockings and the hem of a white coat. When the kicking's over, and you've got the bag off and found that your road to honesty has been washed away, you howl at the moon like a dog.'

'I think I did howl,' says Tom, burping and beating his chest to make room for more wine. 'Go on.'

'Lost and dejected, you slumped your way toward home, barely able to walk, till you came to Holborn, and saw a familiar white coat. Marshalling every grain of life you had left in you, you launched yourself towards your enemy, putting his own bag over his head and serving him up a slice of the pie he made for you.'

Tom laughs. 'That's good,' he says. 'I see what you're saying. I got the wrong white coat.'

'That's it. So, will you tell my story for the justice?'

Tom drains the bottle and hands me the empty. 'Bring me a ham and a bottle of fourpenny brandy.'

'I'll send it over.'

'If you do, I'm your storyteller.'

## *Sheppard*

'Right,' says Wood, as I set down the barrow in front of the swaybacked little house. 'Should be a quick one, this.' He raps out a cheerful tattoo on the door. The door sounds hollow with worm. This whole creaking, draughty old wooden mews is a spark short of a pile of ashes.

'Hungry?' I shake my head, though I'm starving. I'd rather wait till I can get something better than eat anything made here. 'Shame,' says Wood. 'Bet knows how to cook.' The front door opens, and a woman of about thirty stands with a hand on one hip, a girlish smile stretching a drawn, ruddy face near to the point of splitting. Wood runs a hand through his hair, the flour already darkened by sweat, curls hanging loose at his temples.

'Alright Bet? Here for your wonky mantel.'

This looks like one of Wood's little favours. I don't know where he meets them, but there's a new one every week. When I get my paper there'll be no more fixing widows' wonky mantels while they try to rub the wonk out of Wood's cock. When I set up on my own, I'll never work for favours. I'll be paid for everything, I'll make sure of it, and Wood can stay here and find a new apprentice to pimp.

'Owen, you're a gem, you are! Now come in and I'll fetch a bottle of ale.' Bet opens the door wide for us. I heft the toolbag through, being careful not to scuff the doorframe.

Bet leads us through the kitchen towards the stairs. 'You want a bit of bread and bacon dripping?' she asks.

Wood rubs his belly. 'Cor, yeah. Jack?'

'I'm not hungry,' I say. I always feel a traitor to Pam when one of Wood's women offers to feed

me, which they always do, as though I were Wood's boy and they had to mother me as well as fuck him.

'Well, all the more for me. Wouldn't mind if an egg fell on top neither.'

Bet laughs, hand over her mouth to hide her rotten chompers. and rubs his back.

'We'll see what happens. I'll put it on a plate for you.'

The last thing I want to do is eat. After last night my belly's turning over and my head feels like a team of masons have been at it. Fourpenny brandy may taste fine, but it's gone through me like a curse, and I feel like I'd puke up my whole belly if I got a whiff of liquor.

I'll eat once I feel better. I've brought a guinea piece out with me, and as soon as Wood sets me free for the day, I'll get it changed up and buy something good and fresh and hearty. The best way to do that is to go to one of the expensive vintners on Fleet Street and say I'm buying for my master. I'll end up paying a shilling for a bottle, no doubt, but I'll get some less suspicious metal in return.

Then I'll go and meet Bess. I don't blame her for leaving the Kettle.

But for today all I can do is work hard, so I address myself to Bet's mantel. It's as crooked as they come, certain death to any vase placed on it. When I get it off with the crowbar, I find that one of the pillars has woodworm in the core and needs to be replaced. It's not going to be a quick job. We'll have to measure up and make a new pillar in the yard, then come back and fit it. If Bet's not paying we'll be in for a whole day's work plus a good piece of timber, just so Wood can have a tumble and an egg.

'Right-o,' says Wood, just as the time comes to start the hard work, 'you get that wormy thing out. I'll be having breakfast.' He stomps off downstairs, and I hear him cry out with joy at whatever Bet's served up.

Once I've measured up and written down the numbers, I set to work. If the job's being done for

free, it's best to make sure it's done right, or else I'll be back here in a few months listening to Wood and Bet coo at each other in the kitchen. First, I cut into the plaster along the side of the pillar with my pocketknife so I don't crack the entire wall when the pillar comes out. Next I set the crowbar and lever the top away from the wall. The whole thing comes out easily, and it's light as a feather. The worm must have got in deep. I heft it under my arm and I'm about to carry it back down the stairs when I hear a tread coming up.

'You got it out?' asks Wood, who's brought his plate up with him.

'I have. Not much left of it.'

'Happy worms here,' says Wood. He lifts a slice of bread from the plate, soggy with dripping.

'Best you get off. Start on the new pillar back at the yard. Pam asks, I'm taking up a floor.'

Wood folds the bread and shoves the whole slice into his mouth. I say nothing.

No wonder he's penniless.

## *Wild*

Charlie Bains wasn't lying when he said he'd had his house turned into a palace. The place is decked out like a man who's married a merchant's daughter, painted and plastered and fitted all over with finery. There's enough brass in his knocker alone to make buttons and buckles for the whole parish. It's a miracle it's still fixed to the door.

'Mr Wild!' cries Charlie.



'Jonathan, Charlie. Please'

'Jonathan. Forgive me opening the door myself, but as I said, straitened straits. Will you come in? I'm sure I can find us something to drink. I had to put my girl out to the seamstress down the street to earn enough to pay for her keep, and now I only have her on Sundays. Still, she has left us a pork pie, if I can tempt you?'

'Thank you, Charlie, but no. And I must refuse your offer of a drink, at least until I tell you what I came to say.'

'And what is that?'

'I have located your cloth.'

'Marvellous news!' He grasps my hand in both of his and works me like a water-pump.

'Listen before you marvel, Charlie. It seems that last night it was offered to a lady I know up on Hounds Ditch, who has a little linen shop of her own. This lady secured the goods by purchasing them, along with the name of the man who brought them in.'

'What man?'

'A fellow named Joseph Blake, who they call Blueskin Joe.'

'Your honest broker should have had this Blake arrested if she suspected theft, not paid the thief.'

'I've known the lady a long time, and she is a sober and honest sort. Our Joseph Blake is a notorious fellow, known for violence. I assure you, my friend's course was the most prudent available to her. If she hadn't paid for it, Blake would have taken it elsewhere, likely someone less honest, who would likely not have brought it to me. If she'd attempted to seize it, Blake would no doubt have done great violence to her. Buying the cloth was the only certain way of restoring it to its rightful owner,

which is you.'

'Where is the cloth now?'

'Up on Hounds Ditch. I have a carriage outside, and I am about to go and retrieve it. All I need is your permission.'

'Permission?'

'My friend sent to me in good faith, but I feel it is only right that we not only compensate her for her outlay, but reward her for her honesty.'

'How much was her outlay?'

'Thirty guineas.'

'That rather cuts into my thief-taking earnings. Did this Blueskin fellow mention Molly Herbert?'

'He did not. But he is very likely the one who carried out the robbery with her help. After all, there is still the matter of how they got in, and Miss Molly answers that cleanly.'

'Pay it,' says Bains. 'Do you need the money from me now?'

'Not now,' I say, marking the suspicious squint of his eye. 'I will pay from my own purse, and you can pay me once the cloth is in your hands.'

Bains grasps my hands again. 'You are a good man, Jonathan Wild.'

### *Sheppard*

The houses on Wych Street are like a crowd of drunks. Each slouching heap of storeys leans on its

neighbours, and if one should go, they'll all follow. Wood's house is on one end, whether leaning against Newell's smithy or holding it up it's hard to say.

I wheel the barrow down the alley to the yard and stow it in the shed. There's no way I'm spending my afternoon hacking up a chump of pine while he rolls around with Bet and gorges himself on dripping. I've kept Wood's secrets since I came here, but if we're to be partners, I'll need paying for my silence. When he gets back I'll play dumb, and if he threatens, I'll threaten him right back.

For now, though, I need something to eat, then I'd better go and give Tom his five guineas, then on to Billingsgate Market and Bess. I peek through the kitchen window. Pam's not there, so I open the door quietly and slip into the pantry, lift the cloth off the stewpot, and pick out a couple of chunks of meat. It was poor meat when it came into the house, and it's got no better in the pot, but my stomach growls with relief as soon as I start chewing.

I suck the gravy off my fingers and take the cover off the cheese. There's not much left, so I only take a sliver, but there's a full jar of pickled onions, so I take a wooden skewer from the pot on the windowledge and gobble a good half dozen of them, sweet and stinging all at once. I'm just corking the jar when a shadow falls across the counter.

I turn to see a man in a black waistcoat barring my way back to the kitchen. 'He's here!' he cries. There's an answering shout from above, and footsteps clatter down the stairs. Black Waistcoat takes a step towards me. 'Come on, Jack. There's no point trying to run.' He makes to lay a hand on me, but I manage to twist past him and out into the kitchen.

A liveried footman stands at the back door, and before I can stop myself I'm careening into him and his knee is coming up to meet me.

My head hits the stone flags and I lay, gasping for breath and balance, till I'm hauled to my feet and dragged into the hall, where Black Waistcoat locks my wrist to his with a set of heavy irons and

sticks the key in his fob pocket.

He hauls me through to the front parlour where Pam slumps in her chair by the hearth. Opposite Pam, in Wood's chair, sits a man in a cornered hat and a fine blue coat, scribbling in a notebook that he rests on his knee. Between them, on the little table where the punch bowl usually sits, is Blueskin's purse, empty, with the guinea pieces all stacked up next to it.

'Two bad apples, then,' says Pam, fixing me with her cold green eyes.

I hang my head so I don't have to look at her. If this has to happen, I'd rather it be quickly.

'This is Jack?' The man in Wood's chair closes his notebook and slips it into his inside pocket.

'I thought so,' says Pam, still not looking at me. 'It's him.'

The man closes his notebook, slots his pencil into a groove in its spine, and pockets it. He leans forward and takes a guinea from the top of the stack.

'I will give you precisely one opportunity to be honest. Tell me, where did this money come from?'

I say nothing.

'Tell him, Jack,' says Pam, staring into the hearth.

'It's mine,' I say. 'I saved it.'

'This is your story?'

I say nothing.

'Very well, Jack. You have made your choice.' He nods to Black Waistcoat, who clears his throat.

'I am arresting you,' he says, 'in the name of his Majesty King George.' His tone is dull and flat and it takes a moment for the words to get from my ears to my brains. By the time they do, I'm being

marched through the hall.

Our shared iron's a lot tighter on my side, and it feels like it's going to grind off my wristbone with every shove. I look back to see Pam kneeling in front of the man from Wood's chair.

'Two thieves sprouted in your house, Mrs Wood. In my view, the soil is as much to blame as the seed for the rotten apple tree.'

He swats Pam's begging hands with his notebook and rises to his feet, stepping over her on his way to the hall.

'Don't just stand there, you know where you're going.' Black Waistcoat bundles me to the front door and pushes me out into the street towards a fine grey-painted carriage, its four black horses panting in harness. 'You going to make work for me?' he asks, as he bundles me into the cab and climbs in after me.

I shake my head.

'Then we'll be friends. Here.' He reaches into his jacket and pulls out a flask. I pull the cork and take a swig. It's foul stuff, cheap rum, but welcome.

The other door opens and his master takes the seat opposite us.

'Is he speaking yet?'

'Black Waistcoat shakes his head. 'I think he might be a monk. He's silent as they come. Too full of pious thoughts to speak, no doubt.'

Full of thoughts is right, but none of them are pious. This must be Jim, or Blueskin, which is one and the same since if it weren't for Jim, Blueskin wouldn't know me.

'Can you ask the driver to let me out on the corner down here?' asks Black Waistcoat.

'I'll be getting out at the end of the Old Bailey,' says his master, pulling on a pair of

embroidered gloves, 'so you'll need to ride with Friar Sheppard here all the way to the roundhouse.'

Black Waistcoat bites his lip. 'I'm sorry your lordship, but that's not my duty,' he says. 'Strictly speaking, I shouldn't have come with you. I may be a constable this year, but I've a business to run at home, and besides, it's not even my ward.'

'You'll take him.'

'It's supposed to be the beadle. I've never even been to the roundhouse.'

'Then it's high time you went.'

## *Wild*

'Katie talked Bab Cole into letting her try pulling wools,' says Mary, flinging a wig onto the table in front of me.

'We'll have to tell her to stop,' I say, turning the blood-encrusted curls over in my hands. A wig may be worth thirty guineas, but it's a delicate thing. Bab's got ten full-time wool pullers, and it's a profitable thing for us both. The pullers sit on ten different rooftops around the town, armed with fishing rods, waiting for a good-looking wig to walk by before casting their line. They're all practised

hands, masters of the clean hook and the swift pull. Even with them it goes wrong once in a while, and either the gent lays a hand on it and you pull the thing apart between you, or you pull too hard on your line and end up tearing it.

'She brought a sackful in,' says Mary. 'All this bad. One's still got the man inside.'

'We'll talk to her.'

'She won't listen. Anyway, Bab won't let her at it again.'

'I suppose not. But what shall we do with her?'

'She's a talker, not a thief. She and Ob did the lodging game four times without a hitch before that Warboys forgot his lettercase, and that was hardly her fault. Get her back on something like that.'

I shake my head. 'I've spoken for her. She gets seen, it comes straight back on me.'

'There's got to be something.'

'It's got to be something straight.'

'Like what?' asks Mary, throwing up her hands. 'She won't submit to the needle. Her Mam was the same.'

Mary's right, but where Lucy Lynx was a miracle of a pickpocket, Katie's all thumbs. 'We'll talk to her,' I say, 'tell her we'll pay any apprenticeship she wants, as long as she sticks to it. Where is she?'

'With the whippets.'

'Let's talk to her now, then.'

Mary leads the way through to the sitting room, where Katie's perched on the footstool, throwing balled-up pieces of bread to Beau and Alex, making them twirl and beg for their treats.

I drop the sack in front of her.

'We can't have this,' I say.

'They'll be fine,' says Katie. 'Look, it won't take me a minute to straighten them out.'

She takes a wig from the sack and busies herself following a twist around its edge, poking her fingers through its furrowed curls, trying to get the weft back in line. Beau squints at her futile tousling while Alex looks at me apologetically, as if the wigs were somehow his fault.

'Good boy, Alex,' I tell the whippet, rubbing the soft underside of his muzzle.

'Babs won't have you back,' says Mary. 'You need to make up your mind what to do with yourself. I promised your mam I wouldn't let you hang like her, and I'm not having you undo sixteen years' good work by sticking your own head in a noose.'

'Let me back on the lodging game, then.'

Mary shakes her head. 'Pick a trade. Anything. We'll pay your apprenticeship, see you've got enough to eat and drink, and you can live with us.'

'I could work for you,' says Katie.

'You hated whoring,'

'Not as a whore!' Katie, reining in her disgust when she remembers who she's talking to. 'I mean, I'm no good for it. I could help you run the houses.'

Mary laughs. 'A girl who's too good for the trade. Who'll listen to you?'

Katie scowls. 'Send me to Norwich then, or Birmingham.'

Mary laughs to herself. 'Into some country justice's lap? You're staying here.'

I reach into my jacket pocket, pull out the purse from my left pocket and count out five half crown pieces. 'You've got till Friday to decide,' I say. 'This is to last you till then.' She reaches out to take the coins. I close my hand. 'You're not out of the noose yet, you know, so no wool-pulling or anything else.'



'If you say so, Uncle Jon.' Her face is the same innocent mask that she wore at her trial.

I open my hand, and the coins vanish into Katie's skirts.

### *Sheppard*

'Can I go now?' asks Constable Black Waistcoat, rubbing his wrist.

'You're not supposed to be here anyway,' says Harry's dad, who everyone calls Morgy. 'We haven't had the beadle's name on a paper, or got our shilling chain money.' He shoves me into the corner, and motions for Harry to keep his eye on me. He sets his hands on his hips. 'By rights I should refuse to take him. No paper, no nothing. You're supposed to take him to your house till you can get him up before the justice. Then the justice gives him to the beadle, then the beadle gives him to us, along with our shilling.'

'He's seen the justice. It was him that told me to bring him here.'

'What justice?' Morgy asks.

'Parry, his name is. I never met him before today.'

Morgy looks over at his fellow keeper, a skinny fellow with long moustaches and a long braid of grey hair slung over his shoulder. 'He's the one who wrote that letter asking for the weekly reports, Smithy.'

'He'd have to teach us to write first,' says Smithy.

'He wrote us a letter too,' says Black Waistcoat. Wanted every constable in the city to go out

wandering the streets looking for trouble. My trouble is, he lives in my ward, so every time a bee gets in his bonnet he comes running to me. Three nights this week he's had me out, following some fellow around Holborn, hanging around in Newgate, now this. I can't wait till my year's up.'

'Our year's never up,' says Morgy. 'You get off, but tell your justice not to send you down here again unless you've got paper and a shilling.'

Once Black Waistcoat's gathered up his chains and scurried out of the roundhouse, Morgy and Smithy turn to me.

'Tommy's brother, isn't it?'

'Is Tom still here?' I ask.

'Gone to Newgate,' says Harry.

'What's he got on him?' asks Smithy, taking a couple of steps toward me.

'Wooden buckles,' says Morgy. 'Doesn't look good.'

Morgy takes up a wooden cudgel that's hanging on the wall by his chair. 'Don't give us trouble, and we won't give you none, you hear, Tommy's brother? What's your name anyway?'

'Jack.'

'Well, Jack. Let's see what's in your pockets. Come here and turn them out.'

I step over to the table, and Morgy sweeps the dirty dishes and cups aside. 'Let's see.'

I reach into my left breeches pocket and pull out my tobacco pouch, along with the pipe Jim gave me and my tinderbox.

'Oh, ho! Look at this!' Smithy picks up the tinderbox and turns it over in his hands. He flicks it with a nail. 'Only pewter, but still, I do need a new box. He pockets it and opens the tobacco pouch for a sniff. 'Christ, boy! That's mouldy. I don't want to smoke that, you can keep it. Have your pipe too,

and don't be telling us we've got no hearts.'

'Turn it out,' says Morgy. I pull the pocket out and let it flop outside my breeches. 'Next one,' he says.

All I have in the other pocket is a farthing, which Morgy grabs as if it were a guinea, and a barley sugar, which gets the same treatment from Harry, who sticks it in his mouth and crunches it straight to powder. I turn out the pocket and show him.

'Boots,' says Morgy.

I reach down and unbuckle both boots, and step out of them onto the cool dirt floor. My feet reek after a day marching the barrow round town. I shake my boots to show there's nothing in them, but Morgy holds out a hand for a boot, then nearly pulls it apart checking beneath the tongue and in the toe. When he's done he throws the boot to the floor and holds out his hand for the other.

'A farthing and a tinderbox is all you have, Jackie-boy. A tale of woe. It's a shame. If you had a shilling for us, Mrs Smithy could bring round some of her stew. A farthing and a tinderbox gets you yesterday's bread and last week's beer. Anyone coming to see you who could give Mrs Smithy her shilling?'

I shake my head.

'Stale bread and beer it is, then.'

Morgy grabs me by the neck and bowls me at the staircase, sending me staggering. 'Go on, Harry, you show him to the family estate.'

Harry, still crunching the last of the barley sugar, stumps up the stairs after me. 'You know where you're going,' he says. 'All the way to the top.'

The staircase creaks beneath my tread. As I pass the first floor landing a voice cries out, 'Is that

Harry?’

Harry ignores him. In the distance, I hear the St Giles bell begin to toll. I count the strikes, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight.

Right now, at the edge of Billingsgate Market, Bess is sitting in the Hound waiting for me with a pocketful of guineas. I turn to speak to Harry. ‘Can you take a message somewhere for me? The person you take it to’ll pay?’

‘A crown.’

‘To take a message?’

‘A crown.’

‘Fine, a crown, then. But you need to take it now.’

‘Why? You’re not rushing anywhere. I’ll take it, but I’ll take it after my dad’s asleep.’

‘It’ll be too late then,’ I say.

‘Your day gets worse every minute doesn’t it? Here we are. Come on, don’t make me call my dad and Smithy up.’

I step into the cell. The bed’s stained with my brother’s blood, the walls and floor smeared with it too. The bucket in the corner hasn’t been emptied either, and the place stinks like a sty.

‘I’ll bring your bread and beer when I’ve had my dinner,’ says Harry, as he hauls the heavy door closed.

As the key scrapes in the lock, I lie down on the bloody bed and stare up at the ceiling. The rafters are ancient and sagging, and the plaster between them is cracked and dark with damp. Twelve guineas, gone in a flash. No more pancakes either, no more watching dumplings slowly form on Wood’s neck. I look at the back of my hand, and picture the burned circle that will soon mark me for a

thief.

No matter how stale, they can't bring the beer too soon.

### *Wild*

Charlie Bains and his forty guinea wig have rolled up to my front door, and now comes the joyous reunion. While Quilt keeps him talking in the front room, I make sure all's set. On the table between the chairs by the window are Charlie's two bolts, wrapped in brown paper and string. Next to them, a decanter of wine and two glasses.

A knock at the door and Quilt leads our unlucky draper into my office. 'Charlie!' I rise from my desk and extend a welcoming arm. 'Come in! Brandy or wine?'

Without a word, Bains scurries over and tears open a corner of the bolt of silk, running his thumb over the fabric beneath, breathing deeply as if he's been holding it in all week. 'Blake? Is he caught? Has he said anything about Molly?'

'Sit down, Charlie. Let me pour you a glass and tell you the whole thing.'

Charlie sits down, but carries on fussing with his cloth. 'What happened to the silk?' he asks, running the torn end through his fingers while I pour us both a bumper of good brandy. It'll do him better than wine, with what's coming.

'Here,' I say, handing him the glass. 'We measured it, and there's less than a yard missing. We

think Blake cut it off and gave it to his sweetheart. But before we get to that,' I say. 'It wasn't your lodger. Miss Molly didn't rob you, or help the robbers, and the first thing she knew about it was when you and the constable hauled her out of bed.'

Bains looks a little sick.

'Does that mean I don't get my forty guineas?'

'I'm afraid not.'

He knocks back the whole glass and stares into its bottom. 'I was looking forward to spending that. To tell you the truth, I had spent a little already. You are absolutely sure it wasn't her?'

'Absolutely. As you will see. Top up?'

'Please.'

Bains holds out his glass for me to fill. 'I was certain Molly was at the heart of it,' he says. 'She had such a guilty look about her.' He takes a sip of the brandy, recovering from the forty-guinea loss enough to offer me a wry smile. 'Maybe I shouldn't make a career of thief-taking after all.'

'Maybe not.'

'So who was it if it wasn't Miss Molly?'

'There was Blake, who we know, and a young lad called Tom Sheppard, who Blake pressed into aiding him.'

'Pressed?'

'The boy owed him a guinea, and Blake made him enter the house first under threat of imprisoning him for the debt.'

'How did they get in?'

'Blake was walking past your house and noticed that you had left your key in your front door,

unattended.'

Bains gives me a suspicious eye. 'I hardly think I could have done that.'

'It happens to us all, Charlie. I myself have done it. Looked everywhere, given it up for lost, then found it sticking out into the street just waiting for anybody to take. This man Blake took an impression of your key, then returned, knocked on your door and claimed he had noticed it left in the lock.'

He sets his brandy glass down on the table. 'I remember no such caller.'

I look him in the eye to make sure he sees the honesty in my own. 'Miss Molly does remember. She says a man knocked on the door and handed her the key, and that she placed it in the bowl on the desk in your study. She remembers quite distinctly, because the man had a rough way about him, and she was surprised at his honesty.'

'Why didn't she tell me?'

'Why would she? After all, you had already shown that you suspected her of robbing you, and nobody likes to have their own carelessness exposed. She may have expected you to take out your shame on her.'

'Shame?'

'I only say it because I have felt it. A hundred times I must have told Quilt to be sure to lock up properly. When I found my key in the door, my first thought wasn't that I may have already been robbed, but that Quilt had seen my carelessness. Shame.'

'So Molly says she wanted to spare me shame?'

'She says she didn't want to disturb you. The rest is my own thinking.'

'And the things that went missing before?'

'Maybe that was Molly. Maybe it was a tradesman. Maybe your girl isn't quite the angel she appears.'

Charlie nods. 'I see. You are the expert, I suppose.' He takes up his glass and 'So you have arrested these men?'

'Tom Sheppard was arrested the night before last after trying to rob a man in Bloomsbury. I have spoken with him. He claims that Blueskin gave him the duplicate of your key, that he made him enter the house and steal your cloth. Then, as soon as they were safely away, Blueskin robbed and beat him and made off with the cloth, leaving him penniless.'

'Rogues are rogues, then, even among their own kind.'

'Indeed. A fine way to put it. Might be you've a thief-taker in you yet.'

Bains smiles at this. 'Two times forty guineas.' Charlie shrugs and raises his glass in a forlorn toast. 'Good business.'

I knock my glass against his, and we both take a sip. 'Not so good,' I say. 'Sheppard was taken for another theft first, and his forty, if it's claimed, will go to the man he robbed. As for Blueskin, I have not taken him yet.'

'Still, that's forty guineas when you do get him. I'm down ten after paying your honest buyer. Down fifty if you factor what I'd have got for Molly.'

'I feel your loss, Charlie. But I have a plan that'll turn it to a gain.'

'What do you mean?'

'Blueskin is part of a gang. A vicious bunch, but crafty. I've been after them for months with no success. The heads of the gang work through surrogates like our Blueskin, and keep themselves clear of danger. If I can impeach Blueskin on a hanging charge, then I can use the threat of the noose to



persuade him to turn on his masters.'

'How many masters does he have?'

'Four or five, I believe, though it may be many more. I've heard rumours that it's a regular guild of thieves.'

I can see the guineas stacking up behind Charlie's eyes.

'If we get the gang, then I'll give you half the proceeds. If not, you can have the forty for Blueskin. Here.' I reach into my right hand pocket and draw out the purse of guineas. 'Thirty. That's your change after my friend's been paid back. I will cover the reward myself. That puts you thirty guineas above where you were before you were robbed, less the price of the silk that Blake tore off, of course.'

Charlie looks taken aback.

'Take it, Charlie,' I say, placing it into his uncertain hand. 'All I ask is that when the time comes for Blueskin to go to trial, you stand as a witness.'

'A witness?'

'My friend in Hounds Ditch bought the cloth from Blueskin, but I cannot ask her to take the stand. If it were known that she'd sworn a man to the gallows, rogues would no longer think to bring her their wares, and she would no longer be able to give me information. She may even be at risk of reprisal from Blueskin's friends. Thieves take betrayals to heart, you know.'

'So you want me to swear that I saw the man?'

'I do. Without a witness, he'll likely walk free, and the gang will carry on with their villainy. With your word, he hangs, and we can offer him his life in exchange for his master's.'

'But you haven't even got him yet.'

'Blueskin will be taken before the day is out. I have men out hunting all over the city.'

Charlie weighs the purse in his hand. 'I don't know what to tell you, Wild. This whole time I expected a swindle. When you turned up with the story about the woman buying it, I was certain. I owe you an apology. You're a gentleman. I'll swear I saw your Blueskin Blake.'

Charlie holds up his brandy glass. 'Here's to the hunt.' I join him in draining every drop.

### *Sheppard*

The roundhouse must be a hundred years old at least. The plaster on the ceiling's been patched up here and there, but I'll bet anything new's been slapped on top of the old. Still, the place is solid despite the neglected woodwork the sagging plaster. The walls are thick and they seem to slap enough mortar in the cracks every now and then to keep the place standing.

The furniture in here's a different story. The bed's a simple platform, without even a lip to keep the straw in, and the chair is about to collapse into a pile of kindling at any moment. Still no beer. Morgy and Smithy seem the types to hold it back if I make a fuss about asking for it, but on the other hand they may have just forgotten me.

I stand and walk to the door, my legs already cramped. Tom and who knows who else have rolled around on the straw enough that it may as well not be there.

The door's old and heavy, with a small barred gap. I put my mouth to the bars and call 'Harry!' though I doubt he'll hear me from up here, and even if he does, I doubt he'd pay it any mind.

I try to press the straw into a more comfortable shape, and bury the bloodier clumps, but it's so old and dry that it breaks into dust as I handle it, so I give up and lay down.

The ceiling is unchanged.

They kept Tom locked up for a bit over a week before they burned him for the saws. Bess said she'd be at the Hound every night this week. If she left one message, she might leave another, arrange a meeting once I've taken my brand. She may be set on leaving town. I wouldn't want to take the chance of bumping into Sally Fromtheseashore after I'd robbed her. I've done nothing to her and I'm already terrified.

There's a rattle from the door as someone struggles to turn the key, followed by a crunching scrape as the barrel turns over.

'You want to oil that,' I say, when Harry steps into the cell.

'Still joking, eh?' says Wood, hot on Harry's heels.

'I'll be on the stairs,' says Harry. 'Shout when you want letting out.'

The key turns in the lock, and Wood stands silent before me, not a trace of flour left in his hair. It's no wonder after the kind of afternoon him and Bet must have had. There aren't even any sweat dumplings on his neck. Bet must have nibbled him clean.

Finally he speaks. 'You watch your brother get burned, and then you go out robbing with him?' He holds up a hand. 'Before you blame it on him, I know it was your idea, because we never worked for Bains with Tom. You must have told him all about how old Charlie had all that silk and whatnot. It's your fault he's going to hang. You took him out after he'd been burned, which means you've killed him.'

I open my mouth, but can't think of a thing.

'I'm done with Sheppards. Just cause your mam's fucking Kneebone I have to answer for a pair

of thieving little cunts?' He spits on the floor in front of me. 'I'm done with you. Once you're burned, I'm not having you back.'

He bangs on the door. 'Let me out!'

He turns to look at me. 'I do feel sorry for you. Brothers aren't supposed to turn on each other. I'm glad he did, though, otherwise I'd have ended up in business with a thieving little cunt.'

'What do you mean turned on me?'

'Nobody told you?'

'Told me what?'

## *Wild*

As soon as the boy brings word back from Parry, I set out to meet the young justice, arriving at Gooch's just after nine. Parry's here before me. He's chosen a booth near the window. A pot of coffee sits on the table before him as he scribbles in his pocketbook with a stub of pencil.

'Jonathan! Good, you're here. Come, sit. I've ordered hotcakes. I hope you're hungry.'

'I can always find room for a hotcake.' I slide onto the bench, and Parry sets to pouring the coffee. It's good, syrupy-looking stuff.

'How was your walk with Jim? Getting to know the city?'

'All too well, I fear. You read things, in the papers and whatnot, but they don't know the half of it. No wonder the constables want to stay at home.'

I take a sip of my coffee, my tongue curling at the strength of it.

'I wanted to ask your advice.'

'Oh yes?'

'A young man was arrested in Bloomsbury the other night,' says Parry. 'Thomas Sheppard is his name.'

'Go on.'

'This Tom Sheppard asked to be sworn as an evidence today.'

'Oh? And what did he say?'

'He admitted a further theft, and gave up the name of an accomplice, who we arrested this afternoon.'

'You did?'

'I did. I went along with the constable, and found the boy in his master's house. He had twelve guineas hidden under his bed.'

Twelve guineas under the bed. It's not like Jim to leave money behind. 'Who was the accomplice?'

'Sheppard's older brother, Jack. Skinny little fellow. Bright boy by all accounts, but the way Tom tells it, he's been thieving for years.'

Tommy Sheppard. Who'd have thought it? Either he's far cleverer or far stupider than he looks. His own brother, though. I've known brothers that swore to kill each other, but they'd never stoop so low as to inform on each other. That's worse than murder.

'Might I suggest some caution?' I say, 'After all, in my experience a man won't turn on his brother over what's right. The only thing I know of to get that done is spite. Besides, nobody's a readier

liar than a man on trial for his life. Have you questioned the older brother?'

'Not yet. The beadle recommended leaving the boy overnight to let his fear grow.'

'Sound course,' I say, trying to hide my gratitude for old Jones the beadle and his grasping ways. He gets tuppence a night for every prisoner he keeps, so of course he'll want Jack to stay as long as possible.

'Ah,' says Parry. 'The hotcakes are here.'

### *Sheppard*

There's not a cloud in the night sky, and the moonlight falls through the window into the cell, blackening the smears of Tom's blood that still decorate the place. Mam and Kneebone will be here in the morning, no doubt, and no doubt Kneebone will try to get me transported too.

Since I didn't rob a Marquess, he may succeed. I could be on a ship to Virginia before the summer's out. Virginia can't be much worse than London. They'd probably have me building barns and fixing sheds and houses. Probably a better workshop than Wood's. And if I didn't like it, you hear about people making it back all the time. They run off the plantation, get on a ship and come home. But then, you hear of them getting hanged too.

All I know is that dead or alive, Wood's done with me, and I'm done with him and Kneebone both. If I'm to be transported, I'll work on any man's farm but his. But if I don't throw in with Uncle William, what's left to me? I could take a burning, then strike out on my own, but with no tools, no money, no paper to say I've learned my trade, where is there for me? Nobody's going to take me on as

apprentice if I'm burned.

I won't be burned.

Instead, I get to my feet and turn the chair on its side. It's a sturdy old thing, but when I stand it on the corner of one leg and lean all my weight on it, the nails squeal in the wood, and soon the joints are loose enough for me to work the stretcher out of the back. It's just the thing, a foot-long strip of wood two inches wide and half an inch thick.

Tom's the worst of all of it. It's not a sure thing, getting burned. There's always the chance they could deny you when you ask for it and hang you to make an example. Tom's not my brother any more. He's my murderer.

The only hope in the world now is Bess. If I can get to her tomorrow night and get my store of guineas, I could be in a coach on the way out of town this time tomorrow. Ten guineas is enough to start up wherever I land. Without a paper work might be hard to come by at first, but with ten guineas I'll be able to keep myself for a good long while, maybe even rent a shop and forget timber entirely.

I climb back onto the bed and use the stretcher to attack the plaster. I start with an ancient patch that's as dry as the straw on the bed. It's as easy as carving a joint of meat, and soon I've made a hole wide enough for the stretcher. Cracks race along the ceiling, and a chunk of plaster falls onto the bed in a shower of dust.

I keep widening the hole till I find a beam, then work my way along it, exposing the dry, brittle wood. I pull myself up into the roof. The thatch is so thick with mud and roots that I may as well be underground, and I have to burrow upwards, jamming my fingers through turf and, feeling the roots tear between my fingers and soil pouring down the neck of my shirt.

From below I hear sounds of collapse as a chunk of plaster falls from the ceiling of the cell and misses the bed, smashing on the floor,. I claw and scrape at the edges of the hole, making it wider and

wider till I can squeeze my shoulders through, then my head, bursting out of the mossy roof like a mole through a lawn.

Even though it stinks of shit like usual, the air tastes fresher than it's ever been.

The roof overhangs the edge of the drum by about a foot, and for a moment I'm hanging in empty space, till I manage to get a foothold on the narrow sill of one of the slitlike windows. The mortar's worn away from between the chunks of stone that make up the drum, making for an easy climb, but when I'm still ten feet off the floor, there's a flare of lamplight in the square as Morgy and Harry and the others pour out of the door. The crashing plaster must have raised the alarm.

I drop down to the floor, landing hard but rolling forward to save my ankles, and sprint for the darkened mouth of one of the alleys on the far side of the square.

I look over my shoulder to see that Harry's on my heels, his dad and the rest wheezing in the distance. Harry's quick, but I'm quicker, and I dive into to the alley and start taking turns willy-nilly, disappearing into the close-packed heap of boards and bricks between the market and Holborn.

## *Wild*

The Flight of Angels is one of the dearer places you can buy a fuck on the back side of the Exchange. Hidden away in the back of a mews, all you get of it from the outside is the lantern that hangs above the door, with its pair of flying angels set in pale blue glass.

Inside, the place is a maze of staircases and hallways lined with doors. Every door has a piece of paper pasted up on it. *Cathy, trained at dancing school, remembered all she learnt, half a crown.*



Next door to Cathy is *Jenny, eyes like a kitten, hands like the wings of a dove, two shillings*. Next door is *Annie, who knows all the ways, half a crown and cheap for the price*, and so on.

'This way,' says Mary, leading me through a door and up two flights of stairs to a peaceful, white-painted landing with narrow tables placed between its many doors. On the tables, sweet-smelling things: bowls of lemons, their skins slashed and sticky with juice, dried flowers, wicks burning in bowls of some dark, waxy, fragrant oil.

'This is her,' says Mary, stopping in front of *Jemima, who will drink you dry, a crown*.

I knock. The door opens and a heavy-painted face appears beneath a green wig.

'Hallo,' she says, 'is it the both of you together? It'll be twice the money.'

'It's neither of us,' says Mary. 'I'm your landlady. Or your landlady's landlady.'

'What do you want?'

'To stop Sally From-the-Seashore from scratching your eyes out.'

Bess starts at Sally's name. She's a good-looking girl, no doubt, but hardly pretty enough for the half-crown an hour. It's her dress and the paint on her face that's got her the room here, flowing silk skirts and a sharp way with a puff of rouge, not to mention the guinea she laid down to secure the place. 'Listen, love,' says Mary. 'We're here to help you. Let us in and we can talk.'

Looking uncertainly from Mary to me and back again, she opens the door and lets us into a room with dark red walls and a black lace canopy over the bed. The heavy curtains are drawn, the only light from a lamp under a red glass shade.

'If Sally gets wind you're here she'll come for your blood,' says Mary, 'and I'm not having this place made an abattoir. It's taken years to turn it into what it is. Now, where's her dress?'

Bess walks to the armoire and takes out a faded scarlet silk gown, with ruffles in the shape of roses decorating the bodice. She hands it to Mary, who rolls it up and gives it to me.

'And the ring?'

Bess slips a ring off her finger and holds it out to Mary.

'You sold the cloth to Hub Gilbert?'

'I did.'

'And how much did he give you for it?'

'Ten guineas.'

'And you were to split it with Jack?'

She nods.

'So he's owed five. Do you have it?'

She shakes her head.

'How much do you have?'

'Four, and some change.'

'Rent paid for the week?' I ask Mary.

'For the month,' says Bess.

'Good,' I say. 'Still, you'll need some for yourself. Give me three for now, then, and I'll see Sally gets one and Jack gets two. As for the other five you owe him, you'll have to help him some other way.'

You'll hear from me. When you do, drop everything you're doing. Got it?'

She nods.

'Good.'

*Sheppard*

I don't remember getting to sleep. It's a miracle I got any rest at all, not that it's done me a grain of good. Last night this spot looked like heaven, but this morning it is what it is, a gap between a chicken shed and a wall in somebody's back yard. After a night squashed in among the rat droppings and scraps of hay, I feel like I've been kicked in the spine by a donkey, and every joint grinds as I unfurl myself and poke my head over the chicken shed.

The sun's up, and it's already beating down fiercely. I crawl out and stretch my limbs, an eye on the kitchen window of the house, then spring up the wall and out into the back alley.

My hair's still gritty with bits of plaster and soil and thatch. I try to shake off as much as I can, but with my mud-streaked shirt and filthy breeches, I still look like a beggar.

I stick to the alleys, making my way east, winding up taking the same alley down to the King's Theatre that me and Tom took when we ran off from Bains. The courtyard behind the theatre's busy with men building stage scenery and women sewing costumes, all taking the air in the shade of the lime tree that sprouts from the middle of the yard. The theatre gate hangs open, and I can see right through to the stage, and the rows of scuffed wooden seats beyond.

I pause at the mouth of the alley to scout Drury Lane, searching the bustle for faces that know me. It all looks clear, till I see Ben Pollard step out of the door that leads to the rooms above the Craven. He stands on the steps, yawning into his palm, and I shrink back. They're bound to offer a reward for catching someone who's escaped gaol, and though I know Ben, I thought I knew Tom too. Strangers are the only people I can trust.

Except maybe Jim. So far, he's the only man in town who's never done me wrong. It's not long after six now, which leaves plenty of time to get caught before eight o'clock.

I poke my head out onto the Lane again, but Ben Pollard's fallen into conversation with Glenn the pot mender, and the two of them are packing their pipes. Instead of taking the quick way over the

lane, I double back down the alley and past the scenery makers, working my way north till I come out on the south side of White Horse Yard.

Bains' house is shimmering in the morning sun. The shutters are all still closed, even upstairs. It may be early, but White Horse Yard has been retaken by the footmen and porters, who've chased off the night folk and woken the bench-sleepers. Under the tree where the boys played dice, two footmen are setting up a breakfast table, with a tray of fresh bread rolls, a block of cheese and a bottle of ale all arranged on a dainty folding table and set with tablecloth and silver. One footman catches me looking and gives me an evil eye as I pass. I hurry along and make for the alley at the north end of the yard.

Up on High Holborn, the day's in full swing, with coaches and carts rattling along and cryers lining the wooden walk selling all kinds of things out of their splintering wicker baskets. I slink along the shaded side of the street, keeping my eye out for anyone I know. At the Cross, a pair of old men have set up a brazier, and they're frying sausages and onions. The smell makes my stomach growl, and I search my breeches pockets, even though I know there's nothing there.

Even a farthing would get me half an onion, and I'm tempted to turn beggar, but there's no sense in drawing notice to myself, so I keep going till I find myself beneath the shade of the city wall. The Blue Boar on Lewkenor's Lane is what Jim said. I'm sure I've worked on Lewkenor's Lane, and I know it's somewhere round, but the roads by the wall are tangled and crooked, folding in on themselves like rabbit burrows.

I scan the signs above, the Red Horse, the Angel on a Pin, the Eye of the Needle.

'Is this Lewkenor's Lane?' I ask a woman selling oranges opposite the Battering Ram.

'Buy an orange and I'll tell you. Buy two and I'll tell the truth.'

'I haven't got a penny.'

'Then I don't know.'

I leave her and push on along the wall. I'm sure Lewkenor's Lane is by the Gold Star Stables, near where Poll used to work before she moved down to the Wych. Though it's early, all the gin-shops are doing a fine trade as people stop in to start the day. My mouth waters at the thought of a drop of good drink, but none of these places will sell that. Even the best gin makes you heavy of heart. It pins you to your seat, keeps you sipping all day even though you only popped in for a breakfast drop. Ale's too weak and tasteless for any time, but brandy is a friend at any hour. Warm, clean, strong, brandy's the only drink worth drinking.

***Wild:***

Since old Bowler died, it's only Tichborne who's sat the bench with any kind of regularity. Back in Bowler's day, the gallery was always full. He had a way with a condemnation, did Bowler, and he liked to personally interrogate every witness who came before him. I never had much luck in his court, but I'll agree, it was something to see, the old man standing up and leaning over the bench to hector the poor wretch in the dock, or throwing his hands up to heaven when he commended their immortal soul to the noose. Every time he chaired a session, the place would be filled with members of Societies for the Reformation of Manners, the Suppression of Vice, and the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and all kinds of other Godly folk, all enjoying the chance to join in hateful communion, bawling the

sentenced man halfway to hell before Bradley could unchain him from the dock.

In Tichborne's era, the gallery's got less crowded, since nobody much wants to come out and see a man drowse over a plate of bread and meat. Only for the big sensations do they turn out in any force. Whether it's the presence of the Marquess or the arrival of a new justice, today's session's brought out a crowd of curious souls, and not since Bowler spat his homilies has there been such a crush in the stalls.

Parry brings no food to the bench, only a bottle of ale to wet his mouth. He's no Tichborne when it comes to keeping proceedings going either, and Jameson has barely a thing to do as Parry first bangs his gavel, then stands and addresses the court.

'Order in the court, please! Quiet in the gallery or you will be removed. These sessions of the Court of the Old Bailey are hereby opened. We begin with Crown vs Thomas Sheppard of the Wych. Clerk, if you would.'

Jameson, clearly unused to having the room settled for him, or hearing a voice louder than his own, stands. Only when he looks down does he realise he's looking at the wrong paper, and hurriedly swipes the right one from his table and clears his throat.

'Thomas Sheppard is charged with two counts of felonious theft against the persons of Henry Paulet, Marquess of Winchester, and Mr Charles Bains of Covent Garden. To make the first charge, the prosecutor, my Lord the Marquess.'

Applause erupts from the gallery as the Marquess, resplendent in a black, fur-edged hunting coat and towering black wig, makes his way to the stand. A footman encased in black and silver livery follows half a step behind him, and takes up a station between the Marquess and the gallery, placing his hands on his hips so as to screen his master from the eyes of the crowd.

'My lord Marquess, if you would,' says Parry, as though coaxing an exotic bird to sing.

'My lord justice,' says the Marquess, his voice a bass rasp that comes from deep in his frill-

encrusted throat. 'I was set upon by the man in the dock Tuesday last as I was walking between the theatre and Gooch's coffee house. My footman stopping to remove a stone from his boot, I was momentarily unattended, a fact seized upon by the vicious brute called Tom Sheppard. He slipped a rough sack over my head, and pulled me to the ground. He delivered several stout kicks to my body, but before he could complete his mischief, my footman caught us up and overpowered him. We brought him straight to the constable, and had him arrested on the spot. Do you deny this, Tom Sheppard?'

Every eye in the room looks to Tom, who shifts uncomfortably in his irons.

'Do you deny it, boy?' asks the Marquess again.

'I don't,' says Tom. The gallery erupts in chatter, but the moment the Marquess speaks, everyone hushes to hear.

'There. The man is guilty, and will be hanged. I will say no more.'

Without waiting for Jameson or Parry, the Marquess turns on his heel, marches straight past the bench and out through the door to the justice's private apartments.

Parry strikes the bench with his gavel, not to stifle any noise, but to break the silence. 'As Mr Sheppard does not deny that he attacked my lord the Marquess, we may safely move on to the second charge.

Jameson stands. 'It is charged that Thomas Sheppard did break into the house of Mr Charles Bains of White Horse Yard that same night. Mr Bains to present the charge.'

Bains rises from his place in the front row of the gallery and walks uncertainly across the court. His eyes keep flicking over at me, but his nerve looks like it's holding. It'll be harder for him with Jack in play, but his job is easy, and Jameson knows to intervene if questions start to cut to deep. Facing the gallery, he wrings his hands, then lets them fall to his sides. 'On Tuesday last, I went to bed as usual. I

locked the front door and barred my cellar hatch. In the dead of night, I was woken by a sound from my study below, so I furnished myself with the poker from the grate in my bedroom, and crept downstairs. As I came down into the hall, I saw that my study door hung open, and the cellar door too. Voices were coming up from the cellar, so I dashed down the stairs just in time to see a pair of fellows clambering up the stairs to the yard, each carrying a large bundle. I gave chase, but the one got over the back wall like a rat up a drainpipe, so I only got a look at the other.'

Parry coughs. 'Was the man you saw Thomas Sheppard?'

Bains shakes his head. 'It wasn't. It was another man entirely.'

'Can you describe this man?'

'Certainly. The moon was full, so I got a good look at him. He was taller than myself, with a broad chest, and a wild black beard.'

'Clerk,' says Parry.

Jameson gets to his feet. 'Thomas Sheppard volunteered an admission that he was guilty of robbing Mr Charles Bains of White Horse Yard of three bolts of fine linen.' He pauses. 'He also identified an accomplice, his own brother, Jack Sheppard, who was arrested yesterday in possession of some ten guineas for which he could not account.'

Parry coughs to silence the clerk.

'This Jack Sheppard escaped from St Giles roundhouse, and remains at large. You have had dealings with Jack Sheppard, have you not, Mr Bains?'

'So I'm told. He came with a carpenter who fitted my new doors.'

'And was he the man you saw fleeing your home?'

'He was not.'



'You remember the boy's face?'

'Not well, but well enough. He had fair hair, and I doubt if he could grow a beard if you gave him a year and a gallon of bull's blood to drink every day.'

'Very well, Mr Bains. Please, take a seat.' The justice pivots in his seat to address Tom directly. Tom winces under his gaze, and clutches his ribs with one hand, supporting his manacles with the other. 'Mr Sheppard. What say you? Was your accomplice a bearded man, or was he your brother?'

'It was Jack,' he says. 'I don't know what this fellow's talking about.'

'Let us accept your story for now – not to imply that Mr Bains is telling anything but the truth of course. You were burned in the hand last month, is that right?'

Tom nods.

'So what made you rob again, knowing that if you were caught you'd hang?'

'Jack got me to do it. I was hungry, and he said if I helped him rob the draper, he'd give me a few pennies for a sausage roll.'

'I see. How did the robbery proceed?'

'Jack broke in. He did something with strings and hooks and lifted the bar off from the inside. When we was in, he had me keep watch while he went in and got the stuff.'

'So you only kept watch? He did the breaking himself, and the robbing?'

'He did my lord. He went in and brought back the cloth, and had me help him carry it away.'

Parry cocks an eye at me. 'A rogue's rogue, your brother.'

This is music to Tom. 'He is! He made me keep watch for him, promised me money, then left me for dead!'

'Which brings us to the main charge, Mr Sheppard. You set on my lord the Marquess. Was that

at your brother's urging too?'

'No.' Tom looks down. 'That was me.' He gives the jury a good look at his big, sorrowful eyes.

'But it was all an accident,' he says. 'After I went out with Jack, I was going home when I got set on. Some fellow put a bag on my head, and started kicking me in. They got the shilling Jack gave me, and my flint and tinder besides. When they ran off I whipped the bag off my head and got a look at them, but all I saw was that one had a tall wig and a white coat.'

'A demon for a brother, doom for luck. I would pity you, Mr Sheppard, did I not know you lied. I have spoken with Owen Wood, your old master, and your godfather Mr Kneebone, both of whom have given me an identical picture of your brother, and of yourself. Everyone I speak to has nothing but praise for Jack, and nothing but pity and sorrow for you. Yet you say your brother is the one playing the tune?'

'Jack's a sneak,' cries Tom. 'He's robbed everyone he's ever met! As soon as someone's not looking, Jack's in there.'

'And yet he has never been accused of so much as filching a fig?'

'That's his way. Never enough to be noticed, he always says.'

'I see. Mr Wild?'

Jameson hurries to his feet. 'Mr Jonathan Wild, the Thief-Taker General of Great Britain and all its Isles.'

I stand to applause from the gallery and a good half of the jurors, and address myself to Tom.

'Do you know a man named Joseph Blake, often called Blueskin Joe, who lives at the Hornbeam at St Giles Cross?'

'No.'

'Are you certain?'

'Certain.'

'And if I told you that this Blueskin Joe was a tall, broad man with a black beard, just like the fellow Mr Bains described, and that he was taken with the cloth you stole?'

'Must be the bloke Jack sold to.'

'So. 'You don't know Joseph Blake?'

'I don't know him. It was Jack.' He looks ready to burst into tears. Parry's face softens a little, but when he speaks his voice is steely. 'In light of your confession in the first charge, and the uncertainty surrounding your evidence, I sentence you to death. You will be taken to Tyburn at the next sessions and hanged.'

'When's the next session?' cries Tom, eyes wild. 'When's the next session?' Bradley steps forward and takes hold of Tom's elbow, but Tom pulls himself free and rattles his irons, trying to wrench them from the dock. 'I'll say it! It was Blueskin. He did it, saw the key in the door then gave it back so he wouldn't notice – I owed him money, you see – we went and we got in. We let ourselves in, through the front, and-.

'Bradley,' says Parry, with a strike of the gavel. 'Take him to the condemned hold.'

'It was Blueskin Joe!' cries Tom, as Bradley unlocks one manacle and attaches it to his own wrist. Tom struggles, but though he's a big lad, Bradley's got half a foot and half a hundredweight on him. Still, Tom's a handful, and Bradley calls to the two bailiffs to help him, and it's only with the three of them poking and prodding at him like a stuck bull that Tom submits to passing through the gate that leads back into the prison.

The saying of the name has come too late to save poor Tom, but it may still be in time to doom Blueskin Joe. I give Jameson a nod. 'Mr Wild?' he barks, as the court returns to order.

I address myself to Parry. 'As you heard, my Lord, the boy admits that Blueskin was at the very least his confederate.'

Parry meets my eye. 'We get to the truth at the end, eh, Jonathan? Jameson. Make up a warrant for this Blueskin Blake. 'We will have him here and he can answer for himself.'

\*

In his chambers, Parry pours me a brandy. 'How do you square all this with the brother absconding from gaol?'

'A frightened man will do anything to save himself. I believe the lad was afraid, and fled. If we suspend the warrant against him, he may be enticed to hand himself in.'

'You may be right, Jonathan. But the warrant stands. I'll not stand for men walking out of my gaol. He'll be tried for robbing Bains, and be allowed to speak in his own defence, and I will ask the jury to ignore the matter of the gaol-break, but the boy will have his hand burned and spend the day in the pillory.'

'If you burn him, it may end badly.'

'What do you mean?'

'If you punish him like a robber, he may become one.'

'What would you have me do?'

'The boy's a carpenter. Order him to mend the gaol. Have him spend his evenings and his Sundays making good. Pillory him too, if you need to make him an example. It'll teach him a better lesson than the brand, I promise you.'

'I didn't think you so soft-hearted, Jonathan.'

'You could call it softness. I think of it as taking the long view of things.'

'There's sense in it, I'll grant you. I'll think on it.'

I take a drink of brandy. Something in the tone of Parry's voice makes my skin prickle. 'Now,' says Parry, leaning back. 'Onwards. Tell me about this Blueskin fellow.'

'As rum as they come, is Joseph Blake. Him and his mother run a brandy pit at the Holborn end of St Giles. Fiendish sort of place. I've heard things about him over the years, but never enough to get him on a charge. Now it seems that he's got in with a gang. Devilish fellows, who use other hands to do their work. I've brought in a few I'm sure were under their direction. Ob Lemon was one. The beaten man who was sentenced the day you and I first met. He hired the other two to help him, though the night before he was bankrupted at the hazard table. He promised to give me their names, but then changed his mind and gave up the Lynx girl instead.'

'Just like our Thomas with his brother.'

'Just like. Tom was afraid of Blueskin, but Blueskin is nothing compared to his masters. These are brutal men, known for cutting the noses off those who cross them. Ob Lemon had a wife and daughter. Why turn on his masters and risk their noses when he's got sweet little Katie Lynx just waiting to be pointed at?'

'Tom named Blueskin in the end, though.'

'He did. Too late to save his own skin, though.'

'Do you feel bad for the boy?'

'A little. But he brought it on himself. It's the brother I feel for.'

Parry holds up a hand. 'I understand. I do.'

'Then you'll let him mend the gaol.'

'If he returns to the court to answer his charges, and they are dismissed.' He leans forward. 'We must vow to stick together in all things, Jonathan, and I hope you take this as a token of my trust in you.'

'It means much, my lord.'

'Matthew, Jonathan. Always Matthew.'

### *Sheppard*

The Blue Boar's the same as every other brandy house in the shadow of the wall. Dirty, dark, and full of muttered conversations between shifty looks. Behind the bar, a friendly-looking woman of about my mam's age stands talking to a girl of about ten, who is polishing a tall glass vase.

'Is Jim Sykes here?' I ask the woman.

'You all right, love?' she asks. 'You're all dirty. You've got a cut on your head.'

'I'll be fine,' I say. 'If I can speak to Jim.'

'Go on,' says the woman to the girl, who sets down her vase and scampers off, ducking under the counter hatch and through a door.

'You want a drink?' asks the woman.

I shake my head.

'Just Jim.'

'He'll be back soon,' says a girl. 'I'll look after you till then. Have a drink. On me.'

She sets a full glass down on the bar in front of me. She takes a long, curved pipe from her apron and fills it with sweet-smelling tobacco from a bright red tin.

I take a gulp of the brandy, and for a moment I don't know what it is I've drunk it's that smooth.

I take another sip and let it run over my tongue. 'That's the best brandy I've ever had,' I say.

'You look like a man who needs the best brandy he's ever had,' says the woman. She sticks the pipe between her teeth and lights a taper from the candle on the counter. 'Want a bit?' she asks out of the side of her mouth, as she puffs the pipe into life.

I nod, and she holds out the pipe so the stem hovers near my mouth and I take a long, hard drink of smoke. Like the brandy, it's the best I've ever had, better than I even knew was possible.

### *Wild*

The St. Giles house is the roughest we have. It didn't used to be. When I bought it, it was a wellkempt, straight-papered place done out in cream and crimson, and the whole place glistened with lacquer. These days it's scuffed to a dull decrepitude, and despite all Coll Cooke's efforts to keep it respectable, I keep away as much as I can.

Still, it's a useful place. When I bought it, I had the cellar redone, put in two cells at the back,

and an extra cellar under a hatch with a table bolted to it. Coll used to work at Newgate till he got caught with Corky the head keeper's wife, Corky in the process finding out where his baby daughter got her bright red hair.

Coll came to me with a bloody face and a baby girl in his arms, a man in need of help. Back then, with the Hawkins gang and the Flood brothers and the rest, I had a lot of use for a keeper like Coll, who knew when to use a hot plate of broth and when a stick to the shins. Nowadays, without so many Hawkinses and Floods to beat into obedience, Coll's more like an innkeep than a turnkey. Today, though, his bloody knuckles show that the old days have never really left.

Coll sees me looking and sucks at one bleeding knuckle. 'I'm sorry Jon. His fault, though. We've had to put him in the cellar. We tried to give him a good room like you asked,' says Coll, as he leads me down the stone stairs to the cells. 'He had bread and ham and cheese, and ale too, but he pissed on it and threw it in our Janet's face when she came to take the plate away. I know you said to be good with him, but after that we had to give him a bit of a doing and bring him down here. I let Janet put his pissy bread and ham back on the plate and leave it in there with him. He was gobbling it down last time I looked in.' Jim grimaces.

I pull my scarf over my face as Coll leads the way past the table to the cell. Inside, Blueskin is slumped in a corner, an empty wooden plate on the floor next to his feet.

'Enjoy your dinner?' asks Coll.

'It was tastier with the piss than without.' His scowl turns to a look of earnestness as he sees me step into the cell. 'Hallo, Mister Mystery,' he says when he sees me.

'Before you dig yourself a grave, let's see if you're dead or not.'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean that I'm going to ask you a question, and if you give me an answer I don't like, I'll see



that you hang at the next sessions. Tell me something that pleases me, and you'll be back out in a week as if nothing had happened.'

Blueskin sucks at his moustache.

'I'm only going to ask you this once,' I say. 'Who were you going to sell the silk to?'

'I wasn't, I mean, it was going to be-'

I lay a hand on his shoulder. He flinches. 'It's your neck, Joe,' I tell him, as he avoids my eye.

'You've only got one neck. Now, come on. Who?'

'Bill Field and Roger Johnson.'

'Fleet Dock Roger Johnson?'

Blueskin nods.

'The snake! I didn't think he had it in him. Good lad. Now, here's what's going to happen. I'm going to take you to see the justice. He's going to ask you a lot of questions, and this is what you're going to tell him. Coll?'

'What is it?'

'Get us a bottle of brandy and a plate of meat and cheese for Mister Blake.'

### *Sheppard*

Now that I've had half a bottle of the Blue Boar's miracle brandy, I feel twice the man that walked in here. Sarah the serving woman's kept me topped up, and now she's gone through to the kitchen to fix me a plate of something.

The Boar seems like a friendly sort of place. Everyone's a regular, but me, and they've all got

their roosts picked out. There's a pair of pretty girls in matching pink wigs sitting in the window booth, their lacy dresses and white-powdered bosoms glowing in the morning sunshine.

Sarah comes out and sets down a plate in front of me. A boiled potato steams on top of a thick slice of ham, all glistening with melted butter. 'Here you are, lovey. Want some ale with it?'

I shake my head. 'Just brandy.'

She fills my glass with the glorious brandy, thick and dark, it sticks to the sides and sings me a sweet amber song.

'Need a knife?' asks Sarah. I nod again, and she takes a pocketknife from her apron and hands it to me. 'Need anything else?'

I shake my head, the knife already open in my hand.

I crush the spud with the flat of the blade, then slice off a bit of ham, load it up with crushed spud, and put it in my mouth. The ham's well-salted, and the potato's done just right, so it melts in my mouth. As I'm taking a slurp of the ale, the door opens.

'Here's your man,' says Sarah. 'Jim! Jon! Just in time for a bite.'

I turn to see Jim stooping to get through the front door.

'Jack!' he says, striding over to the bar and laying a hand on my back. 'Just the fellow. Don't look so troubled. You're the talk of the town. There's been a crowd around the roundhouse all day to see the hole you made.'

I look down at my crushed potato. 'Can you help me?'

'Poor lad! He's rattled, Sarah, and I'm not surprised. Listen Jack, I can help you, and I will, but you eat your lunch first. Get yourself settled, then we can talk all about it. Fetch me a plate too, will you, Sar?'

'Two potatoes?'

'Two potatoes. And a slice of cheese if there's any about. Bring it to the skittle alley. We'll have

ourselves a game.'

'Want the bottle?'

Jim nods, and she takes it down from its shelf.

'Come on,' he says to me, 'bring your plate and your ale.'

The skittle alley's empty.

'Quite a thing, getting out of St Giles.'

'Not really,' I say. 'Bad plaster, old wood. If you know what you're doing it's like walking out the door.'

'Is that so. Well, however you did it, it's got the city talking about you. Especially the justice, from what I hear. There's a bounty of five guineas on your head, you know. The beadle's going from corner to corner with his soapbox crying it out: 'Five guineas for the man who brings me Jack Sheppard, late escaped from St Giles Roundhouse!''

I don't know what to say. The butter that's dripped off the potato onto the ham is starting to cool and set, turning hazy and white. I close Sarah's knife and lay it on the table. 'You finished?' asks Jim. I nod.

'Come on,' he says. 'Eat. You want my help?'

'I do. If you can, I mean.'

'I can. And I will, but you're not going to like how.'

## *Wild*

In Parry's parlour, the justice sits in an embroidered armchair stuffed so full that there's not a wrinkle in the cloth. Parry's just as sharp and well cut, the morning sun giving his powdered face a spectral brightness.

Quilt holds Blueskin fast by the chain that links his irons, while I stand by the hearth, leaning on the mantel, trying to look detached from proceedings so as to let Parry feel the full force of his authority.

'You are Joseph Blake?' asks Parry.

Blueskin nods, his beard slick with the blood that flows from his cheekbone. His beating needs to look new, and though he grumbled, he owned that picking off his scabs early was a sight better than letting Jim give him fresh wounds.

'You robbed Charles Bains?'

'I did. Me and Tom Sheppard.'

'It was your idea?'

Blueskin shakes his head. 'There's this gang, they had me do it.'

'So I am told. But tell me, how exactly did they have you do it?'

'They sent a man round last year, just before Christmas, and he said we were to pay three guineas a week or maybe our shop would catch fire. I thought he was a chancer, you know, making threats he couldn't keep, so I told him no. That night, someone kicked our door in and threw a burning cat inside. They'd dipped it in pitch, and it burst in like a fireball. I had to stamp on its head to get it to stop. Burnt my breeches. If I hadn't been awake reading, me and my mam would have been roasted alive. The man came back the next morning, and we paid, and we've kept paying ever since, till we

couldn't. It's been a slow summer, you see, what with all the new places opening up on our road, and we fell behind. Last week, the man came back. He gave me a key, and said that if I didn't use it to rob the house on White Horse Yard, you know.'

'Your shop would catch fire again.'

Blueskin nods, and keeps his eyes on the justice, just as I told him to. Parry meets his gaze, his expression softening a little.

'A most pitiable predicament. Tell us, then, who was this man?'

'I don't know him. Had a country way about him. I asked around, but nobody knew a thing about him.'

Parry's eyes flick over to me. 'If you don't know the man, then how can we prove what you're saying is true?'

'I followed him,' says Blueskin, a little too quickly for my liking.

'Followed him?'

'When he left. He went into every tavern in St Giles. He never stopped for more than a few minutes, and I could see his coat getting weighed down the more he went into. After he finished in the Five Foxes, he doubled back and made for the river. I kept after him till he went to this warehouse down at the Fleet Dock. It was strange. Every other dock had men working it, but this place was quiet as the grave. He went in at a side door, so I crept into the yard and peeked through the window. I saw him talking to three men. He handed over a whole armful of purses from the taverns he'd been to.'

'And you knew these men?'

'I do. I did. Two of them, any road. Bill Field was one. He used to drink in the same tavern as my dad. The other was Roger Johnson. He used to have a draper's shop on Clare Market till he sold up and vanished a few years ago. People said he'd gone to sea, but if he did, he came back.'

I clear my throat. 'If I may, your worship, I have had dealings with both of these men, and I am

convinced that Blake here speaks the truth. Bill Field used to be a drayman till he got enough money to buy his dray. Now he has a dozen coaches and half a dozen stables between here and Harwich. Roger Johnson owns a ship that sails between Margate and Den Helder, and I have long suspected that he has been using it to export stolen goods in bulk. He has a barge on the Thames that I have raided on several occasions, always finding nothing. Between Field and Johnson, this gang has the ability to ferry goods from London to Holland by the ton.'

'And the other one?'

'Two,' I say. 'Don't forget about the man from the country. These are other links in the chain,' I say. 'We know how they move their haul, and how they sell it, but we don't know how they steal.'

'You've got to get them quick,' says Blueskin, giving a convincing show of concern, 'or they'll burn the shop down with my mam in it.'

'When did the man from the country say he would return for the cloth?'

'He didn't. He never says when he's coming. Just turns up. Sometimes on the weekend, sometimes in the week, sometimes in the morning, sometimes last thing at night.'

Parry leans forward on his chair, elbows on his knees, fingers steepled. 'Very well. Mr Blake, I will accept your evidence. You will be tried, and if found guilty, you will be burned in the hand, but your neck is safe for now. I warn you, though, if I suspect any double dealing on your part, I will see that you hang, and I will make sure you do it slowly.'

Blueskin says nothing, wisely, but hangs his head, meekly accepting the weight of justice. He wasn't keen on the burning, but twenty guineas is balm enough for any brand.

'Take him to Newgate,' says Parry. Quilt looks to me.

'You take the coach. I'll walk.'

Blueskin gives the justice a final bow before Quilt leads him out into the hall and down the stair.

'A chance to rid the city of some real rogues,' says Parry, half to himself.

'It'll be a chance to rouse your constables, too,' I say. 'Issue warrants for Field and Johnson, and send your beadle out to assemble the constabulary. Have them meet at midnight at the Cap-in-Hand on Fleet Street and we'll go out in a posse. We'll get them while they're sleeping. With men like this, we need to catch them napping.'

'If they're not napping? After my walks with Jim I'm starting to believe that there is a class of rogue who never goes to bed.'

'If they're not there, we wait for them to return. Either way, we surprise them.'

'Two of them. What of the other two? Would it not be wiser to post a watcher at Blake's mother's shop and have them follow the man from the country the next time he shows himself? Then we would be able to scoop them all up together.'

'The man from the country won't be visiting Mrs Blake any time soon, if he's got half a brain. Blueskin's arrest is the talk of the town. Jim chased him through the Poultry Market and halfway down Cheapside, and the two fought hand to hand on the steps of St Pauls. There are already songs being sung about Blueskin the Bold and the Hell-and-Fury Runner. Besides which, Thomas Sheppard's trial is in every paper, so they'll know that there's no cloth to get.'

'You think they may flee?'

'They've no reason to. They don't know Blake followed their man. Jim found out where Field and Johnson live, and if we can take them tonight, they may be persuaded to give up their fellows before word of their arrest gets out. Our best chance to catch the whole gang is to pounce on Field and Johnson tonight and press them for the other two names.'

Parry nods, and is about to reply when there's a knock at the door.

'Come!' he calls, and his girl enters.

'There's a boy for Mr Wild, sir. He brought this.'

She hands me a letter, sealed with Jim's J. *Jon- I rounded up the Sheppard boy. Taking him to Newgate. Jim.*

'Good news?' asks Parry.

I hand him the letter. 'What we agreed still stands?'

### *Sheppard*

The sun's as good as down, and Jim and I cast long shadows ahead as we walk, him close behind me, holding a chain that's linked to my irons. I must have walked past the prison a thousand times, but I've never spent long looking at it before. A hulking great heap of brick, stone and black iron, Newgate towers over the courthouse that huddles in its lee.

'Halfpenny for a drink!' comes a feeble voice from one of the grates at the base of the wall, then, hearing their fellow pipe up, the rest all start in with 'Halfpenny for bread!' and 'Farthing for a bit of ale!'

Jim roots around in his pocket and comes up with a couple of halfpennies, which he throws into the grates. 'Thank you sir!' comes a voice, 'Blessings on your soul!' comes another. Inside the squat archway of the gatehouse, the gate itself hangs open. It's a beast of a thing, made of foot-thick iron-banded beams, with a solid iron wicket set in its right side. Nobody seems much concerned with it being open, though, and three keepers sit happily in the yard beyond, playing dominoes in the shade



while prisoners mill about, some in irons, some free.

One keeper sits at a desk just inside the gate, his halberd leaning against the outside of the empty sentry-box behind him. He scratches in a ledger with a stub of pencil, noting down the words of a ruddy-necked man in a peaked hat who stands in front of him, holding a boy of about fourteen by a hank of his long hair.

'And what's his name?' asks the keeper.

'I don't know, do I? All I know is he was nicking cheese.'

'What's your name?' the keeper asks the boy.

'Tell him to let go my hair and I'll tell you!'

'Go on,' says the keeper. 'We'll take him. Robbo!'

One of the domino players grumbles to his feet. 'Where's he going?' he asks wearily.

The keeper at the table looks up at the cheese-thief. 'You got money for your board, son?'

'He took it,' says the boy.

'I didn't,' says the ruddy man, the lie half-hearted, but left unchallenged.

'So no money. Stick him in the street cells Robbo. He can sing for his supper.'

Robbo takes the boy by the elbow, pushing him through the gate, one hand gripping the back of the boy's neck.

'Jimbo! The keeper rises from his table and he and Jim greet each other with a hearty handshake. 'Danny!' says Jim, 'How's tricks?'

'Not too bad, Jimbo, not too bad. Last cask of gin we made is selling like you would not believe. Word's got out. We're starting to get people come to visit who don't know anyone in here.'

'Coming just for the gin?'

'Just for the gin! We'll have to shut the prison down at this rate and make the place a tavern.'

'This is Jack,' says Jim. 'He's a good lad, and I want him looked after.'

'Danny,' says the tall keeper, giving me a slanting bow and holding out a hand. 'Pleased to make your quiantiance.'

'Danny's going to see you right while you're in here, eh Danny?'

'I will, Jack. Don't you worry.'

'He's not to pay a penny for anything, and you're going to put him in Jon's old room.'

'Right you are, James. The royal treatment.'

'Petey!' cries Danny.

'What?' calls back one of the keepers from the yard.

'Watch the counter. I'm going to take this one up myself. James.' He gives Jim's hand a final pump, then lays a hand on the small of my back. 'Come on, Jack. Let's get you settled in.'

'You tell Danny if there's anything you want, Jack. Food, drink, papers, it's all on us.'

I give him a nod as Danny gently pushes me into the yard. Four storeys of sooty stone rises around me on all sides, hundreds of narrow, barred windows like hundreds of beady eyes. 'You can walk round out here as much as you like,' he says. 'That's the women's side.' He points to the west. 'You can't go in but we've got rooms behind the tavern that the whores can use. Just ask at the bar, and they'll take you to the back. It's tuppence for quick, a shilling for an hour, half a crown for the whole night. Some good girls, too.' He points to the eastern wall. 'That's the masters' side. We keep the gents in there. Over there's the Press House, which is where you go if you've got enough to pay. You get serving girls, a cook, everything. I'd put you in there, but we've got a banker in right now. Funny bloke, killed his wife. She's supposed to have lied about how much money she had. She said she had a thousand guineas in a bank in Ireland. Anyway, all's well for five whole years, till he goes bankrupt and asks her to take out her money. She sends him away on a ship to get it, and when he gets to Dublin, they tell him they've never heard of her. When he gets back, she's cleaned out the house – everything – furniture, stuff from the kitchen, his clothes, his fucking horse and his dogs, the lot. Anyway, he gets himself back

on his feet, gets a loan from somewhere and soon he's back on top. Then he's walking down Edgworth and he sees his wife, out on the street in front of some brothel, tits half out, and he walks right over and knocks her to the ground and just keeps stamping on her. He didn't even run off when he got nabbed by the crowd, just kept screaming 'Bitch! Robbing bitch!' and kicking out with his bloody boot. And here's you.'

Danny opens a solid iron door and leads me into a cramped passageway with rough walls. It's so dark that I can barely see, but Danny takes me by the arm and leads the way till we come out into a low-ceilinged hall. A man in a ratty scratchwig and a faded blue jacket sits with his feet up on a stool in front of an unlit hearth. 'Alright, Danny,' he says, levering himself upright.

'Don't get up, Corky. This is one of Jim's. He's to have the works, and he's not to pay a penny. Here.' He fishes around in his pocket, draws out a shilling, and tosses it into Corky's lap.

'What room's he having?'

'Royal suite.'

'Where's my other sixpence, then?'

'Jim only gave me three shilling bits. I'll give it to you when I've got change.'

'I've got change. Come on.'

Danny throws another shilling at Corky, who makes a half-hearted show of checking his pockets. 'Don't look like I've got change after all,' he says. 'I'll give it to you later.'

Danny's face darkens, but he says nothing, just puts his hand on my back and pushes me toward an ancient, sagging wooden staircase.

'That's Corky. He's a cunt. Up here's the tavern. If you want a drink, ask me, and I'll get you one for free, otherwise they'll try and squeeze you for it. The gin's good, the brandy's bad, the ale won't kill you but it'll feel like it's trying to.'

'How bad's the brandy?'

'Horsepiss and vitriol. You a brandy man, then? I'm a brandy man myself, and I won't ever touch the stuff we make in here. I'll bring you some stuff from outside later on.'

'Really?'

'Of course! Jim says you're to be looked after.'

'How do you know Jim?'

Danny gives me an odd look. 'How do you think? He's Jim, isn't he? Everybody knows Jim.

Because you know Jim, and Jim speaks for you, you've got a good room up here. Best we have. I'll send a boy up to put new sheets on later.'

'New sheets?'

I've got Jim to thank for my job here, so when he says royal treatment, royal treatment's what you'll get.'

### *Wild*

I'd hoped for a day or two till Jack's trial, so as to have a chance to go over things with Bains, but Parry's keen to get the boy in the pillory, so he's pushed back the schedule, and now the afternoon's prosecutors are grumbling in the front row of the gallery.

Not that they'll have to wait long. With Bains and Blueskin deposing and Molly waiting to be called if I need her, the whole thing shouldn't take more than half an hour. Molly sits at the back of the gallery, sipping from a glass of wine she keeps topped up from the bottle on the bench beside her. Bains

sits with the carping prosecutors, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees to avoid their dagger-looks.

Cobb's on dock duty today, and is off in the anteroom with Jack and the other accused. Today my neighbours on the bailiff's bench are Younger and Ives, the two oldest and doziest of the court's men, who are sharing a bottle of port between them, their teeth already red from the morning's sessions. Parry is taking a rest after condemning two Irish sisters for stealing the wheels off a mercer's wagon, a waterman for pushing a gent into the Thames so as to steal his luggage, and sending a lad of sixteen to be burned for taking a horse from his master's stables.

The sisters had no hope, what with being caught rolling the wheels down the lane by the mercer himself, and the lad made no attempt to disguise his theft, letting his neighbours see him thundering along on horseback. It's the waterman who's the fool of the day, though. If he'd have waited till he was in the middle of the river before he pushed his man off the boat, he'd have likely got away, but he made his move before he was ten feet off the bank. The gent managed to swim back, hire two other men, who took an oar each, and caught up with the thief before he was a quarter of the way across. Even if he had got away, what would he have done? The gent would have been back with a constable, and he'd be sure to pick him out as the robber. The waterman didn't own his boat, but he had a guinea's deposit laid with the owner, and he'd have lost that, and his living besides. As it turned out, the chest was full of worthless old papers and books from an office the gent was clearing out. If he had got away, he'd have given up his living for a trunkful of trash. Hanging's only a little worse.

As I light my pipe from the candle in front of Ives, Bains pushes his way through the gallery and strides up to our bench. 'Mr Wild,' he says, 'It is good to see you. I'm spending so much time here I'm starting to wonder if I should become a bailiff. I received your letter this morning. Blueskin is taken, then?'

'He is.' I point to the door to the anteroom. 'In there.'

'And has he given you names?'

'Two so far, though I expect more warrants to be signed by the end of the day.'

'Good, good,' says Charlie, as Parry, accompanied by his footman, strides into the court and takes to his bench like a ship's captain at the rail. Charlie scurries back to his bench and takes his seat just as Jameson rises from his.

The clerk clears his throat, and, but for the grumbling of the prosecutors and some snores from the gallery, the court falls silent. 'Jack Sheppard of Wych Street is charged with the felonious theft of seventy yards of fine silk and forty yards of fustian from the house of Charles Bains. The prosecutor to read the charge.'

Bains turns to face the gallery, then looks along both jury benches in turn, looking faintly bemused. He speaks cautiously, as though afraid that he might be about to incriminate himself. 'My name is Charles Bains, and I am a draper. Last week I was robbed of just over a hundred guineas' worth of fine silk and fustian.' He pauses.

Parry waves a hand. 'Please, Mr Bains. If you could describe to us the night of the robbery.'

'Of course, of course. Well, I woke in the night. There was a sound from downstairs, you see. From the study. I left my bed, took up the poker from the grate, and as I was tiptoeing down the stairs, I heard more noises. Crashing, shuffling, you know. As I reached the foot of the stairs, I saw two figures bolt out of the study and down my cellar stairs. I gave chase, but they fled across my yard. I caught sight of one of them, '

'And did you discover how the robbers entered your house?'

'The cellar door was open. I had barred it myself the night before, but the bar was leaning against the wall.'

'Do you know how the bar was removed?'

Bains gives Parry a suspicious look. 'Must I say this all again?'

'You must. How do you believe the robbers came to enter your house?'

'At the last trial, the brother said it was done with string and hooks. Mr Wild says it was done with a copied key.'

'I see. And what do you believe?'

'I don't think it was young Jack. He struck me as a sober lad when he worked for me. I remember that on one day I left a bowl of figs standing on my desk. He was working on the shutters in the study that day, with the bowl sitting right there, but he never took a one.'

'Indeed,' says Parry. 'I have before me an affidavit from your former lodger, Miss Molly Herbert. Members of the jury, I will save your time and my clerk's and tell you that Miss Herbert deposes that last week a man knocked at Mr Bains' door to return a key he had apparently noticed left in the lock of the front door.'

Jack is holding his breath, his eyes cast slightly upward.

Parry glances in my direction, and gives me a nod. 'Let us now hear from the accused. Mr Sheppard. How did you come by the five guineas which were found beneath your bed?'

'I saved for it. A shilling a week for near two years. I'd keep a shilling back out of what my master gave me, and when I got twenty-one, I'd take them and swap them for a guinea piece.'

'How much did your master pay you?'

'Four shilling a week.'

'And what were you planning on doing with this money?'

'When I finished my paper, I was going to buy tools and hire a workshop.'

'I see. A dream of honest toil.'

'Now, Jameson. We have another witness?'

'We do, your worship. Bailiff, please bring Joseph Blake to the dock.'

Bradley gives Cobb a nod, and he ducks into the anteroom, returning with Blueskin, whose second scabs are dark and give him a thoroughly unwholesome look.

'I don't know him.'

'You have never seen him?'

Blueskin makes a show of inspecting Jack's face. Jack meets his eye, though he looks a little rattled. 'He might have been in my mam's shop for a drink once, I can't be sure. But I don't know the fellow.'

'But you know his brother, Tom Sheppard?'

'I do. I robbed that cloth with him.'

'You did?'

'Aye. I did.'

'And Jack Sheppard was not involved?'

'No. Just me and Tom. Like I said, I've never met the man.'

'Very well,' says Parry. 'Mr Blake, you will be tried for this robbery tomorrow. For now, Gentlemen,' he says, giving each bench of jurors a sweeping look, 'I would direct you to find Jack Sheppard not guilty. I took the testimony of the boy's brother, and I am convinced that he was chiefly concerned with a petty vendetta, and that young Jack was not the robber on this occasion. I have looked into his character, spoken with his master and his mother, and his godfather, and I have formed a picture of a hard-working young man with a healthy love of honest labour.'



Every juror watches Jack as he casts his eyes down and presses his lips together.

'Now,' says Parry. 'Mr Bains, you are dismissed. There remains the matter of Mr Sheppard's escape from the gaol at St Giles.'

Jack bobs up and down on the balls of his feet. He looks exhausted, at the end of his reserves.

'Mr Sheppard,' says the justice. 'Why, if you are as innocent as it seems, did you feel the need to evade justice?'

'I was scared,' says Jack. 'I thought I was going to hang.'

'If you were innocent, why would you be afraid?'

'Because Tom's a good liar. If he got you to believe him, what could I say? I tried telling the constable but he wouldn't listen.'

'My boy,' says Parry, though he can be scarcely ten years older than Jack. 'You must trust in the organs which govern you. Had you not fled, this case would have ended when Mr Blake gave his evidence. As it is, you have further crimes to answer.'

Parry continues. 'We have all been afraid at some point in our lives,' he says. 'And we have all felt the urge to flee and preserve ourselves. I am persuaded that fear of injustice is what motivated you to abscond from the gaol. However, you must answer for your rebelliousness. Tomorrow morning you will be taken to the pillory at St Giles, and there remain for two full days. Following this, you will spend the next two days repairing the damage you inflicted on the gaol. I am told that you are a skilled carpenter, but I myself will inspect the work, and if it does not meet my standards, I will have you whipped on the spot.'

The jurors, disappointed that they don't get to exercise their judgment, break into chatters, turning this way and that to swap observations with their neighbours. The prosecutor of the next case barges his way out of the gallery, takes Bains' empty chair and spreads his papers on the table. Jameson

appears troubled, and looks to Parry.

A single blow of the gavel silences the jurors and stills the gallery. 'Mr Harris,' says Parry to the new prosecutor, 'We are not ready for you yet. If you would rejoin the gallery please.' Harris looks about to argue, then thinks better of it and starts collecting up his papers. 'Thank you,' says Parry. 'Now, we come to the third charge. Mr Jameson, if you will. Bailiff.'

Cobb bows, then scuttles through the door to the justice's chambers.

Parry's eyes meet mine, and a gamester's coy smile flickers across his lips as the clerk stands. 'Jack Sheppard. It is charged that on the night of the twelfth of August you committed felonious theft, taking eight gilt candlesticks together worth forty guineas from the house of Mr William Kneebone.'

Cobb returns, leading a sunken-eyed cove in a fifty-guinea coat over to Bains' vacant seat.

'Mr William Kneebone,' says Jameson.

'Sir,' says Parry, 'If you would present the charge?'

'Of course.' Kneebone sticks his thumbs in his braces and clears his throat. 'On the night he was locked up for robbing Mr Bains, I was working in my study. I couldn't sleep, you see, because of the boys. I heard a sound from the dining room, so I went to investigate, and discovered Jack with an armful of candlesticks. I asked him what he was doing, and he said he was robbing me. I offered him five guineas if he would leave the house, but he held up my own purse and said he already had ten. I tried to stop him, to reason with the boy, but he laughed at me and made to barge past me out of the room. I placed myself in his path, and tried to hold him fast, but he only laughed, knocked me to the floor and stepped over me. By the time I'd recovered myself he was gone, along with a bolt of good woollen which I was going to have made into curtains.'

Kneebone looks to Parry, who gives him the smallest of nods.

'You are certain it was Jack Sheppard?'

'I am, your Lordship.'

'You know Sheppard well, then?'

'He has worked for me since I bought him out of the workhouse when he was ten. His mother is my housekeeper, and when I discovered that she had two children in the care of the parish I had no choice but to adopt them as my godchildren. I have fed them, clothed them, put them out to work- all I could to see them right.' Kneebone pauses to swig from a flask that's appeared in his hand.

In the dock, Jack's neck is flushed, and he grinds his teeth. Whether he's feeling guilty or rageful I can't tell. It's certainly possible that he robbed Kneebone before he came to the Boar, but by the looks passing between Kneebone and Parry, this could all be a contrivance.

'And this other brother?' asks Parry.

'He was always the wild one, a natural vagabond, and to tell the truth when I heard he'd turned robber, I wasn't the least surprised, and neither was his mother. I had always thought Jack to be made of better stuff. The boy had a knack for his trade, and he always appeared honest and obedient, always helpful, always kind. When word came that Jack had followed his brother's suit, his mother became inconsolable, as did I.'

'You mean when he was arrested?'

'Yes.'

'It must have been a shock to see him in your house.'

'It was.'

'But you claim that despite his innocence in the matter of Mr Bains' cloth, he robbed you, despite your manifold kindnesses?'

'I do.'

'Have you any other witnesses?'

'We do, your lordship. My housekeeper. Jack's mother.'

There's a ripple in the gallery as people make room for a frail woman of thirty-five, whose face is peachy with powder, but whose neck shows a gin-sop's grey pallor. She picks her way slowly across the room, her head bowed, afraid to catch any of the eyes that follow her.

'You may take Mr Jameson's chair,' says Parry, when she gets to the table. Jameson stands and offers her his seat. She sits and stares down at the scuffed wood of the clerk's table.

'Now,' says Parry, 'Mr Kneebone has deposed that your son robbed his house and subjected him to the greatest violence. Tell us, were you in the house that night?'

'I was.'

'And did you hear or see anything?'

'I was woken by the noise.'

Jack snorts and shakes his head. 'She's a drunk!' he shouts, 'You could kick her in the head and she wouldn't wake up.'

'Sergeant!' cries Parry with another whack of the gavel. Bradley yanks on Jack's chain and pushes his face down into the dock, keeping him pressed there with one big hand. Jack cries out, but May Sheppard keeps her eyes on the table. 'Now, you heard a noise. Did you get up?'

'I did, but it must have been after Mr William.'

'Where's the Mister come from?' comes Jack's muffled yelp. Miles presses him even harder into the dock.

'Another word,' says Parry, 'and you'll be getting fifty strokes of the lash. Now, Mrs Sheppard. When you got up, what did you find?'

'I was on the landing when I heard Mr William cry out, then I heard something in the yard, so I looked out of the window.'

'And what did you see?'

'I saw my son. In the back yard, with Mr William's curtain wool under his arm.'

'You are certain it was him?'

She nods. 'I saw his face. He looked back to see if he was being followed and I saw him.'

'Liar!' For the first time since she took the stand, she looks over at her son. 'Mr William's always looked out for us,' she says. 'Especially you. We'd be beggars if it weren't for him.'

Jack, face pressed into the wood of the dock, says nothing.

'Thank you, Mrs Sheppard,' says Parry. 'You may return to the gallery.'

'Well, then. Gentlemen of the jury. We have the evidence of the victim, and the boy's own mother. If you will permit me to once again direct you to a judgment, let us declare the boy guilty and move on to Mr Harris. What say you all? Raise hands for guilty.'

Every one of the jurors begins to raise an arm.

Jack raises his head. 'Don't I get to speak?'

Every arm stops.

'Very well. What have you to say?' Parry steeples his fingers.

I try to catch Jack's eye so I can signal caution, but he doesn't know me from Adam, and just looks straight past me to Kneebone. 'Mam's not your housekeeper,' he says, nostrils flared, eyes fierce, as though Parry, the jury and the gallery weren't here and him and Kneebone were alone in the world. 'You give her drink and you fuck her and-'

'Sergeant!' Parry slams the gavel and Bradley pulls on Jack's chain, knocking the breath from

him. The gallery bursts into laughter, and the hacks all set to scribbling. It takes half a dozen blows from the gavel before calm is restored.

'Mr Sheppard,' says Parry. 'If you have nothing to say in your defence, your testimony is at an end.'

Jack wrenches a few inches of chain back off Bradley and straightens up. 'There wasn't a theft. He's made it up!'

'And why would he want to invent such a charge?'

'Because my mam fucks better when she's not worried about her sons, is my guess.'

Cheers go up from the gallery, and half the jury falls into fits of laughter.

'That's not true!' Kneebone bangs the desk again, sending Jameson scrambling to stop the toppling of his inkpot. 'Matthew?' He looks to Parry, who waves him off, and glances surreptitiously at the jury.

'That is enough, Mr Sheppard,' says Parry. 'Sergeant, keep him quiet.'

Bradley wrenches Jack's arm halfway up his back and slams his face down into the dock. Held firm, Jack seethes, shoulders heaving, his whole face flushed.

'Gentlemen,' says Parry, looking from one jury bench to the other. 'Let us forget this appendix and resume the passing of judgment. Who finds Jack Sheppard guilty, raise your hand.'

The jurors, still recovering from the excitement of Kneebone's embarrassment, settle themselves, then every one raises his hand.

Parry's gavel strikes the bench three times.

'Mr Sheppard. This is your last chance to show repentance before I sentence you. Will you admit your guilt, or persist in your lie? Let him up, Sergeant. He may answer.'

Bradley lets go of Jack's arm, and he straightens up. He looks at the justice, then at the jury, then at Kneebone. 'You bought my mam and you think that means you bought me and Tom too. Tell them about Tom,' Jack gestures at the jury. 'Tell them that you bought him like you buy an ox, so he could work on your bastard plantation for the rest of his life!'

Kneebone slams his fists down on Jameson's desk. 'Tell them what? That I spoke with the justice and saved your brother from the noose? That I've paid for a cabin on the way over so he won't have to sleep in the hold with the common beggars? He'll work hard, and he'll learn. In a few years maybe he'll have his own piece of Virginian land and a chance to do things the right way.' He shakes his head. 'You must listen to me, Jack. Your mother, who is my housekeeper and nothing more, is dear to me.' There are laughs from the gallery, and a snort from a juror, but Kneebone presses on. 'You are dear to me. That's why I bought you out of the workhouse, clothed you and found you a trade.' He looks up at Parry, who gives him a nod. 'I promise that if the court sees fit to have you transported, I'll do what I did for Tom, pay for your cabin and give you a new start on the other side.' He straightens up, returns his thumbs to his braces, and addresses himself to Parry.

'You will stand for his good behaviour if he is transported?' asks the justice. Kneebone looks confused for a moment, then comes to himself.

'Your Lordship. If you are willing to be lenient and limit your sentence to transportation, I will pay the treasury twice the usual rate of a convict worker, and personally vouch for-'

'Hang me!' cries Jack. 'I'll die before I work another minute for you, so unless you admit you made it all up, you're hanging me. How's mam going to feel about fucking the man who hanged her son?'

'I'm not- she's my housekeeper. You can start again in Virginia.'

'Hang me or let me free.'

'Mr Sheppard,' says Parry, looking at me rather than Jack. 'If this is all the remorse you can muster, I will be forced to do as you ask. Transportation's for those who repent, not those who glory in their evils.'

'I can't repent for what I never fucking did!'

'Mr Sheppard. You may have no desire to honour your mother, but for the sake of myself and the members of the jury, please refrain from such obscenity. Sergeant, take him to the condemned hold. He will hang on Sunday.'

The gavel falls one final time.

'Not seen you beaten before,' says Ives the bailiff, nudging me in the ribs.

'Not beaten,' I say. 'Cheated.'

### *Sheppard*

The sergeant in the dented breastplate pushes me down the passage and back out into Newgate Yard.

'You coming easy, or do I have to drag you?' asks the sergeant.

'I'll come,' I say, my tongue feeling slow and thick. He holds my chain loosely, like I'm a dog on market day, and leads the way over to the three iron doors in the north corner of the yard. He reaches up under his breastplate and pulls out a ring of keys.

'In,' he says, opening the door and shoving me in. 'Back from the door.' I take a few steps back, and the door slams shut with a clang.

The cell's filthy, stinking of piss and old sprats, with an ancient, squashed bale of hay for a bed



in one corner, and a bucket that's already half full of piss by the door.

There's a window looking back out into the yard, at chest height, barely ten inches high and a foot wide, with a thick iron bar running down the middle. I run my fingernail around the base of the bar. It's set into a hole in the sillstone, not fixed to a metal frame and bolted to the stone like the windows that face the street.

I try to shake some life into the bale of hay, but it's so old and brittle that it falls to powder in my hands, so I leave it be, and sit down.

As I'm unlacing my boot, a key rattles its way into the lock, and the door swings open. 'Sorry, Jack,' says Danny. 'The justice says we've to put you in here. If it was up to me, I'd let you stay in the royal suite, and tell him what he wants to hear, but he said he's coming to talk to you himself, and he didn't say when. Besides, he's started giving some of the lads extra to give him reports of who's in here, where they stay, what they do, all sorts. I got you this, though.'

He hands me a bottle of brandy. 'I'll bring some beef later, too, but I best go.'

'I don't feel like beef,' I say. 'Is there any chance you could get me some fried potatoes?'

'Right you are,' says Danny.

'I like them with vinegar. Lots of vinegar. Bring me a bottle down?'

'I'll see what I can manage,' says Danny. 'There's some pickling vinegar up in the back of the tavern, but I'll try to get something a bit weaker.'

'Pickling vinegar's fine with me. I'd rather have it than better stuff. I like a taste that smacks you about a bit. Besides, I'm only going to be alive for a few days. May as well give my tongue a good send-off.'

'Alright, Jack. I'll bring some down. You need anything else?'

'Just the brandy,' I say.

'One thing I can do, he says, taking a key from his pocket. 'No need for those.' He nods at my

irons. I hold up my wrists and he unlocks each one and lifts them off me. 'I can say I needed them. We're always running short.'

When he shuts the door, the cell's plunged into near darkness. I leave the bottle where it is, and go back to picking at the sole of my boot.

### *Wild*

'He's here, but he's got company,' says Parry's footman. 'Wait while I see what he says.' He bows and retreats inside, leaving the door hanging open. According to Quilt, the man's name is Baxter, and he came with his master from the country. He may even have been one of the boys whipped by Parry's father.

'He says to come in,' says Baxter.

'Ever been scrumping?' I ask.

Baxter cracks a smile, but quickly crushes it and resumes the proper footman's blankness. 'In the parlour,' he says. 'This way.'

William Kneebone sits in the embroidered chair, while Parry stands by the mantel. Both hold tumblers brimming with brandy.

'Jonathan!' says the justice. 'Pour yourself a glass. We are drinking to young Jack.'

'To what about young Jack?'

'To his health, of course. Both Sheppard brothers will sail at midnight next Wednesday.'

'You sentenced him to hang.'

'I'll commute it once the fear of the noose has done its job. He'll be penitent soon enough.'

I step over to the drink-table and pour brandy into one of Parry's gold-rimmed tumblers. 'To his health, then.'

Kneebone and Parry raise their glasses and drink, Parry taking a hearty slug, Kneebone draining his glass entirely.

'If you would, my lords,' says Kneebone. 'I must be getting home.'

I can imagine he must. Mrs Sheppard looked half a wreck when she came in, and the whole way to ruin when she walked out. Kneebone will have some consoling and convincing to do, no doubt.

'I have heard from the constables,' says Parry.

'Have they answered the call to arms?'

'The beadle tells me that though there was griping, they will heed. I have six men, including myself.'

'Good. I've had a couple of boys out watching Field and Johnson's houses all day, and Field has a fellow staying with him. The boy heard him talking to a sausage-seller, and this man has a country speech.'

'Oho!'

'Oho indeed. Now, since you have six men and I have three – four including myself – I'd say that you and your constables should take Field and the countryman, and I'll go for Johnson.'

'At the stroke of midnight?'

'At the stroke. You'll find the house down on Water Lane, opposite the Bull and Bee. My boy will meet you there and show you. He'll know if Field's at home. If he is, storm the place, if not, break

in through a side window and lay an ambush.'

'You'll do the same for Johnson?'

'Oh, yes. Though he may sleep on his ship. I have a boy watching there too.'

'Everything appears to be sewn up tight. Is there anything else?'

'One more thing.'

Parry smiles genially. 'Yes?'

'Did the boy rob Kneebone?' I ask.

'Of course not,' says the justice, and drains the rest of his tumbler.

### *Sheppard*

The plate of potatoes sits untouched next to the piss-bucket, but the bottle of pickling vinegar's already a third gone. Whoever laid the stones here was mixing the mortar as they went. Working that way's quick, but it leaves unslaked lumps of lime in the mix, smooth white lumps that stay white while the better mix soaks up the dirt. When the pickling vinegar touches the mortar, it fizzes up and starts to nibble at it, but when it touches one of the lumps, it eats them whole, leaving the mortar like holey cheese. I've only used a third of the jar, but the vinegar's working its magic, and the mortar around the stone that holds the window-bars is gets mushier with every dribble that soaks into it.

The tack's not quite as right for the job as the vinegar. It's barely half an inch long, and its flat head is cutting into my fingers, but still, I'm making progress. I'll only need to take out one bar to get

out, and all I need to do that is get this stone loose, then I can use its weight to work the bar free.

I'm surprised nobody else has thought to try vinegar, but even more surprised nobody's thought to pry a tack from the sole of their boot and cut their way out. Even without the vinegar, any mason worth his salt would be out of here in half a day. Most people must only see the stone, not the mortar between.

A shadow passes across the window, and I shrink back from my work. The lock groans, and in comes Danny.

'Teatime's in an hour, but in the meantime, James has sent you a little present. May I present, the lovely Roxana.'

'Hello, Jack,' says Bess. She's wearing a green silk gown with a matching green wig. Lace bursts out at her chest and sleeves, but despite the finery, she's still Bess.

'Hello, Roxy.'

Danny catches the look that passes between us. 'Oho, sorry! I thought you were a whore, love. You two sweethearts?'

'No,' I say. 'She's a whore.'

'I'm a sweet whore,' says Bess, with a smile that makes me furious.

'I can see that,' says Danny. 'I'll leave you to it. Jim sent a girl for me, too. She's up in the royal suite now, waiting for me. Anyway, the justice is coming to see you himself in an hour, so I'll be back in three bells.'

Danny locks the door, then bangs on it three times.

'I brought you this,' says Bess. She reaches into her apron and draws out an envelope. She hands it over and I tear it open. Inside is a key.

'It's for this cell,' she says.

'Where did you get it?'

'He said his name was Bolton, and he said to tell you to go to the Boar. He paid for a carriage. It's outside the gate now, but you'll have to wear these.'

She reaches into her petticoats again, pulls out a bundle and shoves it at me. 'They're mine. Try not to burst the stitching.'

Inside the bundle is a single white petticoat, a yellow silk gown, and a dyed pink sheepswool wig.

'Put it on,' says Bess. 'Come on. You can leave your breeches on, but get that shirt off.'

She lunges at my shirt, unlacing it in a flash. 'Stop,' I say. 'I'll do it.'

'I do feel rough about it, you know,' says Bess as I climb into the petticoat. 'That cloth. I was going to pay you back once I'd got settled and had money coming in.'

'I'd have lent it to you if you'd have asked.'

'No you wouldn't. You'd like to think that, but you wouldn't.'

'Maybe not. Still.'

'I know. But you try living with Sally From-the-Seashore and rolling around with Gregggy and Scaly Balls. You wouldn't let a chance like that pass you by.'

'Do the back,' I say, turning round so that Bess can tighten the laces.

'I really am sorry,' says Bess, planting a kiss at the nape of my neck. 'If it weren't for Sally and everything, I really would be sweet on you. When you're done at the Boar, come and see me. I'm on the east side of the piazza. The blue door with the sunflower painted on it.'

'I'm not going to the Boar.'

Bess pushes me away, nearly sending me sprawling.

'But they got you out!'

'They got me condemned. I could have got out on my own. Look.'

I point to the window. Bess walks over, runs a finger down the trench I've made in the mortar,

then grasps the stone with both hands and heaves with all her might. 'You're right. I'm sorry. If I'd been a quarter of an hour later getting here, you'd be long gone.'

'A few hours, maybe.' I fix the wig on my head. 'How do I look?'

'I wouldn't pay more than a farthing for a night with you, but you'll do. Come on.'

She presses her face up against the grille in the door. 'Quick. While they're all at dominoes.'

She holds out a hand, I press the key into it, then she shoves it in the lock. She slowly pushes the door open. 'Come,' she says, and I follow her outside, closing the door gently so as not to draw attention. She leaves the key in the door, and I go to take it out, but she grabs my wrist. 'Bolton said to leave it. Come on.' The keepers are sitting playing dominoes on the far side of the yard, and don't seem to notice us. There are lamps all round the yard, but the one in the corner by my door has either been snuffed or left unlit.

We skirt the yard, arms linked. 'Walk like a woman,' says Bess. 'Shorter steps. And bow your head, and stoop your shoulders too. It'll hide how flat your chest is. This way.'

She half drags me to the gatehouse, where we find the main gate closed but the wicket hanging open. At the table, the keeper called Petey is dipping his little finger in the inkwell and letting drops fall on a blank piece of paper.

'That was quick,' says Petey. 'Where's Danny?'

'She hit him like a ton of bricks,' says Bess, giving me a nudge. 'Poor thing's on his back. I wouldn't count on seeing him again tonight.'

*Wild*

The coach sways from side to side, the compartment heavy with pipesmoke. 'I promised him he'd get out,' says Jim, playing with the corner of the black hat in his lap. 'You made a liar of me.'

'I know. But you're not the liar. You may have made the promise, but it was mine to keep.'

'You lie all the time,' says Quilt. 'We all do. There's no sense in feeling bad for the boy.'

'Lying to liars is different. He's a good lad all round,' says Jim. 'He was straight with me from the off.'

'When you see him, say sorry, then,' says Quilt. 'We've made it right, besides. It's not everyone we waste a key on.'

'I know,' says Jim. 'I just like to know when I'm lying.'

'It's Parry,' I say. 'He's too eager by half. Have we anything we can use?'

Quilt shakes his head. 'He's a good little boy. He went out walking on his own last night, all down Drury Lane and along the Strand. Watched a dogfight, didn't bet. Walked up to the piazza and looked at all the girls but didn't fuck a one. Bought an orange, walked home to bed. Postboy brought him two letters today, one from his father about some ruin they own that he wants to sell, one from his wife saying his son's hair's started to curl. The man's dull.'

'There's got to be something,' says Jim. 'At his house. We should send someone to break in.'

'And if they're caught?' I say. 'No. For now, we live with him. Keep up the watch, make sure the postboy shows us everything he gets, and wait till he shows his belly. Every man has a secret.'

'Not this one,' says Quilt.

The coach lurches to a halt, and Rob bangs on the roof. 'Right,' I say. Keep your kerchiefs up, don't say a word.

We all pull our black scarves over our faces, put on our black hats, and I close the shutters on the lantern, leaving the cab in darkness.

Outside in the lane, all is quiet. The skinny little houses up here are all built right up against



each other, tottering so much that the upper floor of one is directly above next door's ground floor. I look over at Rob to make sure he's got his scarf up, and he gives me a salute from the driver's seat. Without needing to be told, Quilt sets off down the lane to the alley that leads around to the back of Johnson's house. While we wait, Jim unfurls the little velvet scroll which holds his lockpicks, and sets to work.

When Jim first turned up, I'd never have guessed he was one of the best lockpicks in town. Marlborough sent him to a master locksmith to learn so he could read his friends' letters. It's a pleasure watching Jim pick. He closes his eyes, presses his temple to the door and moves his pair of picks slowly and deliberately till he finds the bite.

'Here we are,' he whispers, as the lock turns over. Lifting the latch carefully, he pushes the door ever so slightly. It doesn't move.

'Bolt or bar?' I whisper.

'Bolt.' He points to a spot halfway up the door.

Off in the distance, Quilt whistles. Either he's picked the back door, or he's found a window to climb through. Whichever, it's time.

'Right,' says Jim. 'One, two-'

Jim lets out an answering whistle, and we both kick the door. If you're going to put a bolt on, it's best to put it high, that way it's harder to kick right through it. Johnson's bolt gives at the first kick, and me and Jim rush inside.

I whip the shutters up and the lamplight floods the hall. Jim leads the way up the stairs and bulls his way through the first door he sees. 'Not here,' he says, as I pass him and kick open the next.

Roger Johnson lies in bed, still not awake.

'Roger!' I cry, and he stirs, luxuriating in his silk sheets for a moment till he snaps to and his eyes turn wild.

'Get out!' he yells, leaping from the bed and making for a sword that hangs off the back of his dressing chair. Jim and Quilt are on him before his feet touch the floor, and in a heartbeat he's lying on the ground while Jim kneels on his chest and Quilt's brandishing his sword, waving its point in his face.

'I have here a warrant for your arrest,' I say, taking the warrant from my pocket.

'For what?' Johnson spits.

'Listen, Roger. It's midnight. Right now, Bill Field's being arrested by every constable in Farringdon. He'll be in Newgate by one. Do you want to join him?'

'This is my fucking chamber Jon!'

Jim raises a hand then cuffs him round the face, leaving a bloody smear along his jaw.

Roger touches his face and looks at the blood on his fingers. 'Take your fucking rings off if you're going to clout a man, Jim!'

'Do you want to go to Newgate, Roger?' I ask. 'Do you want to go to gaol, get tried for receiving, and then hang? Yes or no.'

Jim raises his hand. Roger shakes his head. 'No.'

'Good. Let him up, then.'

Quilt throws the sword on the bed and together he and Jim haul Johnson to his feet.

'If you don't want to hang, I'm not going to hang you, Roger. I'll tell you what I'm going to do, then we'll talk about what you're going to do. I'm going to walk out of here, go to the justice's house, and tell him that Roger Johnson was not at his home, and I don't know where he's gone. He's likely got word of our coming, taken his ship and fled.'

I straighten the brim of my hat. 'So, as for what you do next. There are two courses you can chart. One, you take ship as soon as I'm gone, and never come back to London. Fine with me. We'll keep your house. Maybe I'll live here. It's a good house, don't you think?'

'It's too near the river for me,' says Jim.

'Second course. You stay, you keep doing what you're doing, only instead of taking goods off Bill Field, you take them off us.'

'I don't want you to think that you've lost out by this. What were you making off Field?'

'I had three quarters, him one.'

'I'll be talking to Bill within the hour. Jim will be beating him.'

'We had halves.'

'Then halves it is. Pay for a shilling advertisement in *Mist's Weekly* a week before you sail, and the day before you go, we'll come load you up. Got it?'

'*Mist's Weekly*?'

'That's right. And Roger, if you talk to any one about us, to anybody that isn't us, all I have to do is tell the justice you've turned up, and you'll be in Newgate.'

### *Sheppard*

Kneebone's not got many tools in his shed, but he's got enough for me. A hammer, three nails, and a couple of strips of lead from when me and Wood did the flashings on the roof.

Leaving the hammer by the back door, I climb up on the rain butt and onto the flat roof of the kitchen, then up onto the main roof and over to the dormer window that looks out of Kneebone's chamber. The curtains are drawn. I take the one of the flashings and jam it between the sashes, good and tight so neither sash will budge, then climb back down into the yard.

I work the second strip of lead between my fingers, bending it back and forth until it's soft

enough for me to tear a small piece off. Jamming it into the keyhole, I use one of the nails to mash it upwards into the workings of the lock. Even if Kneebone manages to force the key into the hole, when he twists it all he'll be doing is gumming it up worse.

I walk over to the pantry window, set the hammer down on the sill and take off my jacket.

Glass tinkles onto the sill, and onto the stone floor inside. The jacket dampened the sound, but it's still louder than I'd like. I step back into the yard and look up at Kneebone's chamber, waiting for the curtain to twitch, but all is still.

I put my jacket back on to save me from the glass that's still in the frame and crawl into the pantry. The window's too small and too high for either Mam or Kneebone to squeeze themselves through, and is a tight fit for me, but with a bit of twisting and turning, I make it through. Kneebone's pantry is always well stocked, and tonight it doesn't disappoint. Bottles of brandy, wine, arack, Spanish water, everything you can imagine, all lined up and ready. I pull the cork from a bottle of brandy and take a long, slow draught.

Hammer in one hand, bottle in the other, I make through the kitchen and up the stairs. The study door is open, and when I poke my head round, the couch and chair are empty.

The desk is the thing, so I set down the hammer and bottle and fall to rifling it till I find the red tin where Kneebone keeps his cash money. The tin's heavy, and when I open it, I feel my heart leap. There's three fat purses and a stack of promise bills. I open the purses one by one. Guineas, crowns, and half-crowns, thirty of each, at the least. I set them on the desk and inspect the bills. Most are named for Kneebone, but a good few are made out to the bearer. One for a hundred guineas, another for eighty. I stuff the purses back in the tin, stick it under my arm and, hammer swinging at my side, mount the stair that leads to Kneebone's chamber.

I put my ear to the door, but I can't hear a stir. I hold one spike up, angled so that it'll pass

through the side of the door and into the doorframe, and swing the hammer. The clang of metal on metal rings in the narrow staircase, louder and louder with each blow.

There's a shout from inside, but I can't hear what's being shouted.

The door rattles as Mam or Kneebone tries to open it, but I keep going, pounding the spike through the door, through the frame, till the head is lost in the wood.

'Who's out there? What are you doing?' comes Kneebone's frantic cry as I hold up another nail lower down the door. I swing the hammer again.

There's a crash as Kneebone kicks a pane out of his window.

'Hallo!' he calls, 'Thieves! Help, thieves!'

'That's you, Jack, isn't it?' comes Mam's voice.

'It's me.'

'Let us out! What are you doing?'

'If I'm to be hanged for a robbery, I may as well be guilty of it,' I say, giving the nail a final whack so that its head disappears into the wood.

'Jack!' comes Kneebone's voice. 'Open this door and we can talk. You're risking your neck this way.'

I kneel and tap the last nail in at ankle height, knocking it right into the frame in three blows. Leaving the hammer behind and cradling the red tin to my chest, I make my way downstairs as Mam and Kneebone call my name like drowning sailors calling for the Lord.

Kneebone's front door key sits in a bowl on a table in the hall. I look up and down the street, but there's nobody about. I lock the door behind me and stuff the key in my pocket, then tear another piece off the strip of lead flashing and jam it into the keyhole.

'I see you, Jack Sheppard!' comes a voice from above and behind me, and I turn to see old Laney the cane chair maker hanging out of his window, his nightcap drooping off his head. 'Stop! Thief!' he cries. 'Stop! Thief!'

Laney disappears from his window and I set off at a run, making south towards the river. I hear footsteps behind me, and turn to see a tall, broad man in a nightshirt and a pair of black knee boots hurtling towards me down the lane.

'Stop! Thief!'

I run as fast as I can till I come to one of the steep, narrow alleys that leads down to Bread Street and on to the river. There are no parish lanterns down here, and I keep to the shadows. When I look round, I see the nightshirt glowing in the moonlight, the man standing in the middle of the street, not moving.

As I'm coming up on Nicholas' Church, I make to turn down the snicket that cuts through to Five Foot Lane, and run straight into a bubble of lamplight and laughter, as half a dozen men in black clerk's coats stagger their way home.

'Stop! Thief! That's Jack Sheppard! Stop him!' comes the voice of the man in the nightshirt from behind me.

'Is that for you?' asks one of the clerks. He means it as a joke, but even as he waits for me to answer, his face hardens. 'Jack Sheppard's the one broke out of Newgate this afternoon,' says one of his friends. 'Beadle said there's thirty quid for the man who gets him.'

'Stop him!' I look over my shoulder to see the man in the nightshirt standing in the mouth of the alley.

'Lay hold of him!' he cries. There's a moment of hush as the clerks all wait for each other to take the lead, then they all rush me at once in a mad tide of black wool and white cotton.

Better to battle one than half a dozen, so I turn and run headlong at the man in the nightshirt, who crouches, arms spread wide, bracing himself to catch me. He lunges when I get near, but at the last moment, I duck to the side and leave his arms whirling behind me.

The clerks are right behind me, and I hear the man in the nightshirt grunt as he's slammed into the alley wall by their berserk passing. 'Come on, boys!' cries one, 'On him!'

I head south, making for the river walk. If I can climb over the wall of one of the dockyards, there'll be plenty of places to hide myself till the storm passes, but the clerks are quick, and as I round the bend onto Thames Street I feel a hand brush my back as one gets close enough to grab at me.

'Nearly got him! Come on, faster!'

No time to hop over a wall, I keep heading east, towards the lights burning on the Fleet Dock, then swing to the north towards the cathedral. If I run through the market I may have a chance to lose them among the stalls.

There's a light burning up ahead outside the Ton Bag, and a score of people are standing about outside watching two men fight bareknuckle. 'Stop! Thief!' sounds from behind me, and a cry goes up as the Ton Bag folk leave off their fight and turn their attention to me.

A good half of them run straight at me, joining in the call of 'Stop! Thief!' and I've no choice but to turn east again and dash down the lane that runs through the houses to Addle Hill. I look over my shoulder to see that the clerks are no longer at the head of the chase, and the Ton Bag folk are swarming up behind me. One of the fighters is in the lead, stripped to the waist and dripping with sweat, his mouth hanging slack as he gulps down air.

I hear music up ahead. Addle Hill's not usually a rowdy place, but when I round the final corner I can see that it's lit up bright as noonday. Worse, there's a knot of men blocking the mouth of the alley. Holding the tin to my chest, I put my head down and make ready to bull into them, but when they see us coming, they bolt onto the Hill, and I fly out after them.

The Hill's thick with folk, all staggering and strolling and packed so tight that there's no room to run, but one of the men who bolted from the alley is shouldering his way through, leaving a wake of clear earth behind him. I plunge into the crowd after him, squeezing my way through the jostling midnight herd.

'Stop! Thief! It's Jack Sheppard!' comes the cry again, from only a few yards behind. 'There he is! The boy with the red tin!' There's a shudder in the crowd as the usual flow stops and turns into a whirlpool with me at the centre.

'This is him!' cries an old man in a full-bottomed wig ahead of me. 'There!'

It feels like a hundred hands all lay hold of me at once, and before I know what's happened I'm on the ground, the tin's wrenched from my grasp, and a heavy boot stamps down on my chest.

'Get him up!' comes a rasping voice, 'Someone get the constable!'

Around me, the cries and chatter rise like a wave about to crash, and I'm dragged by the leg to the side of the street, hauled to my feet, and pressed up against the wall beneath the lamp-pole. Faces leer at me, dozens of them. A fist comes from nowhere and clocks me in the side of the head, setting my ears ringing. 'Leave off him, Jem,' comes a woman's voice. 'He's been got!'

A thousand things are cried in reply:

'Stand back! Let's get a look at him!'

'Where's the robbed man?'

'Go for the constable!'

'I'm here already!'

The sweaty trunk and swelling face of one of the Ton Bag fighters swims up in front of me, and I feel myself go limp as the hands that hold me up let go. The fighter hoists me up over his shoulder like I'm a bag of flour. 'Make way!' he calls. 'Where's the constable? Give me sixpence and I'll carry him to the lock-up.' I try to squirm out from his thick, sweaty arm, and find myself beating on his back,



my fists bouncing off hard muscle.

The crowd presses round us, despite the fighter's cries of 'Make way!' and I feel other hands try to pull me away from him.

'I got him! The thirty guineas is mine!' comes a voice from somewhere.

Hands pull at my arms, trying to drag me away from the fighter, but he wheels round and shoves the grabber back into the crowd. 'I've got him, so it's my thirty, now leave off.'

The grabber doesn't leave off, and soon I'm the rope in a tug-o-war. 'Leave off, I said!' growls the fighter.

There's a crunch, and the grabber's hands fall away. 'Fifteen each and I'll help you get him to the gaol?' comes a voice. I crane my head round to see the other bareknuckler.

'Twenty for me, ten for you.'

'Done.'

\*

'Fuck's sake, Jack. Look at you.'

I open my eyes and sit up as straight as I can, which isn't very straight at all, thanks to how tight the fighters have tied me to the barrow. Danny stands at the wicket gate, arms folded, eyes wide.

'Here,' says the fighter who got me, handing Danny a piece of parchment. 'The beadle put this up at the tavern door. Thirty guineas for whoever brings him in.'

'That's right,' says Danny.

'Well, I'm bringing him in.'

'We are,' says the second fighter.

'Right, well the beadle's not here, and I don't have thirty guineas, but I can give you a paper and

you can get your reward in the morning.'

'I'm not leaving him till we get our thirty.'

'Fair enough, but you'll have to sleep over. We've got room. Sixpence for bed, and sixpence for board.'

'Take it out of the thirty,' says the fighter. 'And he's not going out of my sight till I get it.'

\*

Upstairs in the tavern, Danny and the two fighters sit around me at a table by the wall while Petey goes to the counter. The place is full to the rafters, and so thick with the stink of smoke and boozed breath it's as though some dragon had guzzled a barrel of brandy and then burped down the chimney.

Everyone's looking at us, and I hear my name whispered, muttered, spoken all around me.

'Here,' says Danny, tossing me a bit of rag. 'Clean your head. You look like your brains are dribbling out the side of your head. Now, gents. Since you're staying, we may as well make each other's acquaintance. I'm Danny, Jack you know, and the dozy one at the bar's Petey.'

'Gordon,' says the fighter who caught me.

'People call me Pug,' says his friend.

'Well, pleased to meet you, Pug and Gordon.'

The fighters' grumbled reply is lost as a spindly old man with a long, rusty beard swans up to our table. 'Is this Jackie Sheppard?'

'Piss off, Willy,' says Danny. 'He don't want to talk to you.'

'He might. Jackie, what do you say? We'll break out together on the morrow!'

'What did I say, Willy?' asks Danny. 'Now piss off before I have you shut in a barrel for the night.' Pug gives Willy a shove, and he slopes off back to the counter.

'You'll be getting a lot of that,' says Danny. 'Whole town's talking about you. Just wait till tomorrow morning, you'll see.'

Petey comes back with a jug of punch and a plate of bread and ham. Danny gives the fighters a serious look. 'This is on you boys,' he says, as Petey sloshes out three bumpers of brownish-pink punch. 'He's made you thirty quid, so the least you can do is buy him a drink.'

### *Wild*

In the justice's chambers, Tichborne sits with his wig in his lap, sharpening its parting with a silver comb, which he scrapes now and then over a block of lard. Once he's got the curl right, he dips his fingers into a pot of Cyprus powder that sits on the wall next to him and starts to work it into the wig, getting it good and grey.

'Always like to do it myself,' he says, setting the wig aside and clapping the powder off his hands. 'A man's wig is the man himself, I always think. Now, take a drink with me before we face the horde. Sit.'

I do as he says

'Gin has a bad reputation,' he continues, fishing around in the cabinet behind his desk. 'But it has its place. Arack's too savage, ale's too weak, brandy and wine send you to sleep, and rum and whisky are too foul to be tolerated. He takes a pair of shining pewter tumblers and pours a healthy measure into

each. 'Besides, it has a good taste, don't you think?'

'I'll drink it if it's in front of me.'

He smiles and takes a hefty gulp. His liver-spotted face looks like knotted wood, and he barely flinches from the bite of the gin.

'As I say, the problem with gin is the reputation. I can't have you in my court again.'

'Why? I've always had a bad reputation.'

'Not to Parry. It seems you have had quite an effect.'

'Parry's a fool.'

'But clever in the pursuit of his foolishness. The cleverest fool I've known. He spoke to me today of hiring men to patrol the city, and of organising a register of pawnbrokers. He says he has friends who can buy their way to the bench, and that with your help they can bring the whole city to account. People are listening to him. The Lord Mayor is listening to him.'

'I see.'

'I imagine there are things you could do.' He laughs and drains his tumbler in one draught.

'Such as?'

'What you did with me. Watch the man till he lapses, then confront him with proof of the lapse and bring him under your control.'

'The man's a blank,' I say. 'How can I corrupt justice without a corrupt justice?'

'Corrupt is hardly the word.'

'It is exactly the word, my Lord.'

## *Sheppard*

Danny wasn't lying. The whole town seems to have heard about me. All day they've been coming in, filing past my cage, the whole city allowed to come and claim their piece. I wish I could be alone in the condemned cell again.

They call this room the Stone Room. It's twenty foot square, walled in heavy block, chains and manacles hanging off hooks and rings set into the stone. A single window looks out over the yard and lets in a weak lemony light. My cage sits in the middle of the room, a box of gridded iron, and I sit in the middle of the cage, draped in chains. My wrists, neck and ankles are in fetters, all chained to a thick iron ring set into the stone floor.

All day people have crowded into the room, fought for spaces on the benches or even brought their own stools. They haven't just come to look, either. Merchants come to ask me about how to properly secure their warehouses, painters to sketch my face, girls to blow kisses at me and fall into blushing, squealing mush when I so much as look at them.

The writers are the worst. They ask me questions, and when I don't answer, they tell me stories about myself that aren't true, trying to get me to spill so they can drink it all up and piss it down on the page.

I tell the merchants that their warehouses will never be secure until I'm dead. I give the painters the scowls they came for. I catch the girls' blown kisses, and look them in the eye as I crush them in my fist.

To the writers I give lies, though they've all arrived with their own. They all ask about Bess.

There's a ballad going around about how we escaped the New Prison together. It's a good tale. We get locked up, fuck all night, I break open the bars and we climb out of the window, using our sheets as a rope. We kiss in celebration, but then we find we've climbed into the yard of the Bridewell next door, and all we've done is escape from one prison to a worse one. In the last verse, I scale the Bridewell gate with Bess clinging to my neck, while the inmates of both prisons sing us out. It's a good story. Better than the truth, so I tell them it's true.

Now the writers have had their fill and gone to turn my words to theirs, I'm left with the girls, the merchants and the preacher. He's been here every day, saying nothing mostly, just sitting on the ground near the door, his back against the wall, occasionally writing something down in a small notebook. Now he stands, and calls out, 'Brothers and sisters!' Some heads turn, but most carry on their chat. Undeterred, the preacher continues, his voice booming off the hard brick. 'If Christ were born, here today, in some barn behind Cheapside, what would become of him? Would his mother drown him in a butt of rain for fear of letting him suffer longer by starving? Would he sicken and die from the foulness that surrounds? Would he survive to manhood, and venture forth to seek out his disciples, only to find himself in the company of rogues, and would he not soon be so caked in their rough clay that he be lost to the light of the Lord?'

Nobody's listening, but he keeps on and on.

'We killed a carpenter once before, remember, who let himself die so that we might see our sin. This boy is no Christ, but he need not have been a devil! We made him so.' Looking mightily pleased with himself, he sits down again and clasps his hands in prayer.

On the bench in front of me sits a slim, dark woman in a tall French wig, next to a man in a porter's apron. The woman stares into her glass and fiddles with the posy in her lap as the fat man talks, though her eyes keep flicking up at me as if I'm a pie on a shelf and she's thinking of running off with

me. Farther along two bored, frowning men smoke pipes without speaking to each other, both staring at me as though I were about to burst into bloom.

'Teatime,' says Danny, shouldering his way through the crowd, using his elbows to shield the tray he carries. As Corky unlocks the cage door, the people crowd up behind him. This is the first I've seen of Danny since they brought me in. Petey, Corky, and a couple of other keepers have been taking turns watching me, changing over at the hour bell.

'Let me take his dinner in!' calls the girl in the French wig. Danny whistles sharp, as if to a dog. 'We'll have order, please, ladies and gents.' He looks French Wig right in the blue-shadowed eye. 'If you go in, Miss, you're not coming out, so unless you want to be a gaol-bird, I'd fly away now.'

Danny sets the tray down at my feet. 'Here we go,' he says. 'Salt beef and a boiled onion.' He reaches into his coat and pulls out a bottle. 'Dark ale. Don't worry, it's come from outside.' He pulls the cork with his teeth and sets it next to the tray. 'And look what else.' He reaches into his other pocket and draws out another, smaller bottle. He pulls the cork, and I feel my heart race as the vinegar fumes tickle my nose.

'Thanks, Danny.'

'That's all right, Jack. I know you like your vinegar.'

'I do like my vinegar.'

'Got one more surprise for you. Mate of yours locked up downstairs. Petey's bringing him up for a visit. I'll be back to have a drink with you later. Best go though, I'm supposed to be on the door.'

Danny pushes his way through the crowd, standing aside to let a girl in a black bonnet force her mountain of skirts through the doorway. Behind her trots a man in a wig so big it looks like someone's dumped a barrowload of wool on him.

Behind them is Petey. 'Alright, Jack,' he says. 'Got your mate here. Make room, everybody!'

Jack's got a friend coming!' He stands clear of the door, and Blueskin shuffles into the Stone Room, manacled and the ankle and wrist, his beard even wilder than last time I saw it. The girl in the bonnet looks him up and down, then whispers something to the gent sitting next to her.

'Hallo, Jack,' says Blueskin, squatting down in front of my cage. 'I heard you were back. Thought I'd come and see you.'

'Go right to hell, Joe. It's because of you I'm here.'

He laughs. 'How do you figure that? I've only met you twice. First time, you came into my room and dragged me through my own shop by the fucking dick. But even so, the second time I saved your life. Not my fault you threw it away again.'

'What do you want?'

'Just to ask you a question.'

'Ask, then.'

'Was it Jon Wild brought you in?'

I shake my head. 'Jim Sykes.'

'Same difference. Did he say they'd get you off with a burning?'

'Pillory and rebuilding the gaol I broke.'

Blueskin nods. 'But here you are.' He stands. 'That's me done, Petey. You can take me back down now.'

*Wild*



Tichborne waddles over to the bench, his wig gleaming and smooth. He takes his seat and inspects the plate of ham and figs that his footman's left for him.

On seeing the justice, Bradley makes for the prison gate.

Blueskin has an odd, cock-eyed look about him, and he beckons to me frantically as Younger chains him to the dock. He mouths, 'Please.'

I stand and walk over to the dock.

'What?'

He looks at Younger. 'It's about my mam. Here. He speaks in a whisper, and I lean in to hear. 'This is for me, and for Jack Sheppard.' He wrenches his wrists up, yanking the chain from Younger's grasp. I feel something pressing on my neck. When he draws his hand back, a gout of blood splashes across his face. I look down to see more blood cascading down my shirtfront. I open my mouth to speak, but when I try to draw a breath my throat seizes and I feel myself staggering back, my knees buckling, my head hitting stone.

'Get something round his neck!' Comes Bradley's voice, the clanking of his breastplate sounding like the booming of a faraway cannonade.

### *Sheppard*

Newgate pickle must be something sharp if this vinegar's anything to go by. With my legs crossed and my plate in my lap, nobody can see me dribble the vinegar onto the mortar around the metal ring that

holds my chain. The mortar mix is the same as the rest of the prison, a hot-mix done on the fly, with huge lumps of unslaked lime.

Rather than draw attention to myself by trying to scrape the mortar out, I let it soak in slowly, then when the fizzing's stopped, pour another trickle. It's soft enough now that I can move the ring from side to side. It's not set deep into the floor, and I reckon a good pull on the chain could pop it straight out.

In the corner, one of the girls has brought in a guitar, and she's plucking out a tune while one of the writers tries to make up a song about me getting taken by the hue and cry.

'Over the cobbles our Jack he ran, hot on his heels came half the town, but Jack was nimble and Jack was quick, and Jack-' he stumbles and stops, and falls to scribbling in his notebook.

'Poor show, Mawdsley,' says his friend the artist, without looking up from his hundredth drawing of me. In every one of the drawings I look cheerful, and my back's straight despite the chain. I don't feel cheerful, though, and my back's aching.

'Do you want to try?' asks the girl, still plucking.

She's silenced by a horn blast from out in the yard. Everyone looks at each other. Danny stirs from where he's dozing on the bench and walks over to the little slit window. 'Don't know what this is,' he says.

'What's happening?' asks the girl with the guitar.

'Everyone's running for the court. Horn's supposed to be for riots, though, and I can't.'

The writer's up like a shot, and makes for the door, nearly colliding with Petey, who stumbles into the room from the staircase.

'What's going on?'

'In the court. That Blueskin killed Jonathan Wild. Cut his throat. Bradley was in with those four who were to be tried this afternoon. He left them to go and help and they ran out into the court and out

the gate. Bradley and the bailiffs are off chasing them. He wants me to go down to the court and keep things peaceful.'

Danny looks over at me. 'What about our Jack?'

'What about him? Quick, the justice is down there waiting.'

'You run along then. I'll check his chains and be right behind you.'

Once Petey's gone, Danny walks over to the cage. 'Silver linings,' he says. 'It's not going to be my fault if you pick the lock on your way out.'

He takes the keyring from his belt and unlocks the cage door.

'That help?' he asks.

I nod.

He steps into the cage, kneels down next to me and unlocks the fetters round my ankles. 'Give me your hands.' He unlocks one of my wrists. 'Alright if I leave the other one on? It'll look better if you take it with you.'

I nod.

'Good,' he says. 'Best to stay out of the yard. Too many milling about. Best way out from here's to go down the passage till you come to a flight of stairs on your right. Go down there and you'll be in the stores. Look for the coal room. There's a chute in there that leads outside.'

'Got it.'

'Good.' He stands. 'Well then, I hope I never see you again.'

'Me too.' I hold out a hand and he grabs it with both of his. 'Thanks, Danny.'

'It's a pleasure. Just make sure you tell Jim I helped.'

'I will,' I say, though I hope I never see Jim again either.

Once Danny's gone, I walk over to the window and peer down at the yard. Scores of people swarm the gate that leads through to the prison while the keepers try to fend them off with their

halberds. I watch as Petey crosses the yard to fetch his own halberd from the gatehouse.

I do as Danny says, taking the stairs down to the storerooms. The air smells of malt and mould, and it looks like most of what's been stored has spoiled. Past a room that's choked with splintered barrels, broken furniture and rat-nibbled sacks, I find the coalroom.

There's no coal but dust and chips, but winter's a long way off. I lift the hatch that covers the chute.

At the workhouse, we all loved cleaning the chimney. We used to have races to the top. Me and Tom managed to pinch old Stichelton's pocketwatch, and we used to all time each other on it. We'd shimmy up, as fast as we could while everybody counted out the seconds from below. When you got to the top, you'd stick an arm up out of the chimney-pot, and when they saw your hand poking out from below, they'd stop the count.

I was always good at the chimney race, and I haven't lost my touch. Bracing myself with my legs, I rise through the chute towards the street till my head hits the wooden top hatch.

I push up on the hatch and peer out. The chute opens into the stableyard outside. There's a fine lacquered black coach-and-four parked up against the gate that leads back into the prison, but the driver's not in his seat or anywhere in sight. He must be sleeping in the cab.

I haul myself up into the yard and brush myself down. The yard opens right onto the street, but the iron hanging from my wrist marks me as a Newgate bird, so I hunt around the yard till I find an old sack, then wrap my fettered hand and bundle up the hanging iron.

Out on the road I keep my head down. There must have been a hundred people pass through the Stone Room since they put me in there, and I'm certain someone's going to call my name or cry 'Stop! Thief!' but it never comes, and soon I'm down on the river walk, lost among the crowds that mill about the docks.

\*

On the Strand I turn away from the river and cut through the snicket that leads up towards Wych Street. It's a risky thing, coming back here, but it's better than walking around in irons, so after peeking out onto the lane to make sure nobody I know is about, I dash over the road towards Wood's and round the back.

Wood always had a bee in his bonnet about robbers coming to steal his timber, so the yard's boxed in by high brick walls that he adds to any time there's a spare brick about. Every few months, Wood used to have me gather a bucketful of dogshit from the lane. It's got to be dogshit, he always said, because horseshit dries to powder and catshit brings more cats while dogshit keeps them away. I'd have to go out with a bucket and pick up fresh dogshit, then break half a dozen bottles into the bucket and mix it up with a stick, then cake the mix of jagged glass and mouldering shit along the top of the wall. It works a lot better than railings, mainly because you can't see it from below, so if you try and climb up the first you'll know of it is when your hands are cut to ribbons by the glass. Still, I always make sure to leave a gap in the corner of the yard furthest from the house, so I'm up and over in no time.

Keeping close to the house in case Pam's in the kitchen, I scoot over to the shed. The pillar from Bet's fireplace is still in the barrow, blocking the way to the workbench. I take hold of the barrow's handles and test its weight, feeling the grooves my fingers have worn into the handles. For five years I've pushed the barrow. East to Fleet Street and the river, west to the scrag end of Covent Garden, North to Holborn, south to the Strand. Hundreds of miles of pushing, all for nothing.

I set down the barrow and step over to the workbench. Wood's always been a mess, and even

though I've barely been gone three days the bench is a chaos of awls, saws, and planes, all caked in sawdust. Before I finished for the evening, I always set the bench straight, and I have to stop myself from moving the tools to one side and sweeping off the sawdust.

Instead I take up the skinny bradawl we use to drill holes for miniature hinge plates, and set to work digging around in the lock of the manacle attached to my arm.

The fetter is a chunk of metal as heavy as a two-pint pot of ale, roughly made, and the lock's a simple thing. I took note of the shape of the key when Danny let me free, so finding the soft spot is easy, and it's not long before the bolt yields and the iron splits in half.

I hang the fetters over one handle of the barrow, carefully so that the chain that links them doesn't rattle. I could take some of the tools, sell them to a tinker or a smith, but then I'll always be the thief to Wood, a thief worse than Tom.

I start putting the tools back into their places, the saws on the hooks screwed into the beam above the workbench, the awls in their wooden pot, stray nails in their bucket beneath. I take up the manacles, then sweep the sawdust off the bench with a stroke of my forearm.

Before I leave I lay the fetters on the bare top of the workbench, laid out like sausages on a butcher's cart.

\*

On Clare Market I stick to the edge of the street, keeping an eye out for familiar faces. The only one I see is the tailor, who's moved his wicker chair outside and is sitting in the sun, a paper in his lap and a cup of something steaming at his elbow.

'I've come for my suit,' I say.

'John!' he cries, 'Lucy! Fetch John!'

He rolls up his paper and brandishes it at me like a cudgel. Before he gets a chance to swipe at me, and before Lucy can bring John, I pull the black coat off the dummy's shoulders and stuff it under my arm.

In the churchyard round the corner, I strip off my carpenter's clothes and pull on the black velvet breeches. Lucy's right about the boots, but hopefully the velvet's enough of a dazzle that nobody'll think to look down.

Despite the boots, the black velvet world is very different from the roughspun one I've just stepped out of. Out on the street girls stare, drinking in the inky black, and men give me room.

I walk west towards St James, where my suit will feel at home.

### *Wild*

I feel myself getting stronger every day. My legs, jelly last week, are now able to get me from the bed to the window, and my hands only shake when I'm late with the laudanum.

Outside, on the Bailey, a snatch of song goes up, and I crane my neck to hear. The songs bring news of Jack Sheppard every day. Of him and his love escaping together from a cell at the New Prison, of him and Jim and Blueskin robbing a coach but leaving the ladies with their jewels or breaking into the Lord Mayor's house to give his daughter a rose.

I hear of myself, too, of how I hunted noble Jack, and how he fought against me. How I drew a

sword on him and how I cut off Mary's ear when she said he was pretty.

I hear nothing of Jim, nothing of Dez, only Mary and Quilt and Lizzie come by, but they come with a host of other old friends: bread, and meat, and wine, and laudanum.

I hold up my hand. It's not shaking yet, but still, best to stay on top of things. I lift the stopper from the laudanum bottle and put it to my lips, tilting it slowly so as not to let any drops fall to waste.

I feel it in my legs first, the sweet heaviness that drives out the pain and drives in the strength. I sit up, swing my legs over the side of the bed, and wait for it to reach my heart.

As I'm summoning the will to stand, the Ordinary waddles up to the cage, looking as usual like an overstrung pork joint. Fat and folded skin bulges from either end of his tight-laced brown day-coat, the constriction at the neck made worse by a complicated neckerchief that forces his chin up into the air. He draws up a chair and sits down carefully to avoid the rupturing of seams. He's not even that tubby. If he dressed to his shape instead of trussing himself up like a ham he'd cut the comforting, dependable figure a man needs to lever souls out of evil and into the light. As it is, the dishonesty of his dress puts the smell of rat into the air.

He says something, but I can't make it out. Since the slashing, some kind of rot's got in at my neck and made it up to my ears. These last weeks I've barely heard a thing but the sound of my brains pulsing in my skull.

'You'll have to come closer,' I say. 'My hearing is getting worse.'

He shifts his chair closer and cups his hands round his mouth.

'I come to ask you one last time, do you repent?'

'What will happen if I repent?'

'You shall know the kingdom of heaven!'

'Do you know it?'



'What?'

'The kingdom of heaven. Have you spoken with the angels? Have you personally confirmed that repentance guarantees admission?'

'The scripture is clear. Repentance restores God's favour!'

'So I go to heaven.'

'If your repentance is sincere.'

'It won't be.'

'Very well.' He rises from his chair.

As he walks to the door I call after him. 'I'll tell you what repentance is. It's getting someone to agree with your story. If Parry thinks that I'll go along with his little tale, then it'll take more than the promise of a dance with the angels!'

The Ordinary says nothing, just waits for Baxter to open the door. Once he's locked us safely up again, he goes back to his book and I lie back down and close my eyes again.

\*

It's pitch black when I wake. My whole body feels hollow, as though someone's crept in and sucked out my marrow while I've been sleeping. I reach down and find the laudanum next to the leg of the bed, and tip a little into my mouth.

The bottle is nearly full, which means Mary was here this morning, but I can't recall her coming. I remember Katie being here with the Lyon girl, and I remember Mary telling me that they're

running the Southwark house together, but I can't tell if that was today or last week.

The last chance, is what the Ordinary says. That means that I must do it tonight. Lifting my head up a little, I swallow as much of the laudanum as I can before the bitterness is too much.

It's a fine thing, the old whiff, the drop that drops you. Laudanum gives you strength when you are weak, puts you to sleep when you can't do it yourself, and, best of all, it lets you cheat the hangman.

\*

Hands all over me, in my armpits, at my ankles.

\*

My eyes are open, but the world is smeared and too bright. I try to sit up. 'Easy, Jon,' comes a voice, right next to my ear, though I can't tell who it is, or even whether it's man or woman or angel or demon.

Soft, cool fingers stroke my forehead. Demons aren't known for the softness of their fingers or the tenderness of their care. I try to speak, but my breath catches and I fall to coughing, my body doubling up. I try to put my hand to my mouth, but my arm doesn't make it all the way. Chained, I realise. 'Where?' I manage to say.

'On the Tyburn cart,' comes the voice. 'It'll be over soon.'

The coughing subsides, and I close my eyes against the brightness, letting the cool breeze play over my face. I'm outdoors. I knew a blind man once who said he could navigate the city by smell, and I always thought he was making fun, but it's not so hard. We're passing the Fleet dock now, the wind

carrying a maritime funk of pitch, tar, sweat and tallow.

Soon the smells of the dock give way to the smell of sawdust from the workshops round the Wych. This was Sheppard's patch. When his cart passed, I wonder how it was. The songs would have been sung, of his escapes, of him and Bess kidnapping a parson and having him marry them, and his friends would have stopped the cart to feed him brandy, I hope.

I heard the landlord at the Tree bought Jack's irons, and his velvet coat, and has them hung behind his bar. His breeches went to one of the cryers at the hanging ground, who cut them into strips and sold them to the girls so that they might rub them on their faces and think of Jack.

There's no word of Jim, but for the odd song where he runs with Sheppard. I recall Mary telling me that Quilt wounded the beadle when they came for him. He'll be back west at Bath, no doubt, with his brothers, and Jim may have gone with him. For his own good, I hope neither ever come back to town.

I think of Katie, at the trial, looking at her feet while she told them of all the times I'd put her on to robberies, and all the times she'd seen me rob myself. She came often in the early days, and cried, and called me Uncle.

There was another girl at the trial, I think, but the memory is twisted somehow. Sometimes she is in the dock, sometimes she sits at the foot of my bed, and sometimes she holds out a pair of shoes and says, 'A gift, for you, for all you've done,' her voice lilting. I recall her sitting at my bedside and singing a pretty Irish song, but where she came from and who she is I can't tell.

The song is all I hear now, the sweet voice singing of a marriage on a hill.

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The cart lurches to a halt.

Through the blur I see a dark shape ahead, moving like the skin on top of a bubbling stew. A roughness is at my neck, and I'm up on my feet. This is the moment, then.

A dull roar fills my ears, and my body lurches as vomit rises in my throat. Hands lift me by the armpits, and I feel the roughness moving and tightening.

The hands fall away, the cart moves beneath me, and out of the world I swing. Laudanum softens the strangle as the blur darkens, the roar subsides, I feel a wrenching in my hips as numb legs kick at empty air.