

BOOK ONE OF A SEA OF SWANS:

JONATHAN'S SEED

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Nobody but me remembers Will Micklenwood and Margaret Withering anymore, but that's because for me they weren't just another name on a list: they were Papa Will and Mama Meg – my only family for twenty-five years. And no matter how the judges ruled later on, they're the reason I was born English and will die Virginian. That makes their tale is worth the telling, down and down the years, since you can't know me if you don't know them.

Now, Papa Will always said it began on one of the most miserable January afternoons London had ever seen, so that's where I'll start. It was the winter of 1620; and this is their story -- and the beginning of mine....

-- Elizabeth G.

Part I: England, 1619-1620

***By the Lord Mayor
to all aldermen
10 January***

These are to ... Charge & Command that...all Constables within your ward...forthwith...apprehend all such vagrant Children both Boyes and Girls as they shall finde in the streets and in the marketts or wandring in the night to bee apprehended by the watch and...to comitt them to Bridewell there to remaine untill further order...

* * * * *

[Give charge to] the Deputy and Churchwardens of every parish to...inquire of them that are overcharged and burthened with poore children, if they will have any of their Children either boyes or girles of the age of twelve yeares and upwardes and how many sent to Virginia.... And if such poore persons shall denie or refuse to send any of their Children...that then you take such order that they receive noe further releife from the parische wherein they inhabite.

-- 31 Journal of the Common Council, folios 125v, 126r

1. Dolittle Lane

"*Griffin Beadle! George Piser! Mary Nicholls!*" The constable bellowed the names down the narrow London alley. He dangled the scroll to cover the laced seams of his doublet that opened a half-inch across his belly at each deep breath,

and paused between each name. He looked up to glare at the crowd before squinting again at his list.

Perched high above, at an open garret window, Will Micklewood was enjoying the scene. He was a wiry lad, fourteen or so; and he'd hoisted himself onto the sill like a young tomcat mounting a fence. While the constable ploughed on, Will looked at the faces that were appearing at the other windows alongside or below him, or across the lane. Some were hard; some curious; but all were tired at the end of this day. Will nodded at one or two and waved to sweet Maggie Withering, who was looking up at him from across the way. She smiled at him as she always did; but Maggie smiled at near everyone, he told himself. She tucked a stray blond wisp underneath a red headband and smiled again. Will grinned, then lowered his eyes: Maggie smiled at near everyone, he repeated.

Down in the alley, fat old Constable Tewman plunged doggedly through his list, and raised his voice to be heard over the murmurs beginning to rise from the crowd.

"Tabitha Austyn! Thomas Riggle!"

The names echoed down the alley and bounced from lintel to post beneath the overhanging gables that brought an early twilight to the mean, narrow cul-de-sac that opened off the mean, narrow lane that bore the unpromising name of Dolittle Lane. The inhabitants there did their best to live down to the name, doing as little as needed to survive from one day to the next -- at least most days. Even so small a thing took all they had, and when they prayed each morning for their daily bread, it was as heartfelt and earnest as prayer can be. Each of their days was much like the others, except perchance another waif wandered in from the countryside: another child without a name from some town that no one knew. At this fag end of a cold January day, they eyed the officer with one part

of exhaustion, two of contempt – but mostly with just hope for a show.

"Tobias Destiny! James Feats!"

A little gasp came from somewhere: surprise perhaps, or recognition. Constable Tewman officer looked up sharply and squinted around him but saw only a growing crowd of silent, hostile faces. He was no fool; he too knew how to survive, and could do his duty very nicely in the wider space, before the Lane plunged into the twisting alley; there was no call to go any further. Still, as he read through the names, more men and a not a few women were emerging from the unlit tenements and joining the back of the crowd. Abruptly -- whether a jokester had given a deliberate shove or an old crone had slipped on the stone -- the whole murmuring mass muddled forward like a troubled herd: one step; then two.

Tewman stood his ground, but his voice took a sharper edge. *"Margaret Withering! Lodowick Middleton! William Micklewood!"* he shouted.

"Will ain't here!" called a pox-faced woman in front -- and the murmuring vanished. She elbowed those behind to hold her place. "Nor Maggie, neither," she added. "We don't know none of the others."

"Where have they gone?" the constable commanded, lowering the scroll but raising his voice.

"How should I know," she spat. "They ain't mine."

"Tell me when they return," commanded Tewman. "The same goes for all of you!" The scroll flapped as he waved it wide. "It's an order, I say! A direct order from the Lord Mayor for all those to be sent to Virginia."

Scattered laughter rose from the crowd. "Well ain't that sweet!" cried a voice in back, "he's ordered us to rat on Will and Maggie!"

At the windows above, Will stared across the lane to where Maggie Withering stared back, her smile gone. Will pulled back into the shadows but still peered out just above the sill.

"And rat on this Griffin Beadle, too!" cackled another, "which I'd happily do, Constable, since I don't know no Griffin Beadle. No, no, no," he chuckled, "don't know no Griffin Beadle at all."

"It's the Beadle he wants?" croaked Old Pete, a bald fellow with a hunched-over back and a few tufts of white hair around his ears. Everyone knew that Old Pete was half-deaf, so it was possible – just possible – he had misunderstood; but a malicious glint in his eye told otherwise. "Why, he musts want the Beadle's boy, lads, our Baynards Castle Beadle!" he called. The crowd howled; Tewman scowled, and Old Pete carried on, staring the officer in the eye. "You've got to know where the Beadle is 'cause how can the Ward pay 'im every month elsewaise? There you have it, Constable: go ask the Beadle where *his* boy is!"

"Send the Beadle's boy instead of ours!" called another.

"Send the bloody Beadle himself!"

The voices jumped left and right. Constable Tewman knew how a London crowd could become a mob. He'd seen it more than once -- could happen in the blink of an eye – and this rabble was turning ugly fast. He glanced behind him, where the lane wound back to the street. There were no shops: just tenements and more tenements leaning out from either side with hard faces staring out of the windows above. It was thirty, no, forty yards or more to the tavern at the corner. The *Boar's Head* would be jammed with the regulars at this hour as they downed another pint. He could call for help if he got close enough;

but would anyone hear him above the din inside? If they did, would they come face the mob? Or join it?

But a crowd is a fickle thing and already the mood had changed. Old Pete picked up the banter where he'd left it. "Maybe Constable wants a different sort of beetle, the kind with six legs!"

"Six legs, Old Pete? With six feets, the Beadle would run 'round the Ward so fast he'd deliver his messages before they's even sent." Laughter from the crowd.

"Fee-*te*, not fee-*te*, young sprout! Six *feet*! Don't they teach you young'uns anything now? You only says one *feet* when you're talking about six of 'em. I mean...."

"You don't know what you mean no more, Old Pete!"

The round of guffaws and groans ceased as Thomas Dingfield stumbled forward and stood right before the constable. Dingfield was easy to recognize by the stench of day-old ale. "You want Withering, Constable?" he moaned. "I'm your man! Can't you see me withering, just withering away!" He rolled his eyes in mock distress and collapsed in slow motion onto the cobblestones, tongue panting, arms stretched wide: "A pint! a pint! give me a pint or I'll wither up whole!"

He stared at the Constable with a smiling, unfocused gaze. "But Maggie's not withering, and anyone what says so ain't seen 'er, 'cause she's a'blooming and a'blossoming like a rose in June!" He belched and Tewman pushed him away. "Aye, a rose she is," persisted Dingfield, clinging to the officer's arm, "but with as many thorns!"

"She only pricked you, Thomas Dingfield," cried the pox-faced woman with a wicked laugh, "when you tried to prick her!"

Coarse laughter convulsed the crowd and Dingfield swung around to face them, fists raised to fight an unseen foe. "Come say it to me face! C'mon and say it here!" he

shouted. He swayed a moment, staggered a few steps over to the wall where he turned, belched once more with remarkable force, then slid gently down the wall. There he sat comfortably on the wet cobbles with a beatific smile.

Tewman saw his moment. He took several determined steps towards the haven of the tavern and shouted with all the authority he could muster, "I'll be back tomorrow! And with a warrant," he cried. "They'll all be well cared for in Bridewell before they're shipped to Virginia; new clothes for each. And they'll be taught a trade there. Just like those sent last year."

The bantering vanished. "Last year? Where are they now, the ones from last year?" The pox-scars on the woman's face glared red and rough at the constable: "Where's Craupley? We ain't heard a word from him!"

"Nor little Shambrook nor Mary Hackett! Which nobody's heard nothing from them neither!"

"Not them, not from none of 'em! A hundred they were from all the Wards and nobody ain't heard nothing! Why'd you want a hundred more?"

Constable Tewman wiped his forehead with a large handkerchief and backed two more steps. He had a clean path now behind him to the tavern. A part of him marveled that he could sweat at all on such a cold day. "Well taken care of, I say. The City has raised 500 pounds to ship them. It says so right here and --"

"Just hang 'em and save the sterling, you f--- butcher!" It was a low voice, unseen, but close at hand and ripe with menace.

"Who said that?" roared Tewman. "I'll be back with a warrant I tell you, and anyone hiding them will go straight to Newgate and *will* be hanged if I have any say in it! On behalf of the crown, I *order* you to help find them!" But he backed two more steps toward safety.

"Find 'em yourself, you fat-bellied bugger!" came a cry from the back, where someone shoved or pushed or stumbled -- and in an instant the whole mass surged forward again. Tewman fell back before the foaming tide. "A King's warrant!" he cried one last time before he turned and ran. A small stone shot past his ear and skipped down the glimmering cobblestones.

"Tell King Jimmy to come himself with his pretty warrant!" screamed Thomas Dingfield, rousing himself from his gutter-throne. "We ain't sending Will and Maggie to his Virginia hell!"

At the garret window, Will Micklewood watched the constable flee. When he looked up, Maggie had vanished, and the shutter was pulled tight. He lingered at the window and saw Dingfield collapse again in a drunken heap along the wall, ignored by the crowd as it slowly broke up. The drab twilight faded into evening; fog came rolling up from the Thames; someone threw a thin blanket over Dingfield and disappeared into the shadows. Before long the alley was deserted, except for an occasional workman hurrying home and candles began to light a few of the windows.

Will sighed, and pulled the shutter tight. He had no candle to light that night; but he was used to the dark and rarely did it damp his spirits. Tonight was different, though. He lay in a corner of the little room for a long moment, eyes open. Everyone in the lane knew where he was, where Maggie was, too. It wouldn't be long before somebody snitched, maybe right now, maybe tonight -- certainly before tomorrow night, once the word got all around. He could lie there and wait; or he could run. But with no place to run, why bother to hide?

He lay in the darkness and gazed at the beam overhead. What was this all about anyway, that's what he

couldn't see! Mary Hacket, Craupley, Shambrook -- who were they? Transported to Virginia last year someone said? Just before he and his mum had arrived here from the farm, he guessed. A lifetime ago, yet no more than...he counted it out: eleven months since they had passed through the lively chaos of Southwarke to the smell of frying pan-cakes, crossed the great bridge, and threaded through crowded lanes into the Ward. Eleven months was time enough for her to die and for him to make a life scrapping on the streets, a world away from the quiet lanes and green fields of Kent he had known before. But Virginia was farther still, they said: unimaginably far.

He pulled the mite-infested blanket up to this chin and wondered what to do. Wait until they came back for him? Run away tonight? What about Maggie? Why were they coming for her? Would her uncle give her up?

The questions rose like waves on a troubled sea until, at last, he slept.

2. An Evening on Philpot Lane

Sir Thomas Smythe was in his favorite after-dinner room: a comfortable London room in a comfortable house on Philpot Lane on a foggy winter night, with thick blue drapes twined with gold thread around the edge, a thicker rug, and a fire burning hard and bright on the broad stone hearth. Before the fire, a pair of fine Venetian crystal glasses stood on a small table.

Smythe sat to one side of the table, facing the fire: a dapper, white-haired man with a neatly trimmed beard. A younger man sat beside him. Sir Thomas lifted his glass and swirled the wine, watching the firelight play through the crystal as he shook his head softly in disapproval, disbelief or indeed both. Although the crystal, the claret, the room

-- and a not inconsiderable part of London -- all belonged to him, he could take no pleasure in any of it tonight. Though he had tried to be companionable with his son-in-law in spite of his sour mood, he had failed. He knew it and regretted it. But he could hardly help it: he had not built the great trading companies for the East Indies, the Levant, the Baltic and Russia only to see his *magnus opus* fail -- and yet the Virginia Company *was* failing. A venture he had directed from the very beginning and nursed through hard years had begun to collapse from the very moment he had stepped aside as Treasurer last spring to let Sandys take that post -- *Sir* Edwin Sandys! for the love of God Almighty -- and just when the Company had finally begun to produce real returns! Smythe regretted *that* far more than his boorish demeanor at supper.

"Eighty thousand pounds of good sterling! Johnson," he muttered. "Eighty thousands! And hundreds of them mine -- along with a dozen years of my life! Yet Sandys will throw it all away like a fool, an idiot gone senile before his time. I cannot bear the thought of it, my friend...." Sir Thomas set his glass down with more force than was right and regretted that as well. He was a reasonable man, after all -- he had said so himself on many an occasion.

"Excuse me, Johnson, I have let my anger get the best of me and that will never do. Anger has not paid for this Médoc, my friend. Nor did I ever let anger get the best of me when we were launching the Levant Company...how many? Twenty-eight years ago? My God! I *am* getting old. And I can assure you that we had fools aplenty in those days, too!"

"Ordinary fools, perhaps," replied his companion, "but Sir Edwin Sandys is no ordinary fool."

"Eighty *thousands!* Johnson," repeated Sir Thomas. He leaned forward and stared at the fire, gritting his teeth

before murmuring "You are in the right of it: it takes an extraordinary fool to throw away eighty thousand pounds...."

His companion was Robert Johnson -- now *Alderman* Robert Johnson. He was an altogether simpler man than his father-in-law. If his shirt lacked flair or finery, it was not because he affected the spartan simplicity of the Puritan brethren one saw ever more frequently on London's streets these days, but because he found it a more deliberate vanity than the conventional fluffs and ruffles that the Puritans, Precisions and other hypocrites condemned so loudly. No, his dress was unselfconsciously plain, the mere reflection of the direct, transparent simplicity of a man of business: Johnson paid little attention to finery on others and none at all to lace on himself.

"The man is a fool, Sir Thomas," he repeated, "an ambitious, preening, cozening woodcock. But a brilliant and tireless fool! He throws himself into his follies one after the other with unstoppable zeal!" He stopped abruptly. "Excuse me, sir. He has been your colleague, after all. I fear I have spoken too bluntly."

"Bluntly, yes, but true. No, no. Johnson, we must be candid with each other after all." Sir Thomas set down the wine. "Robert, I have worked with the man, as you say, and closely too; but perhaps I have seen him too closely and too long to see him as he truly is. The Company's only realistic hope is the Crown's help with the tobacco contract, to keep the Spaniards' leaf out and root out plantings in England as well. We *must* have the Crown with us. You know that; I know that; and Sandys ought to know it, too. Yet all he has done since replacing me is to antagonize the King. It was a miracle that we got the Privy Council to ban planting here. But no sooner than we have that order but Sandys prepares to cross the Crown again!"

How many times does he think you may spit at any man and expect a favor in return?

"For all the years that he worked with me, never would I have thought he would run off like this! Headstrong he was, I knew; stubborn; and vigorous almost in the extreme. But he has become irresponsible, beyond measure." Sir Thomas shook his head again. "But perhaps I misjudge the man. The older I grow, the more irresponsible nearly everyone seems." He tried to chuckle, without much success. "Open your mind to me, Robert, not as my daughter's husband, but as my counselor, do! How do you see this man?"

"In all candor, then?"

"In all candor. It stays between us only."

"Forgive me if I criticize out of turn, but you have asked me in all candor." Smythe nodded. "Then I submit that you underestimate both the man and his folly. Sir Edwin Sandys is what you say, a fool and a booby - but a *great* fool and a *great* booby. It goes beyond foolery and that is his special gift: he truly believes in his chimera, whichever he is chasing at any moment. *That* is why men follow him. They are not so much charmed by his silver tongue as by the dreams themselves. He is like a City man who is clear-sighted in business but so blinded by Cupid that he sees a Florentine countess in place of his honest Southwarke whore!"

"Yes, yes! That is it!"

"And because *he* sees a countess and not the whore, his friends soon see a countess too -- even as she wipes her nose on her filthy sleeve and empties the poor fool's purse!"

Smythe laughed in spite of his anger, and Johnson continued. "Most men are like that in some little thing or another, failing to see the gray in their beard 'til all is white

as snow, perhaps, or forgetting a slight they have done to a friend. But with Sir Edwin, it is altogether more vast."

"By God, Johnson, you have it. He does believe his own tales; I have seen it. If Sir Edwin Sandys stood at the Globe and summoned the 'vasty fields of France', he would think *himself* in Picardy!"

Sir Thomas shook his head again and laughed at the thought; and his eyes sparkled with good humor. He was not a man who liked to be angry; it went against his grain. That was why Edwin Sandys confounded him so deeply for Sandys sowed anger as the farmer sowed corn: it was what he did -- and was forever surprised when the seeds sprang up behind him in brambles full-bristling with thorns.

"In all seriousness, though, "replied Johnson," with Sandys everything must be vast. When you founded the Virginia Company -- how many years ago, twelve? Thirteen?"

"Thirteen years ago last month! I went aboard the *Susan Constant* with Newport the night before they sailed, you know. Every year, I mark the 20th of December as a great and important day."

"Did you? Just so. It was a great adventure."

"*Was?*" exclaimed Sir Thomas. "It still *is*, Robert, if only Sir Edwin does not destroy it!"

"Just so, again. But *revenons à nos moutons*, as they say on the continent. You planned the Virginia Company as a *trading* company like the others. The first voyage was to choose a port, build a post, make a base for trade.."

"Which we did! Oh, it was harder than we had hoped. These things always are. But we planned and prepared it. Not like poor Popham's plantation for the north. Those poor souls were left to fend for themselves without supplies until they gave up and abandoned it all."

"How long did they stay in the north? What was it...two years?"

"Two years?" Smythe exclaimed again. "Closer to two months!" He caught himself shaking two fingers right in front of Johnson's nose and quickly lowered his hand – and his voice. "Two months, three, a few more perhaps; but they *planted* nothing, *built* nothing, *discovered* nothing and so *came* to nothing. Rocks, scrub grass, trees worthless for masts. Bah! They might as well have discovered *Wales!*"

Johnson laughed and took another sip. "Wales, yes," he replied, "but without the Welsh, which is not so bad a thing!"

The scowl on Smythe's face broke once again into a smile. "There is at least that, to be sure. But seriously, Robert, Popham himself told me that the north is much worse than they let generally known: like the coast of Cornwall with the winter of the Hebrides and hardly fit for civilized habitation at all. A worthless country altogether is Northern Virginia!"

"Yet there are those who would try again," said Johnson, after a pause.

"Yes, yes, yes," said Smythe with impatience. "Another of Sandys' wild schemes." His voice was rising again, in spite of himself. "But Robert, even that Southwarke whore you spoke of has more sense for business than Sandys! She knows what she sells, sir; and at least she gets paid in the bargain! But in all great seriousness, tell me what Sir Edwin Sandys looks to accomplish! As soon he succeeded me, he announced these plans to send a thousand men to Virginia this winter; a thousand more next year; and the next, and the next *and the next!* *Five thousand men in five years!* And to what end, I ask you? *To what end?* To build iron works better than Birmingham? glass works better than Venice? salt works to

shame the bay salt of Brittany? Ah! don't forget the vineyards to spring up at his command and bring forth claret better than the best from Guienne!" He rolled his eyes. "He proclaims all that even as all know that tobacco is the only crop that will pay its own freight!"

"Yet Southampton cheers him on," replied Johnson, "as does Warwick. Even Wroth and the other investors have been charmed by his sweet tales. Or blinded by their own greed."

"It is far worse than that, Robert. It's not only starry-eyed fops like Southampton who are taken in, but the guilds' men, too! They listen to him in the Company meetings, nod their heads, say nary a contrary word and seem to think they, their widows and even mere journeymen in the Guild will live in their dotage on Virginia profits running as broad as Virginia rivers, rising high as Virginia trees and swelling as great as Virginia berries and beans! Bah! It is near felony, Johnson! The Grocers are in for near five hundred pounds; the Goldsmiths, the Mercers and Tailors in for two hundred apiece or more. All told, the guilds and the towns together have put in thousands of pounds! Thousands!"

He took a deep breath and paused to sip his wine before shaking his head again in disgust. "It is always the same, Johnson. A fool is parted soon enough from his own money, but when a man ventures someone sterling from men he wouldn't even recognize outside a guild hall meeting, something that makes him mad and throw caution to the wind! It's a black tearing at your bowels when you lose *your* cargo lost in a shipwreck, but mere embarrassment when you lose someone else's goods! Governing other men's goods can change the most level-headed man – much like governing other men's lives. Sir Edwin Sandys seems never to have learned that lesson...."

Smythe ended with a forced smile. "Ah, pay me no mind, Robert. The years have made me forget my manners." He took the carafe and filled their glasses. "Sandys is brilliant, I grant you. Nonetheless, he'll beggar us all if we are not first hanged for sheer stupidity. A truly great fool, as you say; but a *wondrous* great booby."

3. Where *Utopia* Ends

The evening wore on. The fire crackled gently. Neither man spoke for a long moment. At length, Alderman Johnson tilted his goblet round and round, letting the ruby-tinted light play across his eyes. Then he set it on the table with a deliberate hand.

"I have been considering, Sir Thomas," he began slowly, "considering that conundrum."

"Eh? What conundrum is that?"

"Why, what you have said earlier: if Sandys is such a clever soul, why does he do such foolish things? And if he is such a fool, then how can he be so clever?" Johnson picked up the glass again, as though to drink, but set it down without touching his lips and an abruptly different tone he asked, "have you heard of Bacon's new essay?"

"What's that? replied Sir Thomas, confused by the change of tone as of subject. "Bacon?" he repeated. "Fine fellow of course: very helpful when we drafted the charter; excellent scientifical studies, too, I hear. Even Harvey admires his work, though he detests his style. But as for his Bacon's natural philosophy, well that has never been my *forte*, I fear."

"Yes, well, I'm not speaking of his natural philosophy, but rather the more *unnatural* kind: the flight of fancy that Bacon is working on now."

"Oh, that! Yes, I heard it mentioned some time back. *Novus Somethingus*, or the like, is it not?"

Johnson nodded. "Indeed: *Novus Atlantis*. Not terribly original, perhaps. If he ever finishes it, it will be merely another *Utopia*, though not so amusing as the first. It's rather *less* than, uh...More, you might say." He grinned.

"*Utopia!*" muttered Smythe, ignoring the wit. "Another *Utopia!*" he muttered. "One is more than enough, I should think." He shook his head. "I cannot understand it, Johnson. Men dream of women, which is normal enough; and the dear Lord knows what women dream of -- but certainly not of men! Why would any sensible woman waste her sleep dreaming of the beast that slumbers and snores beside her? I hope my Sarah does not! But who dreams of heaven on Earth? What kind of man does that, I ask you? No one up to any good, for no sooner than Jack spies his Paradise, but he finds John blocking his view. So Jack pushes John down, of course, so he can gaze on his heaven *totus solus*. But since John doesn't like it, he pushes Jack back. And then it's all just a matter of who pushes more -- or less, as you say! Look what that fool Calvin did to Geneva! Hmph! Heaven on earth is a hell all to itself! No, Johnson, Heaven is best left just where the good Lord put it, so near to our reach, yet beyond our grasp!"

Johnson smiled momentarily, then hesitated, as though summoning courage. "I agree with you, Sir Thomas, but I don't think Sandys does." He looked his father-in-law in the eye.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I will tell you," replied Johnson. "But before I start, pray let me lay it out 'in one fell swoop' as they say. Otherwise I may never dare say it at all."

Smythe's curiosity was piqued. "Speak then, as to the sphinx himself," he said, and lay a finger over his lips.

"Yes, then," said Johnson, draining his wine. "Now, Sandys thinks to build his New Atlantis, his own *Utopia*, if you will, on the banks of the Chesapeake. You know that. Yet he will not stop there. Consider the facts. He has been active in the Company since its early days and was the chief opponent of the royal monopolies --"

"So says he!" exclaimed Sir Thomas, unable to stop himself. "But no one loves monopoly as much as Sir Edwin Sandys, as long as it is *his* monopoly!"

"As you say. But there is worse. He has not scrupled to defraud the original Company investors -- the term is not too harsh! -- with this new-fangled system of private ventures where he grants land to newcomers who plant in Virginia without them paying anything towards for use of the Fort or the quays that our investors have carved out of raw wilderness over a dozen years. His favored friends build on the eighty thousand pounds the Company's investors have put in -- yet he ensures *them* a current profit on their newly invested, private funds."

Johnson was speaking easily now. This was what he understood: ventures, funds, returns. "*Idem*: he maneuvered for months, nay, I believe for years! to replace you as Treasurer, currying favor with the small holders, the one-share men who count even with you in the balloting box."

"That is true!" exploded Sir Thomas in anger. "But it was not just his sweet words and games that persuaded me to give up the post. I had sworn to see the Virginia Company through until it found its way, and we are nearly there, now that Rolfe's new leaf is winning markets and--." Sir Thomas remembered his promise of silence and stopped. "A sphinx, I am. A sphinx!" he cried, and folded his hands on his lap.

Johnson continued speaking as though there had been no interruption. "Now consider our new Assembly in Virginia. He claims credit for it himself, even though it was you who proposed it and --"

"Well of course we had to put an end Argall governing Virginia like a petty tyrant and -- Sir Thomas caught himself and fumbled for his glass.

"Of course. But for Sandys, the new Assembly is about much, much more than stopping Argall's depredations. He plans to make the Assembly his own private Parliament, reporting to him as Treasurer -- putting himself in place of the Crown!"

It was Johnson's voice that was rising now. He was talking as much to himself as to Smythe. "Still more: see how desperately he works to people his new *Utopia*. Last year he even bought five score children from the City --"

"Oh, that! Just more of his foolishness, Johnson, and I've gotten too old to argue with every foolish idea and the older I grow the more of them I hear. They often sprout in France, you know, then take root and flourish here!" He shook his head and sighed. "As for those rather useless orphans from last year, it's true I let Sandys take the reins more and more since I was soon to step down. So yes, I let him have his way with the children. Once he got the City to put in five hundred pounds, he had a hundred scoundrels rounded up and off they went. But they were *orphans*, Johnson, or so he told us. And as I said, the City provided the children, not the Company. And they were not *bought*."

"Last year, perhaps. But Sandys' vision is too great now for mere orphans and his needs are too great for niceties. The Lord Mayor signed an order not a fortnight ago directing the Aldermen to assemble one hundred

children more to ship this winter – and there was no mention of orphans.” He paused to take a sip.

“Go on.”

“I have Lord Mayor Cockaine’s order here.” Johnson took a paper from a leather folio at his feet and handed it to Smythe. “He has ordered the arrest of any young vagrants, at least twelve or older, boys and girls both. The roundup has already begun. Sandys is so pleased he plans to take the scheme to the ports next year, buying up children in Bristol, Southampton, Plymouth. There are even rumors from Somerset that men have gone about buying maids for a shilling apiece to add to the shipment. And Sir Thomas” -- here Johnson paused -- “that is not all. The constables are telling the poor on parish relief to give up a child for Virginia, or else to be cut off. It’s that paragraph towards the end,” he added, pointing to the document. “There where it ends *“they shall receive no further relief from the parish in which they inhabit.”*

Smythe squinted; then scowled; and an awkward silence followed. When he spoke, his voice was soft and sober. “So, London’s poor must choose between starving or offering up an Isaac for Sir Edwin Sandys’ altar? We did not do such a thing last year, Robert. There were no such threats to the families last year. They were either orphans and wandering vagrants, or were willingly sent by their families, or so Sandys told me...but I left a great many things to him last year, more perhaps than I should....”

But his voice rose indignantly again. “And even so, it never made any sense to send children! The Company needs *skilled* men who can ply a dozen trades a thousand leagues from all the civil parts of the world – not ignorant starving children, no matter badly the City wishes to be rid of ‘em!!”

"Even so," replied Johnson, "he's not done with the idea. I've heard that as soon as Dean Donne returned from Europe and enjoys the King's favor, he's taken to badgering him to preach in favor of sending the children."

"More foolishness and more!" exclaimed Sir Thomas. "What does the good preacher know of what Virginia needs or how much it costs to furnish, ship and feed a new settler? He ought to keep to his preaching and his poems, instead!"

"Indeed," replied the Alderman. "But it's not only children. Sandys is so desperate to find a thousand souls to ship this year that he's negotiating for a shipload or two of Frenchmen! Not Papists, to be sure, but foreigners still; hundreds of them, who he'll settle among our own people. And still more! he wants Brewster to begin peopling the northern reaches with true Dissenters – Separatists! – near traitors to the Crown who've been skulking about in Holland for ten years or more! And you know that they do not look overkindly at any king...."

"The northern reaches, you say? How *far* north, Johnson? With all the questions hanging over Popham's charter for a northern company, by what right can the Virginia Company build a northern plantation at all?"

"By what right?" It was Johnson's turn to be indignant. "Lawyerly details will not deter Sandys. Once men have planted in Northern Virginia, who will expel them?"

Johnson stood up abruptly, and began pacing nervously before the fire. "Now we come to the nub. It is not to trade for furs with the savages or to mine ore that Sandys will plant Separatists and Puritans in Northern Virginia. Don't you see? He will not send them to build Bacon's *Novus Atlantis* – but to build Brewster's *New Jerusalem*! They will draw others whose only purpose is to

reform the Reform. They will not rest until they have rebuilt a new Church of England that is as pure as their prayers, as barren as their hearts, and London as cheerless as Geneva! *That* is why he sends men to buy maidens to ship to Virginia to breed him new subjects! He intends nothing less than rebuilding Christendom in his own image!

"And who will rule this new realm? Sir Edwin Sandys, who despises the old England that gave him life, and yearns for a new and better England that will do his bidding! And when all this is done a generation or even two hence, he or his disciples will arise in the Commons and say, 'See what we have done? Go now and do likewise!' And the commoners will listen and follow and have done with crown and scepter! *That* is what Sir Edwin Sandys thinks and dreams and schemes, whether he admits it even to himself or not. Yet *that* is what he uses the Company for: not to earn a return but for a headlong rush to build his new world on the flesh and blood of other men's very lives!" Johnson stopped, shocked by the enormity of his own accusation.

"It is beyond treason," whispered Smythe, "it...it is revolution; it means war, even --"

He stopped abruptly when the door behind them opened and a servant entered without a word. He eyed the fire and quickly chose two or three short pieces of pine, hardly larger than kindling, to stoke a pretty flame, then placed goodly oak atop. The flames embraced the pine and cheerily lapped at the oak.

"Thank you, Edmond," said Smythe, trying to speak in his usual voice. "Uh, we won't need you any further this evening; you may retire."

While the servant left as quietly as he had entered, his mere appearance – unassuming as it was – had somehow left a conspiratorial scent lingering in the air.

“Treason and revolution, it is, Sir Thomas,” whispered Johnson, when the door had closed. “Revolution above the slightest reproach: treason in plain view; revolution by order of the King, under a charter bearing the Privy Council’s seal; treason sown today to be known tomorrow; treason to be wrought by his children and grandchildren – against ours. Revolution, and even war, will come before your grandchildren grow old.”

4. A Plot is Hatched

A log shifted noisily on the hearth, spurting a flurry of sparks as it slipped and then settled on the embers. The men gazed at it a moment until silence fell again and steady flames returned.

“Do you take a pipe, Johnson?” asked Sir Thomas abruptly to break the darkened mood. He rose and reached into a cupboard for a carafe and two broad-mouth glasses. “Neither do I,” he continued as his companion shook his head. “How ironic,” he smiled; “here I am, the founder and Treasurer of Virginia Company for all these years, responsible for 60,000 pounds of Virginia leaf brought in this year – and yet I hate that filthy weed as much as the King himself!” He laughed, breaking the ominous mood. “But since I have nothing to offer you to smoke, let me offer you this to drink.”

He took the carafe and poured a generous pool of a golden liquid into each glass, just to the limit of reasonableness. “It’s very like the *eau de vie* from Cognac, but from the Armagnac, nearby – although this evening we sound like we have indulged in ‘Maniac’!” He chuckled. “I

was given a cask last year and told to wait a year or two more. I sampled it last week and found it exceptional. There is a great future in it, if we can find a way to keep the Hollanders out of the trade!"

Johnson tasted it and nodded appreciatively, but let the older man continue. "Now, Robert, what you say about what Sandys' plan is right to the mark, but come now! An accusation of treason without proof serve only to destroy the accuser."

"Agreed."

"So how, do you propose to rid ourselves of this most troublesome Treasurer?"

Johnson smiled and shrugged. "Sir Thomas, I have not spoken this way with anyone else, and I fear my words have far outrun my thoughts."

"Oh, of course not, Robert, I know you better than that! You are as bright a fellow as I have met these sixty years past. You have some ideas already or you wouldn't have spoken at all! So come now: what can we do, when, and how?"

Johnson sighed. "We cannot remove Sandys as Treasurer until balloting this spring. Still, a campaign can be prepared beforehand."

"Yes, yes," urged Sir Thomas. "Of course: complaint after complaint that seems to arise quite naturally. But somehow we must start the flood?" He leaned forward, a glint in his eye. "Our quarterly meeting of shareholder is tomorrow. Can we not find some unpleasant matter be raised?"

"There are the City children, of course," said Johnson slowly.

"What children? What about them?"

"Close to a hundred are already rounded up in Bridewell and Sandys is anxious to begin loading them very

soon. *Duty* is ready to sail; *Jonathan* and the *London Merchant*, nearly so. But what if someone should object? What if some of them simply refuse? Or if someone objects for them? Does it not seem odd for the Company to ship away the King's subjects against their will? We're not talking about thieves reprieved from the gallows or the like, but just ordinary subjects, however mean and common. Where is the warrant for shipping them out of England?"

Smythe stroked his beard thoughtfully. "As you say, it's not reprieved convicts, where it's a choice between transportation and the noose. But wouldn't Sandys just say its like when the Overseers of the Poor bind a child to serve a master? That's common enough."

"But still not the same. When a unwilling youngster is bound to a master, the master must train him up in a trade, teach him a livelihood, feed and cloth him for years. But can City bind each one of the hundred to serve *the Company*? Serve a thousand different masters at once, almost all of them here in England since they adventure only their purse here and not their person in Virginia! What right does the Company have to send the King's subjects unwillingly out of King's own realm of England?"

Sir Thomas reflected. "Whatever rights the Company has are in the Charter, of course, the revised one, to be sure. But Robert, who has re-read the Charter in years?"

Robert Johnson gave a sheepish smile. "I have, actually, Sir Thomas. It was just yesterday, and on this very point. I told Sandys that I needed to verify a matter in a private dispute and he directed Collingwood to let me review all three of the Charters."

"Hmph! While Collingwood stood by looking over your shoulder, I suppose."

"Oh, he busied himself around me, trying to see what I was looking for. But he is so new as Secretary – he's really

not ready to replace old Fotherby – that he had no idea what I was looking for. I didn’t choose to enlighten him.

“Well don’t keep me hanging, Robert! Where are you going with all this?”

“The Treasurer, the Company and their assigns are authorized to transport to Virginia so many of the King’s subjects *‘as shall willingly accompany them’* them. It’s that exact phrase. It was in the first charter in ’06, and is exactly the same in two revisions. I examined them all.”

“*As shall willingly accompany them*”, repeated Sir Thomas slowly. “You are sure of that?”

“I copied it exactly as it was written: the Charters do not allow the Company to transport anyone who is *unwilling*, whether bound servant or not. Not even Edwin Sandys can treat the poor children of London worse than common thief or murderer. So if *anyone* refuses to be shipped to Virginia, Sir Edwin Sandys will have to go hat in hand to ask the Privy Council for an order.”

A mischievous grin spread on Sir Thomas’ lips. “But Sandys doesn’t know that yet.”

“Precisely And now that I think of it, it gets better. Cockaine has only agreed *in principle* for the City to pay the five pounds fee per child as was done last year.”

“Three pounds for shipping and two pounds for clothing, if I recall correctly.”

“Indeed; but no agreement has been finalized. Cockaine wants the youngsters to be granted some land for their own where their servitude is over, but Sandys keeps refusing.”

“Because he wants to reserve more land to grant for the private plantations,” added Sir Thomas.

“But let us suppose that Cockaine asks Sandys to produce his warrant for shipping the children -- a warrant Sandys does not have.”

Smythe's smile grew broader and broader as he saw how the plan would unfold. "Sandys tells Collingwood to find some provision in the Charter that would allow it!"

Johnson nodded. "And Collingwood discovers that the Company may ship only those who *willingly* will go."

"I see it all now," cried Smythe, clapping his hands with delight. "The ships pressing to sail – dockage fees mounting -- the captains complaining -- Sandys running to beg the Privy Council for a warrant to gie to the City, only to be lectured that while merchants in Parliament may think otherwise, James Stuart is not a King who ships even his meanest subjects a world away from their mothers' breasts simply because Sir Edwin Sandys claims to have bought 'em!"

"So the Privy Council won't grant approval without the City's agreement and the City says it won't agree without the Council's order – or unless Sir Edwin agrees to fix a term on the children's service and grant them land when their time is over – and perhaps extend those better terms to the five-score sent last year as well. You know the clergy and others have already complained about how they were treated – Parson Whitby has been most persistent in the matter."

"To summarize," smiled Sir Thomas, "if the children refuse, Sir Edwin Sandys will be forced to squander more of the Company's almost non-existent funds, offending the guilds and other investors, the Privy Council, and the King all at the same time. A most beautiful fiasco, Mr. Alderman Johnson."

"So it would appear," he replied with some satisfaction. "After such a debacle, how many men will place Sandys' ball in the balloting box come next Spring, or support him if later if he feuds with the Crown?"

On the hearth, the flames, while fading, flickered still. "Robert," said Sir Thomas slowly and emptying his glass to the last drop, "the day you were wed, I thought my Margaret had chosen well. Tonight," he concluded, "tonight, I am sure of it."

5. Bridewell

Cold it was and colder still: as the short winter afternoon drew to a close, the chill cracked though Will Micklewood's coat and scarf and pierced an unmatched pair of mittens that had worn so thin that holes might appear unannounced at any of a dozen unhappy spots. Cold and colder still: the sun disappeared, red and mutinous, into the coal-tainted twilight haze; and the damp rose from the river, with its ever-present mist.

Will shivered under a wagon on Trig Lane. He grasped tightly his small sack of chestnuts and wizened apples at his side, waiting for nightfall. It was hot in Virginia, they said. So hot in summer that sweat ran like a river and a man didn't need a shirt, couldn't bear a shirt, they said. Will tried to imagine a hot summer day where the air was still and the heat pressed down from a tropical sun. He tried to feel the heat weighing heavy on his chest and creeping down his arms and his legs, seeping at last into fingers and toes.

It was no use: the cold would not go away.

He figured that if he turned himself in now, they'd toss him into a cell in Bridewell with a dozen other lads, heated by little more than the animal warmth of the crowd. But they would feed him, he thought. He was pretty certain of that; soup perhaps; some bread. And he'd have a roof over his head all night long. So what if they then shipped him on a six-penny bark that leaked to let in the whole Virginia Ocean? His stomach growled, loud enough to summon

every watchman in the Ward. But the quiet of the lane was undisturbed. A hacker drove by with a fare from time to time; Widow Denton huffed along the wall with a child in tow: the ordinary flow of the city.

Will hugged his knees against his empty belly and waited for full night, for the stars to appear. Life had been a blur these last days, ever since Maggie had told him that her uncle wasn't going to send *her* to Virginia, no matter what. He'd sworn it, and told her he'd send her away to some cousins until the storm blew over. Will had decided that if Maggie wasn't going to Virginia, then he wasn't either. He'd been on the run ever since.

He was safe in the great sea of London humanity beyond Dolittle Lane, he thought – safe, but penniless, hungry and cold. Worse, he had to keep coming back to the Lane each night after dark, looking for a bite of bread, a cup of small beer, or a sack of nuts and apples like what he had now. Each time he came, though, there were some who eyed him while trying to look like they weren't. He knew who the snitches were, and would settle up with them when he had a chance. The cook's boy up on the Strand might be one: he'd given Micklewood a funny look when he'd spotted him in the street that very afternoon. And that rogue Will Guylliam was always looking for trouble, too. There could be others; and everyone knew the Watch was picking up anyone they could from the streets these days, bundling them off to Bridewell.

The darkness deepened. Will had begun to relax when a flurry of voices broke out behind him. "There 'e is! Micklewood! Micklewood! Behind the cart, there! I told you 'e'd be 'ere!" cried a voice up the lane.

Will was blinded by a rush of dancing torches that blocked the narrow space between the wagon and the wall, then by others behind: vague shapes hurrying up in the

dark. He pitched under the wagon and rolled a full turn toward the center of the alley – but rolled back underneath as the watchmen rushed to find him on the other side.

Will grabbed his sack and waited a moment. The waving torches and confused cries flowed around him. As soon as the watchmen saw that Will hadn't come out on the street, they raced, cursing, back toward the wall. Now for it! He rolled again under the wagon: one turn, two turns; then leaped to his feet and ran, tossing the nuts behind him, where they rattled and clattered on the cobbles, bouncing and rolling underfoot. His pursuers dashed after him, but slipped and stumbled on the nuts. No one fell, but a stumble was enough. Just as the constable nabbed at Will's sleeve, he slipped on a nut: his knee gave a twist; his arms threw up madly, grabbing for a support. At that point, his torch leaped from his grasp and arced like a comet across the darkening sky. While the torch landed safely on the cold, hard cobblestones where nothing would burn, the constable himself landed on the warm, soft bosom of unsuspecting Widow Denton and set it ablaze despite Tewman's frantic efforts to damp the flames: "Beg pardon, Madam!" he cried, pulling himself away, breathing hard. "Had no wish, none at all, I assure you, Madam, to fling myself like...." Her sudden smile vanished and she snapped up her child's hand and dragged it away down the lane.

The posse poured past by them, a dozen or more; some after the bounty, but most for the joy of the chase. Torches flared; boots pounded the street like horse hooves after a fox.

Ahead in the darkness, Will Micklewood let the breeze clear his head. He cut right onto Little Carter Lane, then doubled back down Sermon Lane. He felt the cathedral's imposing presence behind him before he stopped abruptly:

the wrong, wrong, way, he thought: the church yard was open space where a watchman's call could carry to the far side and summon someone to bar the way. No, he thought, he needed to work his way through Breadstreet and so to Cheapside, where he could blend into the street life again. He just needed to catch his breath a moment....

At that moment however, a hand came down on his shoulder, and seized the scruff of his neck. He never even saw who it was, but they dragged him down the lane, into the street, and into Constable Tewman's waiting grasp. They yanked him around another corner and slung him into a waiting high-walled wagon. The gate slammed shut and Will heard the chain rattle into place. Exhaustion and cold overcame him. He slumped against the siding as the driver gave a whistle. The horse whinnied and the wagon click-clacked over the cobblestones: the only sound of civilization in a city frozen in silence, and already, or so it seemed, a world away.

It was the onion soup that wakened him: sharp, sour, half-rotted onions kept in a basket from August, perhaps; but onions in soup for all that, with a carrot or two thrown in for good measure. He opened his eyes and stared blankly into the darkness. He was alone. The other lads must have followed the smell of the soup without bothering to waken him from his stupor, since less for him meant more for them. He scratched his unkempt hair and tried to sit up but dropped back with a faint groan from the pain in his side. He probed his ribs gingerly, wincing as he found the mark. "Damn you, Tewman," he muttered.

He tried lying unmoving, but his empty belly would hardly let him. From downstairs came the muted sound of benches scraping on stone and the dull clatter of wooden cups and bowls. Visions of an empty soup pot rose before

him, with the left-over steam swirling above the copper, there where gallons of soup ought to have been; and his stomach growled again. With another curse, he forced himself to sit up, leaning against the wall. He was just preparing to try standing when he heard footsteps in the corridor: light steps on the stone floor; the swish of a dress.

“Will,” called a soft voice, “Will, are you awake now?” She pushed the door and a dim light came in.

“Maggie? Oh Maggie! That’s you! Thank God you’re here!” He stopped. “But why are you here? In Bridewell?”

“Don’t fret about all that, now. I brought you some soup that I saved for you. Come, let me help you with it. Careful now: if you spill it, there’ll be no more.”

She set a bowl on the stone floor, pulled some thick bread from a pocket in her apron, and bent down in front of him. “Let me help you up now; take my hands.” He grabbed her wrists, held his breath, and pulled himself up. His side still ached, and he wavered a bit, but at least he was on his feet again.

In the faint light from the corridor, he could just see her, in a dark dress and a white apron. Her hair was pulled back under a sort of wimple, from which a few blond strands escaped at the temples. Her breath was full and warm. He finished the soup while still standing. Then Maggie took his hand and led him down the corridor towards the common room where several long rows of plain tables and benches stood nearly bare. A half-dozen girls dressed like Maggie were finishing the clean-up. In the near corner, there was a large wedge of very dark bread next to a wooden bowl.

“Hurry now, William,” she whispered, “supper’s done and I must hurry back to work. We can’t speak during meals here, anyway. Have what’s left of the soup; you can take the bread with you.” She turned to go.

“But Maggie, is *this* Bridewell?” asked Will in the same low whisper. “And where’d you get that dress?”

“Of course, it’s Bridewell! And they *gave* me the dress, Will. *Gave* it the morning after I was registered! Can you believe it? Ain’t it the finest thing you’ve ever seen? You’ll get your new shirt tomorrow – well not tomorrow, seeing it’s Sunday, but surely on Monday for work.”

“But what –“ Will was cut off by a wide-hipped, red-cheeked woman at the far door who clapped imperiously to summon Maggie. The woman looked as though she had not smiled this century, thought Will. Maggie ran towards the door and, her eyes lowered and meek, slipped out under the woman’s unblinking gaze.

The unsmiling woman spoke to someone in the next chamber and pointed dismissively back at Will. So he grabbed the bowl with both hands and swallowed the rest of the soup as quickly as he could. He was just in time for a tall, heavy-jowled man appeared in the doorway.

“You!” he commanded. “Get cracking, boy!”

While the last drops of soup dribbled down his old shirt, Will scooped up the rest of the bread and trotted between the benches, trying to ignore his aching ribs.

Will’s first meal at Bridewell was his best, as he soon discovered, for Bridewell was devoted to *work*, or rather to certain ideas about work that Will and his new companions found particularly confusing. As explained by their jailors (for jailors they were, for all the high-minded talk), Bridewell’s purpose in life was to make the poor work – to *teach* them to work – and work as they ought to have worked before they were brought in, since if they had only worked beforehand, they wouldn’t have been so poor as to be sent to Bridewell in the first place.

Will's new friend Tom Cornish explained it all to a bewildered Will one evening as they lay on opposite sides of the dividing board in a common bed in a long row of such beds. The inch-wide board in the middle gave a pretense of privacy, but what theory said was twenty-four inches of bedding for each sleeper had been condensed by practice – sharp practice indeed – to a good deal less. Tom Cornish explained that some long-forgotten carpenter must have convinced Bridewell that a forty-two inch wide bed could pass for the required forty-eight inch variety.

It was what Cornish called 'sterling reasoning' After all, a little bit of extra sterling under the table was a very sound reason indeed in Bridewell, since there was never very much of either sterling or reason. Besides, since a plain two-by-four was a quarter-inch less than two inches and a quarter-inch less than four, why couldn't twelve times two equal twenty-one which after all was exactly half of forty-two, Tom explained to a thoroughly befuddled Will.

"You'll get along just fine, here," Tom assured him, "if ya just remember that Bedlam has more sense than Bridewell!"

The new arrivals soon saw how they stood out in Bridewell like gentlemen in Billingsgate. Most were younger than the others, of course. More important, though was that, what official reason had been given the ancient scrivener who recorded their names in Bridewell's thick register book, the newcomers knew (or soon learned) that they'd been brought to Bridewell for the sole purpose of being shipped away.

Mocking their official register entries was one of the first things the new Bridewellians (as they called themselves) had in common; and they delighted in sharing the official reasons for their arrest. Liza Harris explained

sheepishly that she had been ‘taken for a vagrant’ when in truth her uncle had shouted ‘and good riddance, too!’ as Constable Tewman had led her away. Mary Nicholls boasted that she had been brought in from the Bridge as a ‘lewd vagrant’, and offered to prove it to any who doubted her – and after her first three days in Bridewell, there were no doubters at all.

For Ann Momford, however, the constable had told the Register that she’d been brought in because she lived an ‘incontinent life’ and would ‘take no warning’. Since Ann didn’t know what ‘incontinent’ meant, she figured it referred to her habit of kicking any drunken rogue who tried to fondle her; so in Bridewell she declared she’d be ‘incontinent’ whenever she wished. In fact, Ann looked at her arrest as reward for good behavior, since she was dressed better now than any time since her mum had died. She knew Virginia was further away than Calais, which she had seen once, across the water from Dover – but didn’t care so long as it wasn’t as cold as the bloody London rain.

When someone said that the maids brought in from St. Brides should be called the ‘Brides’ bound for Virginia, the name stuck; and someone else declared it only fair for the lads to be the “Grooms”, although many were young enough they could only hope to be horse grooms for some years to come.

The influx of all these newcomers confounded the harassed men and women in charge of Bridewell. For one thing, they were instructed that these recent arrivals were not whipped at registration. It wasn’t natural since everyone brought in to Bridewell was greeted with a dozen lashes (and every child with six). It was an expected public spectacle: not as popular as bear-baiting in Southwarke perhaps, but attractive for those who took delight, hidden or open, in watching young women be stripped to the waist

and whipped. Thus it had been for many years for the prisoners sent from the courts for various petty, and sometimes not so petty crimes. Yet the Lord Mayor had directed that those arrested only for shipping to the plantations should be 'kept at work' as usual, but should not be whipped at registration. But a stream of ordinary prisoners continued to arrive, including some reprieved from execution and transported to Virginia as well as the usual flow of petty thieves and other rogues, all of whom would have been whipped at Registration in the usual scheme of things.

This all created confusion as to who should be whipped and who spared. The Registrar settled the matter in a pragmatic way by whipping all newcomers on some days and none on the others. This was bound to cause problems eventually, of course, but the Registrar hoped those held for shipment by the Company's would be gone before real trouble arose.

Will had arrived on a no-whipping day, which was just as well since Constable Tewman and the posse had already paid him nicely for the trouble he had caused them. On his first Monday, he got his promised shirt, oversized to be sure, but it came with a firm admonition to be sure to grow into the sleeves before the elbows were worn through.

With the shirt came a promise for new shoes as soon as they could be made. Bridewell wasn't ready to outfit a hundred new arrivals with shirts and shoes. While Bridewell expected to receive 40 shillings apiece from the Company for clothing the transportees, the Company had not yet reached firm agreement with the City and so the money had yet been paid. Two hundred new shoes were yet to be ordered, but less delivered. Yet another headache!

As Tom explained to Will, the good folk who ran Bridewell thought there was more work to be done than folks to do it, rather than the other way round. For them it was pretty clear that the reason for all the poor thieves and beggars in London was because of all the poor thieves and beggars found there....

Even worse, thought the authorities, were all blackguards who would work for wages so low they could barely eat – which meant everyone else had to do near the same!

Tom Cornish had been in Bridewell for a couple of weeks already, brought in by the judges of the Middlesex Sessions court for theft; at the lordly age of 17 or perhaps 18 (he'd never known for certain which), he was an acknowledged expert. Bridewell's reasoning was unassailable: since there wouldn't be no poverty without the poor, then the poor were plainly the source of the problem! It stood to reason! For Bridewell the solution was straightforward. Because masters in the City wouldn't pay servants to do work they didn't have, Bridewell would force the poor to work for even less – for nothing at all, in fact – and make goods that were so shabby no one would buy them anyway.... It was a perfect solution, said Tom – before breaking into gales of laughter. All that was left, he added between fits, was to order the merchants to buy all the brummagem stuff that Bridewell produced and pay full price for it all!

This had all been explained to the children in great earnestness, in different terms, of course, and indeed explained several times to those who had been there a week or two. They in turn regaled the newcomers by going over it again, just as Samson Hollyday did the next day after the Sunday service. He held forth in the courtyard on Will's first Sunday in Bridewell. A baker's dozen of newcomers,

some freshly clothed, others still in their street-worn rags like Will, gather about Hollyday with puzzled faces.

“Didn’t ya listen?” said Hollyday would say with a grin. “If you ‘aven’t figured it out by now, then God save you a’cause I can’t. But it’s like this: the Cooper he won’t take you ‘prentice because he can’t sell all the barrels he’d teach you to make, right? An’ the mason he won’t take you since he’s a’teaching his own lad and don’t have no brick to lay this winter anyway. So you run from dawn to dusk trying to find a fetch-and-carry for the day so’s you can eat your daily bread.

When you find nothing, they bring you here and set ya at a broken loom t’weave cloth so bad even the lice don’t want to be seen on it! Then comes the Sabbath and they tells us we’re damned to Hell since God must not love us ‘cause we’re in here instead of on the street.

“There ya have it, lads! Stay a few weeks and you’ll get it all down pat. But not from me, ‘cause I’m for Virginia, soon as the first ship sails. Ain’t no Bridewell in Virginia, that’s for sure! No, nor no Clink and no Newgate prison neither!”