

**Copyrighted Material**

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Parliament Street, Hull, May 1842**

Margriet pressed her nose against the first-floor casement window and turned her head both ways, the better to see along Parliament Street towards Whitefriargate where her mother liked to shop, and then towards Quay Street and the dock from where she hoped her father would come if his ship had berthed.

‘Margriet! Come away from the window.’ Her mother’s voice was impatient. ‘You’re smearing the glass.’ She pressed her finger to the bell on the wall to summon the housekeeper.

‘Sorry.’ Margriet rubbed the pane with the cuff of her sleeve. ‘I’m watching for Papa.’

‘He’ll be here when he’s here,’ her mother told her. ‘No sooner and no later.’ She rethreaded her needle with embroidery silk. ‘It might not even be today, or tomorrow either for that matter. It depends on business.’

Margriet knew that, but Papa was already two days later than he had said he would be. Papa was fun, whereas Mama was no fun at all and only became

**Copyrighted Material**

animated when trying on a new gown or running a fine piece of muslin or velvet through her fingers at the draper's. Margriet thought rebelliously that her mother didn't really mind how long Papa stayed away.

The housekeeper answered the bell and was asked to bring a cloth to clean the window. Margriet hung her head. 'Sorry,' she said again, and dropped her voice to a whisper to explain to Mrs Simmonds that she had been looking out for her father. The housekeeper gave her a complicit smile and told her mistress that she would send Florrie up to deal with the dirty window.

Margriet's father Frederik Vandergroene was Dutch, which made her half Dutch, he had told her, and he ran an import-export business. She hadn't known what that meant when she was little, but now that she was six she thought she understood. It meant that his company bought and sold merchandise between England and Netherlands and other northern countries of Europe. They took lace from Nottingham, linen and wool from Yorkshire and cotton from Manchester across the German Sea, and brought back, amongst many other things, cheese, wine, and gin which he called *Genever* and was the finest spirit you could buy. He brought her mother gifts of trinket boxes in blue and white Delft ware and for Margriet pretty little dolls with porcelain faces and rag bodies that sat on a shelf in her bedroom. Her favourite dolly had a painted celluloid face with wide-open eyes and was dressed in an outdoor gown and bonnet; if she was tipped upside down there she was with another head and

**Copyrighted Material**

her eyes closed and dressed in her nightgown, with slippers on her soft little feet.

He didn't always bring presents, but Margriet didn't mind; she just liked him to come home. The house seemed happier when he was there, the air charged with a joy that disappeared when he went away. Even the servants – Mrs Simmonds, Florrie, Cook and Lily the young maid who was so nervous she rarely spoke to Margriet – seemed much merrier once he was home, and Cook especially made lovely biscuits and cake for him that Mama never ate.

Florrie brought up a cloth that smelled of vinegar and wiped the glass, then polished it with a clean duster. 'I don't think your papa's ship will be here until tomorrow morning, Miss Margriet,' she whispered. 'Tide's not right for it to come in now.'

'Ah,' Margriet said softly. She'd forgotten about the tides. 'Thank you.'

She was given a conspiratorial smile and Rosamund Vandergroene, who must have overheard, said, 'That is all, Florence,' dismissing her, and to her daughter, 'Go to the schoolroom, Margriet, and prepare for your lessons. Miss Ripley will be here shortly.'

Miss Ripley was tall and thin and sniffed constantly even when she didn't have a cold. She also twitched her nose, and when she first came to teach Margriet the child was so fascinated by this habit that she began to do it too. It wasn't until she was spoken to harshly by her mother and then more kindly by her father that she was able to stop, but only by avoiding looking at Miss Ripley. Someone, probably her mother, must have spoken

**Copyrighted Material**

to the governess, for she now kept a handkerchief permanently pressed to her nose.

Margriet's father had taught her to read, write and add up long before Miss Ripley came to teach her, which was just as well, Margriet thought, because the lessons were probably as boring to the governess as they were to her. However, she did bring Margriet some of her own books to read, which were much more interesting than the children's books that her mother had ordered for her.

When the governess joined her in the schoolroom Margriet asked, 'Do you know about tides, Miss Ripley?'

'Tides? What kinds of tides?'

Margriet gazed at her and wondered how many kinds there were. 'Sea tides,' she said, 'that bring ships into the harbour. It's just that Papa's ship should be coming in soon, but it will have to be on the tide.'

'I see.' Miss Ripley sniffed. 'I know there's a morning tide and an evening tide, so if your father's ship has missed the morning tide . . .' She pondered, and then shrugged. 'I don't know. Perhaps it won't come in until tomorrow.'

Margriet's spirits slumped. Sighing, she wiped her slate clean with a cotton cloth and prepared to write answers to the questions that Miss Ripley was sure to ask about yesterday's lessons. Then she heard the bang of the front door and her face became wreathed in smiles. It was a joyous sound, triumphant. No one else slammed the door as her father did. No one else was allowed to. She slid off her chair and looked rebelliously at the governess.

**Copyrighted Material**

‘It’s Papa,’ she said jubilantly. ‘He didn’t miss the tide after all.’

Miss Ripley closed her book. There would be no lessons for a while; she had neither the energy nor the spirit to counter the child’s devotion to her father, and why indeed should she? If she had had such a father, or indeed could have caught such a husband as Frederik Vandergroene, she too would have given him all her love and adoration. But she hadn’t, and with her plain looks, long nose and melancholia she was unlikely to get the chance. She thought of Mrs Vandergroene, who would later question her on how much her daughter had learned that day. I’ll just lie, she thought, following Margriet out of the nursery schoolroom and heading down the stairs to the kitchen, where Cook would be sure to offer her a cup of tea.

‘I thought you’d missed the tide, Papa!’ Margriet flung herself into her father’s arms as he bent to catch her.

He kissed her cheek. ‘No, little Daisy, I did not. We docked very early this morning and I didn’t want to waken you or Mama, so I went to the office and caught up with some work.’

‘So have you finished now? Can I stay downstairs with you and not go back to lessons?’

Her mother was still seated in her chair with her embroidery on her knee. ‘No, you cannot, Margriet,’ she said. ‘Otherwise why are we paying Miss Ripley?’

Margriet looked up at her father as he let her down to the floor. He gazed whimsically back at her. ‘Ten minutes only,’ he said, giving a little wink. ‘Just

**Copyrighted Material**

whilst I have a little chat with your mama. Then I must go back to the office. You see? We all have to work.'

'Mama doesn't,' Margriet pointed out.

'Of course not,' her father said, a slight reprimand in his voice. 'But she has other things to do.' Then he added, 'I'll try to come home early; perhaps we'll have supper together?' He looked at his wife for confirmation.

'I don't think so,' she said. 'Seven o'clock is Margriet's bedtime.'

'A story, Papa. Will you tell me a bedtime story?'

'I will,' he agreed, 'but hush now. I want to speak to your mama.'

Margriet's concentration drifted as she stood by her father's side. She knew by looking at her mother's face that she had not the slightest interest in anything he was saying, but she kept very quiet, otherwise she knew she would be sent upstairs again.

'I had dinner with the Jansens when I was in Gouda. Do you recall meeting Nicolaas, Rosamund?' her father was saying. 'I brought him here for drinks a few years ago. We've known each other since we were boys.' He looked pensive. 'He doesn't look well. Not at all his usual self.' Then he smiled. 'His son, Hans, is a fine boy. Very polite and very grown up for a ten-year-old.' He glanced at Margriet. 'They have a daughter, Klara, a little older than you. About eight, I think.'

'Is she taller than me? Is she fair or dark?'

'She's taller than you, and fair,' he said, 'like you, and Hans's hair is reddish brown, though he was blond when he was a child.'

**Copyrighted Material**

‘Did you know them when they were little?’

‘I met them once or twice, but not often. I usually see their father in his office, but this time he invited me to supper at his house and they were allowed to stay up late to eat with us.’

‘I wish I could stay up late,’ Margriet pleaded. ‘When can I, Mama?’

‘Not yet. Perhaps when you’re older. The Dutch do things differently from us.’ She gave a resigned huff of breath. ‘Off you go now, Margriet. Miss Ripley will be waiting for you.’

‘Yes,’ Frederik continued after Margriet had left the room, ‘Nicolaas didn’t look at all well. I’m quite concerned about him. He’s very sallow, and doesn’t have much appetite even though the meal was delicious.’

Rosamund wore a resigned expression. ‘Herring?’

Frederik laughed. ‘Of course herring. And pea and ham soup, sauerkraut and waffles – not together, of course! Cornelia had arranged a buffet with many different dishes. And then there was apple cake and rye bread, and you know how I love my bread.’ He stood up. ‘I must go back to the office. There’s huge potential for business. Why don’t you come with me next time I go over? I shall be visiting Amsterdam: you could go shopping. We could take Margriet.’

‘I have things to do,’ she said coolly. ‘I’m on several committees, and besides, you know I don’t like to sail. I get very claustrophobic as well as seasick.’

‘But the weather is calm now. I wouldn’t ask you to come in winter as it can get very cold and the sea is rough, but it’s lovely at the moment

**Copyrighted Material**



and the tulips are in flower; they are such a wonderful sight.'

'Well, I'll see,' she said, and he turned away, knowing that she wouldn't come.

## CHAPTER TWO

Margriet ate her supper at a small table in the nursery schoolroom on the top floor of the house. She hated it to be called the nursery, for that implied that she was still a baby. The room was the schoolroom during the day and she sat at the table with Miss Ripley opposite her. After she had finished her lessons and Miss Ripley had gone home, Florrie came up to move the table and chair nearer the fire to make it into a nursery again. A fire-guard was placed in the hearth so that there was no fear of Margriet's burning herself. An interconnecting door led into her bedroom, and apart from the twice-daily visits downstairs to see her parents, once after breakfast and once before bedtime, and being taken for a walk on a fine day, this was where she spent most of her life.

Margriet was convinced that her father would have allowed her downstairs more often had he not spent his days at his office near the estuary, but in practice her mother was in total control of her daughter's well-being, which encompassed the type of book she should read, the food she should eat, her religious instruction, her piano lessons and her

**Copyrighted Material**

health, which meant not going out if the weather was wet or cold in case of catching a chill, or if it was too hot in case of becoming overheated. All of these things Mrs Vandergroene had been taught by her own mother, and so must be right and proper.

Her father was much more lenient. Margriet knew that the daughters of her mother's friends rarely saw their fathers, and when they did it was only when they came downstairs in their dressing gowns before bedtime, and put up their clean and shiny little faces to receive a peck on the cheek. They were certainly not read to by their papas as Margriet was; whenever he was at home her father would sit in an easy chair by her bed and read her a story he had loved when he was a child. He had once quite memorably sat beside her on the bed and she had snuggled beneath his arm to follow the words in one of her favourite books, and both had fallen asleep halfway through it. When Florrie had come up to tuck Margriet in she had had to shake his arm gently and tell him that the supper bell had been rung.

This evening he arrived home early, but not early enough for Margriet to join them for supper; that would have been a rare treat indeed and not an indulgence she expected. Her mother considered that her father spoiled her, and her behaviour today, running down the stairs to greet him, had been quite reprehensible, despite Frederik's pleasure at receiving, as he called it, such a joyous welcome home.

Frederik didn't understand, Rosamund thought. When Miss Ripley had taught her pupil to the best

**Copyrighted Material**

of her ability she would leave, and it would become Rosamund's task to teach their daughter to be an obedient, well-mannered young woman who knew her place in society. Rosamund alone must teach her the important things in life, such as running a household, in preparation for when she married and had her own establishment. She must teach her to respond intelligently to conversation but not to give an opinion lest she be thought forward, a failing which would reflect back upon her mother and not on her indulgent father.

Rosamund's friends constantly reminded her of how lucky she was to have such a tolerant husband, to be married to a man who didn't spend every night at home. She could be invited out to dine or to make up a card party whilst he was away, knowing that Frederik wouldn't object as some husbands might. But what they didn't understand was that Frederik expected her to be interested in what he was doing, and even worse to discuss business or current affairs with him, when she had no interest in either.

When Margriet came downstairs to say goodnight, her father beamed at her. 'Tomorrow I am taking a day's holiday,' he announced, turning to his wife. 'I thought we could take a walk about town and see what's happening – buildings being pulled down and others going up. Margriet can see the ships in the dock and then perhaps we could walk down to the Corporation Pier and look at the Humber.'

Margriet's face lit up, but Rosamund's lips turned down. 'It's very breezy down there,' she said. 'We might catch a chill.'

**Copyrighted Material**

'Nonsense,' Frederik said briskly. 'You can take a warm shawl, and the weather is fine. It will do us good to walk. It will blow the cobwebs away.'

'I wish we could go for a ride on the ferry,' Margriet said. 'Could we, Papa?'

Frederik glanced at Rosamund. 'Well, perhaps another day. Mama doesn't like going on the water. You know that she has never been to my country, or even to Lincolnshire.'

'Poor Mama,' Margriet said.

'I'm so sorry that I can't, Frederik,' Rosamund murmured. 'And I regret only meeting your parents on our wedding day.'

'Yes.' He lowered his eyes. It was remiss of him too not to have taken Margriet to his homeland before his father died a year ago. His parents had never met their granddaughter, but he hoped that when his mother was out of mourning perhaps she would come back with him after one of his visits.

'Come, give Mama a kiss goodnight.' Rosamund held out her hand to Margriet. 'Sleep well.'

'Goodnight, Mama,' Margriet said dutifully and offered her cheek, glancing at her father. He nodded.

'I'll be up in five minutes,' he told her, 'and we'll have a story.'

'A short one,' Rosamund reminded him. 'Supper will be almost ready.'

'Yes,' he said irritably, bending to give Margriet a kiss. 'I know.'

After Margriet had gone up, he said, rather testily, which was unlike him, 'Please do not begrudge the child an extra ten minutes of my time, Rosamund.'

**Copyrighted Material**

She must get lonely with only the company of servants, for she has little of yours!

'I don't understand what you mean, Frederik,' she said primly, which didn't delude him in the least. She knew very well what he meant and how irritated he was that she spent so little time with their daughter. 'I cannot indulge or cosset her in the way that you do or she will grow up to be outspoken and unconventional, which will ruin her chances of making a suitable marriage.'

He said nothing more. Rosamund was inflexible, entrenched in traditional rules of what women should and shouldn't do. For eight years he had offered her the opportunity to speak her mind and enjoy the equality and companionship of a good marriage, and she had chosen not to accept. Well, he would not in future pander to her; she could go to the devil, he thought resentfully. In a few more years, when Margriet was old enough to travel with a maid, he would take her to visit his mother and siblings and show her what family life could be like.

After giving Margriet time to get into bed, he went upstairs and pulled an easy chair closer to her bedside. 'Your mama thinks it too cold to walk out tomorrow.' He saw her expression close up. 'But you and I will still go.' He smiled at her obvious delight. 'You can ask Florrie to give you a warm scarf to wear with your coat in case you need it, though I don't think you will. It's May, after all, and quite warm.'

Margriet nodded. 'I'd like to wear my grey bonnet, because Florrie has put a new blue ribbon on it. She said it needed prettying up and that blue would match my eyes. It's not as pretty as Mama's

**Copyrighted Material**

new hat with the flowers and feathers, but I'll have to wait until I'm grown up to wear one of those.'

'I'm sure your bonnet will look lovely,' he said, 'and so will you. Now, what shall we read tonight?'

'I don't know,' she said. 'I'm a little tired of the ones we always read. You can choose, Papa.'

'Well, I was thinking that maybe I'll tell you something about history, about the old days, or perhaps Miss Ripley does that?'

She nodded and sighed. 'She tells me about kings and queens, but it's a bit boring because all she wants me to learn are the dates when they were on the throne.'

'Mmm. And has Miss Ripley told you about our young queen, or of the time when King Henry had a palace in Hull?'

Margriet considered. 'I know when Victoria came to the throne. It was in June 1837, after her uncle William died. I don't remember it because I was only a baby, but I think I remember seeing all the flags in the streets when she married Prince Albert and we went to parties to celebrate, didn't we, Papa?' Her eyes widened. 'But Miss Ripley never said that King Henry came to live in Hull. Where is his palace? Can we go and see it?'

Frederik smiled. 'I'm not sure if he ever lived in Hull, but monarchs had houses and palaces all over the country, so that they could stay in them if they were visiting the area.'

'Could they not have stayed with friends?' she asked. 'I'm sure people would have loved to have them visit. Mama would be very pleased to have the queen here to stay if ever she came to Hull, and her

**Copyrighted Material**

friends would be very jealous, but . . .' She frowned and contemplated. 'I'm not sure which bedroom she would have. I wouldn't mind if she had mine, but of course she would bring lots of servants, so perhaps we wouldn't have room – maybe that's why they have their own palaces to stay in.'

'I think you have worked that out very well, Margriet. So where do you think she would stay if she did come to Hull?'

Margriet shook her head. 'I don't know. I don't think there is anywhere that would be suitable. Perhaps someone should build a palace for her, just in case.'

He saw that she was getting sleepy, so he tucked her blankets around her. 'I think that tomorrow we'll look at all the buildings and think about where she might like to stay, and about what went before.' He smiled. 'Do you know the name of the street that was here before Parliament Street?'

'No,' she murmured, her eyelids drooping. 'It's always been called Parliament Street.'

'It was called Mug-House Entry!'

'Oh, Papa,' she chided sleepily. 'You are joking of me!'

He kissed the top of her head. 'No,' he said softly. 'I am not joking of you. Sleep well, *mijn lieveling*. And tomorrow we will go and look for King Henry's palace.'



## CHAPTER THREE

The following morning was bright and sunny. Margriet had an early breakfast and was dressed and ready for their walk when her mother came into her bedroom.

‘Why do you have your coat on, Margriet? Where are you going?’

Margriet licked her lips. ‘For a walk, Mama. Don’t you remember?’

‘Don’t be impertinent,’ her mother admonished her. ‘Of course I remember, but I don’t recall that we agreed that you should miss your lessons with Miss Ripley. You must do at least an hour’s work before you go out.’

Margriet’s mouth trembled. ‘I’m so sorry, Mama,’ she mumbled. ‘I – I didn’t realize – I thought Papa meant after breakfast.’ She began to unbutton her coat and take off her bonnet. She looked up at her mother. ‘Will you be coming too?’

‘Of course I will. Why not?’

Margriet managed a smile, though she would rather have had just her father’s company. ‘Oh, good,’ she murmured. ‘That will be very nice. We’re going to look for King Henry’s palace.’

**Copyrighted Material**

‘What?’ Her mother frowned. ‘A palace?’

‘Papa said. He said that King Henry had a palace in Hull.’

‘Your father fills your head with stuff and nonsense. I have never heard of such a thing and I have lived here all my life. Miss Ripley!’ Rosamund called as she heard the governess come into the adjoining schoolroom. ‘Have you ever heard of a king’s palace in Hull?’

Miss Ripley patted her mouth. ‘Erm, I vaguely recall something,’ she offered hesitantly, not knowing whether yes or no would please her pupil’s mother.

‘Well, have you or haven’t you?’

‘It’s possible,’ she said. ‘I believe King Henry commandeered a manor house in medieval times. It – erm – isn’t here now.’

‘So there you are, Margriet. What did I say? Miss Ripley,’ Rosamund continued, ‘Mr Vandergroene wishes to take Margriet out this morning, but first she must have an hour’s lesson. You may then take the rest of the morning off, but I will expect you to make up the lost time on another day.’

Miss Ripley dipped her knee. ‘Of course, ma’am,’ she said. ‘Thank you. Well,’ she said to Margriet, ‘we’d better get started and then you can go off and enjoy the sunshine.’

‘I expect there’s a chill wind, isn’t there?’ Rosamund asked.

‘Oh, no, ma’am,’ Miss Ripley smiled, unable to believe her luck at being given the morning off on such a lovely day. ‘It’s warm and sunny. Just perfect for a walk.’

Rosamund left the room and met Frederik coming

**Copyrighted Material**

up the stairs. 'Miss Ripley has arrived,' she told him. 'She's going to give Margriet an hour's lesson before we go out.'

'Oh, is she?' He seemed astonished. 'I would have thought she would have jumped at the chance of having a day off. Well, I suppose I could have another cup of coffee whilst we wait.'

'I'll ring for Florence,' Rosamund said. 'If you'll excuse me, Frederik, I must take a powder before I get ready. I have a beastly headache starting and I want to nip it in the bud if I can.' She gave a stoical sigh. 'I don't want to spoil our walk by making us all come home again.'

'No indeed,' Frederik agreed. 'But the fresh air will do you good.'

'Oh, I don't think so,' his wife murmured. 'There are so many infections lurking about, with that dreadful workhouse at the bottom of the street. Something should be done about it. It isn't right to have it situated so close to where decent people live.'

Frederik nodded. He had heard this opinion often; it seemed to be the only topic that Rosamund discussed.

By the time Margriet met him in the hall wearing her coat and her newly trimmed bonnet, he was waiting with increasing impatience for Rosamund to come down and say she was ready. Half the morning had been wasted, and he wished he had gone into the office. Then Florrie came hurrying downstairs, followed by Miss Ripley.

'Beg pardon, sir,' Florrie dipped her knee. 'The mistress isn't well and asks to be excused from

**Copyrighted Material**

coming out – her headache . . . She says that Miss Ripley could go with you instead.’

‘I see,’ Frederik murmured. ‘And what does Miss Ripley say about that?’

Florrie glanced at the governess and the three of them waited for her to speak. Her nose twitched and she uttered something that could have been a hesitant stammering excuse or an apologetic erm.

‘You don’t have to come, Miss Ripley,’ Margriet said kindly, giving her an option to refuse. ‘You might prefer to go home.’

‘Of course you’d like to go home,’ Frederik said firmly, ‘or indeed anywhere you please. You can have the rest of the morning off, and goodness me,’ he glanced at his pocket watch, ‘how the day is flying by. Off you go.’

As Miss Ripley rushed out of the door as if worried he might have a change of heart, Florrie asked, ‘Shall I tell Mrs Vandergroene of the new arrangements, sir?’

Frederik stood for a moment as if considering, then said, ‘No, I don’t think so. She’s better resting, don’t you agree? Best not to disturb her in the slightest.’

‘Very good, sir.’ Florrie seemed relieved. She smiled at Margriet. ‘Don’t you go losing that pretty bonnet, Miss Margriet,’ she said, ‘for you’d never get it back again.’

Margriet put her hand into her father’s. ‘I won’t, Florrie,’ she said. ‘Thank you. I’ll take great care of it.’

When father and daughter had left the house, Florrie heaved a sigh and went into the kitchen.

**Copyrighted Material**

Cook was rolling pastry and Mrs Simmonds was drinking a cup of coffee.

'Mistress is in bed,' she said, 'and 'master has tekken Miss Margriet out. We might get a bit o' peace for an hour or so.' Cutting a slice of bread and smearing it with marmalade, she said, 'I think that this is not a very happy household.'

'Well, that doesn't concern us,' Mrs Simmonds said sharply. 'Though I feel sorry for 'little lass in 'middle of it.'

'She's happy today.' Florrie took a bite from her bread and munched appreciatively. 'And who wouldn't be with such a papa? She told me when I was dressing her this morning that they were going to look at 'king's palace and when I said I'd never heard of such a place she told me that King Henry used to live here.'

'He's teaching her history, then,' Mrs Simmonds said. 'But I can't think it'll be of much use to her. She'll be married off to somebody when she's old enough and be in 'same role as her mother.' She curled her lip. 'And live a most useful life.'

Margriet and her father walked along Parliament Street and crossed into Quay Street, where they stood looking at the busy dock in front of them. It was packed tightly with sailing ships, steamers and schooners, barges and tug boats with barely any space between them.

'Hull is a great shipping town,' he told her, 'and when this dock was built it was the largest in the country. That was when they made Parliament Street, to give access to it from Whitefriargate. The

**Copyrighted Material**

ships come in to the River Hull from the sea and the Humber and unload here. You know where the Humber Dock and the Junction Dock are, don't you?'

Margriet shook her head.

'The Junction Dock is at the top of Whitefriargate, a mere two-minute walk from our house. How is it that you don't know? It links together the other two. It's a ring of docks.' He shook his head; it was remiss of him not to have shown her before. Had she been a son and not a daughter he would have done so.

'I'm sorry, Papa,' she said, looking crestfallen. 'I didn't know. But please, when are we going to see the king's palace?'

He laughed. She was still a child and believed in fairy stories, so he would take her. 'First of all we will go back into Parliament Street,' he said, 'and I will show you a secret place.'

'Oh?'

'You have probably passed it with your mama or Florrie and not even noticed it, although I'm sure Florrie must know it.'

They walked back a few yards and Frederik paused by a narrow opening between the buildings. 'This is a short cut, a passageway through to another part of the town.' He gazed down at her. 'Shall we take a look?'

Margriet peered down the entrance and clutched her father's hand. 'I don't know. It's very dark.'

'It's dark because the buildings are high and no sunlight can get in, that's all. Shall we try?'

'All right,' she agreed, 'but I don't think that Mama would have liked it.'

**Copyrighted Material**

'I'm quite sure she wouldn't, but there's nothing to fear, Margriet, or I wouldn't bring you.'

She knew that was true; Papa would never let her come to any harm. She followed him trustfully, holding on to the hand he held out behind him. It was too narrow for them to walk side by side so she kept as close as possible without treading on his heels.

There were doorways along the passage, leading into houses, she supposed, and as Papa had said the buildings were very high, but some had windows at the very top to catch what little light there was. They turned a corner that brought them into a slightly wider area, where the buildings had yards and washing hanging out and children playing in the dirt; her father said it was called Duncan's Entry. A few moments later she could see an opening ahead of them leading out into a sunny, busy street.

'Once upon an ancient time,' her father began, 'by the confluence of the River Hull and the Humber estuary, the monks of Meaux owned a piece of land and on it a hamlet they named Wyke. The people of Wyke lived in wooden houses and there were no paved or cobbled streets such as we have today, but only the rough earth. Then one day King Edward I realized that Wyke was well protected from any enemies coming from across the sea and bought it from the monks. He called it King's Town upon Hull, but everyone came to know it as Hull.'

'Oh,' Margriet said, disappointed. 'So it wasn't King Henry after all? And what about the palace?'

**Copyrighted Material**

Frederik took firm hold of her hand as they walked on; the road was busy with carriages and traps and carters' vans. 'The reason that the king wanted it was because of its position,' he went on. 'He enclosed the town with boundary walls, gates and a moat, and where there was no wall there was the barrier of the estuary and the River Hull to keep the people safe from any invaders.' He looked down to see if she was listening, and she appeared to be. 'And over the centuries,' he continued, 'inside these walls, various royal personages came and made improvements. Rich merchants and ship owners lived in High Street, and there were craftsmen, wood carvers and silversmiths, and warehouses full of goods to trade with other countries. Most important of all was Holy Trinity Church in Market Place, where shopkeepers and stallholders clustered around it selling their wares, much as they do today.'

'I sometimes go there with Florrie,' she said eagerly, as if wanting to be included in this rich tapestry of life.

Her father nodded. 'It became a bustling medieval town, and,' he paused dramatically, 'many important people lived here.'

'Like the king!' Margriet piped up as they came to the top of Silver Street.

He stopped and pointed out the old church of St Mary's and now she knew they had walked in a circle and were not far from home. Here were shops selling silver and gold jewellery and regalia where her mother liked to linger.

'Noble families like the De la Poles served under

**Copyrighted Material**



many kings, and one of them, the earl of Suffolk, built a mansion which he called Suffolk Palace.'

'For the kings to stay in when they visited!' Margriet exclaimed. 'So where is it, Papa?'

'It was right here where we are standing,' he said, 'and it was a splendid building with a great gateway and a fine tower.'

Margriet looked about her, but there was no splendid palace, only some commercial buildings that she had seen before and hardly noticed. She turned a disappointed face to her father.

'I think that's enough history for the time being,' he said, smiling. 'Let's take a walk down High Street by the Old Harbour and look at the ships, and then we'll go to the pier to see the Humber. Perhaps we might stop for a dish of ice cream, *ja*?'

'*Ja*,' she agreed, and thought how she loved being out with him.

From High Street he led her down one of the staiths to look at the congested River Hull, clogged with barges and cobs and fishing vessels. The wharf was stacked with wooden crates and coils of ropes and all the paraphernalia of shipping, too dangerous, Frederik considered, for Margriet to walk along, so they cut back into High Street again, heading for the Vittoria Hotel and the promised ice cream.

They were sitting at a window table overlooking the estuary, Frederik sipping coffee and Margriet scraping her dish for the last of the ice cream, when a figure loomed beside them.

'Vandergroene!' The man was stocky and rather portly, as if he lived well, and was holding out

**Copyrighted Material**

his hand. Frederik stood up to greet him and shake it.

‘Webster! How are you? Won’t you join us? This is my daughter Margriet. Margriet, this is my lawyer, Mr Hugh Webster.’

Hugh Webster gave a polite bow. ‘Charmed to meet you, Miss Vandergroene. How are you?’

‘Very well, sir, thank you.’ Margriet gave a slight nod of her head, as she had seen her mother do on meeting an acquaintance, and then offered her hand, which Mr Webster bent over.

‘Delighted,’ he smiled, before seating himself. ‘This is a great pleasure.’ He turned to her father. ‘So, not working today, Frederik?’

‘No. I decided I would take the day off and enjoy the company of my wife and daughter. Unfortunately, Rosamund felt unwell and was unable to join us.’

Webster glanced at Margriet. ‘So you have your papa all to yourself?’

Margriet couldn’t help but give a happy smile. ‘Papa is telling me about the kings who used to live here. Or at least . . .’ She hesitated. They hadn’t quite got to that part. ‘They had a palace here, so I expect they stayed sometimes.’

‘Really?’ Mr Webster seemed astonished. ‘I didn’t know that.’

‘Opposite St Mary’s Church,’ she informed him. ‘But it isn’t there now.’

‘Teaching history, are you?’ Webster asked Frederik. ‘How is it that you know so much about a town you weren’t born in?’

‘I’ve known Hull for many years.’ Frederik ordered another pot of coffee for them both and a

**Copyrighted Material**

lemonade for Margriet, who sat happily in her chair looking out at the choppy estuary waters and feeling very grown up sitting here with her father and his friend. 'I first came here when I was eighteen and about to join the family company. We had recently opened a Hull office. I liked the town and got to know it very well on my visits, and five years later I married Rosamund and came to live here.'

'I see. I hadn't realized you had known it so long, longer even than I,' Webster observed, 'for I have been here only five or six years.' He leaned confidentially towards Frederik. 'Speaking of marriage, do you recall the broker Smithson? He died about two years ago?'

'I do remember, *ja*; he left substantial assets to his widow, or so I heard.'

'You heard correctly. He was not my client, so I am free to speak of it.' Webster lowered his voice. 'His widow married a much younger man shortly after her mourning period was over; I have recently learned that within six months he has spent practically all her money, has taken a mistress, and is now threatening to sell the house to raise capital, which will leave the former Mrs Smithson and her two daughters virtually penniless.'

He gazed keenly at Frederik. 'Smithson was not well advised. I suppose he thought that as his wife was of middle age she would not be tempted by another suitor after his death, but he was quite wrong. I tell you this, Frederik, as I am telling all my clients, to be sure your will is watertight, however fit and hearty you may be at present.' He smiled at Margriet, who was listening to the

**Copyrighted Material**

conversation with her head on one side. 'You must take steps to ensure that if, heaven forbid, anything should happen to you, your wife and daughter will be secure.'

## CHAPTER FOUR

At last the lawyer rose from his seat. 'I'll see you some time soon, Frederik, and we'll sort out the details.' He turned to Margriet. 'I won't detain you from your activities any longer, Miss Vandergroene. It has been a great pleasure meeting you and I am always at your service.' He gave her a courtly bow of his head, his hand to his chest.

'Thank you,' she said. 'I'm much obliged.'

Frederik gave an indulgent smile and shook hands with Webster, who murmured 'Charming' as he left them.

Frederik turned to his daughter. 'Shall we continue our walk, Margriet, or are you tired?'

'Oh, no,' she assured him. 'I want to know what comes next.'

They walked away from the pier with their backs to the estuary, and Margriet felt the cool wind at her neck. Soon they came to Market Place, where the gleaming statue of William of Orange, or King Billy as he was affectionately known in the town, sat astride his horse.

'What you have to imagine, Margriet,' her father said, 'is that in the olden times, before these

**Copyrighted Material**

buildings were here, this was open land. When King Henry came on a visit he liked what he saw and took Suffolk Palace for himself, renaming it the King's Manor House and laying out elaborate gardens with fish ponds, flowering bushes and trees that stretched all the way down here.'

'And did the king walk in the gardens?' she asked, her voice rising in wonder. 'Did he come down here where we are now?'

'I expect he did, along with his advisers and noblemen, and perhaps noblewomen too.'

'I expect the ladies liked the gardens more than the gentlemen did,' she said. 'Mama would have liked them.'

'Mmm,' her father said. 'Perhaps so.' He was thinking that Rosamund had never shown any interest in visiting the tulip fields of his home country. Entertaining or being entertained was what she liked most of all.

'Can you see them in your mind's eye?' he asked her. 'The gentlemen dressed in doublets made of the finest material, and linen shirts with wide sleeves, with gold chains round their necks and rings on their fingers to indicate their wealth, and the noblewomen wearing so many layers of petticoats under their velvet gowns that it would have taken them hours to get ready before being seen in public.'

'Oh,' she murmured, 'I wouldn't have liked that. It takes Florrie a long time to dress me before I go out with Mama. I have to wear three petticoats. I much prefer it when I stay in for lessons and only need to wear one. And I expect those ladies wouldn't have

**Copyrighted Material**

wanted to get their lovely gowns dirty if the weather was wet, but how uncomfortable they would have been if the days were hot!

They continued along Market Place, past the stalls near Holy Trinity Church where the traders were calling out their wares, their voices mingling with the squawks of caged hens and the bleating of goats and the rattle and rumbling of wheels on the cobbles, until Margriet said abruptly, 'But what about the poor people?'

'The poor people?' Frederik's thoughts had turned away from the past to the present day and his conversation with Webster. He had made a will in Rosamund's favour, with provision for Margriet and any other children they might have – although he considered that highly unlikely – but he hadn't given any thought to Rosamund's position if by chance he should die suddenly and she should marry again.

He recalled the sinking of a passenger ship only the previous year, when a sudden storm had blown up in the German Sea and many people had drowned. He spent a considerable time travelling overseas, he thought, and the worst could happen. Rosamund was not yet thirty, and she was not wise enough to look after her own interests. Just like poor Mrs Smithson and her daughters, she and Margriet could be in a very precarious position if she should marry a bounder.

Margriet was pulling at his sleeve. 'Papa! What about them? Were there any, or was everyone rich?'

He gazed vaguely at her. 'Ah, the poor who are always with us. They would rub along as usual, I

**Copyrighted Material**

suppose,' he said thoughtfully. 'They would try to keep alive by whatever means possible. Work, if they could find it.' He wondered whether there were workhouses in those far-off days, and considered it unlikely. 'In order to buy their bread and lodgings,' he added.

'Well, that would be very unfair,' Margriet said indignantly, 'especially if there were rich people who could have helped them.'

Frederik sighed. 'Yes,' he said. 'But it was always so. It is an unfair world.' He looked down at her sweet little face, which was wearing an unaccustomed scowl. 'So how do you know about poor people, my dear Daisy? Who has told you?'

'I've seen them from my window. They come to the workhouse at the end of the street and wait outside the gate to be let in; and when Mama goes shopping they hold out their hands to her.'

But, she thought, Mama says, 'Don't look at them. Come away, come away, don't look at them,' and never gives them a single copper, unlike Florrie when she comes with us to carry the parcels. She slips a coin into their hands, especially the old beggar women who are dressed in rags and can barely walk in their torn boots. Mama says I mustn't touch them as they are probably diseased, and Florrie nips her mouth up very tight when she hears that. She doesn't say anything in front of Mama – she's afraid to, I expect – but she tells me afterwards that they are to be pitied for having fallen on hard times.

'I have one more place to show you,' her father was saying, 'but if you're tired we can cut across in front of the church and go home.'

**Copyrighted Material**



‘I’m not tired,’ she said quickly, even though she was, but she didn’t want the outing to end. ‘I’d like to see it.’

He led her on until they reached the top of Silver Street once again and were looking down the length of Whitefriargate, within minutes of home.

‘Down here is a street that you might have passed without noticing,’ he said, ‘and there are many stories of how it came to be named.’

Margriet looked up at him quizzically. ‘Mama says we must hurry past all the little streets – entries, she calls them – for fear of robbers and ne’er-dowells hiding in them. I can see one of them from a window at the back of our house. Florrie says it’s called Winter’s Alley. I hadn’t been down the passage to Duncan’s Entry before, but sometimes if I go on an errand with Florrie we cut through some of the others.’

She hesitated, fearing she had been indiscreet and might have got Florrie into trouble, but her father simply smiled and said that he was quite sure Florrie would not let her run into danger. A moment later he pulled her to a halt. ‘Now, do you know where we are?’

Margriet looked round. ‘I do know this street,’ she said, ‘but not its name.’

‘Then look up and find it, and then tell me what you think of it.’

Margriet gazed up at the high walls on either side. It was an unremarkable street with an inn on the corner, and it was not as elegant as their own Parliament Street; most of the buildings had tall doorways leading straight off the street, and she saw

**Copyrighted Material**

that what she had thought was a small lane led into a courtyard and the narrow passage they had come down earlier. She spun round and saw Bowlalley Lane behind her, then lifted her gaze again and saw the name he was referring to.

She drew in a breath and mouthed, 'Oh.' On a grimy metal plaque, too high for her to have noticed before, she read, *Land of Green Ginger*.

## CHAPTER FIVE

The stories might not be true, her father told her as he led her up the short street, but no one could dispute them, for there wasn't anyone left alive who could remember how it had come by its name.

Margriet nodded her head and listened as he told her that there had been a street here for hundreds of years, and it was marked on old maps as Old Beverley Street. He said that he had become interested in the name when he was a young man just arrived from Amsterdam, and had been told that a Dutch family named Lindegroen had once lived here. 'Some people think the street name is a corruption of theirs, but there are others who say that ginger was once grown here, so—'

'In the king's gardens?' Margriet asked eagerly.

'Possibly so,' he agreed, 'for the street was very close to the palace. Other people say that the ginger was preserved here and stored in jars and the name came from that.'

Margriet tugged on his hand and looked about her. 'Could there have been a shop here and it sold ginger? Because I think this is the place where the little girl lives.'

**Copyrighted Material**

‘Which little girl?’

‘The little Dutch girl, from the family that you said. Lindegroen. Green lime trees.’

‘How do you know it means green lime trees?’ he asked, astonished. ‘*Spreek je Nederlands?*’

She shook her head and gave a little hop. ‘*Nee!* But the little girl does.’

‘Does she?’ Frederik raised his eyebrows. ‘How do you know?’

‘She’s Dutch.’ Margriet looked up at the roofline of one of the buildings and pointed. ‘She said this is Lindegroen Walk.’

Frederik followed her gaze. The building she was indicating seemed unused; the door had a bar across it and the upstairs windows were dirty. He was startled when Margriet gave a sudden smile and a wave of her hand before turning back to him. ‘She’s gone now. Perhaps I’ll see her again another day.’

He felt he should mention this encounter to Rosamund once they were home. Margriet had gone upstairs to her room, where Florrie brought her a meal of soup made from yesterday’s chicken and a small bowl of rice pudding, and then suggested she had a lie down on her bed for an hour after her long walk. ‘Perhaps read a book?’ she said, but Margriet shook her head and said, ‘No thank you, Florrie, I have some thinking to do.’

Frederik preferred to eat their main meal at seven o’clock, so he and Rosamund were just served cold chicken and bread and butter, followed by coffee and cake.

**Copyrighted Material**