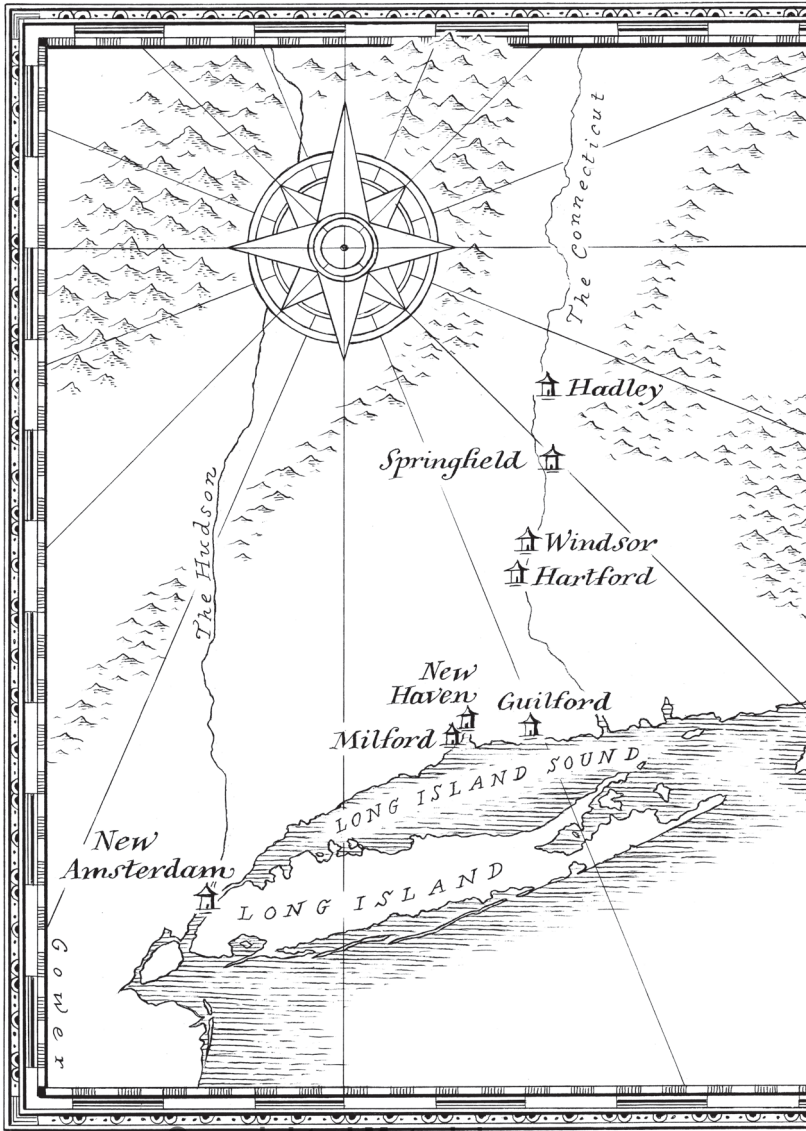


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NEW ENGLAND  
— 1660 —

Cambridge  
Boston  
Charles

CAPE COD

A T L A N T I C O C E A N



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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

This novel is an imaginative re-creation of a true story: the tracking down of the 'regicides', the killers of King Charles I, the greatest manhunt of the seventeenth century – in particular, the pursuit of Edward Whalley and William Goffe across New England. The events, dates and locations are accurate, and almost every character is real, apart from Richard Nayler. I suspect there must have been such a person – you cannot sustain a manhunt without a manhunter – but whoever he was, his identity is lost to history.

Otherwise, I have tried to stick to the known facts, and even discovered a few that were previously unknown, such as the date and place of Goffe's birth and the identity of Whalley's second wife. But it *is* a novel, and readers who want to investigate the story further will find a list of sources in the acknowledgements.

Robert Harris  
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## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

### *The regicides*

**Colonel Edward Whalley**

**Colonel William Goffe**

### *In Massachusetts*

**Daniel Gookin** a settler in Cambridge,  
Massachusetts

**Mary Gookin** Daniel Gookin's wife

**Mary, Elizabeth, Daniel, Samuel, Nathaniel** the  
Gookins' children

**John Endecott** governor of Massachusetts

**Jonathan Mitchell** Cambridge minister

**John Norton** minister of the Boston First Church

**Captain Thomas Breedon** Boston merchant,  
shipowner, Royalist

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

**Thomas Kellond** shipowner, Royalist  
**Captain Thomas Kirke** Royalist  
**John Chapin** Nayler's guide  
**John Stewart, William Mackwater, Niven Agnew,**  
**John Ross** Scotsmen, members of Nayler's  
hunting party  
**John Dixwell** regicide

*In New Haven*

**Reverend John Davenport** minister and  
co-founder of New Haven  
**Nicholas Street** assistant minister and headteacher  
in New Haven  
**William Jones** resident of New Haven  
**Hannah Jones** William Jones's wife  
**William Leete** governor of New Haven  
**Dennis Crampton** resident of New Haven  
**Richard Sperry** farmer

*In Connecticut*

**John Winthrop** governor of Connecticut  
**Simon Lobdell** guide  
**Micah Tomkins** general store owner in Milford  
**Captain Thomas Bull** Puritan in Hartford  
**John Russell** minister in Hadley

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

*In London*

- Richard Nayler** clerk to the Privy Council  
**Katherine Whalley** Edward Whalley's wife  
**Frances Goffe** William Goffe's wife, Edward  
Whalley's daughter  
**Frankie, Betty, Nan, Judith, Richard** the Goffes'  
children  
**Reverend William Hooke** Edward Whalley's  
brother-in-law  
**Jane Hooke** William Hooke's wife, Edward  
Whalley's sister  
**Colonel Hacker** former commander of the troops  
guarding King Charles I  
**Isabelle Hacker** Colonel Hacker's wife  
**Sir Edward Hyde (later Earl of Clarendon)** Lord  
Chancellor  
**Sir William Morice** Secretary of State  
**Sir Arthur Annesley, Sir Anthony Ashley-Cooper**  
Privy Councillors  
**Barbara Palmer (later Lady Castlemaine)** Charles  
II's mistress  
**Samuel Nokes** Nayler's secretary  
**Duke of York** King Charles II's younger brother  
**Samuel Wilson** merchant

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*In Europe*

**Sir George Downing** His Majesty's ambassador at  
The Hague

**Sir John Barkstead, John Dixwell, Colonel  
John Okey, Miles Corbet, Edmund**

**Ludlow** signatories of the King's death warrant

**James Fitz Edmond Cotter, Miles Crowley, John  
Rierdan** Irish Royalist officers

**Sir John Lisle** lawyer who managed King Charles I's  
trial

*In the Civil War*

**Oliver Cromwell** Edward Whalley's cousin

**Henry Ireton** Cromwell's son-in-law

**General Fairfax** Parliamentary commander

**Cornet George Joyce** soldier who arrested the King

**John Bradshaw** president of the court at Charles I's  
trial

**John Cooke** prosecuting attorney at Charles I's trial

**Thomas Harrison** signatory of the King's death  
warrant

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PART ONE

# HUNT

1660

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## CHAPTER ONE

**I**F YOU HAD set out in the summer of 1660 to travel the four miles from Boston to Cambridge, Massachusetts, the first house you would have come to after crossing the Charles River would have been the Gookins'. It stood beside the road on the southern edge of the small settlement, just past the creek, midway across the marshy land between the river and Harvard College – a confident, two-storey timbered property in its own fenced lot with an attic in its steep roof commanding a clear view of the Charles. That year, the colony was building its first bridge across the river. Thick wooden piles were being driven into the mud close to the ramp where the ferryboat ran. The sound of hammering and sawing and the shouts of the workmen drifted up to the house on the drowsy mid-summer air.

On this particular day – Friday 27 July – the front

door was flung wide open, and a childish sign reading *Welcome Home* had been nailed to the gatepost. A passing student had reported that a ship from London, the *Prudent Mary*, had dropped anchor that morning between Boston and Charlestown. Among her passengers was believed to be Mr Daniel Gookin, the master of the property, returning to America after an absence of two years.

The house, spotless enough to begin with, had been quickly swept and tidied, the children scrubbed and forced into their best Sabbath clothes. By early afternoon, all five were waiting with Mrs Gookin in the parlour: Mary, who was twenty and named after her mother; Elizabeth, eighteen; and their three younger brothers, Daniel, ten, Samuel, eight, and four-year-old Nathaniel, who had no memory of his father and was fidgeting in his chair.

Mrs Gookin knew it was the prospect of the meeting, rather than being cooped up indoors, that was making him so fretful. She took him onto her lap, stroked his hair and spoke of the man who would soon walk through the door – of his goodness and kindness and his important work for the government in London, where he had been summoned by the Lord Protector himself. ‘He loves you, Nat, and God will make it so that you love him.’

‘What’s a Lord Protect Her?’

‘Protector, child. He was the ruler of England and America.’

‘Like a king?’

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‘Yes, like a king, only better, because he was chosen by Parliament. But the Protector is dead now. That’s why your father is coming home.’

Nat’s eyes widened. ‘If the Protector is dead, then who will protect us?’

It was a question that had defeated the cleverest minds in England, and Mrs Gookin found herself stuck for an answer. She spoke over Nathaniel’s head to her daughter. ‘Mary, go to the attic, will you, and see if your father is coming.’

Mary ran upstairs, and returned a minute later to report that the ferryboat was still moored on the opposite bank and there was no sign of anyone on the road.

From then on, the children took it in turns every quarter-hour to climb up to the attic and be the look-out, each time descending with the same answer. An awful conviction began to grow in Mrs Gookin’s mind that her husband would not be coming after all – that his ship had not arrived, or that it had anchored but he was not on board. Perhaps he had never embarked from London, or some calamity had befallen him during the crossing. The shrouded body, the brief prayers, the corpse weighted at the neck sliding head-first down the gangplank into the waves – she could see it all. It had happened twice during their original voyage from England nearly twenty years before.

‘Go outside, boys, and wait for him there.’

Nat scrambled off her lap and all three darted for the door like cats released from a sack.



‘But don’t dirty your clothes . . .’

The girls remained in their places. Mary, who was most like her mother in her stolid good sense, and who had acted the man’s role in the household over the past two years, said, ‘I’m sure there’s no need to worry yourself, Mama. God will have watched over him.’

At which Elizabeth – prettier and always grumbling about her chores – burst out, ‘But it must be seven hours since his ship arrived, and it’s only an hour to Boston.’

‘Don’t criticise your father,’ said Mrs Gookin. ‘If he is delayed, he’ll have good reason.’

A few minutes later, Daniel called from outside, ‘Someone’s coming!’

They hurried out of the house, through the gate and onto the dried rutted mud of the road. Mrs Gookin squinted in the direction of the river. Her eyesight had worsened since her husband’s departure. All she could make out was the dark shape of the ferry, like a water beetle, halfway across the bright ribbon of water. The boys were shouting, ‘It’s a cart! It’s a cart! It’s Papa in a cart!’

They dashed down the road to meet it, Nat’s short legs pumping to keep up with his brothers.

‘Is it really him?’ asked Mrs Gookin, peering helplessly.

‘It’s him,’ said Elizabeth. ‘See – look – he’s waving.’

‘Oh, thank God.’ Mrs Gookin fell to her knees. ‘Thank God.’

‘Yes, it’s him,’ repeated Mary, shielding her eyes

from the sun, before adding, in a puzzled voice, ‘but he has two men with him.’

In the immediate flurry of kisses and embraces, of tears and laughter, of children being tossed into the air and whirled around, the pair of strangers, who remained throughout politely seated in the back of the cart among the luggage, were at first ignored.

Daniel Gookin hoisted Nat up onto his shoulders, tucked Dan and Sam under either arm and ran with them around the yard, scattering the chickens, then turned his attention to the shrieking girls. Mary had forgotten how big her husband was, how handsome, how large a presence. She could not take her eyes off him.

Finally, Gookin set down the girls, placed his hand around her waist, whispered, ‘There are men here you must meet; do not be alarmed,’ and ushered her towards the cart. ‘Gentlemen, I fear I have plain forgot my manners. Allow me to present my wife, the true Prudent Mary – in flesh and blood at last.’

A pair of weather-beaten, ragged-bearded heads turned to examine her. Hats were lifted to reveal long, matted hair. They wore buff leather overcoats, caked with salt, and high-sided scuffed brown boots. As they stood, somewhat stiffly, the thick leather creaked and Mary caught a whiff of sea and sweat and mildew, as if they had been fished up from the bed of the Atlantic.

‘Mary,’ continued Gookin, ‘these are two good friends of mine, who shared the crossing with me – Colonel

Edward Whalley, and his son-in-law, Colonel William Goffe.’

Whalley said, ‘Indeed it is a pleasure to meet you, Mrs Gookin.’

She forced a smile and glanced at her husband – *two colonels?* – but already he had withdrawn his hand and was moving to help the pair down from the cart. She noticed how deferential he was in their presence, and how when they put their feet to the ground after so many weeks at sea, both men swayed slightly, and laughed, and steadied one another. The children gawped.

Colonel Goffe, the younger one, said, ‘Let us give thanks for our deliverance.’ Beneath his beard he had a fine, keen, pious face; his voice carried a musical lilt. He held up his hands, palms flat, and cast his eyes to the heavens. The Gookin family quickly wrenched their fascinated gaze from him and lowered their heads. ‘We remember Psalm One Hundred and Seven. “O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters. These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.” Amen.’

‘Amen.’

‘And who do we have here?’ asked Colonel Whalley. He moved along the line of children, collecting their names. At the end, he pointed to each in turn. ‘Mary. Elizabeth. Daniel. Sam. Nathaniel. Very good. I am Ned, and this is Will.’

Nathaniel said, 'Did you know the Lord Protect Her, Ned?'

'I did, very well.'

'He's dead, you know.'

'Hush,' said Mrs Gookin.

'Yes, Nathaniel, that he is,' replied Ned sadly. 'More's the pity.'

There was a silence.

Mr Gookin clapped his hands. 'Boys, fetch the colonels' bags for them.'

Until that moment, Mary Gookin had nursed a hope that her husband had merely offered the men a ride. Now, as she watched them unload their luggage from the cart and hand it to her sons, she felt dismay. It was hardly the homecoming she had dreamed of — to feed and shelter two senior officers of the English army.

'And where are we to put them, Daniel?' She spoke quietly, so they could not hear, and took care not to look at him, the easier to keep her temper.

'The boys can give up their beds and sleep downstairs.'

'How long are they to stay?'

'As long as it is necessary.'

'What is that? A day? A month? A year?'

'I cannot say.'

'Why here? Are there no rooms to be had in Boston? Are colonels too poor to pay for their own beds?'

'The governor believes Cambridge a safer lodging place than Boston.'

*Safer . . .*

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'You've consulted the governor about their accommodation?'

'We've been with him half the day. He gave us dinner.'

So that was why his journey from Boston had taken him so long. She watched the boys struggling under the weight of the large bags, the two colonels walking behind them towards the house, talking to the girls. To her feelings of dismay and irritation was suddenly added an altogether sharper emotion. Fear.

'And why,' she began hesitantly, 'why does the governor believe Cambridge is safer than Boston?'

'Because Boston is full of rogues and royalists, whereas here they will be among the godly.'

'They're not visitors from England, then, so much as . . . fugitives?' He made no answer. 'From what is it they run?'

Gookin took a while to reply. By the time he spoke, the men had gone inside. He said quietly, 'They killed the King.'

## CHAPTER TWO

IN ENGLAND, IT was almost nine in the evening, the sun just setting. Isabelle Hacker, her plain blue Quaker dress coated brown with dust after two days on the road, was riding into her home village of Stathern, Leicestershire.

Close behind her rode another figure. His constant proximity unnerved her. So did his silence. He had followed her all the way north from London. Even when they broke their journey for the night, he had barely directed a word at her. In his pocket she knew he carried a commission from the House of Lords issued three days earlier. He had shown it when he came to her door in London: *Hereupon it is Ordered, That Colonel Hacker do forthwith send his Wife into the Country, to fetch the said Warrant; and that the Gentleman Usher attending this House do send a Man along with her for that Purpose.*

He said, 'I am that man.'

Mrs Hacker had agreed at once to accompany him to the country. She was ready to do anything to help her husband, at that moment held in the Tower on suspicion of treason, for which the punishment was a death of an almost unimaginable and protracted horror: to be hanged until the point of unconsciousness, cut down, revived, castrated, disembowelled – the entrails dragged out and burned in front of the living victim – then beheaded and his body cut into four quarters for public display. Unimaginable, yet she could not stop tormenting herself by picturing it. Almost the worst part was that he would leave this world in a welter of agony and at the end she would not even have a body to lay to rest.

She had said goodbye to her children and within the hour they had been on the road. By surreptitious observation, she guessed the man to be roughly forty – a few years younger than herself – and that he had suffered some wound or defect at birth that caused him to walk with a barely perceptible limp. His torso was broad, his legs short, his voice when he chose to use it oddly soft. He had told her his name was Richard Nayler. She gathered he was some kind of clerk to the Privy Council. He rode well. More than that she could not say.

The day had been hot, the evening still warm. A few villagers strolled in the lane or idled at their cottage gates. When they heard the clip of horses' hooves, they swung around to stare then quickly looked away. Men who a month ago would have swept off their

hats or touched their forelocks were now too afraid, or appalled, to acknowledge her existence. Isabelle Hacker, pious Quaker and lady of the manor though she might be, was also the wife of a revolutionary. She stared down at them with contempt.

Sathern Hall, the grandest house in the village, stood close to St Guthlac's church. The ninth chime of the hour was just dying away as she turned off the road and passed through the open gate. In the weeks she had been away rallying support for the colonel, she saw weeds had taken hold in the vegetable garden. The grass around the orchard was a meadow. In the gathering dusk, the big house loomed dark and seemingly abandoned.

Her horse picked its way along the drive towards the front. She dismounted, tied the reins to the iron railing beside the entrance, and without glancing back at Mr Nayler, took her key from her pocket and unlocked the heavy door. She wanted to be done with this man as fast as possible.

She crossed the flagstone floor and called upstairs into an echoing silence. Even the servants must have fled. The hall darkened slightly as Nayler loomed in the doorway behind her. As she went to her husband's study, she heard his footsteps quickening to catch her up. Clearly he wished to forestall any last-minute act of destruction. Inside the study, the air was stuffy. In the trees beyond the leaded windows, nightingales were singing. From a drawer she took a small box and extracted a key, then knelt in front of the safe. She had



never read it, but she knew what it looked like. Give it to him, save Francis from the hangman-butcher, get him gone.

Nayler had not until that moment allowed himself to believe that the document still existed. Nobody had seen it for eleven years. Desperate men, in his experience, would say anything to buy themselves a little time – and Colonel Hacker’s predicament was nothing if not desperate. But here was his dreary wife, her narrow back presented to him in this gloomy chamber, rummaging through the estate deeds and household accounts and whatnot, pulling out something – he could not quite see it – and slowly rising to her feet.

He had expected, if it did exist, a grand parchment in the style of an Act of Parliament: some scroll appropriate to the magnitude of the crime. But what she held out to him was a footling little thing, eight inches long or thereabouts, like a bill of sale for a horse or a cask of wine, rolled up and tied with a frayed black ribbon. It was promisingly heavy for its size, though. Parchment, not paper. He carried it over to the window and in the dim light untied the ribbon and unrolled it to its full width of seventeen inches. The death warrant of Charles Stuart, King of England, Scotland and Ireland, as handed to Colonel Francis Hacker, commander of the troops guarding the King, on the morning of His Majesty’s execution, by Oliver Cromwell himself.

He laid it on the colonel’s desk, where it immediately coiled up again, like a serpent protecting itself. He

sat, removed his hat, placed it to one side, and wiped his hands on his coat.

‘Some light, Mrs Hacker, if you’d be so kind.’

She went back into the hall, to the chest where the candles were kept. It took her a while, with shaking fingers, to strike a spark from the steel and flint. When she returned to the study carrying two candelabra, he was exactly where she had left him, motionless at the desk beside the window, his head silhouetted against the purple light. She set down the candles. He pulled them towards him without acknowledgement and unrolled the parchment.

The writing, he noted with interest, was full of erasures and insertions. Evidence of what? he wondered. Haste, perhaps. Confusion. Second thoughts? He began reading it aloud, to get it clear in his head, rather than for the benefit of Isabelle Hacker, who was watching him intently.

“Whereas Charles Stuart King of England is and stands convicted attainted and condemned of High Treason and other high crimes, and sentence upon Saturday last was pronounced against him by this Court to be put to death by the severing of his head from his body, of which sentence execution yet remains to be done, these are therefore to will and require you to see the said sentence executed in the open street before Whitehall upon the morrow being the thirtieth day of this month of January between the hour of ten in the morning and five in the afternoon of the same day with full effect . . .

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The awful, momentous words were thick in his throat. He had to cough and swallow before he could continue.

“... and for so doing this shall be your sufficient warrant. And these are to require all officers and soldiers and the other good people of this nation of England to be assisting you in this service. Given under our hands and seals . . .” He stopped. ‘And here are the names.’ He scanned the fifty-odd signatures beneath the text, arranged in seven columns. Beside each man’s name was a red wax seal. They spattered across the document like drops of blood.

‘But my husband’s name is not among them?’

His gaze travelled back over the signatories, lighting on a few here and there. Gregory Clements . . . Edmund Ludlow . . . Thomas Harrison . . . William Goffe . . .

‘No. He did not sign.’

She let out her breath. ‘You see – he told the truth. He was not one of the King’s judges and nor did he put his hand to the death warrant.’

‘No. But his name is here nonetheless. “To Colonel Francis Hacker, Colonel Huncks and Lieutenant Colonel Phayre.”’ He turned the parchment round and pointed. ‘The warrant is in fact addressed to your husband first and foremost – the reason, I assume, why it’s in his possession.’

‘But only as a soldier,’ she protested. ‘As an officer obeying orders, not issuing them.’

‘That will be for the court to decide.’ He quickly pulled the warrant away in case she tried to snatch it

back. Hacker had supervised the execution. His guilt was plain in black and white. She might just as well have handed him a noose to put around her husband's neck. She seemed suddenly to realise it, swaying in front of the desk, face as waxy as the candles. He was keen to be rid of her now. She had played her part. He wanted to study the warrant in peace. 'It's late, Mrs Hacker. You should retire.' He saw a couch in a corner of the room. 'I'll spend the night in here, with your permission, and leave at first light.'

She could not bring herself to accept this calamity. The abruptness of it, the cruelty. Two days on the road for this. 'But we have done what their lordships asked, Mr Nayler. That must count for something.'

'It's not my place to say. I suggest you withdraw for the night and pray for your husband.' His mouth twitched in a slight smile. 'Whatever happens next is God's will, after all.'

How many times had he heard that sanctimonious formula over the past eleven years? Let them see how they liked it now.

She continued to gaze at him, holding his eyes with hers. It was not enough for this man to hunt down, imprison and execute the King's enemies. He must mock their faith as well. But the Devil in his triumph was full of pride, and he did not flinch. He returned her stare until eventually she turned and walked unsteadily out of the study, up the stairs and into her bedroom, where she collapsed in a faint on the floor.

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Despite his long day's travelling, Nayler felt neither hunger nor thirst. The warrant was sufficient meat and drink for him. He sat at the colonel's desk and read it again. *The severing of his head from his body . . . in the open street before Whitehall . . .* It still had the power to shock. He opened his jacket, unbuttoned his shirt, and bowed his head to remove the leather cord that had hung around his neck for the past eleven years. Attached to it was a small pouch. Inside the pouch was a tiny piece of bloodstained linen. He turned it over between his fingers.

He remembered everything about that midwinter day – slipping out of Essex House at first light, the bitter wind off the Thames, hurrying along the Strand, past the big mansions that backed onto the river, the feel of his old army knife and pistol hidden beneath his coat. It was all unreal to him. To cut off the head of an anointed king? Impossible. Barbarous. A sacrilege. The army would never go through with it. Either General Fairfax, the Parliamentary commander, would put a stop to it, or the thousands of Royalists lying low in the city would rise up to prevent it. He for one was ready if the word was given to sacrifice his life to rescue his sovereign.

Then he had turned at Charing Cross towards Whitehall and his hopes had collapsed. The crowd in King Street was certainly large enough – five or six hundred – to cause trouble. But the number of troops was greater, a thousand or more: lines of pikemen shoulder to shoulder, holding people back, then cavalry

packing the middle of the wide thoroughfare to prevent any attempt to reach the scaffold. The makeshift timber platform, draped in black, adjoined the side of the Banqueting House. There was no ladder from the street. It was accessible only from an upper window. An organised mind, a military mind, had thought this all out very carefully.

He pushed his way through the mob. There was none of the holiday atmosphere that usually attended an execution. Even the most radical republicans, the Levellers, recognisable by the sea-green ribbons attached to their coats and hats, were keeping their mouths shut for once. He worked his way down the back of the silent crowd, along the wall separating Whitehall from the Tilt Yard. People were standing on it for a better view, or sitting perched, legs dangling. He saw a gap, demanded to be allowed up, and when no one moved, he grabbed the nearest man by his feet and threatened to pull him down unless he made room. He had the physique of a wrestler. They shifted along.

Standing on the parapet, he had a good view over the heads of the crowd and the soldiers. The scaffold was about thirty yards away. Most of the windows of the Banqueting House were boarded up, but one on the first floor gave access to the platform. From time to time an officer would step out and patrol around it, scan the scene, then retreat out of the cold, shutting the window behind him. There were five small objects in the centre of the platform, and it took Nayler a while to work out their purpose. One was a very low wooden

chopping block, barely higher than a man's hand, with iron hoops on either side of it and two more set close together a little further back. Clearly the intention, if the King put up a struggle or tried to rouse the crowd, would be to tie him down by his hands and feet and cut off his head while he was lying prone. Thorough staff work again. Barbarous.

The day did not get warmer. No sun tempered the iron frost, just the occasional flurry of snow and a grey sky so heavy it seemed to press all the colour from the buildings. Time itself felt frozen. Nayler had to keep his hands in his pockets and shuffle from foot to foot to ward off the numbness. Eventually, half a mile to the south, the abbey bell tolled nine o'clock. The old wound in his thigh ached like a knife jabbed in the bone. His mind became as blank as the sky; there was only the pain in his leg and the cold and the dread. Another hour passed. He counted the chimes of ten o'clock, and then not long afterwards he heard a faint drumbeat coming from somewhere behind him, from St James's Park: a slow funereal pulse. After a few minutes, the beat ceased.

He looked to his right, to the Holbein Gate. Above its arch an enclosed passageway led across the street to the Banqueting House. Figures appeared behind the mullioned windows: soldiers first, followed by a shorter man with a familiar profile who turned briefly to look down at the crowd and the scaffold, then a pair of clergymen, and finally more soldiers. In the instant of recognition, all the air seemed to go from Nayler's

body. A moment later, the procession vanished. But others had seen it too, and the word went round: 'He's here!'

Still nothing happened. Eleven o'clock struck. Noon. With each passing minute, Nayler's hopes revived. Rumours of the reasons for the delay swirled across the crowd: that the House of Commons was at that moment sitting in debate and cancelling the verdict, that the King had agreed to abdicate in favour of his son, that the Dutch had offered half a million pounds to purchase a reprieve. He tried not to imagine what must be going through His Majesty's mind as he sat in the Banqueting House. Evil enough to cut off a man's head; cruel beyond measure to drag out his agony.

One o'clock came and went, and then, just before two, there was activity. The window opened, and through it poured a file of soldiers with their officers, followed by the executioner and his assistant, clad in long black woollen coats and black leggings, their faces covered by black masks, with grotesque ill-fitting grey wigs and false beards. The shorter of them carried an axe, its long shaft resting on his broad shoulder. A bishop appeared behind him with a prayer book open.

The King stepped out of the window last – a slight figure, bareheaded, scarcely five feet three inches, although he carried himself, as he always did, even in these final minutes, as if he were a giant. He went straight to the low block, and it was clear he was remonstrating with the officers at this affront to his



dignity, that he should have to lie on his stomach to be killed. They looked at one another, shook their heads. The King turned his back on them. Producing a small piece of paper from beneath his cloak, he stepped to the front of the scaffold. He surveyed the soldiers, the cavalry, and the crowd beyond. He seemed to realise his words wouldn't carry, so returned to the middle of the platform and read his speech to the officers. Nayler could not hear a word of it, although by the following day it was printed and available to buy on half the streets in London. *If I would have given way to an arbitrary way, for to have all laws changed according to the power of the sword, I needed not to have come here; and therefore I tell you (and I pray God it be not laid to your charge) that I am the Martyr of the people . . .*

The King unfastened his cloak and removed it, took off his jacket and handed it to the bishop, along with some glittering decoration. He stood in his white shirt in the freezing cold and gathered up his long hair into a cap. He did not tremble. He said something to the executioner and gestured again to the block in protest, then shrugged, got down to his knees and lay full-length, adjusting his neck on the block until it was comfortable. He stretched his arms out behind him. The executioner braced his legs apart and lifted the axe as far as he could swing it behind his shoulder. A few moments passed, then the King made a gesture with his hands, a graceful flick, as if he were about to launch himself into a dive, and the blade descended with such force that in the silence the sound of the blow could be heard all the way down Whitehall.

Blood jetted out of the severed torso. The nearest soldiers twisted aside to avoid the flow until it settled into a steady glug, like an upended barrel. The executioner, still holding the axe, picked up the head by the hair, strode to the front and showed the King's face to the crowd. He shouted something, but his words were lost in the great roar that rose from the spectators, a mingling of exultation, horror and dismay. Part of the crowd pushed forward through the distracted pikemen, who had turned to watch the spectacle, and darted between the cavalry. Nayler jumped down from the wall and loped across Whitehall after them.

Beneath the platform, the blood was seeping between the planks. It pattered in the kind of heavy droplets that herald the beginning of a storm. People were slipping and scrambling all around him. He held up his handkerchief and watched it spot crimson – once, twice, three times, the spots spreading across the linen fibres and merging to form a single patch – then he fought his way out into the winter afternoon, up Whitehall and back along the Strand to the chapel of Essex House, where his patron, the Marquess of Hertford, and his family were kneeling at the altar, waiting to hear the news.

The martyr's blood had dried over the years to a faded rusty colour. Perhaps one day it would disappear. But as long as it existed, Nayler had vowed to do all in his power to avenge the events of that January day. He kissed it, folded the linen carefully, returned it to his

pouch and retied the cord around his neck so that the relic lay close to his heart.

It was dark in the study now, apart from the flickering pool of candlelight. Beyond the window, the birds had ceased to sing.

He counted the signatures on the death warrant, and made it fifty-nine. Some of the names were famous, some obscure, but all had become familiar to him over the past ten weeks as he had tracked their footprints through the dusty records of the King's trial. Yet it was one thing to know that such-and-such a man had sat in judgement on Charles Stuart in Westminster Hall on such-and-such a day; it was quite another to prove that he had actually dipped his hand in blood. What the warrant provided at last was incontrovertible proof of guilt. The slippery Colonel Ingoldsby, for example, had already confessed to signing, but had insisted he was held down by violence and that Cromwell, laughing at his squeamishness, had thrust the pen between his fingers and guided his hand by force. Yet here was Ingoldsby's signature in the fifth column, clear and true and unhurried, with his seal placed neat beside it.

He transferred his attention to the names at the head of the initial column. The first signature was that of John Bradshaw, the jobbing lawyer promoted to be president of the court, so fearful of assassination that throughout the hearings he had worn a suit of armour beneath his robes and a bulletproof hat of beaver fur lined with steel: luckily for him, he had been dead for nearly a year, so he would escape retribution. The

second signature belonged to Thomas Grey – Lord Grey of Groby, ‘the Leveller Lord’ – a man too radical even for Cromwell, who had eventually had him thrown in jail: he too was dead. The third signatory was Cromwell himself, the true architect of the entire diabolical procedure – dead, of course, and burning in hell. But the fourth signature, directly beneath Cromwell’s, belonged to a man who was still alive as far as Nayler was aware – a man whom he had cause to know well.

He must make a new list.

He took a sheet of paper from Hacker’s desk, dipped his pen in the inkpot, and wrote, in his careful hand, *Col. Edw. Whalley*.

## CHAPTER THREE

THE THREE GOOKIN boys shared a room at the back of the house. It looked out over the village of Cambridge, and beyond it to the looming roofs and broad chimneys and thin spire of Harvard College, gilded like a lance by the late-afternoon sun. When Mary hurried in, Colonel Whalley and Colonel Goffe were standing at the window, studying the view and being studied in their turn by Daniel, Sam and Nathaniel. At the soldiers' feet were what looked like their old army bags. She registered the scratched leather, stitched and patched. Scant luggage, she thought, for a voyage halfway across the world. They must have left in a hurry.

'Boys, go downstairs and leave the gentlemen in peace.'

'But Mama—'

'Downstairs!'

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They descended the steps in a chattering, tumbling continuous thump.

Mary said, 'The boys have had this room since birth. Whatever Mr Gookin might have promised – forgive me – I believe it would be best for them to keep it.'

'They're fine lads,' said Colonel Whalley. 'They remind me of my own at that age.' He turned from the window, and for the first time she got a good look at his face close up. A strong nose, dark eyes, a grey beard streaked with black. 'We wouldn't ask them to give up their beds to us.'

'I don't wish to seem inhospitable . . .'

'Think nothing of it.' He glanced up. 'What's above? An attic?'

'Oh, that is merely a servant's room.'

'You have a servant? I've not seen one.'

'Not at present,' she conceded. 'But the attic is not at all comfortable.'

'After the ship, it will seem a palace.'

The two soldiers hoisted their bags onto their shoulders. Colonel Whalley was plainly a gentleman by birth: polite, accustomed to deference, not easy to deny. She hesitated, but lacking the inspiration for any fresh objection, she felt she had no choice but to lead them out onto the landing and up the narrow staircase.

The attic ran the length of the house. Its ceiling sloped according to the angle of the roof, and Whalley was tall – perhaps a head higher than his son-in-law – so it was only in the central section that he could stand

upright, and even then he had to duck as he walked to the window, to avoid striking his head on the cross-beams. He unfastened the latch and leaned out, looked this way and that, then withdrew.

‘This is perfect. We shall be most content up here, shall we not, Will?’

‘Indeed. And at least, Mrs Gookin, we’ll be somewhat out of your way. We do so much regret this unexpected imposition.’

She glanced doubtfully along the cramped, narrow space. There was a single wooden bed they would have to share, with a straw mattress, too short for Whalley – his feet would hang over the edge for sure. In the gloom at the far end were various items of furniture, no longer used. There was an old chair among it all somewhere, and a chest. She surrendered.

‘Take what you need. I’ll have the girls bring you linen and blankets.’

‘Most kind.’ Colonel Whalley was already back at the window. He took a small telescope from the inner recesses of his coat, extended it, adjusted the focus, and scanned the river. ‘That bridge will make the journey from Boston much quicker. There must be thirty men working on it. When will the job be done?’

‘They say another half-year.’

‘So, January then.’ The answer seemed to satisfy him. ‘Perfect,’ he repeated. He snapped the telescope shut.

Daniel Gookin was in their bedroom, lying on the bed with his arms flung wide, his eyes closed, sound asleep.

He hadn't bothered to take off his boots. She leaned over and studied him for a moment. He was forty-eight, thinner than she remembered. The greying at his temples rendered him more distinguished. She felt a surge of love. The colonels were not the first men in need of help he had taken pity on, and would surely not be the last. They had even had local Indians sleeping under their roof before now. Daniel was dedicated to the cause of teaching them the Scriptures. Such faults as he possessed came only from a good heart. She knelt at the foot of the bed and began to unlace his boots. He felt the movement, opened his eyes and raised his head to look at her.

'Leave the boots and come and lie beside me.'

'Hold your impatience, Mr Gookin.' She finished the unlacing, grasped the heel and worked the boot off, then did the same to the other. The climacteric had come upon her while he was away. There would be no more children, for which she thanked God. Fifteen pregnancies had been more than enough. She lifted her skirt and climbed onto the bed.

Ten minutes later, there was a thud above their heads, followed by another, and then the scrape of a heavy object being dragged across the floor.

He looked at the ceiling. 'You have lodged them in the attic?'

'It was their choice. Do you disapprove?' She climbed off the bed and searched around the floor for her underclothes.

'No, not if they are content with it.'



‘If you like them so much, they may sleep in here with us if you prefer.’

He laughed and made a grab for her, but she twisted away and finished dressing.

Another thump came from the attic.

‘How did you come to know them, Dan?’

He swung his feet to the floor and sat on the edge of the bed. ‘You remember Reverend Hooke of New Haven, who returned to England some years ago?’

‘Of course.’

‘His wife is Colonel Whalley’s sister. When Hooke discovered it was my intention to sail back to America with Captain Pierce, he asked me to arrange passage for his brother-in-law. And then Ned persuaded Will to join us. He was reluctant – he has a young family.’

‘And why was it so urgent for them to leave?’

‘To put the matter briefly, the King’s son is returning to the throne by invitation of Parliament, the army has agreed – or most of it – and England is to be a republic no more.’

The information came in such a rush, was so overwhelming and unexpected, she had to sit on the bed beside him to absorb it. After a few moments she said, ‘Why did the army agree to such a thing?’

‘A new law, what they call an Act of Oblivion, has been laid before Parliament. The past is to be forgotten. There’s to be an amnesty for all who took up arms against the late King – with one exception. All those regicides, as they call them, who had direct involvement in the trial and execution of Charles Stuart are

required to surrender themselves for judgement.’ He took her hand. ‘There you have it, as plain as I can tell it. This was ten weeks ago. Ours is the first ship to reach Boston with the news. That’s what I had to go and tell the governor as soon as we came ashore.’

‘How many of these regicides came over with you?’

‘These two only.’

‘And the rest?’

‘Some are already fled to Holland. Most are lying low in England. Others were planning to surrender in the hope of mercy. The ports were closing even as we left. It will be hard for them to get away now.’ His fingers tightened on hers, as if he could somehow transfer his strength and belief by the force of his grip. ‘They are good men, Mary. Ned was Cromwell’s cousin. He commanded the cavalry in the campaign against the Scots. Will commanded Cromwell’s regiment of foot. They’re in need of sanctuary until things quieten down. There’s nothing to fear. No one knows they’re here, save you and me and the governor.’

‘Colonel Whalley was Cromwell’s *cousin*? Oh Daniel!’ She pulled her hand away. ‘Things will never quieten down. They’ll come after them for sure. Nothing is more certain.’

Above their heads, another piece of furniture was being dragged into position. In her anxious imagination, it sounded as if they were already building a barricade.

Down on the river, the workmen had finished for the day. Both banks were deserted. Water glistened

invitingly in the sunlight. Ned, back at his post at the window, felt a rush of contentment. He liked the Gookin family. He liked this place. America would suit them very well.

Behind him, Will was laying out their armoury on the bed: four matchlock pistols, two bags of powder, a box of bullets, two knives, a pair of swords. He had barely spoken since they came into the house.

‘Leave that, Will.’ Ned searched through his bag, pulled out two clean shirts and threw one to him. They had not been out of one another’s company for the past four months. His son-in-law’s face had become like a pane of glass to him – he could see everything that passed through his mind. ‘Let’s go down to the river. It’ll do us good to be rid of this salt.’

Will looked dubious. ‘What if we’re seen?’

‘There’s no one to observe us. And if they do, what of it? We’re merely two men bathing.’

‘Shouldn’t we ask Gookin first?’

‘He’s our host, not our gaoler. The governor said it was safe for us to move freely here.’ He took a step forward, gripped Will by the forearms and shook him gently. ‘You’ll see your wife and little ones again, I’m sure of it – my sweet Frances, and the grandchildren. God will not allow the wicked to triumph for long. We must have patience, and faith.’

Will nodded. ‘You’re right. Forgive me.’

‘Good.’ Ned released him.

Together they put the weapons into the chest and covered it with a blanket, then Ned led the way

downstairs. The two bedroom doors facing one another on the landing beneath the attic were both closed.

Mary, sitting on the bed, heard the boards creak as they passed. She glanced at her husband. ‘What now, do you suppose?’ she whispered. He shook his head, had no idea.

The two officers passed through the parlour, out into the front yard, through the gate, and set off down the slope to the river.

Gookin had taken them straight from the *Prudent Mary* to the home of the governor, John Endecott, an old man in a lace collar and black cap who seemed to Ned to have stepped out of the England of Queen Elizabeth. They had handed him their letters of introduction – Will’s from John Rowe and Seth Wood, the preachers at Westminster Abbey, Ned’s from Dr Thomas Goodwin of the Independent Church in Fetter Lane – and while the old man held them close to his eyes and studied them, Ned had sketched the circumstances of their departure: how for two days at Gravesend they had been obliged to hide below decks while on the quay-side the common people had celebrated the imminent return of Charles II, son of the dead king. The sky above the town had glowed a diabolic red from their bonfires, the air had been filled with the noise of their carousing and the sizzle of their roasting meat. The revels had gone on disgracefully late into the Sabbath. On the Monday, when news was brought from Parliament that his name and Will’s were on the list of those wanted

for the death of Charles I, Captain Pierce had given the order to put to sea.

‘But for our good friend Mr Gookin here,’ concluded Ned, ‘we were likely to have been taken.’

‘So you both were judges of the King?’

‘Yes, and signed his death warrant. And let me be plain with you, Mr Endecott, for I would not live here under false pretences. We would do the same tomorrow.’

‘Would you indeed!’ Endecott set down the letters and studied the two visitors through moist occluded eyes, pale grey as oysters. He gripped the edge of his desk. Amid a fusillade of cracking joints, he pulled himself to his feet. ‘Then let me shake the hands that signed it, and bid you welcome to Massachusetts. You will find yourselves among good friends here.’

They scouted out a place a little way off the road, where part of the riverbank had been eroded by the current to form a natural pool. Trees hung down almost to the surface. Someone had tied a rope to a branch to make a swing. A long green dragonfly, more exotic than anything they had seen in England, skimmed between the reeds. Wood pigeons cooed amid the foliage. Ned pulled off his boots and briefly dipped his feet into the cool flow, then stripped off his brine-stiffened clothes and waded naked into the river. The cold made him shout out loud. He ducked his shoulders beneath the surface until after a minute he became used to the temperature. On the bank, Will had taken off his own

boots and leather coat but seemed to be hesitating. Ned waded back, cupped his hands full of water and splashed him. Will laughed, danced away and shouted in protest, then pulled his shirt over his head and quickly removed the rest of his clothes.

What a sight they made, thought Ned, with their dead white bodies and their battle scars, like phantoms amid all this lush greenery. He'd seen corpses that looked better. Their skin, front and back, was covered in nicks and welts. Will had a jagged line across his stomach from a Royalist pike at Naseby, he himself an ugly fist-sized crater beneath his right shoulder, sustained when he was knocked off his horse at Dunbar. Will stood on the water's edge and lifted his arms above his head. At forty-two, he was still slender as a boy. To Ned's surprise he launched himself into a dive, full-length. He disappeared beneath the surface, then bobbed up moments later.

Was there any sensation more delicious than this — to wash stale salt off sweating skin in fresh water on a summer's day? Praise God, praise God in all His glory, for bringing us in safety to this place! Ned flexed his toes in the soft mud. It was years since he had swum. He was always poor in the water, even as a boy. But he stretched out his arms and allowed himself to topple forwards, and presently rolled over onto his back. Katherine floated into his mind, and for once he did not try to shut out the memory, but allowed her to take shape. Where was she? How was she? It was four years since she had miscarried and almost died, and her

health and spirit had never properly recovered. But what was the use of tormenting himself, as Will did every night, with impossible speculations? One of them must be strong. They had a duty to stay alive, not for themselves but for the cause. His text, which in the end was what had persuaded Will to join him, was Christ's injunction to his disciples: 'But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another; for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.'

When he rolled over again onto his stomach, the riverbank was suddenly a long way off. As he struck towards the land, he could feel the pull of the current trying to carry him out towards Massachusetts Bay. Will was standing up to his waist in the river, arms akimbo, watching him. Ned trod water for a moment and waved to him, and in that instant saw a figure in the shadow of the trees behind him. It was hard to make the stranger out. He was dressed in black, with dark hair and a short dark beard, and he was standing perfectly still. No sooner had Ned registered him than he realised he was drifting again. The force felt strong enough to drag him all the way back to England if only he would let it. He had to put his head down and swim – swim hard, on the edge of panic, pulling with his arms and kicking with his legs – to save himself. When his feet at last touched the muddy riverbed and he was able to stand, the man had disappeared.

He staggered through the water and threw himself down on the grass, breathless, heart pounding. Will

splashed his way out and stood over him, laughing, blocking the sun. 'I swear I never saw a man swim so fast in my life! You looked as if Leviathan was after you!'

Now here was a sound Ned hadn't heard in a long while: Will's laughter. He propped himself up on his elbows, coughed, and brought up a mouthful of river. He glanced at the trees, rustling in the slight breeze. Perhaps the figure had existed only in his mind. He decided to say nothing that might spoil his son-in-law's mood. 'That river's like the man it's named for. The surface may look friendly enough, but beneath it means to kill you.'

Will laughed again, put out his hand and pulled him to his feet. They dried themselves in the sun, donned their clean shirts, and made their way back up the empty road towards the house, the two English regicides, arm in arm.

Mrs Gookin was in her apron in the kitchen preparing supper when Ned ducked his head beneath the lintel and asked if she had such things as a pair of scissors and a broom – and if so, might he borrow them?

Naturally she had scissors, their blades as sharp as penknives, and of course a broom as well. She fetched them from the cupboard.

'And a mirror, by any chance?'

She handed it over and watched as he climbed the stairs. On the threshold where he had been standing, he had left a damp patch.

Elizabeth, laying the table, asked, 'How long will they be staying, Mama?'



‘As long as they desire. Your father is quite firm on the matter.’

‘But why have they come from England to Massachusetts? Are they on official business?’

‘Enough questions. Go fetch some water.’

In the attic, Ned placed the chair next to the window, invited Will to sit, and began to cut his hair. They had been on the run since April – a month and a half in England, sleeping in strangers’ houses and in barns and hedgerows, wanted by Parliament for trying to rouse the army to oppose the deal with the exiled Charles II, then ten weeks cooped up on that stinking ship. Will’s dark locks came away in handfuls.

After a while he protested, ‘Enough, Ned, surely? I shall be bald as an egg.’

‘Not enough yet if you are to look respectable, which is how we must appear. If we look like escaped prisoners, we shall be treated as such. Front face, soldier. That beard must come off now.’

He squatted in front of Will and set about the tangle of hair that reached down almost to his son-in-law’s chest. He wielded the scissors deftly. Long ago, in the twenties, before the war, he had been apprenticed to the Merchant Taylors’ Company to learn the cloth trade from top to bottom, and the skill of cutting had not deserted his fingers. The face that emerged once most of the beard was gone was strong and delicate, full of spiritual force – a face straight out of *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, thought Ned, which was exactly what the younger man would have become if he hadn’t persuaded him to run.