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Rogue Lord

By

John M. Brewer

A Regency Romance

To Mary Sue, the greatest
good fortune of my life

1. A Hunt

Lord Fallworth urged his horse, a stallion, further into the woods of the deer park on his estate. His thighs gripped the animal through the saddle. This produced a pleasurable sensation, not unlike that from riding a whore. His horse jumped a small depression, swerved around an oak, and galloped on through the forest. Lord Fallworth was pursuing a large buck, and as usual, he had outpaced the other riders and even the dogs. He was a renowned huntsman, and the head and neck of the buck would be placed on a bare spot on the wall of his manor.

Lord Fallworth was also renowned for another activity: he was known, or notorious, as a cocksman and as a noted seducer of wives. He had fought at least six duels with enraged husbands as a result and had killed three. The gentry of his county affected to admire him; their actual feelings were kept quiet, if only to avoid duels with him.

He was carrying a loaded musket as well as a pistol for when he had run the buck down. A hunting horn hung from his neck. When he had shot the animal through its heart, he would summon the others. His servants would cut the neck and head off; Lord Fallworth wasn't as interested in the meat.

His horse was tiring, but Lord Fallworth urged it forward, now climbing a low hill. Large

rocks emerged from the hillside here and there. Ahead, the forest opened. A very big, tall oak stood at the end of the open place. Beneath it was stretched the buck, its belly heaving. Lord Fallworth and his mount had ridden the buck to exhaustion. It was helpless, and Lord Fallworth felt triumphant. Its head and neck were his.

There was a sound of thunder. He looked up. Toward the west were gathering and darkening clouds. Lord Fallworth cursed. Then, the edge of the storm clouds moved in front of the sun. They turned red, actually spectacularly, had Lord Fallworth been of a mind to appreciate such things. The other sides of the clouds were dark grey, and those clouds were growing and darkening as he watched. Then he saw lightning, several streaks of light. Some seconds later came several rolls of thunder.

Lord Fallworth, still cursing, urged his horse forward. They would shelter beneath the oak. The buck, flanks still heaving, watched their approach. Looking up at the clouds, storm clouds thundering, gathering, darkening, closing rapidly, Lord Fallworth decided to shoot the buck before the rain made the priming powder useless. He stopped beneath the oak and dismounted. He pulled the musket from its sheath and stepped toward the buck which was gasping at Lord Fallworth.

The air exploded, blinding white everywhere, then only darkness....

2. An Ill-Timed Visit

Steven Cosgrove walked up the street to the house of the woman he was courting. He was carrying a bouquet, an armload of pink roses, and had another pink rose in his buttonhole. He had stopped the public horse cab he had taken from his rooms in order to buy the flowers at a shop. His shoes were mirror-like in their polish, his grey trousers spotless, his shirt was an immaculate white with a deep blue cravat about his neck. His morning coat was a stylish dark grey. He was hoping, if Sarah was sufficiently impressed, to ask for her hand. Hoping, but not confident. Still, he felt impelled to gain a better idea of her feelings for him.

He reached the house. It was detached, its grounds well kept. Steven knew that Sarah usually spent pleasant mornings such as this one sitting out of doors, reading. So rather than knocking at the door for admission, then allowing a maidservant to guide him to Sarah, he walked around the house. He wasn't trying to surprise her; he just wanted to talk to her sooner.

But he could hear talking, two voices, her voice and that of a man. He was near the rear corner of the house, saw them together, and stopped. There were just two of them, Sarah and a man—a man who reminded Steven of someone—a man who suddenly leaned forward and kissed Sarah on her lips.

They had been laughing together, but the kiss, of course, stopped that. They looked at each other, then both leaned forward to kiss again. At that moment, Steven knew who the man was: his nemesis from his school days, Lord Fallworth. He felt sick, then enraged, then devastated. He turned and walked quickly back to the street. Neither Sarah nor the man had seen him, being preoccupied with each other.

He walked down the street, still holding his now-ridiculous bouquet and boutonniere. There was a group of young women ahead, and Steven saw they were laughing at him. For an instant, Steven wanted to throw the bouquet at them, so angry had their behavior made him, but he just walked around them, reaching up with one partly free hand to touch the rim of his grey top hat. They continued their tittering, and Steven continued his walk.

As he continued eastward into London, his feelings deepened, became more acute. People were still laughing at him, he felt, or at least were amused, keeping him from any hope of recovering his spirits. Sarah was lost to him, and the worst aspect of the loss was the man who had clearly captured her heart.

In school, Steven had been repeatedly bullied by another student, Andrew Woodfield, and two of his friends or followers. At one point, they had tried to throw Steven over a fence consisting of a linked row of spikes. Steven's face had been deeply gashed, and he still carried the scar. The three bullies had been reprimanded by the headmaster, but no other action was taken. Steven had bled into his shirt collar for weeks and felt the contempt, as he imagined, of the

other students for the rest of his stay at the school.

Andrew, on the other hand, was actually Lord Andrew Fallworth as a result of his father's death. (In the school they were all attending, titles were not recognized by the boys and only given, Christian, names used.) His mother had subsequently remarried, or so Steven had once heard from one of the other students at the Inns of Court, where Steven was then studying. As the years passed, Steven also heard stories about Lord Andrew's behavior. "Rakehell" was the usual term used to describe his behavior: drinking, assaults on the watch, whoring, seduction of other men's wives, and duels seemed to occupy all of Lord Andrew's waking hours. Steven's hatred for the fellow had only increased, and now...

Steven suddenly threw the bouquet into the street. He couldn't bear being reminded of what had happened. He threw the boutonniere away, too. This attracted more attention, and Steven walked away from that as well, as fast as he could. He didn't want to take a hackney cab or a gig back to his rooms, as he didn't want to be confined in a space with his thoughts. He had walked quickly and was fast approaching the place where he lived and worked. Perhaps there he could find some peace, perhaps even some work.

He was a lawyer, his work largely writing wills, and while he knew his business, he was not getting rich. Over time, perhaps... But what he had seen that day had, among other hurts, intensified his feelings of social inferiority. Sarah's family, whose money came from trade, specifically shipping, looked down on him. Why

Sarah had tolerated his pursuit of her was a mystery, but one he had been more than willing to accept. At that point, however, unless her family forbade Lord Andrew access because of his reputation, she was his for the taking. While Lord Andrew might not have much money (Steven had no idea of his wealth), Lord Andrew did have a title and estate, and Steven was certain that would be more than enough.

His appearance helped his suit as well: Lord Andrew wore his hair longer than the fashion. It was thick, dark, and wavy, naturally so, as Steven remembered from their school days together. Tall, manly, and good features into the bargain completed the picture. Steven realized even more acutely that he had no chance, regardless of Lord Andrew's behavior. He felt a keen despair.

Steven lived in a part of London with what were termed the "middling orders." These were people who had some property and so wished to see that whatever they had accumulated was passed down to their children or to others they favored. He rented two rooms on the ground floor, one to sleep in and the other to meet people who wanted his services. In back of the building, which had two upper floors as well, were the "jakes" or, more politely, the "offices." Water was piped in and had to be paid for. His landlady, Mrs. Willis, a widow, owned the two adjoining buildings as well as the one in which Steven lodged.

Steven had posted a sign saying he was out for the day—he had been hoping to be invited to dine with Sarah's family. He took the sign down and walked to the chair where he sat when talking to clients. He collapsed into it: all

the walking, together with his despair, had exhausted him. He put his head down on his arms. He could feel tears welling in his eyes and despised himself even more for the weakness—as he had been taught in school to regard crying.

However, there was a knock at the door. Steven got up quickly, went into the other room, the kitchen-bedroom, went to a bowl of water, dashed some in his face, and wiped himself off with a towel—a clean one, he hoped. He did this every so often to refresh himself after hours of work. Well, in a sense he had been working today, though without any success whatever.

3. A Matter of Some Delicacy

Another knock sounded, and Steven opened the door. A liveried footman was standing there. Behind him was a carriage, driver on top, reins in his hands.

The footman asked, “Mr. Cosgrove?” Steven nodded, and the man said, “My lady requires the services of an attorney,” indicating someone inside the carriage.

Steven told the footman, “Please have her ladyship enter, and I will speak with her.”

The footman returned to the carriage, opened the door, and pulled folding steps down for the passenger. He extended his arm for a woman who was plainly, though expensively, dressed. The woman acknowledged the footman’s assistance, but walked unaided to Steven’s doorstep. Steven stood aside and bowed as the woman entered Steven’s workroom.

Steven gestured to one of the two chairs in front of the table where he worked. He sat down behind the table. The woman was looking about the room: several bookshelves held books, law books, and many wooden boxes. These boxes contained copies of wills, deeds, and other legal documents that Steven had prepared. He looked at the woman: middling stature, dark hair running to grey—still attractive though. Also self-assured: a woman accustomed to being in charge.

The woman looked at Steven and said, "I prefer to be addressed as 'Mrs. Thompson.'"

Steven nodded and spoke, "Please let me know how I may serve your...Mrs. Thompson."

The woman smiled briefly at Steven's near mistake and told Steven, "I married Lord Fallworth as a young girl." She paused, noting Steven's reaction, and asked, "Do you know of my first husband?"

Steven nodded and forced himself to acknowledge her question, "Only indirectly. The son and I were in school together."

There was a brief silence before the woman asked, "Were you friends?"

Steven clenched his jaw, shook his head, and told Mrs. Thompson, "No."

Oddly, the woman seemed pleased at this admission. She continued, "We had a son, Andrew, but Lord Fallworth died in a hunting accident. Two years later I married my second husband." Silence, then she said, "We were very happy together. He was everything, everything good, everything that Lord Fallworth wasn't. But he was many years older than I, and I knew our time together would be short."

Her eyes were on some distant point. She took a handkerchief from her reticule and wiped her eyes. Steven watched her sympathetically. She sat more upright, squared her shoulders, and went on.

"We had one child, a daughter, and it was both my husband's and my wish that she should be provided for. On my husband's deathbed, we talked of this. His estate was substantial, and he left her some four thousand pounds in the Funds. This was with my knowledge and consent.

“My family was in trade, but when I married Lord Fallworth, my father settled five thousand pounds in the Four Percents on me. They were very pleased at my marriage at first. Then I told them what sort of man Lord Fallworth was, but of course there was nothing anyone could do then.” Silence before she resumed. “I no doubt shouldn’t say this, but I was relieved when I learned of his death. He beat me and was unfaithful into the bargain.”

At this point, Steven spoke, “Knowing the son, I am not surprised.”

They looked at each other, and Steven nodded, his sympathies now totally with the woman.

She continued, “My husband, second husband I should say, though in my heart he is and will always be my only husband, tried to give Andrew a proper upbringing, to make him a better man than his father, but his father’s example and reputation and perhaps Andrew’s ancestry caused us to fail. Andrew inherited early, but was already on his path.” She looked down, then up at Steven and asked a surprising question, “Do you know the current Lord Chief Justice?”

Steven nodded once more. He told her, “He attended the Inn of Court when I did, and we dined together. Also, I represented an accused woman before him and secured an acquittal for her. I do not know if he was pleased.”

Steven looked inquiringly at Mrs. Thompson.

She said, “Mr. Thompson knew him at school, and I wrote to the Lord Chief Justice and asked him for the name of an attorney. He gave me your name.”

This totally surprised Steven. But now she got to the point.

“Andrew has been asking about my marriage settlement. He said he has plans to improve the estate, but I suspect he has gaming debts and is being pressed for payment. I want to be able to bequeath my marriage settlement, all of it, to our daughter. I do not want a penny of it to go to Andrew. Can this be done?”

Steven thought a few seconds and told the woman, “I must see the settlement documents from your family, your husband’s and the previous Lord Fallworth’s as well. The previous Lord Fallworth died unexpectedly, you said?”

“Yes, but there is a family will. I haven’t seen that.”

“Is there an attorney for the Fallworth estate?”

“There was, but he died recently; and my son hasn’t given any thought to his successor.”

At this point, Steven thought a minute or two. He eventually told Mrs. Thompson (now his client, he realized), “I must see these documents, your husband’s, I mean Mr. Thompson’s will, and this family will, as well as your family’s settlement papers. These should at least tell me what I cannot do.”

Steven was contemplating whether he could somehow shift the woman’s marriage settlement to her daughter. He was thinking of a possible way to do this. They looked at each other. The woman began to smile.

She said, “You have a plan?”

Steven smiled back. “A possibility, right at this moment, nothing more. I will know better when I see those wills.”

Mrs. Thompson got up, as did Steven. She told him, "I will bring them this next week."

He escorted her back to her carriage, helped hand her up. She waved goodbye to Steven and he to her as her carriage drove away. In the meantime, Steven began looking through some of his law books and notes taken when he had been a student. His depression, his anguish, had gone. He was feeling excited, but wondered if that would survive exposure to legal reality. Still, he had to do his duty for his client above all.

After his reading, interrupted by some bread and tea, Steven had a much clearer idea of the relevant laws. Basically, women were considered wards of their husbands in terms of financial matters. That was the basis of the problem, but reading the wills was essential. As a widow, what could Mrs. Thompson do? Had Mr. Thompson somehow empowered her to make these decisions? Steven didn't really think that the will of her first husband's family would make any difference, not after her remarriage.

Steven was not actually that unfamiliar with settlement documents. Over the six years or so of his practice, Steven had added marriage settlements to the services he could offer. While the husband, upon marriage, obtained control of his wife's money, saving "pin money," in practice many women had endowments, usually money invested in the Consolidated Funds or the "Four Percents," as they were known. These were considered the safest investments. They actually paid five percent, perhaps more, depending on how much money was available in Britain to invest in them when they were purchased. However, although the husband took

the income, the endowment might pass, depending on the legal terms of the settlement, to daughters. Steven would write these settlements according to what the parents of the woman wished.

He was interrupted by three men, two to change their wills and one to convey some property—a house—to his son. After these men left, Steven began writing the final copies of the wills and the deed. He used the notes he had taken during the discussions. Instead of a clerk, Steven wrote everything himself, both so he wouldn't have to pay a clerk and so fewer mistakes would be made. As it happened, he wrote in a "good, round" hand, and after making a copy for his own records, his work that day was done.

A woman, his housekeeper-cook, came in to prepare the evening meal. It wasn't very enjoyable, but it never was. Steven was once more remembering the morning, and that made him unhappy again. Of course, Sarah could bring about a reformation of Lord Andrew's character. That was possible. He told himself he wished Sarah well, wished for her happiness, but then reproached himself for being insincere. In truth, he didn't know what he wanted for her, but he strongly believed that whatever she wanted for her marriage, Lord Fallworth wasn't likely to provide it.

Steven undressed and lay down to sleep. As he was beginning to drift off, it occurred to him that Lord Fallworth might take violent exception to Steven's efforts to transfer his mother's settlement to his half-sister. But Steven told himself that his duty was to represent his client, come what may. Still, he wondered if he

should buy one of those walking sticks with a blade concealed inside. Or a pistol....

4. Family

Steven sat in the room where he worked, staring at the door to the street. He had just written a will for a man, an orphan, who wished to leave his goods to some friends. Steven's parents, so Steven was told, were missionaries and had taken their message to India. Since India was considered unhealthy, particularly for English children, Steven had been left in the care of his uncle, Edward Cosgrove. Steven had been very young when this had happened and had no memory of the separation from his parents. They had, in fact, died in India, so Steven himself was an orphan. He was thinking about this and about his life growing up in London.

Steven's uncle was not married. When Steven had asked his uncle's housekeeper about this, she had Steven sit down at the table where she was sewing. She made Steven promise he would not talk to anyone else about what she was going to tell him. Then she told Steven that his uncle was about to marry a young woman but the young woman had died suddenly. Steven's uncle Edward, the housekeeper had solemnly told Steven, had been in mourning ever since.

Steven's uncle kept a shop where he sold fish. Steven had learned that his uncle and some of his shopmen arose very early, in darkness in fact, harnessed a cart, and drove it to the river. Fishing boats arrived and were tied up at the docks. The shopmen told Steven that the catches

were selected by Steven's uncle himself. The fish were then sold to other, smaller shops, or at times to individuals who bought directly from his uncle. Steven gradually grew to understand that his Uncle Edward was perhaps the largest purveyor of fish in London.

Steven was very interested in all of this, but his uncle firmly and consistently discouraged this interest. His uncle was not harsh with Steven; somehow Steven understood that his uncle regarded himself as almost a substitute parent, not simply Steven's guardian.

But Steven's uncle was ambitious for Steven. He wanted Steven to become not the nephew of a tradesman, but a gentleman. This meant that for Steven, the route to gentility could only be through one of the gentle professions: officer in the Army or Navy, the church, or the law. Obtaining a parish, a "living," as it was termed, in the church would require sponsorship by the local landowner. Therefore, Steven was left with the options of either service in the Army or Navy or becoming a lawyer. Steven's uncle knew no naval captain, so could not have him admitted as a midshipman. That left the Army or the law, but both of those required money. Officer's commissions had to be purchased, and becoming a lawyer required years of education. Steven's uncle explained all of this to Steven.

The dame school Steven attended, escorted to and from by one of his uncle's shopmen or at times by his uncle's housekeeper, had quickly discovered that Steven could already read, though he was only four. Therefore, during his time in school, he focused more on practicing his penmanship and in learning numbers, such as

the Rule of Three. After Steven had spent several years at the dame school, the lady whose school it was had told his Uncle Edward in his presence that Steven had an excellent aptitude for learning. This decided the matter: that evening at dinner, Steven's uncle told him that a mind like Steven's would be wasted in the Army—the uncle wasn't as certain about the Navy—so that left the law. Thus, Steven's future course was decided. As always, Steven accepted his uncle's decision.

After that, Steven went to public school. Knowledge of Latin and perhaps Greek was required of an attorney, and the dame school did not provide this. Hence, Steven found himself, at age ten, attending a well-known public school in west London. He did not board at the school, but had to travel to and from there in a public horse cab. His uncle decided on this course of action (as he decided everything for Steven), because, as he told Steven, he did not trust the other boys, and he knew the masters would not interfere with what the boys did to each other. Steven once more understood his uncle was doing his best to protect him, though he wondered what he was being protected from.

After being quizzed regarding what he had learned at the dame school by a young assistant master, Steven was placed in the upper second form. He had to scramble at first to learn much that was unfamiliar, but despite the time consumed in the rides to and from the school, Steven quickly caught up. The other boys naturally questioned Steven about who and what his parents were, and Steven answered honestly, if misleadingly. This quieted the questions for a time, as none of Steven's fellow upper second

formers knew much about the social status of clergymen in India. Otherwise, Steven said only that he lived with a relation.

Steven did not take part in the games that the students played, as, he hinted, he was required to return from school directly. This was also true of some of the other boys who lived in town, so again, Steven attracted no attention. In terms of his academics, however, Steven rose through the form. This surprised Steven: he assumed the other students would be the best students in London. It certainly gratified his uncle, who even boasted of his nephew's abilities to his shopmen.

The lower and upper third form passed in much the same way. But matters became much worse in the lower fourth. By then, Steven was at the top of his form and so attracted the attention of the other boys, especially some of the older ones. In particular, three lower sixth formers appeared to take exception, sometimes violent exception, to Steven's presence in the school.

The three of them were two years ahead of him, young men actually, taller, bigger and stronger from games played almost daily. The leader was Andrew Woodfield, known as Lord Fallworth when at home. Henry Thurmond worked in Woodfield's shadow, and they were aided by the third, Peter Dawson.

Though Steven had never given any hint of where he lived or with whom or what his relations did, these three had discovered Steven's secret. Soon afterward,, they and the other boys—at least some of them—began suggesting, then urging, then demanding that Steven remove himself from the school, as his uncle's social

status was held to be unworthy, indeed to defile the school. Steven said nothing, but of course remained in the school, as that was his uncle's wish.

This act of passive defiance provoked attacks. Steven tried to avoid them by arriving as close to the beginning of classes as possible, by remaining after the other students in his form had left to ask questions of the masters, and by moving as quickly through the halls between classes as he could. However, he had to endure blows, attempts at tripping or shoving, and demands to remove the pollution of his presence from the school. It was a rare day when none of these occurred.

Still, Steven persisted. His uncle, of course, saw the bruises that sometimes appeared on Steven's face and was clearly concerned and angered, but could do nothing. Then, when Steven was some months into the fifth form, matters came to a head.

5. A Nightmare

Steven still had nightmares about what Lord Fallworth and his friends had done to him at school. By the time he had reached fifth form, he was still dealing with troubles from Fallworth and his followers. By that point, even though it was not as often as before, he was still occasionally subjected to taunts and violence. Students would sometimes strike him or try to push him down a set of stairs. This was their way of telling him that, as nephew of a fishmonger, he was not acceptable as a fellow student. They even took to calling him “Fish,” their way of giving him an ugly nickname. He would have been quite happy to stop attending the school; however, his uncle wanted him to become a lawyer, and completion of studies at this school would enable him to be admitted to one of the Inns of Court.

One day, he was walking home warily, keeping a close eye out for possible dangers from the group. He had reached the fence that enclosed the school: vertical iron spikes held in place by iron strips near the top and bottom of the spikes. He was carrying three books in his left hand so that he could do his assigned reading over the weekend. But his way out of the gate was blocked by his three principal tormentors.

Lord Fallworth told Steven, “Fish, we told you that you were not acceptable here.”

Steven was looking at him and trying to decide what to say when Thurmond hit him, hard, in the pit of his stomach.

Steven doubled over, gasping, helpless, and the three picked him up and threw him over the fence. Unfortunately, they didn't lift him up far enough to miss the spikes. Steven felt a ghastly pain in his left cheek, his left shoulder hit the fence, and he was turned turtle as he went to the other side. He hit the street, falling on his right shoulder and arm. Amazingly, he retained his grip on his books, but lay on the street, bleeding, stunned, humiliated, and helpless. He could hear the other students who had witnessed the attack on him laughing.

A voice: "'Ere, what's 'e matter w' ye? Can't ye see the lad's bleedin'?"

It was certainly true, Steven realized: the side of his face felt wet. In fact, he could smell the blood.

The man said to Steven, "'Ere lad, lemmie 'elp ye up."

At this point, Steven recognized his sympathizer. He was one of the drivers of a public horse cab who made some of their money by taking Stephen and other boys who did not actually reside in the school to their homes. The man knew Steven, in fact. Getting on his feet was painful because of his right shoulder. Steven flexed the arm; it moved, but it hurt.

The driver helped Steven into his cab with surprising, but very much appreciated gentleness, telling Steven, "I'll take 'e 'ome, lad."

In the cab, Steven was able to sit and lie back, but even the slightest movement of the cab hurt his shoulder and arm. He could feel his

collar and the shirt itself becoming wet with his blood. He ran his tongue cautiously over the inside of his mouth, but couldn't taste any blood, so the cheek hadn't been sliced through. Still, he could feel pain in the cheek as well. Then he began to wonder what his uncle would do when he told him what had happened. Though Steven knew the reasons why he was supposed to finish his studies at the public school, he would, as always, do what his uncle told him to, even if that was to leave the school.

The driver helped Steven out carefully. Steven had money to pay him, but the man waved this away and brought Steven into his uncle's shop. His uncle Edward's face set into stone as Steven, still clutching his three books, painfully explained what had happened. His uncle saw Steven to his bed after he thanked the driver, giving him a crown, and asking the driver to bring a surgeon who lived nearby to treat Steven.

The man came and sewed the side of Steven's face up; there was more pain.

The surgeon told Steven's uncle, "Nother inch longer cut an' the jugular's cut. Then your nevvv would've bled to death."

At this, Steven's uncle asked one of his shopmen to go for the uncle's solicitor. Steven wondered at this: the teachers at the school kept well clear of matters such as fights, as these were considered strictly between students and not the concern of the teachers. However, his uncle wrote down the surgeon's comment and the surgeon signed the paper. The surgeon, before leaving, said Steven's right arm and shoulder would heal in a few days, as nothing appeared to be broken.

The solicitor came and listened to Steven's uncle. The solicitor's face also turned grim as he listened. He read the signed comment of the surgeon.

"Your nephew could well have died. I will speak to the headmaster. He may imagine he has no responsibility for what the students in his school do to each other, but the newspapers might well take a different view."

Steven became somewhat alarmed, he really didn't want his troubles coming to the attention of that godlike creature but his uncle bade him rest, to sleep if he could. Steven's bloodstained upper garments had been removed and he was bandaged and wearing a nightshirt, so as always he did as his uncle bade him.

Steven lay quietly for what seemed an interminable time, then remembered his reading. He struggled to his feet, sat wearily down at his desk and began reading. Apparently Steven was expected to continue attending the public school and he would do so, especially as now his own sense of honor was in play. While bullying had been a constant factor in the years he had attended the school, the behavior of those three had been beyond outrageous, even criminal. But he would see what his uncle said.

Late that evening, the solicitor returned and talked to Steven's uncle. Steven was still awake and listened.

"The headmaster didn't want to listen to me. He kept interrupting me, but the signed paper gave him pause. I believe I convinced him to intervene. He did not want to, but coming within an inch of a murder trial involving three of his students, together with the newspaper's comments, and even the possibility of the

headmaster being called to testify to defend his own behavior, made him listen at last. In fact, I hinted that assault charges might still be brought. At this, he said he would talk to the three assailants. So your nephew should, I believe, return to the school Monday.”

Steven’s uncle nodded, thanked the solicitor for his efforts, and showed him out.

Before Steven retired to try his best to sleep, to begin healing, to try to forget, even for a short time, what had happened, his uncle spoke to him.

“Steven, as soon as you are able, that is, recovered sufficiently, I am going to send you to learn how to box, how to defend yourself against those cowards. It will be hard, but if you persevere, you will find your time in that school greatly eased. Bullies only respect force. But once you can defend yourself against them, while their objections to your origins will not change, at least they will leave you alone.”

Steven cautiously nodded. He had no desire whatever to learn how to box, but his uncle was the only one of his family that Steven had at that point. He also knew his uncle took his responsibilities seriously, so he had to take seriously his own responsibilities as well....

By then, Steven was fully awake. He tried to return to sleep, but his memories of this part of his life continued. Steven sighed and shifted his position. He recognized this was the start of another sleepless night....

Steven’s return to the school Monday, bandaged and bleeding, caused his fellow students to treat him rather warily. This was perfectly acceptable to Steven, but more importantly, his three chief tormentors, though

sneering at him—well, one of them seemed to be having second thoughts about what he had done—kept their distance. “Warned off” was Steven’s thought, but he had work to do.

Going forward, his days became calmer. He was actually once more at or near the top of his form and would do his best to stay there. Though the other students still called him Fish, this time in Steven’s attendance at the school was much more pleasant or rather, much less unpleasant.

This situation continued as Steven slowly healed. The stitches in his face were removed, causing more pain and bleeding and leaving a livid scar. Otherwise, as soon as he was judged sufficiently recovered, Steven’s uncle took him to a building, unmarked on the outside, but inside was a large room. It was divided into several squares with ropes on posts. Inside these squares were pairs of beefy men, whose hands were covered with padded gloves, fighting, hitting each other with tremendous force, it seemed. The room smelled of sweat.

Off to the sides of the room were large padded cylinders suspended by ropes from beams across the ceiling. Other men, also wearing padded gloves, were hitting them. The cylinders were covered in leather. The ropes that held them above the floor continued through the bags to the floor. There, heavy metal plates tied to the ends of the ropes kept the bags from swaying too much. Again, the men doing this were very muscular. Steven felt childlike in the presence of these Goliaths.

Steven’s uncle went to a man who appeared to be watching all of the other men, sometimes making comments or giving advice,

and introduced himself and Steven. He explained to the man that he wanted Steven to learn how to box. He did not explain why, which Steven appreciated. The man was of medium height, well-fleshed, powerful-looking arms and shoulders, with a nose that descended from his brow at several angles and in several directions. His ears had evidently been cut in several places as well. Steven realized the man himself was a boxer, and the mild disfigurements were the result of his profession.

Steven's uncle pointed to his nephew, "Teach him how to box, to defend himself."

The boxer glanced at the scar on the side of Steven's face, but merely nodded.

So Steven began his apprenticeship. Two evenings a week, rising to two to three mornings a week during the summer, he "sparring" with another boxer. This wasn't exactly pretending to box, the other boxer was careful not to hit Steven hard, but Steven learned, very slowly it seemed, how to avoid being hit. He had to learn how to stand, one foot ahead of the other, so he could move more quickly if he must. Otherwise, Steven learned how to duck, use his shoulder to protect his head, dodge blows, retreat, weave and sidestep so that his opponent did not have an easy target.

He learned how to counter blows, reposting, jabbing with his fists to keep his opponent off balance and worried about being struck himself. This was well enough, but in addition, Steven was required to hit one of the padded bags one hundred times, full force, with each of his fists each time he visited the gym. Steven was wearing the padded gloves everyone used when "sparring," but this exercise made his

arms and especially shoulders sore. However, he did not complain, simply persisted, doing his utmost always. And he slowly, again very slowly it seemed, got more agile and stronger.

When he returned to the school, to the vocal disappointment of some of the other students (“Fish” was the mildest of the epithets that greeted him), he didn’t know what to expect. His three principal tormentors had left, presumably for Oxford or Cambridge, but were there others waiting to take their places? However, though some attempted to push or trip Steven, he was now much more wary, alert, and quick on his feet. He kept as far away as he could from any nearby students and also kept glancing around to see if anyone was approaching.

On a few occasions, one of the other students tried to hit Steven, but he was able to evade these attentions or simply absorb the blow on a shoulder. On one memorable occasion, another student, his face full of hate (why?), swung his fist at Steven’s head, hard. Steven ducked while turning his head away and the student’s fist hit the wainscoted wall. The wooden panel broke, and the student cursed: he had clearly injured his hand, how badly Steven couldn’t guess.

This incident ended badly for the student, for his parents had to pay to repair the broken panel, and the injury to the student’s hand left him unable to write with it. The student had to leave the school, at least for the rest of the term. How the student would behave when or if he returned was not something Steven could be at all certain about. However, at least so far, Steven’s boxing practice had spared him pain

and humiliation. He was able to go about his business unmolested to a much greater extent.

Though Steven could have begun beating students who tried to attack him or were merely uncivil, he had actually never struck another student. He really didn't want to beat anyone else. What he wanted above all was friendship, for his life had been a lonely one. However, given that the other students apparently considered Steven's "origins" quite beyond the social pale, the best he could hope for, he realized, was to be ignored.

Otherwise, the only other concession Steven made to help protect himself was to obtain a bag in which to carry his books and papers. The bag had a strap so it could be carried on his shoulder, leaving both hands free. Gradually, the other students realized that attacking Steven was not likely to give any satisfaction to the attacker, and so attacks stopped. The other students now paid no attention to Steven. Steven, however, remained wary and alert and continued his boxing.

Academically, Steven had moved to the top of his form, to his uncle's unvoiced, but clear satisfaction. It was at this point that his uncle began to tell Steven of his wish that Steven should attend one of the Inns of Court and after being called to the bar, should practice law. Though Steven had never thought of what he would do after leaving the public school—perhaps teaching at a public school himself—he silently consented. It also occurred to him that his uncle's solicitor had been able to force the headmaster to take action to protect Steven after he had been attacked and injured, so attorneys

had authority, power in some circumstances. This fact attracted Steven to the profession.

Steven noticed some effects of the boxing on his body. His wrists and arms became thicker, even muscled. Also, his shoulders grew wider. His shirts could no longer contain him, he thought, so he required new ones to be made. The old ones were still stained with his blood, and Steven readily parted with them.

Steven continued with the boxing after leaving public school, though not attending as often. He found the exertion helpful in allowing him to concentrate more strongly on his work. Though he was on good terms with everyone at the boxing school, Steven noticed that they all seemed to treat him with what Steven would almost call deference. Instead of being of a lower order socially as he had been in the public school, now he was on a higher level. This was understandable in a way, yet it helped to keep Steven lonely.

Gray's Inn had been the only place where such considerations did not appear to apply, or at least not nearly as strongly. This was a great relief to Steven. He actually began to be on good terms with the other students, even to the point of allowing a few tentative friendships to form. He decided that since everyone had the same desire, to be called to the bar, other considerations were not as important. Not entirely absent, but at least reduced sufficiently to allow everyone to achieve his desire.

Another difference from public school was the talk of the students. In the public school, conversation was unbelievably, unremittingly filthy. At Gray's, conversations, even those not

concerning the law, were rational, civil, and decent. Steven liked this, but puzzled over it.

Steven was much happier at Gray's. But then his uncle's health began to fail. As his heir, Steven had to be kept informed and was. This was unbelievably distressing to him. When his parents had died in India, he had tried to feel sorrow, but had difficulty feeling anything except guilt for not sorrowing enough. It didn't help that Steven could barely remember his parents; they and Steven had separated so long before. His uncle was the only father he had known, no, the only parent he could remember.

Thinking of all of this one day, Steven's eyes had tears in them: the memories of his uncle's life slipping away before him were unbearable. And those of what came after were little better.

Once his uncle was buried as closely as possible to the grave of the woman he loved, the woman whose life had slipped away from his uncle's, Steven had to see to selling off the stock and paying the last wages of the men who had worked in the shop, worked all Steven's own life it seemed. Farewells, everyone trying to conceal what they felt as they left the shop for the last time to hazard life somewhere else, then Steven was alone. He collected his possessions, looked about the shop one last time, then locked the door and went to give the key to the man who held the lease.

Uncle Edward had been a thrifty man, save where it concerned Steven. Except for bequests to his shopmen, which Steven of course honored, his uncle had left everything to Steven. This would enable Steven to complete his studies at Gray's with perhaps a bit left over to begin his

life as an attorney. In fact, Steven eventually had about fifty pounds left over to do so. He began work at the location he still occupied. He was certainly not becoming rich, but had achieved what his uncle had wanted for him: respectability. Steven became more aware as time elapsed: somehow, whatever had been achieved, irrespective of the cost in money, time, effort, or hope, had not been enough.

6. A Courtship of Sorts

At this point, Steven was thoroughly saddened, his failed courtship of Sarah filling his mind. He wiped more tears from his eyes. He remembered that his uncle had decided, when Steven was young, that Steven should learn to dance. This was one of the accomplishments a “proper gentleman” should achieve. So Steven was sent to learn how to dance at the establishment of a very erect lady with greying hair. A man in her employ played a piano. This was all very well; in fact, Steven was quite willing to learn to dance, for he was beginning to wonder how he would ever meet young ladies his uncle would deem suitable.

Since Steven was expected to go to the dancing “academy,” not “school,” he had to be dressed appropriately—that is, well. This immediately produced a problem: the other boys who lived near his uncle’s shop took great exception to his dress. Evidently, they felt he was trying to escape his (and their) social class and deeply and violently resented this. Of course, their suspicions were, in a sense, correct, but eventually, Steven’s uncle had to send one of his shopmen to escort Steven to and from his lessons.

Steven attended these classes for three years and managed to master the steps. Oddly, the shopman escorting Steven knew many of

them himself and on many occasions helped Steven practice the steps.

Steven had been invited to a gathering at the home of one of the friends Steven had made while at Gray's. This was a man who had, at one point, confidentially informed Steven that he was only at Gray's because his family expected him to have some respectable profession and so he had chosen the law. Steven envied his friend, but understood his circumstances; Steven had told the man of his own, but this had not obviously affected their friendship. For Steven, this exchange of confidences had greatly deepened it, in fact.

Though the invitation was late, Steven paid a haberdasher to make the customary costume for dancing: knee breeches and stockings. With a blue waistcoat, white linen shirt, white cravat, and black topcoat, Steven felt he could acquit himself as part of the *beau monde*. He went by public horse cab.

At the house, detached with three floors and lying to the north of London, were perhaps a dozen gentlemen and about the same number of ladies, along with two elderly women. The last were there perhaps as chaperones. There were also seven musicians. The musicians were playing something which was unfamiliar to Steven's ear. He was introduced to everyone, and of course, all of the unfamiliar names promptly escaped his memory—save for one.

This was Sarah. Specifically, Sarah Calvert; Steven got the impression he should be impressed by her family name and tried to pretend he was. Otherwise, he was genuinely very impressed indeed. Sarah was golden-haired, with large blue eyes that seemed to be

pulling Steven into them. She gave Steven her hand: it was soft, and he could smell her perfume. He could only bow and smile at her in acknowledgement of whatever it was she said to him. But at this point, the musicians began playing what Steven recognized as dance music. He was able to ask for and obtain her consent to be her partner in a quadrille.

This was followed by a minuet, then another, then a second quadrille. Sarah seemed willing to be Steven's partner in all of these dances. She was neither tall, nor short, just appropriate in height for a woman, as was her figure. Her features were pretty, perhaps not spectacularly so, though Steven was not disposed to be critical. He was, in fact, enchanted, enslaved; her willingness to be his partner had accomplished all of this over the course of a few minutes.

Tea was served. Sarah sat down, and Steven obtained cups of tea for each of them. He brought Sarah hers, carefully including what she had requested: lemon and a teaspoonful of sugar. Somehow a chair remained unoccupied beside her, so now they were able to talk, to learn something about each other. Sarah was newly out of a "female academy," so Steven guessed she was perhaps eighteen or nineteen years of age. In a way, she seemed older, more "poised;" the expression Steven decided was appropriate. This was not at all like Steven himself.

Still, she seemed sufficiently impressed by the fact that Steven was a member of the bar, had actually tried a case at Old Bailey before a judge, even successfully, and Steven's bondage deepened, impossible as this seemed. More dancing followed, including some English

country dances, all of which were familiar to Steven. In fact, Steven and Sarah danced together the entire evening, a fact that Steven could see the chaperones did not like. Steven guessed they felt that Sarah was showing her preference for Steven's company perhaps too much or perhaps her independence at last from the chaperones. The chaperones did not intervene, however, and an evening of enchantment passed all too quickly.

Yet, there was a capstone, a final achievement that appeared to seal Steven's fate: Sarah agreed to receive Steven at her family's house for a morning visit. She gave Steven a card with her name and direction printed on it. Clearly, she was impressed with Steven, though not to the extent that Steven was with her; that was not possible. Steven walked the miles back to where he lived and worked in the dark, not really conscious of the route. He had walked, not because he hadn't money for a cab, but because his mind was flying.

Steven began his courtship as soon as propriety allowed. However, reality then made an unwelcome appearance. Sarah's family, her father in particular, was far less impressed by Steven than Sarah seemed to be. He guessed her father had made inquiries about Steven's likely income and family and warned Sarah off of him. She did not deny him when he visited, but she was not as forthcoming as she had been when they had met. This was discouraging, but Steven argued to himself that she had to keep her distance to slow matters, so he continued his visits. Indeed, very gradually she seemed to warm to him, while her family became sufficiently tolerant of Steven's attentions to

invite him to dine at their house. Hence, Steven felt he was making steady progress toward his goal. He made no attempt to determine her fortune; he truly felt she was her own fortune. Of course, all of this made what had happened all the more crushing, even without his being supplanted by his arch nemesis. He wondered if she had told Lord Fallworth about him; perhaps they laughed together about his courtship. It was all too much, and he wept into his pillow once more.

It was gall, wormwood: his uncle had lost his beloved to death, but possibly their souls were united, though his uncle had never spoken to Steven about any religious subject. However, the loss of Sarah was for all time, no matter how one looked at the situation and the loss of her to... It was all too much entirely. Should he take his own life? No, too many people relied on him. Emigrate? No, for the same reason. He had to go on and perhaps someday take a partner.... Steven got up, used the chamber pot, then lay down again, to spend the rest of the night in anguish.

On the following days, he thought often about love. Was it all just a habit of mind, of feeling? If that was so, then permanent separation from the object of desire would eventually cause the memories, the longing, and the desire to fade. Though it hadn't in his uncle, Steven was certain. There were women living nearby who, even Steven understood, had wanted to marry his uncle. Uncle Edward had always been polite, but these women soon came to understand the situation.

But Sarah, had Steven really been in love with the woman she was or the woman Steven

imagined her to be? How well did he know her, really know her character, her soul, as well as the more mundane matter of her likes and dislikes? At this point, he could not be certain. Although he recognized that aspects of the woman behind the dress, the manners, were and had been hidden from him; such understanding made him sadder over their separation, not more resigned. This was, in a way, irrational, but perhaps love was, at bottom, exactly that. More to think about, to remember....

7. Memories of a Happier Result

A few days after all of this reflection, memories of happier times, one period especially, began to help Steven to recover his spirits. He had been sitting at the table where he met with those seeking his legal skills and where he subsequently worked. He was sipping very sweet tea. This was not to keep himself alert, for this day, like the previous one, had brought no one. But then came a rap at his door, definite yet hesitant. Steven arose, went to the door, and opened it.

Outside were two women, both respectably dressed, both of “mature years.” After a moment, Steven recognized one of them as a lady who owned property some distance away, who had paid Steven to write a deed. The other woman appeared to be a servant, probably a housekeeper. Steven stood back and gestured for the women to enter. He placed chairs for each of them and offered tea. They accepted, and Steven asked his housekeeper-cook to bring cups for each of them.

Once they had accepted cups and began sipping, Steven looked inquiringly at the property owner, who, in turn, looked at her companion, then turned to address Steven.

“This is Missus Thomas, my housekeeper. She ‘as a daughter Mary ‘oo is a

maid of all work for me. Mary was arrested this morning.”

Steven stared at her and asked, “On what charge?”

“She was charged, I’m not sure what the law calls it, with stealing a gold spoon, value ten shillings.”

Steven blinked: stealing anything valued at more than five was a hanging offense. This was very serious. But the women were well aware of this.

Now the mother began talking. She was, Steven could now see, extremely upset, enough to begin speaking for herself.

“This morning ‘a sent Mary to buy jam an’ marmalade. She didn’t return, then we ‘ears she’s in gaol, in Newgate. So we went an’ a shopkeeper an’ constable searches ‘er bag an’ finds this spoon. Shopkeeper says she comes into ‘is shop, then left ‘an ‘e sees the spoon is gone. ‘E went out an’ got a constable an’ they finds the spoon in ‘er bag, so she was taken in gaol.”

Here the woman stopped, overcome. Steven allowed her to regain her composure before speaking.

“What did she say when you talked to her?”

“She said—an’ I b’lieve ‘er—she didn’t steal nothink, she never went into ‘at shop; she was talkin’ to a young man ‘oo keeps astin’ ‘er to go out with ‘im, but she don’t like ‘im ‘an won’t. She said ‘e shopkeeper brushed past ‘er while she was talkin’, but ‘e didn’t say nothink to ‘er till ‘e comes back w’ constable. Now she don’t know what to do, Mister Cosgrove, bein’

in Newgate. Missus Adams said we should talk to you, ‘an ‘ere we are.”

Steven had never tried a case of any sort, at Old Bailey or elsewhere. Although, of course, he had a great deal of knowledge about procedures there; it was just from reading or observation. But this was a very serious matter, and he did want to help. Someone was either grossly mistaken or else lying.

Actually, when Steven was “called to the bar,” he became a barrister, someone who could present criminal cases, usually for the Crown, to a jury. But he had decided he did not want to send men to the gallows for what Steven had decided were often minor offenses. So he instead began to make his living as a solicitor, writing wills. Though he could have hired a barrister to defend the girl, he was intrigued by the case and would defend her himself.

He took a small notebook and a pencil and asked, “What is the name of the shopkeeper, and where is his shop?”

Mrs. Adams told Steven, “‘Is shop is on Fenchurch Street, Number Eight. ‘Is name is Jones, John Jones.”

Steven wrote this down, then asked, “And the name of this suitor?”

Now Mrs. Thomas replied, “David Talbot. ‘E’s a ‘ostler, drives a ‘ackney sometimes. Over at Oldcastle Yard.”

“Why does your daughter dislike him?”

“She just said once she didn’t trust ‘im.”

Silence, followed by, “Too free w’ ‘is ‘ands, mebbie.”

Steven nodded then looked at the window.

“It is becoming dark. Allow me to escort you ladies to your abode. It is too late for me to do anything today, but I will visit your daughter tomorrow at Newgate. She may have more information. Then I will speak to this Jones, as well as Talbot and inquire as to whether anyone else saw anything. After that, we shall see.”

The two women rose. Steven put on his hat and cloak and took up his heavy walking stick. On the way to Adam’s residence, all were silent. Steven hadn’t been called to the bar more than two years before, as he was painfully aware. Still, he was intrigued by the case. Something wasn’t right.

The next morning, since—fortunately or not, depending on one’s point of view—there were no claimants for Steven’s professional services, he told his housekeeper-cook about the situation and what he would be doing. She was somewhat appalled about the possible fate of the girl, but agreed to tell anyone who wanted Steven’s legal knowledge to return the next day. Then Steven went out and took a cab to Newgate Prison.

This was a large, grey-brown building made of dressed stone. There was a pillared entrance in the middle, but the wings on either side of the entrance were without windows. It reminded Steven of a fortress, save the walls were to keep people inside, not prevent people outside from entering. Steven went in and obtained a guide to the wards and cells where women prisoners were kept. Money was, of course, required for this service, but Steven was expecting that.

He wasn’t expecting what he saw, heard, and smelled. The rooms where the women were

confined were filled beyond their capacity, many women having to stand, along with ragged, crying children, some clearly ill, while some of the women were naked or nearly so. Steven guessed they had pawned their clothing, possibly for food or more likely drink. He and his guide were greeted with a torrent of abuse, incredibly vulgar, indescribably obscene. The guide didn't appear at all surprised at any of this, so Steven realized that what he was seeing (and smelling) was usual. At each room, Steven asked for Mary Thomas.

There were several possible pretenders, since the girl's name was not that unusual. But at last, there came a rather short, obviously young, obviously upset young woman who, after Steven asked a few questions, was clearly the person he had to talk with. He dismissed his guide with a shilling, telling him he would find his own way out. He turned to the girl, a rather comely one he could see, and told her he had been asked by her mother and her mother's (and her own) employer to represent her at her trial. He asked her to tell him exactly what had happened the previous morning. This she did, and Steven asked her a few amplifying questions not only to make what had happened clearer, but also to see if he could catch her in a lie. He didn't, not that he expected to, and after taking a few more notes, he asked her if she had been able to sleep at all, for the noise was deafening.

"No, sir, it's so noisy an' there's no place to sleep 'cept the floor."

By now, this didn't surprise Steven, just added to his appalled state. He told Mary, "I will look into all of this, to try to find why this has

happened. In the meantime, here is some money.”

He handed Mary about three shillings' worth of halfpence, pennies, and a few slightly larger coins. She accepted these gratefully and Steven left, hoping the other prisoners wouldn't simply steal the money from her, but he was not optimistic about this. What was more, he very much wanted out of Newgate, into what passed in London for fresh air. He was afraid that if he didn't, he was going to vomit. He would visit the shop and if possible, talk to the shopkeeper; then he would look for Talbot.

The shop itself looked much like so many others in London. Gazing at it and looking through the windows, he could see the place was indeed a pawnshop: there were several cabinets with glass covers, the cabinets showing a miscellany of items. The windows had frameworks of iron bars to keep thieves from being able to break into the shop by throwing stones through the windows. Steven went inside to be confronted by a stout, grizzled man behind a counter. The man didn't appear at all welcoming, but Steven was polite:

“Mr. Jones, I am called to be a part of a criminal trial, concerning the accusation you made against a Mary Thomas. I have some questions for you. Your answers can help make the trial faster if you care to answer them.”

Steven was being careful not to tell Jones he was going to be defending the girl.

Jones looked hostile, then uncertain, finally asked, “What 'r questions, like?”

Steven smiled placatingly and asked, “You claimed this Mary Thomas must have taken a gold spoon, value ten shillings, from

your shop. You did not see this take place, so was there someone else in the shop that distracted you?"

"Aye, there was."

"Someone buying or selling?"

"'E was askin' about stock."

"What in particular?"

Silence before Jones finally said, "Watch chain. Wanted gold, but I didn't 'ave any then."

"Did this person give you his name?"

"No, didn't give any."

"What did he look like? Can you describe this man to me? Perhaps I can ask people living here if they know such a man."

Jones became...what? Steven was beginning to be more certain Mary's story was true; otherwise why was Jones having so much difficulty answering simple questions?

Eventually, Jones said, "Mid-sized, grizzled, grey hair, dressed much like everyone else 'round 'ere. That's all I remember."

"You never saw him before?"

"No."

"Well," Steven returned, while maintaining a placating tone, "then, searching for this man would be a clear waste of time. In a way, this simplifies things. Thank you for your time. Let me leave you my card in case you see this man again or think of anything else."

Steven gave Jones his card, smiled, and walked out. He began looking for the rejected swain, Talbot.

This took some time. Eventually, Steven found a place that had a number of hackney cabs. He found that Talbot worked there, at least on occasion, and was told where he might find the man. This was one of several taverns. So

Steven went to two of the places without finding him. The third was The Ayrton Arms. Like all taverns, it had a sign giving the name, along with a painting of what the name referred to. The painting was ornate, but like the other tavern signs along that street, the paint was peeling from the sign in places.

At the third, if only because the morning was coming on noon and Steven was thirsty, he purchased a pint of ale, drank some, and asked the barkeep about Talbot. The barkeep didn't seem to be friendly with Talbot, and Steven learned that Talbot was often seen drinking with the shopkeeper, Jones. In fact, they had had a prolonged conversation three nights before. The barkeep suggested that Steven ask a man, a regular patron of the tavern named Wyeth, if he had heard what they were talking about. Steven finished his pint (it had been a thirsty day), thanked the barkeep, and left. He wanted to talk to Talbot, but found he was out driving a hackney cab. There was no telling when Talbot would return, so Steven went back to his own place of business.

In fact, a man who desired a will followed Steven into his shop, so Steven made some money that afternoon and was distracted for a time from what he had seen, heard, and smelled at Newgate. That evening, after visiting a nearby chop shop, Steven returned to The Ayrton Arms. Neither Talbot nor Jones was there, but Wyeth, pointed out to him by the barkeep, was. Steven introduced himself as an attorney who was going to be assisting in the trial of a young woman who Jones had accused of theft—he once again didn't say exactly what he was going to be doing. He offered to buy

Wyeth a pint, and Wyeth accepted. He seemed to understand what Seven was talking about, Steven noticed. The two men adjourned to a table in a corner near where Wyeth had been sitting, and Wyeth told Steven what he had heard Talbot and Jones talking about.

This was, as Steven had begun to suspect, a plot to send Mary Thomas to the gallows, if not transportation to the colonies. Evidently, her refusal to accept Talbot's attempts at courtship had enraged him. He had spent some time persuading Jones to drop the spoon in Mary's bag, then go for a constable and swear her life away.

Steven revealed, over a second pint, that he was to defend the girl. He also told Wyeth, "I had begun to suspect something like this. However, if you are willing to testify as to what you overheard, we stand a good chance of overturning this vile plot. Are you willing? Remember, a young woman's, an innocent young woman's, life is at stake here."

"What would I 'ave to do?"

"Appear at the trial, whenever that is to occur. I will tell you when. Did you tell anyone else about what you heard?"

"Aye, barkeep."

Steven thought a minute or so, decided the barkeep's testimony would corroborate Wyeth's, and told Wyeth, "With your testimony, and his if necessary, I do not foresee any problems and will try to have the trial take place as soon as possible."

Especially, Steven realized, since the conditions of her imprisonment were so vile; death from gaol fever was possible in such places. He didn't say any of this, however.

Steven supposed that prisons should be places any sane person would avoid and so conduct himself to eliminate chances of being arrested for anything. Even so, remembering what he had seen and smelled at Newgate, there had to be limits to what the prisoners should have to endure. What was more, at least one of the gaoled women was innocent....

But now Wyeth seemed troubled about something. Steven raised his eyebrows; Wyeth was, at this moment, the center of Steven's defense, and he had to stay on the man's right side.

Wyeth said, "Don't like to 'peach," meaning inform.

However, Steven reminded him, "Unless you testify, tell the truth about what you heard, an innocent young woman may hang. I can see you are a decent man. You do not want to go to your grave feeling guilty about this. If anyone in the tavern reproaches you, simply tell them that. Jones and Talbot will have their own concerns to occupy them: attempting to do what they, in fact, did—false swearing is the least of it—is a hanging offense."

Wyeth sat, thinking about what Steven had said. Then, after another largish sip of ale, he nodded, looked Steven in his eyes, and said, "Then I'm on board."

Steven smiled, partly in relief, and extended his hand. Wyeth shook it, and the matter was settled. Steven went to the barkeep and secured two more pints and brought them back to where he and Wyeth were sitting. They drank their ale, both then more at ease.

As they drank, Steven thought of something. Wyeth might know, so Steven asked him, "Where does Talbot reside?"

Wyeth replied, "'E lives top of Jones shop. 'E's 'is tenant. Mebbe they 's friends, but I dunno that." Silence, then Wyeth continued, "Not in 'ere much. That's why I noticed 'em. Could 'ear 'em talkin' easy enough."

"Your hearing is good?"

"Allus 'as been." More silence and then Wyeth leaned forward and said confidentially, "Don't like to eavesdrop, but 'earin' them bastards plannin' to get a gal in Newgate, maybe 'ung, just 'cause she didn't like Talbot, bad cess to 'im, I says...."

"Shows her good sense," remarked Steven, who realized at this moment that he shouldn't drink another pint, as he was feeling a trifle lightheaded.

Wyeth laughed, drained his pint, and as if by mutual understanding, both men got to their feet. They exited the tavern, shook hands once more, and went their separate ways.

It was becoming dark, exacerbated by deepening fog. Steven was walking close to the shop fronts on his left when a man stepped out of a lane and swung his closed fist at Steven's head. With an instinct created and honed by many hours of boxing practice, Steven raised his left shoulder and lowered his head. The man's fist struck Steven's shoulder and grazed the side of Steven's head. Steven swung his stick up into the man's groin as hard as he could—an unofficial part of boxing instruction. The man, who was about to follow his right-hand blow with one from his left, gasped and bent forward.

Steven reversed his swing and hit the man on the back of his head.

At this, the fellow clearly had had enough and retreated back into the lane. He began staggering away as fast as he could. He disappeared almost at once, so Steven decided not to follow him. The side of his head was sore, though not terribly so, and Steven couldn't feel any signs of blood. So he continued his journey, thinking about what had happened.

He realized the fellow was no ordinary footpad. Such a person would have used a knife or club. Use of fists suggested their differences were personal. So how had the fellow known who Steven was, what he looked like, where he would be walking and when? Had he talked to Jones? Was this Talbot? Then why the attack? Unless Jones realized Steven was defending Mary Thomas. Steven began walking in the center of the road, horse traffic permitting. He frequently glanced behind himself, but saw no one following.

However, he reached his rooms without further incident. He ate a slice of bread with butter and jam, drank some cold tea after adding some sugar, and went to bed. The side of his head didn't hurt too much....

The next day, Steven had several people who wanted his services, so he was busy until near darkness. He decided he would call on Mrs. Thomas and her employer and tell them what he had found. Then he would make some effort to find Talbot, but he very much wanted to read the constable's report, which would probably include what Jones had said, Talbot as well, if he had said anything.

The following day promised to be a quiet one, so after telling his housekeeper-cook he would probably be away the entire day, he set out. It was full light, though still foggy. He was unable to locate Talbot—“adn’t been in”—but did find Wyeth. He told Wyeth of the attack and his suspicions. The man didn’t seem surprised or frightened: he smiled grimly and showed Steven the stout wooden club he was carrying. Steven decided not to try to see if Talbot was in his room above Jones’s shop and went to Old Bailey.

This housed the central criminal court of the country. It derived its name from its location, on Old Bailey Street at the corner of Newgate Street, just inside the City of London. The building was, like Newgate Prison itself, relatively featureless outside, with few windows. It was perhaps forty feet high, constructed of dressed stone.

Inside, Steven explained his errand, showed his card, and eventually was allowed to read the report of the constable that Jones had persuaded to search and then arrest Mary Thomas. This was straightforward, but there was one surprise: Jones had told the constable that a woman had diverted his attention, allowing Mary Thomas to do what Jones had claimed she had done. Jones had told Steven it was a man. This was a major discrepancy, but since only Steven had been present when he had questioned Jones, the fellow could always deny telling Steven any such thing. But it confirmed Steven’s opinion of the man, and Steven decided he would tell Mrs. Thomas and her (and Mary’s) employer what he had found. He asked the clerk to make a copy of the constable’s report, leaving

him money for his time. Walking back, Steven kept looking about him, but there was no one following.

Both women were pleased, though not surprised. Nor were they surprised when Steven told them of the attack after he had talked to Wyeth.

“E must ‘ave followed you, Mister Cosgrove.” Silence, then Mary’s mother added, “E’s quick w’ ‘is fists, ‘e is. ‘E ‘it Mary once. ‘At’s why she don’t like ‘im, I think.”

“I don’t blame her for that, not at all,” agreed Steven. Then he told them, “I will visit Mary with the news. At the very least, I think I can obtain a ‘not-guilty’ verdict. I would have to obtain corroborative evidence to indict Jones and Talbot on a charge of conspiracy. I will take her more money tomorrow. That appears urgent in that place.”

The women nodded, and Steven took his leave. He returned to his rooms, always keeping an eye open for anyone who was suspicious-looking and who was taking an interest in him. Though London was a violent town, Steven was now certain he had been a target, most certainly by Talbot. He also decided he would try to advance the date of Mary’s trial as much as possible.

Though the next day brought two men who desired wills drawn, as they were to marry Sunday, Steven managed to do this by early afternoon. He returned to Newgate and at length was able to talk to Mary Thomas. She was dirtier (not surprising in that place), thinner (also not surprising), and clearly frightened, either at her possible fate or because of the other inmates.

Steven, looking at them, decided the latter was more likely.

He asked her in as low a voice as he could that would allow her to hear over the din of screams, curses, and vile songs, "If I give you more money, will it be taken from you?"

Mary swallowed, looked around at the other women, a telling sign, and nodded. "Some, not all. But I do needs money, Mister Cosgrove, if you can spare it."

Steven gave her about what he had before, all small coins, to reduce temptation as much as possible.

Mary went on to say, "Some 'ave defended me, they 'int all bad, so I thanks 'e again, sir."

Then Steven told her what he had discovered. Her face hardened when he told her of her supposed suitor's perfidy. She looked down, shook her head, and uttered some expressions Steven guessed she had learned in Newgate. He concluded by telling her, "I will try to advance the day of your trial as much as I may, to reduce your trials in this place."

He smiled at her, was rewarded by the hope that was now in her eyes, and took his leave. He would go to Old Bailey tomorrow to do just that, as it was drawing late. And he urgently needed fresh air.

The following day, Steven gave the two men their wills, explained these to them, and took his fees. Then he returned to Old Bailey to negotiate the earliest possible trial for Mary Thomas. He was able to do this with surprisingly little trouble, as an outbreak of gaol fever among the men had created several openings. Of course, if Mary contracted the

disease herself, then all of Steven's efforts would be in vain. However, barring that outcome, her trial would now take place in two weeks' time, on a Wednesday. He returned to Mrs. Adams' house, told them when the trial would occur, and asked them to visit Mary the next day to tell her the news. This request produced a grimace from both women, an expression which Steven well understood, but he really couldn't face another visit to Newgate himself, not so soon.

He also asked Mary's mother, on the morning of the trial, to bathe Mary and dress her in clean, respectable-looking clothes, nothing more. Somewhat surprisingly, Mrs. Adams said she would go and assist Mrs. Thomas. Evidently the Thomas women were favored, and perhaps Mrs. Adams wanted to foil the two men who were attempting to disgrace her maidservant—if not to have her executed. Not that her motives mattered. Steven would visit Mary, probably the next week, to explain in general what was going to happen and what Steven was going to do. He wanted her testimony to be simple and honest, for her to try her best not to allow her knowledge of Jones' and Talbot's plotting to affect it. He returned to his rooms to deal with any clients who might be there and to decide whom to call to testify and in what order, and as much as possible, exactly what to say and ask.

He also had to tell Wyeth when to appear and how he should be dressed: respectably, as if he were going to church. After locating Wyeth in the hackney cab firm where he worked and relaying his requests, Steven went on to warn Wyeth that the counsel for the Crown would try to portray Wyeth as having some grudge against Jones and Talbot, impugn his motives. Wyeth,

whom Steven was beginning to think of as a very intelligent man, understood that this might happen and assured Steven he would simply tell the truth as he was sworn to do. Wyeth then told Steven that he had seen Talbot driving a cab, with a bandage about his head. Talbot hadn't seen Wyeth, he was sure. Both men smiled at each other, both understanding what the bandage meant.

The day of the trial approached. Steven visited Mary Thomas twice to encourage her and give her more coins. There were signs that some of the other women were taking Mary under their wings, but otherwise, she was becoming dirtier and more bedraggled than ever. Still, compared with the other inmates, she was looking startlingly normal. Not surprisingly, she was worried.

“Are they goin’ to find me guilty, Mister Cosgrove? Are they goin’ to ‘ang me? I ‘uz thinkin’ I can bear to ‘ang—we allus mus’ die—but me ma’d die from disgrace. It’s ‘at wot troubles me most.”

Steven shook his head and told Mary, “If anyone hangs as a result of this trial, it won’t be you.”

But here Steven decided he was close to saying too much and took his leave. He had to collect his newly cleaned wig and trial robe from the shop he had taken them to.

8. Trial

He rose early the Wednesday of the trial. He shaved carefully, dressed immaculately, and put his wig, robe, and some papers in a bag. He had bathed the previous evening, a real measure of his nervousness. He had told his housekeeper-cook what he would be doing, so she was to tell anyone desiring legal work he would be available again on Thursday. Then, he walked quickly to Old Bailey, arriving in good time. He introduced himself to the man, a much older, more experienced man, who would present the Crown's case against Mary Thomas. The man seemed confident, even bored. His clear confidence in his case and his obvious attitude of superiority over Steven for what he was certain was going to be Steven's loss of a client to the gallows annoyed Steven even as it amused him. Or did the prosecutor know something that Steven didn't? That notion put Steven on edge. He donned his wig and robe.

The room where trials were held was square with a high ceiling. Nearly all of one wall consisted of one window, many sheets of glass held together in a framework. This made the entire chamber clearly lit. To the left of this window was a rectangular railing, a little below waist high, in which twelve chairs were seated in two rows. The jurymen would sit there. The Lord Chief Justice had an elevated seat in the center of the room, close to the window. Below

him, there was a chair with wooden railings along three sides, where witnesses sat to testify. Finally, below him sat robed and wigged barristers, here to try the cases.

Away from the wall with the large window was another low rail which separated the spectators from the participants. This area also had chairs, and these were now being rapidly claimed by spectators and witnesses. Steven was most relieved to see Wyeth, respectably dressed as Steven had requested. Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Thomas also came in. They smiled at Steven, who smiled back. Less welcome was Jones, but he had to be there, as one of the two accusers. The other accuser, the constable who had arrested Mary after finding the spoon in her bag, was already seated. He looked bored. Steven didn't know if Talbot was there, as he had never knowingly set eyes on him. Steven quietly asked the Crown prosecutor if he was going to call Jones first; the prosecutor nodded. Steven smiled to himself; his trap was set. He prayed it would work as he hoped it would.

Now the prisoners to be tried that morning arrived. Their chains had been removed. They would sit to the right of the room in a fenced enclosure, with guards standing nearby in case any tried to escape. Steven was pleased to see Mary's dress was clean and respectable-looking. She herself looked clean and her hair was pulled back to show a face that was anxious, but determined. Steven's confidence, relative to his anxiety, began to grow.

The Lord Chief Justice walked in, and everyone rose. He sat down and gestured for everyone else to do the same. He ordered the

first twelve jurymen to go into the space or “box” reserved for them. After they were seated, a court official announced the name of the first person to be tried. Steven sat quietly; Mary’s case would be the third. The accused sat down, facing the witness chair. The first trial began.

Steven tried to pay attention to the first two trials, but after they were over, he couldn’t even remember what the verdicts were. But then Mary’s name was called. She got up and went to the place where the first two defendants, both men, had sat during their trial. The Chief Justice read out the charge against Mary and asked her how she pled to this charge. Mary said firmly, “Not guilty, Your Honor.” Steven smiled; he had coached her well. Now the accuser was called to testify, and Jones got up and sat down in the witness box.

The Crown Counsel asked Jones to tell the court what had happened, and Jones did so, working up a fine show of indignation at what he claimed Mary Thomas did and was caught doing. But now it was Steven’s turn. He smiled at Jones, who looked hostile in return.

Steven said, “Mr. Jones, you described a man to me whom you said had diverted your attention from the woman who is the defendant in this case. Please describe this man to the court.”

“Why?”

“Please do. It is important.”

The Lord Chief Justice said, “Do so, Mr. Jones.”

Jones looked baffled, as Steven pretended to help him.

Steven said patiently, "You told me this was a man, medium-sized, grizzled and plainly dressed. Is this not so?"

"Oh, aye, I 'ad forgot."

"And what did he say he wanted to buy?" More bafflement, so Steven again pretended to help him. "You told me he wanted a gold chain for a watch fob."

"Aye, that's so."

"Did you have one?"

"No. I told 'im so, an' 'e left. That's when I saw..."

"That is sufficient, Mr. Jones."

Then Steven turned to the jury and reminded them of what Jones had said about the person who had distracted him: middle-aged, grizzled, plainly dressed, and male.

Steven turned again to Jones, who looked puzzled and still hostile. He said, "When you rushed outside to look for the young woman whom you have accused of theft, was she walking along the street or standing talking to someone? You must have noticed."

Jones now looked wary. But he had to answer. He said, "She 'uz talkin' to someun."

"Standing in the road, carrying, according to what you are claiming, a stolen spoon that could send her to the gallows and talking to someone? Did you recognize to whom she was talking?"

Jones was silent for so long that the Lord Chief Justice prompted him again, "The accuser will answer the question."

Jones said, "No. I 'uz in a 'urry to get constable."

"You didn't recognize Mr. Talbot, your own tenant? Is Mr. Talbot in court, by the way?"

Here the bailiff called for Talbot to present himself, but as Steven expected, he did not.

Steven said, "Thank you, Mr. Jones. Pray do not leave the court. You may be required to answer more questions."

Jones looked at Steven, and Steven could see the beginnings of fear in the man's eyes. That was good.

The next person to be called was the constable who, at Jones' behest, had found the spoon in Mary's bag and arrested her. His testimony was given clearly and unemotionally. He had, of course, done this many times before.

When he had finished, Steven got up with his copy of the constable's report. He showed it to the constable and said, "Constable, this is a copy of the report you wrote about this case. Please glance over it and confirm for me and this court that it is an accurate copy, particularly the place marked with a vertical line."

The constable did so, looked sharply at the place Steven asked him to, and looked up at Steven.

"Constable, is this an accurate copy of your report?"

"Yes, sir, it is."

"Then please read to the court the part of it I have marked."

And the constable read: "Mr. Jones said his attention was diverted by a woman who entered his shop. She was fashionably dressed, of middle years, and was looking for a gold necklace. I told her I had none then, but might later, and she left."

"Thank you, Constable. That will be all."

Steven turned to the jurymen and observed, "Mr. Jones had earlier claimed to the constable that the diversion of his attention was of middle years, fashionably dressed, desiring a necklace, and female. Either Mr. Jones' memory cannot be trusted at all, or he is lying through his teeth. Why? Why would he try to send an innocent young woman, a woman he doesn't know, to the gallows? To answer this question, I summon a witness who can. Call Mr. George Wyeth, please."

The Clerk of the Court did so, Wyeth rose, came to the witness box, and was duly sworn. Jones was looking puzzled: he didn't recognize Wyeth.

Steven said to Wyeth, "Please tell the court what you heard Mr. Jones and Talbot saying about this matter."

Wyeth looked nervous, but swallowed and began: "A matter of weeks ago, don't remember the day, I 'uz sitting in tavern..."

"Please give the name of the tavern and speak more loudly. Some in the jury are having difficulty hearing you," urged Steven.

Wyeth said more loudly, "'Tiz The Ayrton Arms. I goes there to sit an' 'ave a pint after work. I sits in corner, no 'un bothers me. On this night, it 'uz a Thursday, I think, the week afore the young 'oman..."

"The defendant, Mary Thomas?"

"Aye. 'Afore she was arrested. I 'uz sippin' my pint when Jones 'ere sits down at a table with Talbot. They 'ad their backs to me, didn't see me, and they started talkin'. Well, Talbot started talkin'. 'E was sayin' this Thomas gel wouldn't walk out with 'im; she kept puttin' 'im off; 'e was tired of this; if there were bushes

to 'ide behind, 'e would take 'er and rape 'er, show 'er not to trifle w' 'im.

"Jones said "'twas better to get the gel arrested, thrown in Newgate, that 'ud teach 'er.' Talbot says 'Mebbe the bitch could be sent to the gallows.' 'E goes on, says 'She walks near every morning to greengrocers with a sack over 'er shoulder, then back w' what she buys for mistress.' And Jones says, "'eres what we do, then. When she comes back, you talk to 'er, make 'er stop walkin'. I'll close shop an' walk past an' drop somethin', somethin' worth more than five shillings in 'er bag. Then I goes for a constable. There's allus one sittin' nearby. I'll 'ave the constable search 'er bag, tell 'im she was in my shop afore the item was taken.'

"Talbot says, 'But you 'ud be watchin' 'er, wouldn't ye?' 'An' Jones tells 'im, 'I'll make up some story 'bout another in store got my attention, like.' They both drained their pints an' Talbot says, 'That's what we do, then. 'Angin's too good for the bitch.' Then they went out tavern."

The court was deathly silent. Jones, Steven could see, looked stunned and frightened.

Wyeth continued, "I 'uz troubled in me mind 'bout what I 'eard. I went to barkeep an' told 'im. 'E said it was tavern talk, an' those two would wake up tomorrow an' just go about their business an' forget what they 'ad been sayin'. So I went 'ome meself. But next week, when I 'eard the gel," (nodding toward Mary Thomas), "'ad been taken, all just like I 'ad 'eard they two was goin' to 'ave done, I knew what I 'ad 'eard wasn't just tavern talk. But I didn't know what to do, who I should see. I talked to barkeep again an' 'e didn't know either. So I didn't say

nothink to anybody. Then, some weeks later, Mr. Cosgrove comes into tavern, lookin' for Talbot, but barkeep sent 'im to me, an' the story I'm tellin' you is the truth, so 'elp me God."

Here Wyeth looked defiantly about the court, especially at Jones, who sat open-mouthed. The court remained deathly silent.

"Thank you, Mr. Wyeth. Your witness, Counselor."

But the Crown Counsel shook his head, and said, "No questions."

Steven was surprised; was the Crown abandoning its case? Still, Steven wanted to call Mary Thomas to testify and said so. She came and sat down in the witness chair.

Steven directed her attention to the jurors and told her, "Please tell the jurors what happened the morning you were arrested."

"I 'uz sent to greengrocers to buy jam an' a tin of marmalade, an' I boughts these an' put 'em in my bag an' started back. But Mr. Tolbert, 'e comes out an' started talkin' to me."

"This was near Mr. Jones' shop?"

"I don't know, I suppose so, but I never been in 'is shop, never, nor other shop, save greengrocer. I 'uz told to come right back and allus did."

"Pray continue."

"I don't like Mr. Tolbert, didn't want to talk to 'im, but I 'uz allus told to be p'lite, so I listened to 'im askin' me to walk out w' 'im, but tol' 'im no, I 'ad to return to my missus."

She paused here. Steven waited, and she continued, "I 'ears a door shut an' someun' locks it, an' a man—" she indicated Jones—"comes along street an' brushes against me, then walks on."

Steven: "He brushed against you, pushed you?"

"Aye, an' goes up street. I tol' Tolbert again I 'ad to take what I bought to mistress an' went on. An' then Jones an' constable come an' 'e was sayin' I 'ad taken spoon from 'is shop an' I never, ever been in there, but constable pulls spoon out of me bag, an' I don't know 'ow it got there."

"Perhaps Mr. Jones, when he pushed against you, dropped it into your bag."

Here Steven looked at Jones, who seemed to shrink.

Mary said, "'Ay, 'at must've been what 'e done, cause I never saw 'at spoon 'afore, I never did."

"Thank you, Mary. Counsel, your witness."

"No questions."

Mary returned to her place among the accused.

Now the Chief Justice said, "If there is no further testimony, the jurors may decide on their verdict."

The testimony was concluded, so the jurors began talking quietly together. After what seemed to Steven to be a very long time, one of the jurors said, "Yer 'Onor, we 'ave a verdict."

"And what is your verdict?"

"Not guilty, yer 'Onor."

Steven exhaled, realized he had been holding his breath. The people listening to the trials were clearly happy; there was applause and some cheers.

The Chief Justice said, "Release the prisoner."

Mary's mother and mistress met her; her mother embraced her, and the three of them turned to leave the courtroom, this time through the columned door on Old Bailey street. Steven picked up his stick and hat, remembered to bow to the jury and the Chief Justice and followed them. He saw Wyeth get up to leave as well. Jones had disappeared.

Outside, the women had gathered to hire a cab. Steven put his wig and robe in his bag, took up his stick, and put his hat on.

He turned to Wyeth and told him, "Remember, I was attacked, I suspect by Tolbert. So do you take care."

"I'll keep me eyes open."

Steven saw that Wyeth was a big man, nearly as tall as Steven, so felt reassured. But here came Mary, who threw her arms around Wyeth and kissed him.

"Ere," he said, but didn't pull back. The two men shook hands once more, and Wyeth left.

"Mr. Cosgrove, please join us," Mrs. Adams said.

So Steven handed the ladies into the hackney cab, then climbed in himself. Off they went to Mrs. Adams' dwelling.

Mrs. Adams told her maidservant, "In future, I shall send a manservant with you, so such as happened does not occur again. If it weren't for Mr. Cosgrove's able defense, well...I don't want to think about what might have happened."

Steven smiled, but was all too painfully aware of how much luck, good and bad, had been involved. Luck and Jones' stupidity.

Steven handed the ladies out at Mrs. Adams' dwelling, then bade them goodbye and turned toward where his rooms were. He walked quickly as he always did. By now, this was habit, but he started doing so originally to escape the attentions of the flies that infested the streets of London; they were drawn by the droppings from the horses that were employed to pull vehicles of all types. Sweepers were employed to keep the streets clear of dung, but were unable to do this. The smell was just something everyone had to accept, had perhaps become accustomed to. He could have taken a hackney cab himself, except the distance wasn't great, and often he was trying to escape some thoughts or memories. But for today...

As he walked, it occurred to him that the Lord Chief Justice's recommendation was likely not based on conversations over the dinners alone. After the dinners, pairs of students were required to argue invented cases. These were called "moot court," and Steven had been conscientious about searching out precedents that could be applied to these imaginary cases. Perhaps the Lord Chief Justice had been impressed by that.

Over the months and years that followed the trial, he returned to wills, deeds, and trusts. On occasion, he was asked if he was willing to represent an accused man or woman in his or her trial. However, he always declined. The chances were great that the man or woman was in fact guilty and Steven didn't want to be sending a felon back into the streets of London, probably to make new victims. And he was well

aware how a near, close-run thing his one trial had been.

There was one item of news he was searching for in the newspapers. While he had always perused these to see what laws or judgments Parliament, Crown, or the Courts produced, laws or judgments that he might have to take into account in his work, he was particularly interested in discovering if Jones and Tolbert were to be held to account for their attempt to send Mary Thomas to the gallows. But he was disappointed. No proceedings of any sort mentioned them. Perjury at the very least, Steven was thinking. Was he supposed to file a motion to this effect?

Mrs. Adams came to see him on occasion for legal work. From her, he learned that Tolbert had emigrated, some said to Australia. As for Jones, his shop remained open, and he was apparently prosperous. Mary had wed the manservant Mrs. Adams had sent with her to protect her and was expecting a child. Good news there, at least, though Steven wondered if Mary would ever be able to quit the memories of her time in Newgate. He had nightmares on occasion, even from his relatively brief times there. He also wondered if he might have married the woman. No, his uncle wanted him to marry a middle-class woman. However, Mary was a comely creature, and he was increasingly conscious of being lonely....

Also, there were sometimes far more disturbing articles in the newspapers. These referred to the activities of what were sometimes termed "young bloods," among whom one was particularly prominent: namely, Lord Fallworth. He and others of like disposition were often

named in attacks upon the Watch. Admittedly these men were usually elderly, often corpulent, of little value in maintaining order, but what was the point in inflicting violence and abuse on them? Unless Lord Fallworth and his companions simply liked doing such things to anyone who might interfere with their devious desires, desires that always seemed to involve activities considered criminal, at least when done by men of “lower orders,” men like Steven himself.

There was worse, Steven found on reading succeeding newspapers. Some of the men attacked had evidently died subsequently, presumably from their injuries. If so, their crimes amounted to murder, a capital offense if ever there was one. However, there was no mention of any trials. Of course, peers like Lord Fallworth would only be branded on their thumbs if convicted, but at least there would be a trial, some measure of public disgrace. While whoever was writing the newspapers seemed to disapprove of these activities of “titled miscreants,” Steven was aware that some readers were amused by these activities. For Steven, being reminded of Lord Fallworth’s behavior only brought back the nightmares and increasingly, the anger.

It shouldn’t be so. Steven was well aware of the historical origins of the privileges of peers, but in today’s age, such considerations were absurd. Today, Parliament was increasingly chosen by the middle-classes. Napoleon had been deposed, and there was universal peace, at least among European powers. In addition, mechanical inventions were increasingly employed to ease the burdens of

labor and to aid peaceful commerce—the increasingly extensive gas lighting of the streets of London, for example. Insofar as Steven was aware, all of these improvements were conceived of and created by people of the “middling orders.” So what was the value of a peerage that was exempt from the laws ordinary citizens must obey? In the case of Lord Fallworth, no value whatever. Peers had to be held accountable for their deeds, just as Steven and other commoners were. Steven realized that his ideas might be considered radical, “leveling” ideas, but these were ideas he was increasingly disposed to accept. Steven sighed, something he found himself doing often, and returned to his reading.

9. Miss Angela Thompson

The client handed Steven a guinea for the two copies of his will, and Steven gladly pocketed this. He had to pay the woman who prepared his meals and on rare occasions swept the floors, services alike indifferently performed. Today lunch was once more bread and butter and lavishly sugared (by Steven himself) tea. He had barely finished this repast when the street door was opened by a man, a man Steven recognized as Mrs. Thompson's footman. Indeed, the lady herself entered. She was carrying papers and was followed by a young woman.

The footman closed the street door, remaining outside. Steven gestured to the two chairs, but Mrs. Thompson said, "My daughter wishes to visit the offices."

Steven opened the door to the kitchen-bedroom and led the daughter through. He saw her glance at Steven's bed and smile. She was a tall, slender woman; her mother was not short, but the daughter stood a good two inches taller than her mother. Otherwise, the daughter was slender, with very dark hair and eyes that seemed almost black. A long, straight nose and wide mouth completed Steven's impression of her looks.

Outside, the "offices" or "privy" was a wooden shed. Its door was slightly ajar, so was empty. A high wooden fence kept people who did not live or work on any of the three floors of

the building—whose first floor was occupied by Steven—from using it. This arrangement was unusual: under most of the houses in London, including the one where Steven had lived with his uncle, were cesspools. In fact, there might be one under the building Steven worked and lived in, but, if so, it was inaccessible.

Steven gestured at the shed, and the daughter went inside, closed the door, and pushed the latch to. Steven returned to the room occupied by Mrs. Thompson and sat down. Mrs. Thompson handed the papers to Steven.

He was about to begin reading when Mrs. Thompson said, “My daughter Angela was visiting with my relations when I came to you a sennight ago. If she had been at Fallworth, I would not have dared leave her alone in that house with my son.”

Steven looked at her, surprised. Then the sense of what she had said struck him, and he sat appalled. He didn’t know what to say: was this the son’s behavior only or his half-sister’s?

The mother answered Steven’s thought: “Angela once looked up to him, but is now afraid of him.”

Steven shook his head.

The woman continued, “Angela finished her studies at a school for young ladies two years ago. The school belongs to two sisters, and they asked Angela to assist with the instruction. She has just finished the second year.”

Steven could see the pride in the face of the mother. He asked, “Does she intend to continue? Perhaps start her own school?”

The mother shook her head. “She told me too many of the students have no interest in

anything beyond a suitable marriage, and the money she is given is meagre.”

Here Mrs. Thompson paused. Steven had the feeling she was about to say something she felt Steven would object to, but this only made him curious.

Then, “I know this makes her something of a bluestocking, but I think what she really wants to do is attend university, though this isn’t allowed.”

Steven wasn’t shocked or repelled, rather intrigued.

Angela now rejoined them and sat down on the second client’s chair. Looking at her full face, Steven decided that Angela was not pretty in the conventional sense as Sarah was, but he found her quite attractive nonetheless. She saw Steven looking at her and smiled. He smiled back and then bent to the papers he was supposed to read.

He was thoroughly familiar with such documents, of course. The Fallworth estate was entailed, no surprise there, and had been so for generations. Despite the supposed age of the document, Steven had no difficulty in grasping the situation, despite the archaic phrasing. The entail was a strict one, leading Steven to suspect that the current Lord Fallworth was becoming conscious of a need to provide a male heir. Oddly, if he died without one, the estate would revert to the Crown. This was extremely unusual. Steven knew that such provisions were once the rule, but hadn’t been in centuries. However, there was no mention of dowries or settlements or even wives; probably these were separately covered by the settlement documents.

The document about Mrs. Thompson's dower settlement was refreshingly clear and concise; most importantly, it stated that while the interest was the property of the husband, the principal remained that of the now Mrs. Thompson. Moreover, in the event that the husband predeceased the wife, the widow regained control of the interest. Steven nodded, smiling. This was clear and unusual. But would the courts, if it came to a suit at law, uphold that provision?

He looked up at Mrs. Thompson and told her and Angela about this provision. He asked, "Did someone in your family have reservations about your marriage to Lord Fallworth?"

She pursed her lips and eventually told Steven, "I think that provision is always included in marriage settlements in my family." She paused, then resumed, "Lord Fallworth tried several times to make me sign a document, I think giving him the right to spend my settlement, all of it if he so wished. This was the occasion for some of his beatings."

Her daughter turned sharply toward her mother. She asked, "He beat you?"

Mrs. Thompson nodded. The daughter looked shocked. Steven had heard of this sort of behavior, and his sympathy showed on his face. That was not what a marriage should be. At least that was the modern view; Steven was aware that some men abused their wives.

The daughter then turned to Steven. "Did you know of this, Mr. Cosgrove?"

"Yes. Your mother mentioned this on her earlier visit. I consider such behavior vile. Though knowing the son," Steven felt compelled to add, "I was not surprised."

“You know the current Lord Fallworth?”

“We were in a public school at the same time.”

Steven gave Angela an expressionless look, which Steven felt she had interpreted correctly. She nodded.

The will of Mrs. Thompson’s second husband simply left everything to his wife, though it asked her to settle money on their daughter so that she would have an income of her own. Steven looked at the mother, raising his eyebrows in a questioning gesture.

“Mr. Thompson left me an additional four thousand pounds in the Funds. The return from this will be enough for my needs,” she said, looking at her daughter, who smiled back. “So upon reflection, I wish to give her the five thousand pounds settled on me at my first marriage when she turns twenty-one or becomes married herself. Can this be done?”

“Is your father or whomever settled the five thousand pounds on you still alive?”

“No. All of that generation have died. The lawyer who arranged the settlement is also gone.”

“Then I will draft a letter for you to sign, a letter appointing me as your agent—if you wish.”

Mrs. Thompson nodded.

“After that, I will draft another letter of settlement that makes the arrangements that you desire. I agree this is silly, as you are perfectly competent to decide on these matters yourself, but such is the law at present. It may be necessary to sell the funds settled on you by your father then buy new with the arrangements you and your daughter desire.”

Mrs. Thompson looked at her daughter, who nodded. The mother told Steven, "Do so. When should we return?"

Steven said, "I will try to have all ready in one week." A pause, then Steven added, "I do not know where Fallworth lies. How long is your journey?"

"Two days, two very long days. Fallworth is at the edge of the Midlands in Derbyshire. We stop overnight at a house owned by relations of my mother. I could write to ask them to expect us this next week also. At the moment, we are staying in lodgings, a rented, detached house."

Angela spoke: "The house is perfectly comfortable, Mother. Staying there would mean less traveling about, and we could see more of London, possibly see a play."

"Very well, that is what we shall do. Here is our direction."

She wrote down where they were staying on a piece of paper and gave it to Steven. He silently agreed this was a better arrangement, since he could not guarantee completion of his task in a week.

He asked Mrs. Thompson where the certificates for the Funds were kept.

She said, "Originally with the family's solicitor. The man who held them when I married is now dead, and I was told they were sent to the Bank of England and are now kept there. Will they be needed?"

Steven nodded and told her, "It is possible that we will need to sell them and buy new."

Mrs. Thompson was once more looking off into the distance, perhaps the distant past.

Eventually she told her daughter and Steven, "When I married Lord Fallworth, I had been totally swept off my feet by him. He was tall, handsome, a peer, everything I thought a man should be. I now realize my father had made inquiries about his character and was disturbed by what he had been told.

"He told me about his reservations and assured me that if I called off the marriage, no one would reproach me. But I felt my marriage to Lord Fallworth would put him on the right path." Silence. She resumed, "I was naïve."

Steven and his clients got up. This time, Steven accompanied the ladies to their carriage and handed them in. He noticed that Angela Thompson had very trim ankles. (For some reason, Steven paid attention to such details.) He also saw that both ladies had metal plates attached to the soles of their shoes. These were, he knew, worn by gentlewomen to keep the soles of their shoes out of the mire on the streets. Mrs. Thompson and her daughter smiled and nodded at Steven as their carriage pulled away. Steven smiled back and raised his hand in farewell. Then he went back inside, sat down, and began drafting the letters. This task took thought and time, but he was done by dinnertime.

Steven had a rare blessedly dreamless sleep, but on arising, something occurred to him: if the husband's authority over finances was absolute, when remarriage took place, did the second husband now have all the power the first one had? Could he alter arrangements made by the first? Did his wishes take precedence? It occurred to Steven that there should be precedents, for this sort of event happened often enough, as in the case of Mrs. Thompson.

Steven began looking through his selection of law books.

However, a man came in who wanted his will made. He was about to sail to India and might never return. Steven wrote down the man's wishes and told him he would have the will ready the next morning. After the man left, Steven left himself. He had two errands, one concerning Mrs. Thompson, the other personal.

Steven's uncle had never married, but he was fond of Steven, as Steven now realized, viewing Steven as his own son. Steven would accompany his uncle to a cemetery on the anniversary of his fiancée's death, when his uncle would leave flowers on her grave. His uncle had asked Steven to continue leaving flowers on her grave on that date every year, and of course, Steven had promised that he would. On that day, he would keep his promise again. He would also visit his uncle's gravesite, which was near hers.

Steven bought the usual bouquet: primroses. He carried it to the churchyard where his uncle and his love were buried. He placed the flowers on her grave and stood a few minutes in tribute. Then he visited his uncle's grave not far away and stood a few minutes more in tribute there. His uncle had left him enough for his education at the Inns of Court, but his most important gift to Steven was the love he had given to him. Steven's real parents had died in India, but by then Steven had come to regard his uncle as his emotional family. So his tribute to his uncle was indeed heartfelt.

His uncle also had two important pieces of jewelry intended for the bride: a plain gold

ring and a brooch that had been in the Cosgrove family for generations. Steven inherited these.

He then paid a visit to the Bank of England. Steven had been there a few times before on similar business and saw the same official. Steven alerted the man as to what he intended and then returned to his home and office.

He sat down at the table where he worked. Once again, he felt sadness, not just from thinking about loss, his uncle's and the woman he loved, but from Sarah's evident preference for the current Lord Fallworth. Steven wondered if Mrs. Thompson's history was going to repeat itself. Was Andrew Woodfield redeemable? Steven didn't think so. Should he try to warn Sarah's father? Would her father listen?

Once more, Steven decided there was nothing he could do. His thoughts were interrupted when his housekeeper-cook appeared: lunch. Steven ate it without paying much attention to what it was. Then he forced himself to write the will of the man who was going to India. After he had written the will and prepared the copies, he again lapsed into sadness. Would he ever find someone himself? What did he have to offer a woman? Below-average looks, a modest income, nothing else of note that he could think of.

He felt restless. He should return to searching for precedents, but he couldn't force himself to do so. He could go out for a walk, but might miss someone with custom. And walking about London could be dangerous, perhaps not as much now as in times past, but there were criminals, some of them violent, about. Steven

always carried a stout stick, but that might not be sufficient.

He was a strong walker, and he wanted to walk, partly for the diversion of his thoughts; but he couldn't decide what to do. So he sat, thinking.

Eventually, it was time for dinner. The woman who prepared his meals otherwise paid little attention to Steven. And Steven to her: at that moment, he couldn't even remember her name, despite the years she had worked for him: Mrs.? Once she had left, Steven locked his front door and went to lie down, perchance to sleep, though it was still light.

He stared up at the ceiling. He could see several spider webs. He was not surprised: his housekeeper-cook, whatever her merits (and none came immediately to mind), was a most inefficient housekeeper. Tomorrow, he told himself, he must, must return to his law books to search for precedents...there must be some....

His thoughts finally turned to the Thompsons. He wondered if they had been able to see a play by this time. There had been years when Steven had never attended anything of the sort. He decided he would, indeed, like to see a play or some musical entertainment, perhaps something with them. It would divert his thoughts, but...but once more he realized he was lonely. That had been one of the reasons for his courtship of Sarah, hope for a family of his own, hope to be able to join a wife's family. To belong.

10. A Night at the Opera

The Thompsons, mother and daughter, appeared in the morning, one week after the last meeting, as Mrs. Thompson had said they would. They were early, so Steven understood they were interested in what he had done. He was happy to see them, for he liked them. He had prepared tea and offered this to them, but they declined. Mrs. Thompson told Steven, “We ate at our lodgings.” At this, Steven produced the documents he had prepared for them.

As they sat reading them, Steven sipped his tea. He was feeling very pleased with himself because his search for precedents had been successful. He had found two actually, both dating to the last decade of the last century. Both held that the second husband succeeded to the authority, the full authority, the first husband had possessed. This was reasonable and rational, but having this clearly stated would be most helpful in case of challenges in the courts. Steven had cited the paragraph summarizing one of the decisions in the documents he had prepared. He had also returned to the library at Gray’s to see if Parliament or the courts had reversed or amended the decision, but this had not happened.

Steven told the two women about his discoveries and pointed out the paragraph he had copied, explaining its significance: Mr. Thompson had every right to provide for Angela

and to permit Mrs. Thompson to bestow her entire settlement on her daughter. He also told them of the visit to the official of the Bank of England for signatures if they were needed. Both women were quite pleased.

However, Miss Thompson had news, telling Steven, "My half-brother is engaged to marry Miss Sarah Calvert."

Steven felt a pang as he sipped his tea. It was indeed over. He stared at the door.

Miss Thompson asked, "Do you know Miss Calvert?"

Steven struggled to regain his control of himself before saying, "Yes."

That was all he could say. But Miss Thompson seemed to understand and said nothing more.

Her mother had looked up from her reading. "The ceremony will take place in six weeks."

Steven nodded acknowledgement and forced himself to smile at the two women.

Both women had finished reading their documents. Mrs. Thompson asked, "When should we speak with this official at the Bank of England?"

Steven replied, "We can go now if you are willing. I have prepared another copy of these documents for him to sign and keep. I do not think this is really necessary, but it might become so."

Both women nodded. Mrs. Thompson asked, "Should we sign these?"

"I think signing them at the bank, in the presence of the official, is best."

The mother looked at her daughter, who nodded, then returned her gaze to Steven. "Then let us effect this change."

The three of them got up and went out to the carriage. Steven handed the ladies in and got in himself after telling the driver where they were going.

"Threadneedle Street, Bank of England." Off they went.

At the bank, Steven led the two women to the man he had talked to before, introduced them, and explained, once more, his errand. He gave a copy of the document to the official, pointing out the paragraph summarizing the court's decision.

The official remarked, "Mr. Cosgrove told me of your wishes."

Then everyone, Steven included, signed all four copies of the document. The ladies would each have a copy, as would the official and, of course, Steven. At this point, Steven realized that he was indeed the agent of both ladies.

Angela Thompson asked, "I have never seen these certificates. May I do so? I am very curious."

The bank official smiled and arose, telling them, "This will take a few minutes. I shall return with all nine for your perusal." He left, returning several minutes later with the documents. He handed them to the ladies.

They were impressive, grandly engraved, each of a nominal value of one thousand pounds, though always purchased for somewhat less. The interest they offered was four percent, but because of the lower purchase price, the actual return was somewhat larger.

The official good-naturedly explained how they worked to the ladies: “Mrs. Thompson’s return is a trifle above five percent, but Miss Thompson’s certificates were purchased when Bonaparte had just returned from exile to seize the throne of France again. The yield increased to above six percent until Waterloo. So you,” nodding to Angela Thompson, “will receive two hundred forty pounds per annum, while your mother receives two hundred fifty.”

The three visitors nodded, then rose to depart. As they returned in the carriage, Steven reflected that, as their agent, he would get nearly fifty pounds per annum, a significant addition to his income. In addition, being the agent of heiresses was prestigious. Steven was cheered by all of this; his depression seemed at bay, and he hoped that condition would continue.

Angela had questions about what she had heard. She said, “So the return from the Consolidated Fund is affected by what may be happening in Britain or elsewhere?”

Steven replied, “Centuries ago, the Crown owned everything, so the king could take what he would. Of course, this was not well-received by those of his subjects he had despoiled, and a compromise was reached: today the Crown must pay for everything it takes or uses, including wages. Some of this money is derived from taxes, but the rest must be borrowed, hence the Consolidated Fund. These pay a nominal interest rate of four percent, hence their often-used name, the ‘Four Percents.’ However, those with ready money to invest, perhaps from the sale of a ship’s cargo, want to invest safely, but with the greatest return. In

practice, this reduces the prices of these funds so the return is about five percent. If there is a greater fear or uncertainty, as when Napoleon escaped from Elba, those with money to invest hold back, and the result is a further reduction in cost of the funds, so the return is greater.”

Angela nodded. She said, “So the Bank of England must always sell enough shares in the funds to cover government debt, and the return reflects this.”

Steven nodded in turn. She had understood Steven’s rather long explanation. He was impressed by her interest.

Then she added, “That was why my father’s executor was able to buy four of those certificates, each paying me sixty pounds per annum, but he must have had to give government a little less than twenty-seven hundred pounds for the lot.”

Steven nodded again, by now very impressed indeed. Angela Thompson was a highly intelligent woman. In addition, she was clearly not disposed to merely accept matters as they were; she wanted to understand what was happening.

As they arrived at Steven’s dwelling, Mrs. Thompson said to Steven, “I understand there is to be a performance of *The Beggar’s Opera* at the Drury Lane Theatre in two days. Would you care to accompany us?”

Steven was surprised; he had attended four theatrical performances (plays), each time with Sarah, but of course had heard of Gay’s opera. So his response was heartfelt: “Indeed, I would. I have heard of *The Beggar’s Opera* and have been curious for years. When should I be ready?”

“Let us say six o’clock. We should all dine first.” So it was arranged.

Steven sat down at his workplace and thought about what he would be doing the next day and when he would do what was required. One was bathe: he usually did that Saturdays, but his housekeeper-cook would have to be told to heat the water tomorrow afternoon.

At this point, a woman appeared who wanted to change her will, disinheriting one daughter in favor of another. Steven gently attempted to dissuade the woman, as the one daughter’s sins seemed rather minor to Steven, but the woman was adamant. So Steven made a note and told the woman the revised will would be ready for her signature in three days.

The woman wanted it done right away, but Steven assured the woman that the revised will couldn’t be prepared that quickly. He got up and pulled the woman’s current will out and placed it in front of the woman. He noted (to himself) that it was rather long, owing to the large number of minor bequests she had made and told her that her change would involve essentially rewriting all of the will. The newly disinherited daughter was mentioned a dozen times, on every page in other words, and Steven liked to produce clean wills, with nothing marked out or inserted. He eventually persuaded the woman to return three days hence. As she left, Steven reminded himself that he was going to charge the woman a guinea for doing what she insisted upon.

At this point, Steven went into the kitchen-bedroom and explained what he was going to be doing in two days. The housekeeper-

cook was preparing Steven's dinner. The stove was a small one, made of cast iron that was inserted in a fireplace. It was heated using coal, two sacks of which lay against the wall near the fireplace. One sack was nearly empty; the other was as yet unopened. The coal ash that accumulated in the stove was taken away every so often by a man who told Steven that the ash would be used to make bricks.

Since Steven hadn't eaten anything since breakfast, he was quite hungry. The meal would probably disappoint, but that was always true. Steven told the woman he would bathe the following day, instead of Saturday.

Steven did not keep a manservant. This was at first out of caution, for he did not know how successful his practice would be. As it proved, his caution was justified. His only servant was and had remained for several years the housekeeper-cook, Mrs. Long (he had finally remembered her name). The "Mrs." was probably not actually accurate: Steven had never seen any sign of a husband, but then they never discussed personal matters. However, she was reliable and knew what she had to do; Steven paid her well. Essentially, he was used to her, and of course, if he hired someone else, there was always the possibility that her replacement would be worse.

Her task the following afternoon was to heat the water for Steven's bath. Steven's uncle had impressed upon Steven the need to bathe on a regular basis. Because Steven had paid his court to Sarah on Sunday afternoons, this had meant bathing every Saturday afternoon. During the week, he had to be about if someone desired his professional services, but also, Sunday

afternoons were the only time when Sarah would receive him. When she did receive him, he remembered, her manner was always distant, but Steven did not question this; it was only her way. If anything, it made him love her more, if that were possible, but now...

Steven had a tin tub, a hip bath, in which to perform this ritual. The housekeeper-cook had heated two five-gallon pails of water to near boiling on the stove. There was a third five-gallon bucket which Steven had filled with cold water and poured into the hip bath. When the housekeeper-cook had left, he poured one bucketful of hot water into the bath and stirred the mixture of hot and cold water to mix them. Then he stripped and sat down in the bath with a bar of soap and washed himself all over. The soap was expensive, but at least it didn't make his skin red, as cheap soaps did.

Then he got up from the bath and used an empty bucket to remove the soapy water, pouring it down the sink, a cast-iron structure bolted to the wall next the stove in the fireplace. The sink drained outside, into the street. The other bucket of hot water was followed by a second one of cold. This was also mixed, at which point Steven took a small pot, got into the water and employed the small pot to rinse the soapy water off himself. He dried himself with a towel then dressed for whatever he was going to do. He did this quickly—as it always seemed so cold—then emptied and rinsed out the hip bath and buckets.

At this point, Steven ate; the housekeeper-cook had left the meal on the stove to keep it warm. After this, he cleaned his teeth. Steven cleaned his teeth very conscientiously,

every evening. He employed the Addis toothbrush which consisted of bristles glued into a piece of bone. This was used along with a powder Steven had purchased from an apothecary. Then he extinguished the last candle and climbed onto his bed. The bed was made of boards laid upon several empty boxes. It was covered with a large cloth bag filled with rags that served as a mattress. A smaller stuffed bag served as pillow. Steven pulled the two blankets he always slept under about himself and waited for sleep. He hoped he would not dream, but was resigned to almost certainly being disappointed.

Steven used the “offices” upon arising the next morning, as he usually did. Every few weeks, a man, a scavenger, was paid to empty the privy. He used a large shovel. There was a gate in the high wooden wall separating the “office” from the lane behind the building where Steven lived. It was at other times held closed with a heavy iron chain and large padlock. The man had been there that morning, for the stink hung heavily in the air. On windless days, the smell persisted.

Steven shaved. He used a hand mirror at the sink, along with the same soap employed when bathing. Removal of hair from around the scar on his face took additional time, along with a pair of scissors. This served to remind him, every day, of what Lord Fallworth and his minions had done to him.

The following day, Steven prepared a will for a woman and began rewriting the disinheritance will. His housekeeper-cook had told him the previous day she would have to leave early, so he had to bathe two days before

the opera. He dined that evening at a chop house and decided the fare would keep him alive, not much more. He continued work on the disinheritance will, giving up his efforts when it was full dark. The day after, Saturday, was the day of the opera. He finished the disinheritance will, sent the housekeeper-cook home early, and had a light early meal at a tavern. Then he returned to refurbish himself: shave again and clean his teeth early.

When he had done this, he dressed, but not in his best finery. His best was what he had worn on his ill-fated attempt to visit Sarah. What he was wearing tonight should be appropriate, however. By then, it was nearly six; indeed, he could hear a carriage coming. It stopped at Steven's door and Steven walked out of his shop. It was Mrs. Thompson's carriage. The footman opened the door and set the folded steps down for Steven. He climbed in, doffed his hat to the ladies, and set his heavy walking stick upright in a corner.

Mrs. Thompson and Angela were both wearing the most recent style dresses with very high waists. Their dresses were both white muslin, rather thin cloth, though many layers of it. Over them, they wore short blue coats called Spencers. No hats, but long white gloves. The smell of perfume was very pleasant, a sharp contrast to the usual smells of the streets of London. The carriage proceeded to Drury Lane, where the opera was to be presented.

During the ride, Mrs. Thompson remarked, "This is perhaps the most frequently performed opera in English. It is the first performance in some years, and I have always wanted to see it performed."

Steven himself had heard of it, but had never attended any opera. He sat back, anticipating a most interesting, pleasurable evening. Looking out of the carriage window, he could see there were many carriages bringing people, and there was also a large throng on foot. Clearly, there was great interest.

The performance was being held at the Drury Lane Opera House, one of two places where operas in English were performed. When their carriage stopped, Steven descended first and handed the two ladies out. Inside the opera house, they were directed to the stairs, for Mrs. Thompson had rented a box on the third level of boxes.

Steven preceded the two women up the stairs. He understood it was required etiquette: the man was not supposed to be in a position to see the ankles of the ladies. He found their balcony seats and stood aside to permit them to enter first. Inside were four chairs. They moved them so that the three of them could sit abreast. He sat down between them and looked out. The theatre was crowded and becoming more so.

The tiers of boxes were supported by pillars painted red. Otherwise, the faces of the boxes were gilded. Between the two sides of the hall was the ground floor, covered with rows of chairs and nearly full of people already. This was the pit, where the cheaper seats were located. Cheaper or not, everyone appeared well dressed. The stage, a large one, was at one end of the hall. Musicians, with their music and instruments, were gathering next to the stage. Steven had read in the newspapers that previously, the light in Drury Lane had been provided by candles in great chandeliers, but the

earlier opera house had burned down from their use. It was replaced by gas lighting; S-shaped tubes emerged from the walls, tubes terminated by glasses shaped like inverted bells.

The place smelled like perfume from his two companions of course, but probably from all of the women and many of the men as well. Steven could also smell smoke. The air in London was always scented by burning coal, but he could smell tobacco, as some of the men were smoking cigarillos. The air in the hall was otherwise pleasantly warmer than that outside and would become more so, from the heat of the bodies of thousands of men and women.

The musicians began playing, not loudly and not together, tuning or adjusting their instruments, Steven guessed. The stage was empty otherwise. Evidently, no one was allowed to sit on the stage during the performance, at least tonight. Just as well, thought Steven. He was beginning, for the first time in years it seemed, to actually feel...happy. He smiled at his companions, who smiled back.

The balconies were now nearly all occupied. The two women with Steven had lorgnettes, and began looking through them at the inhabitants of the boxes on the other side of the hall. They in turn were doing the same thing. Though the majority were women, some were men.

Then Steven heard Mrs. Thompson remark, "There is my son."

Steven looked...and saw Sarah. She was dazzling: smart hat, jewels in her hair, dressed in what Steven guessed was the extreme of fashion, though of course he was no expert on such. She was talking animatedly to the man seated next

her, a man Steven recognized as his public school nemesis, Lord Fallworth, her intended.

He was easily her match in appearance and often turned to her, smiled, and spoke, but Steven saw he was also looking at the house, especially the boxes on the opposite side of the theatre. It wasn't long before his eyes steadied on the box with his mother, half-sister, and Steven. He looked a bit surprised at seeing Steven, or was he sneering? Steven kept his face expressionless as he bowed slightly. Behind the couple were her father and mother, whom Steven had, of course, met. They ignored Steven, "cut" him as the old expression went.

Mrs. Thompson looked at Steven, clearly saw something in his face, and asked, "Do you know the woman he is with?"

"Miss Sarah Calvert."

Mrs. Thompson glanced again at Steven and asked, "Do you know if she is of large fortune? I assumed so, but have heard nothing specific."

Steven shook his head. "Her family is well-off, but I do not know what her fortune is."

He had been too much in love to pay any attention to such matters.

Angela turned to Steven. He turned to her in response, and she smiled at him, a smile that seemed to combine understanding and sympathy. Steven surprised himself by smiling back at her.

The opera began. Steven forced himself to remain turned to the stage, listening to the music. It was magnificent, enthralling music, along with many lovely songs. A few of them were actually familiar to Steven. He became entranced. He found himself silently (he hoped)

mouthed the lyrics, gently swaying with the tunes. These were, he had read somewhere, based on actual English, Scottish, and Irish songs. But the songs were transformed somehow by the orchestra, the singers, and their costumes. It was magical. Down on the floor, Steven could hear some people talking; of course, they weren't supposed to do this, but they seemed unconcerned about making it more difficult for those seated nearby to enjoy the opera.

Then, out of the corner of his eye, he noticed that Angela's hands were moving in time to the music. When he looked at her face, he could see that she was rapt, and her mouth was moving. She realized Steven saw what she was doing, and she smiled, a bit sheepishly, at Steven, who grinned at her in response. Then they both went back to what they had been doing, both smiling.

The first act ended and was followed by dancers, women in costumes who danced between acts. They were in Scottish highland dress, but the costumes exposed not just ankles, but their legs to well above their calves, nearly to their knees. The dances were traditional, including hornpipes and jigs, but included considerable movement of their middles. Steven became aroused; he hoped the two women he accompanied didn't notice. They did not appear particularly shocked at the performance. They were looking at the dancers through their lorgnettes. For a moment, Steven wished he had one as well, then decided it was better he did not. He tried to distract himself by looking about the audience, particularly those in the boxes on the other side of the theatre. He noticed that Lord

Fallworth was looking intently at one of the dancers. So intently indeed that Sarah noticed and was looking annoyed. Lord Fallworth, in turn, saw her frown and smiled at her, then whispered something in her ear. Her annoyance vanished, and she took his arm and leaned her head briefly against his shoulder. This action ended the rift, though Steven thought Lord Fallworth's eyes continued to follow that same dancer.

Between acts it was possible to obtain refreshments. At the end of the second act, Steven offered to get chocolate for the ladies as his contribution to the evening. His offer was accepted, and he went to fetch cups for all three of them. Carrying them was awkward, but just possible. After his return, they all sipped the chocolate—expensive, of course. Still, Steven thought it was quite good.

Steven learned that while he was downstairs getting the chocolate, the ladies had a visitor, an acquaintance of Mrs. Thompson when she was at school.

Mrs. Thompson told Steven, "My friend told us that Miss Calvert has five thousand in the Funds settled on her, but she has a very rich eccentric great-aunt who has just died and left her another twenty thousand pounds."

Steven was surprised: Sarah had mentioned the rich great-aunt, but women, particularly young women, always received settlements, not ready money.

He noted, "That is an unusual arrangement, surely."

"Yes, and I wonder at it myself, but though I do not wish to disparage the young woman, it to some extent explains my son's

interest in her. My son, among his other qualities, is most extravagant.”

Steven nodded. The situation was no longer surprising. The depression that Steven expected from this news was there, but oddly, it was not as acute. The influence of the opera, Steven guessed. He wondered what sort of husband Lord Fallworth would become. He actually found himself mentally shrugging; it was no longer his business, though still, to some extent, his concern.

The opera ended, and nearly everyone began to leave. Outside, many were leaving on foot, and many others, including Steven's companions, were waiting for their carriages. Steven saw Sarah, her family, and Lord Fallworth leave in the Calvert family carriage. Then Mrs. Thompson's carriage pulled up to them. Steven handed the two women in and got in after them. They settled down as the carriage began its journey, first to Steven's rooms.

There was silence inside the carriage for a few minutes, though Steven thought he could hear Angela humming. Outside, the ride was noisy, iron-ringed wheels over cobblestones, the carriage itself moving irregularly because of the unevenness of the street, but Steven found himself sitting in something like a trance of happiness.

Angela Thompson evidently understood Steven's feelings and asked him, “What did you enjoy most about the performance, Mr. Cosgrove?”

She may have been expecting him to answer roguishly with “the dancers,” but instead he said, “The songs, the music, they were enchanting. Someone once told me the songs

came from various parts of Britain. If so, they were transformed by Gay. I will always remember this evening.” He added, “Tonight I shall sleep with so many beautiful songs in my head.”

There was again silence—or relative silence—as the carriage rumbled down the street. Then Steven went on, “I’ve been told that John Gay wrote another opera, *Polly*, a sequel, but the Lord Chamberlin wouldn’t permit its production. It wasn’t performed until after Gay’s death.”

There was more silence before Steven resumed, “I have come to the conclusion that the office of the Lord Chamberlin should be abolished, done away with. Having one old man decide what everyone can or cannot see on stage is absurd and insulting, I mean to the intelligence and good taste of all of us. If at least some of us can vote governments in or out, we can be trusted to recognize decency and worth in stage performances.”

At this point, Steven stopped, wondering if his radical opinions had offended his two listeners. But when he looked at them, he saw they were nodding agreement. Angela was smiling. But then the carriage stopped, and Steven realized it had reached his rooms. The carriage door was opened by the footman and the steps set down.

Before leaving, Steven bade the ladies goodnight. He told them, “I thank you from my heart for this evening, for the experience, and above all, for your company.”

He wanted to say more, but his heart was too full to be able to put his feelings into words, and all he could come up with was a second “goodnight.”

The ladies nodded, everyone exchanging smiles. Steven descended and waved to them. Once he alighted, the door to the carriage closed, and the carriage rolled off. He took his key from his pocket and went inside of his home and office, a return to the everyday. However, he knew he would always remember that evening.

11. Invitation to a Dance

Steven resumed his life, now in a better humor than before. He could not decide why this should be, but he accepted it. Several requests for wills and three for settlements occupied the week following the opera. For reasons quite beyond his understanding, his work for Mrs. Thompson and her daughter appeared to have become common knowledge. He was happy to have the additional custom and indeed was appointed the agent for two daughters preparing for their marriages. This added to his income and had the additional virtue of providing additional demands on his time. Since Sarah's marriage to Lord Fallworth was relentlessly approaching, these duties were also beneficial to his peace of mind.

One day, a letter for Steven appeared. Opening it, he found it written in a good round hand and then realized from the way the writer addressed him that it was from Angela Thompson:

Dear ~~Steven~~ Mr. Cosgrove,

Pray forgive my impulse toward, no doubt, excess informality, but some friends of mine from school and I have decided to have a dance this Saturday in the afternoon. This event will take place at the house mother took for our attendance at my half-brother's wedding to Miss

Calvert. We had to take it for six months, and Mother and I preferred to be away from Fallworth to allow the newlywed couple time to accustom themselves to each other.

We, very well, I would appreciate it if you would help make up for a small dearth of men. Indeed, I confess to a hope you will be my partner for some of the dances. If you are willing, be here at one.

Angela Thompson

Steven's response to this was beyond delight. His spirits did not so much soar as escape the planet. One part of his mind wondered at this, but otherwise he refused to question it. And Angela, he noticed, wrote well enough to draft or copy legal documents. He promptly wrote a reply accepting her invitation. Her direction was written on the back of the letter. A map of London gave Steven the location. It was in the West End, perhaps a mile from the dwelling of Sarah's family.

Steven bathed that Friday evening, informing his housekeeper-cook of his plans for Saturday. She was encouraging; Steven did not know whether she wanted Steven to get married or just had noticed his sadness these last months.

On the day of the event, he dressed in his dancing garb, which included knee breeches and stockings. This reminded him once more of his first meeting with Sarah, so long before—no, just rather more than a year. He went out by public horse cab to the house the Thompsons were renting.

Mrs. Thompson and Angela greeted him warmly. He was introduced to the others. Two

women of middle years would assist Mrs. Thompson as chaperones; otherwise there were only eight couples in all. Seven musicians had been retained.

The house itself had two floors. It was detached, though on a rather small piece of land. The room where the dancing was to take place was barely large enough, even cleared of all furniture save chairs for the musicians and chaperones, for twenty-six people, not including servants. Steven asked Angela for the honor of her company in the first dance, and she affected to consider this deeply and carefully, but to Steven's feigned great relief, agreed.

The dances were the same as those he had danced with Sarah. Otherwise, the dancers had to take more care with their movements, because of the size of the room. Steven and Angela were partners for all of the dances. Steven noticed that the other dancers accepted this fact without comment. In fact, he had not actually asked her for a second dance: both evidently accepted that they would be partners for all of the dances.

Tea and cake were served in an anteroom when everyone stopped to rest. Steven and Angela sat together and talked.

She told him, "Steven, I have been thinking about what I should do. As a woman, I am not allowed into any profession save teaching other young women." Then she paused while she sipped her tea.

Steven observed, "And that, from what your mother told me, would keep you very busy without much return."

"Yes, and if I tutored a young woman, I would be a servant in all but name."

“Were you thinking of establishing a school of your own?”

“Yes, but I was not able to obtain any information from the two ladies I was instructed by and worked for, I mean about fees and the costs. I had the feeling they were concealing something, probably how much money they were making. I costed everything I could and decided that their profit might be a great deal.”

Everyone was returning to the room that had been cleared for the dance.

Steven told Angela, “I will try to make inquiries. To the best of my knowledge and experience, there are no laws of any sort involved.”

Angela smiled, Steven smiled back, and they took their places.

Advancing arm in arm with Angela, swinging her about, the contact, however slight and fleeting, even simply bowing, was intensely enjoyable. The shared movements were vastly happier experiences than he could remember having with Sarah. But all of it had to end and did; still, the expression on Angela’s face seemed to Steven to mirror his own. Now the group took their farewells. The men and musicians were leaving; the women would stay together overnight in the house.

Steven was the last to leave. He found himself saying goodbye while holding Angela’s hand. At this point, he began to wonder at this: was he being too forward, and should he release her hand? Yet she did not seem at all discomfited. At this point, his feelings, feelings he was until then unaware he possessed, caused him to raise her hand and kiss it. He looked in

her eyes, smiled, and bowed. She returned his smile and curtsied.

He released her hand—so soft, yet strong and capable and told her, “Until our next meeting.”

“Goodbye for now, Steven,” she replied, and he returned to his rooms.

He returned, yet his thoughts remained with Angela. He realized that he had fallen in love with her; he recognized the feelings from his courtship, if it could be called that, of Sarah. But what were Angela’s feelings for him? Did she consider him only a friend of her mother, a business associate hired for his profession? He did not know, could not know. He was perhaps ten years older than Angela; how did she feel about that? Again, he could not be certain.

Over the coming weeks, he tried to keep his attention on those seeking his legal skills and experience, but this ran contrary to the current—no, tide—of his thoughts.

Then he received another letter from Angela. He now recognized her hand from frequent rereading of the one letter he had received from her. This letter read:

Dear Steven, (nothing crossed out this time, Steven noted)

The wedding between my half-brother and Miss Calvert took place this past Sunday, two days ago. It was very well attended and quite stylish. Nearly everyone was a friend or relation of the bride; only a few were Lord Fallworth’s friends, and Mother and I were the only relations of his who were present. The

couple are now on the way to Fallworth, indeed may have arrived by now.

Of course, I do hope and pray they will be happy together. Is that not one of the reasons for marriage? However, Mother and I are not optimistic about that.

Have you obtained any information for me about starting my own school? If not, do not take my questions as a reproach. I know you must earn a living for yourself as well as assist those seeking your counsel.

Steven, I did so much enjoy our dancing together. Our lack of space was a hindrance, but if I can assemble my friends again, I shall hold another. Or perhaps you can simply visit us for dinner, let us say on a Sunday? This Sunday?

On a completely unrelated subject, I was restless and not falling asleep and remembered something: I was told our English word "aristocratic" comes from a Greek original. Surely Britain's government does not derive from ancient Greece, does it?

Angela

Steven grinned. He could not stop. In fact, he would have gone outside and danced down the street. Surely news of Sarah's wedding should have sent him into despair, but reading Angela's letter made Sarah's wedding irrelevant. He sat down to draft a reply began, in fact, several times before he could command his mind to compose the reply desired by her and by him. Eventually he thought he had succeeded, more or less:

Dear Angela,

I did, in fact, talk to two women who are or were headmistresses to ladies' academies. One had turned her duties over to her daughter and was quite forthcoming or as much as an unfortunate taste for gin would allow. The other was considerably more guarded, but her information was consistent with that of the other, so what I am telling you is almost certainly correct.

As I suspected, there are no legal steps to take when starting a public school. The chief requirement is for one or more houses, dwellings, for the students to listen to the instructors, study, eat and sleep. That requires money, probably a great deal, as does the hiring of cooks, housemaids, and probably additional teachers. So a very large investment must be made before the school can open its doors. I understand this is unfavorable to your ideas, but it is best to be realistic.

The ancient Greeks, at least some of them, believed in government by the best, "aristos," that is, the bravest, wisest men (only men were considered) of the city-state. In this country, "aristocrats," whatever they imagine themselves to be, are simply the great landowners, the richest. If they are the best in other qualities, that is accidental. (The ancient Greeks did not have citizens who possessed great estates.) Naturally, we want government to consist of aristocrats in the Greek sense, but how should we identify these people? Someday, perhaps centuries hence, the PM will be the son (or daughter) of a tradesman. But here I am

dreaming, speculating, and apologize if my thoughts offend or alarm you.

I am delighted to accept your invitation to dinner this Sunday. Beware, however: my presence will be accompanied by my appetite, so perhaps one additional chair or two will be necessary.

My regards to your mother,

Steven

He sent this letter as soon as he had finished it. Then he actually did dance—about the table and chairs where he met people desiring legal work. The housekeeper-cook observed this behavior and retired to the kitchen-bedroom, smiling.

Steven decided to risk everything that Sunday: not only did he wear the same clothing he had on his last visit to Sarah, but he also bought a large bouquet of pink roses and wore another rose in his buttonhole. The only change was that he took a public horse cab directly to the house, having purchased the flowers before he set out. Whether this was sufficient he could not know, but Angela was very pleased with the roses. She clapped her hands, took the bouquet, and with the help of her mother, put the flowers in a vase.

Then she advanced toward Steven, took his hands, and told him, “Pink roses are my favorite. How did you know?”

Steven evaded answering honestly by saying, “Genius is often difficult to explain.”

Angela laughed, and for an instant, Steven thought she was going to throw her arms about him, but that did not happen. He saw Mrs.

Thompson looking at the two of them. She seemed surprised, but not disapproving. Steven gave Angela his arm, and the two of them followed Mrs. Thompson into the room where dinner was set out. As it happened, this was the room where the dance had taken place. A single maidservant was present, but that was sufficient, as it was a simple meal with few courses. There was a fourth chair placed at the table, next to where Steven was to sit.

He looked at this, then at Angela, who was attempting not to smile, and told her, "One may suffice."

Now she laughed, as did he.

Steven's attention was captured by Angela, if only because she had questions about Steven's education, particularly his study of Latin and Greek. In fact, Steven at one point had to secure a piece of paper, pen, and inkwell to show Angela what he was talking about. This activity continued to such an extent that Mrs. Thompson had to remind Steven to complete the course in front of him. She had to remind Angela to eat as well, for Angela's attention was equally fixed on Steven.

Dinner ended, and Steven thanked Mrs. Thompson for the meal (though his memory of what had been served was somewhat vague) and took his leave. Angela accompanied him to the door. He turned to her, and somehow her hands were in his. His eyes met hers. He suddenly wanted very much to say something, to tell Angela about his feelings for her, but he could not speak. He was a shy man and was afraid he might say the wrong thing, perhaps offending her; was it too soon for such a confidence? He simply was not certain, and this kept him mute.

Angela spoke: "Steven, perhaps we might attend a concert or a play."

Steven nodded and told her, "I will see what offerings are in the newspapers."

"I will look also. Or possibly dinner again."

Steven nodded and once again was able to bring himself to raise one of her hands to his lips and kiss it. She curtsied, and Steven released her hand, turned, and began walking away. However, every few steps, he turned back to wave or simply look and smile at her.

On his journey back to his rooms and for many hours thereafter, Steven thought about the two women he had loved. And did love now, in Angela's case. Though Sarah and Angela were nearly the same age, they could otherwise hardly be more dissimilar. While both were well-educated, both readers of novels, Angela enjoyed talking about the plots, the characters, the locations. Sarah's comments were general and vague. Sarah had taken absolutely no interest in Steven's profession, but Angela asked question after question, clearly desiring to understand what Steven did and why he did it. She had a lively, inquisitive mind, and Steven very much enjoyed explaining matters to her and also being told of her experiences and ideas. A woman to share a life with, Steven realized.

Why, then, had Steven fallen so deeply, so quickly in love with Sarah? And aside from losing her to the man he hated above all others, why had he been so devastated at her loss? He finally decided that he had fallen in love with Sarah simply because he was so lonely that he wanted someone to love and be loved by, that Sarah's tolerance of his suit had been more than

sufficient to ensnare him. He had, at last, been fortunate, doubly, trebly fortunate in how matters had turned out.

Over the next two days, except for occasional legal work, Steven examined the newspapers he customarily read, this time for plays, operas, or concerts. He also began composing a letter to Angela to try to express how he felt about her. But on the afternoon of the third day, a Wednesday, a letter from Angela appeared. Steven opened it quickly: had she decided they should distance themselves from each other for a time? Did her mother disapprove?

Dear Steven,

Mother has just received a letter from Lady Fallworth, urgently requesting Mother's (and my) attendance at Fallworth. By the time you read this, we will be en route to Fallworth. Lady Fallworth was not specific about the reason for her request; but the letter was written in haste, and it seems obvious that something very alarming and very upsetting to her has occurred. We can only assume this involves her husband, some quarrel. Mother feels we must go in order to ease matters if we can.

Steven, I do so much hope to return soon.

When we arrive at Fallworth, I will send you our direction.

Angela

Steven read and reread the letter, shaking his head. His worst fears were baseless, though he felt little relief on learning this. He could not

imagine what had so early produced the rift between Lord and Lady Fallworth, but it had clearly produced a violent reaction on the part of Lord Fallworth, a reaction that had frightened his wife. Steven hoped Lord Fallworth's mother and half-sister could mediate, calm matters. Then it occurred to Steven that the matter might, probably did, involve money. But this was a guess.

12. Visits, Including One by a Most Unwelcome Guest

As Mrs. Thompson's lawyer and agent, Steven had to collect the quarterly interest payments from her settlement, deduct his agreed percentage, pay any charges she directed him to, and if necessary, journey to Derbyshire to give her what monies she requested. Otherwise, the money was to go into a banker's account. However, the haste of her removal from London made Steven certain that she would require money in hand, so he was not surprised to receive a letter from her on the fourth day after she and Angela left:

Dear Mr. Cosgrove,

We arrived late, but were able to obtain two servants from Fallworth Manor to open the dower house and make it just habitable for Angela and myself. However, I will require money to pay servants and for other expenses. I think twenty or thirty pounds should suffice, coin rather than bank notes. I apologize for requesting you to make such a tedious journey or rather journeys, though the reunion with Angela should mitigate the hardship.

We are invited to dinner tonight at the Manor and should obtain a better idea of the situation then. Angela will write tomorrow to tell you what transpires.

Margaret Thompson

Steven went to the bank and obtained thirty pounds in coin in a cloth bag. The larger sum was, he felt, better—in case there were unforeseen expenses. Then he inquired about which coaches to take, how much they cost, and how much inns would likely charge.

He began to understand how expensive the journey was going to be and had to return to the bank to obtain a similar amount for himself. This left him with two bags of coins and took the better part of the afternoon. When he returned to his rooms, there was no one wishing for legal work, thank God, and he found that there was a letter from Angela as expected. He sat down at his work table with a cup of tea and opened the letter:

Dear Steven,

We dined at the Manor two nights ago. Lord Fallworth was civil, so our presence may have been beneficial; otherwise, the meal was tense. He left the table early, clearly angry about something. After the meal, we heard what the matter was from Lady Fallworth. She never received the bequest of twenty thousand pounds from her great-aunt whom we were told about; evidently, the great-aunt was a woman of extravagant tastes, and when her will was proved, there were only debts. Lord Fallworth was expecting that money and was enraged when he was told he would not have it. Mother and I, upon returning to the dower house, talked, and

we agreed that Lady Fallworth's face was powdered to conceal bruises.

Mother says you will be coming to give her money for the servants. I very much want to see you, as you are from our London life, a decent life. I enclose a map of Fallworth, so you may be able to find the dower house. We do not recommend you stay at the inn in Fallworth Village.

Angela

Steven told the housekeeper-cook he would be away perhaps six days. He bathed that evening and took the early morning mail coach for the first half of his journey. The coach carried four passengers in all, and the route was to the northeast, along Watling Street.

The road was not very rough because it had been improved, and one of the passengers said they were able to travel as fast as eight to ten miles an hour between changes of horses. These changes had to be made at distances of eight to ten miles, that is, every hour on Watling Street. The inns along the route were decent, well-kept establishments, which encouraged Steven: perhaps the journey would not be that tiresome after all.

This hope did not last. Steven had to spend the night at the inn where the coach going north to Derbyshire would leave in the morning. He found he had to share a bed with another man, a man who snored, tossed, and turned. Steven lay atop the bed, removing only his shoes and hat and covering himself with his cloak. He slept little. He hoped he might sleep in the coach carrying him on the second part of his journey,

but the road was a great deal more uneven. The coach lurched and swayed frequently, and the other passengers insisted on talking.

When he reached Fallworth Village, the light was fading, and so was he. Angela's map was most helpful, but the hour was late by the time he reached the dower house. He was admitted despite the hour, as the servant who admitted him had been warned of his likely late arrival. Mrs. Thompson sent for tea and made him welcome. Angela appeared. Despite wearing nightclothes, she gave him her hand. While the tea was being prepared, Steven and Angela sat next to one another, smiling, until Steven remembered the reason for his journey. After drinking some tea, Steven revived sufficiently to give Mrs. Thomas her money, along with a written account of the last two quarter's transactions and the current state of her finances.

He was finally able to retire and sleep, by himself, in an actual bed. He awoke feeling much revived. He breakfasted with the ladies. He would begin his return to London tomorrow. While he was there, however, Angela took him about the house, small but comfortable, or it would be when thoroughly cleaned. She showed him the gardens, which of course were overgrown with weeds at the moment.

At lunch, she asked Steven if he would buy some books for her.

"Of course. Give me a list, and I will bring them the next quarter journey." He realized she was bored.

After the lunch, Mrs. Thompson returned to the Manor. She was planning to talk to her son, to try to argue him into a better frame of

mind. Steven and Angela watched her walk toward the Manor house, then stood looking out at what was once a garden. Beyond the garden fence was a field bearing grain and beyond that was a dark, dense forest. Angela's arm was in Steven's.

She remarked, "That forest is a deer park. Hunts go on there often."

"Do you hunt?"

"No, nor ride." Silence until she resumed, "I am, I think, not really considered part of the Fallworth family."

"Does this bother you?"

"No, I suppose I am used to being outside of them, or rather him. In fact, I really do not think of him as kin, for I do not like him."

Steven nodded.

"Nor do you, I understand," she said, looking at Steven. At this point, Steven's face turned grim for a moment.

He turned again to her and pointed to the scar on the left side of his face. "Your half-brother and two of his sycophants did this to me when we were in school together."

"He bullied you?"

"Often and extensively."

"I am very sorry for the pain and humiliation you must have suffered, but I am not surprised at my half-brother's behavior. Still, you have done well despite it all."

Steven, oddly, was very pleased to hear her say this. He turned to her and smiled, and she returned the smile. They stood silently together looking out of the window. Steven was thinking that he very much wanted to kiss her.

Angela remarked, "I am sure having an entailed estate is considered quite the *ton*, but

from what my father told Mother and me, the entail causes problems. It is impossible to borrow money for improvements, and deer parks bring in no money. That is why the heir must marry money, as much as he can. And as you have heard, this itself can cause problems.” Steven nodded.

At this point, Mrs. Thompson returned. She did not say anything, just shook her head. Angela went to write down what books she wanted. At this point, Steven found himself dozing.

Angela noticed this and told him, “Our first day here, we both had to nap. Go lie down, Steven.”

Steven did as he was bidden. Arising before dinner, he felt the nap helped, but not enough.

At dinner, Steven and Angela both had to be reminded by Mrs. Thompson several times to attend to eating, and Angela’s list of books was the occasion for extensive conversation. After the dinner, Angela went to the spinet to play. While she had never been taught to ride, her mother had paid for piano lessons, and she did play well. Then she took some music from a pile and began playing from it: it consisted of songs from *The Beggar’s Opera*.

Steven had been sitting in a chair, listening. He moved the chair close to the spinet, so he could read the words. She began playing one of the songs, and they both began singing it. More songs followed. Angela had the better voice, but did not object to Steven’s accompanying her. Mrs. Thompson sat listening and smiling. At length, she called a halt to this activity, reminding Angela and Steven that he

had to depart very early the next morning. So the evening ended.

Steven was awakened by a servant the next morning while it was still dark. Steven wondered if the servant had been directed to stay awake all night to accomplish this and left him half a crown. Despite the hour, when Steven emerged dressed and shaven, he found the ladies were also up, and a good, substantial breakfast was being served. Steven ate quickly, thanked Mrs. Thompson and Angela for their hospitality, meaning every word, and took his leave after once more kissing Angela's hand. He had Angela's list of books and had noticed the shelves in the dower house were empty of books.

The return trip was even more awkward and even more tiring. The coach that was to take him to the inn on Watling Street (the one where he had been forced to share a bed with a stranger) arrived late at Fallworth Village. And when he finally did arrive at Watling Street, he found the inn had no beds available at all and slept at a table in the tavern, supporting his head on his crossed arms. At least, he tried to sleep, with perhaps some success. He arrived in London beyond tired, late at night and counted himself fortunate to be able to ride to his rooms.

He did not recover from the return trip for several days. He very much missed Angela, and the memory of their singing together would always stay with him, he realized. Steven had realized that he very much enjoyed music. Another lacuna in his life until he had met her.

Demands, or rather requests, for his services were as scattered as before. Days with no business were occasionally interspersed with two or three people, usually desiring wills. Since

Steven now had another source of income, this did not worry him as much as it did formerly. And the days with no custom were spent locating and buying Angela's books. They appeared interesting, and Steven decided that he should get these to Angela as soon as possible, rather than waiting for the trip on the next quarter day. Otherwise, he would spend his time reading them himself. So he decided he would pay to have them delivered to her from his own pocket. He wrote to her to be certain she was aware of what he was doing and sent them.

Otherwise, they exchanged letters every week. The quarter passed slowly; Steven began to understand his life was now divided, not into days or weeks, but quarters. A letter from Angela arrived. He sat down behind his table and opened it. He began to read:

Steven,

The books finally arrived and in good condition. I thank you very much for your thoughtfulness. I was not expecting them until the quarter had passed and you had journeyed here again. But now I have many hours of enjoyment awaiting me. Thank you again.

We dined at the Manor two days ago. Lady Fallworth is expecting, or so she believes. Lord Fallworth is in London, on some business presumably. When here, he hunts. Occasionally, we are sent a haunch.

I have the feeling that Lady Fallworth has become resigned to her position and her marriage. She seems lonely, but better Lord Fallworth neglect her than abuse her. Perhaps this is because of her condition, but of this, I

cannot be certain. We are not sufficiently close friends yet for such confidences, despite our similar ages.

We await your next arrival, I with the greatest impatience. Mother will write with her requests.

Angela

Steven smiled at Angela's letter, but felt some sadness: a brilliant marriage, or so it had seemed, but whose reality fell far short. He supposed that actual life together would always fall short of idyllic. He was beginning to understand this, though he hoped life with Angela might prove the exception. However, he had to turn his attention to three wills he had been asked to draft and did so. After writing them and making two copies of them, he had tea. He wondered if Lord Fallworth was visiting the bagnios while his wife was growing his child. It seemed likely, given what Steven knew of him.

With some idea of Angela's taste in books, Steven began to visit the nearby places where books were sold. He found two or three he thought she might find entertaining and bought them. Mrs. Thompson wrote, telling Steven how much money she thought she would need, once again in the form of coins rather than Bank of England notes. Steven obtained the currency in the form of a rather heavy bag of pennies, sixpences, and shillings; this money would be needed for payments to servants and merchants for small purchases.

His second journey was no better than his first. He once more arrived at the dower house exhausted. It was dark, the night opaque. He

kept worrying about being attacked by dogs, but all remained quiet. There was a light, a single candle he discovered, in the dower house. He had to knock several minutes to awaken a maidservant to admit him. He removed his shoes and coat and collapsed on his bed.

Yet again, his welcome—after he had arisen, used the offices and shaved—made up for everything he had been through. Breakfast consisted of the customary dishes, but perhaps because he was hungry, they seemed better prepared than his housekeeper-cook provided.

By this time, Steven was certain he wanted to marry Angela, perhaps to live with her mother as well. He desired Angela, felt this desire more and more strongly, though he was not certain about exactly how the act of love was to be carried out. He also wanted to live with her, to have a home, a family, love.

He felt he should ask Angela to marry him, but was restrained by a number of considerations, perhaps silly ones, but together, they caused him to hesitate. He was aware that men often married women with money—this arrangement was customary. However, though Angela's settlement was not large, he shrank from the idea. It was too much like the behavior of Lord Fallworth. Also, Steven was older than Angela by nine years; he did not know how she felt about that. Her mother's second, happy marriage had been cut short by her husband's death. Finally, in the back of Steven's mind was the fact that his uncle had suffered a tragedy when the woman he was to marry died before the ceremony. Steven did not want to experience what his uncle had.

Steven had also brought, unasked and paid for by himself, a collection of sheet music for country dances by Beethoven. Angela was beyond delighted by this. Her mother had to urge her to finish eating before going to play these. Steven, of course, had to be urged to do the same, as he wanted to listen to the dances.

And not only to listen but to dance. Unfortunately, he was not sure about the steps. However, Angela's mother was and offered to show these to Steven. In this way, the morning passed quickly and joyfully. At lunch, Steven was still hesitating, but realizing more and more how lonely he was, he felt that perhaps he was being driven toward a proposal.

After lunch, Angela invited Steven to help her gather flowers for the dining table bouquet. The two of them searched the garden, still overgrown but with some flowers, perhaps wild, perhaps from vegetables that had survived. The two of them walked together; she was carrying shears, looking for newly opened flowers. They selected flowers with a variety of colors and shapes and turned back to the dower house.

Angela remarked, "I spend so much time at the spinet now."

"The results certainly justify your efforts," observed Steven.

She smiled and continued, "I was thinking that if I had to support myself, I might give spinet lessons. Now, since your help with Mother's settlement, I can simply play for enjoyment, my own and others."

Steven smiled acknowledgement.

A flower fell from those Angela had chosen. Steven bent down and picked it up,

presenting it to Angela. She smiled and curtsied, and their eyes met. They were now facing each other. Steven leaned forward, Angela raised her head, and their lips met. They kissed and then kissed again. To Steven, it was almost as though he was outside his body, watching....

Angela asked, "Steven, you know, of course, that I come of age this next March. May I ask how old you are?"

Steven replied, "I turn thirty that same month." He was about to ask her the reason for her question, but instead swallowed, cleared his throat, and was finally able to say what was, had been, on his mind. "Angela...Angela, I...I wish so very much to marry you, to take you for my wife. I...apologize for my total lack of eloquence, my awkwardness, but..."

Angela smiled, her entire face seemed to light up, and she put her hand on Steven's arm and interrupted him: "Steven, I respect your honesty and lack of artifice and am not put off by those qualities. I do love you and do accept your proposal of marriage. The only problem is that I will have to be married in the church here at Fallworth, and that brings my half-brother into the matter. Mother feels she must stay to try to ease matters between Lord and Lady Fallworth, and who can say how long that will take? And as long as she remains here, I feel I must remain with her. Why? I cannot say with certainty; it is just a very strong feeling. However, I accept your proposal and shall ask for Mother's permission directly, with your permission, of course."

Steven's permission was accompanied by a kiss and embrace. Whatever problems might

exist, he and his Angela, his Angel, would address them together.

They went inside hand-in-hand. Mrs. Thompson saw this and smiling, raised her eyebrows. Angela told her of her engagement to Steven, and her mother embraced them both, an act which Steven took for permission. The three of them sat in chairs discussing plans. However, conversation was interrupted by the clamor of hunting horns, the barking of dogs, cries of hunters, and the sound from many horses' hooves. Steven saw the two women were not particularly surprised, still less alarmed, so concluded the tumult was another part of their lives. Two of the servants, a man and a woman, entered and were permitted to go to the French doors in the room to watch the spectacle. From their comments, they were impressed, particularly by Lord Fallworth's carriage and vigor. Steven tried to stay expressionless, but once more was reminded that his life and fate were tied to that man.

Aside from that, the rest of the day was passed with music and song, with stolen endearments and cheer. Come what may, once Angela reached the age of twenty-one, she could access her settlement and could marry whom she chose.

After dinner, Steven was urged to retire early for his trip the next day and did so. When he left the next morning, once again in darkness, he did indeed feel rested as well as overjoyed at his engagement to Angela.

By noon, the restful feeling had ebbed or rather been destroyed, even though he had a day and more of the journey left. When he once more finally collapsed on his truckle bed after he

reached his London rooms, he almost immediately lost consciousness.

He had to revive the next day to deal with the settlement arrangements of two newly married women. By the mercy of God, neither required such a journey; the women lived in London.

Over the next two weeks, Steven doggedly tended to his business. This was barely enough to keep him employed. However, it did give him more time to write to Angela. He had written twice to her, in fact, and received one letter so far in reply:

Dearest,

It is quiet here, at last. My half-brother's deer hunts, which were followed by seemingly endless grouse shootings, have finally ended. For now, anyway. Mother and I and our servants cannot sleep through a night without being awakened by shots, shouts, horns, loud voices, and horse sounds. I do not mean that the hunts go on after dark, just that the noise does.

Mother and I talked yesterday about our situation here. Mother feels she must see Lady Fallworth through her term and a few months beyond; then we will leave Fallworth. We would like to move to London on its west side. Mother and I are asking you to look for a cottage in that area; one the size of the dower house would be quite acceptable. We would rent, of course, unless you find a property for sale that you think we might like and can afford.

I have lived on this estate, save for my time at school, my entire life. In some respects, Fallworth looks idyllic, but I have always felt

uncomfortable here, largely because of my half-brother. My aversion to him, because of his character, has only grown through the years. So I will be happy to leave. I do so much wish for concerts, plays, and just being able to move about. And most of all, I wish to be with you for all the time we are allowed.

Your Angel

This letter was quite cheering, save for the news that they would be staying at Fallworth for perhaps a year. Steven would, however, begin looking at the property listings in the newspapers right away. In the meantime, the thought of three or perhaps four more awful treks to Derbyshire—with overnights in that vile inn perhaps, a target for fleas and lice—reduced the cheer. Another thing that occurred to him was that when they married, it must be at Fallworth Church, and that meant yet another trip for the wedding, following three weekly visits for the reading of the banns. Well, it had to be done.

He carefully read the property listings in the newspapers and sent them to her, along with a letter expressing his thoughts and feelings:

My only Angel,

This letter encloses cuttings from several newspapers concerning properties available to the west of the City. Note that some may be purchases: I do believe you will be able to buy them if you and your mother decide to do so after inspecting them.

Your letter gave me more happiness than any I have received this sennight. This should

not be surprising, since it has been the only letter I have received. No, I must confess, it has given me more happiness than any letter I have ever received.

And I do hope Fallworth remains quiet, if only to recover its deer and grouse population. Or are these events only the nominal reasons for the gatherings keeping you awake?

My profession continues to occupy me as much, or rather as little, as ever. I continue to wonder if I should set up my shop in a different location. The question is, of course, where?

Let me know what additional services you require of me well before the next quarter meeting. In other words, please write again.

We have been apart only a short time according to the calendar. Yet I miss you so very much.

Your Steven

He posted the letter, then spent the next day or so as he usually did, though his desire for another letter from Angela grew far more rapidly than was reasonable. He was sitting at his table, supposedly drafting a will, but actually thinking about her, when the door opened and someone came in from the street. Steven looked up and saw it was Lord Fallworth.

Steven's nemesis was totally impressive: tall, handsome, and immaculately dressed from his riding hat to his blue cravat, dark grey riding jacket, lighter grey riding breeches, and shiny black riding boots. He was carrying a riding crop. And he was sneering at Steven.

Steven's instinctive response to seeing Lord Fallworth was fear. As Lord Fallworth's

favorite victim, or so Steven had imagined, this was understandable, even if Steven despised himself for feeling this way. But the sneer produced a different response: rage. Somehow, Steven had reached his limit, and anger swept every other feeling aside. Still, Steven was able to command himself, even to display politeness. He asked, “My Lord?”

In response, Lord Fallworth sat down in one of the two chairs in front of the table Steven was sitting behind, put one boot on the table, and pushed himself so he tilted a little backward in the chair. He also flicked the riding crop onto the top of the table, just missing Steven. Steven did not flinch; he was now beyond fear. He stared coldly at Lord Fallworth, but said nothing.

Fallworth pulled out a silver pocket flask, dexterously opened it with the hand holding the riding crop, and drank from the flask—drank, not sipped, and Steven suddenly realized Lord Fallworth had brought a strong scent of whiskey with him. After another moment Steven realized his visitor was drunk, though he could not be certain yet how drunk Lord Fallworth was. However, Steven still said nothing. He could not guess the occasion for this visit.

After another mouthful of the scotch, Lord Fallworth wiped his mouth with the hand holding the whip.

He finally spoke: “I want to know how my mother’s dower settlement is to be distributed. When she dies. You are her attorney, are you not?”

Steven could hardly control himself. Yet he was able to answer in what he hoped was an even tone: “If I were, I could not divulge such information without her assent in writing, my

lord.” Steven was silent a few seconds before speaking again: “My duty in such situations is always and only to my client.”

Steven was looking Lord Fallworth in the eyes as he said this. For a moment, Steven wondered if his visitor was going to use his riding crop on him.

To try to change the subject, Steven asked, “How is Lady Fallworth faring? When is your heir expected?”

But this failed absolutely, as Lord Fallworth’s face darkened. He cursed, a vile expression, took another swallow of liquor, and said, “Bitch miscarried. Would have been a boy.”

There was silence as Steven reacted to this news. A tragedy of course, but calling Sarah, his wife, a bitch was the act of a scoundrel. Beyond that, Steven remembered hearing talk among his fellow public-school students about the pox or great pox—syphilis its medical name. When women were infected, they often, or at least more often than not, miscarried. Had Lord Fallworth poxed his wife? And lost his chance of having a male heir or any heir as a result? That would be ironic, no, just tragic, but Steven believed it.

However, Lord Fallworth returned to the reason he had come. He said, “I have plans, improvements for Fallworth. But for that, I need ready money, not just an income. My mother’s settlement should go to me. I am her heir. Where are the four percent papers?”

Steven could hardly believe what he was hearing. Did Lord Fallworth actually believe what he was saying? He was talking total nonsense. But Steven could see him looking

around the room and did not want Fallworth rummaging through all the boxes of copies of wills and deeds.

Steven raised his voice while keeping his eyes on Lord Fallworth's face. "Any four percent certificates would be kept in a secure location, my lord, not here. And the settlement document is clear: your mother may not alienate any part of her settlement while she is alive."

Steven was vague about the location, but the settlement was of the usual character. His remarks caused Fallworth to smirk, and Steven realized he had acknowledged that he was, in fact, his mother's attorney. Lord Fallworth got to his feet, flicking his riding whip while looking at Steven.

The situation was becoming serious. Steven's heavy walking stick was lying across the table, though largely hidden by papers. Lord Fallworth had turned toward some shelves which had boxes on them. It was clear to Steven that his visitor was going to begin opening the boxes and going through them. The certificates were not there, of course, but that was not the point. Lord Fallworth was drunk, beyond unwelcome, and Steven had to force him to leave. He picked up his stick and walked to the street door and opened it.

He said, "My Lord, leave now."

Lord Fallworth was just in the act of opening one of the boxes.

Steven told him, "That box and the others contain title deeds and wills of my clients. Put it back."

Instead, Lord Fallworth emptied the papers in the box onto the floor. Then he stepped on them.

That was more than enough. Steven thrust his stick, as hard as he could lunge, into Fallworth's belly, then swung the stick, again as hard as he could, at Fallworth's head. Both connected, Steven heard a grunt from the belly thrust, but while Fallworth swayed, he remained on his feet. Steven grabbed Fallworth's right sleeve with his own left hand and pulled him toward the open door.

He was drunk, partially stunned, and breathless. Still, Fallworth was extraordinarily strong. Endless riding, hunting, and boxing had granted him physical superiority over Steven, certainly, but also over most of the boys in the school they both had attended. He swung his fist, still holding the riding whip, at Steven. Steven ducked, but was struck nonetheless. It was a glancing blow, but it felt like a hard one. Steven was not stunned, but shaken.

Still, Steven was now behind Fallworth, with the opened door in front of them. Steven crouched, put his head and shoulder into Fallworth's back and with all his strength, shoved Fallworth toward the door. Fallworth started to turn, but was slow, possibly because of all the scotch. His feet tangled, and he fell face forward out of the door, falling onto the street. Steven nearly fell on top of him, but was just able to catch and right himself. He turned back, went into the room, and closed and bolted the door. Looking out a window, he could see Fallworth's horse, its bridle held by a street boy, bending down towards its master, as if out of concern. Lord Fallworth was slowly pushing himself upright. His hat, his stylish riding hat, lay a few feet from where had had fallen. The riding crop was still in his left hand.

Steven turned to pick up the spilled documents and put them back into their box, but he now felt weak and unsteady and went to his chair and sat suddenly and heavily on it. He put his crossed arms on the table and lay his head down on them. The side of his head, where Fallworth's fist had just grazed him, hurt. Steven wondered if there was blood, but decided he did not want to know that.

Someone was knocking at the door. Steven pushed himself up and went to a window and looked out. The knocking was from a street boy, perhaps the one who had been holding Lord Fallworth's horse. Steven realized the child had been promised money, or at least was expecting some, and wanted Steven to provide it. Of course if Steven did not, the boy was perfectly capable of throwing rocks through the windows. Looking carefully about, Steven could not see Lord Fallworth or his horse, so unlocked the door and handed the boy a sixpence.

The boy looked or rather glared at Steven, but eventually took himself and the sixpence off. Looking down at the street where Fallworth had landed, Steven saw something, like a small pebble. He bent down and looked more closely at the object. He suddenly recognized what it was: a piece of a tooth, almost certainly a front tooth. There was some blood around it. Steven became aware that this made the situation much more serious.

While the struggle between Steven and Fallworth had been the first in which Steven had not only held his own, but prevailed, Fallworth's response was not likely to be a shrug. Much more likely, Steven felt, was a violent retaliation, perhaps aided by servants or hired bullies. And

loss of a front tooth, a disfigurement really to someone considered notably handsome, would provoke a much more violent retaliation.

Of course, it was possible that Fallworth might develop a respect for Steven. Possible, but not at all likely, Steven was convinced. He did not think Fallworth would challenge Steven to a duel: mere attorneys were not really considered true gentlemen, certainly not on the same level as landowners. But that brought another thought to mind: perhaps he should buy a pistol. If hired louts were to attack him, his stick would not be sufficient.

There was another thing Steven had to do and quickly: tell Mrs. Thompson and Angela what had happened. So Steven sat down to write a letter to them. However, he discovered his hand was shaking so much he could not pen a legible word. This was humiliating. After sitting at his table a few minutes, he decided to look at the wills and deeds Fallworth had emptied onto the floor, then stepped upon. He had to see how many he would have to recopy once he had recovered from the struggle with Fallworth. He sorted through the papers and put them back into order after examining each. Five papers would have to be recopied.

This angered Steven once more. Fallworth's arrogance in general, his disdain for Steven in particular, completely erased any feelings of regret, let alone pity for Fallworth's humiliation. Assuming that was what he was feeling, of course. Steven once more tried to begin the letter to the Thompsons, once more decided his hand was too shaky, so he got up, told the housekeeper-cook he was going out to buy something, put on his hat, picked up his

stick, and, after looking carefully out a window, unlocked the door and stepped out onto the street. He was going to a gunsmith's shop to buy a pistol.

Steven had looked in a newspaper and found a gunsmith named John Manton with a shop on Dover Street, off Picadilly. Manton specifically mentioned dueling pistols, as opposed to shotguns, for example, so Steven chose him. He began walking westward, trying to keep his distance from everyone else.

13. Warning Shots

Steven often looked about himself as he walked toward Piccadilly. He could not see anyone following him. After walking an hour, avoiding carts, riders on horseback, and people walking singly or in groups, Steven reached Manton's gun shop. The shop had a collection of metalsmiths working about several forges in the back of the shop. In spite of their work, the front of the shop was not too noisy.

Steven saw a man behind a table whose top was a big box with panes of thick glass in the top. Through the glass, he could see firearms, muskets and many pistols. Steven stared at them, trying to determine what to buy. He had not really considered his situation in those terms and felt embarrassed. Fortunately, there were no other customers, or perhaps that was not so fortunate.

He finally made up his mind: he wanted a pistol, but a small one. A large one would be awkward to carry, and Steven decided it would be better to surprise an attacker.

So he told the man, who was beginning to show signs of impatience, "I want a pistol, a small one."

"Single or double barrel?"

More thought and more impatience until Steven realized that being able to shoot two attackers instead of one was twice as likely to forestall any attack.

“Double,” said Steven.

The shopkeeper took keys out of his pocket and opened a hatch in the rear of the table that allowed the shopkeeper to pull three or four double-barreled pistols out. He set these on top of the table. He allowed Steven to handle these, to get an idea of their weight and how they felt in his hand. One of them did seem easier to carry and point. However, the firing hammers looked different from the others.

“That one is fired by percussion caps, not flint striking steel,” the shopkeeper told Steven. Steven looked inquiringly at the man, who said, “That means no misfires in damp weather.”

The man reached inside the chamber with the firearms and pulled out a leather-covered box that, when opened, clearly held the firearm Steven was holding. There were several other items in the box, a small hammer, a wooden rod, and four smaller boxes. The shopkeeper opened the smallest of the boxes and showed its contents to Steven: small squares of metal, each a little thicker in its center.

The shopkeeper, whom Steven realized from his soiled hands was also a gunsmith, took the pistol from Steven. He turned it so Steven could see down the barrels, and said, “These are rifled. See the spiral grooves.” Steven nodded. The man went on, pulling back the hammers, “The barrels are short, so this one cannot hit anything at a distance. It will not do for a duel.”

“How far?” asked Steven.

“Ten or fifteen feet,” was the answer.

Steven detected a hint of pride in the man’s voice. He thought more and realized the pistol was what he wanted, something to protect him from an attack. And Steven did not intend

to fight a duel, even if the other man were willing to accept Steven as a socially worthy opponent.

He told the shopkeeper, "This one will do. How much is it?"

"Six guineas," was the answer, and it made Steven wince. But he pulled his purse from an inside pocket, opened it, and counted the money out.

"Let me show you how to load and fire this," said the shopkeeper, and he gestured for Steven to follow him into the back of the shop. Steven saw a board with the figure of a man on it, a target, Steven realized.

There was a table. Steven set the pistol box on it, opened the box and loaded the pistol as the shopkeeper/gunsmith told him to. Steven filled a small metal scoop with gunpowder and poured this into each of the barrels. A very thin piece of leather from one of the smaller boxes was wrapped around a lead ball from another, and pushed by hand into one of the barrels, then forced down the barrel as far as it would go. The wooden rod was used to do this, driven into the barrel using the hammer. Then Steven put another wrapped pistol ball into the second barrel the same way. Finally, Steven put a percussion cap into each of the two slots after pulling back the locks to permit access to the places for the caps.

The pistol was now loaded and ready to be fired. But at that point, the shopkeeper took the pistol from Steven and showed him how to close the hammers on the caps in their slots without setting them off. He had Steven do this several times, then told Steven to pull back on the two hammers, cocking the pistol. He pointed

to the target and Steven pointed the pistol at it. Steven pulled the trigger, and the pistol fired.

An umbrella of smoke and a loud crack, then the pistol jerked back. Steven could see a new hole in the target. He pointed the pistol once again and pulled the trigger back further. The same thing happened as the second barrel fired, but this time Steven knew what to expect. And he could see a second new hole in the target, close to where Steven had pointed the pistol to hit. Steven was pleased: he could defend himself if attacked.

He reloaded, partly to make himself more familiar with the procedure and listened to further instructions including how to clean the barrels, then carried the box with the then-loaded pistol out of the shop and back through the crowded, sometimes chaotic streets to his rooms. He carried the stick in his right hand, the box in his left. From then on, he decided he would carry the loaded pistol in his right-hand pocket, the stick in his left and be careful to watch for pickpockets or for anyone following or who looked threatening.

Steven was relieved to return to his rooms with no obvious threats and no one loitering about. His relief was immediately tempered, however, by his realization that he had to write to Mrs. Thompson and Angela about what had happened.

He was about to do this when the woman who cooked for him told him, "Sir, 'ere's ready," meaning dinner was served.

Startled, Steven looked at his watch: the entire morning and afternoon were gone. Since he was quite hungry, he bolted the front door

after she left, then ate. It was not very good. He did not expect it to be, and he ate it quickly.

Finally, Steven could sit down and write the letter. He pulled close the curtains and lit a candle. He thought and thought, then wrote with a result that was sufficiently legible. At least now his hand was steady enough:

My dear ladies,

I was visited by Lord Fallworth today. He was drunk and insisted on obtaining your settlement certificates. In fact, on my informing him that what he was demanding was illegal, he began to search in the boxes where my copies of wills are kept. I ordered him to leave and after a short struggle, forced him out.

He fell down the front steps outside, and I think he broke one of his front teeth. This is not likely to improve our relations: I suspect he will hire louts to beat me. Anticipating this, I have purchased a pistol and shall now go about my business armed. I tell you this to apprise you of the situation. This may affect your relocation plans.

If you decide to return to London and think my presence will be of assistance to you, let me know by post. I will be there no matter what to help as I may.

Your Steven

He reread it, considered changes, decided against them, and finally sealed the letter and wrote the ladies' names and direction on the letter. He would post it early the next day.

At that moment, he only wanted to sleep. As he lay back on the pillow, he reminded himself of the wills Lord Fallworth had deliberately soiled, wills Steven would have to recopy. Once again, Steven was angered, but also wondered if Fallworth had some special animus against Steven, and if so, why? Or did Fallworth behave that way to anyone he considered his inferior?

The following morning after making himself ready for the day, he looked very long and carefully out of the front door before exiting his rooms upon seeing no obvious lurkers. He posted the letter and bought some meat, bacon, for his meals. The cook could prepare bacon, though not much more, and Steven wondered again why he kept her in his employ. Since he was carrying a package, he held his stick in his right hand, very conscious of the pistol in his right pocket. But there were no unfamiliar faces about on his return either.

Steven requested bread and butter, tea and six slices of bacon. He had to insist on the six slices, as his cook seemed to feel cooking so many slices was beyond her customary duties. But Steven was hungry. Once the cooking was under way, he went to his table to begin his copying. The smell of the bacon was distracting, but Steven forced himself to continue.

Three of the soiled copies had been recopied when Steven heard someone try to open the street door, which was bolted. Then there was a loud knock. Steven got up, pulled the pistol from his pocket and went to one of the windows. He was able to see around the curtain: there were three men on the upper step. They did not look as if they were seeking to have wills

drawn: they were burly, and one had what Steven could see was a truncheon just emerging from a pocket.

“Here it is,” Steven said to himself. He pulled the firing hammers on the pistol back and unbolted the door. He opened it suddenly, stepped back, and leveled the cocked pistol at the three men, aiming for their middles as the gunsmith had advised him.

They had started to advance into the room. They stopped when they saw what Steven was pointing at them.

He said, “This is a caplock pistol, double barrel, as you can see. No misfires. So I will be able to shoot two of you before the third can get to me. Whom shall I shoot first?”

Silence as the three men looked at each other, a silence broken by Steven: “How much did Lord Fallworth promise you? Will that be enough to pay for the surgeon’s charges? Or will any survivors divide it all?”

By now, Steven had reached behind him and taken his stick off the table, so now was doubly armed, in a sense.

“Ere,” one began, but Steven cut him off.

He said to the three men, “Out. Out now, and stay away from this part of London. Cut your losses. Tell Lord Fallworth what happened if you wish. If I see any of you about again, the best you can expect is dealing with the watch and the magistrate. Go!”

The three of them turned and left without a word. Steven watched them off, then returned to his table and his work. He was afraid his hand would once again be too shaky to write, but after drinking more tea, he was able to continue.

14. Summons

Though he had to keep his eyes open when walking London streets, Steven actually was feeling, not triumphant, but happier than he could recall ever having felt before. For the first time in his life, he had prevailed in a physical struggle with another man and had also seen off the man's trio of hired bullies. No longer a helpless target for abuse, he was now a man who could and would defend himself.

Of course, he was still realistic enough to understand his ability to fight off attackers was quite limited: if Lord Fallworth rode up and attacked him with a riding whip, Steven could only resist effectively using his pistol. And he could always suffer from an ambushade if taken by surprise. Lord Fallworth was not likely to quit the field, even after two reverses. Steven had to remain watchful at all times.

A trio of expensively dressed women was approaching. Steven had long realized that any attractive woman who appeared interested in him was a whore. Because of his intense fear of contracting the great pox, he had never lain with a prostitute, so had remained a virgin. Of course, this was extremely embarrassing: at Gray's Inn, he avoided conversations about sexual matters. Fortunately, this was not difficult, as his fellow students talked nearly exclusively about the law. However, this lack had nonetheless limited his friendships in a sense, leaving him feeling even

more isolated. As it happened, the trio of women merely glanced at him and continued walking and talking.

Steven had to purchase more paper for his work and walked to the shop where he usually bought it. After his purchase, he began his trip home, but decided to return by a different route, if only to confuse any ill-wishers looking for him. In his office, he found a man waiting for him, a man admitted by the housekeeper-cook. The visitor told Steven he required a will: he was to marry and wished to provide for his wife. Steven gathered the information he needed and began to work.

However, the feeling of having prevailed did not last longer than two days, two days without posts from Angela. Had Lord Fallworth learned of their engagement to marry? He would hardly accept becoming linked by blood with Steven. Steven did not feel the servants at the dower house were trustworthy; should he write again or not? He could not decide at first, but eventually began letters to Angela, asking for news, then tore them up and burned them in the stove.

Day succeeded day with no posts. The quarter day was approaching, and he wondered if Mrs. Thompson needed money. But the quarter day came and went with no letters. The situation was becoming serious, and Steven began thinking he should plan to journey to Fallworth to find out what the situation was.

Surely Fallworth would not take his rage out on his mother and half-sister, would he? But the answer to that question, Steven realized, was almost assuredly yes. If he found out, that is. So

Steven was kept from writing, but not from worrying.

Then, at long last, a letter arrived. Steven paid for it and saw from the handwriting that it was from Angela. But he also saw that her handwriting was hasty, some letters ill-formed, and knew that there was something troubling her. He opened her letter and read:

Dearest,

My half-brother returned, raging, with a broken front tooth. He has repeatedly threatened Mother, told her she must dismiss you as her attorney and engage his attorney instead. Mother is frightened, as am I, but refuses. Today, he struck her. With his fist. Then he called for two manservants he had in attendance to take Mother and me to the manor house, to be kept in confinement.

I was able to run away, to escape. I ran through the woods, to the house where the curate and his wife live. They agreed to shelter me, which was brave, even noble, of them. Of course, I stay out of sight of anyone in the village.

I have no money, but I do not want to leave my mother here. If you feel there is anything you can do, please try. I cannot ask you to come here; you would, I fear, be risking your life if you did. My half-brother seems demented.

Angela

Steven stared at Angela's letter. He was appalled. He recalled hearing that men with the

great pox sometimes went insane. Of course, Fallworth's behavior had always been extreme, and perhaps Steven's manhandling of him had pushed Fallworth into actual madness. However, Steven had to, had to go to the Fallworth estate. He had never seen the manor house and even armed could hardly be expected to rescue Mrs. Thompson. But Angela needed his help, and he could and would try his damndest to provide that. Money, yes, but getting her away from Fallworth, into London, had to be done.

At this point, Steven decided to close up shop. He told his housekeeper-cook he would be away again, information that she accepted tranquilly.

Then he finished the will he had begun. As it happened, the man who had requested it appeared and paid for it. So Steven was free to become what he had always dreamed of being: a knight-errant.

Of course, there was a problem: Steven had no horse, could not ride, and had never sat a horse in his life. In fact, he was not confident about being able to drive any vehicle. However, he had to get there somehow and as quickly as possible. First, though, he needed money for the journey, for Angela and her mother, perhaps for bribes to get Mrs. Thompson out of what Steven feared was effectively her prison. So he ventured to the Bank of England, remembering to keep his eyes open. He took Angela's letter, to acquaint the Bank of England official with the situation.

The end of the quarter had passed, and Mrs. Thompson had over one hundred pounds in her banker's account even so. Steven took fifty pounds, some in notes, the rest in coins which he

placed in a leather bag. The bag with its contents weighed several pounds. However, the bank official Steven always dealt with had news.

“I received a letter purportedly from Mrs. Thompson, informing me that she had dismissed you as her attorney and agent and making her son, Lord Fallworth, her agent.”

“That is remarkable. Today I received a hastily written letter from her daughter, informing me that her mother had been physically assaulted by her son, then taken to the manor house, where she is effectively in confinement. Here is the daughter’s letter. May I see the letter purportedly from Mrs. Thompson?”

The bank official stared at Steven a moment, then nodded and produced a letter, a single page. Steven read the letter, which stated just what the bank official said it did. But Steven could see the handwriting was not that of Mrs. Thompson.

He looked up at the bank official and told him, “This is a forgery. I thought we had left the letter, making me her agent, with you.”

The official nodded once again, smiled, and set another letter next to the first one. Steven recognized it as authentic and said so. The official had read Angela’s letter.

The official put the real letter back into a box, then turned back to Steven and remarked, “Given Lord Fallworth’s reputation, none of this surprises me. But what can any of us do? Are you intending to try to rescue the lady?”

“Both ladies,” was Steven’s reply.

“Perhaps the sheriff of that county could provide assistance.”

Steven shook his head, replied, "I do not know how much interest Lord Fallworth has with the sheriff or with the county gentry. I do know it would take a great deal of time to persuade them to help."

"You fear for their safety?"

Steven nodded, said, "Lord Fallworth, I fear, may be descending into madness. Anything may happen."

The bank official stared at this. Steven took his leave.

He stopped during his walk back to his rooms, partly because he wanted to see if anyone was displaying excess interest in what he was doing or in what he was carrying. Otherwise, he had to decide, not what he had to do, but how he could get to Fallworth as quickly as possible. Reluctantly, he concluded that he would have to rent a small vehicle, a gig, and drive it himself to Fallworth. Under the circumstances, he could not hire someone to put himself, perhaps, into mortal danger.

So he went back to his rooms, collected what he thought he would need, and went out to engage a cab to take him to the place where gigs could be found and rented. Gigs were carriages with two wheels pulled by a single horse. The gig could carry two people, and Steven chose a vehicle with a canvas cover over the seat to protect against rain. Steven's choice also had a box under the seat that could be locked. This was for Steven's bag.

Steven was able to rent a vehicle that had what he was assured was a docile horse. He told the woman who was renting the transportation that he had never himself directly employed a horse, either riding or pulling and told her where

he was going. She patiently explained everything he had to do; these necessities included ensuring the animal had food and water and was changed sufficiently often. Of course, the next horse or the one after that might be quite different in temperament, but there was nothing Steven could do about that.

Eventually, Steven felt sufficiently instructed to begin. He mounted the vehicle, gathered the reins, and remembered to release the brake. The horse obediently began pulling the gig along. Steven was on his way and prayed he would get to Fallworth in time.

Driving the vehicle was not difficult; the horse knew his or her business. There were no collisions or crossed paths. In turn, Steven was scrupulous in ensuring the animal was changed, fed, and watered as he had been instructed. The only problem, as Steven judged the situation, was that they were not moving as rapidly as by coach. This meant they had to be on their road longer, and they were. They stopped late that night.

Steven tied the horse up and slept on the ground, wrapped in his oil cloth and greatcoat. It was not a comfortable night. On the other hand, he had passed the inn where he had slept during earlier visits. He could not decide if he wanted to arrive before or after darkness fell and went to sleep without deciding.

The next day threatened rain, but mercifully none actually fell. Aside from that, Steven did indeed arrive at Fallworth Village after dark. He could see lights in the cottage windows, and several dogs barked; but he saw no human beings about. His horse was beginning to tire: Steven could now recognize

the signs, but could do nothing. Angela had, despite her agitation, remembered to sketch a map that depicted the location of the curacy. Steven urged the horse on, speaking to the animal encouragingly, "Not far now. Nearly there."

He passed the church. The curacy was a few hundred yards further, and God be thanked, Steven could see lights in the windows. He guided the horse into the small stables next to the house, got stiffly out of the gig, tied the horse to a post in the stable, and went out to rap on the door of the curacy. He could hear movement; then he saw shadows crossing a window, and the door opened. A man, middle-sized, stood looking at Steven. And Steven thought he remembered the man from years ago.

15. Plans

“Steven,” the man said, “Steven Cosgrove.”

Steven finally recognized him: Peter... Dawson, that was the name, one of Lord Fallworth’s cronies and one of the two who had helped throw Steven over the sharp-pointed rail fence, leaving him disfigured. Dawson stood aside so that Steven could enter. Steven briefly wondered if he should shake Dawson’s hand, but he was distracted by the sight of Angela. She threw herself into his arms. He could feel her flesh under her night shift. He became aroused, but she did not pull back and instead continued to hold herself against him. They kissed and finally separated, decorum eventually prevailing.

Present was a woman, evidently Peter’s wife, and two children, a spindly boy and a very young girl. The woman introduced herself while Peter, after looking about outside, closed the door.

She extended her hand and said, “I am Sybil Dawson. I take it you are a friend of Peter?”

Steven turned to Peter, who replied for Steven, “Sybil, I told you about a boy at school that I helped Lord Fallworth injure. This is he.”

“Oh, dear. I am very sorry for your injury and for the experience. I know Peter deeply regrets his part in it.”

“I do indeed and apologize to you. I am a cleric, a representative of the Church of England, but what I did then, I have realized more and more strongly, was not *Christian*.”

Steven stood, while memories of what had happened then and afterward swept into his mind. Anger seemed to fill his entire being, but then better feelings pushed the anger away. Peter had apologized, but most of all, he and his wife had offered sanctuary—no better word than that—to Angela. Steven realized that, as a mere curate, Peter and his family could be sent out on the road, dismissed, if Lord Fallworth found out what he had done.

Steven turned to Peter and said, “Apology tendered, apology accepted.”

Steven extended his hand. Peter did the same, and they shook hands.

After this, Steven said, “So let us consider that matter behind us.”

Everyone was smiling; then Steven remembered his horse. He said to Peter, “The horse that drew my gig here requires stabling. Can this be done?”

Peter replied, “We keep no horses, but come with me, and we will arrange it.”

Off they went. There was little hay, but Steven drew a bucket of water from the well. The horse eagerly drank nearly all the water and quickly ate the hay provided. It did seem pleased.

Inside the curacy again, Mrs. Dawson provided Steven with some meat and ale, most welcome, though Steven had the feeling that what he ate would mean less for the Dawsons. He had brought his possessions inside, along with the bag of money that he gave to Angela.

She smiled in response, holding to his arm. She sat with Steven as he ate. Finally, when Steven had finished, they could talk about the situation and make plans.

Steven asked Angela, “Do you know where your mother is being kept?”

Angela shook her head, saying, “The manor house is in the Gothic style: it has turrets and battlements and even a dungeon, at least that is how it is fitted, instead of a proper cellar.”

“Do you think your mother is being kept there?” Angela looked at the Dawsons.

Peter sighed and told the rest, “I was told by a servant that she is actually locked in a cell there. I realize that this sounds beyond possibility, but Lord Fallworth has grown extremely, well, eccentric, to put it mildly, no, violent in his behavior. Especially since he returned from London after breaking his tooth.” Silence before Peter resumed, “The servants are terrified of him.”

Steven was curious about the Dawsons’ lives here and asked, “How did you come to live at Fallworth?”

Peter and Sybil looked at each other; then Peter told Steven, “After I graduated Oxford, I wanted a parish. Lord Fallworth was my friend, or so I believed, and I wrote to him. I knew the Lords Fallworth had interest, specifically this parish. However, he offered me only a curacy. I had no other offer, and his letter seemed to be promising the parish once certain matters—I was never told what they were—had been resolved. So we married,” he said, looking at his wife, “and came here.”

Sybil continued, “We kept expecting to be given the parish, but that did not happen.”

Steven raised his eyebrows, and Peter told him, "Money. The present Lord Fallworth has debts, very pressing ones, and insisted that whomever the parish was bestowed upon had to pay handsomely for it. I do not know if Lord Fallworth is somehow pocketing the Church of England's revenues from this parish, as that would be illegal, but it is possible."

At this point, the clock chimed, alerting everyone to the hour, so everyone retired. Angela occupied the only bedroom available, and Steven was constrained to lie down upon the floor before the fireplace. The fire in this was meagre. Steven removed his shoes and covered himself with his greatcoat. He used his bag as a pillow. As he lay there, he thought of going to Angela in her bed. Remembering her greeting, he thought she would not refuse him, and he wanted her so much. But he was so tired....

As sleep overtook him, his thoughts shifted. He realized he now understood the situation here much more clearly, though in a way this made matters worse....

Steven was awakened by a kiss. Of course, it was Angela. She was fully dressed, worse luck, and he could see it was morning. He reached up and touched the side of her face, caressing it. Then he realized that he had a blanket covering him.

He asked, "Where did this come from? You did not leave yourself cold did you?"

Angela shook her head, saying, "No, I was quite warm."

But then he had to arise to begin the day. Among other tasks, he had not shaven for two days, so he took care of that. Breakfast was more abundant than dinner had been, a

circumstance which Steven could see the children appreciated. Steven gave Angela the bag of money. Angela then gave the Dawsons money for the meal and probably other things as well, an act which was only appropriate.

After breakfast, Steven sat alone with Angela to try to decide how to release Mrs. Thompson from the manor. Steven showed Angela the pistol he had brought and eventually showed her how the pistol was loaded, how to insert and remove the caps, and how to close the hammers without firing the pistol.

After talking together a few minutes, they agreed that rescuing Angela's mother could best be done when Lord Fallworth was away, gone to London or on a hunt. Then they would, with the help of the pistol, release her. After that, they should leave in the gig, perhaps driving all night....

But Lord Fallworth had not left the estate since returning, and they had no idea when he would depart. If his debts were that pressing, departure was not likely to be imminent.

At this point, a servant from the manor appeared. Steven and Angela remained out of sight. The man was carrying a request, evidently from Mrs. Thompson: she was asking for a visit from the curate. She wanted spiritual guidance or perhaps just someone to talk to. Peter Dawson agreed he would try to get Lord Fallworth's permission to visit Angela's mother. The servant left after muttering something about the situation being "shameful."

At this point, Steven had an idea: he asked Peter if he would be willing to drive Angela and Mrs. Thompson to London in the gig: it would carry three if they were willing to

be crowded. But Steven would have to get her released.

“But what about you?” asked Peter.

Steven told the three of them, “What I was thinking was that I shall release Angela’s mother. She would walk here, and I will try to walk to a neighbor’s, to decoy Lord Fallworth. Is there a house nearby that would shelter me, give me sanctuary if you like, from Lord Fallworth?”

Peter nodded, and Sybil said, “The Lawrence estate. Lord Fallworth killed Mr. Lawrence’s son in a duel and the family hate Lord Fallworth.” After a few seconds, she added, “Sir Edward Lawrence is also a magistrate in this county.”

“Where is their manor?” asked Steven.

“To the west, beyond the Fallworth deer park. Perhaps four miles.”

Steven nodded.

But Angela shook her head: “Steven, I think I should go with you. In the first place, I know of a path, a secluded path, that we could take there and that Mother could take coming back here. Then you and I would walk to the Lawrence manor.”

Steven was surprised and impressed, but also alarmed: Angela was exposing herself to certain retaliation if Fallworth caught her, and Steven did not want to think about what that retaliation might involve.

But Angela went on, “I escaped with only what I am wearing, and I am sure Mother is in the same situation. As I cannot go to the dower house for more, I mean to exchange with Mother. So we must release her to walk back

here, and we must show ourselves, show ourselves so my half-brother follows us.”

Steven grimaced; that would make for a very exciting walk to the Lawrence’s manor. Steven decided to reload his pistol, hopefully to ward Fallworth off if he caught up with them, a likely occurrence. So he did this while Angela watched carefully. Then they set forth. She was carrying the pistol box.

16. Rescue Venture

Angela guided Steven through some woods, then along a muddy path beside a small stream. She clearly knew where she was going, and Steven could see their way was well concealed. He could also see that she was struggling somewhat with her burden, and Steven took the pistol box from her. She smiled at Steven in response. Steven carried the box under his left arm; his right hand he kept near the coat pocket that held the pistol. He had to tread carefully, as the ground was uneven and slippery.

Fallworth Manor became clearer through the trees as Steven and Angela got closer. Steven had never seen it before. His first impression was of ornateness: red brick, turrets at the corners of the building, narrow windows set in steeple-like protrusions every few feet across the front of the building, the entrance resembling that of a church, or rather cathedral.

After glancing at the Manor over the next few minutes, Steven decided the building was designed to impress, but to Steven, the impression he received was negative: overly ornate, impractical, and almost certainly crippling expensive. That explained a great deal, he thought.

Angela was moving into deeper woods, circling the Manor towards the right. There was a kitchen garden behind the manor house, but the woods kept close to the right side, which was

helpful. And there was a door on that side, not nearly as ornate as the one on the front of the house. Angela moved directly toward this. No servants were visible.

She said, "The kitchen is to the right. Beyond that are circular stairs. We go down." Fortunately, the door to the stairs opened quietly, and a great relief was that no one could be seen inside either. Steven and Angela walked quickly to the stair spiral.

They descended, passing two levels of doors before reaching the bottom. At the bottom were two doors. Angela unhesitatingly went to one of these; at this point Steven no longer knew what direction he was facing.

Before opening the door, she turned to him and whispered, "Have that pistol out before I open this door."

Steven pulled the pistol out and cocked both barrels, as quietly as he could. Angela opened the door and stepped through it, followed closely by Steven. The room was brick-walled. Chains hung from metal plates set in the wall, giving the impression of a dungeon.

Steven briefly wondered if any of the chains ever held a skeleton, but there was only one occupant, a living human, a man seated behind a table. He was bent over the table, his head on his crossed arms, clearly asleep. Steven saw an iron ring with two keys attached lying on the table.

The servant remained asleep, so Angela took the ring with the keys and went to each of the cell doors asking, "Mother, are you in here?"

Steven remained in front of the table, his pistol pointed at the servant.

"Is that you, Angela?"

“Yes, I am here with Steven. Let me try to open this door.”

Angela tried one key without success, then the other. The dungeon door lock turned, and Angela pulled the door open. It creaked, or rather shrieked, and this woke the jailor. He started to get up, then stopped when he saw Steven and what Steven was pointing at him.

“Sit down,” Steven ordered the jailor, adding, “No noise.”

Angela had gone into her mother’s cell and was talking to her.

“Are you well enough to walk away from this place, Mother?”

“I think so, dear; let me put my shoes on.”

Silence for perhaps a minute, then Steven could hear whispering between the two women. After perhaps two more minutes, both women emerged. Steven noticed that the two women had exchanged bonnets. Mrs. Thompson smiled at Steven and Steven at her, but he could see the bruise on the side of her face, expected perhaps, but this sight hardened Steven’s anger further. However, it was time to try the escape.

Once the women were out, Steven ordered the jailor into the cell Mrs. Thompson had occupied.

Steven locked the cell door on the man, then threw the keys onto the floor well away from the cells.

He told the jailor as he did this, “Someone will come and let you out. You can tell Lord Fallworth we took you by surprise and I held you at pistol point, not your fault.”

Of course, the man had been caught sound asleep, but he presumably had enough

sense not to tell Lord Fallworth that, or so Steven hoped. The three of them went out, closed the dungeon door, and went up the stairs. Mrs. Thompson seemed to be moving well, Steven noted with relief.

“How were you treated?” Steven asked her.

“Aside from this,” she replied, pointing to the bruise on her face, “I was not beaten, just threatened every day by my son. Otherwise, I was kept locked up.”

Steven shook his head. Lord Fallworth’s behavior was beyond polite description, but the only thing he, Steven, could do was to try to get the ladies and himself well away from Fallworth. Now they were at the door to the right side of the manor. Steven opened it and looked cautiously out. Still no one, so the three of them walked quickly to the woods.

Once in the woods, out of sight of the manor, Angela pulled the purse Steven had brought from London and gave it to her mother.

Steven told her, “This will pay your expenses to London while your daughter and I try to throw Lord Fallworth off the track. The curate agreed to drive you there. You know the path?”

Mrs. Thompson nodded. She had tears in her eyes and embraced Steven and Angela.

Steven was embarrassed and said, “God speed you. The horse for the gig at the curacy should be fed and rested.”

Mrs. Thompson nodded; then they separated.

Steven and Angela walked back out to the kitchen garden at the back of the manor. Steven was carrying the pistol box as well as the

pistol, now safely uncocked. They walked quickly and openly turned toward the west. Angela made no attempt to hide her face. Two housemaids who were shaking rugs out saw them, looked at each other, then went into the manor. Steven and Angela, without exchanging a word, began walking faster. Ahead were the woods of the deer park, but Angela turned toward the woods without hesitating.

Then they were in the woods, following less of a path than a faint trail. They had to walk single-file, Angela ahead. Occasionally they had to lower their heads because of branches. Steven wondered how men on horses were supposed to pursue deer. Occasionally the woods opened, but the ground was uneven. Angela was either very familiar with these woods or very surefooted. Since she seemed to be moving in a consistent direction, both were likely.

There was a sound from the east, from the direction of the manor, as though borne by a gentle wind. It was a horn.

Angela told Steven, "That is a hunting horn. I fear my half-brother is following us. Probably with dogs."

That was serious; the pistol might hold Lord Fallworth off, but not a pack of dogs. But clearly Angela knew what to do, at least about the dogs.

She told Steven, "We will cross the stream we are approaching, but come out of it some distance from where we went in."

Angela led Steven down a gentle slope until they came to a shallow stream. There were rocks here and there, rocks whose tops were above or just below the water. Angela began stepping on these, moving along the stream,

gradually coming closer to the far side, until she could finally step on a rock on the far bank. Steven followed her.

She explained, "The dogs track deer and human beings by their scent. By moving downstream and stepping only on scattered rocks, we are making it much harder for them to find out where we have stepped."

Since some of the rocks they had stepped on were actually a little under water, Steven was convinced—and impressed. Of course, Angela had been born and grew up here.... But now they could hear the horn much closer and even some dogs barking. Onward then.

As they moved up the far side of the little valley, they encountered deer. One had horns, and Angela commented, "A buck, two does, and two fawns, probably going to get a drink. Their being here will help confuse the dogs."

Steven asked, "How will the dogs know our scent?"

Angela told Steven, "From some of my clothes, perhaps, but I am sure from our tracks where we went around the rear of the manor."

This thought stirred Steven, who was becoming tired, to greater efforts. He had not heard anything lately, but knew Fallworth was coming as fast as his pack of dogs allowed him.

He and Angela were moving through leafy shade interspersed with patches of sunlight. The light was bright, even dazzling at one moment, then it became dimmed. Steven looked up and saw clouds, dark ones, becoming darker as he watched.

"Storm coming," remarked Angela.

Both began moving faster; neither wanted to walk in a rainstorm. At that moment,

they heard Fallworth's hunting horn, clearly closer, though they could not hear any dogs. They were approaching a giant oak, alive, though with several dead big lower branches.

Angela commented, "If the dogs saw or scented those deer, they would have gone after the deer, probably. At least we can hope so."

Steven said nothing, as he was out of breath. Even so, his respect for Angela, not just for her knowledge of the manor, but for her sense and cool-headedness, had grown even more. If they survived this adventure, it would be largely owing to her.

Thunder sounded: clearly the storm was nearly upon them. Raindrops could clearly be heard beginning to fall, and they stepped under the largest lower limbs of the oak tree.

"How far to the Lawrence estate now, do you think?" asked Steven.

"Perhaps a mile," was Angela's reply. But just then a horse and rider crashed through nearby trees. The rider was Lord Fallworth.

Though he had his hunting horn hung from his neck and a riding crop in his hand, he was not dressed for riding. Clearly he had left Fallworth Manor in a hurry. He was grinning triumphantly at Angela, a grin that disappeared when she raised her head and looked Lord Fallworth in the face.

"Where is your mother?" he demanded.

"Not here," was Angela's reply.

By now, Steven had his pistol out, both barrels cocked. Lord Fallworth saw this and sneered.

Rain kept pattering on leaves, not a heavy shower. There was more thunder, but nothing

close. Still, Fallworth continued to sneer at Steven's pistol.

Steven told him, "This is a caplock pistol." He added, "And the barrels are rifled."

The sneer faded somewhat, but only somewhat: Steven and Fallworth were perhaps fifteen feet apart and Fallworth had of course noticed the short barrels on Steven's pistol.

However, Fallworth turned to Angela and asked again, "Where did your mother go?"

Angela again evaded the question: "Elsewhere."

Fallworth's expression became angry, and he urged his horse forward as he raised his riding crop. Steven raised his pistol, aiming it at Fallworth's middle.

Fallworth told Steven, "If you shoot me, you will hang."

But Steven replied, "I will shoot the horse."

This caused Fallworth to hesitate, reining the animal in. There was a pause, then Fallworth took his feet from the stirrups, evidently intending to dismount. Then the air lit up, a deafening cracking sound; Fallworth's horse reared, and a dead tree limb fell on Lord Fallworth, knocking him off his horse onto the ground. The horse had bolted, causing the limb to barely miss it, though it did not miss its rider. The side of Fallworth's head struck another limb lying on the ground. He lay as if stunned, his head at an unnatural angle to his neck.

Steven and Angela turned to each other, both temporarily blinded and deafened by the lightning. After these effects eased, their hearing largely recovered, they assured each other they were all right and then turned to Lord Fallworth.

As they approached him, his eyes opened. Steven uncocked his pistol and returned it to his pocket, as he could see Fallworth was not moving otherwise. He and Angela knelt next to Lord Fallworth. His eyes moved from one face to the other. They looked so sad that Steven felt pity for his longtime foe. He could see Angela felt similarly.

Fallworth said, or rather whispered, "...Cannot feel anything. Cannot breathe." Then, "...Tell wife...sorry." His eyes went to Angela's: "...Mother, you too." To Steven, "...And you."

Silence. Steven realized that Fallworth could not inhale, so he was running out of air as he tried to talk. Steven did not know what to do, what to say.

Finally, he told Fallworth, whose eyes were beginning to set, "We will tell them. And we will take you home."

There was perhaps a glimmer of understanding in Fallworth's eyes before Steven could see that Lord Fallworth was dead.

Steven and Angela knelt a minute or so longer as Angela recited a prayer. Then they both got up. The rain, thankfully a light one, had passed. They could hear the receding sounds of thunder. Both of them looked toward the west, just another mile. There was a noise to their left: it was Fallworth's horse, its reins being pulled along the ground as the animal slowly moved toward its fallen master. Angela walked slowly to the animal, took the reins, and walked Fallworth's horse to a small tree near Fallworth's body and tied the reins to the tree. The horse touched its nose to its master's body then stood

there as if on guard. For some reason, Steven found this behavior affecting.

Now the two of them could resume their journey without fear of pursuit. The ground continued to rise, but more gently. Otherwise, the tangle of tree branches was much the same. Suddenly the trees opened, revealing a park, a park with a manor house atop a very gentle hill. Unlike Fallworth Manor, the architecture of this manor house was totally, reassuringly unexceptionable: grey stone, two floors, unadorned rectangular windows. There were three chimneys, all with smoke rising from them, as plain and simple as possible.

Three men were scything the grass that grew a little tall about the house, working steadily on a customary task. They stopped when they saw Angela and Steven approaching.

“Is Sir Edward at home?” asked Angela.

One of the men touched his cap as he answered, “Aye, miss.” He pointed to the front door of the manor and told the two, “Just pull at the rope.”

So Angela and Steven walked to the front door and did just that. They heard a bell sound inside and waited.

17. Interview with Sir Edward

The door was opened by a manservant. From his dress, Steven took him for the butler. He told the man, "We must speak with Sir Edward. It concerns a man's death."

The butler, hardly batting an eye, gestured for Angela and Steven to enter, then led them to a sitting room. Two people were there, both well-dressed and grey haired, the lady knitting and the man reading a newspaper. The man rose to greet them.

Angela spoke. "I am Angela Thompson, Lord Fallworth's half-sister."

Steven saw Sir Edward's face change, but did not know how to interpret this.

Angela continued, "Lord Fallworth imprisoned our mother and would have imprisoned me as well, but I was able to leave Fallworth Manor without being seen and took refuge with the curate and his wife. I wrote to Mr. Cosgrove, and he arrived as quickly as he could. We decided on a scheme to free my mother, then decoy Lord Fallworth away after us. Mother would return to London to stay with relations. Steven—Mr. Cosgrove—had brought a pistol because my half-brother was clearly prepared to continue to use violence."

Here the butler and a maidservant brought in a tray with tea and cups. Steven and Angela were both thirsty and drank two cups each before Angela resumed.

“With the help of Steven’s pistol, we freed my mother, locked up her jailor, and all left the manor. Mother was to go to the curacy by a concealed route, while Steven and I left openly. As we hoped, Lord Fallworth followed us—with a pack of dogs.”

“Where is Lord Fallworth? He knows he is not welcome on our estate.”

Angela announced, “Lord Fallworth is dead.”

Both Sir Edward and Lady Lawrence became even more alert and exchanged glances.

Angela continued, “We were able to confuse the dogs, perhaps a family of deer helped, but my half-brother caught up with us. At the base of a very large oak tree.”

Here the Lawrences, after another exchange of glances, were smiling. Steven realized that they hated Lord Fallworth.

“How did he die? I should remind you both that I am a magistrate and must see justice done, though,” he said, then glanced at his wife, “I suspect it has been. Did you,” addressing Steven, “have to employ your pistol?”

Steven shook his head and told Sir Edward, “I produced it to give him pause, but just then a lightning bolt struck nearby. Lord Fallworth’s horse reared and a great limb from the oak tree knocked him off the horse. His head struck another fallen limb. This appeared to break his neck. We went to him, but he said he could feel nothing and could only gasp a few words, final messages, before he died. We came here directly to inform you.”

Sir Edward and Lady Lawrence smiled at each other; then Sir Edward told Angela and Steven, “Lord Fallworth’s grandfather was

struck by lightning and killed at that same oak. You should understand that the Lord Fallworth, who was pursuing you, had seduced our son's wife, and our son challenged him to a duel."

Sir Edward nodded at a portrait of a young man, clearly Sir Edward's son, on the wall amidst a series of portraits of his family. Next to the son's portrait was an open space, the wall there distinctly different in shade, undoubtedly where the portrait of the disgraced wife had hung.

Sir Edward addressed Steven, "As I told you, I am a magistrate. You said that you did not discharge the pistol you were carrying, is that correct?"

Steven nodded.

"May I inspect this weapon?"

Steven pulled his pistol out, got up and gave it to Sir Edward, who looked carefully at the weapon, then sniffed at the barrel. Steven realized this was to find out if the pistol had been fired recently.

Sir Edward handed the pistol back to Steven, remarking, "A caplock, and rifled too. An excellent weapon."

Sir Edward looked at his wife again, then back at Angela and Steven. "I will ask my people to go into the Deer Park with a sled and a horse to recover Lord Fallworth's body for return to Fallworth Manor. I will also send you two back in our carriage. To the manor or elsewhere if you wish."

He looked at Angela and Steven, who in turn looked at each other before Steven replied, "To the manor, I believe. One of the messages was for Lady Fallworth."

“Then let me direct my people to recover Lord Fallworth’s body. In the meantime, may I offer you the hospitality of our abode?”

This was acceptable to both Angela and Steven. Both of them were tired, and they sat together on a sofa while Sir Edward gave his orders to the servants. Once this was done, they sat down with Sir Edward and Lady Lawrence at what was essentially a high tea, welcome to the visitors who had eaten nothing in many hours it seemed. Steven could see Sir Edward and Lady Lawrence were pleased that Lord Fallworth was dead. Unfortunately, of course, that would not return their son to them. Glancing at Angela, Steven had the impression that Angela’s thoughts were as his own. This comforted him. This day’s adventure had, Steven felt, brought them even closer together.

Once everyone’s appetite was sated or at least reduced, one of Sir Edward’s servants came in and told everyone at the table, “Sir Edward, milady, Lord Fallworth’s body has been brought out.”

Sir Edward told his servant, “Take it to Fallworth Manor, and prepare the carriage to take our two guests,” indicating Steven and Angela, “to the manor also.”

“Yes, Sir Edward.” The servant paused, then added, “Lord Fallworth’s horse will be taken along with the body.”

Sir Edward nodded. Steven and Angela arose, thanked their hosts, and went out to await the carriage.

A wooden sled lay on the gravel road used for carriages. A plow horse was harnessed to the sled. Another horse, which Steven recognized as Lord Fallworth’s, was tethered to

the back end of the sled. A man's body was lashed to the sled. It was Lord Fallworth, incontestably dead, his eyes no longer staring at a great distance, now pecked out by carrion birds, his head still at an unnatural angle, the sign of a badly broken neck. Steven and Angela looked away from the scene after a moment. Then the carriage arrived, and Steven helped Angela into it. She smiled at Steven in response, as she usually did, but Steven could see she was tired. As was he, and the day was not yet over.

In the coach, he put his arm about her shoulders. She turned and laid her head on his shoulder. His own head seemed, of its own volition, to turn and rest on hers. The carriage began its journey to Fallworth Manor, followed by the sled. Their journey, the coachman informed them, would take perhaps an hour. They would tell the Fallworth household of what was following them, give Lady Fallworth her husband's last message, and then walk to the curacy. The sled with its occupant would not reach Fallworth Manor until after dark.

"Just as well," thought Steven. He and Angela stirred themselves and looked out of the carriage windows, back at the sled following them. The two men who were walking along the sides of the sled, guiding its direction, were grinning.

In fact, everyone at the Lawrence estate seemed happy. Lord Fallworth was universally hated and probably not just on this estate.

Steven sighed and turned to Angela. He said, "I daresay I have more cause than many to loathe and despise Lord Fallworth, yet I confess I take no joy in what happened to him, still less the abuse of his corpse and memory."

Angela took Steven's hand and told him, "Nor do I, but what you just said confirms my esteem for you as a good, kindhearted man."

She fell silent for several minutes and finally spoke again: "You must tell Lady Fallworth what befell her husband. I do not know if she is with child again, nor what the entail on Fallworth involves. But if you do not object, I will accompany you as you relate what happened."

Steven certainly had no objection to Angela's continuing company and smiled.

The sun was setting as the carriage carrying Steven and Angela reached Fallworth Manor. Steven assisted Angela out of the carriage, thanked the driver, then escorted Angela to the ornate entrance of Fallworth Manor and pulled hard at the bell cord. They stood only a few seconds before the door was opened by a man wearing what reminded Steven of a Grenadier Guardsman's uniform. The man, almost certainly the butler, stared at the two of them.

Steven said, "I have dreadful news for this household. Lord Fallworth is dead, killed as the result of falling from his horse and breaking his neck. His last breaths were messages to his mother and Lady Fallworth. We ask to speak to Lady Fallworth to tell her what Lord Fallworth said."

"Lord Fallworth is dead?"

Steven nodded and told the butler, "His body is being brought here on a sled by Sir Edward Lawrence's servants. It should arrive in perhaps two hours. May we see Lady Fallworth?"

The butler looked cornered and confused, but stepped aside to permit Angela and Steven to enter. He then led the two of them up a set of ornate stairs, along a hall hung with pictures, some of family members, some of classical scenes, to a room on whose door he knocked.

“Enter,” said a woman’s voice, one that Steven recognized as that of the woman he had once aspired to marry.

18. Bad News?

Sarah, Lady Fallworth, was sitting at a small table, dining. She was alone save for a serving maid. She was surprised to see Angela and especially Steven.

Angela forestalled any complaints Lady Fallworth might have about the release of her mother by telling her, “My lady. Your husband, Lord Fallworth, was killed this afternoon. A bolt of lightning struck nearby as he was dismounting his horse. The horse reared, and Lord Fallworth broke his neck when he fell. Before he died, he was able to give us some final messages, to your ladyship as well as to others.”

Angela looked at Steven, who told Lady Fallworth, “His last message, with almost his last breath, was to you. He said to tell you that he was sorry.”

“That was all?”

“He had great difficulty saying that much, as he could not take a breath.”

Silence fell. Then Lady Fallworth asked, “How did this happen? I heard that someone saw his mother had escaped and Lord Fallworth took his pack of dogs to recapture her.”

“The report was mistaken: Lord Fallworth pursued Miss Thompson and me instead, reaching us, but dying because of an accident.”

More silence until Steven told Lady Fallworth, "His body is on its way here; it will arrive in perhaps two hours."

Still more silence until Steven suggested, "Perhaps your ladyship could give orders for a casket to be constructed?"

This stirred Lady Fallworth to tell the obviously shocked serving maid, "Have the butler attend me."

The serving maid left quickly. Steven and Angela remained standing, as their hostess had not bidden them to sit. This was awkward. Steven and Angela exchanged glances and were about to request to be allowed to leave when Lady Fallworth recovered her manners.

"Pray sit. Have you dined?"

Steven and Angela assured her that they had.

Finally, Lady Fallworth began to talk: "I believe I am again with child. If it is a living boy this time, he will inherit. Otherwise..."

A knock at the door interrupted her. She said, "Enter," and the butler appeared. "Please have a coffin made for Lord Fallworth."

The butler said, however, "My lady, the custom here at Fallworth is that when a Lord Fallworth dies, his body is wrapped in a white shroud and placed in a large, very ornate coffin for the household to approach and pay its respects. While this is happening, a gravestone is prepared. After one day, the body is buried in the cemetery near the manor. No coffin is otherwise employed. I have directed one of the servants to begin preparing the grave marker, and the display coffin is being placed in the entrance hall. The grave is being dug. Your

Ladyship need not trouble yourself; everything is being prepared according to Fallworth custom.”

The butler stood upright, waiting to hear if Lady Fallworth had any questions or instructions, but hearing none, bowed and left.

After listening to all of this, Lady Fallworth asked Steven and Angela, “I do not know where you are lodged. It is drawing on to night. If you wish, you may sleep here in Fallworth Manor.”

Angela and Steven looked at each other, and both agreed to stay overnight; neither wished to alert the Fallworth Manor household that they had been staying with the curate and his wife.

Though the day had been extraordinarily wearing, Steven spent the entire night having seemingly endless dreams of being chased by Lord Fallworth through woods and through the halls of a public school, Lord Fallworth always on horseback, striking at Steven with a long whip, coming ever closer. Then Lord Fallworth would take Steven, shackled, from a cell at Newgate out to be hanged. On the way out, he would pass the women’s cells; Angela was inside one of these, weeping, stretching her hand out to him...

He was awakened by a manservant, but he did not feel refreshed; rather, he felt the reverse. He dressed, but was unshaven; his razor and soap were at the curacy. He met Angela on the landing and gave her his arm, and they entered the room where they were to breakfast in this manner. Steven had the impression that Lady Fallworth, now dressed in mourning, was not pleased that they entered so linked, but he had no idea why. Steven was struck by how

attractive Lady Fallworth was, dressed as she was required to be.

Otherwise it was a pleasant meal. At its end, Angela asked permission to withdraw, which of course was given. This left Steven with Lady Fallworth and a maidservant.

Lady Fallworth told the maidservant, "You may go," and the woman curtsied and left.

Now Steven was alone with Lady Fallworth. He wondered at this until she spoke.

"Mr. Cosgrove—or may I call you Steven?—I require guidance from an attorney. It involves the entail on this estate."

"I believe Mrs. Thompson gave me a copy of the document, but I would, in any case, have to read it again before venturing an opinion. But surely your late husband had a solicitor? He should be consulted first. If you still have questions that he cannot answer, I would be quite willing to give you my opinion."

Lady Fallworth said, "I should indeed appreciate your opinion; I am not certain there is a Fallworth solicitor at this time."

She smiled at Steven, who smiled back—it was only good manners, after all—then Angela rejoined them.

Steven and Angela looked at each other before Angela spoke to Lady Fallworth: "We," indicating Steven, "must return to our dwellings. I require to change my clothes and Steven, I am sure, desires to shave."

Lady Fallworth asked, "Do you know where your mother is?"

"I think she has gone to visit some relations."

Lady Fallworth nodded; Steven and Angela stood up and took their leave.

On their way to the dower house and curacy, Angela asked Steven, "What did Lady Fallworth want?"

"Some legal counseling about the entail. I told her to speak to her late husband's solicitor first. If she wishes for an independent opinion, I would be happy to provide one. She said she wanted my opinion."

Steven noticed that Angela had not taken his arm, and this disturbed him.

They walked in silence until she remarked, "If I might, I would like to see this document."

Steven said, "Then so you shall." He thought for several seconds and added, "If you are to be the wife of an attorney and desire to assist me, you will be required to examine many legal documents."

This was somewhat clumsily put, but it prompted a smile from her. She began to walk more closely to Steven.

A few more steps, and Angela remarked, "It sounds self-serving, but as long as my half-brother was alive, I would not have been able to marry you here at Fallworth. We would have had to travel to Scotland to marry there."

Steven had not thought of that possibility, but agreed.

Angela added, "And I am aware you are not fond of traveling."

Steven stopped and turned to her. He said, seriously, "I have undertaken to journey with you for the rest of our lives."

At this, she melted. She reached up to touch the side of his unshaven face, then leaned forward and kissed him. The kiss was repeated, and became an embrace, before they resumed

walking. They were finally arm in arm once more.

Angela remarked, "I had the impression Lady Fallworth might be thinking of a closer connection with you."

Several steps before Steven replied, "Once, I did wish to marry her, but she chose Lord Fallworth, not surprising, and well...then you entered my life. Unlike my experience with her, everything we said or did together interested, then fascinated me and served to draw us closer. I have learned that I can rely absolutely upon you, as a friend, a companion, and above all as a wife."

Angela said nothing further, but leaned her head on Steven's shoulder as they proceeded.

They separated at the dower house. Steven walked quickly to the curacy, to be greeted by Sybil Dawson with two letters. Steven had left the direction to the curacy with his housekeeper-cook, so these letters would be from people seeking legal services. He had also left Mrs. Dawson with coin to pay for the letters, so simply thanked her, opened and read them. Indeed, two men would appear at Steven's rooms on Tuesday; they would not be able to attend any other day, so Steven would have to begin his return trip on Sunday to be able to meet them.

This meant he could not be at Fallworth church for the reading of his and Angela's banns, so that would have to be postponed until the next week. The circumstance was vexing, but Steven had to return for these men. The curate would almost certainly return Saturday, as he had to read the service Sunday. Steven sighed and explained the situation to Mrs. Dawson. She shook her head sympathetically.

Steven returned the pistol box, with the pistol inside, to his bag. Then he went to shave. When he had done, he told Mrs. Dawson that he would return to the manor house to examine a legal document and that she should not expect him for meals that day. He stopped at the dower house on his way back to the manor. He took the letters with him.

Angela appeared, they embraced and kissed, then looked at each other. Finally, Steven told her about the letters and showed them to her. They began walking toward the manor.

Angela returned the letters to Steven and said, "Of course you must return; you must earn a living. And perhaps the delay of a week is appropriate given Lord Fallworth's death. Only a week, dearest."

For a moment, Steven remembered his uncle's loss of his beloved, but pushed that thought aside.

At the manor were two carriages, probably nearby ladies coming to offer condolences to Lady Fallworth. Steven supposed the sincerity could be questioned, but the gesture was probably appreciated.

He and Angela summoned the butler and told him, "Lady Fallworth wishes me to examine the estate entail document."

Steven thought the butler was beginning to look harassed. But, he bowed and took Steven and Angela to a room where there was a table and several chairs. There were also shelves, though few books.

The butler told them, "I shall obtain the key from her ladyship."

Steven and Angela sat down; on the table were pens and ink. On a shelf on the wall were some small stacks of paper. The butler came in carrying a scroll.

Despite its apparent antiquity, Steven could see the document, though certainly old, had an age that would be measured in decades, not centuries. However, that was good, as it would be more easily handled. Steven told Angela this between kisses. Finally they managed to turn their attention to the scroll. Steven untied the silken cord holding the scroll closed and very carefully unrolled it. Mercifully, it did not tear or crack. Angela saw what was needed and retrieved four books to hold down the corners of the scroll.

Steven smiled at her; they kissed once more, then forced their eyes onto the scroll. They inspected it together in silence.

Finally, Angela remarked, "It certainly looks old."

She was referring to the appearance of the letters. However, after being silent for perhaps a minute, Steven shook his head.

He said, "It is written to give that appearance, but I do not think this document goes back before the seventeenth century and perhaps not long before the last century. However, despite the script, the document appears to be lawful, the actual will of the first Lord Fallworth...."

Here Steven looked very carefully at the seal, looked over at Angela and pointed to part of it. "The date is 1663, after the Restoration."

Angela looked where Steven's finger was pointing and nodded.

Steven commented, "It was during the Restoration that landowners became landowners with the right to bestow their lands on whomever they chose. Before that, the Crown held all the land, or at least that was its claim. Wardships and other devices were used by the Crown to gain revenue and to try to control those who held the land. So if there is an entail mentioned," he started, reading quickly through the will, then pointing to part of the will and continuing, "and indeed, here it is." Looking at Angela, he said, "Before the Restoration, there were no entails possible."

Angela nodded.

Steven looked carefully at the start of the will. He converted the Latin into legal English in his mind then recited the English sentence aloud. Angela quickly wrote the sentence down on paper. Then the next sentence and the next. Angela, Steven observed, not only wrote a very fair hand, she wrote it quickly.

The translated will grew until a second sheet of paper was required. So the day progressed. In fact, the two of them had finished preparing the translation in little more than three hours. Angela arranged the pages in their number order, and Steven rolled the original up and retied it.

After another exchange of kisses, Steven pointed to one part of the translated will. "This will be of interest to Lady Fallworth. During the minority of a son, the widow has control of the estate. That will perhaps be the situation here. I will bring this to Lady Fallworth's attention. Of course, the child she thinks she is carrying has to be a boy, but if it is, then perhaps I—or we—can

persuade her to give the living to the man Lord Fallworth promised it to, Mr. Dawson.”

He and Angela exchanged smiles, more kisses, and went to tell Lady Fallworth their news.

On entering the room where Lady Fallworth was sitting reading, Steven bowed, and Angela curtsied. Steven was again struck by Lady Fallworth’s increasingly clear resentment at Angela’s presence. Angela saw this, too; she and Steven exchanged glances. But Steven set the translated will on the table near where Lady Fallworth was sitting. He pointed to the relevant part of the will and informed Lady Fallworth of its meaning.

She was interested; that much was clear. “And when would my son reach his majority?”

Steven pointed to the place on the will with that information and told her, “When he completes his sixteenth year.”

Lady Fallworth thought about this, then told Steven, “I am obliged to you, Mister Cosgrove.”

Steven noted, “Miss Thompson wrote the document you have and very clearly, too.”

But Steven’s attempt to obtain Lady Fallworth’s thanks for Angela fell victim to silence. Steven and Angela stood awkwardly, waiting for something more to happen.

Just then, there was a knock at the door. Lady Fallworth said, “Enter,” and the butler appeared.

“My lady, Miss Thompson, Lord Fallworth’s burial awaits your presence.”

Lady Fallworth arose and walked, no, swept out the door. Of course, Angela, as his half-sister, had to attend, while Steven, for

several reasons, had to leave. He and Angela kissed goodbye, and Steven left the manor and walked quickly to the curacy.

There, Steven informed Sybil Dawson of what had transpired.

She commented, "I am quite happy that, with his last breath, he apologized. That will mean a great deal at the Last Judgment, I am sure."

She then told Steven that Peter had taken Mrs. Thompson in the gig to an inn on Watling Street. She would take the mail coach to London and stay at the house she was renting. Peter would rest overnight at the inn and return on Saturday. Steven told her that he would have to return Sunday, hopefully using the gig. His and Angela's banns would begin the Sunday following. Sybil smiled and wished them joy.

Steven spent the remainder of the day buying fodder for the horse pulling the gig when Peter returned. He also bought meat and eggs for the Dawson household, prompting some *pro forma* protest from Sybil. He could see their children were pleased, however, and reminded her that the food was required for someone whose presence, whose very continued existence, had been uncertain. So the dinner that Friday evening passed amicably.

Steven had heard nothing from Angela and was still worn from his exertions, so he retired early. He lay down, thinking he could catch Angela's scent, most comforting and arousing as well. Still, this did not prevent more and more continuous—or so it seemed—nightmares. When he arose once more unrefreshed, he wondered how long these dreams would persist. The only comfort he could derive

came from his inability to remember what he had dreamed.

A note from Angela was brought after breakfast:

Dearest,

Lady Fallworth questioned me closely about our plans. I saw no reason to conceal them from her, so she knows our banns will begin on the Sunday following tomorrow. She said she has a question about Lord Fallworth's gaming debts, which she learned of on reading his papers. Please attend her and particularly me. She has asked me to stay at the manor, perhaps for my companionship.

Your Angel

Steven informed Mrs. Dawson of his purpose at the manor and left. He walked there in a light rain, wearing his oilskins. The butler admitted him, and Steven walked to the room where Angela and Lady Fallworth were sitting. Despite their being together, Steven had the impression of coolness between the women. Angela arose when Steven entered; they embraced and kissed. Steven did not look to see how this was received by Lady Fallworth. In fact, at the moment, he did not really care; he was simply happy to see his affianced once more.

Lady Fallworth, with what Steven could hear was an edge in her voice, said, "Miss Thompson, I wish to talk to Mr. Cosgrove alone."

Angela flushed, but after an exchange of glances with Steven, she left the room. Steven steeled himself for what he felt would be an uncomfortable conversation.

“Mr. Cosgrove—or should I call you Steven?”

Steven forced a smile and answered, “What your ladyship pleases.”

This reminder of her title and marriage restored the distance between them, and she turned to the legal matter Angela’s note had mentioned.

“On examining my late husband’s papers, I found numerous letters from men to whom he owed gaming debts. Some of these missives appeared threatening, of legal action or worse. Will I have to pay these debts? The amounts are substantial, thousands of pounds.”

Steven had been able to think about how he would answer this question, so readily answered, “In a word, no. Such debts are personal. The estate cannot be sued or attached to recover these, and so on Lord Fallworth’s death, they can no longer be collected. These letters may be burned along with any further ones.”

Lady Fallworth nodded.

A silence fell until Lady Fallworth spoke: “And your marriage to Miss Thompson is definitely decided upon?” Another silence, then she continued, “Once you had different matrimonial aspirations.”

Steven spoke and spoke from his heart, “When I met Angela, there was such an aching void in my heart, it was hard to bear. But from the beginning of our acquaintance, I found her interesting, then more than interesting; every

conversation, every circumstance seemed to deepen my feelings for her and—I discovered—hers for me. We understand each other. My dearest wish—and she tells me hers—is to be together for as long as is given us.”

Steven had to stop because he had begun to speak with such intensity. He swallowed and was able to speak in a more moderate tone: “The reading of our banns will begin a week from tomorrow. I must return to London to conduct some business. I will return with Angela’s mother. I will have to travel to and from Fallworth a total of four additional times before we are able to return to London and begin our lives together.”

Lady Fallworth’s expression became remote. At length, she spoke again with an evident effort, saying, “I am obliged to you for your counsel and the work you performed on my behalf. And that done by Miss Thompson as well, of course. But have you any request of me in return?”

Steven thought and partly to turn the conversation to a new direction, said, “Indeed there is, your ladyship. The parish curate, Mr. Dawson, came here because the late Lord Fallworth promised him the living when the man who held it died. This promise was not kept. In fact, I have heard that the rents from the living have been going into the late Lord Fallworth’s pocket. But you have the power to fulfil your late husband’s promise. And I am asking you, if my assistance has merited your favor, to bestow the living of this parish on the curate.”

The room became silent.

Finally, Lady Fallworth nodded. She said, "If the child I carry is a son, I shall do as you ask."

Steven replied, "Thank you, your ladyship."

At this, however, tears began to flow down Lady Fallworth's cheeks. Steven, alarmed, rose to offer her his one remaining clean handkerchief, but she forestalled him by producing one of her own.

Steven, still standing, offered his shoulder to try to offer some sympathy, some comfort, but she began to speak: "Once you loved me, Steven. Is that all forgotten?"

Steven struggled for words. He was finally able to reply, "Not forgotten, your—no, not forgotten. I did love you, but you chose someone else, and I had to accept your choice."

"It must have been a bitter choice for you."

Steven stood in silence for a few seconds, then nodded, "Bitter indeed, yet what could I do? And, as I told you, I then met Angela. I cannot say exactly how or when she took your place in my heart; we imperceptibly grew together in mind and soul. And our dearest wish now is to complete our union."

Lady Fallworth wiped the tears from her face. She looked up at Steven and said, "Then pray accept my own wishes for your happiness."

Steven bowed and took his leave. Outside, he saw Angela and went to her. She was sitting on a sofa, and he sat down next to her. In a voice little more than a whisper, he related the conversation that had just concluded. He thought his affianced needed to know the situation in her current (for the time at least)

household. Angela was not surprised by what Steven told her. She took his hand and kissed him.

At this point, he asked her about the burial of Lord Fallworth.

She told him, "There was no actual service, that is, no religious service, just the burial. There was one surprise: Lord Fallworth's horse kept putting his nose to the grave; he seemed most distressed. In fact, the horse resisted being taken back to the stable, so Lady Fallworth said to allow the animal to remain. I believe it remains there. I was told it will take water, but not food."

Steven found this memorable: a single living being that was devoted to Lord Fallworth. On his return to the curacy, he thought about this.

He spent the rest of the day feeling restless. He attempted to nap, but could not sleep. He had only returned to be certain to be present when the curate arrived. However, arrive he finally did, and Steven went out to help feed and water the horse drawing the gig. He also told Peter Dawson what had happened and what he had to do starting the next day. They went into the curacy and continued their conversation with Sybil Dawson. Steven was becoming more and more impressed with the woman: she was highly intelligent and totally sensible, a most reliable mate for Peter.

Steven went to his bed as early as he could, to arise as early as he could. With Dawson's help, he was breakfasted and ready to go while it was still dark. The horse he had was an energetic animal, and Steven had to keep firm control until the horse tired somewhat. The day

was marked with stops to change horses, until at great length he reached Watling Street. He looked for an inn to stay the night, to be repeatedly refused, until once again he found himself sharing a bed with a stranger. Arising unrefreshed, he left, following Watling Street to London, avoiding the coaches and carriages traveling in both directions as best he could.

Dark was falling when he reached London, and it was well after by the time he was able to admit himself to his rooms. He was awakened by the housekeeper-cook and struggled to make himself ready to meet the two men who had written to him. He spent the entire day preparing the documents they had requested, working until late at night. At intervals, he managed to write to Angela, informing her of his eventual arrival and plans, and to Angela's mother. He told Mrs. Thompson what had happened and that he would travel to the house she was renting on Thursday evening, accompany her on the mail coach up Watling Street, then on a second coach up the road north to Fallworth.

The next day, Steven was paid for the work he had done the day before, gratifying if only because he had done what he was required to do. Two more people appeared, desiring letters certifying that they did hold deeds to certain properties. Steven wrote them, took the money, and began to hope he might have an easier week, a hope that was not to be realized: two new wills had to be drawn. He did this latest task, was paid, and left for Mrs. Thompson's house late Thursday evening. She, at least, had no additional work for him.

19. An Epic Journey

The next day brought another early rising. To be sure, Steven had to meet his professional obligations and had done so, but he was beginning to count the days when he and his bride could resume rational hours. He remarked on this circumstance to Mrs. Thompson, who was sympathetic. On the other hand, Steven reflected that in some respects, separation from Angela for the greater part of the next month, coupled with the distraction of drafting wills and deeds, would be good for him—vexing, but good for him. She had also noted in her latest letter that it would be so for her, too, as thoughts, dreams of him were beginning to disturb her sleep. So Steven's thoughts ran as he accompanied Mrs. Thompson in a cab to await the mail coach at an inn. As was always the case when he was in London, he had his loaded pistol with him.

At the inn, Steven learned that the coach he and Mrs. Thompson were to take up Watling Street would not stop overnight at an inn. He and Mrs. Thompson would have to wait for the coach that traveled up the road that passed Fallworth. They would have to drive through the night. This meant a shorter trip, welcome certainly, though Steven doubted that he would be able to sleep on a moving coach. On the other hand, the lice and fleas in the beds at this and most inns essentially made sleep impossible

anyway. He remarked on all of this to Mrs. Thompson, who agreed with him. He wondered why the change had been made, money changing or perhaps not changing hands, but was not disposed to inquire.

At least once he and Angela were married, Steven would be able to live in the rented house with Mrs. Thompson as she had suggested. These would be far more comfortable surroundings, even if he had to stay in his rooms two or three days a week. His thoughts about this and other subjects were distracted by the ride: as was typical, it was noisy, always shifting, the approach of night bringing no promise of sleep or even ease. And this was on Watling Street, the easiest part of the journey.

At the inn, they waited and waited for the coach that was to take them to the north. After an exasperating length of time, it finally appeared. Then the passengers it brought had to leave the coach, obtain their bags, and at last Steven and Mrs. Thompson could climb into the coach along with the other passengers. The horses had been changed during all of the preceding activity, and after entering the coach, they had barely taken their seats before the coach pulled away.

Moving on, everyone had to endure the north road, much rougher, less well maintained. Steven tried to sleep, though he had little hope of success.

Sometime in the middle of the night, there was a loud voice outside, and the coach stopped. Steven must have fallen asleep after all. Then what the voice was saying got Steven's attention.

“Stand and deliver! All of youse inside, out! Now!”

“Highwayman!” said one of the passengers. Everyone inside was awake, if bewildered.

Someone opened the coach door on Steven’s side, roaring, “Out!”

Steven began to leave the coach. He had automatically put his right hand into the pocket of his greatcoat, grasped his pistol, and pulled the hammers back with his thumb.

As he stepped down onto the ground outside the coach, a long step, he felt moisture on his face, realized the dawn was near and that it would be a misty one. The side of a horse, a huge one, was in his way. He could smell the horse and the man atop it, and then the man, the highwayman, pointed a very large pistol at Steven. But almost at once, the highwayman roared and swung the pistol at Steven’s head.

Though Steven ducked instinctively, his head was knocked aside by the blow; he saw a flash of light, but miraculously was not rendered unconscious—perhaps his hat had absorbed some of the force of the blow. And being struck enraged Steven. He could feel blood flowing down the right side of his head and pulled his cocked pistol from his pocket, pointed the pistol at the bandit’s middle, and pulled the trigger.

His pistol roared twice; he had fired both barrels. The flashes of burning powder showed the highwayman drawing his pistol back to hit Steven again, but Steven’s shots had struck home. The man screamed in agony; his horse reared, turned, and carried the man off, up the road the coach had just traversed. The rider was bent over, groaning and gasping. Steven

swayed, kept himself upright by holding onto the coach with his left hand. He tried to look about him: was there another highwayman?

Mrs. Thompson had stepped down from the coach and was tying one of her handkerchiefs about Steven's head to staunch the flow of blood. It was a kind act, but at that point Steven's head was hurting fiercely. The other passengers were out also. One of them looked up at the coachman, who was barely keeping his horses in check. Unlike Steven, the coachman and the rest of the passengers were unharmed.

Steven put his pistol back in his pocket. The light was now stronger, though it was still misting. The other passengers, now that what had happened had become clearer, grew complimentary. Steven would have appreciated this, except his head hurt so much. He wondered if he was going to faint, wished he would—it would provide a respite. Then Mrs. Thompson, who could guess how badly he felt, urged him to climb back into the coach and try to rest.

With her help and that of one of the other passengers, a man, Steven was able to return to where he had been sitting. He leaned his head against the back of the seat, but rest in a moving coach was definitely not possible. Every movement, every noise, hurt, hurt, hurt, but Steven told himself that he must endure for Angela's sake. And endure he did, moment to moment, second after second. There was a respite when the coach had to stop to change horses, to allow the other passengers to get some food or drink or to relieve themselves, and to allow the coachman to tell a local constable what had happened.

Steven answered the constable's questions as well as he could and told him where he could be found if the sheriff wanted more information (assuming Steven survived, that is). Finally, the coach could resume its journey, and Steven could continue his own journey in purgatory. Now and again, he thought that he really should clean and reload his pistols, but the movement of the coach would not allow that. Or so he finally decided.

It was late in the afternoon when Steven and Mrs. Thompson reached Fallworth village and could leave the coach. It was still misting, perhaps more by that point, and Steven wondered if he would be able to walk as far as the curacy. He decided he would do his damndest, if only to avoid the humiliation, as he saw it, of having to be supported by Mrs. Thompson. As the curacy drew closer, he forced himself to place one foot ahead of the other, though the effort to do so grew and grew.

At last, at last, he was able to walk through the door into the arms of Angela. He had no idea why she happened to be there, but was not disposed to question a miracle. He held her, perhaps onto her, and she helped him into a chair, help he was not too proud to accept. She gently touched the blood-stained handkerchief, and he raised his head and kissed her hand while Mrs. Thompson related what had happened. Everyone there, including the curate, his wife, and their two servants who were present, seemed to regard Steven as a hero. Of course, Steven was quite unaccustomed to be so regarded, but he was gratified enough not to protest.

One of the servants claimed to know the name of the highwayman: "Bill Willis is one of

his names he goes by. ‘Bully Bill’ is another. Likes to hit passengers. Glad to hear someone shot him. Mebbie he won’t be back.”

Steven nodded, then he told Angela, “I should clean and reload. Are relations with Lady Fallworth civil, by the way?”

Angela replied, “Mother and I are invited to stay at the manor.” Seeing the look on his face, she specified, “No, in the bedrooms, not the dungeon this time. Let me help you with your reloading. I am curious.”

Steven smiled at his fiancée and brought the pistol from his pocket and the box from his bag. He stood with Angela’s help and moved to a table. As he did so, it occurred to him that she might herself need to use the pistol, God forbid. But he opened the box and explained what he was going to do. Since everyone else had gone about their business, he and Angela were alone.

“First, clean out the barrels using this cloth attached to the wooden rod. Fired gunpowder can cause a firearm barrel to rust or corrode,” he explained as he pushed the cloth into each of the barrels in turn, then looked into them. After he had done this, he invited Angela to do the same.

“What are those spiral lines in the barrels?” she asked.

“The barrels are called ‘rifled,’ and those lines are spiral ridges of metal that cause the bullets to rotate or spin as they are fired from the barrel. The rotation makes the bullets travel in a straighter path, making the pistol more accurate. That is, they will better go where the pistol is pointed or aimed.”

Angela nodded.

Steven opened the box of powder and poured some into each of the barrels using the metal cup. Then he wrapped a pistol ball into a small square of leather and pushed this into one of the barrels. He used a small hammer and the wooden rod to hammer the ball into the barrel. He repeated this action with a second ball in the second barrel.

“What is the leather for?” asked Angela.

“To make the balls fit more snugly in the barrels. This helps confine the explosion of the powder so that its force is focused on pushing the balls out of the barrels. Some of the power of the explosion is lost, wasted if it can go around the ball, in other words.”

Angela nodded, commented, “I do see and understand, Steven.”

Steven was once more impressed by her intelligence. He would, assuming he survived his latest injury, have a highly intelligent wife and was very pleased at the thought. He completed the loading of the gun by inserting two caps in the locks and carefully setting the hammers down on each.

“Done,” he noted, rather unnecessarily. He and Angela exchanged smiles, then a kiss, along with an embrace. These actions were only the first of several.

Steven once more found himself becoming aroused. This state had become less embarrassing, more the natural, expected response. He could hear Angela’s breathing and guessed she was becoming aroused, too, all very gratifying, but also worrying considering his virginity.

He was not about to beg off; however, he felt the need to change the subject, as it were, for

the time being. He asked, "Why were you here when we arrived? It was delightful, of course, but surprising."

Angela rested her head on Steven's shoulder. "I came here to await your arrival. And to leave the manor."

There was a pause involving more kisses before she asked him, "Those little squares of metal, how do they contribute?"

Steven said, "Those are called caps, and have something inside them, a substance that explodes when struck with a hammer. This substance, and I cannot recall its name, is confined between two very thin sheets of metal. The explosion makes a hole in the sheet on the far side of where the hammer strikes and causes the gunpowder in the barrel to explode and the pistol to fire."

Angela nodded.

After more kisses, Angela told Steven, "Lord Fallworth's horse remains at his grave. It still will accept water, but not food. No one knows what to do about the horse. It will probably starve itself to death. Lord Fallworth's grandfather and his horse were killed by lightning and were buried together. There is an argument now about whether my half-brother's horse should be buried with him as well. Some say it is pagan. What do you think?"

Steven sat in silence, thinking. He commented, "It is strange. I cannot think of any human being that Lord Fallworth did not eventually make into an enemy. Yet his horse...his horse loved him, misses him so much, seems inconsolable, indeed seems to have chosen to follow him into the grave."

Silence once more, before Steven resumed, "So pagan or not, I say bury the horse next the master. I am certain both want that."

Angela replied, "I will urge this course on Lady Fallworth. As I told you, there is precedent."

The next day was Sunday, when Steven and Angela's first banns were announced. There were no objections. In fact, saving perhaps Lady Fallworth, everyone seemed cheerful. Steven wore his second-best garb, that is, the clothes he wore when he went with Mrs. Thompson and Angela to the theater. He had removed the handkerchief employed as a bandage, removed it carefully. Though there was some bleeding, it soon stopped. For the second time in his life, Steven was in a public place with a disfiguring facial wound, but this was a wound that he was beginning to feel proud of.

He was invited to dine at Fallworth Manor and accompanied Angela there. Aside from desiring her company, he felt uncomfortable dining with the curate and his family, as he had repeatedly observed that they did not have enough to eat themselves. The lovers lagged behind the Fallworth Manor servants and Lady Fallworth. Steven remarked on how happy the parishioners seemed.

Angela lowered her voice to reply, "That has transpired since my half-brother died and was buried. The contrast is remarkable."

Steven shook his head: his nemesis of old was universally feared and disliked. Except by his horse.

20. To and Fro

The next day Steven returned to London. He was cheerful: three more weeks of discomfort and tedium and fatigue, then he and Angela would return to London together, return to stay. Though he felt some uncertainty about what he must do once in bed with his bride, he assumed they would learn their roles quickly enough. Steven decided that his resolve to remain a virgin because he did not want to risk contracting the pox had been a good one.

As the journey continued, he became less cheerful. He really wanted it to be over, for all three of the remaining journeys to be over. He tried to sleep, leaning back, but this pushed his hat forward, rubbing the scab. So he had to take the hat off. The other people in the coach noticed the scab and unfortunately were inclined to be talkative, so began asking Steven for an explanation. Steven really did not want to talk about what had happened, but one of the other passengers had heard of the shooting of the highwayman and identified Steven as the man who had shot him.

This prompted intense discussion and many questions, which Steven fended off as best he could. At this point, mercifully, the conversation turned to the fate of the highwayman. Steven learned the man was actually well-known, preying upon travelers who ventured through this country, usually travelling

alone. As to whether he was still alive, no one had heard anything. Steven hoped he was dead. However, until the corpse was discovered and the coroner's court convened, at which Steven assumed he would have to testify, Steven really would not know. The other passengers thanked Steven for his courage, an action which flattered and embarrassed him.

The conversation turned to other directions, directions Steven did not chose to follow. So he remained silent, though irredeemably awake now. Despite the fact that the part of the road they were traveling upon now was macadamized, the noise of the iron-bound wheels on the fine gravel remained very noticeable. There was no lurching of the coach, or at least much less of it, but sleep was impossible anyway. So Steven thought of Angela. Despite the increasing tedium of the journey, those thoughts made him smile, but only briefly; he did not want to have to explain what he was smiling about to the other passengers.

Talk among the other passengers continued until well after nightfall, helping keep Steven awake. By the time morning dawned, Steven was quite worn. He was thinking he must have dozed. He had memories of dreams, or rather nightmares, but the interruptions were frequent. In London, finally, Steven took a cab instead of walking to his rooms. The housekeeper-cook, who was expecting him, remarked on how tired he looked.

Steven replied, "If anything, I feel worse. Have any clients called?"

"Aye, three. I told 'em you would be 'ere today."

Steven had eaten little and drunk less, but decided he would lie down immediately, so dismissed the woman. The next morning, he had his usual breakfast: bread and butter with tea, but did not feel much better after. The clients appeared, and Steven wrote or modified wills for all of them. While he was doing this, he felt Angela's absence so very strongly. With her, he felt complete; he was happy. He now realized that his life before they met was as it was when he returned yesterday: sometimes busy, but always empty. Only three weeks more, however.

As the pain in his head slowly diminished, his feelings of pride at driving the highwayman away were displaced by his memory of the rage, the hatred he felt when the highwayman had struck him with the pistol. Whatever the outcome of the man's wounds (and Steven could defend what he had done in any British court of law), Steven now began to feel ashamed. The bullying, the disfigurement he had suffered was, he suspected, the source of the rage, but that was no comfort. At length he decided that the only course was to be aware of these feelings and to avoid—to the extent possible—any situation that might possibly provoke them. He could not decide whether to talk to Angela about this subject; he told himself she might not be able to understand, but at some level in his mind, he understood that the reason was simply that he was ashamed.

Another client appeared the next day, this one desiring Steven's explanation for some legal questions. Steven explained, over and over again, until the man understood. Another guinea went into Steven's pocket. The next day, he would return for the second bann. As he was

lying on his truckle bed trying to sleep, he began thinking about the journey back with his bride. He would hire another gig, no more coaches; however, they would have to spend a night, probably in woods: Steven was not about to subject Angela—or himself, come to that—to a night at an inn. Between the beds, the meals, the noise, and the fleas, a worse wedding night was barely possible. He decided he would talk to Angela about all of this.

The mail coach Steven took Friday reached the inn where he was to change coaches to travel to Fallworth. This time, he did not have to wait very long for the second coach. The other passengers in this coach were a much less talkative group. In a way, this was an improvement, though that left the wheel noise and the irregular movement of the body of the coach. These were enough, unfortunately, to keep waking Steven. This had the usual result: on arrival at Fallworth Village, later than usual for some reason, Steven felt almost as bad as he had when he had reached London four days before. When he reached the curacy, he was informed that the three of them were invited to dine at Fallworth Manor: a neighboring landowner was a guest. So Steven retired to the jakes, shaved, then washed his hands and face before walking quickly after the curate and his wife.

Angela was welcoming. Between kisses, she commented on how tired he looked.

“An honest reflection of how I feel, I am sorry to say. What is the occasion?”

“The man whose estate adjoins Fallworth to the east is visiting. I understand his wife died a year ago, so this is his first venture away from

his estate. His name is Penrose, no title.” Penrose was following custom after the death of a husband or wife, but Lady Fallworth evidently was prepared to ignore that custom.

All quite understandable, no doubt. However, seating at the table was according, as was customary, to social standing. Lady Fallworth sat at the head of the table, and her guest, a tall, dark-haired man Steven had never seen before sat next her. Steven, as a mere attorney, was placed at the bottom, along with the curate and his wife. There was an empty chair at the foot of the table, where Lord Fallworth would have sat were he alive. The chair was draped with a black cloth. Angela sat next her mother near the top. Steven knew this was tradition, but it was annoying, nonetheless. He and Angela kept exchanging glances.

Everyone was served. Steven was hungry, but was taken aback by the appetites of the curate and his wife. He realized more acutely that they were subsisting on a very meagre salary, and this meant short commons. Especially with a guest in the house. Once again, he realized his residence with them was increasing their burden. He decided an especially large fee for performing the wedding ceremony was in order. Ten guineas? He would talk to Angela about this as well.

Otherwise, his attention was diverted by Lady Fallworth’s behavior. She was actively flirting with the dinner guest, despite her own mourning. Indeed, Steven got the impression Lady Fallworth was occasionally directing glances at Steven. Then he realized she was attempting to excite Steven’s jealousy. Another

exchange of glances with Angela confirmed this: she had come to the same conclusion.

The servants were removing soiled plates, replacing these with clean ones for the next course. At this point, Angela rose from her chair with her plate and glass of wine, spoke briefly to one of the servants, and came to the part of the table where Steven was sitting. He got up, smiling, moved his chair over for her to sit, then got another chair from those ranged against the wall—this was not a large dinner party—and sat on it next to his intended. They smiled at each other.

Once it was served, they ate the next course; then Steven leaned toward Angela and told her his thoughts about their journey after they were married. She agreed with Steven and suggested he bring blankets so they could sleep in the forest. Steven was, more than ever, impressed by Angela: her hardihood and good nature.

After the meal ended, Angela introduced the dinner guest to Steven. She mentioned Steven's travels to and from London, remarking, "If I ever doubted Steven, his repeated journeys, his travails, to marry me would have put paid to those doubts."

Mr. Penrose said, "As it happens, I journey to London after church tomorrow. I would be obliged if you would accompany me, as it is a dull trip alone. I will stop for the night at a distant cousin's house. You would be welcome there, I assure you."

Steven replied, "I accept your kind invitation with gratitude."

He looked at Angela, who smiled and nodded. "Just fifteen days," she said.

She reached up and gently touched the scab on Steven's forehead. "I did not think there were any highwaymen left."

Steven kissed her hand, catching her scent, and replied, "I suspect there is or soon will be one less." Two balls in his belly would almost certainly finish him, eventually anyway, he thought. He did not say this aloud, however.

Steven was able to discuss several other questions with Angela, including the fee for the curate, before returning with the Dawsons to the curacy. The second bann was read the next morning, again without objection, so Steven and Angela would marry in two weeks. Then after the service, Steven went back with Angela to the curacy for his bag. He went outside and found that Mr. Penrose's coach had just arrived. The footman took his bag, and he got into the coach. Then Steven's journey began, at first in silence.

Mr. Penrose broke it, alluding to the scab on Steven's forehead, "I understand you shot that highwayman. I hear he has not been seen again. What weapon did you use?"

For answer, Steven pulled his pistol from his pocket and gave it to his host while explaining its features.

Penrose seemed impressed. "A formidable weapon, certainly at close range. Are the streets of London that unsafe?"

Steven replied, "I had an altercation with the late Lord Fallworth. Not the first by any means, but he suffered a broken front tooth, and I feared he would employ bullies to exact revenge. He did, in fact, but the pistol frightened them away."

Steven did not mention the last encounter with Lord Fallworth.

Penrose gave a slight smile and remarked, "In my observation, a rogue remains one after marriage, though I understand some women imagine he will be reformed by matrimony. I heard, though I found this hard to believe, that Lord Fallworth would beat his wife. Given his behavior in general, I was appalled, but not surprised."

Steven nodded. "With the exception of his horse and perhaps his dogs, he was universally hated. If there is a hell, I am certain he inhabits it."

Penrose nodded in turn, and conversation ceased.

Steven looked out of the coach window and realized it was moving very rapidly and without much lurching or noise. Evidently, it was well sprung. Since they would not be stopping to collect or release passengers or stopping at all except to change horses, Steven began to feel they would indeed arrive in London on Monday, despite sleeping overnight at Penrose's cousin's house. He leaned back against the comfortable cushions and began to relax. He thought of Angela and smiled.

Steven's reverie was interrupted by his companion: "My own wife died in childbirth after bearing our son. In view of Fallworth's behavior toward other men's wives, this avoided having to forbid him my property, but I think of her every day. Until meeting Lady Fallworth, I had taken no thought of remarriage." He fell silent then said, "Were you acquainted with Lady Fallworth before her marriage?"

Steven decided candor was required, so answered: "I was a suitor of hers. Not surprisingly, she instead married Lord Fallworth.

But my affections are now wholly engrossed by Miss Thompson. So," he said, smiling at Penrose, "matters seem to be working out well for everyone."

Penrose laughed, and conversation again ceased.

The two men arrived at the cousin's house in surprisingly good time. Despite Steven's status as a mere attorney, he was received as a guest, and Penrose's cousin readily invited Steven to stay with the family on his next visit to Fallworth and on his return in two weeks, with his bride. Steven told his hosts of his plans to hire a gig, so matters were arranged. A very pleasant gathering, a comfortable bed, a good sleep, and an early start were the sum of his stay. Penrose and Steven did indeed reach London in good time.

Steven had no clients waiting and spent a considerable part of the three days he was in London examining gigs for his last trip to and from Fallworth. The vehicle he selected had a roof and side panels so he and Angela would be somewhat protected from weather. It also had a chest for their bags, a chest which could be locked. In addition, Steven decided, after some thought, that he would purchase a fitch of bacon. He would, tactfully, he hoped, present this to the curate and his wife as part of the wedding breakfast. He would give this to family and give the curate ten guineas for performing the service. He wanted to ease the circumstances for the curate and his wife as much as was possible, though giving them the promised living was what was required.

Otherwise, he wrote letters to Angela, telling her how much he missed her already.

Clients did arrive on Wednesday: two requests for wills and one for a deed of transfer. So he had to return to making his living and did as he was asked, working late until he had completed these tasks Thursday afternoon. There was another interruption, but a most welcome one: a letter from Angela. It must have been posted very soon after Steven had left.

Dearest,

You have been gone no more than two hours, and I miss you already. I do wish you not a pleasant journey, not possible under the circumstances, but a survivable one. Please write as soon as you return to London.

I have been thinking: you told me I write a fair hand. Perhaps once we are married, I can serve as your copyist. And in other ways as well.

Your fiancée, Angela

The letter was warming in more than one sense.

Evening began to approach. Steven ate the usual indifferent dinner prepared by his servant and made himself ready for departure Friday morning. Another passage by coach, probably both directions, before the wedding took place. It would be ten days, though four of them would be spent travelling.

Friday was cold, rainy. Steven had to wear his oilskins, and these were really not sufficient. The coach should have been a refuge, yet the cold penetrated the vehicle easily and completely. All the other passengers complained; no one was dressed for the weather.

The horses seemed affected as well, and the passage of the coach slowed. Steven began to worry about being on time for the northbound coach. He repeatedly told himself to accept what he could not change, but found himself insufficiently philosophical. He could feel himself becoming fretful, but could do nothing at all.

However, the departure of the coach for Fallwood Village was delayed as well, to Steven's vast relief. Their speed was reduced, and the lurching, noise, and discomfort felt worse than in the past. Once more, no sleep. Steven made his way through the rain to the curacy. He very much desired a good fire in the fireplace, but that would require money, and a servant to purchase coal, as any firewood had to be soaked. He also very much wanted to see Angela, but not if this meant she would get wet walking to the curacy. Nor did he feel like venturing out himself once more. The afternoon and evening were spent trying to dry himself. Dinner consisted of bread and jam.

The next morning, the sun appeared, extraordinarily cheering. Steven prepared for the service and the reading of the third banns. What was more, Angela appeared, and the two of them stood together for the reading. Several people from the village and some from the manor wished them joy, a week early to be sure, but a friendly gesture, appreciated by both.

And Angela had news, melancholy news to be sure: "Steven, Lord Fallworth's horse died yesterday, we all think of starvation. It never left the gravesite and was found lying on the grave. It was buried next Lord Fallworth's grave."

“Sad,” remarked Steven. The two of them were sitting at a table, talking.

Steven told her of his plans for the next Sunday, the wedding Sunday. He could not leave that day, as there was no coach available. So he would have just two days, Wednesday and Thursday, to meet clients. He described the gig he hoped to hire, to give her an idea of how much she would be able to take with her.

She was very pleased that they would be able to stop at the Penrose’s cousin’s home that night. She confessed she had not been enthusiastic about sleeping by the side of the road on their wedding night. The day passed in walks about the manor. Steven paid for his and Angela’s supper and dinner at the curacy; then he escorted her back to the manor before returning to sleep, sleep in a bed, a bed that was not moving or noisy.

Monday and Tuesday had to be endured and were. The rain had made the roads, particularly the one south from Fallworth Village, much more difficult. Once more, Steven did not reach London until dark and his rooms until the new day had begun. There was only one client, and Steven had prepared what that client desired by Wednesday afternoon. Still, he was feeling that he required at least a week to recover from his travels to Fallworth the previous week.

21. End of a Highwayman

The gig he desired was still available, he learned very early on Thursday morning. He claimed it from the man renting them and proceeded to set forth without delay. Once more, he was pleasantly surprised at his speed. Aside from the speed, the gig also had the advantage of forcing him to pay attention to his driving. This requirement proved to be something of a relief after journeys of many hours in a coach with little to occupy his mind. He stopped at the inn he had patronized several times before, with about the same experience. The next morning, once more very early, he turned to the north road. His pace was much slower, but he expected this.

When the afternoon was advanced but with several hours of daylight remaining, Steven drew near his destination at Penrose's cousin's property. But he saw a horse standing at the edge of the woods. Steven immediately put his hand in his pocket and took his pistol out, and as he did so, he realized the horse had its saddle and bridle, but no rider. He looked around, but saw no one. Then looking more carefully at the horse, he imagined he had seen the animal before: it could be the highwayman's.

Steven checked his horse, and the movement caused it to pull the gig off the road. The riderless horse then turned and moved into the woods. Steven could see there was a path it

was following, a narrow one, almost impossible to see from the highway. Fortunately, the horse pulling Steven's vehicle was willing to follow, even with branches of trees and bushes hitting it. He kept his pistol in hand, though this made driving the vehicle more awkward.

The horse knew its way. Steven was on edge but grew more curious. Now the animal reached a clearing. There was a rude dwelling, with a chimney, attached to a structure that Steven realized was for the horse, though its door was closed. Then Steven smelled something, a dreadful stench, and a swarm of black flies rose from something on the ground. The something was a corpse, face black, signs of dried blood on the middle and a flintlock pistol lying a few feet from the body.

This had to be the highwayman; Steven's shots had indeed killed him. The horse shook itself to get rid of the flies, some of which were taking an interest in Steven's horse and in Steven himself. Steven thought he could see a second pistol in the waistband of the highwayman; he had been carrying two weapons.

Steven tied his vehicle to a branch of a tree. He decided he would give the highwayman's horse some water and feed, if there was any. Brushing the carrion flies away, he went to the well and drew several buckets of water, pouring them into the horse trough. The animal drank from this obediently: Steven guessed it had been drinking from some stream nearby. He opened the door to what must be the stable and went inside. Indeed, there were a dozen or so bales of hay stacked along one wall. He pulled two bales out for the highwayman's horse then decided to leave the stable door open.

Now he went into the highwayman's dwelling, "hovel" was the word that came into his mind. The fireplace had fire irons, a grate, and a black iron pot. Along the other wall was a table with some clothes piled on it, and a truckle bed, much like the one Steven himself slept on, though the blankets were filthy and better described as rags. There was something under the bed, however: Steven leaned down and looked.

It was a wooden box or small chest. Steven knelt, reached under, and pulled the box out. It was heavy. Steven lifted it up and tilted it. He could hear metallic sounds and guessed the box contained coins. This was very interesting indeed, but the box had a lock and where was the key? In the fellow's pocket, most likely, thought Steven, but he recoiled from attempting its recovery from that festering corpse. At this, Steven swept his hand about his face to try to discourage a few black flies that had accompanied him into the room where the highwayman had lived.

As Steven moved his head to escape the attention of the flies, his eyes were caught by something shiny on the fireplace mantel. He stepped over to it and saw the shiny object was a key. Steven took it and went to the box sitting on the truckle bed. The key indeed unlocked the box, which on opening proved to be above half-full of coins, a few silver, otherwise all guineas. There was no jewelry. Steven guessed that any jewelry taken from passengers was likely brought to accomplices in London to be pawned, so the highwayman could not be as readily convicted of having stolen property.

Steven locked the box, put the key in his pocket, and carried the box to his gig. He locked the box in with his bags, got into the gig, and began the return to the road. The highwayman's horse continued eating, occasionally shaking away flies. The horse pulling Steven's gig seemed quite willing to get away, very accurately reflecting Steven's wishes.

When he arrived at his destination, his hosts were expecting him. Mercifully, they were good-natured without being risqué. Indeed, the father offered Steven and his bride the use of the dower house, currently vacant, for their wedding night. Steven was very surprised and accepted this offer with gratitude.

The father, son, and Steven retired to down a few more glasses of beer, made on the estate, Steven was assured. It was very good and rather strong, and Steven found himself telling the two about his adventure that afternoon, excepting the matter of the box of coins.

The hosts were interested. The son asked about the horse, its size and color.

Steven said, "A great bay. With its harness."

The son remarked, "I will take some men and bury the scoundrel and take the horse. I recall an old law that if anyone captures a highwayman, he can take the highwayman's possessions."

Steven at that point remembered hearing about that law and mentally blushed: he should have remembered it. However, this meant that the box with its coins belonged to Steven.

The father remarked, "I did not realize the land where he was dwelling is not so far

away. I believe the land itself has been the subject of a Chancellery suit at law for years.”

Steven knew about the suit; it had been the subject of a great deal of discussion by students at Grey’s Inn while Steven was there. He nodded understandingly. At this point, the men rose to retire.

Despite the amount of alcohol he had consumed the previous night, Steven arose in good time without feeling any obvious effects. He again thanked his hosts and left after breakfast. As he rolled toward Fallworth, Steven felt in his left-hand pocket for his wedding gift for his bride: the brooch. He did not take it out, just thought about it.

22. Reveries

His uncle was the elder of the two sons, so he had inherited a small brooch of silver with an oval red stone in its center, a garnet Steven had been told. The object had been handed down, generation to generation, to be worn by the wife of the oldest male. Steven's uncle had been going to give this to his affianced, but she had sadly died before the wedding. So the brooch had gone to Steven. Steven would give it to Angela, if all went as it should, as he heartily prayed it would. If they had a son, Steven, with Angela's approval, would name him Edward, after the boy's great uncle.

This brought Steven to an increasingly obtrusive question or rather subject: Steven would have to get the child on the body of his bride. For years, Steven had been earnestly pushing questions, ideas, images about sexual matters away from his thoughts. Of course, his interest in the subject went back to his boyhood: the differences in anatomy between boys and girls, confined largely to their middles, fascinated him. Though some little girls seemed equally curious about how boys were made, Steven's investigations were firmly discouraged by his uncle's housekeeper.

Soon, however, imagination would be replaced by reality. Steven once more vowed to talk the entire matter over with Angela: what

they were going to be doing was, after all, something they had to do together. They were going to be creating children, a family; at least that is how their life together should be. And now Steven was feeling much more confident about his life with her.

The evening was advancing when Steven arrived at the curacy. His host and hostess appeared relieved at his appearance. Their relief turned to delight when Steven unlocked the box on the gig with Steven's possession and he presented them with the flitch of bacon. Since Steven had not eaten since breakfast, they offered to prepare some bacon for him and readily agreed to join Steven, along with their two children, in this repast. As Steven suspected, the curate and his family had eaten little, so a significant part of Steven's gift was consumed by the five of them.

There was also a letter for Steven from Angela whose contents he read.

Dearest,

Only a few more hours and we will begin our journey, our life's journey, together. I am not sure I will be able to sleep tonight....

I had a long talk with Mother about what are called "marital relations." It was most informative, so I believe I will be able to join with you to create our family. Your courage and determination, qualities in you that I have observed, will, I am certain, inspire our children. I know they inspire me. Until our future, my love, goodnight, sweet dreams, then a sweeter reality.

Your Angel

Steven was overwhelmed. He felt embarrassed, but at the same time he felt the urge to live up to what he would have to do. He very much wanted to hear what Mrs. Thompson had told her daughter. At this point, even though now very tired, he had the feeling he was not going to be able to sleep either....

23. Union

Steven, indeed, did not sleep well, almost certainly from nervousness. But it was his wedding day, and he had to dress for the ceremony. He climbed from his bed. He was wearing his nightshirt and immediately realized it was cold. No fire had been laid in the tiny room he occupied. He used the chamber pot under his bed, then went to the bag which held his clothing and opened it. He had used the “offices” the night before, so he could begin dressing. He did this quickly. First, his smallclothes, “smalls” that covered his middle. Then his shirt, followed by his trousers. These had a flap in front, the “fall” flap that normally covered his groin but could be unbuttoned when he had to piss. Suspenders kept the trousers up.

At this point, Steven realized he should have donned his stockings before his trousers, as the trousers were cut to closely fit his legs. Steven cursed, but left his trousers on and rolled the calf-length stockings up his legs. Then he shaved himself, carefully, and cleaned his teeth using the bowl and jug of water on a small table next to his bed. Then his white cravat, followed by his dark grey tailcoat, and he fancied himself ready in terms of his dress for the occasion. There were two small cardboard boxes, the one with his uncle’s brooch, the other with a plain gold ring. Steven believed the ring had been intended for his uncle’s beloved.

Someone knocked at his door. It was his host Peter Dawson, who would be performing the ceremony.

“Did you sleep well, Steven?” he asked with a grin.

“Not at all,” was Steven’s reply, accompanied by a smile.

The two men went in together to breakfast. Steven and Angela had agreed they would each breakfast before the ceremony rather than after, as was the custom, as they felt they had to begin their journey to London without delay.

Steven felt awkward in his garb: excited, apprehensive, and awkward all at the same time. He once more made certain the brooch was in his pocket; naturally, the pistol was not accompanying him, not this day. There was a flower, from the curacy garden, for his lapel buttonhole. At last, he was, formally at least, ready. After a breakfast of more bacon, he accompanied the curate, his wife, and their children to the church.

The church filled up. Lady Fallworth, looking reserved, perhaps a bit disappointed, sat with her maid in the pew reserved for the Fallworths. Angela would be accompanied by her mother, but would, of course, be the last to enter. Steven stood near the altar, hat off, trying to appear stoic. The organ began, the church door opened, and Steven’s bride stepped into the church on her mother’s arm.

She was dressed all in blue, the dress’s waistline a few inches above her actual waist, as current fashion dictated; and her smile, like her dress, was dazzling. Steven grinned on seeing her; he could not help it. Their gazes did not so

much lock as fuse as Angela walked up the aisle to stand alongside Steven. They shared one final gaze, then turned to face the curate. Steven could smell Angela's perfume: it seemed to fill the air around Steven. He forced himself to listen to the curate read the service.

Steven had told Angela about the ring, and had measured its diameter. Angela had agreed it was the right size for her finger. And Steven gave Angela the brooch, which she pinned to the front of her dress before kissing Steven, their first kiss as husband and wife. Then they turned and left the church arm in arm, to the sound of cheers and the sight of flowers being thrown by some of the churchgoers. They walked together to the curacy, where Steven's gig waited. When they got there, Steven gathered Angela in his arms and swung her onto the gig's seat. He handed a crown to the Fallworth Manor servant who had baited and harnessed the horse. He locked Angela's bags in the back, then climbed into the gig.

Off they drove, often smiling at each other. Once on the high road, Steven told his wife about what he had found yesterday.

"But what about the highwayman's horse?"

"Our soon-to-be hosts said they would recover the animal."

Angela remarked, "It is as well there was no jewelry. I would not want to be wearing stolen property. But you can keep the money?"

Steven nodded, said, "It is the law, in fact."

He pulled the gig over, off the road. He stepped down from the gig, unlocked the box his bags were in, then the highwayman's box and

opened it. He lifted Angela off the gig and showed her the contents.

She was stunned. "How much, do you think?"

"Some hundreds of pounds, at a guess." Then he added, as a joke, "My dowry."

Angela laughed, and they kissed, Steven relocked everything and helped his wife back onto the gig; then their journey resumed. Steven told Angela about the proposed stay in the dower house.

Angela asked how much he had left for the curate, and Steven told her, "Ten guineas. I do hope Lady Fallworth gives him the promised living. But at least for the present, the curate and his wife will be well provided for."

Angela smiled, kissed her husband, and settled down to enjoy their journey together, at least as much as it could be enjoyed. Every so often, she laid her head on his shoulder.

Stage succeeded stage. The curate and his wife had most thoughtfully cooked some extra bacon and left the pieces in the gig wrapped in a paper. With beer at inns where their horse was changed, their journey was a more rapid and cheerful one than usual. Steven eventually remembered where he was and retrieved his pistol. He had told Angela about his uncle's sad loss. Angela agreed that they would visit the graves on the anniversary of her death. They kissed once again, yet another moment of perfect understanding.

Though tired by the time they reached their destination, they were cheered by the two servants their hosts had asked to greet them. It was nearly dark, but there was a fire, food, and a most comfortable-looking bed, all most

welcome. They employed the “offices,” ate, and retired. Once alone, they embraced, eventually disengaging to remove their cloaks. Steven was obviously aroused, and Angela was pleased at the effect she was having on him.

At that moment, what had been fascinating and enticing, but forbidden was Steven’s pleasure and his duty. Angela again put her arms around her husband, drawing him into a close embrace; indeed their clothing alone prevented it from being any closer. Steven ran his hands over his wife’s gown. He could feel her chemise and petticoats under her gown; she was not wearing a corset, stays, or a fitted bodice. Evidently she did not need these, Steven thought with pride. He could just feel her drawers under everything else and yes, the garters holding her stockings up.

Steven could not recall ever being so aroused. And Angela was certainly well aware of his arousal; she even stood on tiptoe to permit his cock to push between her legs. His hands began pulling her gown and chemise up, up, over her hips. His extended cock interfered with this, but Angela helped, pulling both garments fully off. Then Steven slipped his hands into the top of her drawers. He caressed these down her hips and stroked the smooth skin of her hips and upper thighs. However, at this point, he realized he had to remove his own clothes, so began to undress himself. Cravat and waistcoat came off quickly; then he unfastened his suspenders. Angela was watching, fascinated.

The removal of his trousers was hindered by his arousal, as was pulling down his “smalls.” Angela seemed impressed by the size of Steven’s cock, now exposed. He, in turn, reached over to

stroke her breasts, which she clearly enjoyed. Steven was supposed to remove his stockings as she was doing, and they had to don nightshirts. But he was in too great a hurry. Angela lay down on top of the bed, drawing her legs back and apart. Steven was looking at the hair growing from between them. The dark shadow marking the meeting of her thighs made decades of erotic dreams a reality. He climbed onto the bed, crawled forward until he was above her. At this point, he was not sure what to do.

However, instinct caused him to push forward until he could feel his manhood pressing onto her center, her womanhood. Not precisely at the right spot at first, but here Angela took a hand, rather took Steven's cock between thumb and forefinger of one hand and guided his cock into the middle of her. She guided it so it was deeper in her, in a place between the hairs, a place that was warm, wet, and slippery. Steven pushed farther forward, and something opened. He was entering a passage, deeper, deeper; her body was welcoming his. He thrust, withdrew, thrust again, again and saw Angela was enjoying what he was doing, even as he became aware of increasing feelings of pleasure and pressure in his cock. This prompted faster thrusts, evidently much to Angela's liking, and now the pressure and pleasure became almost unbearable. Then whatever was inside him, whatever had been waiting to emerge, waiting all of Steven's life, rushed, exploded from him into her, now his wife in every respect.

The pressure eased, the pleasure also, though not as quickly. As this point, Steven realized he was lying on top of his wife,

supported by his elbows and knees, and he was sweating. He kissed his wife.

“That was very pleasurable, dear one,” she whispered.

They kissed again, and Steven climbed off Angela. At that point, they were able to put on their nightshirts, and Steven was able to pull off his stockings, pull the bed covers back, and lie down with her to sleep.

Over the course of the night, they awoke, used the chamber pot, and went back to sleep. However, after a few hours, Steven’s lust revived, and he and Angela enjoyed each other again. This was still awkward for Steven, but less so, and Angela’s enjoyment of their mating seemed to increase. Toward dawn, they once more enjoyed marital relations, and this time Angela’s response was beyond what Steven had seen before: her breathing became gasps; she shook all over, her head rocking back and forth; and once it was all over, she was sweating too.

However, their sleep was interrupted by the servants, who informed them that they were expected at the manor house for breakfast. Steven and Angela rose with great reluctance and dressed. Steven found Angela’s dressing fascinating. He shaved, and they walked together to the manor house.

They were greeted with smiles, no bawdy comments, Steven was pleased to note, and he presented Angela to the landowner and his son: “Gentlemen, may I present my wife, Angela?”

The meal was very pleasant. Steven learned the highwayman’s horse had been taken to the manor’s stables and was clearly happy to be there. The highwayman’s body had been buried; his two pistols were now hanging from

the wall of the Great Hall. Steven realized for the first time that the landowner and his son, indeed the servants as well, regarded Steven with admiration. The highwayman had been feared and detested.

Steven and Angela's departure was later than Steven wished, but not by a great deal. He left the two servants who had helped make their night at the dower house so pleasant a crown each, and he and his wife took their way to London as quickly as their gig would take them. When they passed the place where the highwayman had gone into the woods, Steven pointed this out.

Angela remarked, "Not easily seen, to be sure."

"The fellow's horse guided me to his cottage, or I would never have noticed it," he replied.

Though they traveled as fast as they could after spending a much less comfortable night at the inn on Watling Street, it was after dark when they reached the house in London Mrs. Thompson was renting. They had to awaken the servants to take their gig, deal with the horse (Steven himself carried the highwayman's chest), and prepare their bedroom. Steven would share Angela's bedroom, unless other arrangements were made. Fortunately, everyone was good-natured: the fact that Steven and Angela were newly married added to the cheer. After giving directions for breakfast, Steven and Angela retired, worn out. Though not completely, as it happened.

24. Return to Routine

The newly married couple was awakened, late as was their express wish, and eventually breakfasted. Then they went to return the gig. They took a cab to Steven's home/office, and Steven introduced Angela as his wife to the housekeeper-cook. He found there were at least five people desiring his services, a good circumstance for him. Steven set out a chair for his wife next to his at the desk. She was clearly serious about helping Steven. Then people began arriving.

Steven explained Angela's presence, assuring those requesting his services that he (and his wife) would be available from now on, six days a week. Everyone was pleasant, happy to hear of his return to the previous schedule. Everyone praised Angela's beauty, though one or two men suggested Steven had exceeded what he had reason to merit in terms of beauty. Steven readily agreed, laughing, though he could see Angela was not as amused.

With Angela's assistance as copyist, the work requested was quickly done. But then his wife asked about meals; a lunch was, she thought, required. Here Steven told her about his dining habits: largely bread and butter with bacon perhaps and heavily sugared tea, occasionally supplemented by resort to a nearby tavern or chop house. Since these were not places Steven felt he could take his wife, the

woman who served as housekeeper-cook would have to expand her culinary production. On their return to the home they shared, Angela explained that the only culinary ability she had acquired was how to make toast, which she learned in school. So she undertook to teach this skill to the woman. They agreed to have a real breakfast at the house and lunch of toast with butter and jam at the home office. A jar of jam would be purchased.

That night, after he and Angela had enjoyed each other, Steven lay thinking about his wife and his new life. The marital relations were extraordinarily pleasurable: he could now understand the intense interest of the other boys in school, even though he still thought it excessive. But beyond that, Steven felt there was something new in his life: it had a feeling of completeness, of fulfillment, a feeling he was no longer alone. For the first time, he had a partner, a friend, another being joined to him, joined in mind, in soul, and spirit—as well as body. Angela had made him whole. Should he tell her this? He decided he would the next day.

There was only one man desiring Steven's services that day. Also, Angela and Steven began moving the clothing Steven kept in the wooden box he referred to as his "wardrobe" to the house that was their new home. When they returned, there was a surprise waiting: Angela's mother had come from Fallworth Manor to stay with them.

Steven was happy to see her: she was the tenant, after all. Conversation ran into the late evening, all news evidently well received. Mrs. Thompson was clearly not proposing to return to Fallworth Manor. Lady Fallworth had not

requested her services as *accoucheuse* when the next Lord Fallworth (hopefully) arrived. So she was freed from that duty and free to return to London.

While she was in London, Angela's mother planned to attend plays and musical performances with Steven and Angela. Steven and Angela approved of these plans.

For the next two months, Steven and Angela's lives fell into a routine: they would meet with any people who desired Steven's (and increasingly, Angela's) services, and in the evening, they would return to the house to dine or to ready themselves for performances of plays and musicals.

But here Nature intervened. He began to notice Angela and her mother engaging in conferences that increased in frequency and length. Eventually, Steven was brought into the discussions: he was informed that his wife was now with child.

This condition was not surprising, but it certainly sobered Steven. Now he would have to make provision for his son or daughter. "A will," he suddenly thought, then smiled. His profession involved making wills for others, yet of course, he had never made one for himself. "Typical of men of law," he thought, remembering talk at Gray's Inn. He sat down at a writing desk, pulled some sheets of paper out, and began writing.

He had nearly finished, when much more disturbing thoughts came to him. Angela, and their son or daughter, had to survive the birth. If the child was lost, they would be joined in mourning, but probably could have more. But if Angela died, Steven really did not know what he

would do. And death in childbirth was common, Steven knew. He did not really want to think about this possibility, but it had taken possession of his mind, his thoughts, and his imagination. If the child survived, he would have to live for the child; otherwise...for his clients? What a desolate life that would be! He did not think about Lady Fallworth.

Fortunately, Mrs. Thompson came in. For some reason, she seemed to be able to understand what Steven was thinking, even as Angela herself could. Steven explained what he had been doing, as he tried to smile reassuringly.

Mrs. Thompson smiled, too, but sat down in a nearby chair and said, "Still, there is something else, is there not?"

Steven found the subject that worried him very hard to talk about. He forced himself, finally, to tell her, "So many women and their children die in childbirth, and of course, this idea frightens me...."

Angela's mother put her hand on Steven's arm. He fell silent.

The silence was broken when Mrs. Thompson said seriously, but reassuringly, "Steven, for some reason, such deaths are rare in my family and in that of my late husband, come to that. I know you are not one to gamble, but in this matter, the odds are much in favor of your wife and children surviving many years. So take heart, Steven: your own family is growing and almost certainly will grow more."

Steven smiled in response.

He went back to completing his will. He tried to feel reassured, but struggled. Angela came in, and he could see her mother had told her about his concerns.

However, he began the conversation by giving her the copy of his will.

“This is for you to keep,” he told her.

She smiled, sat down in the same chair her mother had, and read it carefully.

After she had finished, she got up, went to her husband, bent down, and kissed him.

“I understand you are worried, dearest; it is a momentous event, but as Mother told you, I think we need to just prepare for our new son or daughter.”

Steven reached over, took her hand, and kissed it. He nodded, smiled, and said, “I must take this will to place it with all the others.”

However, Angela pointed something out that Steven had not yet thought about: “Steven, when this child and any others that we have are born, where shall we all live? The owner of this property may return, and we would have to leave.”

Steven thought about the matter and suddenly realized that they had money, perhaps enough to buy a property, in the highwayman’s chest.

He told his wife his thoughts, and she said, “We must count it.”

At this, Steven got up, went to the bedroom he shared with Angela, and returned with the chest. He locked the door after telling Mrs. Thompson, who was sitting in the library reading, what he and Angela were doing.

He had the key and unlocked the box. The two of them began removing the guineas and setting them in piles of twenty. The smaller coins they left; there were not so many that they would make a great difference. But they found they had 288 guineas, over three hundred

pounds. Steven and Angela put the coins back in the chest, locked it, and returned it to their bedroom. They went to talk to Angela's mother.

She said, "I would really prefer living here. I will write to the solicitor to whom I send the rent and ask about the possibility of a purchase, and if that is possible, of the cost."

Steven looked at his wife, who remarked, "I, too, would like to remain. Steven?"

Steven, of course, would remain with his wife and any children, so he just nodded.

Mrs. Thompson got up and said, "I will write directly."

The solicitor responded quickly. He told Mrs. Thompson that the owner of the property was indeed interested in selling it; the price was 250 pounds, with twenty-five pounds to the solicitor, who took ten percent. At this point, Steven became involved, as he was Mrs. Thompson's agent. After looking in newspapers at prices of properties, Steven concluded that the price the solicitor was asking was reasonable and relayed that to Mrs. Thompson.

Eventually, the sale was concluded, but before it could be, Mrs. Thompson insisted that Steven be stated as the owner of the property, as he was, after all, providing the money for it. So this was done, Steven modified his will, and the property changed hands.

After, Steven reflected that instead of living with two women whose marriage settlements were supporting him, he had contributed financially to his family. This made him feel more worthy of his marriage, a foolish feeling to be sure, but a good one. He spoke to Angela about this and felt that she understood and agreed with Steven.

25. A Last Encounter

Steven walked briskly, largely—he understood—to divert his thoughts. Like nearly every other man, he carried a stout walking stick. The feel of the stick in his hand as its end struck the road helped with the distraction.

Then he was startled by a voice, “Aha, Cosgrove, sold any fish today?”

Steven looked over at a stoutish man walking along the raised walkway in the opposite direction. Steven stopped and stared at the fellow. He looked familiar....

The man was well dressed, even to the edge of being overdressed. Steven frowned, looking at his face; then he remembered: Henry Thurmond, the third of Steven’s persecutors at school. His face was flushed, probably, thought Steven, with excess at the table. Otherwise, he was sneering, his customary expression when talking to him; Steven felt not fear this time, but anger.

Still, Steven kept his face expressionless and answered Thurmond. “No,” was his reply. The sneer remained.

“Perhaps later,” Thurmond said.

Steven again: “No,” was his reply.

At this point, Steven realized that, while Thurmond and Fallworth were taller than Steven when they had left school, Steven had continued to grow and was now a good two inches taller than Thurmond. Steven continued to keep his

face expressionless and his eyes looking into Thurmond's.

"No fish at all, then?"

"No," replied Steven.

"What then?"

"Law."

Thurmond looked surprised, then looked at Steven's dress, which was irreproachable, thanks in part to Angela's influence. Then Thurmond's gaze shifted to the scar on the side of Steven's face. Thurmond's sneer deepened, if that were possible. His gaze moved to the newer scar on Steven's forehead.

"How did that happen, eh, Cosgrove?"

"Highwayman."

Thurmond actually laughed and asked, "How much did he get?"

"Nothing."

"So he hit you because of that?"

"No." Steven was beginning to enjoy this conversation.

"And he just rode off? Why?"

"Two pistol balls in his belly."

Thurmond was staring at Steven, evidently impressed against his will.

"You shot him?"

"Yes."

Silence, before Thurmond could continue: "D'you think he'll be coming after you, once he's well?"

"No."

"Whyever not?"

"Dead."

More silence. Then, "How d'ye know that?"

"Saw his corpse."

Thurmond shook his head. He was now quite at sea. He rallied, however, asking Steven (while attempting another sneer), "Met Lord Fallworth recently?"

"No."

"Perhaps you will. I hear he visits London often."

"No."

"Why not? Has he rusticated himself at Fallworth?"

Steven's feeling of enjoyment deepened. He was in control of the situation with Thurmond for the first time. But he had to answer: "Dead."

Thurmond stared, shook his head, and had to ask, "When? Where? I've heard nothing."

Steven waited some seconds before answering, but eventually told Thurmond, "Less than a year ago. At Fallworth."

"Any heirs? I was told he had married."

"Lady Fallworth is near her time, so perhaps."

"How do you know all this?"

"I saw him die. Broken neck after falling from a horse."

"Why were you there?"

"I was courting his half-sister."

"Were you successful?"

"Yes."

"Any offspring yet?"

"My wife is with child, so in a few months."

By now, this was all too much for Thurmond; perhaps he had noticed the expression behind Steven's steady gaze at his own eyes. His expression had changed, from

sneering superiority to uncertainty. But he nodded and walked on.

Steven watched as Thurmond walked away down the street. Steven thought he could see Thurmond shaking his head.

Steven returned to his journey, thinking. Of the three who had done so much to make Steven's life at school a misery—and come close to killing him, according to the barber-surgeon—Thurmond actually seemed the most determined. Looking back, Dawson, the future curate, was just following the lead provided by the other two, and Fallworth, though often vicious and cruel, was, Steven now felt, simply doing what he wanted to do at that moment. Thurmond always wanted to be vicious and cruel: that was his character.

As he walked along, now paying no attention to his purpose for venturing to this part of London—that is, to hire a hackney to take him to where he worked, Steven felt a great sense of elation, of freedom, of achievement. Thurmond had tried to provoke Steven and had failed totally; Steven had kept his temper.

He remembered a talk with another student at Gray's. The student told Steven that he had been relentlessly bullied by another student at the public school they were attending. That day, the student had caught sight of the bully walking on the street and had instinctively shrunk into the shadows to avoid being seen. Steven's fellow student told Steven he was still shaken.

Steven could and did sympathize with the man, but for some reason, perhaps Steven had simply been victimized less or less severely, Steven had not felt the stark fear the other

student had experienced. Steven did not know what that meant and at the moment did not care. He had endured, and he had prevailed. He was worthy, worthy of Angela, worthy of his children. That thought reminded him of his purpose, of attempting to gain money for their support. Glancing about, Steven realized there was a cab moving at Steven's walking pace next to him on the street, so he smiled at its driver and engaged it.

At his rooms, he sat down at the table where he worked. He arranged paper, ink and pens, largely to be doing something. The housekeeper-cook came in and told Steven two people had asked for him already that morning. She also required payment for some foodstuffs she had purchased for Steven and Angela. Steven paid her, told her Angela would probably not be attending Steven this week. The woman expressed disappointment, then went into the kitchen to prepare tea.

A man opened the door to the street and came inside. He told Steven he was sailing to Jamaica that week and required a will. So Steven asked the man what his name was, his family circumstances, his wishes.... The tea was served to both men—the housekeeper-cook knew her business—and Steven got to work. Another man came in for essentially the same reason later, so this was going to be a day marked by a profit, if a small one. Steven returned to his home with Angela late that afternoon, happy still.

26. Offspring and Consequences

Steven had just sat down to dinner with Angela and Mrs. Thompson when he was handed a letter. The hand was unfamiliar. Steven opened it and read:

Dear Steven,

Lady Fallworth has been brought to bed and has been delivered of a male heir, apparently healthy. This is great good news for us all, as you may imagine.

Lady Fallworth informed me she would honor her late husband's promise and has indeed presented me with the living. She told me that your earnest solicitation on my behalf was the reason. So my wife and I are most deeply obliged to you. On your next visit here, we insist you sample our hospitality at the vicarage.

To add to our joy, my wife has informed me she is expecting. So your visit will certainly be a joyous one.

Peter

Steven grinned, shook his head, and handed the letter to Angela. But he told both women, "From Peter Dawson, some great good news: a male heir for Fallworth, and Lady Fallworth kept her husband's repeated promise

of the Fallworth living to the curate. There are extravagant promises of festivities when I return, though I hope that will not be for years.”

The women laughed, and Steven bent to his dinner. While he was eating, however, he remembered that Angela and Mrs. Thompson and so himself would be required to be in attendance at the christening. He sighed and grimaced.

To be sure, the invitation (command?) to the christening arrived about the time when Angela and Angela’s mother thought it would. Another two day trip each way, if they could stay at the Penrose cousin’s again. But it had to be done, as long as Angela felt she could endure the venture. He and his wife were sitting together before the fire, as the day was a raw one.

She told Steven, “I am certain I can manage, but not in a gig. For the three of us, you will have to hire a coach and coachman.”

Steven nodded. “The other question is where we can stop. The inns are either wretched or crowded beyond the space available.” Silence, until Steven added, “I will write to the Penrose cousins, soliciting their hospitality *en route* to Fallworth and back. I will do that directly.”

He got up and went to the writing desk. His task took him over an hour, since he had to reply to the curate, no, vicar, and also inform Lady Fallworth. Otherwise, they would have to travel through the night, and he certainly did not want to subject Angela to that.

As it happened, the cousins readily agreed to the proposed sojourn. They professed delight at the news Steven passed on to them, which caused Steven to wonder. But he engaged

a coach and two drivers. This was undoubtedly expensive, but Steven tried to defy a lifetime of concern over money, insisting to himself that he had married well and had become a property owner into the bargain. He reminded himself of these facts again and again, to little effect.

Their journey began in darkness, a frigid early morning. Steven was very solicitous about Angela's wraps, about her comfort. She smiled at Steven's earnestness, but seemed to appreciate it. Her mother also smiled at the two of them. Off the coach rolled, a smooth road at first, but the passengers knew that would change. By starting early, they were able to obtain decent rooms at a decent inn on Watling Street. For the next night, the Penrose cousins had insisted that the three stay at the manor house. Then they continued their journey to Fallworth Manor.

Their coach, as it happened, arrived in good time, so the three were able to dine with the family. At the meal, Steven's impression strengthened that there was something going on, almost certainly between George Penrose and Lady Fallworth. It was too soon after Lord Fallworth's death for formal acknowledgement, but....

Steven told Angela of his suspicions and she agreed that she had also noticed that the two of them had shown a definite rapport. After the discussion, Steven and Angela settled in for the night in each other's arms.

Their welcome at the vicarage was heartfelt, though Steven repeatedly reminded everyone that Lady Fallworth had made the actual decision. This detail was acknowledged, though it did not seem to lessen the esteem for Steven that the new vicar and his wife kept

expressing. Their compliments were flattering, and though Steven had long since learned to be suspicious of flattery, he felt his resistance weakening.

The second source of joy in the vicar's household, his wife also expecting their third child, was news received with appropriate graciousness by the visitors. This was followed by extensive conferences between the vicar's wife, Angela, and Mrs. Thompson, conferences that Steven and the vicar avoided. Steven was shown about the vicarage. Even in the darkness, Steven could see that compared with the curacy, the vicarage was indeed most impressive.

For the christening, the three of them were invited to sit with the lately delivered Lady Fallworth, still wearing the obligatory black. She was accompanied by a wet nurse, her maidservants, and a visitor: George Penrose. Steven was somewhat surprised, but also pleased; the two men shook hands, grinning. Then they all sat down for the service and christening ceremony.

Afterwards, Steven, Angela, and her mother were invited to tea at Fallworth Manor. They all crowded into Lady Fallworth's coach for the trip. The new vicar and his wife were not among the passengers, only Lady Fallworth and her family, which now included Steven, close servants, and her guest.

At tea, Steven noted that Lady Fallworth was frequently deep in conversation with George Penrose, a circumstance which pleased Steven. He was not certain why, but did not care to subject his feelings to closer examination. As Steven, Angela, and her mother prepared to leave, Lady Fallworth insisted they return to the

vicarage in her coach, a gracious gesture, as the day was cold. While waiting for its arrival, Steven was able to talk to George Penrose.

Steven gave George messages from the Penrose cousins he had been asked to convey.

George nodded, glanced about, and remarked to Steven, "As you are probably aware, matters between Lady Fallworth and I have reached a state where she and I will marry once her time of mourning is passed."

Steven grinned once more, and once more the two men shook hands.

Then George remarked to Steven in a low voice, "She told me that Lord Fallworth, her husband, beat her and his own mother as well. Beat them! Why?"

Steven grimaced and shook his head. He said, "I cannot believe Lord Fallworth incapable of any villainy that took his fancy. But you know my opinion of him. I am not at all surprised."

At that moment, however, their coach arrived, so conversation ceased. Steven helped Angela and her mother into the coach.

Since what George had told Steven was not said in confidence, Steven told his wife and her mother about the impending marriage. Both women liked George and wanted Lady Fallworth to have some share of real happiness in her marriage.

Steven also alerted the vicar and his wife, as well as the Penrose cousins on the trip back. So though the trip was wearying and cold, it was also cheerful. It was nearly dark when they reached London; there, Steven paid the coachmen.

The time remaining before Angela's delivery passed slowly. She accompanied Steven to his rooms on occasion, her company always very welcome. The number of people desiring Steven's professional services rose, not sharply, but enough that Steven was actually accumulating money, instead of merely subsisting. Was this the effect of his marriage? Of Angela's company on occasion? Steven did not know and with his inescapable worries about Angela's childbirth, did not care.

Still, there was something important to consider, and Angela brought the subject up. They were having tea, and Angela looked at Steven and said, "Dearest, we have not discussed this before, and we should. How large a family do you want?"

Steven thought and replied, "Children, if they survive, must be educated, provided for. So not a large family, perhaps three or four children at the most."

Silence, before Steven resumed, "That means somehow limiting conception."

Angela told Steven, "I will nurse our son myself, rather than hiring a wet nurse. Mother tells me that if a woman does this, she will not conceive again for perhaps a year."

Steven nodded and then conversations or fragments of conversations he had overheard in school began to enter his memory.

Angela, who could read Steven's face quite well, asked, "Did something occur to you?"

Steven replied, "I am not certain. Something I may have heard in school. It will come to me eventually."

He leaned over, kissed his wife, and left.

At his place of business, he sat for some minutes at his desk with nothing coming to mind and decided he would have a cup of tea. He went to ask the housekeeper-cook to heat water, but found she had already done so. He prepared the tea, added juice from a slice of lemon, something he had only recently begun doing, then poured two heaping spoons of sugar into the cup as well, stirring afterwards until the sugar dissolved.

He sat, sipping it and suddenly a word came to him: cundum. Cundum, what was that? Then a conversation in which that word was used was now complete in his memory. Three students sitting near Steven were talking in hushed voices, but Steven could understand what they were saying without difficulty. One was boasting about patronizing a prostitute the previous night.

The second student asked if the first was not worried about the pox, but the first student said, "No, I wore a cundum."

The third student, who Steven understood was trying to appear knowledgeable, remarked, "And the bitch will not get pregnant either."

At this point, the assistant master came in, and the class began.

Two or three other occasions when Steven had heard the word also occurred to him, but nothing much more than the word. So what was a "cundum," how was it used, where could it be bought, and whom could he ask? Steven sat, sipped, and thought. Eventually, most reluctantly, he decided he would have to ask a prostitute. They were about in London at all times of the day and night, in all weathers.

Steven slowly got up, told the housekeeper-cook he was going out for a walk, and left.

He had walked perhaps a quarter of a mile when he saw one of the women who had exposed her legs to him. She seemed to be waiting, probably for business, and Steven walked up to her.

He raised his hand in an effort to disabuse her of the idea he wanted sex with her and said, "I am looking for information. I am willing to pay for it."

The woman looked confused, but nodded. Steven could now see that she was heavily made up and not young.

He asked, "What is a 'cundum'?"

The woman replied, "'Tis a tube, fits over yer cock an' is tied to yer balls w' a ribbon so it don't come off. While yez fuckin', that is."

Steven nodded then asked, "Where can I buy one of them?"

She replied, "There was a shop in Covent Garden, Half Moon Street. Used to be Mrs. Phillips, not certain now, but yez can ask."

Steven nodded again, reached into his pocket, pulled out a guinea, and gave this to her. The woman's face brightened, perhaps because it promised to be a slow day.

Steven began walking again, west, to Covent Garden. Once he reached the area, he began looking about. He finally decided that some of the buildings lining the east side looked suspicious, as there were men going in and coming out. He went into one and saw his suspicions were correct: it was a bagnio, a place of prostitution. He asked the woman who greeted him where cundums were sold.

The woman looked surprised, protested that her ladies were free of any venereal trait, and Steven had to interrupt her. He repeated his question. Finally, the woman, the madam Steven guessed she was called, told Steven the location. She seemed annoyed, but then two more men came in. She immediately became welcoming, and Steven escaped.

The shop Steven was directed to did indeed sell what he was looking for, and he purchased a dozen, made, he was informed, of the finest sheep's gut. He was told each had been sewn into tubes, open at one end, using very fine stitches so there would be no leaks. He was also told how to put them on and wash them out after using them. They were expensive, but Steven was expecting this cost; he paid for his dozen and took his leave. He returned to his shop, had another cup of tea, and the day being spent, returned to his home.

There he told Angela of his adventures and showed her his purchase. She was interested, amused, but remarked that it was a shame that it was so difficult to find something so useful.

Steven replied, "It's because of its association with sex outside of marriage, illegal sex, many would say immoral sex. Even what you and I want them for would elicit disapproval from some. As the Scriptures say, 'Go forth and multiply.'"

Angela shook her head, remarking, "That views human beings as sheep or goats."

Steven laughed, agreeing.

Late on a day in spring, a warm, cheerful evening, Steven returned to the house to find Angela's mother welcoming him with, "Angela is well, delivered of a healthy son!"

"May I see her?"

"Of course, Steven, though she may be sleeping."

"Was her delivery difficult?"

"It is never easy, Steven, but not unusually difficult, no."

Steven went to see his wife, now the mother of their son. She was awake, looking at a crib next the bed. She looked up at Steven as he came in; they exchanged smiles, and Steven went to the crib. There, wrapped in what Steven guessed were swaddling clothes, lay a baby, peacefully sleeping. Steven was touched, no, moved profoundly, perhaps from relief, but also more.

Angela asked her husband, "What shall we name him?"

Steven had tears in his eyes. He took out a handkerchief, wiped his eyes, and answered his wife.

"My uncle's name was Edward. That is the name I want him to have."

He looked at his wife, who smiled and nodded.

"What about a second name?" asked Steven.

"My father's first name was Robert."

"Edward Robert Cosgrove then." And Steven and his wife were once again in agreement.

The result of Steven and Angela's precautions was that their family grew, though slowly. Over seven years, two daughters followed, then another son. Angela continued to help Steven with this work. He came to believe, privately, that if women were admitted to the Inns of Court, they could become perfectly competent lawyers. At length, he confided his opinion to his wife, who kissed him in response. And whether a coincidence or not, the number of people—largely men of course, but including an increasing number of women—requiring Steven's services steadily increased. Steven began thinking this trend was largely owing to Angela's presence.

In fact, requests for Steven's professional services came from two unexpected sources, unexpected because from outside Steven's part of London. These were from the Penrose cousins and from Lady Fallworth and her second husband, George Penrose. The solicitors for both families had died, and Steven was retained by both households.

Fortunately, Steven was able to deal with most of their concerns by post; when he had to go there, he would take Angela, of course. She, and consequently Steven, regarded these visits as a holiday. The additional income, along with custom from a greater number of locals seeking Steven's services, meant that Steven was contributing a greater share of his family's income. The unspent money in the highwayman's chest remained untouched.

Otherwise, each year on the anniversary of Steven's uncle's death, he, Angela, and their brood visited the gravesite and left flowers. They also left some on the grave of the woman

Edward Cosgrove was to have married. After this, sobered, everyone returned home.

But when Steven's sons asked him about what they should do when they grew up, Steven told them, "Whatever you wish to, whatever you enjoy doing, even if it is cobbling shoes or selling fish. Do not go into a profession entirely because of how impressive it sounds."

This was something of a radical statement. Steven was not disparaging his own profession; in fact, he was content working as an attorney, but he was quite serious otherwise. He had heard of and seen too many examples of young men adopting professions—attorneys, clerics, army or naval officers—because of the prestige: young men who were simply unsuited to properly perform their duties. Angela, her mother, and the children were, however, impressed by Steven's earnestness. What effect Steven's words would have on his children remained for the future to uncover.

And so ends Steven's story... for now.