



MR. HARRY HUNT, Observer of the Royal Society of London for the
Improving of Natural Knowledge.

MR. ROBERT HOOKE, Curator of Experiments of the Royal Society of
London for the Improving of Natural Knowledge, Gresham's Professor
of Geometry, and Surveyor for the City of London.

MASTER TOM GYLES, Robert Hooke's Apprentice.

MISS GRACE HOOKE, Robert Hooke's Niece.

MRS. MARY ROBINSON, Robert Hooke's Housekeeper.

MRS. ELIZABETH HANNAM, Harry Hunt's Landlady.

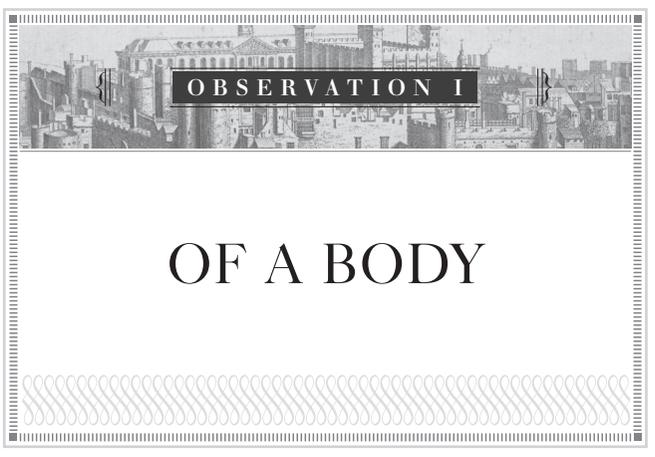
SIR EDMUND BURY GODFREY, Justice of Peace for Westminster.

MR. GABRIEL KNAPP, a Constable.

ANTHONY ASHLEY COOPER, the Earl of Shaftesbury.

DR. JOHN LOCKE, the Earl of Shaftesbury's Secretary.
MR. URIEL AIRES, the Earl of Shaftesbury's Man.
M. PIERRE LEFÈVRE, an Assassin.
THE MECHANICAL SCRIBE, an Automaton.
MR. HENRY OLDENBURG, Secretary of the Royal Society of London for the
Improving of Natural Knowledge
MRS. DORA KATHERINA OLDENBURG, Henry's Wife
MR. TITUS OATES, a Clergyman, and Perjurer.
MR. ISRAEL TONGE, a Fanatic.
COLONEL MICHAEL FIELDS, a Soldier for Parliament.
MR. MOSES CREED, a Solicitor.
HIS MAJESTY CHARLES II, the King.
FRANCES TERESA STEWART, Duchess Of Richmond And Lennox.
ANNE LENNARD, Countess Of Sussex, Daughter of the King.
HORTENSE MANCINI, Duchesse de Mazarin, the most Beautiful Lady in
the Kingdom.
SIR JONAS MOORE, Surveyor-General of the Board of Ordnance.
MR. ENOCH WOLFE, an Eel fisher.
DR. THEODORE DIODATI, a Physician.
MR. GIDLEY, a Chirurgeon.
MR. TOBIAS TURNER, Proprietor of the Angel Coffeehouse.
MR. INVINCIBLE and MRS. FELICITY TARRIPAN, Quakers.
MR. JONATHAN LATHAM, a Carpenter.
MR. NOBLE FISHER, a Builder.
MR. KILL-SIN ABBOTT, a Waterman.
MR. THOMAS BLAGROVE, Proprietor of the Crown Tavern.
MR. THOMAS GARRAWAY, Proprietor of Garraway's Coffeehouse.
MR. DANIEL WHITCOMBE, a Virtuoso Natural Philosopher.
A CAPTAIN, of the King's Foot.
A SERGEANT, of the King's Foot.
A TROOPER, of the King's Foot.
A MAN with a Child on his Back.
A MAN with a Painted Eye.

THE BLOODLESS BOY



OF A BODY

THE WATER BEGAN TO STICK, SPLASHES fattening on the glass.

Harry Hunt, Observer of the Royal Society of London for the Improving of Natural Knowledge, stopped to look more closely at the change in form, as rain turned to snow. Fingers stiffened by the chill, he wiped at his spectacles, and watched the first flakes settle on the brown leather of his coat.

He committed the observation to his memory and moved on. His purposeful stride took him past the new Bethlehem Hospital sprawling across Moorfields, smudges of light escaping its windows.

He had a slight frame and pale London skin.

South down Broad Street. The narrow buildings shouldered one another, pressing together for warmth. Untouched by the fury of the Great Conflagration, they followed the old scheme.

Harry made his way towards Gresham's College, the mansion used by the Royal Society, to see the Curator of Experiments and Professor of Geometry there, Mr. Robert Hooke.

Falling thickly, the snow had already settled despite the wet ground. The early morning sky was violet, the colour of a bruise.

Harry's steps echoed through the archway leading to the College quadrangle. In the stables, the horses snorted, and he heard the grate of their shoes. He turned for the south-east corner and stopped at a door.

Above him, a window clattered open and the head of a boy appeared.

'Mr. Hunt! Mr. Hooke's already gone!'

Harry put his finger to his lips. Tom Gyles, with a pantomime grimace, acted out his understanding. Ah, discretion was required. No less loudly, he called down again.

'I'll come to you! Mr. Hooke would desire no stranger hear the business.'

Harry let himself in with his key and shook off the snow from his coat onto the lobby's neat flagstones.

Perhaps a philosophical business engaged the Curator. The Royal Society kept him busy with his trials and demonstrations for the Fellows. Hooke also worked as Surveyor to the City of London, with Sir Christopher Wren. A far more lucrative employment, rebuilding the new London. Maybe he went to perform a view.

The rest of the boy belonging to the head arrived, zig-zagging down the stairs. A rope of hair stuck up from his crown, giving him the look of a shaggy sundial.

Harry looked past him, on the chance he might glimpse Hooke's niece, Grace. At this hour, though, she would still be in her bed. A little wistfully, he returned his thoughts to Tom.

'Mr. Hooke is gone to his new bridge at Holborn, to meet with Sir Edmund Bury Godfrey!' Tom was hopping from foot to foot. 'The messenger's knocking woke us all.' So, Grace was awake . . .

Hooke had wanted help with his improved design for a lamp, its self-fuelling mechanism misbehaving.

'I shall return later, then, when his business is done.'

'He asks that you join them there.' Tom looked slyly up at Harry, watching his eyes widen, pleased with the result of his information, happy he had held it back for most effect.

Harry felt a pulse of anxiety. Sir Edmund was renowned throughout London as a pervasive, threatening presence.

'I shall go there. Oh, I forgot—a happy New Year's Day to you, Tom.'

'And to you, Mr. Hunt. A happy 1678 for us all.'

Harry left the boy behind him and walked back across the quadrangle.

Grace watched him leave from her upstairs window, observing the trail of his boots as they dragged through the snow.



THE SMELL OF fish, flesh, and fruit from the Stocks. Breakfast.

By the statue overlooking the market—Charles II and his mount trampling Oliver Cromwell's head—Harry bought a pastry and Dutch biscuits from a man half-asleep by his stall.

The pastry was too hot to eat, and too hot to hold. He swapped it from hand to hand as he walked. Up the gradual climb of Cheapside. Past where the Cross had stood until its destruction by Puritan enthusiasm. This had happened ten years before Harry was born, yet people still referred to it as a landmark—the more pious offered their thoughts on the Whore of Babylon as they did.

Friday Street, Gutter Lane, Foster Lane, and Old Change.

Here, all had burned in the Conflagration. In between these townhouses, warehouses, and shops—brick and stone, to the post-Fire regulations and standards—some spaces still remained. Sad patches of land, never reclaimed, their charred ruins dispersed over time, replaced by litter, nettles, and dirt.

Lines of stones reached up from the wharfs. The largest took days to be dragged from the quayside. The Cathedral awaited them, its ribs and stom-

ach open to the sky. Surrounding it lay more stones, bricks, earth, and timbers. Like organs cut from it, more than materials to build it up.

From where the arch of Newgate used to be, before fire, too, destroyed it, Harry walked down the winding lane of Snow Hill, sliding, almost falling, and then to Holborn Hill.

Wiping the last pieces of pastry from his fingers, he transferred his attention to a biscuit.

He was at Holborn Bridge, spanning the Fleet River.



‘HOY! GO NO further!’

An old man in a coachman’s coat stepped out from the doorway of the Three Tuns, halting Harry with an unsteady palm. His face was a cracked glaze of lines under a worn-out montero. The wool of the hat was wet through, sagging over his shoulders. Despite his age, he was a hard-looking man, and far broader than Harry.

‘What happens here?’ Harry asked, in as business-like a tone as he could muster, wiping biscuit crumbs from his chin.

‘A finding—no mind of yours!’

‘If Sir Edmund Bury Godfrey’s done the finding, then I’m to meet him. Mr. Robert Hooke accompanies the Justice, does he not?’

The man, a constable of the watch, scowled at him.

‘I am Mr. Harry Hunt, Observator of the Royal Society, and assistant to Mr. Hooke,’ Harry added grandly.

With a cursory thumb, the constable sent him down to the river.



ROBERT HOOKE HAD shaped this place, overseeing the Fleet’s straightening, deepening, and widening. It had taken four years of difficulty and disaster: the riverbed re-dredged after floods, the weight of the banks breaking the new timber wharfs, piles, and footings, the groundwater sweeping away

the sluices and drains. The dumping of refuse from the abattoirs and households had continued, and rain washed in the wreckage left over from the Conflagration.

At last, it was finished. Vastly more expensive than the City had envisaged, the Fleet Canal was the biggest project of rebuilding the new London. All the way to the Thames was now smart with paved quaysides, and the watermen in their wherries could reach as far as the new Holborn Bridge.

Before, its main users had been floating dead dogs—their corpses bumping, sniffing one another in death as they had in life. Upstream, the Fleet continued as it always had: a silty, muddy-banked ditch. It disappeared into the hillside through an arch, a huge iron grating holding back the filth from Turnmill Brook.

Hooke sheltered beneath the span of the bridge. Harry easily recognised his hunched form, the twist in Hooke's back diminishing what would have been a tall stature. Without the cover of a wig, his hair hung over his large forehead and stuck to his sharp chin, and his long nose, its nostrils red-rimmed, had a dewdrop hanging from its tip. He wore his favourite overcoat, a natural grey colour.

His protuberant silver eyes acknowledged the younger man's arrival, but he said nothing to him.

Next to him, contrastingly upright, stood a tall, impressive man in a long black camlet coat, black leather gloves, and a large black hat. A sword, sheathed in a black scabbard, poked out behind him. His peruke, also black, swept around his large head and down over his shoulders. A single touch of ostentation: a band of gold fabric encircling the hat lessened his Puritan severity.

Sir Edmund resembled, Harry thought, a large inquisitive raven.

Harry jumped down from the quayside's low wall, slipping on the bank. The Fleet slid viscously over the mud, eroding the snow to a clean, frosty edge.

Hooke merely pointed, directing Harry under the bridge. Northwards, away from the new wharfs of the Canal. Along the old, untouched muddy bank.

Harry walked past the two men, through the shadow of the arch, and back into the brightness of the falling snow.



HIS REACTION WAS not worthy of a new philosopher of the Royal Society. Harry urged himself to become cooler, more dispassionate, as Mr. Hooke would want him to be.

A dead boy, naked, possibly as young as two years, at most as old as three, lay in the mud on his side. Back curved, head bowed to his chin, arms and legs folded to his body.

The falling snow softened his outline, making it look as if he had come up from the ground. Digested, then expelled.

‘A happy New Year’s Day to you, Harry,’ Hooke said ironically, now striding after him, the mud under the snow sucking at his shoes. Suffering from a cold, his thin, nasal voice struggled through the phlegm at the back of his throat.

Sir Edmund followed them out from under the bridge. His face was the colour of raw meat, long with a solid jaw, and his mouth had lips so thin it looked like an incision. His complexion, with its furrows and broken veins, betrayed a life in the open air.

‘Mr. Hooke described you.’ Sir Edmund did not wait for Hooke to make the proper introduction. ‘Already I am impressed.’

His voice resonated from his diaphragm. Harry thought he felt and heard it in equal parts. Seldom to receive flattery from men of such rank. He wondered how Hooke had termed his description.

‘Harry was my apprentice, but is his own man now,’ Hooke said. ‘To business, Sir Edmund?’

Hooke stooped nearer the body. ‘An angler made the find,’ he explained to Harry. ‘Looking for grig eels, says he. He must be a night-bird for suchlike.’

‘Eels tend not to stir by day,’ Harry affirmed, swallowing. He tried to control the trembling that had started in his right thigh, hoping the older

men would ascribe it to the cold. The vapour in the air signalled his short, shallow breaths.

‘There are marks of unusual dispatch,’ Hooke said, not noticing, intent on the boy.

‘The eel fisher,’ Sir Edmund added, removing his gloves, ‘ran to tell and cannot bring himself back. He cowers in the Three Tuns.’

The Justice produced a black notebook from his pocket, leather-bound, and a portable pen and ink set. ‘A blasphemous crime.’ He rubbed at his mouth.

Harry noticed Sir Edmund had a twitch in his *orbicularis oris*, a strand of muscle pulling at his bottom lip.

Still trembling himself, but mindful of the dictates of the Royal Society—and of Robert Hooke, who used to be his master—Harry bent to brush snow from the body.

The boy’s skin, pale as the snow he lay in, was untouched by signs of decay.

His eyes, still wide open, had irises an unusual blue. Towards indigo.

An eye withheld the image it last perceived, Harry had heard. Looking into them, he saw only his own reflection.

‘The eyes are not filled with a pestilent air,’ Sir Edmund observed. ‘He is recently dead.’

‘Not recently,’ Hooke corrected him. He saw the Justice’s perplexed look but offered no further explanation. Instead, he placed the end of his finger over his right nostril and ejected snot from the left, directing it into the river.

‘What’s this rectangle on him?’ Harry asked, looking at a thinner dusting of snow on the uppermost part of his ribs.

‘A letter was left,’ Hooke answered.

‘I have it,’ Sir Edmund said, producing it from inside his coat. It was small, with a broken black wax seal. ‘I shall study it later, in the warm.’ He slid the letter back out of their sight.

Hooke held Harry’s arm, stopping his question for the Justice.

Instead, Harry brushed more snow from the boy, rolled him onto his back, and moved the limbs to see. ‘The manner of death’s easy enough to read.’

‘Immediately explicable,’ Hooke agreed.

‘Well, then? How did he die?’ Sir Edmund asked them.

‘You have seen these puncture marks on the body?’ Hooke indicated the insides of the tops of the legs. ‘Each with writing by it, in ink.’

‘I have. The neatness of lettering next to each hole is remarkable.’

‘Going into the skin,’ Hooke continued, ‘and on, deeper, into the iliac arteries, these holes show the insertion of hollow tubes. They have a similar diameter to the shaft of a goose feather. There are four such apertures, used to drain him of his blood.’

Sir Edmund winced, then made a note in his book.

Hooke inspected the writing by each hole. ‘A living body, when pierced, seeks to stem the blood’s flow. The blood sticks at the wound, growing thick from coagulation. Losing too much blood brings death by its heat being lost, and elemental or humourical imbalance.’

He loudly cleared his other nostril. It seemed to aid his thinking. ‘When the action of the heart has ceased, the flow of blood goes still. The texture of this boy’s skin is papery to the touch. The feel of the flesh beneath, with the presence of these piercings, reveals all of his blood was taken.’

‘His heart weakened, then stopped, before it could further expel his blood through these holes.’ Sir Edmund demonstrated his understanding. ‘How, then, was the remainder of his blood taken?’

Harry thought for a moment. ‘By making a Torricellian space, the vacuum encouraging the blood to flow.’

Hooke looked at him, pleased.

‘Why a need for all this boy’s blood?’ Sir Edmund asked them.

Hooke shrugged, his hunched back rocking with the gesture. ‘These holes show the signs of repeated insertion. This writing on the body shows when.’

They stared at the four holes, each having a cluster of dates by it.

‘The oldest is from nearly a year ago,’ Harry said, reading *15th Febr. 1676/77*. ‘Whoever marked these days clings to the old style of calendar.’

Hooke made a circle with the point of his finger around one of them. ‘They show no signs of healing.’

‘He was preserved for perhaps a year,’ Harry said.

‘No signs of freezing, or embalming?’

‘Again, a Torricellian space, Mr. Hooke. A vacuum preventing decay.’

‘Why, though, this need for blood?’ Sir Edmund asked them, writing rapidly in his book. ‘It is papistry, mark my words.’

Hooke looked at him mildly. ‘You steer us where we do not necessarily wish to go. Nothing here shows Catholicism.’

Sir Edmund’s expression darkened, and he snapped his gloves together.

‘Infusion?’ Harry suggested, a little to cheer the Justice.

‘Into another, Harry? Our own trials at the Society have been too often unsuccessful.’

‘Mr. Coga received very well the blood of a lamb.’

‘He had only small amounts infused. Indeed, he wanted to undergo the procedure again, thinking he benefitted from some symbolic power, the lamb’s blood being the blood of Christ, as Christ is the Lamb of God.’ Hooke gave a wry smile. ‘His religious zeal may have protected him. Other infusions ended in agony and tragedy. Into many others then, Harry? In modest amounts?’

Hooke, ignoring the Justice’s irritable look, spoke to Harry with a professorial air, that of a teacher with his favoured student.

Sir Edmund’s irritation was a mask for his disgust. The way of this boy’s death revolted him, and he had never met two people who discussed such phenomena as *affectionately* as these. Even the lowliest surgeons of his acquaintance at least pretended delicacy and deference.

But, he did not doubt, they would be useful to him.

‘Pope Innocent VIII,’ he offered, ‘when given blood from boys to rejuvenate him, received Catholic blood. There was no countenancing any other.’

‘The project failed,’ Hooke said dismissively. ‘He died soon after.’

Sir Edmund growled, and one hand clenched into a fist. ‘Elizabeth Báthory bathed in the blood of her victims, to keep her youth.’

‘She was a Calvinist,’ Hooke replied.

Harry concentrated on the body, avoiding their debate. He wiped off the falling snow with the edge of his hand. On the boy’s chest were fine

splashes, white, almost transparent. He picked at one, and it folded flakily under his fingernail.

‘Candle wax,’ he announced. ‘Beneath, the skin’s unaffected. The wax dripped after he died.’

‘Worked on at night?’ Hooke wondered, squatting next to him. ‘Or in a darkened place. A candle lodged upon his ribs to provide a light to work by.’ Hooke looked closely at the wax. ‘This is bleached beeswax. An extravagance in most households.’

‘Liturgical candles!’ Sir Edmund looked triumphantly at them. ‘Catholic practices!’

‘Such candles are not only employed at Mass,’ Hooke said.

Sir Edmund showed them his annoyance by his laboured concealment of it. He gestured at the snow on the ground. ‘You see the curious lack of prints.’

‘Only our own, and those of the eel fisher,’ Harry agreed. ‘His steps are clear. He stopped well short of the body.’

‘He could not take himself closer when he realised his discovery,’ Sir Edmund said. ‘How did the boy arrive here? Surely, by water.’

‘There are no marks in the mud, leading from the Fleet,’ Hooke replied.

The Justice looked around them. ‘The fall of snow covers the mud about the body. Any impressions have disappeared.’

‘You play the Devil’s Advocate.’ Hooke indicated the smears on their legs. ‘We make deep impressions. Such holes could not have filled.’

‘We are close enough to the Thames for the ebb and flow of its tide to reach here. The rising water has removed any footprints . . . ?’ The question in Sir Edmund’s voice suggested his lack of conviction.

‘The tide ebbs, but gently, and we are close to the neap tide, in the first quarter of the moon, when the water does not rise so greatly,’ Hooke told him.

Sir Edmund stared through the murky surface of the Fleet. ‘There are no rubs from a wherry’s keel. The boy was not dropped from up on the quay, he being too far from the wall. Nor was he dropped from the bridge.’ He shifted uneasily. ‘Everything must have its cause, and leave evidence of its

passing. A murderer may conceal the reason for his crime, yet, given the body, his methods at least—of killing and disposal—are always apparent.’

A little further along the bank was the eel fisher’s large box of bait. It had ropes attached for transporting on his back. Going to it, Harry saw it was full of lampreys. Their sucking mouths pouted stupidly up at him. A film of slime covered their lengths.

‘He wants a large haul, with this much bait.’

They walked back along under the bridge and climbed to the quayside.

‘Here in this place openly . . . it is not a thing hotly wrought.’ Sir Edmund looked back down at the bank. ‘This boy suffered an elaborate killing.’



THE JUSTICE SENT the old constable into the Three Tuns to bring out the eel fisher.

Resembling the fish he preyed on, with an overlarge mouth and expressionless eyes, the man had thick stubble up to his cheekbones. His boots and hands were filthy with the mud of the bank.

He told them his name was Enoch Wolfe.

‘Do you remember anything further than you told Sir Edmund?’ Hooke asked him. ‘Was anything here then that is not here now? No skiff? No wherry?’

Wolfe shook his head. ‘Only night and rain,’ he replied. ‘Traded for day and snow.’

He glanced at Sir Edmund for reassurance he should answer questions from this odd-looking, twisted man with his youthful colleague. The Justice he knew well—who did not?—but who were these two with him?

Sir Edmund, with a snarl, confirmed he should.

‘No person on the bridge, by the water, nor upon the quayside?’ Hooke enquired.

‘Just me, my lampreys, and the eels I was after,’ Wolfe declared.

Satisfied he had no more to tell, Sir Edmund committed the eel fisher to silence about the discovery.

‘Where can we find you again, Mr. Wolfe, should we have need?’ Harry enquired.

The man gestured vaguely westwards. ‘Over the bridge. Go into Alsatia. Anybody there knows me.’

‘I recognised you, from Alsatia,’ Sir Edmund said.

‘*God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell.*’ Wolfe let a mischievous grin touch his lips, no sooner seen than gone.

‘We are, all of us, lower than angels,’ Sir Edmund chastised him.

As Wolfe walked away, he became faint in the falling snow.

‘We have no hope of his remaining quiet,’ Sir Edmund said, wiping at his thin lips. ‘I need time to brief my intelligencers, to hear what is said about the town. If the boy is from loving kin, I feel sorry for them.’

They sheltered together in the tavern’s doorway. The constable stood morosely in the snow, his rank keeping him in the elements. Although he sensed some guilt at displacing him, Harry made no offer to swap places.

‘I need a more close examination of this boy,’ Sir Edmund said. ‘At the Fleet Prison? It would be convenient there.’

‘I have my tools at Gresham’s College,’ Hooke replied. ‘But I cannot promise the participation of the Royal Society. I am merely its Curator. You will need the President’s permission.’

‘You have the skills to anatomise the body?’

‘I studied under Dr. Thomas Willis, and assisted him with his surgical and chymical work,’ Hooke said, nettled by the Justice’s question. ‘I can perform an autopsy well enough.’

‘Well enough is well enough. It would be more private at Gresham’s. I shall not yet make known the finding. The taking of blood from so young a child is irreligious. To my mind, it points to papistry. If word escapes, the mob will add its own shine to the affair.’

‘It would influence only the credulous,’ Hooke said.

‘It may be designed to influence precisely those!’ Sir Edmund answered, his temper rising again at Hooke’s unsubtle dig.

‘We will not divulge a thing of it,’ Hooke promised for them both.

Sir Edmund gripped him by the elbow. ‘Have you the means, at the College, to renew his preservation? You must do it soon, before he decays.’

The question surprised Hooke, and he sounded suspicious. ‘I can preserve the boy. That is Mr. Boyle’s property, rather than the Society’s. Engaged in the writing out of his chymico-physical doubts and paradoxes, he has no need of it presently. Any dissection I will not do without the permission of our President, Viscount Brouncker.’ He shrugged off Sir Edmund’s hand.

‘I believe you both together will explain away this killing,’ Sir Edmund asserted, his deep voice emphasising his faith. ‘Your knowledge of blood and vacua will greatly assist in the finding of this child’s murderer.’

He left them abruptly to commandeer a tumbrel. Its owner, at first belligerent, quickly turned agreeable.

‘Sir Edmund is persuasive,’ Hooke observed.

‘You were more willingly coerced.’

‘True enough, though I find the Justice to be difficult, like rubbing up against a smoothing paper. Why does he press to keep the boy preserved?’

‘In truth, I cannot say, Mr. Hooke.’

Hooke looked anxiously at the scene by the water, the Fleet flowing past them, and past the body of the boy, all being steadily covered by the snowfall.

‘Sir Edmund wants a Catholic cause for this murder. The finding of this boy may lead us into unfathomable seas. We must take a care to keep our eyes steadily fixed upon the facts of nature, and so receive their images simply, as they are.’ He wiped at his nose with the sleeve of his coat.

Harry nodded, looking pensive. ‘You must return to the warmth, Mr. Hooke. Otherwise, we will have a second death. Sir Francis Bacon died from his trial to preserve the chicken with snow.’

‘You are entirely right, Harry.’ Hooke’s stuffed head made his words sound as if he expressed them through treacle. ‘Let us return to the College.’

‘I’ll follow you. I must attend to something first.’

Watching Hooke’s twisted spine, and hearing his wheezing breaths and sniffs fading as he went off along the quayside, Harry wondered how far he

would want to help. Hooke lived for his natural philosophy and for his building. He had enough demands on his time.

Waiting until Hooke was far enough away, Harry at last allowed his body to react to the finding of the murdered boy. He heaved up his breakfast, then scooped up a handful of snow to take the bitter taste from his mouth. He kicked some over the undigested pastry and biscuits.

‘Get yourself to Gresham’s College, Mr. Hunt!’ Sir Edmund called. ‘My man will deliver the boy. I shall meet you there later, to see his preservation.’



OBSERVATION II

OF RELEASE

ONCE THE HOME OF MONARCHS, THE Tower of London was now a prison.

The Earl of Shaftesbury looked back at the room which had been his gaol. A window in a line of many.

Down the timber steps, through the Jewel House, by the decayed ruin of the Hall.

Shaftesbury rested his hand on the wall as he surveyed the falling snow. Its flakes blew about at the mercy of the wind. He threw back his head and opened his mouth, relishing the taste, the delicate fizz, as each snowflake melted on the warmth of his tongue.

An expressionless yeoman urged him on, past the stores keeping munitions, ropes, masts, and tackle.

Shaftesbury had been Chancellor of the Exchequer. Then, Lord Chan-

cellor. Then, First Lord of Trade. How quickly he had fallen from the King's favour.

After authoring a pamphlet declaring the royal prerogative should be restricted, he was charged with contempt of Parliament—even though the King had kept Parliament prorogued for over a year.

Through the gate of the inner wall, then the Wakefield Tower, and to the Watergate. Through St. Thomas's Tower.

His pamphlet also argued Parliament should decide the inheritance.

The King's brother, the Duke of York, was heir to the throne. York was openly Catholic, bringing confusion to those loyal to Crown and tradition, but who feared having his religion pushed upon them.

Another yeoman raised the last portcullis.

Shaftesbury had resisted Danby's Test Oath, which required all in office to declare resistance to the King a crime.

He could not accept that the liberty and property of the people were subject to the pleasure of the Crown. It was against *Magna Carta Libertatum*. It made the King's authority absolute. It swept away the limitations placed on him at his restoration eighteen years earlier, and all of Parliament's gains after the Wars.

Shaftesbury's arguments were gaining popularity, in the Lords and in the Commons. The King had recognised the threat.

It took a year in the Tower before Shaftesbury expressed contrition. Stubbornness kept him in so long, but he had not broken.

The time was right: there were things he needed to do which could not be done inside a prison cell.

He stood outside on the Wharf.

A black coach-and-four waited for him. Its driver wore an oiled goat-skin coat to protect him from the weather. The wood of the coach, lacquered and polished, reflected Shaftesbury's image. A long face tapering past fleshy lips to a small chin, jowls grown more apparent during his imprisonment. A bottle-green coat, which brushed the snow as he walked.

Shaftesbury had not wasted his year. He had reflected. He had disputed with himself. At first to order his thoughts, as much as to while the time

away. Later, as reason and method and purpose conjoined into a plan convincing even to himself, it became his impetus. His inspiration.

Leaning back and bringing up his fist, he punched his own reflection. The noise made one of the horses start, its hooves scrabbling in the snow.

Now his last doubts were gone.

A crack in the lacquer and a dent in the wood.

The driver soothed the horse, making low sounds to calm it. He did not try to dissuade his employer from further violence to the coach. It was not his place. It was not his coach.

Shaftesbury raised his hand, stinging from the blow, in apology to his driver. He smiled, as much at himself as at his man.

The door swung open. An arm extended from the interior to help him step up.

He settled himself on the cushioned seat, revelling in the smell of his own coach.

The window was a sheet of pierced tin. As the coach lurched forwards, he put a hand to its coldness to steady his view. Through these points of brightness, he observed the Lion's Tower shrink. He listened for sounds from the Royal Menagerie but heard only the thudding of hooves as his horses struggled for grip.

The animals remain while I leave, he thought, feeling pity for them.

Turning from the tin window, he looked towards his companion.

A lady in a long, intricately patterned dark blue coat. She looked about thirty years of age, her beauty not yet faded, although perhaps difficult to tell with her powder and rouge.

She flinched from Shaftesbury's look, pressing back into the cushioning to keep distance between them. He had the kind of stare that looked through you as much as at you.

'This day of freedom marks the start of my revenge,' he said.

Her eyes became glossy as tears formed in them.

He slapped her.

The trace of his hand was clear.

A red print on her cheek.



OF INFUSION

THE BRIGHT YELLOW WALLS OF ROBERT Hooke's drawing room made a startling contrast with the view through the window, of the wet slate sky over Bishopsgate and the anaemia of the falling snow.

More strong colours fought for domination. A crimson rug leaked between the legs of blue chairs. Their orange seat covers, imported gogram, clashed with the cerise of the table. At the windows hung purple velvet curtains, reaching to the floor. Sturdy linings reinforced their fabric for the nights when Hooke required complete darkness. A vase of Christmas roses, placed at the table's centre by Mary Robinson, the housekeeper, added bright whites and pinks.

Never afraid to make himself the subject of his own *experimentum crucis*, Hooke had chosen the colours for medicinal effect, to nourish his

weak frame. When working with Harry to build a half-scale model of a flying machine, he had suggested such retinal stimulation might hinder the choking of his nerves and discourage black bile.

Surely enough, Hooke soon put Tom Gyles to pulling up the old rush matting and painting the table and wainscoting. He dispatched Mary to Bloomsbury for the rug. Hooke himself chose the wallpaper, bought from an upholsterer at Whitehall.

Everything about Hooke's appearance, on the other hand, was drab. He sat near the fire, trying to warm after his return from the Fleet to his rooms at Gresham's College. His skin was pallid and lustreless. His greying hair, prone to breaking off, was now tied back with a charcoal-coloured ribbon. His silver eyes, which never settled, flickered about the objects in his drawing room.

The room also served as Hooke's laboratory. Plans and constructions for his demonstrations at the weekly meetings of the Royal Society covered the table behind him. His diary, detailing his busy life, weather observations, the always precarious state of his health and medications used to improve it, his finances and experimental ruminations, lay open across them, next to his microscope and his calculating machine. When Gottfried Leibniz had shown his own calculating machine to the Fellows of the Royal Society, Hooke commented he could make one with a tenth of the number of components, and at a twentieth of the size. He promptly did so.

A glass-fronted cabinet displayed his collection of fossils, the traces of creatures long since disappeared from Earth. Many came from the cliffs near his childhood home on the Isle of Wight, some from excavations for buildings in London, given by the workmen who knew of his interests.

Clocks stood about everywhere, most of them disembowelled, their innards spilt as if Hooke anatomised the grand complication of time itself.

Stalagmitic piles of books grew from the floor, inserted into them hundreds of loose sheets, Hooke's notes written across them in his tiny scrawl. More books filled the shelves lining the whole of one wall.

All his tools—saws of various sizes, vices, clamps, tongs, (one with an extending double joint of Hooke's own invention), turn-screws, perforators,

wrenches, and pliers—were organised on a large board. Each with its own place, either hanging from a nail or on a small shelf.

This neatness was not their natural state of rest. Harry had designed the system when he was Hooke's apprentice. Their temporary discipline was due to the previous morning's hunting and sorting by his replacement, Tom Gyles.

A door led to Hooke's observational turret, housing a pair of his larger telescopes and his selenoscope. Harry used to sit up there with Hooke, both of them wrapped in blankets, sipping hot chocolate.

Now it was Tom who learned the mysteries of the constellations, the names of stars and planets, and the mysterious attractions between them. The boy, just ten years old and already apprenticed, sat in among Hooke's things, mixing plaster for a model of the surface of the moon. He dreamed of exploring the oceans, and never tired of discussing with his master the mathematics of navigation, the problem of longitude, magnetic declination, and a clock to keep time at sea.

'I shall blow air through the plaster from beneath the model, before it has set,' Tom explained to Harry, smearing plaster over his forehead, 'to emulate its craters.'

Harry experienced an unsettling nostalgia for times spent at the table or crouched on the same bit of floor Tom now occupied. Shaping, carving, brazing, gluing. Now, he came by invitation, and the tools he knew so well altered subtly to his perception.

Harry had his own workshop, his own tools, his own methods of taxonomy and keeping to hand.

Visible through a doorway, Grace stood in the kitchen. She watched as Mary enticed a hare to leave its skin with a pull of her forearm. Its pelt slid from the animal, a sheath of pink-lined fur. A satisfying ripping sound accompanied her movement.

They spoke quietly, laughing often, but Harry could make out little of their conversation. Grace had the habit of talking behind her hand, so it was impossible to guess at the topic.

‘How go the springs, Mr. Hooke?’ Harry enquired, surreptitiously looking at Grace.

Hooke’s niece was too grand for him. Sir Thomas Bloodworth, Lord Mayor of London at the time of the Conflagration, had wanted her for his son, until she turned him down. Admiral Sir Robert Holmes, Governor of the Isle of Wight and scourge of the Dutch fleet, also harboured an affection.

‘Will you be ready with your paper?’ Harry added.

An expensive education paid for by her uncle, and the manners of a lady. No thoughts for a lowly Observer.

Hooke grunted at him. ‘I hope to have it in *Philosophical Transactions* soon enough.’

On the table was a wooden stand. A copper spring twisted into a claw at its lower end was suspended from it. A pile of weights sat by.

‘I consider the spring-like behaviour of the air.’ Hooke said. ‘A man might fly on the end of a sound-spring. I am too bogged in fantasy. I am like a cripple climbing stairs, my progress slow and painful to observe.’

‘And the world intrudes as ever. Sir Edmund’s man will be here presently, with the boy.’

‘Yes, yes,’ Hooke said. ‘Come closer to the fire, Harry. Mary has prepared me an infusion of catmint, to fend off the rheum. Somewhere, I have some steel wine. It is no wonder my understanding of this world proceeds slowly. Do my headaches and voidings of jelly signal the slipping of my faculties?’

Taking a place by the fire, next to where his soaking socks already hung, Harry skilfully kept Hooke away from expounding further on his ailments by offering to write an account of the boy at the Fleet. ‘We’ll be asked pertinent questions should there ever be a trial.’

Hooke sent Tom over to the window, instructing him to watch for Sir Edmund’s man. Vigilantly, Tom carried the board with his section of lunar surface, and some tube to blow through. The plaster started to stiffen.

Hooke poured the pan of steaming green liquid into a bowl. The bowl

had a chip on its rim, which he avoided. It would not have occurred to him to replace it. He took a chest-full of the steam before swallowing the catmint.

‘The tincture resembles that which it seeks to drain out, Harry. A happy coincidence of signatures auguring well!’

Harry, his clothes still damp, would have appreciated the offer of at least a sip of it.



HOOKE SAT WITH his catmint and stared up at the ceiling. He did not view beams and plaster, but pictured instead mud, snow, and the body of the boy.

‘What do we know about blood?’

‘To take the blood so completely is a difficult undertaking,’ Harry answered. ‘To infuse it into another, more difficult still.’

‘It demands knowledge of blood, and the course it takes about the body. Its flow, its pulsation, of the fabric of its conduits, of its sticky coagulation, and methods to prevent it stick. Of quills, capillary tubes, and funnels.’

‘Arthur Coga, he of the lamb’s blood, survived.’

‘Professor Denis, physician to the King’s cousin, placed the blood of a calf into a man who had suffered from a frenzy. The man pissed out black urine, then died.’

‘He’s the reason the Society forbade the continuance of infusion.’

Hooke took a tentative slurp of his drink. ‘Viscount Brouncker, our President, put a stop to it.’

Harry watched him swallow. ‘Witches are drained of their blood, to take away their power.’

‘It is not Christian to persecute superstitious people.’

‘There’s a broken line dividing religion, magic, and philosophy. I test all things according to my own yardstick. You’ve taught me to do that, Mr. Hooke, over our years together.’

‘There was a witch in Umbria, I recall, who used baby’s blood stirred with vulture’s fat. Another used toads, fed upon consecrated bread and wine.’

The toads were crushed into a powder and mixed with children's blood.'

Harry felt the need to compete. 'Another witch used the blood of a red-haired Catholic man, who she poisoned by the venomous stings of bees. She suspended him upside down, let his blood into a bowl and mixed it with the corpses of the bees that caused his death.'

'An efficient use of ingredients,' Hooke commented.

'This imparted the power of flight to the witch, who rubbed it on herself.'

'That, I would definitely be interested in,' Hooke said. 'I have long sought assistances to flying.'

He produced a pipe and some tobacco. Harry looked over at Tom, who looked happy enough, despite their conversation. He was busy blowing down a thick length of tube, forcing the almost-set plaster into strikingly crater-like forms.

'Every Scythian soldier drank the blood of the first man he overthrew in battle,' Hooke said.

'The Lydians made wounds in their arms, from which each covenanter sucked.'

'The way of the Arabians, when two men swear their friendship, is that a third makes a cut on the inside of the hand of each, and they all declaim to Bacchus and Urania of their oath.'

Harry tried to think of another one. 'Statues of Mary have been seen to weep tears of blood.'

'St. Catherine of Sienna. She attended executions, resting her head on the block to receive the blood of the sinner, so it would be accepted by Christ.'

'What of Sir Edmund's view, that the boy suffered a papist murder? The Catholics believe in transubstantiation, the changing of wine into the blood of Jesus, in their observance of the Eucharist.'

'It is not my blood that makes me an Anglican, Harry. It is my childhood, my history, and that of my parents.' Hooke stuck a taper in the fire and lit his pipe. 'It is not a thing innate. The Royal Society dictates modesty of aim and expression. We depend neither on Revelation, nor Epiphany. We

have learned through this century how such dogmatists hold a grip on our imaginations, urging men to unpardonable acts.'

Hooke exhaled. The tobacco smoke circled around him, catching the light, a halo missing its saint.

'Yet belief can alter the flesh,' Harry persevered. 'To be brought up a Catholic is to be brought up to believe. Belief in a cure may lead to recovery. Sailors tell of voodoo spells of the Western Indies, where to say a man is dead is enough to kill him, then to show him he can live again is enough to revivify him.'

'Perhaps we should not so easily dismiss Sir Edmund's fears.' Hooke tapped the end of his pipe on his front teeth. 'We are left with the questions: Why was this boy murdered? Why was his blood taken? How was it used? If for infusion, into whom was it infused?'

'Who killed him?' Harry added simply.

'The Justice took the letter left on the body. I am sure that will tell us all.'

'Not if he keeps it from us. Did you see the letter left on the boy? It was just numbers.'

'I will not speculate, Harry, with such little information. I have only *imagination*.'

Hooke used the word as if it were something despicable.

Harry fell silent, seeing the boy on the riverbank again, but moving, pushing himself up through the snow.

His mouth began to water, his own imagination making his nausea return.

Tom Gyles dropped his model onto one of the piles of books, making it rock perilously, before eventually settling.

'A dray arrives, Mr. Hooke,' he announced.