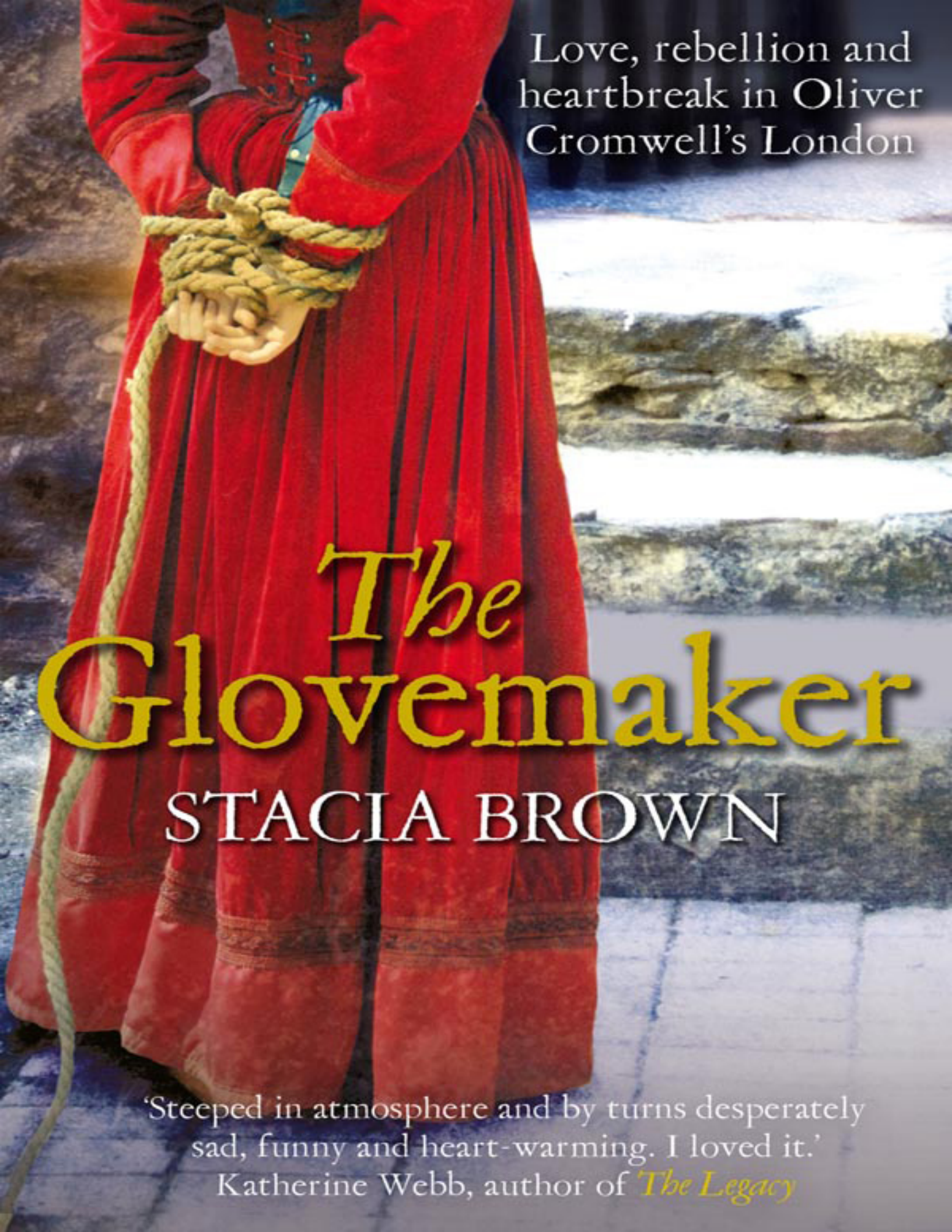


A woman wearing a long, flowing red dress with a high collar and laced-up bodice. Her hands are cuffed together in front of her with thick, light-colored rope. She is standing on a stone surface, possibly a wall or steps, with a blurred background of more stone and a hint of greenery.

Love, rebellion and  
heartbreak in Oliver  
Cromwell's London

# *The* Glovemaker

STACIA BROWN

'Steeped in atmosphere and by turns desperately  
sad, funny and heart-warming. I loved it.'

Katherine Webb, author of *The Legacy*

# Contents

About the Book  
About the Author  
Title Page  
Epigraph  
Prologue

November 1649

Chapter One  
Chapter Two  
Chapter Three  
Chapter Four  
Chapter Five  
Chapter Six  
Chapter Seven  
Chapter Eight  
Chapter Nine  
Chapter Ten

December 1649

Chapter Eleven  
Chapter Twelve  
Chapter Thirteen  
Chapter Fourteen  
Chapter Fifteen  
Chapter Sixteen  
Chapter Seventeen  
Chapter Eighteen  
Chapter Nineteen  
Chapter Twenty  
Chapter Twenty-one

January 1650

Chapter Twenty-two

Chapter Twenty-three

Chapter Twenty-four

Chapter Twenty-five

Chapter Twenty-six

Chapter Twenty-seven

Chapter Twenty-eight

Chapter Twenty-nine

Epilogue

Afterword: Secret Births in Early Modern England

Author's Note

Acknowledgments

Copyright

## About the Book

### **London. 1649.**

Charles I has been beheaded. Oliver Cromwell is running the country. And a law has been passed stating that any unmarried woman who conceals the death of her child is guilty of murder.

When a baby is found buried in the woods, all fingers point to Rachel Lockyer, an unmarried glovemaker who has been locked in a passionate love affair with political agitator William Walwyn. With William in the Tower, Rachel is alone, and although no one is certain that she was actually pregnant, she is arrested.

There's not much one woman can do against the might of Cromwell's court, and as her trial draws to its inevitable conclusion, Rachel's is not the only life that will change for ever.

Set in the streets and prisons of Puritan London, *The Glovemaker* is a remarkable tale of love and the miracles that can happen in even the darkest times.

## About the Author

Stacia Brown holds graduate degrees in religion and historical theology from Emory University. She began writing *The Glovemaker* from research conducted for her dissertation on martyrs in seventeenth-century England. This is her first novel.

*The*  
**Glovemaker**  
STACIA BROWN



arrow books

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?  
And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your  
Father.

— MATTHEW 10:29



## **An Act to Prevent the Destroying and Murdering of Bastard Children (1624)**

*WHEREAS MANY LEWD Women that have been delivered of Bastard Children, to avoid their shame and to escape punishment, do secretly bury or conceal the Death of their Children, and after, if the Child be found dead, the said Women do allege that the said Child was born dead, whereas it falleth out some times (although hardly it is to be probed,) that the said Child or Children were Murdered by the said Women their lewd Mothers, or by their assent or procurement.*

*For the preventing therefore of this great mischief, Be it Enacted by the Authority of this present Parliament, that if any Women after one month next ensuring the end of this next Session of Parliament, be delivered of any Issue of her body, Male or Female, which being born alive, should by the Laws of this Realm be a bastard, and that she endeavour privately either by drowning or secret burying thereof, or any other way, either by her self or the procuring of others, so to conceal the death thereof, as that it may not come to light, whether it were born alive or not, but be concealed, In every such case, the said Mother so offending shall suffer Death, as in case of murder, except such Mother can make proof by one Witness at the least, that the Child (whose death by her so intended to be concealed) was born dead.*

— **Corporation of London.** *Anno vicesimo primo  
Jacobi Regis, &c., 21 Jac. I c. 27*

---

## *Prologue*



MARY NEVER MEANT to be that kind of Huguenot. Since her husband's death she had worked hard to make herself invisible. For five years she had laboured in London as a glovemaker, slowly building the smooth façade of a widow's anonymity. Over time, most customers had forgotten her French name, had forgotten she was a stranger. She kept her head low. She spoke flawless English. But on the night of November 2, Mary du Gard came out from the shadows.

She did so grudgingly. In the first place, the moon was glaring and leering at her; she could not sleep. In the second place, her assistant was up to no good. So Mary pulled on her boots, pinned up her hair, changed her sleeping robe for a jersey skirt, and became what she'd never wanted to be: someone who got involved. She followed her assistant out the back door of the glove shop onto Warwick Lane. She crept behind at a safe remove, watching as Rachel Lockyer carried a tightly wrapped bundle half a mile north to the Smithfield market, past the old slaughterhouse, and to the edge of a thicketed woods beyond. Mary looked on but did not follow her in. Though a Protestant of the truest sort, she retained the common superstition that those woods were haunted at night.

The next morning, at first light, Mary asked God what she should do about what she had witnessed. And God said: You are My servant; you know what to do. Mary bowed her

head and wrestled with herself. Then she returned to the slaughterhouse. In the security of the morning sun she entered the woods and scrabbled up the bundle Rachel had buried. She brushed the dirt out of its crevices and wrapped her shawl around it, so she would not touch what was left. For a moment she was tempted to leave things as they were, to return it to the earth, to let God be the judge. But a pang of duty stabbed her. She pushed the shawl partly aside. What she saw was enough. Gently Mary lifted the bundle. She clutched it to her chest and carried it back to Warwick Lane. What she held was a talisman. What she held was a rupture. All manner of lies and deceptions would fall to their knees as she passed. And though Mary had never been a mother, she understood, better than most, that the lives of children are more complicated than the lives of men. So she made her way back to the glove shop with a heavy heart, and she hunted down her assistant, who was in the back room snipping satin and old velvet. She shoved the burden at her all in a rush, because she needed to be rid of it, because she wished she were someone else; and she said to Rachel Lockyer, quite clear and cold-like, colder than she felt, 'Is this yours? Is this what you have gone and done?'

That was when it started. It was 1649, the year everything happened, the year the wheels of providence rattled backward.

*November 1649*



# One



THOMAS BARTWAIN, CRIMINAL investigator commissioned by the Council of State, was standing outside the Sessions House in Old Bailey warming his bones under a weak London sun when he realised he was a quarter-hour late for his first deposition.

He coughed and checked his notes.

‘Christ,’ he muttered, and wobbled back into the courthouse as fast as his thick, bowed legs would let him. He handed his papers to his secretary, a tall and jaundiced man named White who in recent months had begun refusing to doff his hat to persons of authority. When Bartwain questioned this practice, given the volatile and warring times in which they lived, his secretary growled, ornery as a drunk without a drop, that his hat-doffing was no one’s business.

White glanced down at Bartwain’s notes. ‘You want to see *how* many witnesses today?’ His face wore a dour mien. ‘There is no way to interview all these people. You’re running late as it is.’

‘Their summonses have been delivered,’ the investigator said. ‘They will be arriving throughout the day. Knock on my door just before each hour so I don’t fall behind. You understand the severity of the accusations against this woman, this Leveller, this what’s-her-name.’

‘Rachel Lockyer,’ the secretary said.

‘Yes, that’s it. I need all the information I can find.’

White nodded reluctantly. ‘Shall I bring in your first witness? She’s here.’

‘Yes. Send her into my chambers. And bring me something to eat while you’re at it. I’m famished.’ The investigator coughed again. He was sixty-one years old and his lungs were not good. Ever since the Council of State had assigned him to investigate the discovery of a dead infant behind the Smithfield slaughterhouse, his wheezing had been worse than usual. He stepped into his chambers, squeezed his fleshy stomach behind the desk, and adjusted his powdered wig. Then he picked up his quill, which he wielded like a sceptre in between writing sentences.

Rachel Lockyer’s case had made its way to Bartwain’s doorstep ten days before and so far he detested everything about it. After receiving the coroner’s report, he had interviewed a handful of witnesses, most of whom volunteered neighbourhood gossip as testimony. From them Bartwain learned that Rachel was a spinster who lived independent of her mother (her father was dead), that she was poor (a glover’s assistant), and that she had spent time in the company of the Levellers (those political troublemakers), as had her younger brother, Robert, who’d recently been executed by firing squad for mutinying against his captain in the Parliamentary New Model Army. Only one witness, a grey-haired haberdasher named Katherine Chidley, had provided any information pertinent to the case at hand. Chidley recounted a series of examinations she had conducted of Rachel’s physical person and insisted Rachel had tried to hide a pregnancy from those who knew her. ‘She is the mother of that infant Widow du Gard found,’ Chidley declared. ‘I have no doubt of it.’ And while Chidley confessed she did not know the identity of the father, another witness – a homeless boy named Thom with a shock of orange hair whom White had had to drag in by summons and who remained reluctant to

talk until Bartwain bribed him with candied flowers, which the child gulped down whole – reported being asked to deliver a message from Rachel to one of the Leveller leaders, initials W.W., who at the time was incarcerated in the London Tower. The investigator knew those initials. They'd appeared on the cheap pamphlets and polemical treatises produced by the Levellers over the past few years of civil war. The Levellers were always being incarcerated for one thing or another, usually for seditious writing. Bartwain asked the boy what the message was and how this W.W. had answered it, but the boy claimed to have forgotten the message and added that he'd never reached the intended recipient – something about a lion distracting him. The investigator doubted this account but went ahead and added William Walwyn to his interview list. Of course, the question of paternity was less significant now than it would have been if the infant had survived. When a bastard child lived, the magistrates could invoke the Poor Law and order the father to pay a stipend to the local church for its upkeep. A non-compliant father could be sentenced to corporal punishment, most likely public whipping alongside the mother. If the child died, only the mother was held responsible. Still, Bartwain thought the lead worth investigating.

From the coroner he had learned that the newborn was female, dead less than three days at time of autopsy, and weighing six pounds and one-quarter ounce. Bartwain wondered about that one-quarter ounce. What part of an infant weighed this amount? A hand? A kneecap? He shuddered and spat into his empty water cup. He detested acts of violence against children. The coroner had said that the lungs were partly inflated, meaning the child had breathed outside the womb before it expired. The body was starting to decompose by the time of the autopsy. The earthworms had covered its little limbs, and moles had chewed through the cloth in which it was wrapped, while

beetles had settled in the orifices. The coroner also reported a ring of bluish bruises around the infant's neck, possibly made by string or twine. In his view, this suggested strangulation. But if someone was planning to lay a hand on a newborn, why clothe it first in a carefully sewn yellow dress?

Bartwain tried to imagine what had happened, tried to theorise what had befallen the infant in the minutes or hours before it passed. He considered most women to be deceptive and unreliable by nature, so for him, the challenge in such cases was to leave room for some sliver of innocence, for some possibility that a criminal act had *not* taken place. Still, if the woman was innocent, why would she hide the body?

The night before, the investigator's wife had asked why this case vexed him so. She had seen him preparing his research notes and poring over the autopsy report. Start with the pregnancy and build the investigation from there, she had said. If only it were so simple, Bartwain had replied. In situations like these, identifying the mother could be a vexing challenge. Whether or not an unmarried woman had been pregnant remained difficult to prove after the fact. Some maids were sly and cunning and wore wide skirts to conceal their condition; Bartwain knew of a servant in Worcester who'd told her mistress her swelling belly was not pregnancy but colic. The mistress believed her tale until the servant showed up lean and weeping one Sunday with a dead babe in her arms, saying she'd found it in the alley. Other times women would plead they had not realised their condition until the pangs of labour started. Bartwain found this argument from ignorance persuasive only in exceptional instances, as in a case last year of a thirteen-year-old maid whose master had dallied with her as she moved past the point of her maturation; she had no way to recognise the signs that followed. The same plea

would not suffice for a woman like Rachel Lockyer, a woman at the waning edge of the childbearing years.

At half past nine the Huguenot glover Mary du Gard entered the investigator's chambers. She looked a weary thirty. She wore a grey dress and a kerchief knotted around her shoulders. Her dark eyebrows almost touched.

'Sit.' The investigator motioned from behind his desk. 'Tell me your name for the record.'

She perched on the witness stool, visibly uncomfortable. 'Mary du Gard, sir. I am a widow. I would rather not be on the record.'

'You would rather not be on the record? You were the one who brought this case to the coroner's attention. Have you grown shy? Have you changed your opinion?'

She blinked. Bartwain's cheeks rounded into what on another face might have passed for a smile.

'Now,' he said, leaning forward, leaning all the way across his desk, 'if you are here to make my task harder, Widow du Gard, you may leave, and I shall send you back to whatever stinking village in France from which you came. But if you are here to obey the law, and to be a good Christian, then stay seated and tell me what you saw. I do not have all day.'

So Mary began, reluctantly, to talk. She had managed Du Gard Gloves since her husband had died in battle; a few months after that, she'd hired Rachel to help in the shop. Together the two women paid a fee to the leather sellers' company to become licensed vendors, though the business remained in the name of Mary's husband. They specialised in military gloves, but because of the war they spent most of their time dyeing gloves black for funerals. Mary's fingers, Bartwain noticed, were stained from dipping the gloves in dye.

Throughout Mary's deposition, which dragged on longer than most, the investigator kept growing distracted from the case; at one point he wandered off in the direction of

theology. He found his witness's manner dull and infuriating. She told him point by point about digging up a newborn in the woods behind the Smithfield slaughterhouse, but she took no initiative to explain what happened after. Bartwain wanted to know how Rachel had reacted when Mary returned to Warwick Lane and put the bundle into her arms. He wanted to know why Mary had banned Rachel from the glove shop that same day. Mary stared at him blankly and pretended not to understand. 'My English is not good,' she said, in perfect English. So Bartwain, intuitively shifting tactics, devoted the next thirty minutes to engaging her in a discussion of ideas. He wanted to catch her off-guard so she would talk. Also, he harboured a hobbyist's interest in the study of things religious. Although Mary was a Huguenot, or French Calvinist, her late husband had adopted the Particular Baptist faith when he moved to England, so Mary knew both factions. Bartwain asked her why the Particular Baptists believed Christ had died for some men only and not for the generality of them. She replied that Christ could not have died for all men because not all men were going to heaven. It made no sense for Him to die for someone if that person was going to spurn Him. Therefore, Christ must have died only for those He foreknew would respond positively. At this point Mary fell silent and eyed the floor.

'Can you confirm that what you unearthed was your assistant's?' the investigator abruptly asked. 'Are you quite certain the child belonged to her?' All he needed was one credible confirmation. The evidence required to indict a woman in such investigations was not stringent, not very stringent at all.

'Oh,' she said slowly, 'I could never be *completely* certain. But I lived with her, so I saw things.'

'Things? What kind of things?'

'To recount them would be too tedious.'

'I'm a criminal investigator. I specialise in the tedious.'

‘Well,’ she said, warming slightly, ‘I thought I heard Rachel the night before, in her room. She was in the throes of what sounded to me like a painful indigestion or labour. She would not let me in.’

‘Did you knock?’

Mary hesitated. ‘I called her name.’

‘Did she hear you?’

‘I am sure she did. I asked what she was doing. She had stuffed a cloth in the keyhole so I could not peek inside. She did not answer the door, so I went back to my room.’

‘This was the night of November second?’

‘No, sir. It was the night before. I told you. It was late; it was around one o’clock. And I did not see anything for certain. I only heard the sounds.’

‘Did you see her the next morning?’

‘Yes, sir, she came down to breakfast, but she was later than usual.’

‘Did you see signs of a delivery?’

‘Not then. But I went into her room later, while she was outside sweeping.’

‘She swept the walk the morning after she gave birth?’

‘She swept it the morning after I heard those sounds, yes, sir.’

Bartwain considered this. ‘What did you see while she was outside?’

‘Her bedclothes all in a heap on the floor, and blood staining them, though it looked as if she had attempted to clean them.’

‘Did you confront her?’

‘I tried.’

‘What did she say?’

‘Only that she was in her monthly time, and that was where the stains came from. She said she was feeling faint.’

‘And what was her appearance?’

‘Unseemly and pale. And leaner than she had been the previous weeks.’

I guess she would be, Bartwain thought.

'She didn't eat all day,' Mary went on with some feeling, 'even though we were having her favourite, ham and apple bake.'

I'd like some of that now, he said to himself. Where was White with his breakfast? 'Why did you decide to go to the slaughterhouse?'

'I was following her.'

'The same night you heard the sounds?'

'No, sir, the next night. I heard her moving around in her chambers again, and I was curious. So I followed her out the door. She crept out in the middle of the night.'

'What did you see?'

'She was carrying something small and close to her chest. She walked fast all the way to the Smithfield market. She buried the bundle by moonlight near the trees, and then I suppose she ran away.'

'So you stayed behind to uncover what she had buried?'

'No, sir. I went home. Rachel returned home too, later that night, very ill and in a fit, it seemed, so I helped her to bed. She would not speak a word. I returned to the market the next morning.'

'Why did you wait until the next day to go back?'

'Because those woods are not safe at night.'

'Ah. You think those woods are haunted.'

Mary reddened.

'I wonder what your late husband would think of your superstitions.'

'That isn't fair,' she told him.

'Nothing is fair.' Bartwain's lungs were threatening to spasm. He coughed into his handkerchief, discreetly checked the contents.

From research he had learned that Mary's Huguenot parents had died by fire for their faith when their daughter was ten; a man named Johannes du Gard had taken Mary under his care in the days following. The same man

married her three years later, for her protection, he said, and then went off to war against the Holy Roman Empire. He was gone off and on for twelve years, from what Bartwain could gather. When he returned, he found both his business and his place of worship destroyed, so he crossed the British Sea, wife in tow, to open a glove shop and die for Oliver Cromwell, who believed in the same God he did. Mary never had any children.

White knocked on the door. 'Your next witness is here.'

'You may go,' Bartwain said to Mary. 'But be prepared to testify if there is a trial. And I think there will be.' She excused herself and left, and he rose from his desk, wheezing, to find his pipe.

The investigator appreciated, at least in theory, why a woman might not want to come forward if she'd given birth to a *living* bastard. But why would a woman stay silent if she'd given birth to a child that died? Where dead illegitimates were concerned, the law turned on concealment. Bartwain lit his pipe, pondering. The reasonable thing for a woman to do in such situations was to come forward and confess she had delivered an illegitimate, explain it had died while she was in labour or shortly thereafter, and present it to the authorities for inspection. But time and again he'd seen women who acted contrary to common sense, women who insisted on disposing of the infants in their own secret way and who then tried to deny any wrongdoing when they were discovered. They failed to grasp that the 1624 Act to Prevent the Destroying and Murdering of Bastard Children declined to distinguish between murder and concealment. The law did not care about such details any more than it cared about the identity of the father. It kept things simple. Any unmarried woman who concealed her child's death could be declared guilty of its murder – why else would she need to hide it? If the death was hidden and the woman unmarried, she could be charged, tried, and executed.

Accordingly, all Bartwain needed to indict Rachel Lockyer for the crime of infant murder was proof she'd tried to hide a bastard's death and a reasonable assumption the child was hers. Whether or not she meant to harm it was not important; at least, not in the eyes of the law.

He could hear someone banging around in the hallway. 'White!' he called out. 'Where's my breakfast?'

His secretary appeared with a platter of duck eggs. Bartwain reached for two and shook them to test for doneness; they were hard-boiled, which made him unhappy, as he preferred his yolks runny. But he was ravenous, so he ate them all anyway, not troubling to remove the shells, stuffing the eggs one after the other into his mouth. 'Bring my next interview in,' he said between bites. 'I will get to the bottom of this case today or I am not Thomas Bartwain.' White inclined his head, though his subservience was unconvincing; he went into the corridor to fetch the next witness.

\*

Preparing for his depositions had led Bartwain to investigate the background of each of his interview subjects. Concerning the next woman on his list, however, he knew more about the husband. Everyone knew about Elizabeth Lilburne's husband. They called him Freeborn John, and when he was not earning a meagre living as a soap maker, he was working alongside William Walwyn – that W.W. whose full name appeared farther down on Bartwain's list – to organise a group of fiery apprentices, soldiers, and agitators in and around London and the Parliamentary army. Their enemies had given this group its name, accusing John and his friends of trying to 'level' men's estates and share all things in common. The Levellers had supported the Good Old Cause, the dream of a free republic, when civil war first broke out in 1642, and

they had continued to support it in succeeding years as Parliament's army warred against the king, or against royal tyranny, as some men – never Bartwain – described it. When Charles I was beheaded in January of 1649, some people blamed the Levellers and called them regicides. But Bartwain knew they did not have it in them to do anything so decisive or matter-of-fact. Since the Parliamentarians' victory, the Leveller crusade had begun to lose momentum – no one could quite tell which side the group was on, Bartwain thought.

He glanced down at his notes. Several years ago, when John Lilburne had spent time in Newgate Prison for harassing the Speaker of the House of Commons, his wife, Elizabeth, had joined him there. As a prisoner of the state, John had received the royal treatment. Elizabeth had received a toothless midwife, ordered down from the women's ward, to assist her as she birthed their daughter on the sticking straw. Bartwain shook his head; that was the sort of thing Leveller women did, stay with their husbands in prison. This past summer, he read on, Elizabeth had lost her two sons to smallpox.

He was picking the last of the eggshells from his teeth when his witness burst into the chambers, her yellow curls angry and springing. Before he could say a word, Elizabeth Lilburne supplied her name, place of birth, and current residence, then sat down on the witness stool. He barely had time to wipe his mouth, pick up his quill, and dunk it in the inkwell before she started attacking.

'You are in bed with the devil,' she told him. 'You report to the Council of State, which is an illegitimate government. You find women who are poor and vulnerable and accuse them of this and that, and then once you have convicted them you wash your hands and accept your payment. You are the devil's handyman.'

'Good morning to you as well,' he answered.

She delivered a blistering stare. From the pockmarks pitting her cheek, Bartwain guessed she had contracted the same illness that had taken her young sons. Apart from the scars, she was a handsome woman, he thought.

‘You support the work of men who fear the truth. You—’

‘I am not here to suppress the truth,’ he said wearily. ‘I am here to solicit it. I would be grateful if you would do me the courtesy of allowing me to carry out the work I have been commissioned to do. I am not here to listen to speeches.’

‘You are a hired dog.’

‘Please be careful what you say.’

‘Why, what would you have me say? The justices of the peace have already made up their minds about this case. I know how the courts of London work. They place the burden of proof on the defendant. I am the wife of John Lilburne. I know things.’

‘Tell me how you became acquainted with the case at hand.’

‘I have no relation to the case at hand.’

‘You just said this case was unfair, so clearly you know something about it. You are not a good liar. Your face is blooming red.’

‘Then you already know how I am acquainted with it, else you would not have called me in here.’ Elizabeth tapped her heel against the leg of the stool. He noticed her black boot, with its high arch and tarnished buckle.

‘You are friends with the woman under investigation?’

‘Yes.’

‘Tell me what you know, please.’

‘I have nothing to say.’

He waited. He did not think she was the kind of woman who could stay quiet long.

‘This is an illegal investigation,’ she flung at him, confirming Bartwain’s hypothesis, ‘and you are working for an illegal government. The Council of State is a

government of the sword, not of the people. So I have no words for you today, Investigator.'

'You will have to stop talking for me to believe that.'

'You treat me like a fool.'

'Be careful, or I will hold you in contempt.'

'You already do.'

They went back and forth, Bartwain making little headway. Elizabeth Lilburne was as belligerent as her husband. Finally he badgered her into admitting it was *possible* her friend Rachel Lockyer had been with child, and it was *possible* she had tried to hide this pregnancy from others, but he could not provoke her into saying anything definite. When he asked if Rachel could have laid a hand on her infant, Elizabeth's face darkened. Only a savage monster could harm its own young, she said. When he asked if Rachel had confided in her, perhaps confessing to some kind of mishap in childbirth, she retorted, 'Why would you care? The law still holds a woman responsible.' She went silent, holding the investigator's gaze.

If he could not wrangle information out of her directly, he would have to do so indirectly. 'Would you say Rachel Lockyer went into a fit of grief after her brother's execution this past spring?' he asked, trying not to sound suspicious.

'You mean his murder.'

'Call it what you will. Would you say she went into a fit of grief?'

Elizabeth was not falling for the question. 'I would not. For then you would use my words to paint her as a madwoman, capable of anything, even strangling her child.'

'So you admit the child was hers.'

'I was speaking hypothetically.'

'That is some sleight of hand,' he observed. 'You have spent too much time in your husband's company. I hear he can make a cunning argument masquerade as a plain one.'

'He speaks the truth,' she snapped. But her strained expression made Bartwain wonder if Elizabeth Lilburne

defended her famous husband more vigorously to others than she did to herself.

'I have read your Leveller pamphlets, with all their prattle about the rights and privileges and freedoms of the people. Did Rachel Lockyer believe those teachings?'

She looked at him, puzzled.

'I never knew any woman to harm her child without pleading some doctrine or justification to excuse herself,' he told her. ' "The child made me ill," she will say. "The child made me poor and wretched." It is the same principle you rebels and libertines rallied behind as you dragged this country into war. "The king makes us slaves," you said. "The king makes us pay taxes." Both of these—'

'The Levellers did not kill the king.'

Bartwain groaned. By nature he was not a political man. He did not think anyone could claim victory in the aftermath of civil war. How it was possible for a dead king to be the only one left standing at the end of a conflict, he didn't know. But it had happened. He waved Elizabeth's words away. 'You're missing my point. Both of these arguments are rooted in self-preservation. Both insist that what matters most is *my* life, *my* survival, even at the expense of others. Even at the expense of a child.' He should not have been discussing intellectual matters with a woman. When faced with a moral problem, with a case of conscience, as the casuists called it, women tried to solve their dilemmas by referring to examples and stories. They refused to think abstractly, to seek universal principles of reason.

'You think a woman such as Rachel Lockyer has the leisure to sit around and consider what law or doctrine she will use to justify her behaviour?' Elizabeth tossed back. 'You think she asks such questions while she is sweeping the walk or rolling out the dough before dawn – while she is up to her elbows in flour?'

‘If a woman has no time to think on such things, then why did you and Rachel Lockyer spend so many nights with the Levellers at the Whalebone tavern?’ He was genuinely curious. ‘What could you possibly have wanted that would make you leave the house?’

‘We wanted a drink,’ she said.

The investigator burst into laughter, which metamorphosed into a walloping cough. Spluttering, he called for White, who whisked into the chambers with a pitcher of water; White was used to this.

When Bartwain’s cough subsided he dabbed his eyes with a handkerchief. ‘You are not half bad, Mrs Lilburne.’ Then, taking a breath, he returned to his investigation. ‘Isn’t there anything at all you can tell me about these events? You might be called to testify if there is a trial. In the courtroom you will not have so much room to dodge and trim and equivocate.’

‘I’m not equivocating.’

‘You are,’ he said, ‘but I admire your effort and your talent.’ He rose from his desk, his stomach tipping it forward as he did. A stack of parchments slid to the floor. Elizabeth did not pause to help him retrieve them. She stepped over the papers with a queenly resolution and bade him good morning as she glided out of the chambers. He watched her leave the courthouse on her high-arched boots, saw her tightening the strings of her hat and shoving her blond curls under the brim.

## *Two*



BY THE START of his third interview, Bartwain's head was throbbing. He placed his head in his hands and pressed his fingers against his temples. He did not glance up when the Leveller William Walwyn entered his chambers.

'Name for the record,' Bartwain said into his papers.

'William Walwyn.'

'Title, living, lodgings.'

'Merchant. Former merchant. Formerly of the Merchant Adventurers Company. My home lies at the eastern end of Moorfields, just north of London.'

'Former?'

'Yes. I resigned.'

Bartwain raised his head. On first glance he was not impressed. His witness was silver-haired and lean from nine months in the Tower of London, with a restive, almost refractory stare. But then Walwyn turned to the side and Bartwain reconsidered his opinion. William Walwyn was one of those men who looked markedly different in profile. Viewed directly, his face tended toward the flat and pallid; he would strike you as the kind of man who rarely apologises. From the front he looked quarrelsome, abrupt, and his full forty-nine years. In profile, everything changed. If you were to assess him from the side, as Bartwain was doing, he became a lean and graceful man, a thinking man, a philosopher whose only fear was ignorance.

'I heard you broke your oath to the Merchant Adventurers, that you are now their Judas. Sit down.' Bartwain relit his pipe, which on long days gave him solace. 'I also hear you are trying your hand at medicine – at physic.'

Walwyn remained standing. 'Why does my profession concern you? I have no idea why I'm here; your secretary never bothered to tell me. Is this about John Lilburne's latest pamphlet? I don't know how many times I have to explain to you people I had no part in it. That last one was entirely John's.'

'I'm not interested in you Levellers and your seditious scribbling. I have brought you here on a serious subject. This is a murder investigation, Mr Walwyn.'

'Murder?'

'Yes. There is always a murder when I am on the case.'

'Who has been murdered?'

'We'll get to that.'

'Mr Bartwain,' Walwyn said, leaning forward, leaning all the way across the desk – rudely, the investigator thought – 'I have been under wrongful imprisonment in the Tower for the past nine months. I was released just a few days ago, and since obtaining my freedom I have been busy with household obligations. I have no knowledge of whatever hideous crime you are investigating.' He sat back.

'You Levellers are all the same.' Bartwain fought off a paroxysm of coughing. 'All of you talk about how busy you are. Too busy to think about doctrines, says one. Too busy to engage in king killing, says another. It's a wonder you have time to do anything. Yet here you are, a prolific writer. You know which one of your works is my favourite? I liked *The Power of Love*. I wonder why you wrote that one. It's not very political, is it?'

Walwyn looked at him.

'Now you see where we are heading? Now will you tell me about Rachel Lockyer?' He picked up his quill.