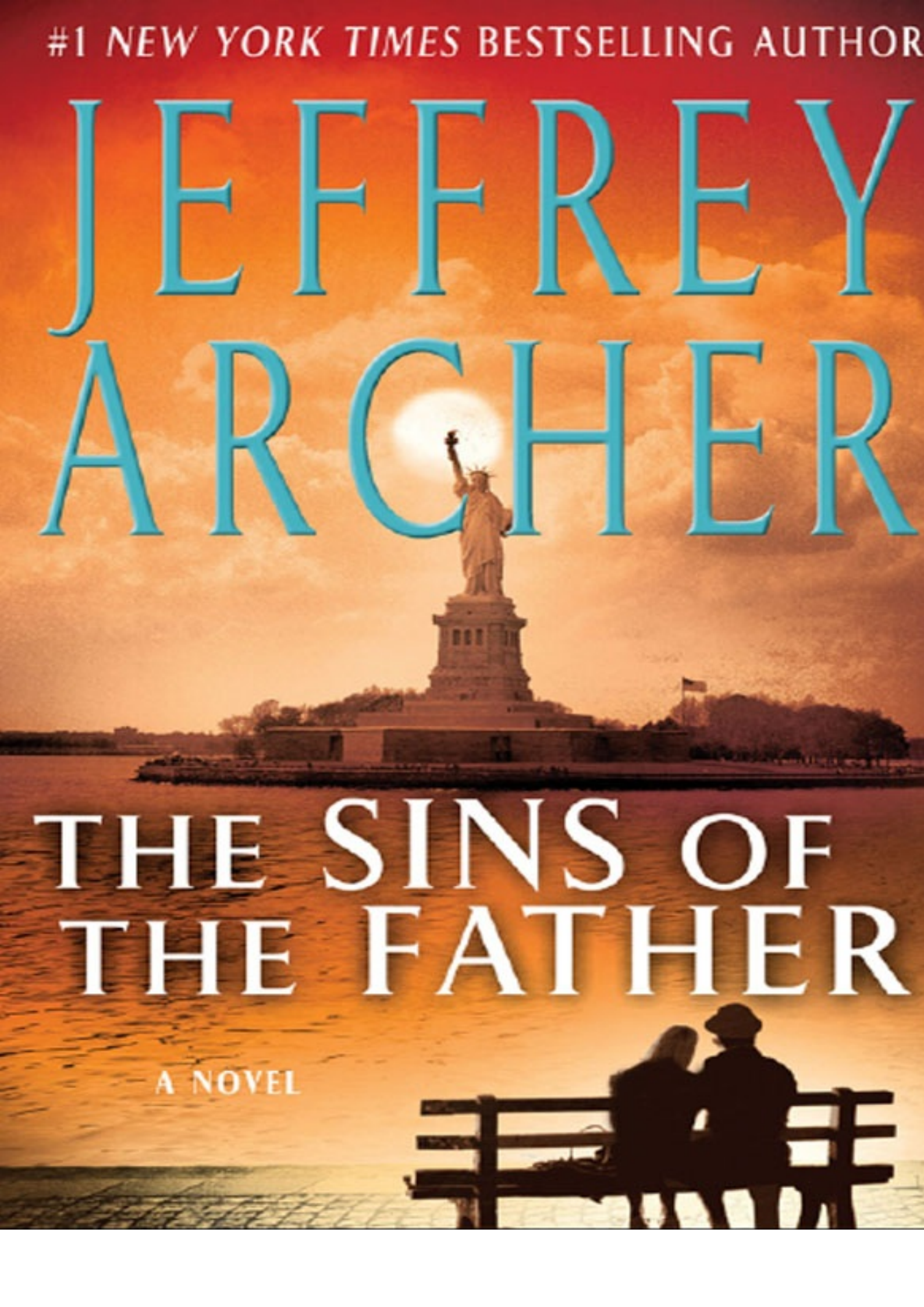


#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

JEFFREY ARCHER



THE SINS OF THE FATHER

A NOVEL



JEFFREY ARCHER

THE CLIFTON CHRONICLES VOLUME TWO

THE SINS OF THE FATHER

St. Martin's Press  New York

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Tom Guinzburg
1926–2010

My thanks go to the following people for their invaluable advice and research:

Simon Bainbridge, Eleanor Dryden, Dr. Robert Lyman FRHistS, Alison Prince, Mari Roberts and
Susan Watt

THE BARRINGTONS

Sir Walter m. Mary
Barrington Barrington
1866- 1874-

Phyllis — Andrew
1875- Harvey
1868-

m. Leticia
1878-

Nicholas
1894-1918

Hugo m. Elizabeth
1896- Harvey
1900-

Giles
1920-

Emma
1921-

Grace
1923-

THE CLIFTONS

Harold m. Vera
Tancock Prescott
1871- 1876-

Ray
1895-1917

Albert
1896-1917

Stanley
1898-

Maisie
1901-

m. Arthur
Clifton
1898-1921

Elsie
1908-1910

Harry
1920-

Sebastian
1940-

“For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation...”

Book of Common Prayer

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Copyright

HARRY CLIFTON

1939–1941

1

“MY NAME IS Harry Clifton.”

“Sure, and I’m Babe Ruth,” said Detective Kolowski as he lit a cigarette.

“No,” said Harry, “you don’t understand, there’s been a terrible mistake. I’m Harry Clifton, an Englishman from Bristol. I served on the same ship as Tom Bradshaw.”

“Save it for your lawyer,” said the detective, exhaling deeply and filling the small cell with a cloud of smoke.

“I don’t have a lawyer,” protested Harry.

“If I was in the trouble you’re in, kid, I’d consider having Sefton Jelks on my side to be about my only hope.”

“Who’s Sefton Jelks?”

“You may not have heard of the sharpest lawyer in New York,” said the detective as he blew out another plume of smoke, “but he has an appointment to see you at nine o’clock tomorrow morning and Jelks don’t leave his office unless his bill has been paid in advance.”

“But—” began Harry, as Kolowski banged the palm of his hand on the cell door.

“So when Jelks turns up tomorrow morning,” Kolowski continued, ignoring Harry’s interruption, “you’d better come up with a more convincing story than we’ve arrested the wrong man. You told the immigration officer that you were Tom Bradshaw, and if it was good enough for him, it’s going to be good enough for the judge.”

The cell door swung open, but not before the detective had exhaled another plume of smoke that made Harry cough. Kolowski stepped out into the corridor without another word and slammed the door behind him. Harry collapsed on to a bunk that was attached to the wall and rested his head on a brick-hard pillow. He looked up at the ceiling and began to think about how he’d ended up in a police cell on the other side of the world on a murder charge.

* * *

The door opened long before the morning light could creep through the bars of the window and into the cell. Despite the early hour, Harry was wide awake.

A warder strolled in carrying a tray of food that the Salvation Army wouldn’t have considered offering a penniless hobo. Once he’d placed the tray on the little wooden table, he left without a word.

Harry took one look at the food before beginning to pace up and down. With each step, he grew more confident that once he explained to Mr. Jelks the reason he’d exchanged his name with Tom Bradshaw, the matter would quickly be sorted out. Surely the worst punishment they could exact would be to deport him, and as he’d always intended to return to England and join the navy, it fitted in with his original plan.

At 8:55 a.m., Harry was sitting on the end of the bunk, impatient for Mr. Jelks to appear. The massive iron door didn’t swing open until twelve minutes past nine. Harry leaped up as a prison guard

stood to one side and allowed a tall, elegant man with silver gray hair to enter. Harry thought he must have been about the same age as Grandpa. Mr. Jelks wore a dark blue pinstripe, double-breasted suit, white shirt, and a striped tie. The weary look on his face suggested that little would surprise him.

“Good morning,” he said, giving Harry a faint smile. “My name is Sefton Jelks. I am the senior partner of Jelks, Myers and Abernathy, and my clients, Mr. and Mrs. Bradshaw, have asked me to represent you in your upcoming trial.”

Harry offered Jelks the only chair in his cell, as if he was an old friend who had dropped in to his study at Oxford for a cup of tea. He perched on the bunk and watched the lawyer as he opened his briefcase, extracted a yellow pad and placed it on the table.

Jelks took a pen from an inside pocket and said, “Perhaps you might begin by telling me who you are, as we both know you’re not Lieutenant Bradshaw.”

If the lawyer was surprised by Harry’s story he showed no sign of it. Head bowed, he wrote copious notes on his yellow pad while Harry explained how he’d ended up spending the night in jail. Once he finished, Harry assumed his problems must surely be over, as he had such a senior lawyer on his side—that was, until he heard Jelks’s first question.

“You say that you wrote a letter to your mother while you were on board the *Kansas Star* explaining why you had assumed Tom Bradshaw’s identity?”

“That’s correct, sir. I didn’t want my mother to suffer unnecessarily, but at the same time I needed her to understand why I’d made such a drastic decision.”

“Yes, I can understand why you might have considered that changing your identity would solve all your immediate problems, while not appreciating that it could involve you in a series of even more complicated ones,” said Jelks. His next question surprised Harry even more. “Do you recall the contents of that letter?”

“Of course. I wrote and rewrote it so many times I could reproduce it almost verbatim.”

“Then allow me to test your memory,” Jelks said and, without another word, tore off a sheet from his yellow pad and handed it and his fountain pen to Harry.

Harry spent some time recalling the exact words, before he set about rewriting the letter.

My dearest mother,

I have done everything in my power to make sure you receive this letter before anyone can tell you that I died at sea. As the date on this letter shows, I did not perish when the Devonian was sunk on September 4th. In fact, I was plucked out of the sea by a sailor from an American ship and thanks to him, I’m still very much alive. However, an unexpected opportunity arose for me to assume another man’s identity, and I did so willingly, in the hope it would release Emma from the many problems I seem to have unwittingly caused her and her family over the years.

It is important that you realize my love for Emma has in no way diminished; far from it. I cannot believe I shall ever experience such love again. But I do not feel I have the right to expect her to spend the rest of her life clinging on to the vain hope that at some time in the future I might be able to prove that Hugo Barrington is not my father, and that I am, in fact, the son of Arthur Clifton. At least this way, she can consider a future with someone else. I envy that man.

I plan to return to England on the first available ship, so should you receive any communication from a Tom Bradshaw, you can assume it’s me. I’ll be in touch with you the moment I set foot in Bristol, but in the meantime, I must beg you to keep my secret as steadfastly as you kept your own for so many years.

When Jelks had finished reading the letter, he once again took Harry by surprise. “Did you post the letter yourself, Mr. Clifton,” he asked, “or did you give that responsibility to someone else?”

For the first time Harry felt suspicious, and decided not to mention that he’d asked Dr. Wallace to deliver the letter to his mother when he returned to Bristol in a fortnight’s time. He feared that Jelks might persuade Dr. Wallace to hand over the letter and then his mother would have no way of knowing he was still alive.

“I posted the letter when I came ashore,” he said.

The elderly lawyer took his time before he responded. “Do you have any proof that you are Harry Clifton, and not Thomas Bradshaw?”

“No, sir, I do not,” said Harry without hesitation, painfully aware that no one on board the *Kansas Star* had any reason to believe he wasn’t Tom Bradshaw, and the only people who could verify his story were on the other side of the ocean, more than three thousand miles away, and it would not be long before they were all informed that Harry Clifton had been buried at sea.

“Then I may be able to assist you, Mr. Clifton. That’s assuming you still wish Miss Emma Barrington to believe you are dead. If you do,” said Jelks, an insincere smile on his face, “I may be able to offer a solution to your problem.”

“A solution?” said Harry, looking hopeful for the first time.

“But only if you felt able to retain the persona of Thomas Bradshaw.”

Harry remained silent.

“The district attorney’s office has accepted that the charge against Bradshaw is at best circumstantial, and the only real evidence they are clinging on to is that he left the country the day after the murder had been committed. Aware of the weakness of their case, they have agreed to drop the charge of murder if you felt able to plead guilty to the lesser charge of desertion while serving the armed forces.”

“But why would I agree to that?” asked Harry.

“I can think of three good reasons,” replied Jelks. “Firstly, if you don’t, you’re likely to end up spending six years in prison for entering the United States on false pretenses. Secondly, you would retain your anonymity, so the Barrington family would have no reason to believe you are still alive. And thirdly, the Bradshaws are willing to pay you ten thousand dollars if you take their son’s place.”

Harry realized immediately that this would be an opportunity to repay his mother for all the sacrifices she’d made for him over the years. Such a large sum of money would transform her life, making it possible for her to escape the two-up-two-down in Still House Lane, along with the weekly knock on the door from the rent collector. She might even consider giving up her job as a waitress at the Grand Hotel and start living an easier life, although Harry thought that was unlikely. But before he agreed to fall in with Jelks’s plans, he had some questions of his own.

“Why would the Bradshaws be willing to go through with such a deception, when they must not know that their son was killed at sea?”

“Mrs. Bradshaw is desperate to have Thomas’s name cleared. She will never accept that one of her sons might have killed the other.”

“So is that what Tom is accused of—murdering his brother?”

“Yes, but as I said, the evidence is flimsy and circumstantial, and certainly wouldn’t stand up in

court, which is why the DA's office is willing to drop the charge, but only if we agree to plead guilty to the lesser charge of desertion."

"And how long might my sentence be, if I agreed to that?"

"The DA has agreed to recommend to the judge that you're sentenced to one year, so with good behavior you could be free in six months; quite an improvement on the six years you can expect if you go on insisting that you're Harry Clifton."

"But the moment I walk into the courtroom, someone's bound to realize that I'm not Bradshaw."

"Unlikely," said Jelks. "The Bradshaws hail from Seattle, on the west coast, and although they're well off, they rarely visit New York. Thomas joined the navy when he was seventeen, and as you know to your cost, he hasn't set foot in America for the past four years. And if you plead guilty, you'll only be in the courtroom for twenty minutes."

"But when I open my mouth, won't everyone know I'm not an American?"

"That's why you won't be opening your mouth, Mr. Clifton." The urbane lawyer seemed to have an answer for everything. Harry tried another ploy.

"In England, murder trials are always packed with journalists, and the public queue up outside the courtroom from the early hours in the hope of getting a glimpse of the defendant."

"Mr. Clifton, there are fourteen murder trials currently taking place in New York, including the notorious 'scissors stabber.' I doubt if even a cub reporter will be assigned to this case."

"I need some time to think about it."

Jelks glanced at his watch. "We're due in front of Judge Atkins at noon, so you have just over an hour to make up your mind, Mr. Clifton." He called for a guard to open the cell door. "Should you decide not to avail yourself of my services I wish you luck, because we will not be meeting again," Jelks added before he left the cell.

Harry sat on the end of the bunk, considering Sefton Jelks's offer. Although he didn't doubt that the silver-haired counsel had his own agenda, six months sounded a lot more palatable than six years, and who else could he turn to, other than this seasoned lawyer? Harry wished he could drop into Sir Walter Barrington's office for a few moments and seek his advice.

* * *

An hour later, Harry, dressed in a dark blue suit, cream shirt, starched collar and a striped tie, was handcuffed, marched from his cell to a prison vehicle and driven to the courthouse under armed guard.

"No one must believe you're capable of murder," Jelks had pronounced after a tailor had visited Harry's cell with half a dozen suits, shirts and a selection of ties for him to consider.

"I'm not," Harry reminded him.

Harry was reunited with Jelks in the corridor. The lawyer gave him that same smile before pushing his way through the swing doors and walking down the center aisle, not stopping until he reached the two vacant seats at counsel's table.

Once Harry had settled into his place and his handcuffs had been removed, he looked around the almost empty courtroom. Jelks had been right about that. Few members of the public, and certainly no press, seemed interested in the case. For them, it must have been just another domestic murder, where the defendant was likely to be acquitted; no "Cain and Abel" headlines while there was no possibility of the electric chair in court number four.

As the first chime rang out to announce midday, a door opened on the far side of the room and Judge Atkins appeared. He walked slowly across the court, climbed the steps and took his place behind a desk on the raised dais. He then nodded in the direction of the DA, as if he knew exactly what he was

about to say.

A young lawyer rose from behind the prosecutor's desk and explained that the state would be dropping the murder charge, but would be pursuing Thomas Bradshaw on a charge of desertion from the U.S. Navy. The judge nodded, and turned his attention to Mr. Jelks, who rose on cue.

"And on the second charge, of desertion, how does your client plead?"

"Guilty," said Jelks. "I hope your honor will be lenient with my client on this occasion, as I don't need to remind you, sir, that this is his first offense, and before this uncharacteristic lapse he had an unblemished record."

Judge Atkins scowled. "Mr. Jelks," he said, "some may consider that for an officer to desert his post while serving his country is a crime every bit as heinous as murder. I'm sure I don't have to remind you that until recently such an offense would have resulted in your client facing a firing squad."

Harry felt sick as he looked up at Jelks, who didn't take his eyes off the judge.

"With that in mind," continued Atkins, "I sentence Lieutenant Thomas Bradshaw to six years in jail." He banged his gavel and said, "Next case," before Harry had a chance to protest.

"You told me—" began Harry, but Jelks had already turned his back on his former client and was walking away. Harry was about to chase after him, when the two guards grabbed him by the arms and thrust them behind his back and quickly handcuffed the convicted criminal, before marching him across the courtroom toward a door Harry hadn't noticed before.

He looked back to see Sefton Jelks shaking hands with a middle-aged man who was clearly congratulating him on a job well done. Where had Harry seen that face before? And then he realized—it had to be Tom Bradshaw's father.

2

HARRY WAS MARCHED unceremoniously down a long, dimly lit corridor and out of an unmarked door into a barren courtyard.

In the middle of the yard stood a yellow bus that displayed neither number nor any hint of its destination. A muscle-bound conductor clutching a rifle stood by the door, and nodded to indicate that Harry should climb on board. His guards gave him a helping hand, just in case he was having second thoughts.

Harry took a seat and stared sullenly out of the window as a trickle of convicted prisoners were led up to the bus, some with their heads bowed, while others, who had clearly trodden this path before, adopted a jaunty swagger. He assumed it wouldn't be long before the bus set off for its destination, wherever that might be, but he was about to learn his first painful lesson as a prisoner: once you've been convicted, no one is in any hurry.

Harry thought about asking one of the guards where they were going, but neither of them looked like helpful tour guides. He turned anxiously when a body slumped into the seat next to him. He didn't want to stare at his new companion, but as the man introduced himself immediately, Harry took a closer look at him.

"My name's Pat Quinn," he announced with a slight Irish accent.

"Tom Bradshaw," said Harry, who would have shaken hands with his new companion if they hadn't both been handcuffed.

Quinn didn't look like a criminal. His feet barely touched the ground, so he couldn't have been an inch over five feet, and whereas most of the other prisoners on the bus were either muscle-bound or simply overweight, Quinn looked as if a gust of wind would blow him away. His thinning red hair was beginning to gray, although he couldn't have been a day over forty.

"You're a first-timer?" said Quinn confidently.

"Is it that obvious?" asked Harry.

"It's written all over your face."

"What's written all over my face?"

"You haven't got a clue what's going to happen next."

"So *you're* obviously not a first-timer?"

"This is the eleventh time I've been on this bus, or it could be the twelfth."

Harry laughed for the first time in days.

"What are you in for?" Quinn asked him.

"Desertion," Harry replied, without elaboration.

"Never heard of that one before," said Quinn. "I've deserted three wives, but they never put me in the slammer for it."

"I didn't desert a wife," said Harry, thinking about Emma. "I deserted the Royal Navy—I mean the navy."

“How long did you get for that?”

“Six years.”

Quinn whistled through his two remaining teeth. “Sounds a bit rough. Who was the judge?”

“Atkins,” said Harry with feeling.

“Arnie Atkins? You got the wrong judge. If you’re ever on trial again, make sure you pick the right judge.”

“I didn’t know you could pick your judge.”

“You can’t,” said Quinn, “but there are ways of avoiding the worst ones.” Harry looked more closely at his companion, but didn’t interrupt. “There are seven judges who work the circuit, and you need to avoid two of them at all costs. One is Arnie Atkins. He’s short on humor and long on sentencing.”

“But how could I have avoided him?” asked Harry.

“Atkins has presided over court four for the past eleven years, so if I’m heading in that direction, I’ll have an epileptic fit and the guards take me off to see the court doctor.”

“You’re an epileptic?”

“No,” said Quinn, “you’re not paying attention.” He sounded exasperated, and Harry fell silent. “Even if the time I’ve staged a recovery, they will have allocated my case to another court.”

Harry laughed for the second time. “And you get away with it?”

“No, not always, but if I end up with a couple of rookie guards, I’m in with a chance, though it’s getting more difficult to pull the same stunt again and again. I didn’t need to bother this time because I was taken straight to court two, which is Judge Regan’s territory. He’s Irish—like me, just in case you hadn’t noticed—so he’s more likely to give a fellow countryman a minimum sentence.”

“What was your offense?” asked Harry.

“I’m a pickpocket,” Quinn announced, as if he were an architect or a doctor. “I specialize in racketeering meetings in the summer and boxing halls in the winter. It’s always easier if the marks are standing up,” he explained. “But my luck’s been running short recently because too many stewards recognize me, so I’ve had to work the subway and the bus depots, where the pickings are slim and you’re more likely to be caught.”

Harry had so much he wanted to ask his new tutor and, like an enthusiastic student, he concentrated on the questions that would help him pass the entrance exam, rather pleased that Quinn hadn’t questioned his accent.

“Do you know where we’re going?” he asked.

“Lavenham or Pierpoint,” said Quinn. “All depends on whether we come off the highway at exit twelve or fourteen.”

“Have you been to either of them before?”

“Both, several times,” said Quinn matter-of-factly. “And before you ask, if there was a tourist guide to prisons, Lavenham would get one star and Pierpoint would be closed down.”

“Why don’t we just ask the guard which one we’re going to?” said Harry, who wanted to be put off of his misery.

“Because he’d tell us the wrong one, just to piss us off. If it’s Lavenham, the only thing you need to worry about is which block they put you on. As you’re a first-timer you’ll probably end up on A block, where life is a lot easier. The old-timers, like me, are usually sent to D block, where there’s no one under thirty and no one with a record for violence, so it’s the ideal set-up if you just want to keep your head down and do your time. Try to avoid B and C block—they’re both full of hopheads and psychos.”

“What do I have to do to make sure I end up on A block?”

“Tell the reception officer you’re a devout Christian, don’t smoke and don’t drink.”

“I didn’t know you were allowed to drink in prison,” said Harry.

“You aren’t, you stupid fucker,” said Quinn, “but if you can supply the greenbacks,” he added, rubbing a thumb against the tip of his index finger, “the guards suddenly become barmen. Even prohibition didn’t slow them down.”

“What’s the most important thing for me to watch out for on my first day?”

“Make sure you get the right job.”

“What’s the choice?”

“Cleaning, kitchen, hospital, laundry, library, gardening, and the chapel.”

“What do I have to do to get in the library?”

“Tell ’em you can read.”

“What do you tell them?” asked Harry.

“That I trained as a chef.”

“That must have been interesting.”

“You still haven’t caught on, have you?” said Quinn. “I never trained as a chef, but it means I’ve always put in the kitchen, which is the best job in any prison.”

“Why’s that?”

“You’re let out of your cell before breakfast, and you don’t go back to it until after dinner. It’s warm, and you have the best choice of food. Ah, we’re going to Lavenham,” said Quinn as the bus turned off the highway at exit 12. “That’s good, ’cause now I won’t have to answer any dumb questions about Pierpoint.”

“Anything else I ought to know about Lavenham?” asked Harry, unperturbed by Quinn’s sarcasm, as he suspected that the old-timer was enjoying delivering a master class to such a willing pupil.

“Too much to tell you,” he sighed. “Just remember to stick close by me once we’ve been registered.”

“But won’t they automatically send you to D block?”

“Not if Mr. Mason’s on duty,” Quinn said without explanation.

Harry managed several more questions before the bus finally drew up outside the prison. In fact, he felt he’d learned more from Quinn in a couple of hours than he’d managed in a dozen tutorials at Oxford.

“Stick with me,” repeated Quinn as the massive gates swung open. The bus moved slowly forward and on to a desolate piece of scrubland that had never seen a gardener. It stopped in front of a vast brick building that displayed rows of small filthy windows, some with eyes staring out of them.

Harry watched as a dozen guards formed a corridor that led all the way to the entrance of the prison. Two armed with rifles had planted themselves on either side of the bus door.

“Leave the bus in twos,” one of them announced gruffly, “with a five-minute interval between each pair. No one moves an inch unless I say so.”

Harry and Quinn remained on the bus for another hour. When they were finally ushered off, Harry looked up at the high walls topped with barbed wire that surrounded the entire prison and thought even the world record holder for the pole vault wouldn’t have been able to escape from Lavenham.

Harry followed Quinn into the building, where they came to a halt in front of an officer who was seated behind a table and wearing a well-worn shiny blue uniform with buttons that didn’t shine. He looked as if he’d already served a life sentence as he studied the list of names on his clipboard. He smiled when he saw the next prisoner.

“Welcome back, Quinn,” he said. “You won’t find much has changed since you were last here.”

Quinn grinned. "It's good to see you too, Mr. Mason. Perhaps you'd be kind enough to ask one of the bell hops to take my luggage up to my usual room."

"Don't push your luck, Quinn," said Mason, "otherwise I might be tempted to tell the new doctor you're not an epileptic."

"But, Mr. Mason, I've got a medical certificate to prove it."

"From the same source as your chef's certificate no doubt," said Mason, turning his attention to Harry. "And who are you?"

"This is my buddy, Tom Bradshaw. He doesn't smoke, drink, swear or spit," said Quinn before Harry had a chance to speak.

"Welcome to Lavenham, Bradshaw," said Mason.

"Captain Bradshaw actually," said Quinn.

"It used to be Lieutenant," said Harry. "I was never a captain." Quinn looked disappointed with his protégé.

"A first-timer?" asked Mason, taking a closer look at Harry.

"Yes, sir."

"I'll put you on A block. After you've showered and collected your prison clothes from the storeroom, Mr. Hessler will take you to cell number three-two-seven." Mason checked his clipboard before turning to a young officer who was standing behind him, a truncheon swinging from his right hand.

"Any hope of joining my friend?" asked Quinn once Harry had signed the register. "After all, Lieutenant Bradshaw might need a batman."

"You're the last person he needs," said Mason. Harry was about to speak as the pickpocket bent down, removed a folded dollar bill from inside his sock and slipped it into Mason's top pocket in the blink of an eye. "Quinn will also be in cell three-two-seven," said Mason to the junior officer. Hessler had witnessed the exchange, he didn't comment. "You two, follow me," was all he said.

Quinn chased after Harry before Mason could change his mind.

The two new prisoners were marched down a long green brick corridor until Hessler stopped outside a small shower room that had two narrow wooden benches fixed to the wall, littered with discarded towels.

"Strip," said Hessler, "and take a shower."

Harry slowly removed the tailored suit, smart cream shirt, stiff collar and striped tie that Mr. Jellison had been so keen for him to wear in court to impress the judge. The trouble was, he'd picked the wrong judge.

Quinn was already under the shower before Harry had unlaced his shoes. Quinn turned on the tap and a trickle of water reluctantly dripped down on to his balding head. He then picked up a sliver of soap from the floor and began to wash. Harry stepped under the cold water of the only other shower and a moment later Quinn passed him what was left of the soap.

"Remind me to speak to the management about the facilities," said Quinn as he picked up a damp towel, not much bigger than a dishcloth, and attempted to dry himself.

Hessler's lips remained pursed. "Get dressed and follow me," he said, before Harry had finished soaping himself.

Once again Hessler marched off down the corridor at a brisk pace, with a half-dressed, still wet Harry chasing after him. They didn't stop until they came to a double door marked STORES. Hessler rapped firmly and a moment later it was pulled open to reveal a world-weary officer, elbows on the counter, smoking a rolled cigarette. The officer smiled when he saw Quinn.

"I'm not sure we've got your last lot back from the laundry yet, Quinn," he said.

“Then I’ll need a new set of everything, Mr. Newbold,” said Quinn, who bent down and removed something from inside his other sock, and once again it disappeared without trace. “My requirements are simple,” he added. “One blanket, two cotton sheets, one pillow, one pillowcase...” The officer selected each item from the shelves behind him, before placing them in a neat pile on the counter. “. . . Two shirts, three pairs of socks, six pairs of pants, two towels, one bowl, one plate, one knife, fork and spoon, one razor, one toothbrush, and one tube of toothpaste—I prefer Colgate.”

Newbold made no comment as Quinn’s pile grew larger and larger. “Will there be anything else?” he eventually asked, as if Quinn were a valued customer who was likely to return.

“Yes, my friend Lieutenant Bradshaw will require the same order, and as he is an officer and a gentleman, be sure that he gets only the best.”

To Harry’s surprise, Newbold began to build another pile, seeming to take his time selecting each item, and all because of the prisoner who’d sat next to him on the bus.

“Follow me,” said Hessler when Newbold had completed his task. Harry and Pat grabbed their pile of clothes and charged off down the corridor. There were several stops on the way, as a duty officer had to unlock and lock barred gates as they came nearer to the cells. When they eventually stepped out to the wing, they were greeted by the noise of a thousand prisoners.

Quinn said, “I see we’re on the top floor, Mr. Hessler, but I won’t be taking the elevator, as I need the exercise.” The officer ignored him and continued past the shouting prisoners.

“I thought you said this was the quiet wing,” said Harry.

“It’s clear Mr. Hessler is not one of the more popular officers,” whispered Quinn, just before the three of them reached cell 327. Hessler unlocked the heavy iron door and pulled it open to allow the new con and the old con to enter the home Harry had a lease on for the next six years.

Harry heard the door slam behind him. He looked around the cell, and noticed there was no handle on the inside of the door. Two bunks, one on top of the other, a steel wash basin attached to the wall, a wooden table, also attached to the wall, and a wooden chair. His eyes finally settled on a steel bowl under the lower bunk. He thought he was going to be sick.

“You get the top bunk,” said Quinn, interrupting his thoughts, “on account of you being a first timer. If I get out before you, you’ll move down to the bottom one, and your new cellmate will get the top. Prison etiquette,” he explained.

Harry stood on the bottom bunk and slowly made up his bed, then climbed up, lay down and placed his head on the thin, hard pillow, painfully aware that it might be some time before he managed a night’s sleep. “Can I ask you one more question?” he said to Quinn.

“Yes, but don’t speak again until lights on tomorrow morning.” Harry recalled Fisher saying almost the same words on his first night at St. Bede’s.

“It’s obvious you’ve been able to smuggle in a considerable amount of cash, so why didn’t the guards confiscate it as soon as you got off the bus?”

“Because if they did,” said Quinn, “no con would ever bring in any money again, and the whole system would break down.”

3

HARRY LAY ON the top bunk and stared at the one-coated white ceiling that he could touch by reaching up with his fingers. The mattress was lumpy and the pillow so hard that he could only manage to sleep for a few minutes at a time.

His thoughts turned to Sefton Jelks and how easily he had been duped by the old advocate. Get my son off the murder charge, that's all I care about, he could hear Tom Bradshaw's father telling Jelks. Harry tried not to think about the next six years, which Mr. Bradshaw didn't care about. Had it been worth \$10,000?

He dismissed his lawyer and thought about Emma. He missed her so much, and wanted to write and tell her he was still alive, but he knew he couldn't. He wondered what she would be doing on an autumn day in Oxford. How was her work progressing as she began her freshman year? Was she being courted by another man?

And what of her brother, Giles, his closest friend? Now that Britain was at war, had Giles left Oxford and signed up to fight the Germans? If he had, Harry prayed that he was still alive. He thumped the side of the bunk with a clenched fist, angry that he was not being allowed to play his part. Quinn didn't speak, assuming that Harry was suffering "first-night-itis."

And what of Hugo Barrington? Had anyone seen him since he disappeared on the day Harry should have married his daughter? Would he find a way of creeping back into favor, when everyone believed Harry was dead? He dismissed Barrington from his mind, still unwilling to accept the possibility that the man might be his father.

When his thoughts turned to his mother, Harry smiled, hoping that she would make good use of the \$10,000 Jelks had promised to send her once he'd agreed to take the place of Tom Bradshaw. With over £2,000 in the bank, Harry hoped she would give up her job as a waitress at the Grand Hotel and buy that little house in the country she'd always talked about; that was the only good thing that would come out of this whole charade.

And what of Sir Walter Barrington, who had always treated him like a grandchild? If Hugo was Harry's father, then Sir Walter *was* his grandfather. If that turned out to be the case, Harry would be in line to inherit the Barrington estate and the family title, and would in time become Sir Harry Barrington. But not only did Harry want his friend Giles, Hugo Barrington's legitimate son, to inherit the title, even more important, he was desperate to *prove* that his real father was Arthur Clifton. That would still give him an outside chance of being able to marry his beloved Emma. Harry tried to forgive where he'd be spending the next six years.

* * *

At seven o'clock a siren sounded to wake those prisoners who had served long enough to enjoy a night's sleep. You're not in prison when you're asleep, were the last words Quinn had muttered before falling into a deep slumber, then snoring. It didn't bother Harry. As a snorer, his uncle Stan was in

different class.

Harry had made up his mind about several things during his long, sleepless night. To help pass the numbing cruelty of wasted time, "Tom" would be a model prisoner, in the hope that his sentence would be reduced for good behavior. He would get a job in the library, and write a diary about what had happened before he was sentenced, and everything that took place while he was behind bars. He would keep himself fit, so that if war was still raging in Europe, he would be ready to sign up the moment he was released.

Quinn was already dressed by the time Harry climbed down from the top bunk.

"What now?" asked Harry, sounding like a new boy on his first day of term.

"Breakfast," said Quinn. "Get dressed, grab your plate and mug, and make sure you're ready when the screw unlocks the door. If you're a few seconds late, some officers get a kick out of slamming the door in your face." Harry began to pull on his trousers. "And don't talk on your way down to the canteen," added Quinn. "It draws attention to yourself, which annoys the old-timers. In fact, don't talk to anyone you don't know until your second year."

Harry would have laughed, but he wasn't sure if Quinn was joking. He heard a key turning in the lock, and the cell door swung open. Quinn shot through like a greyhound out of the slips, with his cellmate only a stride behind. They joined a long line of silent prisoners who were making their way across the landing past the open doors of empty cells, before walking down a spiral staircase to the ground floor, where they would join their fellow inmates for breakfast.

The line came to a halt long before they reached the canteen. Harry watched the servers in their short white coats, standing behind the hotplate. A guard carrying a truncheon and wearing a long white coat was keeping an eye on them, making sure no one got an extra portion.

"How nice to see you again, Mr. Siddell," Pat said quietly to the guard once they reached the front of the queue. The two men shook hands as if they were old friends. This time Harry couldn't see any money changing hands, but a curt nod from Mr. Siddell indicated that a deal had been struck.

Quinn moved along the line as his tin plate was filled with a fried egg with a solid yolk, a pile of potatoes more black than white and the regulation two slices of stale bread. Harry caught up with him as he was having his mug half filled with coffee. The servers looked puzzled when Harry thanked them one by one, as if he were a guest at a vicarage tea party.

"Damn," he said when the last server offered him coffee. "I left my mug in the cell."

The server filled Quinn's mug to the brim. "Don't forget next time," said Harry's cellmate.

"No talking in line!" yelled Hessler, slamming his truncheon into a gloved hand. Quinn led Harry to the end of a long table and sat on the bench opposite him. Harry was so hungry he devoured every morsel on his plate, including the greasiest egg he'd ever tasted. He even considered licking his plate and then he recalled his friend Giles, on another first day.

When Harry and Pat had finished their five-minute breakfast, they were marched back up the spiral staircase to the top floor. Once their cell door had been slammed shut, Quinn washed his plate and mug, and placed them neatly under his bunk.

"When you live in an eight by four for years on end, you make use of every inch of space," Quinn explained. Harry followed his lead, and could only wonder how long it would be before he was able to teach Quinn something.

"What next?" asked Harry.

"Work allocation," said Quinn. "I'll be joining Siddell in the kitchen, but we've still got to make sure they put you in the library. And that'll depend on which officer is on duty. Trouble is, I'm running out of cash." Quinn had hardly got the words out of his mouth before the door was pulled open.

again and Hessler was silhouetted in the doorway, the truncheon thumping into his gloved hand.

“Quinn,” he said, “report to the kitchen immediately. Bradshaw, go to station nine and join the other wing cleaners.”

“I was hoping to work in the library, Mr.—”

“I don’t give a fuck what you were hoping, Bradshaw,” said Hessler. “As wing officer, I make the rules around here. You can go to the library on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays between six and seven, like any other inmate. Is that clear enough for you?” Harry nodded. “You’re not an officer anymore, Bradshaw, just a con, like everyone else in this place. And don’t waste your time thinking you can bribe me,” he added, before marching off to the next cell.

“Hessler’s one of the few officers you can’t bribe,” whispered Quinn. “Your only hope now is Mr. Swanson, the prison warden. Just remember that he considers himself a bit of an intellectual, which probably means he can manage joined-up writing. He’s also a Fundamental Baptist. Hallelujah!”

“When will I get the chance to see him?” asked Harry.

“Could be any time. Just be sure to let him know you want to work in the library, because each new prisoner only gets five minutes of his time.”

Harry slumped down on the wooden chair and placed his head in his hands. If it wasn’t for the \$10,000 Jelks had promised to send to his mother, he’d use his five minutes to tell the warden the truth about how he’d ended up in Lavenham.

“Meantime, I’ll do what I can to get you into the kitchen,” added Quinn. “It may not be what you hoped for, but it’s sure better than being a wing cleaner.”

“Thanks,” said Harry. Quinn scurried off to the kitchens, not needing directions. Harry took the stairs back down to the ground floor and went in search of station nine.

Twelve men, all first-timers, stood in a huddle and waited for instructions. Initiative was frowned on in Lavenham—it smacked of rebellion, or the suggestion that a prisoner just might be cleverer than an officer.

“Pick up a bucket, fill it with water, and get yourself a mop,” said Hessler. He smiled at Harry as he ticked off his name on yet another clipboard. “As you were last down, Bradshaw, you’ll be working the shit house for the next month.”

“But I wasn’t the last down,” protested Harry.

“I think you were,” said Hessler, the smile not leaving his face.

Harry filled his bucket with cold water and grabbed a mop. He didn’t need to be told in which direction to go, he could smell the latrines from a dozen paces. He began retching before he’d even entered the large square room with thirty holes in the ground. He held his nose, but he had to continually leave the room to gasp for air. Hessler stood some way off, laughing.

“You’ll get used to it, Bradshaw,” he said, “in time.”

Harry regretted having eaten such a large breakfast, which he brought up within minutes. It must have been about an hour later that he heard another officer bellowing his name. “Bradshaw!”

Harry staggered out of the latrines, white as a sheet. “That’s me,” he said.

“The warden wants to see you, so let’s get movin’.”

Harry was able to breathe more deeply with each step he took, and by the time he’d reached the warden’s office, he felt almost human.

“Wait there until you’re called for,” said the officer.

Harry took a spare seat between two other prisoners, who quickly turned away. He couldn’t blame them. He tried to gather his thoughts as each new prisoner went in and out of the warden’s office. Quinn was right, the interviews lasted for about five minutes, some even less. Harry couldn’t afford

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