



Huck's Story

This is the beginning of Huck's story – and Terry's comments.

Cui Bono

Great start because we're right there, we know what it's about.

This tells us he was young.

That's lovely because we've now got a second character.

A cracking start!

The brass plaque on the door read "Sir Christopher Wren". Thomas Bridge raised his small hand and hesitated before knocking twice. From the other side there came a sharp "What?". Thomas entered. Sir Christopher Wren, the most famous architect in Britain, was hunched over his desk scribbling on a drawing which Thomas recognised as the designs for the new St. Pauls Cathedral. Without looking up Wren asked "What?". Thomas stuttered, "Excuse me sir, I was wondering whether I could be taken on as your apprentice." Wren looked up from his desk and said, "Boy, tomorrow we are going to the palace. I will present my designs for a new St. Pauls Cathedral to King Charles II. This will be my masterpiece."

That's lovely. Why, we want to know, did he hesitate?

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Thomas ran down a side lane. He emerged on the other side on Pudding Lane. The smell of bread filled the warm night's air. Thomas ran around the corner and bumped into a tall man with a giant cart behind him wearing a hood so large all he could see were two dark eyes. Thomas gasped and backed off. "I'm sorry", Thomas apologised.

The man put his hood down and Thomas said: "Are you David Klint? I think you took away my father Victor Bridge."

"Yeah, you're young Thomas Bridge". Then Thomas looked at the cart behind the man and his face went white. The man followed his gaze and saw one of the arms of the corpses had fallen to the ground.

David smiled and said: "Just a bit of gangrene." Then David looked him up and down and asked: "How old are you?"

Thomas looked directly into his dark eyes and said: "I turned thirteen last month." The man appeared to be contemplating this. He then asked: "Do you want a job? I'd need you to load the bodies onto the cart." Thomas looked back at the arm on the ground and said "I'm not sure I have the stomach for it. Besides I have a job and I hope to become an apprentice architect."

David smiled again and said: "It's plenty of money." But Thomas shook his head. The man said: "Alright, I wish you the best of luck." Thomas smiled and waved goodbye to the man.

When Thomas finally got home he saw two brutish men kicking down the door of his house. Thomas ran at

one of them and punched him in his back. The man spun round and knocked him to the floor. Thomas started to get up but he felt the point of a sword held to his neck. Thomas' mother ran out and screamed: "What are you doing to my son?"

The man holding a sword to Thomas's neck said: "Nothing. We just want Victor Bridge."

Thomas' sister Lizzy ran out and said: "My dad's been dead for two months."

"Ok then, we'll take you two to debtor's prison." He pointed at Lizzy and their mother.

Thomas yelled: "No, you can't!" But the men were already dragging them away. The man called back: "You better pay the debt."

When they had left, Thomas picked up a bed roll and brought it down to the bank of the Thames. Thomas lay looking at the stars all night.

Thomas went along with Wren to the palace where Wren was going to pitch his masterpiece. Wren had also brought along Mr Stanmore and Mr Vogue, his apprentices. Thomas was carrying the box with the designs in it. Four men stood at the palace gates. Thomas recognised one as Cardinal Scott. The cardinal said: "The king was busy today so he sent me to see you."

Thomas, Wren and the others were led to the courtroom where Thomas placed the box on the floor and went to open it. But the cardinal said: "Hold, child. Mr Wren, we do not see the point of a new St. Paul's Cathedral. Cui Bono? The answer is: No one. No one would benefit."

Wren looked at the box that held his designs and said: "You'd be surprised, Scott, at who would benefit." And with that Wren stormed out of the castle and Thomas picked up the box and they ran after him.

When Wren was in his office again Thomas ran in and asked: "Sir, I'm wondering if I could perhaps get a raise. I'm trying to get my family out of debtors' prison." Wren then scoffed and said: "Your dad died of the plague and your family's in prison. You're lucky I let you work here even, so get out before I change my mind."

After work Thomas went to see his mother and sister in debtors' prison. Thomas sat down and his mother entered with a guard behind her. Thomas immediately asked: "Where's Lizzy?"

His mother looked as though she was going to cry and she said: "Elizabeth is ill. She couldn't stand up today. I'm sure it's not serious", she said seeing Thomas' expression. "How sick is she?", Thomas enquired.

She looked up and started to cry. Then she said: "If we don't get a doctor, she's never going to reach her tenth birthday." Thomas hugged her and whispered: "I'll save her, mother. I promise."

The guard came in and led his mother away. Thomas wiped a tear from his eye and left the prison. Thomas walked to Sir Christopher Wren's studio. He knocked on the door and walked in. He saw Wren writing in his office with a cloak in his hand. Thomas entered and said: "Please, sir. I need a raise and an apprenticeship or my sister will die." Wren got up and said: "Thomas, do you think there's even a chance I would teach you?" He burst into laughter. "Listen carefully because you will never be an architect and your sister is going to die and I still won't care the slightest bit." Then Wren yelled: "Get out of my office."

Thomas ran out of the building to Pudding Lane where he sat down on the pavement. He looked up and saw the corpse collector again. Thomas asked: "Is the job still open?"

David looked at him sadly. "I thought you were going to be an architect?"

Thomas looked up and said: "I need the money."

David said: "You sure you want to do this?"

"Yes", Thomas said.

"You'll start tomorrow", David said.

The man walked away. Thomas got up and walked along the road. He saw a man in a cloak drop a match onto some straw which ignited the bakery next to it. The hooded figure looked around and – seeing people watching – ran around the corner past a house. Thomas ran at the house and started climbing it. Thomas ran along the houses with the figure in his sight. Then the man jumped into a small stable.

Moments later Sir Christopher Wren emerged from the stable and ran off. Thomas jumped down and ran into the burning stable. He grabbed the scorched cloak. It was Sir Christopher Wren's alright. It had his initials sewn on the inside of it. Thomas stuffed the cloak up his shirt.

Thomas, along with most of London, fled to Moorfields. He stayed there for four days and on the final day he walked into a tent and saw on the other side Mr Vogue. Thomas called over to him and Mr Vogue asked: "How have you been, Thomas?"

Thomas responded: "Good."

Vogue smiled. "Sir Christopher met with the King this morning and has been asked to take charge of rebuilding London. Sir Christopher is very excited as this

My Hero – With Terry Deary

will include over 50 churches, including St. Paul's Cathedral."

Thomas smiled. "Could you excuse me, please?" Thomas ran back to where he had left the cloak and then headed to Wren's studio.

Thomas entered Wren's office, walked up to his desk and said: "Sir Christopher, I was wondering if you would consider paying my father's debts, buying my family a new home – I think Greenwich would be nice –, paying for my sister's doctor's bills and taking me on as your apprentice."

Wren got up. "Of course not, you've gone mad. Get out of my office", Wren said.

Thomas looked as if he'd forgotten something, then said: "Funny thing happened a few days ago. I saw this man in a cloak set fire to a bakery. Then he ran into a stable, took his cloak off and left it there. The man looked almost exactly the same as you. I picked the cloak up but my sister was cold in debtors' prison so I gave it to her. I think I could get it back though. But I might need something in return."

Wren knew what Thomas was talking about. So he said: "So it's a house you wanted? In Greenwich? I think that could be arranged."