

Accept #46

"HARROW ALLEY"

by

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PROPERTY OF CAMPBELL-DEVON PRODUCTIONS

1 NEWGATE PRISON'S CONDEMNED KEEP is pitch-black and silent until, up above, the manhole cover laboriously is lifted aside and set down with a harsh, echoing clang. A moment later, a jigglingly plump turnkey named SMOLLET squints past the flickering candle in his hand into the darkness below.

SMOLLET

Ratsy...Ratsy...Gamaliel Ratsey.

RATSEY'S VOICE

(grumbles reproof)

Captain Montessor, if you mean me.

Captain Montessor, you old belch.

A ladder starts down.

SMOLLET

Up you come.

RATSEY'S VOICE

Why? Is it today?

SMOLLET

Today and now.

Some seconds pass while Ratsey might be digesting this. Then, a clank of irons as he bestirs himself.

2 THE PASSAGE ABOVE THE KEEP

is a shadowy stone vault with Smollet's candle at the core. In the center of the floor is the manhole, the top of the ladder projecting above its rim; before it is a small anvil. A keeper named LEVIDGE is kneeling alongside the anvil, spike in one hand, mallet in the other. Across the anvil, standing next to Smollet, is the prison chaplain, FIELDING, a small, spare, clerical hack. Their attitudes reflect the tedium of routine.

Dirty, fettered hands grasp the top of the ladder and GAMALIEL RATSEY heaves himself up into view, pausing half in and half out to blink at the light. A burly, vigorous ruffian and (till lately) swaggering whorehouse-bully, his face is filthy and long unshaven. The battered hat atop his lousy head dejectedly sports a ragged, broken feather. His coat and shirt, once fine, are grimy now and foodstained; one sleeve is ripped at the shoulder; at his throat and wrists are bits of tattered lace. Yet his bearing is not without authority.

Levidge pulls his hands to the anvil and starts tapping them free.

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FIELDING

A few words of comfort before we
begin the service.

(clears throat)

Resignation to God's will --

But Ratsey is concerned with matters of greater import.

RATSEY

(to Levidge)

How's the weather?

LEVIDGE

You couldn't ask for better.

RATSEY

(pleased)

Much of a crowd?

LEVIDGE

Packed solid from here to Tyburn.

RATSEY

(assumed indifference)

None of the nobility, I suppose.

LEVIDGE

None? Most of the court. I never
knowed London so feverish with
excitement. Got a good, rousing
farewell speech for them?

With a smirk of self-assurance, Ratsey gives Levidge a
taste.

RATSEY

Let British pluck match British
generosity and we may bid defiance
to the world.

(conversationally)

That's just the start.

LEVIDGE

Oh, that has a ring to it. And
it's just the start. Oh, they'll
be cheering like Bedlams. And
the effect on the ladies, hoho.
Now the legs.

Ratsey climbs out and straddles the anvil, his soiled and
laddered stockings drooping about his calves and ankles.

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He fingers his beard and surveys his attire as Levidge resumes work.

FIELDING

A few words of comfort before we begin the service...Resignation to God's will -

RATSEY

(to Smollet)

What about a razor?

SMOLLET

And a comb, too, I suppose, and a needle and thread.

RATSEY

That's right. I can't go out there like this.

SMOLLET

Show me your money.

RATSEY

If I had money would I have spent six weeks in the Condemned Hole? I'd have had a room upstairs, wouldn't I? I asks a favor.

SMOLLET

Oh, yes, you'd like a favor now, wouldn't you? Well, I told you many and many a time, you be kind to Mother Smollet and Mother Smollet will be kind to you. But was you kind? You was not.

RATSEY

It wasn't nothing personal. I just didn't see the need. Was I expecting a reprieve or was I not?

SMOLLET

Oh, you just didn't see the need. Well, when you stands there with the rope around your neck and no money for Jack Ketch, no money to give him to grease the noose and pull hard on your legs so's you're turned off quick, when the cart

(cont.)

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SMOLLET (cont.)

moves out from under and you're kicking and thrashing and squirming and choking, you just remember Mother Smollet would have helped you and maybe then you'll see the need.

Ratsey tenderly massages his throat. After a moment:

FIELDING

A few words of comfort before we begin the service. R -

RATSEY

(to Smollet)

If you likes, we can go to your room this minute.

SMOLLET

Oh, it's too late now.

And with a lift of his chin Smollet turns away from Ratsey, leaving him in a brown study and oblivious to:

FIELDING

Resignation to God's will is the way to His mercy. "Mercy?" you say, "For me? A highwayman? A murderer?" Yes, if you are resigned. And you should be, as I will now prove. There is happiness in suffering atonement, is there not? And the more you suffer, the happier you are? It follows, then, that you, with the gallows before you and the possibility of roasting in hell through all eternity, should be happiest of all. Let us pray.

Fielding thumbs through his prayer book. Levidge has done with Ratsey, removed the ladder, covered the man-hole and picked up his tools. They now follow Smollet down the passage.

FIELDING

(reads)

Comfort, we beesech Thee, most gracious God, this Thy servant, cast down and faint of heart amidst -

CONTINUED

2 CONTINUED

The door to the Press Yard is before them. At their side is a Dutch door leading to Smollet's quarters. Smollet enters his room and swings the lower part of his door shut. It has a shelf like a counter and on this he places the candle. Levidge moves to open the door to the Yard.

FIELDING (cont.)
- the sorrows and difficulties of
the world; and grant that, by the -

RATSEY
Hold on. I'd like a drink.

SMOLLET
Not without money.

With a smile meant to be ingratiating, Ratsey looks at Fielding for the first time.

RATSEY
(to Fielding)
What about some wine?

FIELDING
(shakes his head)
Scripture cautions us against it
time and again.

RATSEY
My treat.

FIELDING
Well, nowhere, I find, does Scripture
mention brandy. That's what I'll
have, Mr. Smollet.

Smollet waits till Ratsey takes out his purse and empties it above the counter, producing one last coin. While the drinks are being served, Ratsey brings his head close to Fielding's and grows confidential.

RATSEY
Parson. You know the ten miles of
Dover Road between Gravesend and
Chatham? The right to work that
stretch belongs to me. I paid the
Brotherhood a hundred pounds for it.
It's yours for a pound for Jack Ketch.
You can sell it at a handsome profit.

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Fielding shakes his head. They lift their mugs in salutation and drink.

RATSEY

I'll sell you my corpse. You must know a saw-bones who wants one.

FIELDING

Your corpse, if unclaimed, is one of Ketch's perks of office. It's certain he has already arranged for its disposal.

RATSEY

Tell you what, then. You've heard of Captain Baines?

FIELDING

Who has not?

RATSEY

If I tells you where he's hiding, will you go to him immediate and borrow a pound for me? He'll give it to you if you mention my name. He's my mate, has been for years, and there never was a better.

FIELDING

I'm afraid there's no time for that.

RATSEY

Well, then, suppose I sells you his address for a pound and you can turn him in for the price on his head.

Fielding declines with a gesture.

SMOLLET

Another round?

Ratsey turns inquiringly to Fielding whose hand goes to his vest-pocket. And comes out with his watch.

FIELDING

We really must be getting on.

Levidge opens the door to the Yard. Fielding opens his prayer book and, as he exits, resumes where he left off.

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FIELDING (cont.)

- power of Thy Holy Spirit, he may
be enabled to go upon his way
rejoicing -

Ratsey, after a futile effort to tidy himself, squares his shoulders and swaggers to the threshold.

3 THE PRESS YARD

is a high-walled enclosure with a great, iron door leading to the street at the far end. Near it, a Sheriff and a dozen armed Bailiffs, all mounted, are waiting in a wide double-file. Not far from the door to the passage above the Condemned Keep is a cart with a horse and a Carter. Fielding is standing near its rear.

It's a hot summer day. Tolling intermittently in the distance, some near, some far, are the bells of perhaps ten of London's 137 parish-churches, each with its distinctive tone (bells, in increasing numbers in later scenes, will never be silent until otherwise stated).

Ratsey pauses in the shade of the doorway, Levidge behind him, and cocks an ear.

RATSEY

What's that, a call to arms? The
Dutchmen invading us?

LEVIDGE

Passing-bells. All for you.

Gratified, Ratsey steps out into the glare and approaches the cart:

A MAN'S VOICE

(calls)

Pick up the step, mate, the worms
is hungry.

Ratsey turns and looks up. Newgate's barred windows are jammed with the grinning faces of Prisoners, male and female. He waves a greeting as he straightens his neck-band.

A WOMAN'S VOICE

Don't bother, dear, Ketch has a
collar just your size.

Ratsey guffaws and blows her a kiss.

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3 CONTINUED

PRISONERS' VOICES

You'll fry in hell, mate...
 Ta-ta, cat's meat...
 They'll stretch your neck for you...

The words become undistinguishable as these and other voices blend in a prolonged roaring interspersed with whistles and cat-calls.

FIELDING

(to Ratsey)

Are you familiar with the Litany for the Dying?

RATSEY

(to a prisoner above)

So are you, a chamber-pot full.

FIELDING

There are various responses for you to make.

(points to a page)

I say this and you that. Then I this and -- You can read?

RATSEY

I'm a gentleman, I should hope, a knight of the road, not a bloody clerk.

(to a prisoner)

So's your mother. Your sister, too.

LEVIDGE

Pardon, gentlemen.

They step apart and Levidge moves between them carrying on his shoulder a coffin which he slides onto the cart. As it passes Ratsey's nose, he gazes at it thoughtfully.

At once, a high, clear tenor knifes through the din which simmers down at the sound.

A PRISONER

(sings)

It all comes out even
 As you pays your debt -
 Lilliburlero bullen ala -
 Your mouth may be dry
 But your britches is wet -
 Lilliburlero bullen ala.

CONTINUED

3 CONTINUED

RATSEY

(shaking his fist)

Whose mouth is dry, you bastard?

But the last word is drowned out by the Prisoners as they crash into the chorus which they sing as Ratsey spits and spits again, pointing to the splashes on the ground to show how mistaken they are.

PRISONERS' VOICES

Lero, lero, lilliburlero;
Lilliburlero bullen ala -
Lero, lero, lilliburlero,
Lilliburlero bullen ala.

ANOTHER PRISONER'S VOICE

No need now for doctors,
No need now for pills -
Lilliburlero bullen ala -
Jack Ketch has a cure
For all of your ills -
Lilliburlero bullen ala.

PRISONERS' VOICES

Lero, lero, lilliburlero,
Lilliburlero bullen ala -
Lero, lero, lilliburlero,
Lilliburlero bullen ala.

During this last, Ratsey has grasped the cart, preparing to enter, but the next verse spins him around in a rage to face the Prisoners again.

A THIRD PRISONER'S VOICE

Help the poor man
To climb in, if you please -
Lilliburlero bullen ala -
His guts is now water,
He's weak in the knees -
Lilliburlero bullen ala.

RATSEY

Who's weak in the knees?

And, as the next chorus starts, Ratsey vaults nimbly up into the cart and begins to jig, feet pounding, fingers snapping.

PRISONERS' VOICES

(faster)

Lero, lero, lilliburlero,
Lilliburlero bullen ala -
(cont.)

CONTINUED

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PRISONERS' VOICES (cont.)

Lero, lero, lilliburlero,
Lilliburlero bullen ala.

They repeat the chorus at once, clapping their hands to the beat. Ratsey's hat flies off unnoticed as his rigadon gets wilder and wilder. God knows what demon he is exorcising or what virtue - courage? manhood? daring? - he is trying to prove.

PRISONERS' VOICES

(even faster)

Lero, lero, lilliburlero,
Lilliburlero bullen ala -
Lero, lero, lilliburlero,
Lilliburlero bullen ala.

Now Ratsey leaps into the air and there he is dancing atop his own coffin, heels drumming, hair tossing, possessed.

PRISONERS' VOICES

(and faster and faster)

Lero, lero, lilliburlero,
Lilliburlero bullen ala -
Lero, lero, lilliburlero,
Lilliburlero bullen ala.

On the last word, Ratsey concludes with a thunderous stomp and a triumphant leer up at the Prisoners. A moment of hard-breathing silence. Then pandemonium as the Prisoners shout, scream and whistle. Chest heaving, Ratsey accepts the plaudits before clapping his left hand to the inside of his crook'd right elbow in the ancient gesture. That done, he faces the front of the cart and assumes a debonair pose.

The cheering continues while Fielding clambers into the cart and the Sheriff raises his hand in signal. It increases as a Guard swings open the metal door and the cart rolls toward it and, with and between the files of mounted Bailiffs, out into the street.

4 THE⁵ STREETS LEADING TO TYBURN

are deserted. Utterly. Ratsey's expectant grin fades as his bewilderment grows. His eyes dart about. And he sees:

Here and there, on both sides of the street, houses with windows shuttered and, lounging at their front doors, Watchers with halberds in their hands.

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FIELDING

O God the Father; Have mercy upon
the soul of Thy servant. O God the
Son; Have mercy upon the soul of
Thy servant. O God the Holy Ghost;
Have mercy upon the soul of Thy
servant. O Holy Trinity, One God;
Have mercy upon the soul of Thy servant.

Ratsey looks back toward the Press Yard and sees Levidge, just inside, doubled up with laughter as the metal door shuts.

FIELDING (cont.)

From all evil, from all sin, from
all tribulation; Good Lord, deliver
him.

About to question Fielding, Ratsey is forestalled by what he sees as they come abreast and pass the graveyard of a small parish-church: mounds of a dozen new graves; diggers at work in others; mourners following a shoulder-born coffin through the tombstones; a huddle of mourners about a grave being filled.

FIELDING (cont.)

By Thy Holy Incarnation, by Thy Cross
and Passion, by Thy Precious Death
and Burial; Good Lord, deliver him.

The cart is approaching another house with a Watcher on guard. Ratsey, again about to question Fielding, again is forestalled: by the abrupt bursting open of a ground-floor window's shutters to reveal a Man In A Nightshirt struggling with a HAGGARD WOMAN and a TEEN-AGE BOY. The Man In A Nightshirt, eyes rolling in delirium, breaks free and leaps down to the street.

HAGGARD WOMAN

No. No. Simon. Come back.

TEEN-AGE BOY

Father. Father. Please. Father.

The Watcher gives chase. The Man In A Nightshirt lurches between the horses in the file nearest him, staggers to the oncoming cart and tries to grasp the Carter's arm. In terror, the Carter avoids him and, lashing him again and again, sends him reeling back. Also terrified, as the Man In A Nightshirt clutches at him to keep from falling, a Bailiff savagely kicks him away. The Haggard Woman shrieks as he collapses to the cobbles, inert. She

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raises her arms imploringly to the cart as it rolls on.

HAGGARD WOMAN

(weeping)

Pray for us. Pray for us.

Ratsey turns to Fielding.

FIELDING

The Plague is upon us. The Black
Plague.

5 TYBURN HILL

is in open country. The gallows is on its crest with a ladder going from the ground to the cross-beam. JACK KETCH is sitting on the ground with his back against the upright, a grizzled, stumpy man smoking a pipe. On the slope below him, fashioning a noose, is his savagely morose assistant, DAN. Below Dan is an open-faced teenager, the 'prentice MORTIMER.

DAN

No more hangings after this for fear
the plague'll spread if there's crowds.
(spits)

MORTIMER

You can't blame him.

DAN

What do you know about it? We had
a touch of plague twenty years ago
and another twenty years before that
and they didn't call off hangings then,
did they, Mr. Ketch? How do I support
my family if no one hangs? Does the
Lord Mayor ask hisself that?

KETCH

You want to think of it like this,
Dan. They won't be sending nobody
somewhere else for hanging, will
they, like France, say, or Italy?
No, they'll just be accumulating till
the proper time like money in the
bank. We'll soon enough get our
hands on them.

DAN

Soon? Did you see last week's
Mortality Bill? Over eighty dead
(cont.)

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5 CONTINUED

DAN (cont.)

of plague and seven parishes infected in less than a month. It's spreading like brush-fire. I'd like to get my hands on him.

KETCH

Here, now, none of that.

DAN

Not the Lord Mayor. That damned Dutchman who started it.

MORTIMER

My dad says it was a witch.

DAN

I ain't surprised, seeing his offspring. It was a Dutch bosun from a Dutch merchant-brig. He comes ashore with two sailors and they takes lodging not ten houses from mine in Drury Lane. And does he tell anyone them same two sailors is dying of plague? We didn't know it till they turned up their toes. And when we looks for him, he's gone.

MORTIMER

Probably back in Holland by now.

DAN

Use your brain, you young snot. Between the time they come ashore and the time they died, we started a war with Holland, didn't we? How's he going to leave London when there's been no Dutch shipping? He's still here, somewhere. If anything happens to my family, I'll find him and kill him with these two hands.

(tosses noose to Ketch)

How's that, Mr. Ketch?

KETCH

I always likes the loose end tucked in more like this, see?

MORTIMER

Here they come, Mr. Ketch.

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5 CONTINUED

Ketch tosses Mortimer the rope.

KETCH

Up you goes, young Mortimer.

Mortimer heads for the ladder with the rope in his hands.

Led by the Sheriff and flanked by the Bailiffs, the cart with Ratsey and Fielding in it comes up the hill and stops directly beneath the cross-beam. The Sheriff and Bailiffs ride on a few feet, bunching, before reining in; most dismount. Ketch and Dan climb up into the cart.

KETCH

(to Ratsey)

Now, now, it won't be so bad.

RATSEY

(explodes)

A fine hanging, I must say. Not one bloody spectator.

DAN

(fingering Ratsey's coat)

We won't get much for this.

KETCH

It's the custom at this time in the proceedings to make me and my lads a small gift by way of saying thank you for whatever small courtesies we can render, if you knows what I mean.

RATSEY

(taking out a watch)

Here, will this do?

KETCH

(reaching for it)

Oh, a very handsome piece. I -

FIELDING

(snatching it)

That's mine. Really, how could you? At this awesome moment? Let me implore you again to make an open confession of sins, repenting them heartily for the good of your soul.

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Ratsey spits. Fielding gives it up as hopeless.

KETCH

That all you had, that watch?

(hardening)

Too bad, bucko. Ready up there,
young Mortimer?

Dan ties Ratsey's hands behind him as Mortimer lets down
the noose.

FIELDING

(meanwhile - reads)

The Almighty and merciful Lord grant
thee pardon and remission of all thy
sins, and the grace and comfort of
the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Ketch prepares to put the noose around Ratsey's neck.

KETCH

Any last words?

RATSEY

Let British pluck match British
generosity - Ah, to hell with it.

As Ketch raises the noose, Mortimer creates a disturbance
by slipping down the last few rungs of the ladder.

KETCH

You wants to be more careful, young
Mortimer.

MORTIMER

(approaching)

Mr. Ketch, I suddenly feels queer
and that's the truth.

Mortimer sits down heavily near the wheel, holding his
head.

FIELDING

Almighty God, the soul -

Then a thought occurs to Fielding, the same that has just
occurred to Ketch and Dan.

FIELDING (cont.)

It's not the plague? Boy, you don't
have the plague?

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Mortimer topples over on his side, moaning. With a shout, the Sheriff and the Bailiffs fling themselves into the saddle and ride a little distance off before bunching again and milling around uncertainly.

DAN

Let's get on with it, quick.

Ketch raises the noose but Ratsey jerks his head away.

RATSEY

I've changed my mind. I want to repent heartily of my sins.

KETCH

Oh, no, not now you don't.

FIELDING

We cannot deny him repentance.

KETCH

It won't take long, will it?

RATSEY

(takes a deep breath
- then)

When I was three years old -

DAN

Oh, Christ.

KETCH

Mr. Fielding, I appeal to you.

FIELDING

(to Ratsey)
It's quality that matters, not quantity. Just once moment's true repentance and the Good Thief's case was accepted.

DAN

I don't care if I go to hell for this.

RATSEY

- I committed my first crime. My mother kept her money in a jar in the pantry and one day I wanted to buy some barley-sugar awful bad so I goes to the pantry and I takes a stool and I stands on that stool and steals a penny out of that there jar. My next crime was a few months later when I was three-and-a-half. A play-mate of mine, he had a spinning-top and I had none. Well, -

Dan puts the noose around Ratsey's neck and tightens it, shoves Fielding off the cart and, with Ketch, jumps down.

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KETCH

(to the Carter)

All right, now, pull away, quick.

But the Carter, standing well away from the cart and Mortimer, shakes his head in stubborn refusal. Dan dashes to the driver's seat and snatches up the whip.

FIELDING

(quickly)

Depart, O Christian soul, out of this world. In the name of -

Dan raises the whip to lash the nag's rump.

HARRY'S VOICE

Hold on.

HARRY POYNTZ descends from his coach before it has stopped and hurries toward the cart. A prospering tradesman and rising politician in his late thirties, he is self-made and solidly middle-class. Until recently, when this best of all possible worlds, in which all was for the best, began to rock beneath his feet, he was also self-confident and self-satisfied; now he is disturbed, although this is glossed over by his habitual forcefulness and inoffensive heartiness. He has a sturdy body; his face reflects a fair intelligence; his attire is conservative and devoid of frills. As he nears Mortimer, Fielding makes a warning gesture.

FIELDING

That boy may be infected.

Harry stops short and recoils a step before addressing Ratsey.

HARRY

You, up there. I'm Harry Poyntz. Alderman of St. Barnabas parish. I'm here to offer you the chance to escape hanging. Would you be willing to do as you're told, no matter what, risking death by plague if need be, in return for a pardon?

Ratsey nods.

HARRY (cont.)

Are you certain you understand?
Death by plague?

CONTINUED

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Ratsey nods.

HARRY (cont.)

Free him.

And, taking a paper from his cuff, Harry hurries toward the Sheriff. After a moment, Dan overcomes his reluctance to be closer to Mortimer; he scrambles up into the cart to remove the noose and untie the dazed Ratsey. Harry, alongside the Sheriff on his horse, holds up the paper for him to read.

HARRY (cont.)

Mr. Lawrence directs you to place him in my custody. You acknowledge the Lord Mayor's signature?

A glance at the order and the Sheriff, eager to be gone, turns his mount and rides off, followed by the Bailiffs. Ratsey freed, Dan shoves him out, kicks his hat after him and looks up at Ketch on the cross-beam picking at the knots in the rope. The Carter mounts quickly to his seat.

DAN

For God's sake, Mr. Ketch, leave it, I'll buy you another rope.

FIELDING

What about the boy?

DAN

Damn the boy and let's be out of this, he's poisoning the air.

Harry, in the coach, puts his head out the door, impatient.

HARRY

(to Ratsey)

Well? Well?

Ratsey heads for the coach. As he arrives, his knees buckle and he clutches the door to save himself from falling.

HARRY (cont.)

Too narrow a squeak for you, was it?

Harry disappears to reappear a moment later with a flask. Ratsey grabs it and gulps as he is pulled in.

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HARRY (cont.)
 (to the Coachman)
 Back, now, and quick.

The door is shut and the coach moves off. Ketch comes slipping down the ladder with the rope over his arm. Dan hauls him up into the cart.

DAN
 (to Fielding)
 In, if you're coming.

FIELDING
 You can't leave him.

DAN
 Bloody well can and will.

The Carter whacks his nag and the cart lurches away at high speed.

FIELDING
 No. Wait for me.

Fielding runs after the cart, stops short in indecision and runs back toward Mortimer. Again he starts after the cart and again he returns. Then he sits down, looking at Mortimer and plucking at the grass.

6 IN THE COACH

Harry is sitting between PROTHERO, his clerk, who is reading, and BLANCHE, a white setter he loves. Ratsey is on the floor at their feet, his back against a door, sucking at the flask. Prothero is a smallish, intelligent, young man, neat and sleek as a weasel, with a guarded but deferential manner.

HARRY
 (fondling Blanche)
 Oh, God, we'd like to be out in the fields with a gun today, wouldn't we, eh? Rabbits, Blanche, rabbits.
 (she barks)
 If you were human, what a fine wife you'd make, you sweet, loving, loving, loving, gentle-mouthed bitch.

Harry's last words have brought with them a train of melancholy thoughts over which he muses. Then he snaps out of it, puts Blanche aside and idly glances at

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Prothero's book. After a moment, he takes it from Prothero's reluctant hand and looks at the title with an indulgent smile.

HARRY (cont.)

(reads)

William Lilly's Astrological Judgments
For The Year '65.

Prothero reaches for the book but Harry nudges his hand away.

HARRY (cont.)

(reading a page)

And in June, the Sun entering Cancer will have many terrible effects, among them the Sword and the Plague. And the Plague will be a great one and a world of miserable people will perish therein.

(looks up)

Prothero, Prothero.

PROTHERO

The man predicted June, Mr. Poyntz, and here is June and there's war and there's plague. You call that nonsense?

HARRY

How can I, when any month he names will find war and plague somewhere in the world? But it is nonsense to think it means London. You'll notice he doesn't say so himself.

PROTHERO

Then what of the comet last Christmas? If it had no import for the City, why did it come so low? And what of that man seen running through the streets one night last week, crying, "Woe to London, woe to London," naked but for his drawers?

HARRY

Perhaps the lady's husband came home unexpectedly.

PROTHERO

What?

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Harry laughs and whacks Prothero's thigh.

HARRY

Don't worry about it. London will stand whether he runs about with his drawers or without them.

PROTHERO

Well, of course, I myself don't believe in any of this.

HARRY

And you should not. What is more precious to me than my unborn child? If I thought it endangered would I sit here so calmly? Yet you see me. The plague is not a great one and it's only in the suburbs. Not a trace of it within the City wall and none in our parish. If not for the Lord Mayor's orders, I'd pay it no mind at all. As it is, well, it does no harm to be prepared.

The coach is slowing. Harry glances out the window.

PROTHERO

(almost to himself)

Yes, it's best to be prepared.

7 ALDERSGATE

is, as the name indicates, one of the gates in the massive old City wall. Thin streams of vehicular and pedestrian traffic flow through it in both directions under the eye of a blue-coated CONSTABLE with a red staff of office. As the coach stops, he comes to the window and carefully scrutinizes each occupant. Harry leans forward to speak to him.

CONSTABLE

(knuckling his forehead)

Oh, it's you, Mr. Poyntz.

(noticing Ratsey)

What's this?

HARRY

Never mind, Constable, it's nothing to concern you.

CONSTABLE

You knows our orders, Mr. Poyntz.

(cont.)

CONTINUED

7 CONTINUED

CONSTABLE (cont.)

He ain't a vagrant? Or a loose person? He ain't from a infected house or alley? He ain't sick?

HARRY

No, no, no, I vouch for him.

The Constable nods and steps back. The coach moves on.

8 IN THE COACH

Prothero is taking several papers out of his hat and a pencil from his pocket.

PROTHERO

That reminds me. If the plague should reach the City, we'll need additional constables to keep undesirableables out of St. Barnabas.

HARRY

Sweet Christ, no matter which way we turn another expense in the offing. Watchers, nurses, scavengers, rakers, grave-diggers. Where do we get the money?

PROTHERO

You could levy a special tax.

HARRY

Oh, God, no. They'd never again elect me to office. I wish I'd thought of asking the Lord Mayor for convicts last week, when they were hanging a dozen. We must find a way to cut corners.

PROTHERO

Well, I've pencilled in John Hayard for one of the corpse-bearers, if that meets with your approval.

HARRY

Is that safe?

PROTHERO

He hasn't actually harmed anyone as yet. It won't be an easy position for us to fill, Mr. Poyntz.

(cont.)

CONTINUED

8 CONTINUED

PROTHERO (cont.)

No one will be eager to handle the bodies of plague victims. Unless, of course, there's great unemployment. Then they will be fighting for the work.

HARRY

I was about to send him to Bedlam.

PROTHERO

That would be another charge against the parish for his keep.

HARRY

Hayward for corpse-bearer it is. And what have we in mind for - ?
(indicates Ratsey)

RATSEY

Captain Montessor's the name.

PROTHERO

I've put Ratsey down for corpse-bearer, too.

RATSEY

Me? Corpse-bearer?

HARRY

Listen, you. If you now prefer hanging, say so and I'll have you back on the gallows before you can blink. If not, you'll do your duty, no matter what the risk, as we all will, from His Majesty on down. Understood?

Ratsey is about to protest when, without more warning than the abrupt neighing of a horse, the coach stops with a spine-jarring crash.

9 HARROW ALLEY

is a narrow, refuse-strewn way hemmed in on both sides by three- and four-story buildings. A few are tenements. The rest, occupied by merchants, tradesmen and artisans, are shops below and homes above, with gardens and stables in the rear. Projecting on iron branches over most of the front doors are vividly colored shops signs - a Red Bull, a Green Dragon - to catch the eyes of illiterate customers and patrons.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

The Alley stretches from St. Barnabas Church on the corner, and the Pye Tavern opposite, to Barnabas Gate, an archway in the old City wall leading to open fields. There are twenty to thirty buildings on each side. The church has a churchyard with a shade-tree or two among the headstones and a clock-tower where a wooden figure of Death, an hour-glass in one hand, a dart in the other, appears to strike the hour.

There is the usual week-day bustle and clamor of Shopkeepers and 'Prentices haggling with Customers, Food-vendors crying their wares from door to door, a Drover with a cow or two, an Old Clothes Man with a tower of half-a-dozen hats on his head, a Small Coals Man with a sack on his back, a Tinker and a couple of street-musicians, the Fiddler here and the Bagpiper there. It is almost impossible to distinguish the

STREET CRIES

Any milk here? Milk below...
 Come buy, come buy, what d'ye lack?...
 Cherry-ripe...
 Kitchen-stuff...
 Any pots to mend? Any pans?
 Here's fine herrings...
 Fine mackerel I have to sell...
 Peas, white-hearted cabbages...
 Come buy my oysters...
 Vinegar, lily-white...
 Silks and laces from Spanish places...

Entering the Alley from a side-street that runs past the Pye, Harry's coach has locked front wheels with one turning into the Alley at the church corner, an ornate, emblazoned vehicle with a liveried COACHMAN, liveried Footmen and a six-horse team.

LIVERIED COACHMAN

(to Harry's Coachman)

No bloody eyes in your bloody head,
 you bloody abortion?

Both jump down from their seats and hurry to the wheels to determine the damage.
 Opening the door of his coach and coming erect preparatory to stepping down, Harry sees something that brings a puzzled frown to his face:

Behind the other coach is a line of scores and scores of similarly ornate coaches interspersed with baggage-wagons

CONTINUED

9 CONTINUED

and laden pack-animals; mounted, armed Retainers guard the flanks; dozens of devil-may-care Cavaliers, dressed for travel, race up and down the line as though on a spree; here and there, a horse or two rears in the press.

Harry descends to the street. Inside the coach with which his has locked, behind the raised window of its door, are Two Ladies in dazzling apparel, a YOUNG COURTIER singing to his own lute accompaniment and a young nobleman named SIR FRANCIS. Sir Francis opens the door and gets out.

SIR FRANCIS
(to his Coachman)
Abel, Abel. How much longer, damn it?

LIVERIED COACHMAN
I'll have it right in a minute, my lord.

SIR FRANCIS
(noticing Harry)
Why, it's the tailor.

HARRY
Sir Francis.

SIR FRANCIS
(to the ladies)
My dears, this is my tailor and the finest in England.

HARRY
Ladies.

SIR FRANCIS
Have you come to dun me?
I say, are you chasing after me to - ?

Sir Francis slams the coach-door shut.

SIR FRANCIS
I say, are you here for the money I owe?

HARRY
No, no, Sir Francis, of course not. I live in Harrow Alley.

YOUNG COURTIER
(singing)
Drink today
And drown all sorrow,
You may all
Be dead tomorrow.
Best while you have it
Use your breath,
There is no drinking
After death.
Wine works the heart up,
Wakes the wit,
There is no cure for age
But it.
It helps the headache,
Cough and phthisic
And is for all diseases
Physic.
Then let us swill now
For our health,
Who drinks well
Serves the commonwealth,
And he that will
To bed go sober
Falls like the leaf
In sere October.

CONTINUED

SIR FRANCIS

Do you, Mr. Poyntz, do you.
(to his Coachman)

Well, Abel? Well? Well?
(to Harry)

Haven't a penny with me now.
Come see me in Oxford and we'll
settle it there.

HARRY

Oxford, Sir Francis?

SIR FRANCIS

Of course.

(gestures towards the
coaches behind)

We're all going. The entire Court.
No plague there, you know. You
come see me in Oxford.

HARRY

I'm remaining in the City, Sir
Francis.

SIR FRANCIS

Despite the plague?

HARRY

It's not as bad as all that.

SIR FRANCIS

Then you haven't seen this week's
Mortality Bill? No, no, how could
you? Doesn't go on sale till
tomorrow.

Sir Francis takes a copy of the bill from his pocket and
hands it to Harry.

SIR FRANCIS

There. See? One hundred and ninety-
three dead of plague and five more
out-parishes infected. All in one
week. Frightful, eh?

Sir Francis's Coachman approaches and opens the door.

COACHMAN

Ready, my lord.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED

SIR FRANCIS

Good, good.

(to Harry)

No need for such a long
face. You come along
to Oxford and you'll be
safe.

HARRY

I wasn't thinking of
myself, Sir Francis.

SIR FRANCIS

What then?

HARRY

With all of you going
off, His Majesty will
be left to carry the
entire burden alone.

SIR FRANCIS

His Majesty, Mr. Poyntz?
His Majesty was the
first to leave.

YOUNG COURTIER

(singing)

Wealth, my lad,
Was made to wander,
Let it wander
As it will;
Call the bawd
And call the pander,
Bid them come
And take their fill.
When the bonny
Blade carouses,
Pockets full
And spirits high,
What are acres?
What are houses?
Only dirt.
Or wet or dry.
Should the guardian
Friend or mother
Tell the woes
Of wilful waste;
Scorn their counsel,
Scorn their bother,
You can hang
Or drown at last.

And, with this, Sir Francis enters his coach and it speeds down Harrow Alley and through Barnabas Gate to the open country beyond. It is followed by a seemingly endless cavalcade of coaches containing Ladies and Gentlemen and their Children and their Children's Nurses, laughing and singing as though bound for the merriest of picnics. Harry watches them pass, then turns to his coach which has backed into the side-street. His eyes are wet as he meets Prothero's gaze.

HARRY

Well, after all, the King's life
is not to be jeopardized.

PROTHERO

Precisely what I was thinking,
Mr. Poyntz.

HARRY

I mean to say, I'm happy he had
the good sense to go.

PROTHERO

His advisors probably had their
(cont.)

CONTINUED

9 CONTINUED

PROTHERO (cont.)
hands full persuading him. How
he must have protested.

HARRY
Yes, how he must have...We'll
walk the rest of the way. Come,
Blanche.

The setter bounds down out of the coach. Prothero and Ratsey descend to follow a thoughtful and deeply disturbed Harry as he shoulders his way into the Alley, staying close to the buildings to avoid traffic.

Near the entrance to the Pye, there is a recessed angle in the wall. Standing in it, as he has daily for many years, is SOLOMON EAGLE. He is elderly, gaunt and tall; his eyes are unwaveringly fixed on the ground before him. In response to a Call, he is preaching in a steady monotone, seemingly not caring whether anyone pays attention or not. No one ever has.

EAGLE
And after this I looked and behold
a door was opened in heaven and the
first voice which I heard was as it
were of a trumpet talking with me
which said come up hither and I will
show thee things which must be here-
after and -

As Harry approaches with Blanche, Prothero and Ratsey, MAG FEENY, wife of the proprietor, comes out of the Pye to empty a bucket of slops. A harrassed, slatternly, undersized, middle-aged bag of bones, she bobs her head at Harry and gives him one of her marvelous smiles.

HARRY
Is your husband about,
Mrs. Feeny?

MRS. FEENY
He's upstairs agonizing
over the accounts once
more, poor man, seeing
if he can find another
penny or two for the
taxes we owes.

EAGLE (cont.)
- and immediately I was in the
spirit and behold a throne was
set in heaven - and one sat on
the throne and he that sat was
to look upon like a jasper and
a sardine stone and there was
a rainbow round about the throne
throne in sight like unto an
emerald and round about the
throne were four and twenty s
seats and upon the seats I saw
four and twenty elders sitting
clothed in white raiment and
(cont.)

CONTINUED

9 CONTINUED

HARRY
Be good enough to ask
him to come down, Mrs.
Feeny.

(to Prothero)
Arrange with him for
Ratsey's keep.

EAGLE (cont.)
they had on their heads crowns
of gold and out of the throne
proceeded lightnings and
thunderings and voices and
there were seven lamps of
fire burning -

Harry walks on with Blanche as Prothero shepherds Ratsey
into the Pye.

10 INT THE FEENY'S BEDROOM

JACK FEENY, wearing only a shirt, lies half off the bed,
searching for something under it. Overbearing, dis-
gruntled, humorless, he naturally fancies himself a host
without peer. He raises his head as Mrs. Feeny enters.

JACK FEENY
Where's the bloody pot?

MRS. FEENY
Under the bloody bed.

JACK FEENY
Where under the bloody bed?

MRS. FEENY
Here under the bloody bed.

She snatches it out and hands it to him. Sitting up, he
overturns it. A handful of coins cascades to the cover.

JACK FEENY
Seems to me we should have taken
in more than this last night.
Half a barrel was emptied.

MRS. FEENY
And I knows who emptied most of it.

JACK FEENY
Must I drink with the trade or
mustn't I? Get out of here.

MRS. FEENY
Alderman Poyntz wants a word with
you. About what we owes the parish,
most like.

CONTINUED

10 CONTINUED

JACK FEENY

Tell him he don't get blood from a stone. Tell him I may have some money next week. Tell him I'm doing my best. Tell him -

MRS. FEENY

And who's to do the cooking and the cleaning and the serving while I tells him all that?

JACK FEENY

Tell Beck I says she's to do it.

MRS. FEENY

Beck ain't home.

JACK FEENY

Not home yet? Why, the old goat. A whole night of it and now most of the day. Bloody marvel at his age. All right, I'll come down.

MRS. FEENY

If that girl don't start helping her Ma around here, she'll get this hand in her face.

JACK FEENY

She'll put all he pays her in that hand, won't she? How many can say that of their daughters, eh? Send Toby to fetch her. And you let her alone, A good girl, Beck.

11 IN DR. HODGES' BEDROOM

BECK shuts the door to the anteroom, which she had opened a crack, and turns to DR. NATHANIEL HODGES who is sitting cross-legged on the bed. She is eighteen, with a pretty, sulky face and a figure that makes men gasp. Hodges, almost seventy, is a corpulent giant, cynical, irreverent, humane and misanthropic; he has absolutely no illusions. Each wears only a blanket.

BECK

Says he's a patient of yours name of Spicer. Should I tell him to wait? Or do you want to try again?

CONTINUED

11 CONTINUED

HODGES

What's the use of trying?

BECK

Maybe a drink would help.

HODGES

A drink would kill me. No, I'm done with that, too.

BECK

Maybe tomorrow will be better.

HODGES

Tomorrow I'll be even older.

Beck shrugs. A pebble rattles against the window-pane. She pads across the room and looks out.

In the street below is a gentle, sad, little thirty-year-old Jamaican Negro named TOBY.

TOBY

(calls to Beck)

Your Ma wants you immediate if you're done.

Beck nods and turns back to the room.

BECK

(to Hodges)

I have to go. Lots of the gentry seems to be traveling.

She starts to dress. Hodges gestures vaguely toward some coins on a table.

BECK

Oh, that's all right. Ain't as though something happened.

HODGES

Take some...Take some, Beck.

BECK

How much?

HODGES

Whatever you like.

BECK

The usual, then.

CONTINUED

11 CONTINUED

Hodges gets off the bed and, holding the blanket about him, goes into the anteroom as Beck resumes dressing.

12 IN HODGES' ANTEROOM

the Patient, a slack-jawed mechanic, gets up as Hodges enters and holds out to him a small, glass bottle half-filled with liquid. Bemused, Hodges takes the bottle and goes to the window.

HODGES

(sadly humming)

King David and King Solomon
Led merry, merry lives,
With many, many lady-friends
And many, many wives.

Hodges flicks aside the curtain, holds the bottle up to the light and squints at it.

HODGES (cont.)

But when old age came on them,
With many, many qualms,
King Solomon wrote the Proverbs,
King David wrote the Psalms.

During the last, Hodges dips a finger into the liquid and tastes it.

HODGES (cont.)

I wish I had your kidneys, Spicer.

Beck enters, dressed, from the bedroom and goes toward the door to the staircase.

HODGES

(to Beck)

Deliver a message to Mr. Poyntz for
me, like a good girl?

13 IN HARROW ALLEY

Harry is discussing the Mortality Bill with SAM KILLIGREW, the Grocer; MR. WICK, the Linen-draper, an elderly little shopkeeper, looks over his shoulder. Sam, with his tense, six-year-old son DICKIE sitting on his arm, is bareheaded and wears an apron. Harry's age, he is meaty, bluff, shrewd and successful: in his large, crowded shop behind them Two 'Prentices are waiting on Customers; in the warehouse alongside, Another 'Prentice is helping Mrs. Killigrew, SAL, unload a barrow of cheeses. Sal is a sturdy, comely helpmeet, good-humored and patient.

CONTINUED

13 CONTINUED

SAM

(reading the bill)

Saint Brides' parish now, too.
 Oh, I'm glad I changed my mind
 about opening another shop there.
 Trade must be fallen off to
 nothing. And St. James' parish
 as well.

(shakes his head)

I tell you, Harry, boy, death is
 coming too close for comfort.

Dickie's face puckers and he lets out a wail.

SAM (cont.)

What is it, Dickie? Tell me.

DICKIE

Humphrey says if I die they'll
 put me in a hole in the ground
 and the worms will eat me.

SAM

Now, now, now, would your Da-da
 let that happen to you? Would I?
 I'd keep the worms out by first
 shutting you up in a big, strong
 wooden box. Only after that would
 I put you in the hole in the ground.
 See?

Oddly enough, Dickie cries harder than before.

HARRY

Oh, for God's sake, Sam, give
 him to me. Big, strong, wooden
 box.

Harry takes Dickie in his arms and soothes him. Mr. Wick
 snatches the bill from Sam and avidly reads it.

HARRY (cont.)

(to Dickie)

Now, you listen to your Uncle Poyntz.

DICKIE

You're not my uncle.

HARRY

Well, true, but we've known each
 other a long time, haven't we?

(cont.)

CONTINUED

13 CONTINUED

HARRY (cont.)

Didn't you dandle me on your
knee when I was a baby?

DICKIE

(delighted)

You dandled me on your knee.

HARRY

Oh, was that the way of it?
Anyway, no one's going to shut
you up in a wooden box and no
one's going to put you in a hole
in the ground. And if you see
any worms - catch them and we'll
go fishing, you and Blanche, here,
and I. Agreed?

Beginning to hiccup, Dickie nods vigorously. As Harry
puts him down, Mr. Wick returns the bill to Sam and
scuttles off.

SAM

Sal. He's got the hiccups. Do
something about it.

SAL

(looking up from
the barrow)

Hiccups is nothing.

SAM

You heard what I said.

SAL

Oh, Sam, you'd think he's the
first child we ever raised.

SAM

He's the first son.
(to Dickie)
Go to your ma.

As Dickie goes to Sal, Beck approaches. Seeing Harry
before he sees her, she tugs her bodice down a bit for
better display.

BECK

Mr. Poyntz, sir. Doctor Hodges
sends you a message. He says he
will not be at your celebration
this evening, much as he regrets.

CONTINUED

13 CONTINUED

HARRY

Oh? Did something come up?

BECK

(after a giggle)

No, sir. His spirits is low, he says.

HARRY

Thank you.

Beck walks on. Harry and Sam follow her with their eyes.

SAM

Ever crossed your mind you'd like to play at slaps-and-tickles with that one?

HARRY

Oh, no, no, no. No.

SAM

One no would have been enough, Harry.

HARRY

She'd prove more trouble than she's worth.

SAM

Not with proper handling. A woman, a dog and a walnut tree, the more you beat them the better they be.

HARRY

(indicating the bill)

Done with that?

SAM

(returning it)

It's bad, bad news, Harry, boy.

HARRY

If Mr. Lawrence is not greatly alarmed, why should we be?

SAM

(tapping the bill)

Ah, but when you met with the Lord Mayor this morning, this had not

(cont.)

CONTINUED

13 CONTINUED

SAM (cont.)

yet come out. How does he feel about it now? You understand, it's not so much me I'm troubled for but the little ones. The younger they are, they say, the more dangerous it is. I'm told that simply from the mother's having seen a plague victim at a distance, a child in the womb came dead before its time. Not only that, it had turned monst- Ah, forgive me, Harry, I had no right to be saying that to you. It's an old woman's tale, I'm certain.

HARRY

Come, Blanche.

Harry turns away from Sam and starts down the street. As Sam enters his shop to attend to a customer, Sal calls:

SAL

Harry. Harry. Send Nan home, will you?

Harry's pace quickens until he is almost running. He passes Mr. Wick's shop. Mr. Wick and MRS. WICK are on the steps of the front door.

MRS. WICK

What are we to do, Mr. Wick?

MR. WICK

Do, Mrs. Wick? We're leaving the City at once and we'll stay away till the infection's gone.

MRS. WICK

What about the shop? It's all we own.

MR. WICK

What's it worth to us if we die? Begin to pack, Mrs. Wick, my mind's made up. We leave this very day.

14

IN HARRY'S SHOP

OKESHOTT, the elderly journeyman, is fitting a Patron before a mirror. WILL and HARVEY, the 'prentices, are

CONTINUED

seated cross-legged on a worktable, sewing. Harry hurries in with Blanche at his heels.

HARRY

Will, have the coach fetched
'round again. I'll be leaving
at once.

Going to the rear of the shop, Harry nods to the Patron and dashes up a staircase.

(A word about Harry's residence: below the shop and storehouse on the ground floor is a cellar with a wash-room and a store-room; to the rear of the shop is a garden with a stable for the coach and horses; the middle floor has a large dining-room, a kitchen, two small bedrooms - one of them Prothero's - and a 'house of office' or privy; the upper floor has a fine parlor, two bedrooms, a storage room and a little 'closet' or study; sleeping cubicles for the cook, maidservants and 'prentices are in the attic.)

IN THE PARLOR

JEM (for Jemimah) POYNTZ and NAN KILLIGREW are at the spinnet playing a lively duet and enjoying themselves enormously. Nan is a pretty girl of fifteen. Jem, the same age, is a beauty, petite and dainty, intelligent and sensitive; she is six months with child. They break off as Harry enters with Blanche, Nan with a welcoming smile, Jem sobering instantly, all the vivacity and sparkle fading.

NAN

Did you hear us, Uncle Poyntz?
Wasn't it atrocious? We've been
laughing so.

HARRY

Your mother wants you now, Nan.

NAN

(kissing Jem)
Until later, dear Jem.
(to Harry)
Wait till you see me, Uncle Poyntz.
Mother says I may wear beauty
patches here and here, like a
lady of the court.

Nan pecks Harry's cheek, pats Blanche on her way across the room and goes out the door.

15 CONTINUED

Harry and Jem are alone and there is a gulf between them.

HARRY

Mrs. Poyntz, -

JEM

I wasn't being idle. I'd made every preparation for tonight before we began to play.

HARRY

No, no, I -

JEM

I told Cook how I wanted the chickens roasted and the carp stewed and I decanted the wine myself and saw to it the silver was polished and only then did I ask Nan to come visit.

HARRY

I don't question it at all. You're mistress of this house and you may spend your time as you please. I came only to ask about the child.

JEM

(hands to belly)

To ask what about the child?

HARRY

Is it stirring? Has it been kicking?

JEM

No, not for awhile.

HARRY

Not for awhile? Why didn't you say so at once? I'll send for Doctor Hodges.

JEM

The child is often quiet at this time of day. I think it sleeps. It kicks hard enough, certainly, in the night and morning.

CONTINUED

15 CONTINUED

HARRY

The child is well, then?

JEM

Yes.

Will pops his head in at the door.

WILL

The coach is at Pye corner. Ned says he can't come nearer the house for the great to-do in the Alley.

Will disappears. Harry stares at Jem a moment, then nods and turns to go.

JEM

Mr. Poyntz?

HARRY

(without turning)

Yes?

JEM

I'm well, too.

Harry pauses, then leaves. Blanche follows him. Jem takes some unfinished needlepoint from the spinnet, goes to a window-seat and looks out.

The courtiers' coaches are still moving through the Alley in an unbroken line. Harry, with Blanche, is nearing Pye corner.

16

IN HARROW ALLEY

Toby comes out of the Pye followed by Prothero, points toward Harry's coach and re-enters the Tavern. Prothero goes toward the coach, passing Eagle on the way. A Few Men have stopped to listen to him.

EAGLE

- and the kings of the earth and the great men and the rich men and the chief captains and the mighty men and every bond man and every free man hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains and said to the mountains and rocks hide us hide us for the great day of his wrath is come and who shall be able to stand and -

CONTINUED

16 CONTINUED

Harry looks out the coach-window as Prothero comes up.

HARRY

I'm off to Mr. Lawrence's again.
If I'm late returning, help Mrs.
Poyntz greet our guests.

Harry hesitates, gazing off at Eagle.

PROTHERO

Yes, Mr. Poyntz?

HARRY

This is the first time I've ever
known anyone to pay the slightest
attention to Solomon Eagle.

(to the Coachman)

Ned.

Prothero returns to the Pye as the Coachman backs the
coach down the side-street, turns it and drives off.

17

IN THE PYE TAVERN

Ratsey, Prothero and Jack Feeny are seated at one of the
tables. the Pye is a dim, low-ceilinged affair, none too
clean, with a bar and a rack of barrels behind it; there
is a rear-door and, near it, a staircase leading to the
upper floors where there are rooms for guests.

JACK FEENY

Oh, to be sure, Jack Feeny is
rolling in wealth, so let him lodge
and feed this one, too. I'm
already saddled with Mrs. Tolliver
and Mrs. Povey and Toby and John
Hayward and my back's not broke
yet so up with another. They're
eating me out of house and home,
I tells you.

PROTHERO

Yes, I can imagine how sumptuously
you feed them.

JACK FEENY

Well, I ain't got a mattress stuffed
with gold, you know. You seen me
flinging the Crown jewels around here,
Mrs. Tolliver? You, Mrs. Povey?

CONTINUED

17 CONTINUED

From a nearby table, MRS. TOLLIVER, a bleary drunkard of sixty, and MRS. POVEY, a feeble-minded woman of fifty, stare vacantly at Feeny. They are dressed in black and each grasps a white staff of office.

PROTHERO

It's all being credited to what you owe, Mr. Feeny.

Beck has come to the table with a pitcher of beer, mugs for Prothero and Feeny and a much smaller mug and a heel of bread for Ratsey, who shuts his eyes and sniffs at her.

RATSEY

Oh, God, two months since I smelled female.

Ratsey tosses off the beer at once and attacks the bread. Feeny watches him with distaste.

JACK FEEBY

And how long does I board this bottomless pit?

PROTHERO

Depends on the plague. If it lifts tomorrow, say, back to Newgate for hanging he goes. If it strikes our parish and grows hot, as long as he survives. That shouldn't be very long.

Ratsey guffaws and reaches for the pitcher. Feeny puts it out of his reach.

PROTHERO

(to Ratsey)

That's a most peculiar, superior attitude toward the plague you have, friend, and I'm wondering why. Are you thinking of running away, is that it?

Ratsey shakes his head, amused at some secret thought.

PROTHERO (cont.)

You wouldn't get far. Not even if we failed to chase you and you had money. Towns and farms on the road are shy now of people from London. Some who fled here were murdered when they came too close.

CONTINUED

17 CONTINUED

Ratsey shrugs with a tantalizing smile and wolfs his bread. What, then, can it be? wonders Prothero and, eyes narrowed, levels a speculative gaze upon Ratsey.

RATSEY

(after a moment)

I once met a Gypsy in the woods. Gypsies, they knows things we don't. He'd been poaching, see, and he was caught in a trap. When I frees him, he says, I've no money to reward you but I'll show you how my people protects theirselves from plague. There's a certain plant, says he.

(yawns)

Where does I sleep?

JACK FEENY

Wait. What plant would that be?

RATSEY

Well, he - All right to have some - ?
(gestures toward the pitcher)

Feeny refills Ratsey's mug. Ratsey drains it at once.

RATSEY (cont.)

He takes me to the Gypsies' graveyard. It's midnight and there's a full moon. He heaves up a great rock and I sees a trap-door. Down we goes. All right to - ?

Feeny refills Ratsey's mug and Ratsey gulps it down.

RATSEY

We're in a cave, see? He lights a candle and there before me is -

A dark-skinned hand has crept from under the table and toward the remains of Ratsey's bread. Ratsey suddenly seizes the hand and drags up the terrified Toby. Twisting his arm, Ratsey sets his foot against Toby's back and sends him spinning across the room.

RATSEY (cont.)

Can't stand their color, I can't. And they stinks.

CONTINUED

17 CONTINUED

PROTHERO
(reasonably enough)
So do you.

RATSEY
Ah, but mine's a white stink.
There's a difference, see how I
mean?

PROTHERO
No.

JACK FEENY
And what happened then?

Puzzled, Ratsey turns to Feeny as Beck comes to clear the table.

JACK FEENY (cont.)
The story, man, the story. What
happened then?

RATSEY
Oh. Oh, I went for a roll with
the duchess right there on the
poop-deck.

Ratsey nods several times in vigorous confirmation of the truth of his story and, reaching for the pitcher, looks up at Beck.

RATSEY (cont.)
And what might your name be,
darling?

Glaring at Ratsey, Feeny snatches the pitcher and stomps away from the table. Ratsey squeezes Beck's bottom. Annoyed, she twitches it out of reach and leaves him. Ratsey shrugs and, after inspecting and rejecting Mrs. Tolliver, turns to Mrs. Povey.

RATSEY
And who might you be, darling?

MRS. POVEY
I'm Povey. I'm a searcher of the
dead, I am. Her, too.

RATSEY
Are you? Come to the stable, dear,
and we'll hunt for fairy gold in the
hay.

CONTINUED

17 CONTINUED

Claping the giggling Mrs. Povey's wrist, Ratsey gets up and pulls her to her feet.

PROTHERO

Is that it, after all? A mumbo-jumbo Gypsy charm?

RATSEY

(snaps his fingers)

That was the yarn I was spinning. I couldn't remember.

PROTHERO

(with a superior smile)

If it's any such thing you're depending on, friend, I pity you.

RATSEY

Stick the pity, friend, where it'll do most good. You'll need it more than me if the plague comes close.

PROTHERO

What makes you so certain, friend?

Ratsey brings his face close to Prothero's.

RATSEY

Because I once had the plague, friend, and you don't. get it. twice.

Ratsey points at Prothero's stricken expression, shouts with laughter and, seizing Mrs. Povey in a bear-hug, whirls her in a clumsy dance toward and out the rear-door.

RATSEY (cont.)

(bellowing as they go)

Why stand we here?
 Why dance we not?
 Falalalala lala la la.
 My blood's a-boil
 Like water in the pot.
 Falalalala lala la la.

Prothero is alone except for the sodden Mrs. Tolliver.

PROTHERO

(perhaps to God)

But that's not just.

18

OUTSIDE THE LORD MAYOR'S HOUSE

MINGS, an efficient, graying head clerk, is on the doorstep with a list of the City's aldermen in his hand, issuing hurried instructions to a dozen mounted and mounting Couriers, one of whom gallops off as Harry's coach stops and Harry gets out with Blanche.

MINGS

And you, Tom, you summon Alderman Lovelace, Alderman Bunn and Aldermen Stayner, Bartlett, Cuttance and Greatorex. Nick -

Another Courier gallops off as Harry and Blanche come up the step.

MINGS (cont.)

Mr. Poyntz. I was about to send for you. His Worship is in the office.

As Harry goes through the door with Blanche, Mings crosses off his name.

MINGS (cont.)

Nick, you go 'round to Aldermen Mortlake, Carey, Clutterbuck and Tookey. Jonas?

19

IN THE LORD MAYOR'S OFFICE

a spacious, sunny, sparsely furnished room with white plaster walls, JOHN LAWRENCE, Lord Mayor of London, is dictating to TEDDIMAN and Another Clerk as he paces. He is sixty, with a wrestler's build, cropped hair, a scowl and a stubborn chin. Messengers silently come and go with papers for Teddiman.

LAWRENCE

And to slow the further spread of the infection, I order all assemblies prohibited except for worship. I want the schools closed, theatres closed -

Teddiman gestures for Lawrence to slow. Harry enters with Blanche behind a hurrying Messenger.

LAWRENCE (cont.)

Yes, Harry?

HARRY

I've seen the latest Mortality Bill,
(cont.)

CONTINUED

HARRY (cont.)

John. Tomorrow's. A hundred and ninety-three dead of plague.

(fishing)

The situation's very bad, isn't it?

LAWRENCE

A hundred and ninety-three would make it sad enough but not too bad.

HARRY

(brightening)

There's no cause for alarm, then.

LAWRENCE

Not if it were only a hundred and ninety-three. But the true figure, I'd say, is nearer four hundred.

Shocked, Harry can only stare at Lawrence.

LAWRENCE (cont.)

The Bills have never shown more than seventy dead from all causes in any one week. Tomorrow's shows five hundred. One hundred and ninety-three admittedly by plague. The rest, some three hundred, laid to Old Age, Consumption, Small Pox - but what would you say most are? There's a great temptation to lie when someone in your family dies of plague and you face forty days quarantine in an infected house.

HARRY

Four hundred. In one week.

LAWRENCE

It's an ugly truth and we face many. Would you rather not hear them? That there's great unemployment and it's growing with the great houses and shops shutting down as their owners run away and turn out servants and working-men without a penny or a place to live for us to take care of? That there's almost no City Cash, the King having borrowed it to fight the Dutch? That the farmers grow angry

(cont.)

LAWRENCE (cont.)
with us for letting the plague
spread and threaten to bring no
more food and fuel to our markets?

HARRY
My God, John, you take the heart
out of me.

LAWRENCE
Harry, Harry, it's not as though
there's nothing to be done.

HARRY
(brightening again)
Of course. What provision did His
Majesty make before he left?

LAWRENCE
His Majesty? His Majesty graciously
granted me a two-minute audience as
he stood with a foot in the coach,
ready to depart. It might have been
longer but his spaniel began choking
on a chicken-bone and that being a
truly serious matter the audience
ended. Off he went with his whores
and a 'Do what you can' and 'Ask
people to send alms for the afflicted
to the Bishop of London.' That's a
good man; incidentally, that Bishop
Henchman, Harry. I never cared for
him personally but he's vowed to stay
at his post and he will.

Harry is slumped in dejection.

LAWRENCE (cont.)
Never mind, Harry. We managed with-
out a king for twenty years after we
chopped off his father's head and
we'll manage now.

HARRY
(with a nervous glance
at the clerks)
John. For God's sake.

LAWRENCE
Aach. When I said there's something
to be done, I meant we will do it.
(cont.)

19 CONTINUED

LAWRENCE (cont.)

Doctor Alston has assured me the College of Physicians will soon devise effective medicines and measures. And from now on, no one will be allowed to leave the City without a health certificate signed by the alderman of his parish. That'll soothe the farmers and, if you hand them out as slowly as possible, it'll serve to keep people here, too. So you see all's not lost yet, is it?

HARRY

It's not so much myself I'm concerned about, John. But I have a child soon due.

LAWRENCE

I have five already here so I do understand. Naturally, we think of the children first.

HARRY

That's it. You know how much it means to me. I waited so long before marrying, to make something of myself first. Perhaps too long. This child will be very dear to me. And so, while I've been happy to serve as alderman, I -

LAWRENCE

(forestalling)

Of course it will be dear to you. And that's why you'll want it to be proud of you when it's old enough to understand you stayed and did your duty in a critical time.

HARRY

What I have in mind, John -

LAWRENCE

No, Harry, no. What panic you'd feel if the sun failed to appear one day or the moon. Well, we are the planets to London town, a bond and a surety that order will be preserved, suffering alleviated

(cont.)

CONTINUED

19 CONTINUED

LAWRENCE (cont.)
 and the plague fought. I will ride through the streets every day to let myself be seen. And I expect every alderman to do the same and discharge the trust reposed in him to the utmost of his power. I'll break any man who tries to wriggle out of it. I'll break him, Harry, I swear it. I'll fine him to the limits of his fortune, blacken his name and see to it he never again holds office. This City will be kept going. I was not elected Lord Mayor of London to see grass grow in the streets.

HARRY
 I'll send the child, I mean, my wife to her father's in Dover.

LAWRENCE
 (shakes his head)
 It won't do. Forbid people to flee but aldermen may send away their families? No, Harry. Not that either.

HARRY
 My God, what sins have we committed to deserve all this?

LAWRENCE
 Great ones, surely. I'm proclaiming tomorrow and every Wednesday hereafter a day of humiliation and public confession of sin. We will all attend church and implore His mercy by opening our hearts. His hand, they say, is heavy upon the silent sinner.

MRS. LAWRENCE, her husband's age, comes in with his gold chain of office and arranges it about his neck.

MRS. LAWRENCE
 The aldermen are gathering, Jack.

LAWRENCE
 Thank you, wife.
 (to Harry)
 You needn't stay for the meeting. You've heard it all.

CONTINUED

19 CONTINUED

HARRY

I'll not, then. Tonight's my annual feast for the cutting of the stone.

LAWRENCE

Oh, yes. What an absurd man you are, Harry, to be sure.

HARRY

Doctor Hodges cut thirty for the stone that year and I alone survived. I'm grateful.

LAWRENCE

Teddiman will bring you a copy of the plague orders as soon as they're drawn. Make a note, Teddiman.

TEDDIMAN

It won't be before morning, Mr. Poyntz.

LAWRENCE

Read them in church after the service so that all may know.

Lawrence starts to leave, then turns back to Harry.

LAWRENCE (cont.)

Come see me at any time, Harry, day or night. God bless you. And good luck.

20 IN HARRY'S GARDEN

that night a table has been set out under a tree. The feast has ended and GOSNELL, Jem's maidservant, an indolent slovenly girl her own age, is removing the dishes. Harry, at one end, Blanche's head on his knee, is busy with his thoughts. Jem, at the other, is playing a guitar and singing. At the table with them are Sal and Nan Killigrew; CECIL CHANDLER, the silver-haired, aristocratic vicar of St. Barnabas church; his awkward, gentle, young curate, LUCIUS MORRELL; and the baker's wife, BETTY BUCKWORTH, a handsome, strongly built, capable woman.

JEM

(sings)

Why so pale and wan, fond lover?
Tell me, why so pale?

(cont.)

CONTINUED

20 CONTINUED

JEM (cont.)

Will, when looking well
 Can't win her,
 Looking ill prevail?
 Tell me, why so pale?

Harry's gaze has gone to Sam Killigrew and JASPER BUCK-
 WORTH, a broad, simple man Harry's age, standing together
 at a corner of the garden wall nearest the Alley. He
 leaves the table to join them.

NAN

(taking it up)

Why so dull and mute, young sinner?
 Tell me, why so mute?
 Will, when speaking well
 Can't win her,
 Saying nothing do't?
 Tell me, why so mute?

The song goes on. Sam and Jasper have ears cocked to the
 tolling bells. Beyond them, between Harry's building and
 the next, the drift of coaches and wagons toward Barnabas
 Gate is visible. At Harry's look of inquiry:

SAM

Brickbats and tiles say the bells
 of St. Giles. That's the second
 death bell for St. Giles in less
 than five minutes.

JASPER

Sshh. Oranges and lemons say the
 bells of St. Clement's. God rest
 the soul, whoever it is.

HARRY

(eyeing the traffic)

And on it flows. I hear one of the
 aldermen is thinking of going away.

SAM

If I knew his name I'd tell him
 what I think of him, I would. I'm
 staying, why can't he?

HARRY

Are you, Sam?

SAM

Of course I am. I've got enough
 (cont.)

CONTINUED

20 CONTINUED

SAM (cont.)

produce and beer in my store-house to feed an army for a year. I can't leave it, can I? And how would I carry it with me?

JASPER

I wish I could go away.

SAM

It would be easy enough for you.

JASPER

I don't understand. Folks need bread, don't they? How could I go? Who'd bake it?

Chandler joins them, a fiddle under his arm, Morrell trailing after him.

CHANDLER

The ladies would like you to join them in a roundelay.

HARRY

We were speaking of an alderman who thinks of running away.

CHANDLER

What a contemptible man he must be.

HARRY

Perhaps he has good reason.

CHANDLER

Anyone in a responsible position who leaves now out of fear is twice condemned. Condemned for inhumanity in turning his back upon us and for stupidity as well - for if God intends to send him the infection where can he go to escape it?

SAM

(cutting him off)

Listen...St. Giles again. Damn them over there. That's where it all began.

MORRELL

N-not their fault, surely.

CONTINUED

20 CONTINUED

SAM

You don't know how they live in
St. Giles if you can say that.
Homes not fit for pigs and what
they eat you wouldn't give a dog.
I know. I own two tenements and
a grocer's shop there.

MORRELL

H-how p-perverse the poor are.
We set them g-good examples and
they will not f-follow it.

CHANDLER

Gentlemen, the ladies are waiting.

As the others return to the table, Harry holds Sam back.

HARRY

Sam, if it comes to the parish,
I'll be in the thick of it. My
house will not be safe. May Jem
stay with you, if need be, and the
child when it's born? Till the
sickness has passed?

SAM

Of course, Harry. Of course.

HARRY

You're a good friend, Sam.

SAM

And you're the brother I always
wanted and never had...We'll take
care of them for you. And Sal's
a good midwife, if it comes to that.

Harry and Sam join the others. Chandler has his fiddle
under his chin.

CHANDLER

Are we ready, now?
(bow to strings -
then breaks off)
The key of C, remember.
(another false start)
When I count three.
(another false start)
What song was it? Oh, yes.

CONTINUED

20 CONTINUED

Jem and Nan begin to giggle at Chandler. When he puts his bow to his fiddle again and still does not play, they burst into laughter - which dies away when they see he has remained frozen in position, his face ashen. Then they hear the same bell he has just heard.

CHANDLER (cont.)

Two sticks...and an apple...
Say the bells of Whitechapel...
The plague is within the wall.

Everyone is still as a statue. There is utter silence except for the bells.

CHANDLER (cont.)

(bemused)

I must prepare my sermon. For tomorrow.

Like a sleep-walker, he gets up and makes his way slowly to the garden door and out. Each family draws together.

SAM

We'd all best go home.

The group disintegrates without another word. When the last guest has gone, Harry snuffs all the candles but one. Carrying that, he leads Jem across the garden and they enter the darkened shop by the rear door. Blanche follows.

21 IN HARRY'S HOUSE

Harry and Jem go up the stairs from the shop, Blanche behind them. On the middle floor landing, there is a glow of light from an open door: Prothero is writing at a table in his room. Harry hands the candle to Jem and lets her go up alone. From the doorway:

HARRY

The plague is in the City.

PROTHERO

Yes, sir. I heard the bell.

HARRY

What is it you're doing?

PROTHERO

Writing health certificates for those wanting to leave.

CONTINUED

21 CONTINUED

HARRY

You can't work day and night.
We'll engage another clerk.

PROTHERO

The parish cannot afford it.

HARRY

(nods dully)
Bed Blanche down for the night.
(to Blanche)
Stay, girl.

Harry turns away and slowly goes up the stairs.

22 IN HARRY'S BEDROOM

Jem is taking off her shift and putting on her nightgown.
Undressing, Harry looks at her body.

HARRY

Oh, God, how I want you tonight.

Jem hesitates at this, then slips between the sheets.

HARRY (cont.)

Christ, not since our wedding-
night. If you weren't pregnant,
I'd find it hard to remember we'd
ever done it at all.

Jem turns her face away, tears coming to her eyes. Harry
puts on his nightshirt and gets under the cover beside
her. After awhile, Jem turns her head to him.

JEM

You can if you like.

HARRY

I know I can if I like. Thank you.
for nothing. But if there's no
joy in it for you, there's none for
me.

Harry snuffs the candle. The room is black.

23 IN ST. BARNABAS CHURCH

next day the benches are packed solid with parishioners;
many must stand in the rear and against the side-walls.
Harry and Jem are here, in a pew up front, and the

CONTINUED

23 CONTINUED

Killigrews, the Buckworths, the Feenys. Chandler is in the pulpit.

CHANDLER

Variable, and therefore miserable, is the condition of Man. This minute I was well and the next I am ill. We deliberate upon our meats and drink and air and exercises, we polish every stone with which we build that building, Health, but in a minute a Cannon demolishes all; a Sickness unprevented for all our diligence seizes us and destroys us in an instant. O miserable condition of Man. God had put a coal of immortality into us which we might have fanned into a flame. But we blew it out with Adam's first sin. So that now we not only die, we die upon the rack of fear. We are not sure we are ill, we are not sure we are well. One hand asks the other by the pulse and our eye asks our urine how we do...

Lawrence's clerk, Teddiman, enters, looks about for Harry and, seeing him, makes his way through the press to his side. He hands Harry a copy of the plague orders and leaves.

CHANDLER (cont.)

Behold us, O God, here gathered together in confidence of Thy promise that when two or three are gathered together in Thy name Thou wilt be in the midst of them and grant them their petitions. We confess that we are not worthy so much as to confess. Vanities have covered us and thereby we are naked. Licentiousness hath inflamed us and thereby we are frozen. Voluptuousness hath fed us and thereby we are starved. These distempers Thou only, Who art true and perfect harmony, canst tune and rectify and set in order again. Do so, then, most merciful Father. Shut out none of us. But with as many of us as begin their conversion
(cont.)

CONTINUED

23 CONTINUED

CHANDLER (cont.)

and newness of life, this minute,
 this minute, this minute, O God,
 begin Thou Thy account with them
 and put all that is past out of
 Thy remembrance...We will pray now,
 silently, and let those who wish
 to confess rise and do so.

Everyone bows his head. After a time, little Dickie Killigrew gets to his feet.

DICKIE

I took an apple from the barrel
 and brought it to bed with me
 and ate it in the dark and I had
 been told not to. I won't do it
 again.

Dickie sits down. Chandler waits. But perhaps the peril is not yet close enough: no one else rises.

CHANDLER

Alderman Poyntz?

Chandler leaves the pulpit as Harry comes to the front and faces the assemblage, unrolling the plague orders.

HARRY

(reads)

Orders Concerning The Infection Of
 The Plague. First, it is thought
 necessary and so ordered that every
 householder keep the street before
 his house clean and swept. That
 the sweeping and filth of houses be
 daily carried away by the rakers.
 That no hogs, dogs, cats or tame
 pigeons be kept within the City
 and that the dogs...be killed...by
 dog-killers appointed for that
 purpose...

Harry's voice trails off. His eyes meet Jem's. Recovering, he goes on.

HARRY (cont.)

(reading)

That special care be taken that no
 rotten fish, unwholesome flesh -

24

IN THE VESTRY

Morrell's eyes are fixed upon Chandler who is stuffing a few last things into a saddle-bag. Chandler is increasingly uncomfortable under the level gaze.

CHANDLER

I would not have anyone misinterpret my departure, Mr. Morrell. I depend upon you to explain it fully after I have gone. I am not leaving out of fear. Make that clear. My plans were made long, long before there was even a breath of plague. Stress that. I always go to the country at this time of year. It's simply my normal summer vacation. That's understandable enough, isn't it? That it's not desertion in the face of peril?

Morrell is silent.

CHANDLER (cont.)

I say it's not. And I've never given anyone cause to doubt my word, have I? Have I? Well?

Morrell remains silent.

CHANDLER (cont.)

Self-preservation is the first law of life, Morrell.

MORRELL

Is it? I was t-taught it's love thy n-neighbor.

There 'is nothing more to be said. Chandler takes up his saddle-bag and leaves by a side-door.

25

OUTSIDE ST. BARNABAS CHURCH

a dazed Harry stands on the steps with Jem as the parishioners flow out past them. Emerging, Prothero pauses next to Harry who hands him the plague orders with a few muttered words and dully watches as Prothero scans the crowd, sees the man he's looking for across the Alley and raises a hand.

PROTHERO

(calls)

Hayward. John Hayward. Over here.

CONTINUED

25 CONTINUED

JOHN HAYWARD, lounging in the Pye's doorway, is a maniac, a hulking brute with beetling brows, gleaming eyes and a set, twisted smile. At Prothero's summons he crosses the Alley, dodging between the vehicles in the endless procession to Barnabas Gate; these are no longer the courtiers' elaborate coaches but the unadorned equipages of merchants and tradesmen. People in his path give him a wide berth.

PROTHERO (cont.)

(to Hayward)

You're to kill every dog in the parish. Do you understand? They carry the infection in their hair. Kill them all. If anyone tries to prevent you, report him to me.

Hayward is delighted. Stooping, he rips out a loose cobble and looks about for game. A little mongrel is nosing a bit of offal a few doors down and Hayward lopes toward it. It shies as he nears and scurries behind a barrel. There, Hayward catches it. The dog yammers as his arm goes up and is silent when it has come down. Harry shudders at the sight and starts home with Jem.

Across the Alley, two strangers turn their horses out of the cavalcade moving toward the Gate and stop before the house next to the Pye. MERLIN is a striking figure: tall, emaciated, clad in black, with a black cloak; he has a sombre mien and wears a black eye-patch. AZAZEL, his assistant, is a fat little man with knowing eyes and a greasy smile. He addresses Beck, in the Pye's doorway.

AZAZEL

Is this the Robinson house?

BECK

Yes. But they left the City this morning.

AZAZEL

(producing a key)

I know. They've rented it to us.

Azazel opens the front door and lets Merlin in, then lifts their baggage from his horse and deposits it inside. A small knot of Curious Spectators gathers, Beck among them, as he hangs a large, colored cloth with the zodiac on it from a nail on the door and proceeds to beat a small drum.

CONTINUED

25 CONTINUED

AZAZEL

Merlin is here, Merlin the wise and all-knowing, Merlin the great. He knows the past, the present and the future and has been praised by all the crowned heads in the world. He has infallible preventive pills against the plague, never-failing preservatives against the infection, sovereign cordials against the corruption of the air. He has long studied the doctrine of antidotes and is now prepared to save you from any contagious distemper whatsoever. He carries a full line of charms and amulets against all ills and, friends, he directs the poor gratis, absolutely free of charge. Merlin, Merlin is here.

BECK

You say it's free?

AZAZEL

I said it's free and it is free.

(lower)

His advice, that is. For everything else there is a small fee.

BECK

Will the sickness come to this parish, can you tell me?

AZAZEL

The planets have revealed to Merlin, I regret to say, that it will and the many of you, I will not mention the names, no, no, don't press me, many of you will die of it. Unless, that is, you avail yourself of Merlin's help.

And, with a final rat-tat-tat upon the drum, Azazel enters the house and shuts the door.

26 IN HARRY'S SHOP

Blanche bounds down the stairs as Harry and Jem enter from the Alley. Tail wagging, rump wriggling, she stands and puts her forefeet on Harry's chest; he scratches her head.

CONTINUED

26 CONTINUED

Darting away, she goes searching for something under a table. Harry opens a drawer in a nearby chest and takes out a knife. Jem watches in horror and pity as Blanche comes to Harry and lays a slipper at his feet, begging to be played with. Harry picks it up and, going to the rear-door, opens it and flings the slipper into the garden. With a happy bark, Blanche flings herself after it.

JEM

No. No. Please.

Running to Harry, Jem grasps his arm.

JEM (cont.)

No. You can't. Not you. Let Prothero. Or Will or Harvey.

HARRY

They might hurt her.

Putting Jem aside, he goes into the garden. Jem's eyes follow him until, abruptly, she covers them and turns away. After awhile, Harry returns, panting, tears running down his cheeks. He notices the knife still in his hand and, in loathing, hurls it aside. Then he hurries out into the Alley.

27 IN HARROW ALLEY

blindly half-running, half-walking, Harry passes the Pye on his way out of the quarter. Eagle's audience has grown: a Dozen Men And Women now stand listening to him.

EAGLE

- and it was commanded them that they should not hurt any grass of the earth neither any green thing neither any tree but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads and -

28 IN THE PYE

trade is brisk: the inhabitants of the Alley have much to discuss and are excitedly doing so. Yawning hugely, Ratsey enters through the rear-door with Mrs. Povey. There are bits of straw in their hair and on their clothes. He goes directly to Jack Feeny jawing at one of the tables with some patrons.

CONTINUED

28 CONTINUED

RATSEY

I'm hungry.

Feeny waves him away.

RATSEY (cont.)

I says I'm hungry.

Feeny ignores him. Ratsey lets out a howl that silences the room and doubles up, clutching his thigh.

JACK FEENY

For the love of God. What is it?

RATSEY

Sorry, mates. Happens every now and then. Ever since I was a little boy and had the plague. It's easing off a bit, now.

JACK FEENY

(snorts)

Had the plague.

RATSEY

Plague's what I said and plague's what I had. Look here. See?

Ratsey shows Feeny a deep, criss-cross scar behind his ear.

RATSEY (cont.)

Ever seen one before? That's where the swelling was before they cut it and let out the pus. Some gets it there, some under the arm, some in the crotch. Some in all three.

JACK FEENY

My God, he's telling the truth. And you still suffer, after all these years?

RATSEY

You knows how it is with rheumatics when the weather changes? They gets a twinge? It's that way with me when I'm in a room where someone has the plague.

JACK FEENY

Plague? Someone here?

CONTINUED

28 CONTINUED

It takes a moment for this to sink in. Then, with terrified shouts, a dropping of mugs and an overturning of benches and stools, the room is emptied in a trice. Ratsey helps himself to a large slice of meat and some bread from an abandoned dinner and, noticing Hayward in a corner studying what appear to be small, hairy whips, goes over to him. Hayward holds them out for inspection.

HAYWARD

A tail for every dog I killed.

RATSEY

No fear of plague, mate?

HAYWARD

I had it, too, and lived.

RATSEY

G'arn.

Hayward rips his shirt from his shoulder and shows Ratsey a scarred arm-pit.

HAYWARD

It was after that my head began to hurt so. After that.

RATSEY

Now, that's a miracle, that is. There can't be a hundred in all England who've had it and lived. And two of us is here.

Pondering the ways of the universe and helping himself to a pitcher of beer, Ratsey saunters out into the Alley.

29 OUTSIDE THE PYE

Ratsey finds a small barrel in the sunshine and takes his ease with his meat and drink. A shadow falls across him. Looking up, he sees Dan, the hangman's assistant.

RATSEY

How's young Mortimer?

DAN

Oh, it's you. They buried him last night. I'm looking for work. All public hangings is stopped, did you know? I must have walked over half London today and there's a hundred men for every opening.

CONTINUED

29 CONTINUED

RATSEY

I'm onto something steady here,
myself.

Dan hungrily licks his lips as Ratsey takes a huge bite
of meat and loudly chews it.

DAN

I wasn't even able to buy food
for my family yesterday. We'd
planned on eating you. That's
how we speak of it in the craft.

RATSEY

And a very good way it is.

DAN

But no hanging, no fee. What's
going to happen to my wife and
little ones I don't know.

RATSEY

Starve to death, most likely. If
the plague don't kill them first.

DAN

Don't say that. I couldn't bear
it.

RATSEY

Maybe you won't have to. It
might kill you first.

DAN

Damn that Dutch bosun. Damn him.
If I ever sees him, I'll strangle
him.

Dan goes off, cursing.

RATSEY

Hangman.
(spits)

30

OUTSIDE THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
a small, stately building, there is a courtyard. In it,
near the front door, is a coach with a Coachman. Harry
hurries up the steps and into the building.

31 IN THE OFFICE OF THE COLLEGE PRESIDENT
 a handsomely furnished, book-lined room with marble busts
 of Apollo, Hippocrates, Galen, Aesculapius and other
 medical deities and luminaries, SIR EDWARD ALSTON is
 standing at his table hurriedly packing the gold head of
 his cane, actually a scent-box, with a pinch of this and
 a pinch of that from numerous herbal jars before him.
 He is a fleshy, middle-aged, highly successful practi-
 tioner.

HARRY

(entering)

I beg your pardon -

Startled, Alston claps the head of his cane shut and holds
 it to his nose as he fearfully backs away from Harry.

ALSTON

There's no plague in your house?
 You're not a victim yourself?
 Your parish is free of infection?

HARRY

No, no, nothing like that. I'm
 Harry Poyntz, Alderman of St.
 Barnabas. I'm looking for the
 President of the College of
 Physicians.

ALSTON

I am Sir Edward Alston.

He glances doubtfully once more at Harry, then resumes
 stuffing documents into a traveling bag at his feet.

ALSTON (cont.)

I've been besieged by people at
 every step. Many with the impu-
 dence to come to me directly from
 a plague-victim's death-bed. No
 consideration at all.

HARRY

The Lord Mayor told me you're
 devising effective measures
 against the epidemic.

ALSTON

Yes. Tremendously effective
 measures. I delivered our report
 to His Worship not an hour ago.

HARRY

I'm very concerned, naturally -

CONTINUED

31 CONTINUED

ALSTON

Of course you are, of course.

HARRY

I can't tell you how relieved I am to hear from your own lips that there's something we can do.

ALSTON

Plenty to do. We've recommended the victims' bodies be buried two feet deeper, at least, than is usual and sprinkled with quicklime to hasten decomposition. And -

HARRY

I'm more interested in the living.

ALSTON

Oh, we've taken care of that, you may be certain. Got one of these?

Alston shows Harry the gold head of his cane.

ALSTON (cont.)

It's a scent-box, you see? You fill it with aromatics, wormwood, rue, thyme, bayleaf, even garlic, and take a deep breath whenever you suspect you're in the vicinity of the sickness. It helps combat the effluvia, the invisible little beasties in the air that carry the disease. A garland of roses around the neck is extraordinarily effective. Fill your pockets with posies, that helps, too. So does a dead, dried toad: it attracts all the poisons in the atmosphere to itself and saves the wearer harmless. And keep a goldpiece in your mouth at all times, especially one from Queen Elizabeth's reign. That's philosophical gold, that is. Hold it always between the lower lip and the lower gum. Here, see? Some of my colleagues say the upper lip and the upper gum but I say not. Try it both ways, if you like.

CONTINUED

31 CONTINUED

HARRY

Sir Edward, my wife is pregnant.
We expect our first child in
August -

ALSTON

My congratulations to you both.
Now, don't you fret about it.
This is what you do. Keep your
good lady inside the house. Bar
the doors and windows to keep out
the air. Then purify the air
inside the house. Burn noxious
materials night and day. Pitch,
tar, brimstone, old shoes. And
sprinkle the walls and floor daily
with vinegar and horses' urine.
Do that, and if anything untoward
happens to your wife and child,
well, I shall be very much surprised.

HARRY

Sir Edward -

ALSTON

No, no, I can't stay another moment.
My patients have all gone to Oxford
and I should be derelict in duty if
I did not join them at once. Good-
by, goodbye. And don't worry. Joy,
Temperance and Repose, slam the door
on the doctor's nose, eh?

And he is gone. In a few seconds, his coach is heard
rumbling across the courtyard outside. Someone chuckles
drily and, turning, Harry sees Doctor Hodges at a book-
shelf in a far corner.

HODGES

The best cure Sir Edward ever worked
was upon his own purse. When he
began it was lean and sickly and
now it's one of the fattest in the
profession.

Hodges takes down a few books and blows the dust from them.

HODGES (cont.)

Look at that. They haven't been
touched since the day I loaned them
to the College. Too unorthodox.
(cont.)

CONTINUED

HODGES (cont.)

Ah, well, I'm not surprised. When I first showed them to Sir Edward I rather expected him to put them to his nose, like the ape, and ask me whether they were something to eat. If your child is a son and one day decides to be a physician, be sure to send him to an English university. They'll stuff his head properly with the writings of doctors dead three thousand years and he'll never be confused by facts as I was, studying at Montpellier in France.

HARRY

You have no trust in Sir Edward's recommendations?

HODGES

Who am I to doubt the words of Procopius who devised those same tremendously effective measures six hundred years before Christ? And applied them, too, with tremendous effect - until the Black Death killed him. And twenty million more. How can we combat the plague, Harry, when we cannot say what causes it? We know it always starts with the poor and the filthiness that goes with being poor and we know it often stops with the coming of cold weather. Beyond that...

HARRY

I refuse to believe there's nothing can be done.

HODGES

Oh, there's much you can do. Isolate yourself in your house, bolt your doors and windows and never look at the ugliness outside. Think only pretty thoughts, listen only to pretty music, fill your eyes only with pretty things. No? What about choosing a scape-goat, piling all your sins upon it and stoning it
(cont.)

HODGES (cont.)
 into the desert? That's always
 infallible. I don't mean it
 remedies the calamity; I mean it
 infallibly kills the goat. Too
 bad there are not enough Jews in
 London to matter. Why not blame
 Papists for the plague and murder
 a few of them? Or Quakers? Or
 other Non-conformists?

HARRY
 (raising a fist)
 I will not have you mock me.

HODGES
 Then take my advice. The best
 preparation for the plague is to
 run from it. Like Alston. Like
 most of the other physicians.
 Like me.

HARRY
 You? You're leaving St. Barnabas?

HODGES
 I'm going back to Montpellier.
 I can teach there and be of some
 use. I always said I'd do that
 when I could do nothing else. And
 I've reached an age when I can do
 nothing else.

HARRY
 Leaving us. I hope you go straight
 to hell when you die.

HODGES
 Ah, well, Harry, hell for company,
 they say, and heaven for holiness.
 What would be the good of my staying?

HARRY
 You could comfort us, if nothing
 else. Comfort us by your presence.

HODGES
 Why should I? What are most of
 you anyway but passages for food,
 producers of dung? What will you
 leave behind for monuments when
 (cont.)

31 CONTINUED

HODGES (cont.)
 you're gone but full privies?
 Risk my few remaining years for
 that? Besides, I've already ex-
 perienceed a plague. In Italy,
 before you were born. And what I
 saw then filled me with no great
 love for my fellow-men. You wait,
 Harry, wait, and you'll swear it's
 only by chance they wear human form
 and but for this one might class
 them with beasts.

Hodges puts his books under his arm, preparing to go.

HODGES (cont.)
 Don't be a fool, Harry. Run.
 Run. Run.

32 A LONDON STREET

doing business as usual and with Lawrence, the Lord Mayor,
 on horseback, riding slowly along preceded by his Mace-
 Bearer afoot, letting himself be seen.

A SPECTATOR
 God bless you, Jack.

LAWRENCE
 God bless us all, friend.

ANOTHER SPECTATOR
 I look for you each day, Jack.
 It gives me heart to stay.

LAWRENCE
 And I look for you each day, too,
 friend, and it gives me heart to
 stay.

A HOUSEHOLDER has run out of his house with two mugs of
 wine. He hands one up to Lawrence.

HOUSEHOLDER
 Your health, Jack Lawrence. I
 drinks to it.

LAWRENCE
 Thank you, friend, I drink to yours.

Lawrence drinks the wine and tosses the mug back. Harry

CONTINUED

32 CONTINUED

comes running down the street and falls in step alongside Lawrence's horse.

HARRY

John. I must speak to you.

LAWRENCE

I'm listening, Harry.

HARRY

The King has fled, the Court has fled, so has the Parliament, the lawyers, most of the physicians. How can you justify asking me to remain?

LAWRENCE

(eyes straight ahead)

The King has fled, the Court has fled, so has the Parliament, the lawyers, most of the physicians. How can you justify asking me leave to go?

HARRY

I am going, John. I'm going, I say.

LAWRENCE

No, you're not.

HARRY

Fine me to my last penny. I don't care.

LAWRENCE

I know that wouldn't keep you, Harry.

HARRY

And it doesn't matter to me if I never again hold office.

LAWRENCE

I never thought it would, Harry.

HARRY

There's nothing, nothing, that can make me stay.

LAWRENCE

Yes, there is, Harry. You'll stay because you're good.

CONTINUED

32 CONTINUED

Harry is stopped dead in his tracks by this. As Lawrence ambles on:

HARRY

Damn you, John. Damn you. Damn you.

Unperturbed, Lawrence rides on.

33 IN HARROW ALLEY

next day, matters are much the same except that here and there among the coaches moving toward Barnabas Gate there are many fleeing on horseback and a few on foot, pushing barrows with their possessions, carrying children in their arms and infirm oldsters on their backs. Harry and Prothero, on a round of inspection, are moving toward the Pye, pausing occasionally for a word with Householders sweeping the area before their doors. Outside the Pye, a Hostler holds a baggage-laden horse for Hodges who is bidding Sam goodby. Sam has a bottle of brandy.

HODGES

What would I do with it, Sam?
One sniff of brandy would be the death of me.

SAM

It's medicinal, isn't it? Take it for your patients.

Hodges starts opening a saddle-bag to put in the bottle as Harry and Prothero pass. Hodges holds out his hand.

HODGES

I'm leaving now, Harry. I doubt we'll ever meet again.

HARRY

(to Prothero)

They sweep now because the order is fresh in their minds. But we must keep after them.

Harry ignores Hodges who shrugs and stows away the brandy. Listening to Eagle in his niche, now, are a Score of Men and Women, Jack Feeny on the periphery.

CONTINUED

33 CONTINUED

EAGLE

- and when they shall have finished
their testimony the beast that
ascendeth out of the bottomless
pit shall make war against them and
shall overcome them and kill them
and their dead bodies shall lie in
the street of the great city -

Coming up with Prothero behind Feeny, Harry taps his
shoulder.

HARRY

The street before your door
will have to be cleaner
than this. Mr. Feeny?
Please attend to me and not
to that nonsense.

JACK FEENY

It is not nonsense.

HARRY

I want this street -

JACK FEENY

It's deep, very deep.
I do not understand it
all myself but there's
much in what Eagle says.

HARRY

There's much in what I
say, too. I want this
street -

JACK FEENY

(abruptly)

Sshh.

The cause of Feeny's rudeness is the surprising thing that
has happened: Eagle has lifted his eyes to the sky.

EAGLE (cont.)

A great voice from heaven...

(points)

And there it is. An angel in
white. And a flaming sword in
his hand. Do you see it? Do
you see it?

CONTINUED

33 CONTINUED

A WOMAN

I do. I see it plainly.

A MAN

Yes. Yes. There's a sword as plain can be.

EAGLE

And now he waves it over his head.

ANOTHER MAN

Over his head. Yes. Oh, yes.

EAGLE

And look, look, now he points that terrible sword at us.

ANOTHER WOMAN

(shrieks)

At us. I see it. Oh, spare us.

There is a gabble of mounting hysteria.

HARRY

There is nothing there.

JACK FEENY

(snarls)

You don't see the sword? The flaming, two-handed sword?

A MAN

(hating Harry)

There, right there.

HARRY

It's a scrap of cloud.

A WOMAN

It's a time for God's anger, dreadful judgments are at hand, and he denies it, he denies it.

Prothero starts pulling Harry away from the menacing crowd. Hodges catches Harry's eye and grins at him. There is no saying where it might end but for the interruption, a piercing, long-sustained scream from the house next to the church, across the Alley. Everyone turns and sees: A Delirious Man, stripped of his shirt, runs capering out the front door to the middle of the Alley, almost under the hoofs of a coach-horse, and there sinks to his knees and beats his head in agony against the cobbles, his hat

CONTINUED

33 CONTINUED

flying off. Clustered in the doorway from which he came are a MAN WITH A HOT POKER and several Wailing Women. The Coachman heaves on his reins and detours the coach down the side-street that runs past the Pye; the entire cavalcade behind it follows. Everyone, motionless till now, dashes helter-skelter into houses, shops and doorways. Feeny grabs Eagle by the arm and hustles him into the Pye. There is a slamming shut of doors and windows up and down the Alley, like scattered gunfire. And then silence.

Harry looks around. Morrell is on the church-steps, peering to see what has happened. Hodges is in front of the Pye, a foot in the stirrup, preparing to mount, just as the scream caught him. And in every window and partly-opened door a frightened face looks at Harry to see what he will do. Morrell hurries down the steps and runs toward the Delirious Man, who now lies inert. Harry takes a deep breath and moves to join him.

HODGES' VOICE

Stop. Back, both of you. I'll see to him.

Harry pauses. Morrell kneels beside the Delirious Man and gently raises him, resting the bloody head on his knee.

HODGES

(in self-disgust)

Damn, damn, damn.

Hodges takes out the brandy, empties the bottle down his gullet and tosses it aside to shatter on the cobbles. Then he goes and squats next to Morrell. Examining the Delirious Man, he addresses the Man With A Hot Poker.

HODGES (cont.)

When was he taken ill?

MAN WITH A HOT POKER

Three days ago.

HODGES

An icy chill at first? And then shivering?

MAN WITH A HOT POKER

Yes, yes, we thought he'd never stop sneezing.

CONTINUED

33 CONTINUED

HODGES

And after that convulsions and
nausea?

MAN WITH A HOT POKER

And then the swellings came.

HODGES

And you tried to burn them out.

MAN WITH A HOT POKER

We were told it might save him.

HODGES

Why didn't you ask me? You didn't
want anyone to know, is that it?

The Man With A Hot Poker is silent.

HARRY

Is it plague?

HODGES

It's plague. Buboos or swellings
under both arms big as your fist.
And his chest's covered with the
tokens.

HARRY

Tokens? .

HODGES

These little knobs. Mortified
flesh. Hard as a bunion. They
die within five hours after the
tokens come. He's dead now.

The Man With A Hot Poker sobs. The Wailing Women behind
him start to kean.

MORRELL

The Almighty and m-merciful Lord
g-grant thee pardon and remission
of all thy s-sins and the g-grace
and comfort of the Holy S-Spirit.
Amen.

(to Harry)

I'll have his g-grave readied.

Morrell gets up and heads for the church. Hodges lowers

CONTINUED

33 CONTINUED

the body and crosses the arms. Harry cannot tear his eyes away from the corpse.

HARRY

(calls)

Prothero. Prothero.

Prothero puts his head out the Pye's door.

HARRY (cont.)

He's dead.

Prothero pulls his head in. A moment later, the door opens wide and out march Mrs. Tolliver and Mrs. Povey, side by side, with their staffs of office. From Hodges' position, looking up at them against the sky as they approach, they have a weird dignity.

HODGES

What the hell do you want, you old crows?

MRS. TOLLIVER

We are here because we took the oath.

(by heart)

Diligently to search the corpse and report the cause of death faithfully, honestly, unfeignedly and impartially.

MRS. POVEY

And then we gets our fee.

The Man With A Hot Poker casts a fearful glance at Harry and calls to Hodges in a low, desperate voice.

MAN WITH A HOT POKER

Psst. Doctor. For God's sake, say you're mistaken, that it's not plague. And don't let them report plague. I'll give you every penny we have. Doctor, they'll lock us in for forty days. In here, with the infection. We'll all die. Doctor, please, there are four children in the house.

Harry has overheard him and the last words spur him to action.

HARRY

(calls)

Sam? Sam? Sam Killigrew.

CONTINUED

33 CONTINUED

Harry runs to Sam's house. The door is shut. He pounds on it with his fists.

SAM'S VOICE

Get away from that door.

HARRY

Sam, it's Harry. Sam.

The door opens a bit and Sam looks out.

HARRY (cont.)

Sam, it's come. I'll send Jem to you as soon as -

Sam has leveled a pistol at his head.

SAM

Nobody comes in here but me and my family. We're going to stay inside till the plague lifts and I'll kill anyone who tries to force a way in.

(raises voice so all may hear)

Anyone who tries to come in here, I'll blow his brains out, so help me God.

HARRY

Sam. He died of plague. You said -

SAM

Don't say that word. I'm not going to think about it. Go away.

Sam slams the door shut. The church bell starts to toll.

SAM'S VOICE

Nan. Nan. Play that pretty song.

The music of a spinet begins inside. Harry looks about in disbelief. Hodges catches his eye and grins the same mocking grin. Harry turns away from the door and runs to his own house. On the way, he passes Mr. and Mrs. Wicks looking out the partly-opened door of their shop.

MR. WICKS

Not another word, Mrs. Wicks. I don't care what happens to the shop. We're leaving the City at once. My mind's made up.

34 IN HARRY'S SHOP
Okeshott, Will and Harvey step back from the front door as Harry bursts in and dashes to the staircase at the rear.

HARRY
Mrs. Poyntz. Mrs. Poyntz.

Jem looks down from the upper floor landing.

JEM
I'm here, Mr. Poyntz.

HARRY
The plague is in the Alley, do you understand? I order you to remain up there. Up there. You're not to come a single step below. Is your girl there with you? She's to do the same. And close the shutters. You're not to look out into the street. Don't ask questions, do as I say.

Harry leaves the staircase and hurries to the front door.

HARRY (cont.)
(to Will and Harvey)
You're not to go up there. Ever. For any reason.

HARVEY
But we sleep up -

HARRY
You'll sleep in the stable. Not another word, boy. Not another word.

Harry leaves the shop.

35 IN HARROW ALLEY
Ratsey, Hayward and Toby, who is beside himself with fear, are lifting the corpse to a broad plank. A Constable is herding the Man With A Hot Poker and the Wailing Women back into the house with his staff. Another Constable is nailing shut the shutters on the ground-floor windows. Hodges is unloading the baggage from his horse. A Watcher with a halberd is standing by, ready to go on duty.

MAN WITH A HOT POKER
No. No, please. It means our death. You're sentencing us to death. Please. Please. Please.

CONTINUED

35 CONTINUED

The First Constable firmly shuts the door and padlocks it. Hayward is ready at his end of the plank.

RATSEY

(to Toby)

Take hold and off we goes.

Toby is wiping the hands with which he touched the corpse on his shirt as though they would never be free of the taint.

RATSEY (cont.)

Hear what I said, you miserable,
cowardly, little black lump?
Take hold or I'll skin you alive.
Take hold.

Ratsey cracks Toby on the back and hurls him at the plank. Hayward and Toby lift it and, with Ratsey alongside, start toward the church-yard. On the way, Ratsey sees the corpse's hat is much finer than his and makes an exchange.

RATSEY (cont.)

If it goes on like this, I'll soon
look like a bloody duke.

The corpse gone, Prothero ventures out of the Pye and joins Harry at the door of the quarantined house. And now that the Alley is clear, the procession towards the Gate resumes.

HARRY

(to the Watcher)

Fetch them what they require. Water,
food, fuel, nurses and doctors if
they ask. Anything. But if even
one of them breaks out, I'll have
you whipped through the City.

Above, the middle floor windows open. The Man With A Hot Poker, the Wailing Women and the Children are there, wringing their hands and crying their hearts out.

MAN WITH A HOT POKER

Pray for us. Pray for us. Pray
for us. O God, what have we done?

Prothero hands a lump of red chalk to Harry who steps to the front door and inscribes a cross and below it, in large letters:

LORD
HAVE MERCY
UPON US

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

36

IN HARROW ALLEY

one day, some weeks later, THREE LITTLE CHILDREN are at play. Each wears a garland of roses around the neck as they trudge about in a circle, holding hands.

THREE LITTLE CHILDREN

A ring, a ring of roses,
A pocket full of posies,
(sneezing)
Ah-tchoo, ah-tchoo,
We all fall down.

Suiting the action to the word, their laughter silvery, they fall down.

ONE OF THEM

(to the others)

The plague got you, you're dead.

And, getting up, they play it again.

There are now Four Watchers with halberds lounging at the padlocked doors of infected houses on either side of the Alley.

A thin trickle of exodus is flowing toward the Gate, mostly afoot.

Business is going on, but not as usual. A quarter of the shops have closed and there are only a few 'Prentices bawling wares before those still open. Half the Food-Vendors are gone and the age-old street-cries are diminished. Nor are there as many Customers.

From an upstairs window in the Killigrew house, little Dickie, bored and unhappy, watches the Three Little Children. Sam finds him there, pulls him away and berates him till, seeing something below that alarms him, he twitches the curtain across the window.

It is a Young Mother with a baby's coffin in her arms that has frightened Sam. Followed by a Dozen Mourners, she walks with unseeing eyes toward the churchyard.

A Man coming down the Alley sees her with the coffin and quickly crosses to the other side. There, Another Man is heading his way. Seeing each other, they quickly raise scent-balls to their noses and, in passing, give each other a wide berth.

The Young Mother and the Dozen Mourners enter the church as Harry slowly rides into the Alley wearing his chain of office. He has lost flesh and, although his features

CONTINUED

36 CONTINUED

remain officially impassive, he is growing bone-weary. As he rides, he nods to various occupants of the Alley.

An Inmate is at one of the middle floor windows of an infected house and Harry checks his horse to speak to him.

HARRY

Have you enough food? And water?
Is there anything you need?

The Inmate despondently shakes his head and Harry moves on. As he rides past the house of the first plague victim in the parish, the WATCHER speaks to him.

WATCHER

Mr. Poyntz, sir. There ain't
been a sound inside since I come
on duty this morning. I've knocked
but nobody answers.

Harry reins in.

HARRY

Not even the nurse? Fetch a
ladder and look in at one of
the windows. If you see no one,
open it and shout for them.

Harry rides on to the Buckworths' bake-shop and dismounts.

37 IN THE BUCKWORTHS' BAKE-SHOP

while Jasper kneads dough, Betty fills a hand-basket with loaves for THE MUTE, a youngish man, strongly built, with blond hair and a gold ring in one ear. He smiles his thanks when Betty gives him the basket, nods to Jasper and goes, passing Harry on his way out. Harry looks back at him.

HARRY

I've seen him around here before
lately, haven't I? Who is he?

BETTY

I don't know. He's dumb. He begs
for stale bread like this -
(hands in prayer)
- and I give it to him.

HARRY

A loaf, please, Betty.

CONTINUED

37 CONTINUED

BETTY

Only one today?

HARRY

From now on. I've let the cook go and I'm sending Will and Harvey home to their parents. There hasn't been enough trade this past month to warrant two 'prentices. No trade at all, in fact.

JASPER

Any word of the sickness passing?

HARRY

(shakes his head)

Almost two thousand dead of it last week according to today's Bill. But it can't go on much longer. It will lift soon, I'm certain.

JASPER

(with no conviction)

Yes, of course.

Harry takes a coin from his pocket and is about to drop it into one of two jars on the counter when Jasper stops him.

JASPER (cont.)

Wait. The vinegar's dried up.

Jasper refills the jar from a bottle and Harry drops in the coin.

HARRY

Do you suppose that really dis-infects?

JASPER

(shrugs)

So they say. We must do what we can. Your change.

Jasper drops a few coins into the other jar and Harry takes them out. Taking his loaf, Harry nods good day to them and leaves the shop.

38

IN HARROW ALLEY

Harry leads his horse from the Buckworths' toward his own

CONTINUED

38 CONTINUED

house. On the way, he passes the Killigrew house; inside, Nan is playing the spinnet. Harry tethers his horse at his front door and goes in.

39 IN HARRY'S SHOP

Okeshott, Will and Harvey are waiting for him, dressed for travel and each with a few small bundles.

OKESHOTT

The boys and me will be going now, sir. We've only been waiting to say goodby.

HARRY

There's really nothing for us to say, is there, except God bless? I couldn't ask for better 'prentices or a better journeyman-tailor and you know, of course, that we'll all be working together again as soon as I can manage it.

HARVEY

You've been like a father to us, Mr. Poyntz.
(sniffles)

HARRY

Thank you, Harvey. That's kind. Write to me, both of you, when you're home, to let me know you're safe. Goodby. God be with you. You have your health certificates?

Okeshott, Will and Harvey nod and, taking their bundles, leave the shop. After a moment, Harry pulls himself together and goes to the staircase at the rear, tearing off a hunk of the loaf as he does.

HARRY

(calls)

Mrs. Poyntz? Gosnell? I'm home.
I've brought bread.

Harry puts the torn hunk on a small table and mounts to the middle floor landing. Here he leaves the rest of the bread and returns to the shop. He shifts the small table to the bottom step of the staircase, brings a chair and, going to a chest, takes out a knife and spoon.

CONTINUED

39 CONTINUED

Gosnell, Jem's girl, descends to the middle floor landing from the upper floor with a platter of food and a mug of ale. Leaving them, she picks up the torn loaf and returns to the upper floor. A small table has been set at the balustrade here. Gosnell sets the torn loaf upon it as Jem approaches from the parlor and holds the chair for her mistress as Jem sits down. Jem looks down the stairwell as Gosnell goes to fetch food.

Harry is descending to the shop from the middle floor with the platter and the mug. He puts them on the table, sits down and, in weariness, covers his face with his hands and rubs his eyes.

JEM

Are you well, Mr. Poyntz?

Harry looks up, putting the best face on matters.

HARRY

Yes, thank you, Mrs. Poyntz. Well enough. And you?

JEM

Yes.

HARRY

For what we are about to receive, Lord, we thank Thee.

Harry takes a bite of food and makes a face.

JEM

Gosnell is not a good cook, is she?

HARRY

It will do.

JEM

(after awhile)

How do matters go in the parish?

HARRY

Remarkably well, all things considered.

JEM

What does that mean, Mr. Poyntz?

HARRY

I'd prefer you didn't trouble yourself about it.

CONTINUED

JEM

I don't think the child as yet understands what we say.

HARRY

(after considering that)

Mrs. Poyntz, my concern is not entirely for the child. Some is for you, too...I did not marry you for your dowry alone.

JEM

Why did you marry me, Mr. Poyntz?

HARRY

(considers this, too)

I found you beautiful. I knew you were reluctant to have me but ...I found you beautiful.

JEM

Would you have married me without a dowry?

HARRY

I don't know. I'd been a journeyman-tailor for too many years and I was sick with desire for a shop of my own. But I think I would have married you without a dowry.

JEM

Why? I gave you no cause to love me.

The day is ending. Gosnell brings a lighted candle to Jem's table.

HARRY

Love? Love is something for idlers at Court to play at and actors to mouth. If men and women waited for love before marrying, the race would long ago have died out. I'm not certain I know what the word means.

JEM

It's the feeling you had for your dog. A tender concern for her well-being.

HARRY

If that is what it means, then,
I did not love you. I was more
concerned for my own well-being.
I found you beautiful and was hot
for you and that was all I thought
of. I suppose I felt that love,
if you will, would have come to us
both in time. From being together.
I imagine many men make that mistake.

Outside, there is the sound of a hand-bell approaching
and passing.

RATSEY'S VOICE

(calling)

Bring out your dead. Bring out
your dead. Dead-cart's a-coming.
Bring out your dead.

Jem stiffens, food halfway to her mouth. Seeing this,
Harry quickly raises his voice.

HARRY

Did you hear the nightingale in
the garden last night? I've never
known such a summer for nightin-
gales. Or for flowers, either.
The town smells of lilacs wherever
you go.

The cart has passed.

JEM

Thank you. Thank you for that
nightingale. And for those lilacs,
too. Harry.

Harry looks up at this. Jem is looking down at him, the
trace of a smile on her lips.

JEM (cont.)

Tomorrow, I will cook. There will
be a difference.

HARRY

Thank you. Jem.

IN HARROW ALLEY
night has come. The dead-cart rumbles slowly over the

40 CONTINUED

cobbles. Hayward is driving. Ratsey sits beside him, ringing the hand-bell. Toby precedes them on foot, carrying a flaming link or torch. All three wear smocks. There are three corpses in the cart, one in a shroud with bare feet, one bundled in a blanket and one, a man, dressed as he was when found lying in a doorway.

RATSEY

Bring out your dead. Bring out
your dead. Dead-cart's a-coming.
Bring out your dead.

The Watcher at the house of the first plague victim in the parish is on a ladder with a lantern, looking in at an open window on the middle floor. Waiting patiently at the foot of the ladder are Mrs. Povey and a new searcher of the dead, MRS. HOARE. The other Watchers before the doors of infected houses have lanterns, too.

WATCHER ON THE LADDER

(calls to the cart)

Over here.

Hayward pulls up at the door as the Watcher descends and opens the padlock.

RATSEY

Any alive in there?

WATCHER

I don't think so. I can't rouse
the man or the woman or the nurse.

RATSEY

Keep your fingers crossed, then,
and let's hope for the best. We
ain't had a chance at a house
all day.

WATCHER

Lean pickings, eh?

RATSEY

None at all. Every corpse we
found in the streets, someone
else got to first. Empty pockets
was all they left us.

Toby puts the link in its socket at the driver's seat and they all enter the house.

41

IN THE BEDROOM OF THE INFECTED HOUSE

the door opens and the Watcher looks in, holding his lantern in one hand and a scent-ball to his nose with the other. One of the Wailing Women lies on the bed. The Nurse is in a chair, a bottle in one hand. Ratsey and the others crowd behind the Watcher.

WATCHER

The woman's dead, anyway. The nurse is drunk.

Ratsey goes to the Nurse and shakes her.

RATSEY

Joke's on you. She's dead.

WATCHER

Where's the man?

MRS. POVEY

(points to bodies)

Plague, plague. That's two fees.

Hayward has gone to the bed and commenced wrapping the body in the sheet. Toby hangs back in the doorway.

RATSEY

(to the Watcher)

What rooms does you want?

WATCHER

The dining-room. My missus has taken a fancy for silver plate.

RATSEY

Right. The rest's ours.

(to Toby)

To work, damn you. Get them down to the cart.

(to the Watcher)

Still frightened, after all this time.

TOBY

You'd be frightened, too, if you never had plague, same as me.

RATSEY

I ain't in no way same as you, plague or no plague. And don't you never forget it. Get to work.

CONTINUED

41 CONTINUED

As Toby reluctantly approaches the Nurse, Ratsey goes to the wardrobe and begins to loot. None of the clothing suits him but he finds a pair of men's shoes with fine silver buckles and, after matching one against one of his own, puts them on. Then he heads for the bed.

WATCHER

I'll go look for the man.

RATSEY

You can save yourself the trouble.

Ratsey points to one of the rear windows where a rope, made of a sheet, has been fastened to the sill. As the Watcher, worried, hurries to the window, Ratsey probes the mattress with his hands.

WATCHER

He's escaped. Oh, the Alderman won't be happy about this. Said he'd have me whipped through the town. What'll I do?

MRS. HOARE

No use our staying. Let's get a drink, dear.

Mrs. Hoare and Mrs. Povey leave. Feeling something in the mattress, Ratsey rips it open and finds a purse. The diamond ring and gold locket it contains he slips up his sleeve. The rest, some coins, he divides and gives half to Hayward. Hayward takes the body on the bed in his arms and Toby lifts the Nurse to his shoulder.

RATSEY

Are we done? Then here we goes.

(exits singing)

She didn't know her father,
 She was born in a ditch.
 Don't fret, said her mother,
 One day you'll be rich.
 Just let sailors scratch you
 Wherever you itch.
 That is the way of the world.

42 IN HARROW ALLEY

Ratsey, Hayward and Toby come out of the infected house with the bodies. As Hayward and Toby put them in the cart, Ratsey removes his smock, tosses it in and takes a

CONTINUED

42 CONTINUED

magnificent hat from under the driver's seat. Everything he now wears, in fact, is magnificent, from his head to his toes. The last touch is a gold-headed cane.

RATSEY

That does it for today. Fetch the
harvest to the sexton, stable the
horse and I'll see you at the Pye.

Fluffing his jabot and setting his hat at a more killing angle, Ratsey swaggers to the tavern.

43 IN THE PYE TAVERN

trade is brisker than ever. The room is crowded and noisy with riff-raff. Street-musicians, the Fiddler, the Bag-piper and a Drummer are playing a jig. A large space has been cleared in the center and here there is dancing. A TIPSY TENOR is singing, the Crowd joining him in the chorus.

TIPSY TENOR

The doctors are liars,
Their pills are a sham -
Liliburlero bullen ala -
So have a good time, boys,
And don't give a damn -
Liliburlero bullen ala.

CROWD

Lero, lero, liliburlero,
Liliburlero bullen ala -
Lero, lero, liliburlero,
Liliburlero bullen ala.

Ratsey enters and strikes a pose in the doorway as he looks around. Many in the Crowd wave enthusiastically to him as they sing. He notes Beck sitting on some Ruffian's knee as he pushes his way to Mrs. Feeny who is working like a Trojan behind the bar. She cocks an ear to him and replies with a gesture: upstairs. Ratsey goes to the rear and starts to the upper floors. Meanwhile:

TIPSY TENOR

You'll die if you worry,
You'll die if you don't -
Liliburlero bullen ala -
The plague gets us all
And survive it you won't -
Liliburlero bullen ala.

CROWD

Lero, lero, liliburlero -

44 OUTSIDE THE ATTIC DOOR
 Ratsey takes the diamond ring out of his sleeve and polishes it on his cuff before knocking. The Crowd below can be heard singing. Ratsey knocks again.

45 IN THE ATTIC
 which extends over the length and breadth of the tavern, Solomon Eagle has been enthroned upon an armchair atop a crate, a velvet cloak about him. The attic is a third filled with True Believers in a state of hysteria. Many beat their breasts. A few, Jack Feeny among them, are practicing self-flagellation.

EAGLE
 And all that dwell upon the earth
 shall worship him.

A MAN
 Oh, yes, shall worship him.

EAGLE
 If any man have an ear, let him
 hear.

A WOMAN
 We hear, we hear.

In response to Ratsey's knocking, Feeny backs toward the door, not stopping his devotions for a moment.

EAGLE
 He that leadeth into captivity
 shall go into captivity. He that
 killeth with the sword must be
 killed with the sword.

ANOTHER MAN
 Yes, killed, killed. Oh, we are
 all guilty.

46 OUTSIDE THE ATTIC DOOR
 Ratsey holds up the ring as Jack Feeny appears, listening to Ratsey with one ear and to the revelations behind him with the other.

RATSEY
 How much will you give?

JACK FEENY
 (lashing himself)
 Oh, my soul is black but I will
 (cont.)

CONTINUED

46 CONTINUED

JACK FEENY (cont.)
wash it in the Blood of the Lamb
two pounds ten.

RATSEY
It's worth seven if it's worth
a penny.

JACK FEENY
(lashing himself)
Oh, God, be merciful to me, a
sinner take it or leave it it's
the best I can do.

RATSEY
I'll take it.

Feeny accepts the ring, takes some coins out of his vest-pocket and gives them to Ratsey.

RATSEY
(meanwhile)
Are you in the market for furniture?

JACK FEENY
Oh, the Judgment Day is at hand
and I hopes for a glorious resur-
rection too hard to handle and
there ain't much demand.

And, with that, Feeny is back inside the attic and the door is shut. Ratsey starts down the stairs.

47 DOWNSTAIRS IN THE PYE
The music has stopped. Beck is still with her Ruffian. Toby and Hayward are at the bar. Ratsey comes down the stairs and pauses on one of the lower steps.

RATSEY
(calls)
Mrs. Feeny. Here. Drinks for all.
(tosses her a coin)

The Crowd cheers him. Ratsey flings a few coppers to the musicians.

RATSEY (cont.)
Let's hear it, good and loud.

The Drummer scrambles for the coins as the Fiddler and the Bagpiper start to play. Couples move to the dance-

CONTINUED

47 CONTINUED

floor. Ratsey takes the gold locket from his sleeve and makes his way to Beck. Coming up behind her, he dangles the locket in front of her nose. As she squeals with delight and reaches for it, her Ruffian menacingly gets to his feet. Offhandedly, Ratsey raps his head with the cane and drops him like a side of beef.

RATSEY (cont.)

Like it, darling?

BECK

It's a love. Is it for me?

RATSEY

Ain't it always? And that ain't all Captain Montessor has for you.

Ratsey pulls Beck to her feet.

BECK

Don't be so sudden.

RATSEY

It won't be sudden. I means to dance with you first.

Ratsey and Beck join the hopping, whirling couples on the dance-floor. Once around suffices Ratsey: he pulls Beck toward the rear-door and, when she resists, plasters his lips against hers. And then Hayward screams. The Musicians stop, the dancers stop, Ratsey stops. All eyes are on Hayward as he totters a few steps, clawing at his shirt and ripping it open, and collapses at Ratsey's feet.

MRS. FEENY

(looking over the bar)

My God, he's covered with the tokens.

RATSEY

What?

Ratsey quickly bends over Hayward for a close examination.

MRS. FEENY

Heave him aside, someone.

(to the Musicians)

Here. You. Get on with it.

The Musicians resume playing and the dancers dance. Ratsey straightens, his face a study. Then he's off across the room in a mad rush toward the front door.

48

IN HODGES' ANTEROOM

the walls are lined with waiting Patients. As Hodges leads one to the door and sees him out, another comes forward to be treated. Hodges is slack with weariness.

HODGES

You'll have to excuse me for a moment. It's been a long day and I need nourishment.

Hodges enters his bedroom and shuts the door.

49

IN HODGES' BEDROOM

Hodges takes a bottle of brandy from the table and raises it to his lips. After several swallows, he puts his hand to his heart and listens to the beating.

HODGES

Boom-bompa-boom. Boom-bompa-boom.

Hodges looks doubtfully at the bottle and decides to have another. As he raises it to his mouth, Ratsey bursts in.

RATSEY

Doctor Hodges. Doctor. You can't get plague twice, can you? You can't get it again if you've had it.

HODGES

You damned well can.

RATSEY

But I always thought -

HODGES

An old wives' tale.

RATSEY

Maybe it wasn't plague he had before.

HODGES

Who's that?

RATSEY

Hayward. John Hayward.

HODGES

Yes, he once had plague. When he was a boy. I treated him myself. But he was one of the few to survive in spite of that. Why?

CONTINUED

49 CONTINUED

RATSEY

He's got it again.

HODGES

It will be the last time, take
my word. What does it matter to
you?

But, without another word, Ratsey has turned and gone.
Hodges finishes the brandy and returns to the anteroom.

HODGES (cont.)

Boom-bompa-boom. Boom-bompa-boom.

50 IN HARROW ALLEY

dark but for the Watchers' lanterns, Ratsey leaves Hodges' house and walks, as in a dream, along the way. There is a small barrel near the Buckworth's front door and here he sits himself down and tries to take it all in. The Topsy Tenor staggers out of the Pye and heads past him for home near the Gate.

TIPSY TENOR

(singing)

My prime of youth
Is but a frost of cares;
My feast of joy
Is but a dish of pain;
My crop of corn
Is but a field of tares;
And all my good
Is but vain hope of gain;
My life is fled,
And yet I saw no sun;
And now I live,
And now my life is done.

(conversationally to
a Watcher)

G'night. G'night.

(singing)

The spring is past,
And yet it has not sprung;
The fruit is dead,
And yet the leaves be green;
My youth is gone,
And yet I am but young;
I saw the world,
And yet I was not seen;
My thread is cut,
And yet it is not spun;

(cont.)

CONTINUED

TIPSY TENOR (cont.)

And now I live
 And now my life is done.
 (conversationally)
 Where is everybody? That's what
 I want to know. Hey. Everybody.
 (singing)
 I sought my death,
 And found it in my womb,
 I looked for life,
 And saw it was a shade,
 I trod the earth
 And knew it was my tomb,
 And now I die,
 And now I am but made:
 The glass is full,
 And now my glass is run,
 And now I live,
 And now my life is done.

51 IN HARRY'S SHOP

at sunrise next morning, Harry is awakened by a cock's crow somewhere in the neighborhood. He finds himself in good spirits and, for a moment, cannot think why. Then he remembers the end of his conversation with Jem last night and, with a glance at the upper floor, smiles. Putting aside the blanket, he gets off the work-table upon which he has made his bed, slips his feet into his shoes and is fully dressed except for hat and coat. Yawning, he reaches for a pitcher of water and a wash-basin and accidentally knocks the basin with a clatter to the floor.

JEM'S VOICE

Is that you, Harry?

HARRY

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to wake you.

JEM'S VOICE

I've been up an hour. Breakfast is ready.

(calls)

Gosnell. Mr. Poyntz is awake.

Harry picks up the basin, fills it and begins to wash. Gosnell, meanwhile, descends to the middle floor with a tray of food, deposits it and returns. Harry goes up and brings the food down to his table.

CONTINUED

51 CONTINUED

JEM'S VOICE

Good morning.

HARRY

(looking up)

Good morning.

JEM

(sitting at her table)

Did you sleep well?

HARRY

(sitting at his)

Better than I have in months.
Good Lord, we thank Thee for
Thy bounty this day. Amen.

(takes a mouthful)

Gosnell never cooked this.

JEM

Did I season it enough?

HARRY

Mmm. Good.

JEM

(eating)

You were called out again last
night, weren't you?

HARRY

Yes.

(grins at the memory)

JEM

What?

HARRY

I'm not certain you'd find it
amusing.

JEM

Tell me.

HARRY

Well, you know fat Mr. Wright,
seven houses down? And his maid-
servant, Abby? Abby got drunk
the other night and, yesterday
morning, didn't feel like getting

(cont.)

CONTINUED

51 CONTINUED

HARRY (cont.)

out of bed. Mr. Wright immediately concluded she had plague, refused to go near her and sent for a nurse. Abby, meanwhile, decided another drink would do her no harm so, going down the backstairs, she takes herself off to Pye tavern. Now comes the nurse, knocks at Abby's door in the garret and, getting no answer, goes down and tells Wright Abby is dead. When the dead-cart passed, Wright hailed it and told the bearers to come get Abby. But the cart was full so they told him they'd fetch her later. Abby spent the day tippling and, after dark, went home. There's a knock at Wright's door, he opens it and sees her and "Ghost" he shrieked -

(Harry can't go on)

JEM

(laughing)

And then?

HARRY

When he was finally convinced she was in truth alive and had not come to haunt him, his gratitude was such he called for me and told me he would give a hundred pounds for the care of the sick in the parish. "Ghost."

This sets them both laughing again till Harry sees the Mute through his shop-window walking past in the Alley. After a moment's thought, Harry gets up and starts toward his front door.

HARRY (cont.)

Thank you for breakfast, Jem.
There's something I must attend to.

52

IN HARROW ALLEY

the Mute, a basket on his arm, walks past the sleeping Watchers and comes to a stop at the sound of a child crying. He enters the open door of a house.

- 53 JUST INSIDE THE DOOR
a TWO-YEAR-OLD sits wailing near its Mother who lies dead on the floor. The Mute squats next to the Mother, assures himself she is dead and shakes his head in pity. Then he picks up the child and, soothing it, leaves.
- 54 IN HARROW ALLEY
Harry watches the Mute come out of the doorway with the Two-Year-Old and make his way to a house near the Gate, unobserved by the dozing CONSTABLE. It is an abandoned house with its door and ground floor windows boarded up. The Mute enters a passageway alongside. Harry quickly follows.
- 55 THE REAR OF THE BANDONED HOUSE
has a back-door. Coming out of the passageway, Harry hesitates, then opens the door and enters.
- 56 IN THE KITCHEN OF THE ABANDONED HOUSE
Harry finds himself facing the Mute and a Dozen Children, the oldest a GIRL OF TEN, all immobile, their eyes upon him.

HARRY

What are you doing here? Who are you?

GIRL OF TEN

He can't talk. He's dumb.

HARRY

This isn't your house. None of you belongs here.

GIRL OF TEN

He brung us.

HARRY

Is he your father? Any relation at all?

GIRL OF TEN

Papa died. So did Mama. We ain't none of us got nobody. But him.

HARRY

(to the Mute)

Orphans? You took them from infected houses?

CONTINUED

56 CONTINUED

The Mute nods.

HARRY (cont.)

But that's against the law. You had no right to do that. You should have left them until... until... And you had no right to bring them here unless you have the owner's permission. Have you? Then you've committed trespass.

The Mute spreads his hands. Harry looks at the Children.

HARRY (cont.)

Do you get enough to eat?

GIRL OF TEN

He brings us food every day.

HARRY

(to the Mute)

But this could spread the infection. You might catch it yourself.

The Mute smiles and shrugs.

HARRY (cont.)

This is strictly against the law.

Harry looks around again at the half-circle of little faces.

HARRY

Well, don't let the constables see you. Because if they do, well, if they do, bring them to me. Understand? And come to my shop later. I'll have some money for you.

Harry smiles at the Children and leaves.

57 IN HARROW ALLEY

as Harry comes out of the passageway, the Watcher from the house of the first plague victim in the parish calls to him from Barnabas Gate where he has been speaking to the Constable.

WATCHER

Mr. Poyntz, sir. May I have a word with you, please, sir?

CONTINUED

57 CONTINUED

HARRY

(going to him)

I was going to send for you. I've decided not to have you whipped through the streets. I'll take your word for it you weren't bribed.

WATCHER

No, sir, it was not I what was bribed and that's fact.

HARRY

But by letting Mr. Stoner escape from an infected house you were remiss and I'm fining you a week's wages.

WATCHER

Oh, yes, I knowed I'd be the one to suffer. Always the poor man. It ain't justice. Especially since Mr. Stoner won't infect nobody in the parish, having left the City.

HARRY

Left the City?

CONSTABLE

I passed him through the Gate myself yesterday afternoon.

HARRY

How dared you?

CONSTABLE

Well, you know, sir.

HARRY

No, I do not know.

CONSTABLE

Well, he had a health certificate, hadn't he? One of them new printed ones? Signed by you?

HARRY

How did he get it?

CONSTABLE

Well, it ain't for me to say, sir.

CONTINUED

57 CONTINUED

HARRY

I haven't even spoken to Mr. Stoner since we locked him in.

WATCHER

But I suppose he didn't send me with a sealed message to your house day before yesterday. And I suppose I didn't fetch a sealed message back. Depends who gets the bribe, that's the heart of it.

HARRY

Are you saying you brought me a sealed message from Mr. Stoner?

WATCHER

No, I brought it to Mr. Prothero. Same thing, ain't it?

58 IN HARRY'S GARDEN

Prothero comes out of the stable with his trunk on his shoulder and a pillow and a blanket under his arm.

59 IN HARRY'S SHOP

Harry is sitting cross-legged, tailor fashion, on the work-table. Prothero comes in from the garden and puts the pillow and blanket on a stool.

PROTHERO

Mr. Poyntz, I'll return the favor one day, believe me.

HARRY

Are you deliberately trying to be insulting? Do you actually believe I refrain from having you arrested as a favor to you? The people of this parish are shaken enough without the scandal. They're my concern, not you.

PROTHERO

I wasn't the only one did it, you know. Many in this City now take bribes. Why shouldn't I?

HARRY

Many in this City now die. Why shouldn't you? Get out of my sight.

CONTINUED

59 CONTINUED

Prothero leaves as boldly as he dares. When the door shuts:

JEM'S VOICE

I'd comfort you if I could, Harry.

HARRY

Oh, it's nothing.

JEM

Ah, share it with me. Share it.

HARRY

What sort of City will it be for our child? Without right and wrong and caring for the difference between them? Doctor Hodges said people will turn into beasts. But I will not have them turn into beasts.

JEM

They won't. Not all. He himself remains human.

HARRY

That's true. I must keep that in mind.

JEM

And there's an even better example. Look in the mirror.

Harry looks up at her and smiles, pleased but embarrassed.

60 IN THE PYE TAVERN

there is a morning-after air. Mrs. Feeny yawns as she half-heartedly wipes up the slops. Toby is at a table in a corner, already suffering from what he must face today; Ratsey, by himself at another, is still stunned by the implications of Hayward's fate. Both wear smocks. Prothero enters and sets down his trunk.

PROTHERO

(going to the bar)

My morning draught, if you please,
Mrs. Feeny.

(indicates Ratsey)

What a long face.

CONTINUED

60 CONTINUED

MRS. FEENY

(cackles)

Because of Mad Jack's death.

PROTHERO

Ah, yes.

Prothero takes his ale to Ratsey's table and sits.

PROTHERO (cont.)

Well, how does it feel to be mortal, like the rest of us?

Ratsey gives no sign of having heard.

PROTHERO (cont.)

But why should you take it like this? You must have faced death many times when you were - what is it? - a gentleman of the road.

RATSEY

(groping)

It ain't the same. It ain't the same. When a man goes on the road, it's like when a man joins the army or navy. He faces death, yes, but of his own free will. It's part of the contract. But when you've got nothing to say about meeting death, when it can come in spite of you no matter what you do, when it might come any time, unexpected, before you knows it, when it's always around, waiting, not just when you invites it as you might say but even when you don't, then it's not the same. Not the same. No.

A man named ROPER enters briskly.

ROPER

Morning, one and all. Roper's the name. Is Mr. Prothero - ?

(seeing Prothero)

Ah, there you are, sir. Well, what does I do?

PROTHERO

It's no longer my concern, actually, but you go now with Ratsey, here,
(cont.)

CONTINUED

60 CONTINUED

PROTHERO (cont.)
and Toby and you collect the
night's dead and fetch them to
the churchyard.

ROPER
(rubbing his hands)
Let's go, mates.

RATSEY
What the hell are you so cheery
about?

ROPER
First work I've had in two months,
that's what I'm so cheery about.

RATSEY
We starts the day by picking up
the man whose place you've taken.
Let's hear you laugh about that.

ROPER
I ain't worried. It'll never get
me.

RATSEY
That's what he thought, too.

ROPER
I don't think it, I knows it.
(touching his breast)
I got a powerful charm, see?

Ratsey puts his tongue between his lips and blows a
gardaloo. Then he gets to his feet.

RATSEY
Where is it, Mrs. Feeny?

MRS. FEENY
Out in back.

Ratsey, Toby and Roper go out the back door.

MRS. FEENY (cont.)
Did I hear you say it ain't no
longer your concern, Mr. Prothero?

PROTHERO
You did. I'm setting myself up
in trade. A man wants to get
ahead, you know.

61

IN BACK OF THE PYE

Hayward's body lies on the top of a large heap of refuse. A cautious ten feet away, Ratsey, Roper and Toby stand shoulder to shoulder looking at it. Roper sniffs.

ROPER

Ripe enough, for someone as only died last night...Well, here we goes.

But no one moves. After awhile:

ROPER (cont.)

You take him by the legs and you take him by the arms.

RATSEY

You take him by the legs and arms, you're the one with the goddamned charm.

ROPER

(touching charm)

All right. Here I goes.

But no one moves. After awhile, Roper looks about and, seeing a plank, gets it and sets it down at the foot of the heap.

ROPER (cont.)

Roll him onto that. Go on.

RATSEY

You go on.

ROPER

I'm the one got the plank, ain't I?

(to Toby)

Go on, you heard what I said.

Roper grabs Toby to shove him at the body.

TOBY

No, please. Please. I can't no more.

ROPER

(to Ratsey)

Think of that. He's afraid. He -

The words are cut off by Ratsey's grip on Roper's throat.

CONTINUED

61 CONTINUED

RATSEY

So am I. So am I. So am I.

Ratsey shoves Roper aside, gets up on the heap and starts Hayward's body rolling toward the plank with his foot. One last push and it's in place. Roper and Toby lift the plank and carry it off. Ratsey wipes the sweat from his face and stares at his shaking hand.

62 IN ST. BARNABAS CHURCH-YARD

the curate, Morrell, is kneeling at a fresh grave with a Weeping Woman, his arm about her, comforting her. CREED, the old sexton, shuffles over.

CREED

A word, if I may, Mr. Morrell?

Morrell gets up and goes to Creed's side.

CREED (cont.)

The bearers have brought John Hayward here for burial.

MORRELL

He l-lived in this p-parish.

CREED

Yes, sir. But we're getting pinched for space.

Creed gestures, a wide sweep of his arm. The mounds of the new graves are multitudinous and lie very close together.

MORRELL

B-Bury him in the Websters' plot.

CREED

John Hayward in with the Websters?

MORRELL

There are none left in that family to object. W-Why should we?

CREED

Yes, sir. If it goes on at this rate, Mr. Morrell, we'll have no more room before the month is out. And then what will we do?

63

IN AN OPEN FIELD ON THE CITY'S OUTSKIRTS

one afternoon, some weeks later, great pits are being dug. When finished, each will be a hundred feet long, thirty feet wide and nine feet deep.

Workmen coming out of them up ladders with sacks of earth on their backs direct black looks at Lawrence, the Lord Mayor. He is leaning out the window of his coach, nearby, speaking to Harry, who sits astride his horse reading a Mortality Bill.

HARRY

Seventy-three parishes infected. Five thousand seven hundred and thirty-nine dead. Of which four thousand three hundred and twelve of the plague. In one week.

LAWRENCE

But we still have the City. And it goes on as a City. The Council of Aldermen meets, justice is done, even the price of bread remains the same. And no one as yet can say we have not been able to bury our dead. There's cause for despair but not for loss of heart.

HARRY

Save the pap for someone who needs it, John. My heart is sound enough. I'm only wondering if we're doing as much as we might.

LAWRENCE

Why, what a lion you've become. Is this the man who was ready to run?

HARRY

Stop the bells, for one thing, John. They din death into our ears even when we sleep. And order the dead-carts and the burials for the nights only, not for the days, so they may not be seen. In my parish, spirits are low enough without the sight.

LAWRENCE

That's sound advice. And I'll take it. What's caused the change in you, Harry?

CONTINUED

63 CONTINUED

HARRY

Is it so marked?

LAWRENCE

My God, yes.

HARRY

I have fallen in love with my wife.

Lawrence and Harry smile at each other.

LAWRENCE

And she with you?

HARRY

I haven't dared speculate. My own feelings are almost more than I can bear. I should be ashamed, I suppose, for knowing happiness with part of me in the middle of all this.

A gob of mud strikes the coach-door and Harry and Lawrence turn toward the WORKMAN who has thrown it. He stands at the edge of one of the pits, a Foreman restraining him.

WORKMAN

(shouting)

Is this what you have in store for us? Are you preparing to bury the entire City?

The Foreman urges the Workman down the ladder.

HARRY

If I may say so, John, I would pay that no mind.

LAWRENCE

I won't. They must let it out at someone.

(to his Coachman)

Home, David.

(to Harry)

What you feel, Harry, is nothing to be ashamed of. To the contrary, it is a cause for general rejoicing. For if a man falls in love with his own wife, surely the millenium is at hand.

CONTINUED

63 CONTINUED

Lawrence's coach lurches off toward the City. Harry turns his horse and follows at a lope. Until he sees, running toward him from the City, a CONSTABLE of his parish.

CONSTABLE

(shouting)

Mr. Poyntz. Mr. Poyntz. It's your wife. Her time has come.

Harry digs his spurs into his horse and passes the Constable and then Lawrence's coach at a gallop.

64 IN THE BUCKWORTH'S BAKE-SHOP

that evening, Betty Buckworth looks up as Hodges comes down the stairs carrying his medical kit.

HODGES

I mince no words, Betty, you know that. Your man is very ill. He has the Consumption.

BETTY

Oh, thank God. I mean -

HODGES

I know what you mean. No, it's not the plague. But it is serious, for all that. You'll have to nurse him night and day. And, especially, you'll have your hands full keeping him in bed. "The people needs their bread and who's to bake it?"

Tears come to Betty's eyes.

BETTY

He's such a good man.

HODGES

A useful man, at any rate. I wish I could say the same of myself.

They turn to the door as Harry bursts in.

HARRY

(to Hodges)

Where the hell have you been? I've been hunting you through the City for hours. Jem's in labour. Come on, come on, hurry.

CONTINUED

64 CONTINUED

Harry gasps Hodges' sleeve and tries to pull him out of the shop. Hodges pulls back.

HODGES

You don't want me.

HARRY

(looking at him)

My God, you're drunk.

HODGES

Of course I'm drunk. But drunk or sober, you don't want me.

HARRY

Stop talking gibberish. You must deliver the baby.

HODGES

(holds up his hands)

Look. I've seen more than forty patients dying of plague today. With these hands I've wiped the death-sweat from their faces, lanced the buboes and held their heads while they vomited. Do you suppose a baby's prepared to withstand that?

HARRY

What am I to do?

HODGES

Get a midwife.

HARRY

I can't. I tried when I couldn't find you. Think of something else.

HODGES

Have I preached bringing babies into this world or have I preached the opposite? I cannot think of anything else.

HARRY

Betty, can you - ? Would you - ?

HODGES

Jasper needs her. She -

But Harry is already on his way out of the shop.

65

IN HARROW ALLEY

Harry runs from the Buckworth shop to Sam Killigrew's front door and beats against it with his fists and feet.

HARRY

Sam. Sam. Sam. Jem is having the baby. Let Sal be the midwife. I beg you. Please, Sam. Let Sal come be midwife. Sam. Sam. Do you hear?

Inside the Killigrew house, the spinnet strikes up. Harry realizes that is Sam's answer and runs to his shop.

66

IN HARRY'S SHOP

the door is flung open and Harry runs in.

HARRY

(calls)

Gosnell. Gosnell. Gosnell.

Gosnell looks down from the upper floor.

HARRY (cont.)

How is she?

GOSNELL

In pain. Where's doctor?

HARRY

There'll be no doctor.

GOSNELL

Then who'll help Missus?

HARRY

You.

GOSNELL

(losing her head)

Me? Oh, Mr. Poyntz, I couldn't. I'm afraid. I don't know how. I never did such a thing. Mr. Poyntz, please.

HARRY

(murderously)

Stop that or I swear to God I'll tear you limb from limb. Now listen to me. You're going to help her and that's final.

(cont.)

CONTINUED

66 CONTINUED

HARRY (cont.)

You're not to weep, you're not to whimper, you're not to make a sound. Have you ever seen a baby born?

GOSNELL

Only a calf. At home.

HARRY

Better and better. The baby will come much the same way, without your bidding or mine. You must be ready to take it. Clean your hands before you do. And the cord must be cut. Use a sharp, clean knife. Have it ready. And after it's cut, it must be tied. Use thread. And there must be clean cloths and warm water for swabbing. Use towels and sheets. And above all, I will have you cheerful. Smile. Smile.

Gosnell manages a smile. Which is replaced by a look of terror as Jem screams in the bedroom.

HARRY (cont.)

Damn you, keep that smile on. Now go to her.

Gosnell, smiling horribly, goes to the bedroom. Jem screams again. Harry sits cross-legged on the worktable and holds his head in his hands.

67

IN HARROW ALLEY

Ratsey comes out of the Pye, goes to Merlin's house and, after some hesitation, knocks at the door. Jem's screaming can be heard. The door is opened by Azazel.

AZAZEL

Come in. You are expected.

RATSEY

What do you mean, expected?

AZAZEL

The stars foretold it. Merlin is ready to receive you.

Ratsey enters and Azazel shuts the door.

68

IN MERLIN'S STUDY

furnished with quackery with zodiac signs, black velvet hangings, a skull on the table and an alligator hanging from a beam, Merlin is seated in an armchair in meditation. He looks up, his one eye piercing, as Azazel ushers Ratsey in.

AZAZEL

(bowing)

The man is here, Master, as you predicted.

MERLIN

Of course. Leave us.

AZAZEL

Yes, Master.

Azazel bows again and withdraws, closing the door.

RATSEY

Look here, I wants -

MERLIN

To avoid the plague.

RATSEY

I've heard tell -

MERLIN

That I can help you. Yes, I know. Sit down. Some people who yet survive attribute their lives to my Arabian Abracadabra Amulet which sells for one shilling.

RATSEY

Aach.

MERLIN

But you, I was about to say, would not be one of them. Others, who are good enough to credit me for their continuing health, daily drink a bottle of the Iridescent Constantinopolitan Cordial, on which I make no profit even at the price of five shillings.

RATSEY

Muck.

MERLIN

But you, as I was going to observe, would not be among them. Still others -

CONTINUED

68 CONTINUED

Ratsey is on his feet, his hands on Merlin's throat, holding him halfway out of his chair.

RATSEY

Don't play games with me, do
you hear, trying to see how high
I'll go. Don't think you can
gull me as you do the others.
I'm a member of the Brotherhood
myself and I can't be taken in by
any quack ever born.

Even in this predicament, Merlin's face remains impassive and he himself unperturbed, even amused.

MERLIN

Then why have you come?

It's a good question and Ratsey is unsure of the answer. He releases Merlin, who drops back into the chair.

RATSEY

I don't believe in charms and
amulets and plague-waters.
There's no good in them. I say,
there's no good in them. Is there?

Merlin sits motionless and silent.

RATSEY (cont.)

I knows they're a comfort to many
but they're fools who find it so.
You knows they're fools, don't you?

Merlin remains motionless and silent.

RATSEY

I scorns such...But what if there
really was a magical way to escape
death? What if there really was?
You sits there calm enough, like a
black spider, and the plague don't
seem to worry you. Are you help-
less as I am? Or do you have some-
thing you yourself uses? Do you?
Answer me?

In a passion, Ratsey picks up the skull and threatens to bring it down on Merlin's head. Merlin makes no response. Ratsey drops the skull to the table.

CONTINUED

68 CONTINUED

RATSEY (cont.)

I wants the real thing, if there
is one. The real thing.

MERLIN

It's very expensive. Crushed
pearls are just one of the
ingredients.

RATSEY

I'll pay any price you say. But
is it the real thing?

Merlin smiles and slowly nods.

69 IN HARRY'S SHOP

Jem's last scream, the loudest of all, brings Harry to his
feet and over to the stairwell, looking up. Silence.
Then a baby's cry.

HARRY

Gosnell. Gosnell.

No answer. Harry beats his hands together, paces the
floor and tries again.

HARRY (cont.)

Gosnell. Gosnell.

Still no answer.

HARRY (cont.)

Oh, please, God. Please. Please.
Please. Please. Please. Please.
(calls)

Gosnell.

GOSNELL'S VOICE

Yes, Mr. Poyntz?

HARRY

How is she? How is she?

GOSNELL

Resting easy. It's a little boy.

HARRY

And he?

GOSNELL

Seems all right.

70

IN HARRY'S BEDROOM

Jem lies in bed with her child. Gosnell enters from the landing.

GOSNELL

He wanted to know how you was.

JEM

How I was?

GOSNELL

How's she, he said, and how's he?

JEM

He asked after me first?

GOSNELL

Yes, missus.

71

IN HARROW ALLEY

one day, some time later, Dan, the hangman's assistant, walks toward the Pye. Trade is almost at a standstill. Almost all the shops are closed now, and there are no 'Prentices, no Food-Vendors and few Customers. The exodus has ended. A score of houses now have Watchers before them, different houses: the ones previously guarded are now boarded up. The bells of the City's parish-churches have stopped and the only sounds heard are the moans and groans and screams of those quarantined. Dan enters the Pye.

72

IN THE PYE TAVERN

which is a quarter full, conversation at the tables is subdued. The Mute is at the bar, where Mrs. Feeny is filling his basket of left-overs. Ratsey is alone at a table carefully measuring drops from a small bottle into a spoon. Looking around from the doorway, Dan sees him and joins him at the table.

DAN

Got any -

RATSEY

Sshh. Four. Five. Six -

Ratsey swallows the spoonful, carefully corks the bottle and returns it to his pocket.

DAN

What's that? Medicine?

CONTINUED

72 CONTINUED

RATSEY

Oh, the hangman. Still alive are you?

DAN

Just hardly. My family's all dead. I was quarantined with them but the plague never touched me. Why, I don't know. I wish it had. Got any idea where a man could find a bit of work?

RATSEY

They need men to help unload dead-carts at the pits. Make it easy all around if you works there and then gets your wish. You drops down and there you are.

DAN

I might be forced to -
(breaks off)
Who's that?

Dan is pointing to the Mute who is heading toward the front door.

DAN (cont.)

I've seen him before. Somewhere.
But where?

Ratsey shrugs. The Mute goes out into the Alley. Dan, with a puzzled frown, gets up and goes to the door.

73 OUTSIDE THE PYE

Dan stands in the doorway and watches the Mute walk away. A coach rumbles past him and slows as it approaches Harry's shop.

74 OUTSIDE HARRY'S SHOP

Some Children are at play. The coach stops and Prothero gets out, carrying a small chest. Prothero, who has prospered since leaving the parish, is handsomely dressed and fitted out. He enters Harry's shop.

75 IN HARRY'S SHOP

Harry is at the door, beaming up the stairwell at his infant son. Jem, holding the child at the upper floor landing, is wearing a night-robe.

CONTINUED

75 CONTINUED

HARRY

I think he recognizes me.

JEM

Oh, Harry, he won't be able to see for another week or so.

HARRY

No, I think he recognizes me. He's such a -

Harry breaks off and turns to the front door as Prothero enters, his face hardening.

PROTHERO

Good day, Mr. Poyntz.

HARRY

Get out of here.

PROTHERO

Oh, willingly, willingly. I did think, though, that you'd put aside personal differences if you could save the parish money.

HARRY

What does that mean?

PROTHERO

It means precisely that. I have recommendations from Alderman Lovelace of St. Martin's parish, Alderman Carey of St. Giles and many others if you care to see them.

HARRY

And what do they recommend?

PROTHERO

Why, the goods and services I stand ready to provide at prices no competitor can meet.
(opens his chest)
This, for example.

Prothero takes out a stiff-paper sign with Lord Have Mercy Upon Us printed upon it and hands it to Harry.

CONTINUED

PROTHERO (cont.)

Notice how clearly the words stand out against the white background. Much more visible than against a dark door. Only three shillings the gross. No?

(brings out a padlock)

Have a look at this padlock. You won't find a better anywhere for securing the doors of quarantined houses. Six pence each. Alderman Stayner of St. Olave's parish bought a hundred.

HARRY

I can use a hundred at six pence each.

PROTHERO

They'll be delivered to you first thing in the morning. Now, how are you fixed for pails for carrying water to the shut-ins? Brimstone for clearing the air? Ah, here's something I'm introducing for the first time.

(takes out a shroud and models it)

This shroud, believe it or not, is priced at only two pence. Made of very good linen and washable, can be used more than once. Something to keep in mind now that the plague is killing eight thousand a week.

HARRY

Shrouds are a luxury we've long since given up in this parish.

PROTHERO

Hard hit as that, are you? Too bad. You wouldn't be interested in coffins, then, either, I take it. Need any horses for the dead-carts? Horses are at a premium these days, you know. Scarce, very scarce. Best buy them when you can. I've only a few left.

HARRY

No horses. Can't afford it.

CONTINUED

75 CONTINUED

PROTHERO

Then you might be interested in my rental-service. It's an innovation of mine. Cart, horse and hand-bell for only four shillings a day. Why lay out large sums to buy when for a pittance you can have the same thing? No?

(closing his chest)

Then I'll bid you good morning. The padlocks will be delivered as stated and my terms are cash only, no credit. Care for a sweetmeat?

Harry shakes his head. Prothero pops a sweet into his mouth, picks up his chest and bustles out. Harry finds himself chuckling at the absurdity of it.

76 OUTSIDE HARRY'S SHOP

Prothero pauses to toss a handful of sweets to the Children at play. Then he gets into his coach and is driven off.

77 AT SAM KILLIGREW'S HOUSE

Little Dickie, at one of the middle floor windows, sees the Children scrambling for the goodies. Looking over his shoulder to make certain he is unobserved, he leaves the window. A few moments later, there is a sound of sliding bolts at the front door. It opens and, with a cry of joy, Dickie runs to join the Children. He sees a sweet on the cobbles, snatches it before anyone else can and puts it in his mouth. He is enjoying it tremendously when:

SAM'S VOICE

(roaring)

Dickie.

Sam stands at the open door in a state of shock. Behind him, Sal and Nan appear.

SAM

Dickie.

The Children scatter. Frightened, Dickie runs to the front door. As he reaches it, Sam slams it in his face.

SAL'S VOICE

No. No. Dickie. Let me.

CONTINUED

77 CONTINUED

NAN'S VOICE

Papa. You can't. Papa.

The door opens a bit and the hands of Sal and Nan appear at the edge as they strive to pull it open. Then the hands are slowly pulled back and the door shuts. The sliding bolt is heard. Sal and Nan scream endlessly. Dickie slaps at the door.

DICKIE

(weeping)

Let me in, Da-da. Let me in. I won't do it again. I promise. Da-da, let me in.

78 IN THE OPEN FIELD ON THE CITY'S OUTSKIRTS

it is black of night and from the City gates the full dead-carts are rolling toward the pits, their progress marked by the torches carried by the men preceding them afoot. Many have already arrived and stand, in the torch-light, with their backs to the pits as bearers and buriers remove the corpses for deposit below. Some carry the corpses down the ladders; others, less finicky, roll them down or fling them. The night is filled with the creaking of the cart-wheels and with snatches of drunken song and idiot laughter.

The St. Barnabas dead-cart is one of those already being unloaded. Toby and a BURIER are removing the corpses and shoving them over the lip of the pit. Ratsey has paused for the moment to take out the small bottle of the real thing, uncork it and put it to his lips.

BURIER

Oh, I knew this one. Wealthiest man in our parish. Know how much he left?

Toby, hardly listening, shakes his head.

BURIER

All he had.

The Burier pushes the body over, laughing immoderately, and drags another from the cart.

BURIER (cont.)

Oh, she's a pretty thing, she is. Oh, now this was something to cuddle with on a frosty night.

(cont.)

CONTINUED

78 CONTINUED

BURIER (cont.)

What a waste.
 (to someone in the pit)
 Hey. Oswald. Have a look at
 this little darling.

The Burier tumbles the body over and, turning for another, addresses Ratsey.

BURIER (cont.)

What about a hand, mate? Are
 we to shift all this meat our-
 selves?

Ratsey has drained the bottle. He licks the bottle's mouth before tossing it aside and joins the Burier and Toby at the cart.

BURIER (Cont.)

No, we already has this one.
 Get your own. God knows there's
 plenty for all.

Ratsey reaches into the cart, grabs the first foot and heaves. The corpse slides out and Ratsey finds himself looking at Merlin, black eye-patch and all. ✓

79 IN HARRY'S SHOP

Harry sits alone at the work-table, a lantern before him, hunched over something he holds in his hand. Brooding deeply, he scarcely looks over his shoulder as Ratsey comes running in.

RATSEY

No more. I can't bear it no more.
 I don't care if I gets no pardon.
 Send me back to Newgate. I'd
 rather hang then go on like this.
 Send me back to Newgate. At least
 I'll be safe from the plague.

HARRY

Safe? At Newgate? Newgate's
 the worst hit in the City. One
 enormous pest-house, that's Newgate
 now.

Ratsey sways under this. Then turns and slowly goes out of the shop. Harry stares once more at what he has in his hand.

CONTINUED

79 CONTINUED

JEM'S VOICE

Harry, what is it? What is it
you have there?

Harry takes the lantern, gets up and goes closer to the
stairs. Opening his hand he shows her.

HARRY

Grass. Blades of grass. Growing
between the cobbles outside the
door. The City's disappearing.

80 IN THE PYE TAVERN

the night's carouse is reaching its zenith. Toby is
alone at his corner table, rocking back and forth in dull
misery. He looks up briefly as Ratsey sits down heavily
on the bench next to him, then resumes his rocking, a
faraway look in his eye and a trace of a smile on his lips.

RATSEY

What are you thinking?

TOBY

Of home.

RATSEY

Where is it?

TOBY

Across the sea. An island called
Jamaica. I don't want to talk about
it with you.

RATSEY

What's it like?

TOBY

Clean blue sky. Clean blue water.
White sand. Palm trees in the
breeze going sh, sh, sh, like my
mother did when I was little and
had bad dreams. Sh, sh, sh. Oh,
God, I miss it so.

RATSEY

(starting to rock
with him)

So do I.

TOBY

You've never seen it, man.

CONTINUED

80 CONTINUED

RATSEY

Even so. I can miss a place like that. Same as you.

TOBY

You ain't in no way same as me. And don't you forget it. That island's not for you, man. All of us there has black skins. And black stinks.

RATSEY

Our skins is different. And so is our stinks. But we suffers, both, and in the end we dies. That we has in common, Brother Toby. That we has in common.

81 A LONDON STREET

baking in the sunlight. Most of the houses are boarded up. A few Watchers sit as though in stupor before the doors of others. Two or three bodies lie here and there, one uncovered. Lawrence's horse has stopped. Lawrence sits slumped in the saddle. Nothing moves until Harry rides slowly up to the Lord Mayor. Lawrence raises his head, stares dully at Harry and indicates the bodies.

LAWRENCE

Do you see? The nights are not long enough to bury our dead. We're done for, Harry. Done for.

A PLAGUE VICTIM comes crawling out of a house and crabs his way across the cobbles in a desperate effort to reach Lawrence and Harry.

PLAGUE VICTIM

I've got the plague. I've got the plague.

(managing to stand)

And if I've got it, why shouldn't you? Why shouldn't you?

The Plague Victim spreads his arms, groping to reach and touch Lawrence and Harry, comes close and then collapses.

HARRY

(to a nearby Watcher)

Here. You. Fetch a blanket and cover him.

CONTINUED

81 CONTINUED

The Watcher stares at Harry for a moment, then drops his eyes.

LAWRENCE

Everyone's given up. It's the end.

HARRY

Damn you, John, it's not the end.

LAWRENCE

We've done all we can and it's not enough.

HARRY

No. No. Light fires. Large ones. Up and down every street. Brimstone. Pitch. Tar. Keep them burning.

LAWRENCE

What's the good?

HARRY

Perhaps it will cleanse the air, as the doctors said. But even if it doesn't, fires anyway. We can't let people believe there's no hope.

LAWRENCE

Even if there isn't?

HARRY

Especially if there isn't. John. John Lawrence. Your Worship. Damn you, lift your head and consider what I've said.

A COURIER comes galloping down the street and checks his horse near them, the beast rearing. The Courier is young, ardent and terribly excited.

COURIER

Which is the road to Oxford? To Oxford, which way?

HARRY

Oxford?

COURIER

(patting his saddle-bag)
 Dispatches for the Crown.
 (cont.)

CONTINUED

81 CONTINUED

COURIER (cont.)

I've just landed with glorious news. We've met the Dutch fleet and smashed it. We captured seventeen ships, sank five and killed nine thousand of their men.

Harry gestures toward the correct road. The Courier is puzzled at Harry's response to the news.

COURIER (cont.)

Didn't you hear what I said?
About the victory?

HARRY

Hoorah.

The Courier gives up trying to solve it, spurs his horse and gallops off.

LAWRENCE

Very well, Harry. Bonfires it is.
We'll try it. And if it fails -

HARRY

And if it fails, we'll think of something else.

82

IN HARROW ALLEY

that evening, there are large drums or graziers, filled with wood, coal, and tar, in the center of the way before every sixth house, from the Gate to the church and beyond. A Watcher stands in readiness near each, burning torch in hand. Here and there along the Alley are great piles of fuel to keep the fires burning.

Harry comes galloping into the Alley.

HARRY

(to Watchers)

Ready? Ready? All ready here?

Dismounting before his house, Harry ties the horse to one of the posts and, taking a lighted lantern from a Watcher, starts toward the house opposite, an abandoned house, its open door hanging by a hinge, its windows broken.

HARRY

(calling to Watchers)

Wait for my signal. Not until you see the signal.

CONTINUED

82 CONTINUED

Harry enters the abandoned house.

Up and down the Alley, inhabitants yet alive are at the windows, waiting and hoping the fires will prove effective. Among these are Mr. and Mrs. Wick.

MR. WICK

If this does not scotch the plague,
we leave the City at once, Mrs. Wick.
My mind's made up.

83 ON THE ROOF OF THE ABANDONED HOUSE

the highest in the Alley, Harry emerges through a trap-door with the lighted lantern and takes out his watch.

Jem, at a garret window of their house across the way, waves to him and he smiles at her.

JEM

Do be careful up there, Harry.

HARRY

Is the door of the baby's room
shut? And the windows? There's
going to be a terrible stink.

JEM

They're shut.

Harry glances at his watch again and is galvanized into action. He swings the lantern in great circles about his head and shouts to the Watchers below.

HARRY

Now. Now. Start the fires. Now.

84 IN HARROW ALLEY

The Watchers toss their torches into the drums and braziers and the flames leap up. Great clouds of black smoke rise.

85 ON THE ROOF OF THE ABANDONED HOUSE

Harry surveys the Alley, the parish and the entire City. The sight is magnificent: fires burning everywhere in orderly lines, along every street, along London Bridge, across the Thames.

Suddenly, feeling something, he looks up and then holds out his hand: it's raining. The drops come faster and

CONTINUED

85 CONTINUED

faster turn into a deluge. Lightning flickers and thunder crashes. By ones and twos and tens, the fires in the City are quenched and there is only blackness.

Harry stands there in the downpour. He looks up at the sky.

HARRY

Chaos? Is that what You're trying to tell us? That it's chaos up there and meant to be chaos down here, too? That there's no order? No rules? No laws? That we're wrong when we try to make sense of it? Are You telling us there's no purpose to any of it? There? Here? Everywhere? No meaning at all? That justice and mercy and pity are merely things that we have thought of, we, down here? That they exist only in our heads? Nowhere else? What is it You want from us? Has some sin been committed we must atone? If that's what it is, tell us, tell us, because we cannot bear much more.

Harry sinks down and sits on the roof, knees drawn in, arms around them, head resting on them. The rain slows and stops.

86 AT THE GARRET WINDOW OF HARRY'S HOUSE
Jem has overheard Harry. Now she turns away from the window and leaves it.

87 ON THE ROOF OF THE ABANDONED HOUSE
Harry lifts his head from his knees at the sound of a door closing below and, glancing down at the Alley, sees Jem hurrying along.

HARRY

Jem? Jem.

88 IN ST. BARNABAS CHURCH
there are a score of people, here and there, some silently praying, some dozing, others staring into space. As Jem enters, a PENITENT gets to his feet, beating his breast.

CONTINUED

PENITENT

I confess. I confess. My father kept his savings behind a brick in the chimney. I stole the money and he accused my brother and drove him from the house and we never saw Robbie again. My father died without knowing the truth, blessing me as the good son. And now I confess my sin and may God forgive me.

The Penitent sits, weeping. No one has paid any particular attention.

Jem nerves herself and rises.

JEM

Before I married, there was a boy and we loved each other. When my father betrothed me to another, we were desperate and heartbroken. We made love, the boy and I, in the field down the road. And I conceived. And I married Harry Poyntz and I've let him think the child is his. And if this is the sin for which we are being punished, I freely confess it and ask only for guidance so that I may know how to atone.

Jem sinks back in the pew. As before, no one has paid much attention. After some moments, Jem gets up to leave. Turning, she sees Harry in the doorway of the church, staring at her.

89 OUTSIDE HARRY'S SHOP

an hour or so later, a coach stands waiting. Harry and Prothero are before the door. In a brazier, nearby, the ashes of the dead fire still smoke.

PROTHERO

The coach and horse will not remain in Dover, is that correct? Merely bring Mrs. Poyntz to her father's home and return? Then that will be, let me see, six pounds will cover the cost.

Harry takes out his purse and, in a daze, counts the money into Prothero's hand.

89 CONTINUED

PROTHERO

If I may say so, you're very wise
to send your family out of the
City. You saw last week's Bill?
Eleven thousand dead of plague?
Frightful.

(happily)

And no end in sight.
(pocketing money)

Thank you. And if there is any-
thing else you require, you know
where to find me.

Prothero goes up the Alley. Harry enters his shop.

90 IN HARRY'S SHOP

Harry finds a seat on a bench alongside the door. Jem, carrying the baby, comes down the stairs. Gosnell follows with baggage. Both are dressed for travel. Jem moves toward the door, pauses to see if there is forgiveness in Harry's face and, finding none, opens the door - screening Harry - and goes out with Gosnell. A moment later, with the crack of a whip and a rumbling, the coach departs.

Harry sits in the dark behind the open door.

An OLD WOMAN puts her head in, looks around, then whispers to someone behind her.

OLD WOMAN

Look. No one here.

The Old Woman tip-toes in, peers about, then hurries to a shelf and, snatching a few bolts of cloth, hurries out. There is Another Woman behind her who does the same. In less than a minute, the shop seems filled with Women looting.

Unseen by them, and possibly not aware of them, either, Harry gets up and wanders out into the Alley.

91 IN THE PYE TAVERN

roaring, crazy, joyously drunk, Ratsey is having the time of his life. The Crowd, scrambling to get out of the way and packed against the walls, is being treated to a brawl. Alone, and getting much the worst of it, Ratsey is battling Half-A-Dozen Bully-boys. They are too much for

CONTINUED

91 CONTINUED

him. They beat him back into a corner near the door and batter him to the floor. At Mrs. Feeny's prompting, the Musicians come from behind the table they've used as a shield and begin to play. The Crowd turns away from the fight and resumes drinking and dancing. The Bully-boys stay with Ratsey only long enough to give him the heel a few times and then they, too, join the revels.

Prone on the floor, Ratsey lifts his bloody head, still chuckling.

RATSEY

Ah, that was a good one, that was. That was a tonic.

He manages to get to his feet and, staggering to a nearby table, collapses to a stool and holds his head. Harry, who has been standing in the doorway, comes into the room and sits at the same table. Seeing him, Beck approaches.

BECK

What'll you have?

HARRY

Wine. Bring the pitcher.

RATSEY

Me, too.

When Beck goes to fetch it, Ratsey focusses his eyes on Harry and recognizes him.

RATSEY (cont.)

Oh, the Alderman. Is it time for me to go out with the cart?

HARRY

No. You needn't any more. It's a waste of effort. Pointless. Completely pointless. Like everything else.

Beck returns with the pitcher and mugs and sets them down.

BECK

That'll be tuppence.

As Harry reaches into his pocket, Ratsey pulls out his purse.

RATSEY

No, I've got it. Let me.

CONTINUED

91 CONTINUED

Ratsey hands Beck a coin. As she leaves:

HARRY
(calls after her)
Bring pen and paper.

Harry drinks. Ratsey has emptied the purse into his hand and sits staring at the heap of coins.

RATSEY
It ain't right, you know that?
It ain't right. They brings
you up to think this is worth
something. You're supposed to
spend your life getting it any
way you can. And does it help
with anything really important?

HARRY
It can't buy off plague, if that's
what you mean.

RATSEY
It can't buy off death no matter
how it comes. And, my God, it
comes in many ways. Not only
plague. You can die as you're
born. You can die of old age.
You can die of fever. Or wounds.
Or apoplexy. The bloody flux.
Burns. Scalds. Cancer. Gangrene.
Fistula. Giving birth. Colds.
Coughs. Consumption. Convulsions.
Dropsy. Drowning. Smallpox. The
French pox. Grief. Suicide.
Jaundice. Accidents. Liver.
Heart. Poison. Starvation.
Scurvy. Spleen. The stone.
(studying coins)
When I thinks of what I've done
in my time to get my hands on some
of this. And what is it? Shit.

Ratsey flings the coins across the room. There is a brief scramble for them. Ratsey covers his face with his hands. Beck brings pen, paper and a bottle of ink to the table. Harry begins to write.

HARRY
You seemed happy enough a moment
ago, when I came in.

CONTINUED

91 CONTINUED

RATSEY

Oh, fighting eases it some for me, yes.

HARRY

And drink.

RATSEY

Drink, too.

HARRY

And fornication.

RATSEY

That as well. They all help somewhat.

Ratsey pounds the table with both fists.

RATSEY (cont.)

But a man can't keep at them twenty-four hours a day. And it's the times between, the times between.

HARRY

That can be passed in sleep.

RATSEY

But I dream. And it's always the same. I'm in prison. Alone. Terrible alone. And terrible afraid. And there's something outside, I don't know what. But I feels if I could only reach it, touch it, the hurting would stop. And I puts my hand through the bars. And I stretches. And I stretches. But...

Harry has done writing. He slides the paper across to Ratsey.

HARRY

There. You've upheld your end of the bargain. Take it to the Lord Mayor and he'll give you your pardon.

Ratsey takes up the paper.

CONTINUED

91 CONTINUED

HARRY (cont.)

As for your dream, I doubt there's
anything out there worth reaching.

RATSEY

There has to be. There must be
something I can do to find it.
It ain't here. Where is it?
Where is it?

Ratsey gets up from the table, the pardon unnoticed in
his hand.

HARRY

Well, if you want my opinion -

But Ratsey is staggering away toward the front door.

HARRY (cont.)

(shrugs)

It doesn't matter. Nothing really
matters.

Harry gets up and, mug in hand, pushes his way through
the dancers to the Musicians and holds up his hand. The
music stops and the Crowd quiets.

HARRY (cont.)

My friends, early to bed and early
to rise makes a man healthy and
wealthy and wise.

He drinks. The Crowd doesn't understand.

HARRY (cont.)

My friends, every cloud has a silver
lining.

Harry drinks again. Someone snickers.

HARRY (cont.)

My friends, while there is life
there is hope.

A Few People laugh.

HARRY (cont.)

My friends, ask and ye shall receive.

Now the Crowd is laughing.

CONTINUED

91 CONTINUED

SOMEONE

The darkest hour is just before
the dawn.

The laughter grows.

HARRY

And a will will find a way.

The laughter spreads.

SOMEONE ELSE

When one door shuts, another opens.

HARRY

Exactly. And God tempers the wind
to the shorn lamb. And honesty
is the best policy. And a stitch
in time saves nine.

FROM THE CROWD

A good beginning makes a good ending...
Good deeds always have their reward...
By preserving, we achieve...
It's never too late to mend...

THE TIPSY TENOR

(sings)

They say that it's never
Too late to mend -
Lilliburlero~bullen ala -
But what's there to mend
When you've come to the end?
Lilliburlero bullen ala.

THE CROWD

Lero, lero, lilliburlero,
Lilliburlero bullen ala -
Lero, lero, lilliburlero,
Lilliburlero bullen ala.

The Musicians have taken up the tune and the dancing resumes as the Crowd continues with the song. As Beck passes Harry, he takes her tray, hurls it against the wall, puts his arms around her and, joining the dance, is soon lost to sight in the whirling, leaping, jumping throng.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

92

OUTSIDE THE BUCKWORTH BAKE-SHOP

Ratsey sits huddled on the cobbles near the front door, his back against the wall, his head resting on his drawn-up knees. In one hand is the note Harry wrote for the Lord Mayor. It is sunrise.

A cart loaded with sacks of flour, driven by a MILLER, comes down the Alley and stops at the bake-shop door. The Miller gets down from his seat and starts unloading two sacks.

MILLER

(calling)

Hey. Missus.

Betty Buckworth comes out of the shop, putting up her hair.

BETTY

Good morning to you.

MILLER

The wife says I'm to tell you and my other customers I'll come no more to your door.

BETTY

But why?

MILLER

The wife says the devil has looked after his own till now but I must not chance it further. The sickness is very hot in the City, missus.

BETTY

But I must have flour.

MILLER

The wife says I'm to sell it outside the wall and the buyers can trundle it into the City themselves.

BETTY

That's an added bit of work for me.

MILLER

Don't tell me, missus, tell the wife.

The Miller takes a vinegar-jar from the cart and holds it out to Betty who takes some coins from a skirt-pocket and

CONTINUED

92 CONTINUED

drops them in. The Miller shakes them up, then fishes them out and pockets them before getting up on the cart and driving away.

RATSEY
(sniffing hungrily)
The bread smells good, missus.

BETTY
Fresh baked and still cooling.
Want to buy a loaf?

Ratsey takes out his purse and finds it empty.

RATSEY
Another time.

He sniffs the aroma again, settling back against the wall. Betty can see he's hungry.

BETTY
If you carry these sacks in, I'll
give you a loaf for your trouble.

Ratsey starts to get up.

BETTY (cont.)
But you'll have to bathe first.

That puts a new light on the matter and Ratsey settles back again to consider it.

BETTY (cont.)
Well, I can't have a man who has
been bearing corpses handling my
flour unless he washes. Come,
I'll add a lump of butter to it
as well.

Reluctantly, Ratsey gets up and heads for the door.

BETTY (cont.)
No, not this way, around the back.
In the garden.

Ratsey discovers the paper in his hand.

RATSEY
(holds it up)
Can you read, missus? What is this?

CONTINUED

92 CONTINUED

BETTY

It says you're to be pardoned
and it's signed by the Alderman.

RATSEY

(remembering)

Ah, yes.

Stuffing the paper into his pocket, Ratsey enters the passageway leading to the garden in the rear. Betty goes into the shop.

93 IN THE BUCKWORTH BAKE-SHOP

Betty goes to the fireplace where a large caldron of hot water is steaming. Through the open rear door, she sees Ratsey coming into the garden and pausing to look about uncertainly.

BETTY

Do you see that tub? Empty it.
I've just had my own bathe.

Lugging the caldron of hot water, she goes into the garden.

94 IN BETTY'S GARDEN

Ratsey empties the wooden tub and watches Betty dubiously as she fills it from the caldron.

BETTY

What's the matter?

RATSEY

I'm wondering what this will do
to my health.

BETTY

Have you never washed all over
before?

RATSEY

No, of course not. Not since I
was a boy, that is, and went
swimming. But I washed my feet
Christmas Day last and caught a
cold.

BETTY

Well, this won't kill you.
(cont.)

CONTINUED

94 CONTINUED

BETTY (cont.)

My man had a bathe every single day of his life from the moment he became a baker's 'prentice.

RATSEY

Whatever for?

BETTY

Bakers must be cleanly in their person. It's a rule of the Guild going back ever so far. My man was a sweet-smelling man. Like honey.

RATSEY

Suppose I tries it a limb at a time to see what happens.

BETTY

Oh, get undressed and step into it. I can't spend the day waiting for that flour. I must knead it for tonight's baking.

RATSEY

Where does I get undressed?

BETTY

Here. No one will notice.

RATSEY

And where will you be, missus?

BETTY

For Heaven's sake, a man's body is no great mystery to me, even if I cared to ogle you, which I don't. I'll be here, there, around and about. Now, get undressed and have your bathe. I'll fetch you clean clothing. That's the soap. You know what to do with it, I suppose.

Betty goes back to the shop. Ratsey begins to undress, eyeing the tub with distaste.

95

IN THE BUCKWORTH BAKE-SHOP

as Betty enters from the garden and starts up the stairs, the Mute comes in from the Alley with his basket.

CONTINUED

95 CONTINUED

Betty indicates some loaves on a table.

BETTY

Good morning to you. There they are, all ready and waiting.

The Mute nods, smiling his thanks, and fills his basket. Then he turns and leaves the shop.

96 OUTSIDE THE BUCKWORTH BAKE-SHOP
the Mute comes through the front door and walks down the Alley. A moment or two later, studying the receding Mute intently, Dan and a SAILOR pause at the front door.

DAN

Well? Well?

SAILOR

It's hard to say. He could be a sailor from his walk. He does have a roll to it. But I've seen landsmen with that walk, too, who never smelled the sea.

DAN

Well, he looks like a Dutchman, don't he?

SAILOR

I can't say that neither.

DAN

Why not? You're a sailor. You've been to Holland many a time, you said.

SAILOR

And so I has. But a Dutchman looks about the same as anyone else.

DAN

What about the color of his hair? And his eyes?

SAILOR

That proves nothing. Some Dutchmen has fair hair and some don't.

DAN

Damn...Let's have them Dutch words again.

CONTINUED

96 CONTINUED

SAILOR
Dag, meneer. Is u Nederlander?

DAN
(repeating it)
Dag, meneer. Is u Nederlander.
And it means good day, are you
a Dutchman?

SAILOR
That's right.

Dan leaves the Sailor and hurries after the Mute.

97 IN HARROW ALLEY
as the Mute walks along, Dan comes up unnoticed behind
him. And suddenly:

DAN
(loudly)
Dag, meneer. Is u Nederlander?

Startled, the Mute turns and looks at Dan, his brows knit
in puzzlement.

DAN (cont.)
Dag, meneer. Is u Nederlander?

The Mute smiles, shrugging to show he does not understand.
Dan waits, but nothing more is forthcoming. Dan leaves
him and goes back toward the sailor.

98 OUTSIDE THE BUCKWORTH BAKE-SHOP
Dan is excited as he joins the Sailor.

DAN
Did you see? Did you see? He
understood what I said.

SAILOR
What makes you think that?

DAN
He turned around, didn't he?

SAILOR
If someone was to sneak up behind
you and shout in your ear, you'd
turn around, too. No matter what
(cont.)

CONTINUED

98 CONTINUED

SAILOR (cont.)
language he spoke. It don't
prove nothing.

DAN
But he has a ring in his ear.

SAILOR
I'm a sailor and I has no ring
in my ear. Some people wears
them, some don't, sailors or no
sailors.

DAN
Damn. Damn. If I could only
be certain.

SAILOR
Coming back with me?

DAN
No.

The Sailor leaves. Dan crosses the Alley toward the Pye.

99

OUTSIDE THE PYE
as Dan enters, a BUTCHER is unloading meat from his cart
at the door. The Butcher looks off as:

HODGES' VOICE
(singing lustily)
Oh, my name is Samuel Hall,
Samuel Hall, Samuel Hall.

Hodges, carrying his medical kit, is entering the Alley,
passing a corpse here and there on the way.

HODGES (cont.)
Oh, my name is Samuel Hall
And I hate you one and all.
You're a lot of bastards all.
Damn your eyes.
Oh, they've locked me here in quod,
Here in quod, here in quod.
Oh, they've locked me here in quod
And the parson prates of God.
Yes, the parson prates of God.
Damn his eyes.

BUTCHER
Morning to your, Doctor. Morning.

CONTINUED

99 CONTINUED

Hodges stops before the Butcher and bows elaborately.

HODGES

Ah, my fellow-butcher.

BUTCHER

I'm glad to see someone cheerful.
What do you celebrate, if I may
ask?

HODGES

I'm celebrating - something.
But what? Don't remember.

BUTCHER

Success with one of your patients,
it may be?

HODGES

That would call for celebration
if it happened. But it's so un-
likely. Saul hath slain his
thousands and Nathaniel Hodges
his ten thousands.

BUTCHER

Aach, you're too harsh with your-
self, Doctor.

The Butcher lifts a small tub from the cart, preparing to
bring it into the tavern.

HODGES

Why, that's true, considering the
marvel I performed with my art not
an hour ago. Imagine, a young man
in the prime of life dying of
plague. All hope abandoned by
one of my colleagues. Parents
weeping in the next room. And
then, enter Nathaniel Hodges.

BUTCHER

You saved the man's life?

HODGES

No, no, I shared my brandy with
him and saw to it he died happy.
Uproariously happy. What have
you there?

CONTINUED

99 CONTINUED

BUTCHER

Tripe. Why not go in and have them cook you some? It would sober you.

HODGES

Is that what you call an inducement? I'd call it...

BUTCHER

What is it, Doctor?

HODGES

That tripe. Do you realize no one has ever anatomized a plague victim?

BUTCHER

You mean, open one up and have a look at the guts? That would be death for certain, wouldn't it? And what use would it be?

HODGES

Who can say what use it would be? One day.

A coach followed by a cart piled high with furniture rolls past into the Alley. Deep in thought, Hodges turns away from the Butcher and staggers after it.

100 OUTSIDE HODGES' HOUSE

the coach and cart slow and come to a stop at the neighboring residence. Prothero descends from the coach and, taking a key from his pocket, unlocks the neighboring residence's door as the Carter and his Helper start unloading the furniture.

PROTHERO

(to the Carter)

Not so slap-dash with that table. That's mahogany, that is. Worth more than the horse and cart together.

Hodges comes to his front door as the Carter and the Helper carry the table past Prothero into the house.

HODGES

It's Prothero, isn't it?

CONTINUED

100 CONTINUED

PROTHERO

Yes, it is. Good morning, Doctor.

HODGES

I wasn't certain, you've grown so grand. Put on weight, too, haven't you?

PROTHERO

(patting his belly)

I daresay. Well, we're to be neighbors, Doctor. I've bought the Rutland house from the heirs.

HODGES

That's coming up in the world.

PROTHERO

Only the beginning, Doctor, only the beginning. I've already got my eye on an estate in Westminster. Not a large one, of course, but still Westminster. And if a few business ventures prove successful, as they're bound to -
(breaks off as)

The Carter and his Helper come out of the house.

PROTHERO

The bed goes to the large room on the right overlooking the garden.

HODGES

You were saying?

PROTHERO

Hmm? Oh, if you've any money to invest let me know and I can put you in the way of tripling it in six months.

HODGES

Gold mine in Brazil? Indigo in the Carolinas?

PROTHERO

No, no, nothing so speculative as that. Coffins and wood for coffins here in the City. And horses.
(cont.)

CONTINUED

100 CONTINUED

PROTHERO (cont.)

And linen for shrouds. I've
invested every penny I own and
all I could borrow beside. Let
me know if you're interested.

HODGES

Very kind. Thank you.

Hodges fishes in his pocket for his key and comes up with
a folded paper. Opening it, he reads briefly and then
swings around to face the Pye.

HODGES (cont.)

This is what I was celebrating.
Hey, Butcher.

But the Butcher is gone.

HODGES (cont.)

Ah, well.

PROTHERO

Speaking to me?

HODGES

No, but you're welcome to it.
Today's Mortality Bill. Only
ten thousand dead last week.
The plague's on the wane.

Prothero's mouth falls slack as he takes the Bill from
Hodges. And, having found his key, Hodges enters his
house.

101 IN HARROW ALLEY

one day, a week or so later, a breeze blows fallen leaves
across the cobbles. October has come and some of those
who fled are returning through Barnabas Gate, the ones
who, because of poverty, were the last to leave and,
having left, were least able to hold out. In a steadily
freshening trickle, they move through Harrow Alley afoot,
pushing barrows with their possessions and carrying the
very young and the very old. They seem much the worse
for wear.

John Lawrence, preceded by his Mace-Bearer, rides into
the Alley from the opposite direction and checks his horse
at Sam Killigrew's house. The Mace-Bearer pounds at the
front door.

CONTINUED

101 CONTINUED

LAWRENCE

(calls)

Hello, in the house. Killigrew.
Sam Killigrew.

A curtain at a middle floor window is drawn aside and Sam looks out. His face is drawn and he has developed a tic.

LAWRENCE (cont.)

I want to speak to you. Open up.
Open up, I say, the distemper's
not as strong as it was.

Sam opens the window a crack.

LAWRENCE (cont.)

This parish is in a muddle for
want of an Alderman. There are
scarcely enough guild members
left to vote for one so I'm taking
it upon myself to make an appoint-
ment. And I'm appointing you.

SAM

Me? Did Harry die?

LAWRENCE

Dead or fled, I cannot say.

SAM

I don't want the responsibility.

LAWRENCE

I don't delegate responsibility.
Only authority. And it's now
yours.

SAM

No. No. I've already lost my
little boy. Isn't that enough
for one family? No.

LAWRENCE

Aach, you may stay in there as long
as you please, if you are afraid.
But you'll conduct parish affairs
just the same. Through the window
by dumb-show like an actor in a
pantomize, if that suits you. Nod
your head for yes and shake it for
no and drop written messages into
(cont.)

CONTINUED

101 CONTINUED

LAWRENCE (cont.)

the street. I don't care how you manage it so long as the parish is administered. Is that clear?

Sam nods. Lawrence and his Mace-Bearer leave the Alley. On their way, they pass Ratsey speaking to Dan in front of the bake-shop. Ratsey's appearance has changed since his encounter with Betty. He is clean and shaven; his hair is combed; he wears Jasper's simple, sober clothing; and he is puffing a pipe.

RATSEY

How should I know? He comes into the shop and we gives him stale bread, is all. He's never said a word and for the life of me I can't see what makes you think he might be the Dutch bosun.

DAN

Well, he looks something like him, for one thing. And for another, that's just it: he never says a word. Don't you understand why? If he opens his mouth, you knows he's Dutch for certain.

RATSEY

Got it all put together, ain't you?

DAN

I don't spend my time thinking of nothing else.

RATSEY

Well, I has other things to do with mine.

Ratsey takes a step back toward the shop but Dan, like many another with a fixed idea, is never done.

DAN

It might be you wonders why he risks his life fetching them kids out of infected houses.

RATSEY

No, I can't say I does.

DAN

Well, I knows the answer to that, too.

CONTINUED

101 CONTINUED

RATSEY

Yes, I suppose you does.

DAN

It's because his great sin in bringing plague to the City weighs on his soul. He's trying to make amends. That came to me only last night.

RATSEY

That's Crown evidence, that is. Better than Crown evidence. You never has to hunt for it, just let it come.

DAN

And I also knows why he -

RATSEY

Now, listen. Once and for all. I don't give a damn. Do what you likes about him. Strangle him, stab him, shoot him or club him to death. What's it to me, eh? What's it to me?

Ratsey pulls his arm out of Dan's grip and goes into the shop.

102 IN THE BUCKWORTH BAKE-SHOP

Betty is mixing dough. She looks up as Ratsey enters.

BETTY

I was about to call you. It's ready now.

Betty takes the dough out of the mixing trough and plops it down on a table dusted with flour. Ratsey comes to her side, rolling up his shirt sleeves. He is as eager as a child.

BETTY

Now the first thing to be learned about kneading dough -

RATSEY

Never mind that. I've watched you often enough. Let me get my hands on it.

CONTINUED

102 CONTINUED

BETTY

Not so fast. Let me see them first.

Ratsey holds out his hands for inspection.

BETTY (cont.)

All right, they're clean enough.
Show me what you can do.

Ratsey starts kneading dough, soon falling into a steady rhythm.

BETTY (cont.)

What grains do we use to make bread?

RATSEY

Wheat, rye, barley, millet, oats
and - and maize.

BETTY

And how much barley would you use to make a raised loaf weighing one pound?

RATSEY

I'd use - I wouldn't use none.
Barley don't raise. It ain't right, trying to trick me.

BETTY

Oh, the guild will ask you harder questions than that before they accept you as a 'prentice.
(after a moment)
You do that well.

RATSEY

I likes doing it. It eases me.

BETTY

What makes the soft crumb?

RATSEY

The fat.

BETTY

A customer buys a loaf of bread and forgets his change as he walks out.
What do you do?...Well?

CONTINUED

102 CONTINUED

RATSEY

Well, I'm thinking.

BETTY

You run out into the street if necessary to make certain he gets it. There's nothing to think about.

RATSEY

For me there is.

BETTY

That's enough for now. Take it into the back and cover it and let it rise...Name the Roman king who set up the first baker's school.

RATSEY

Trojan?

BETTY

Trajan, Trajan.

RATSEY

Damn, I can never remember.

BETTY

You will.

RATSEY

(after a moment)

You're a comfortable woman, Mrs. Buckworth.

Their eyes meet. Ratsey picks up the dough and carries it to the back room.

Doctor Hodges hurries into the shop with an air of suppressed excitement.

HODGES

Betty, my dear, I have a favor to ask.

BETTY

Of course, Doctor, anything. Come upstairs and we'll talk.

CONTINUED

102 CONTINUED

HODGES

Thank you but there's no time.
I've sent a message to Mr.
Feeny and he must be waiting for
me now. Is my memory correct?
That you do read and write?

BETTY

Why, yes, Doctor.

HODGES

Would you mind doing a bit of
writing at my dictation if I
should ask?

BETTY

Of course. Whenever you like.

HODGES

Thank you, Betty, thank you.

Hodges hurries out.

103

IN THE PYE TAVERN

Dan sits brooding at one of the tables. Except for him, the room is empty this time of day. It is also in a state of neglect: table-tops with puddles of spilled liquid; over-turned stools; a long-unswept floor. Hodges enters from the Alley and, after a glance about, hurries to the stair-case in the rear and calls up.

HODGES

Jack Feeny. Jack Feeny.

A few moments pass and then Jack Feeny slowly descends, unshaven and unkempt, his cheeks hollow and his eyes filled with woe, a self-pitying ascetic.

JACK FEENY

What is it you want, Doctor?

CONTINUED

103 CONTINUED

HODGES

I wish to speak to you concerning your wife.

JACK FEENY

My wife. She has run off and left me, did you know that?

HODGES

I'd heard. I -

JACK FEENY

Run off with the blackamoor.

HODGES

I know. What I have in mind -

JACK FEENY

"Toby does not beat me, Toby does not leave me to do all the work, Toby is gentle and kind and five times the man you ever was in bed." Imagine that, Doctor.

HODGES

Yes, very sad. I --

JACK FEENY

And after we'd been married, let me see, Beck is eighteen, after we'd been married eleven years.

HODGES

The times are very unsettled. She -

JACK FEENY

A man is of the spirit and a woman ain't, that's what it is, Doctor. Run off with Toby. Just because I thirsted after higher things and spent my days and nights listening to the prophet, him with the earthly

(cont.)

CONTINUED

103 CONTINUED

JACK FEENY (cont.)
name of Solomon Eagle. Just because
I was no longer concerned with the
things of this world, off she goes
with every penny I had and God alone
knows how she managed to find it
where I hid it.

HODGES
I have just come from her bedside.
She's very ill, Mr. Feeny.

JACK FEENY
The plague?

Hodges nods.

JACK FEENY (cont.)
It is retribution. May she find
peace. God knows I bear her no
ill-will. How near is the end?

HODGES
That's never easy to say. It may
be three hours, it may be three
weeks. What I'd like from you, as
next of kin, is your permission to
perform an autopsy upon her body.

JACK FEENY
Oh, that's a horrible thought to
a sensitive man, Doctor. And
Jack Feeny knew Mag, as they says
in the Good Book. A horrible
thought. Is she alone?

HODGES
No.

JACK FEENY
Toby?

CONTINUED

103 CONTINUED

Hodges nods.

JACK FEENY (cont.)

Then you may cut her to ribbons for all I cares. I must go back upstairs, Doctor. The prophet has promised to name the source of all our troubles and the revelation may come at any time.

HODGES

I want to thank you, Mr. Feeny.

Feeny dismisses this with a wave of his hand and starts up the stairs.

DAN

Hold on, there.

Dan gets up from the table and comes to Feeny as Hodges leaves the tavern.

DAN (cont.)

What do you mean, name the source of all our troubles?

JACK FEENY

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of - blasphemy. That's what I means.

DAN

Well, what's the beast supposed to be?

CONTINUED

103 CONTINUED

JACK FEENY

Not what. Who. As the prophet says: here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred three-score and six.

Jack Feeny turns away and climbs the stairs.

DAN

The number of a man.

Dan hurries up the stairs after Feeny.

104

IN HODGES' GARDEN

one night, a couple of weeks later, a coffin has been set to rest upon two saw-horses not far from the rear-door of the house. Mag Feeny's corpse is in the coffin; under the coffin is a porringer containing sulphur. On a small table close at hand is a lighted lamp; neatly arranged about the lamp are Hodges' surgical instruments.

Another small table has been placed beneath a tree at the far end of the garden. On it are a lighted lamp, an inkwell and a mug with several pens and a quantity of paper beneath a paper-weight. Alongside this table is a stool.

The night is cool, autumnal, and from time to time a dead leaf drifts down from the tree to the writing-table.

Hodges enters the garden from the house with Betty. Bare-headed, a woolen scarf around his neck, he is alive with anticipation and excitedly puffing his pipe. Betty, with a shawl about her, is apprehensive. About to leave the doorway, she stops short.

BETTY

You said there should be fumigation.

CONTINUED

HODGES

Oh. Yes. It's nonsense, my dear,
but if it soothes you...

Hodges stoops at the coffin, knocks the coal from his pipe against the palm of his hand and lets it fall into the porringer of sulphur which, after a moment, begins to send up smoke.

HODGES (cont.)

There. You have it now.

Skirting the coffin, Betty goes to the writing-table, sits down and prepares to take dictation.

HODGES (cont.)

Are we ready?

BETTY

Yes, Doctor.

Hodges removes the coffin-lid and sets it aside, looking down at the body with a connoisseur's appreciation.

HODGES

Beautiful. Write this down:
that I've never seen a skin so
beset with the tokens, both black
and blue. They are more remark-
able for multitude and magnitude
than any I have yet observed.

As Betty writes, Hodges selects a surgical knife, runs his thumb along the edge and then strops it against the sole of his shoe.

HODGES (cont.)

And write this: I am going to
make entrance now into the lowest
region.

BETTY

Wait.

Betty gets up and shifts the stool so that she may sit with her back to the sight.

BETTY (cont.)

Now.

Knife poised, Hodges is suddenly fearful. He fishes a bottle of brandy from his pocket, uncorks it with his

CONTINUED

104 CONTINUED

teeth and takes a big gulp. Then, pulling himself together, he makes his initial incision.

HODGES

I see a thin liquid, variously colored, yellow, greenish, brown and purple.

(fingering it all)

The small guts are much distended and contain - one moment - and contain a great quantity of dross, very foul-smelling. They are not spotted as I thought they might be...Now I am going to divide the Vena Porta - spelled V-e-n-a P-o-r-t-a - and Arteria Coeliaca, spelled A-r-t-e-r-i-a C-o-e-l-i-a-c-a. I find no rubified juice at all but a firmly congealed substance of a very dark color. How do you bear up, my dear?

BETTY

(nauseated)

You may proceed, Doctor.

HODGES

Good girl. Now for the P-a-r-e-n-c-h-y-m-a, Parenchyma of the Liver. It's very pale and sending out a thin, yellowish excrement. It -

Hodges pauses to cock an ear. Somewhere out in the Alley there is a disturbance, a confused shouting of many men and women. After a moment, Hodges goes on.

HODGES (cont.)

It resembles the matter oozing -

105 IN HARROW ALLEY

the horde of True Believers is issuing forth from the Pye tavern. They are possessed. Some carry lanterns, others are armed with dismantled chairs and tables. Leading the swarm is Solomon Eagle, frothing at the mouth. Flanking him are Dan and Jack Feeny.

JACK FEENY

(to Eagle)

Point him out. Show us the man whose number is Six hundred three-score and six.

CONTINUED

EAGLE

Mish nirza kroten aben lulula
zarandee hup dumen solch yaknee
haf daygen nolpa lulula dobree.

DAN

What's he saying? What's he
saying?

JACK FEENY

The Holy Ghost is upon him and
he's speaking with tongues.

EAGLE

Muzhnee muzhnee hoong hoonga -

Dan grabs Eagle and brings him to a halt.

DAN

Which way? Which way? Answer me.

EAGLE

Plonta mig grunta mig grunta neef
plonta -

DAN

(pointing)

It's this way, ain't it? Ain't
it this way, down here?

Eagle pauses, his eyes rolling, and, literally urged by
Dan, starts down the Alley toward the abandoned house
taken over by the Mute.

EAGLE

Hashlooraloo hashlooraloo kima -

DAN

I knew it. I knew it.

The inspired mob streams down the Alley behind Eagle,
Dan and Feeny.

At the abandoned house, Dan stops Eagle again.

DAN

He's in here, ain't he? Ain't this
where he is?

JACK FEENY

Let him say. Let him say.

CONTINUED

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EAGLE

Fulmen hockteedee hockteedee lip
polivan -

And Eagle points to the abandoned house.

DAN

(exultant)

Yes. Yes.

Dan and all the others, sweeping Eagle along with them, surge against the front door.

106 IN THE BUCKWORTH BAKE-SHOP

Ratsey is at the oven, putting in loaves for baking with a long-handled shovel. At the yells of triumph down the way, he sets the shovel aside and goes to the front door to see what is happening.

107 AT THE MUTE'S ABANDONED HOUSE

as the last of the mob enters through the smashed front door, the Mute comes running into the Alley from the passageway alongside. Terrified, he turns and pelts along the cobbles toward the bake-shop.

ONE OF THE MOB

(seeing the Mute)

He's here. He's here. This way.

108 OUTSIDE THE BUCKWORTH BAKE-SHOP

the Mute trips and sprawls at Ratsey's feet. Lifting himself slightly, he raises a pleading hand to Ratsey. The mob, with Dan in the lead, is approaching in full cry. The Mute clutches at Ratsey who shakes him off and retreats into the shop. The Mute glances fearfully over his shoulder. The mob is almost upon him. Then it slides to a stop. Ratsey has come out of the shop carrying the shovel and glowing on the shovel is a heap of hot coals.

RATSEY

Go on about your business, you
bloody apes.

DAN

(to the others)

It's only one man. Follow me.

But before they can, Ratsey has flung the coals at them

CONTINUED

108 CONTINUED

and before they can recover from this he is upon them with a bellow, swinging the shovel in great circles and arcs. Dan and Jack Feeny go down like nine-pins. The rest, after a brief show of resistance, turn and scatter.

RATSEY

Come on. Come on. One at a time
or all at once. Smash your silly
heads. Tear your ears off. Break
you to bits.

The field is his. He stops in the middle of the Alley, sweating and breathing hard. Betty comes running to him from Hodges' house.

BETTY

Are you all right? You're not
hurt?

RATSEY

Nah.
(to the remnants)
Come on if you're coming. I'm
waiting for you.

But no one dares.

BETTY

Into the shop, quick. You're
streaming sweat and it's cold.

RATSEY

(still feisty)
Anybody? Anybody at all?

BETTY

Oh, leave it, leave it, I say.

Betty pulls Ratsey into the shop.

109 IN THE BUCKWORTH BAKE-SHOP

Bett ypushes Ratsey in ahead of her and over to the oven.

BETTY

Stand here in the heat. And take
off that shirt. I'll get you a
fresh one.

RATSEY

Don't bother.

CONTINUED

109 CONTINUED

BETTY

Do you suppose I want you to catch your death? Take it off at once.

RATSEY

(complying)

MRs. Buckworth, you are a comfortable woman.

110 IN HARROW ALLEY

Chandler, the aristocratic vicar of St. Barnabas church, comes riding slowly through the Gate among the wagons and coaches flowing back into the City. He is gratified to note that a number of shops have been re-opened and that they do not lack for Customers. A few of the itinerant Food-Vendors are hawking their wares and 'Prentices stand bawling before some of the shops. Here and there, Owners are removing the planks with which they boarded up their doors and windows before fleeing. Chandler reins in at the church and dismounts.

111 IN THE VESTRY

the curate, Morrell, is putting on his surplice as he speaks to Ratsey and Betty. He is very pleasantly moved.

MORRELL

(clearing his throat)

F-forgive me if I d-do not seem myself. But yours w-will be the first m-marriage in this parish s-since the coming of the s-sickness. I sh-shall be very proud to perform the c-ceremony. How s-soon would you l-like it to be?

RATSEY

Soon as possible, wouldn't you say, Bet?

MORRELL

Under the c-circumstances, you c-could dispense with the c-calling of the banns.

RATSEY

No, sir. We'll have the banns called. I likes things to be done proper.

CONTINUED

111 CONTINUED

MORRELL

Very well. Shall we say next Sunday? Next Sunday it is. God bless you.

BETTY

Thank you, Mr. Morrell.

Ratsey and Betty leave through the door leading into the church. Morrell gazes after them, sighs happily and resumes dressing. He turns as the side-door opens and Chandler comes in, an uncertain smile upon his face.

CHANDLER

The prodigal returns, eh?

MORRELL

G-good day, Mr. Chandler.

CHANDLER

Good day to you. Well, you seem none the worse for wear.

MORRELL

I d-don't consider myself to be.

CHANDLER

The building seems in good repair. I noticed you attended to that broken rain-spout.

MORRELL

Yes.

CHANDLER

The Alley, I'm happy to say, seems more populous than I expected.

MORRELL

Yes.

CHANDLER

Let's have it out, Morrell, shall we? What are your feelings toward me?

MORRELL

A p-plague is a formidable enemy. It is armed with t-terrors not every man is s-sufficiently fortified to resist. If G-God gave more
(cont.)

CONTINUED

111 CONTINUED

MORRELL (cont.)
 strength to some than to others,
 who am I t-to criticize?

CHANDLER
 Then you're not angry with me?

MORRELL
 No.

Chandler, overjoyed, puts out his hand.

MORRELL (cont.)
 (ignoring it)
 Merely indifferent.

Morrell turns away and enters the church, leaving Chandler to stare at his hand.

112

IN HARROW ALLEY

Ratsey and Betty, having just left the church, are at the bake-shop door and Ratsey, smiling fondly at Betty, is taking the key out of his pocket to open it.

HODGES' VOICE
 (shouting)
 Betty. Betty Buckworth. Where
 are you?

Betty turns and her smile is replaced by an expression of horror.

BETTY
 My God, he's wearing his shroud.

Hodges stands outside his open front door, barefoot and naked but for his shroud. Clutched under his arm is a manuscript. He would appear comical but for the tokens and blotches that pepper his face and neck. Passersby and inhabitants of the Alley shrink from him.

HODGES
 Where are you, Betty?

BETTY
 (calls)
 Here, Doctor. I'm here.

HODGES
 I remind you of your promise. The
 copies of my report are in my bedroom.

CONTINUED

BETTY

For the love of God, Doctor, go
in and lie down and let us take
care of you.

HODGES

No. I'll pass the sickness to
no one else. The reports, Betty.
Promise me you'll send them off.

BETTY

I promise, Doctor.

HODGES

One to Montpellier, my dear mother.
One to Oxford and one to Cambridge.
One to the medical faculty at the
school in Salerno. I forget where
the others go but I've written it
all down. And there's money there,
too, for the posting. Can you hear
me?

BETTY

I hear you.

HODGES

That's all, then, and goodbye to you.
(looking blindly about)
Are there any University men within
hearing? If there are, sing with
me, my brothers. Sing with me for
the last time.

And, staggering toward and through Barnabas Gate, Hodges
lifts a surprisingly true voice, in song.

HODGES

Gaudeamus igitur,
Juvenes dum sumus;
Gaudeamus igitur,
Juvenes dum sumus;
Post Jucundam juventutem,
Post molestant senectutem,
Nos habebit humus,
Nos habebit humus.

Betty covers her face and weeps. Ratsey puts an arm about
her and comforts her.

113 IN THE OPEN FIELD ON THE CITY'S OUTSKIRTS
Hodges has left the highway, with its traffic streaming toward the gate, and cuts across the grass toward the pits.

HODGES

(singing)

Vivat academia,
Vivant professores;
Vivat academia,
Vivant professores;
Vivat membrum quodlibet,
Vivant membra quaelibet,
Semper sint in flore,
Semper sint in flore.

114 AT THE PITS
there are still dead-carts, Bearers and Buriers. They glance at him briefly as Hodges nears, then proceed with their work.

HODGES

Vivat academia,
Vivant professores;
Vivat academia,
Vivant professores...

His strength leaves him and he sinks to his knees at the edge of one of the pits.

HODGES

Vivat membrum quodlibet,
Vivant membra quaelibet...

Clutching his manuscript to him, he topples forward on his face and lies still. And a Burier hurrying past, almost without pausing puts a foot against the body and sends it rolling down out of sight. Field birds rise from the pit, screeching protest, then settle back again to resume eating.

115 IN HARROW ALLEY
just as the field birds fluttered down, so does the snow. Most of the shops are open, now, and the abandoned houses re-occupied. There are Food-Vendors, Customers and 'Prentices and the Alley is much as it was when we first saw it.
Streaming back into the City are the elaborate coaches of the Courtiers, filled with smiling, singing members of the nobility.

CONTINUED

115 CONTINUED

Riding slowly in the opposite direction, toward the Gate, is a highwayman named CAPTAIN BAINES, a middle-aged, lean, self-composed little ferret with shrewd, merry eyes. The eyes, seeing Ratsey clearing snow from in front of the bake-shop open wide.

BAINES

Captain. Captain. Captain
Montessor.

Ratsey vaguely glances about to see who is being addressed and then recollects that was once his name. Recognizing Baines, he smiles with pleasure.

RATSEY

Captain Baines. What a fine surprise.
How are you, mate?

Baines checks his horse and leans down to shake hands.

BAINES

What the hell are you doing with a broom? Never mind. Come across the way and let's have a drink.

RATSEY

Can't, mate, thank you just the same. The wife's shopping and I has to tend to customers.

BAINES

Customers? Wife? What sort of dodge is it?

RATSEY

Well, -

BAINES

All right, all right, it don't matter. Because I has something I knows will interest you much more.

(lowers his voice)

We're going to work together again, mate, I've already made arrangements with the Brotherhood and the finest stretch of road you could hope for is ours, Twombley Hill, no less. I was on my way to visit Captain Fortescue but who needs him for a partner now that I've found you?

CONTINUED

RATSEY

Ah, thanks, mate. There's no one I'd rather go on the pad with more'n you but I'm done with all that.

BAINES

(blinks - then laughs)

For a moment, there, you almost took me in.

RATSEY

No, no, it's the truth. I'm a baker, now, and it suits me.

BAINES

Well, I'll be damned. Captain Montessor. A baker. One of the best ever to stop a coach with a stand-and-deliver. I could weep. What the hell will you get out of it?

RATSEY

Oh, I don't know. Hard to explain.

BAINES

Try it anyway.

RATSEY

Well...Well, this morning a woman comes into the shop with her little girl. She couldn't have been more than two years old. And I says to the little girl, "That's a pretty dress you're wearing, darling." So she puts both hands on the hem and shows off the dress by lifting it above her head so's I could see her belly-button.

BAINES

(after a moment)

Go on, man, go on.

RATSEY

That's all there is.

BAINES

Well, what about it?

CONTINUED

115 CONTINUED

RATSEY

Well, it made me laugh to myself.
Because little girls that age
always shows off their dress in
just that way when you admires it.
It's something I'd forgot.

BAINES

Why the hell should you care to
remember?

RATSEY

Well, I told you. It made me laugh
to myself. In a way I hadn't done
since I was a boy.

BAINES

I still don't understand.

Ratsey shrugs with a half-smile and spreads his hands:
he's done his best and now he gives up. Baines shakes
his head in wonder and pity.

BAINES (cont.)

What a hairy-legged man you once was.
And what a dull one you now is.

RATSEY

I knows. But somehow I don't seem
to mind.

A BOY comes running to Ratsey.

BOY

Mr. Ratsey, sir, the Alderman
wants you and will you come
immediate?

Ratsey nods and the Boy darts back. Ratsey takes a key
from his pocket and locks the front door. Meanwhile:

BAINES

Trafficking with aldermen now, too,
eh?

RATSEY

The parish needs constables so I
serves as such when they needs me.

BAINES

Now, that's the last straw. You
a constable.

CONTINUED

RATSEY

Well, we has to have some rules
if we lives together. And someone
has to see they're followed. Even
the Brotherhood has laws. Different
ones, but still...

BAINES

(holds out his hand)
Goodby, Captain.

RATSEY

(shaking the hand)
Captain, goodby.

Baines lightly spurs his mount and rides slowly toward the Gate. Ratsey heads for Killigrew's.

At Killigrew's shop, Sam is in the doorway writing on a bit of paper he holds against the jamb. As Ratsey joins him:

SAM

I've just had word there's murder
been done in Muttonmonger's Lane.
Two people stabbed to death. The
people in the house have caught
the man and are holding him. You're
to deliver him to Newgate Prison.

RATSEY

I'll need a warrant.

SAM

I'm writing it now. Happen to
know how I'm supposed to fill in
the name when I don't know it?

PROTHERO'S VOICE

In such case, you use the name John
Doe. John Doe or Richard Roe.

Prothero joins Sam and Ratsey. He is shabbily dressed and needs a shave.

SAM

John Doe?

PROTHERO

Here. Let me.

CONTINUED

115 CONTINUED

Prothero takes the pen and paper from Sam and writes out the warrant, then hands it to Ratsey.

PROTHERO (cont.)

There you are.

Ratsey leaves at once.

SAM

Thank you. There's a lot to being Alderman I don't know yet.

PROTHERO

Oh, it takes time. Time or experienced help.

SAM

(making up his mind)

If you're doing nothing at the moment, let's go have a drink and a bit of talk.

PROTHERO

I'm not doing a thing.

Sam and Prothero head for the Pye.

116 IN MUTTONMONGER'S LANE

there is a knot of Curiosity-Seekers standing outside the door of a tenement. Ratsey eases himself through and enters.

117 IN THE TENEMENT

there are Several People on the ground floor landing and on the stairs, all looking up toward the second floor. Ratsey goes up the stairs.

The LANDLORD and Another Man are on guard outside a closed door on the second floor. Ratsey stops before them.

RATSEY

(showing the warrant)

I'm the constable. Is it in there?

LANDLORD

That's right, constable.

The Landlord unlocks the door and swings it open. Ratsey goes in.

CONTINUED

117 CONTINUED

RATSEY
 (to the Landlord -
 as he enters)
 Have a hackney coach brought round
 to the front door.

118 IN THE TENEMENT ROOM

sparsely and meanly furnished, two bodies lie on the floor. One is a Ruffian who used to patronize the Pye. Ratsey turns the other face-up and recognizes Beck. Ratsey's gaze goes to the man staring out the window.

RATSEY
 I arrests you in the name of the
 law.

The man turns to Ratsey. He is dirty and unkempt, sloppily and poorly dressed but recognizable, nevertheless, as Harry Poyntz. Ratsey cannot believe his eyes. Harry remembers him not at all.

HARRY
 I'm ready.

RATSEY
 You? You killed them?

HARRY
 Mm-hmm.

RATSEY
 That you should have been jealous
 of a slut like her.

HARRY
 Jealous? I don't understand. Oh,
 you mean you think I - ? No, no,
 it wasn't that way at all. They
 were continually bickering. I
 told them many times to be quiet.
 They paid no attention. So this
 morning, I took a knife and -
 (shrugs)
 What's the difference? It's
 completely unimportant.

Harry walks out of the room. Ratsey follows.

119 OUTSIDE THE TENEMENT

a hackney coach is waiting. Harry and Ratsey come out of

CONTINUED

119 CONTINUED

the building and get into it.

RATSEY
(to the Coachman)
Newgate Prison.

The coach rolls away. The Curiosity-Seekers watch it for awhile and then disperse.

120 IN THE COACH

Harry sits at his ease, glancing from time to time out the window, humming a snatch of melody occasionally, aimlessly cleaning a fingernail. Ratsey sits beside him, as in a daze.

RATSEY
(after awhile)
You don't remember me, does you?

HARRY
(yawning)
Hmm? No.

RATSEY
We've met before.

HARRY
Tell me about it, if you must,
but I'm quite certain it doesn't
matter.

There is another stretch of silence. Then the coach slows and stops.

121 OUTSIDE THE PRESS YARD

the coach has stopped before the great, iron door. Ratsey gets out and then Harry. Ratsey knocks and the door is opened by a Keeper. Ratsey hands him the warrant and as the Keeper reads it:

RATSEY
(to Harry)
Life is a bloody wonder. If nothing
else, it gives a man something to
think about.

HARRY
Not particularly.

CONTINUED

121 CONTINUED

The Keeper opens the door wider, Harry enters and the door clangs shut. Ratsey gets back into the coach.

RATSEY
(to the Coachman)
Harrow Alley.

The Coachman flicks his whip and the coach starts off.

122 IN THE COACH

Ratsey is still lost in thought. Then he takes a deep, deep breath and, with something like a smile, looks about. The leather of the seat is pleasant to stroke. The itch under his arms is good to scratch. His hands are interesting to observe and the cunning construction of the fingers is fascinating. On an impulse, he reaches out through the window and brings his hand back with snowflakes adhering to it. What symmetry, and no two alike, and how quickly they're just drops of water. He remembers something and grins, shaking his head.

RATSEY
That's a pretty dress you're wearing,
darling.

He chuckles.

123 IN HARROW ALLEY

Betty is sweeping snow from the bake-shop door. Looking up, she happens to notice the coach stopping at Pye corner and Ratsey getting out. She waves to him with a smile.

Ratsey waves to Betty and hands a coin to the Coachman. Behind him, Solomon Eagle is once more in his niche speaking to unheeding passersby. The Coachman gives Ratsey his change.

COACHMAN
Thank you. Fine day, ain't it?

RATSEY
Yes.
(with absolute conviction)
Yes, it is.

Ratsey walks into the Crowd in Harrow Alley and is soon lost to sight.

CONTINUED

123 CONTINUED

In the clock-tower of St. Barnabas church, the wooden figure of Death raises its dart and strikes the hour upon the great bell, on which is inscribed:

DEATH ..
 bong...
 TWEAKS...
 bong...
 US...
 bong...
 BY...
 bong...
 THE...
 bong...
 EAR...
 bong...
 AND...
 bong...
 SAYS...
 bong...
 "LIVE - ...
 bong...
 I...
 bong...
 AM...
 bong...
 COMING"...
 bong.....

FADE OUT

THE END