

CONFIDENTIAL

Year of Wonders

Screenplay by Pip Karmel

Based on the novel by Geraldine Brooks

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1 EXT VILLAGE, MAIN STREET - DAY

1

Shafts of soft light pierce through the clouds, illuminating a remote English village perched tenaciously on a steep hillside.

SUPER TITLE: *Autumn 1666*

A cart-load of apples is hauled through the strangely deserted village. The cart wheels creak over the grassy ruts in the road, its load jolting with each bump.

VOICE OVER (FEMALE)
Leaf-fall used to be the loveliest season. The wood stacked by the door. The hay golden in the low afternoon light. The rumble of the apples tumbling into the cellar bins...

The CART pulls up outside a dignified grey stone rectory, half covered with ivy. In wide-shot a young housemaid goes to meet the cart.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)
That year, the hay stooks were few and the woodpile scant, and neither mattered much to anyone.

CUT TO:

Apples tumble from above into a cellar bin, filling the screen. The MAIN TITLE appears, written by an ink quill...

YEAR OF WONDERS

2 EXT RECTORY GARDEN - MORNING

2

A blaze of intense colour and early light. A country garden bursting with flowers in full bloom. The gentle hum of bees as they greedily suck the morning nectar.

SUPER TITLE: *Spring 1665*

ANNA FRITH, a village girl dressed in humble smock and whisk, timidly pushes open the iron gate and enters the rectory grounds.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)
The winter of the year of our Lord 1665 was the hardest there had been.

ANNA approaches the front entrance. Just nineteen years old, she has a modest, grave beauty about her.

VOICE OVER (CONT'D)

So, in the following spring, when the new rector and his wife came to the village, it was as though God had sent them.

ANNA hesitates at the front door, then knocks and waits. The door is opened by ELINOR MOMPELLION, a young noble woman, luminous and delicate.

VOICE OVER

Later, there were those who would say it had been the Devil...

ANNA curtsies.

ELINOR

Can I help you?

ANNA

Excuse me Ma'am. I heard there was a position...

ELINOR smiles apologetically.

ELINOR

There is indeed a position for a house servant but the widow Frith has been sent for, and besides a stable hand, the rector and I are hardly able to offer...

ANNA

Sam Frith was my husband. Lost in the mine, Ma'am.

ELINOR

(in disbelief)
But you are a child!

ANNA

With two of my own to feed, Ma'am.

ELINOR

...Forgive me. Pray, enter Mistress Frith.

ANNA

Please Ma'am, Anna.

ELINOR regards her warmly.

ELINOR

Anna.

CUT TO:

ELINOR leads ANNA down the hallway and shows her into the parlour.

ELINOR
As you see, it is not a grand house
and I think we shall manage it well,
you and I.

ANNA
Yes Ma'am.

ANNA keeps her head down, not wanting to stare at her surroundings which, by her standards, are grand.

ELINOR
Our stable hand came to us yesterday.
Young William Tyrell. Do you know him?

ANNA
I know the family, Ma'am.

ELINOR can see that conversation won't come easily.

CUT TO:

ELINOR leads ANNA into the rectory kitchen. ANNA glances around briefly. An awkward pause.

ELINOR
Well then. Is there anything you'd
like to ask me?

ANNA
If you please Ma'am, what are my
duties?

ELINOR is taken aback by this question.

ELINOR.
I must confess, I was hoping...you
have house-maided before now?

ANNA
(hesitating)
I serve table at Bradford Hall on
occasion.

ELINOR takes this in.

ELINOR
Forgive me. I fear I have been under a
misapprehension -

ANNA
Pray do not turn me away Ma'am! I am
upright and hard working and you won't
need to watch over me -

ELINOR hesitates. At that moment there is a clatter of gravel from outside as a horse and rider canter into the rectory grounds.

3

EXT RECTORY STABLES - CONTINUOUS

3

MICHAEL MOMPELLION pulls up his fine black stallion ANTEROS. Dancing with energy, the horse's coat is shiny with sweat, its mouth frothing. The charismatic MOMPELLION dismounts. Eleven year old stable hand WILLIAM runs to meet him, taking the horse's reins.

MOMPELLION

See you walk him til he properly cools. He went like the devil this morn.

ELINOR (O.S.)

And his master did not urge him to it?

MOMPELLION turns to see ELINOR and grins mischievously.

MOMPELLION

The fresh wind across the moors may have stirred man as much as beast...

He gallantly presents her with a purple spray of heather. She takes the sprig and presses it to her nose and lips to breathe in its scent.

MOMPELLION notices ANNA standing awkwardly some distance behind ELINOR.

ELINOR

Forgive me husband. May I present Anna Frith. Anna, the Rector Mompellion.

ANNA tries not to stare - this passionate figure in riding gear hardly resembles a village rector. She curtsies shyly.

ANNA

Sir.

MOMPELLION greets ANNA with a disarming smile.

MOMPELLION

Good morning to you Mistress Frith. My wife is fast becoming better acquainted with my flock than I.

ELINOR

Anna is more than a parishioner to us, my dear. I have this day enlisted her services as house maid to the rectory.

She smiles at ANNA. ANNA bows her head in gratitude.

4 INT/EXT RECTORY - VARIOUS - DAY

4

ANNA opens the shutters in ELINOR's bedchamber, sweeps out the fireplace, strips the bed linen and removes the chamber pot from under the bed.

ANNA empties the contents of the chamber pot outside. She pushes the bed linen into a boiling wash cauldron, stirring vigorously with a wooden paddle.

CUT TO:

ANNA cleans the rectory floors diligently, moving down the hallway with her cloth and wash bucket. As she works she passes a door, ajar. She can't help spying MICHAEL MOMPELLION by the window of his bedchamber, in his shirtsleeves, his eyes closed, lost in prayer. ANNA gazes at him. A shaft of filtered light through the shutters delineates his strong features.

MOMPELLION crosses himself and slowly opens his eyes. Panicked he'll catch sight of her, ANNA hurriedly resumes her work.

5 EXT ANNA'S COTTAGE - AFTERNOON

5

ANNA walks up the path to her modest stone cottage. A lively golden-haired three year old boy races to meet her.

JAMIE

Mama, mama!

ANNA sweeps JAMIE up and embraces him tightly. He quickly wriggles from her arms and runs to a stack of firewood.

JAMIE

Look! I'm building a castle for you
and me and Tom to live in! But not
her.

ANNA

Jamie, hush, don't say such things.

6 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - AFTERNOON

6

JANE MARTIN hands a crying baby to ANNA. A girl of fourteen from a Puritan family, JANE is stern in her ways.

JANE

He was fretful this morn.

ANNA takes TOM from her and he calms in his mother's arms. She starts to unbutton her bodice to feed him. JAMIE runs in from outside, excited.

JAMIE
Mama! There's a man coming!

Startled, ANNA looks to JANE, and buttons up her bodice.

CUT TO:

A handsome young GEORGE VICCARS sweeps his hat from his head, averting his eyes respectfully.

VICCARS
Mistress Frith, they told me at the
tavern you might have a room to let.
George Viccars: journeyman tailor, all
the long road from London town.

ANNA stands at the door, a hungry TOM in her arms and JAMIE hanging off her skirts. She regards the stranger warily.

VICCARS
If it please you I can pay sixpence a
week for the attic space in your
eaves.

ANNA
(in awe)
Sixpence?

VICCARS
You won't have to chase me for it. I'm
trustworthy you'll see.

JAMIE ogles VICCARS excitedly. ANNA glances at JANE who scowls with disapproval. She turns back to VICCARS, barely meeting his eyes, and nods.

ANNA
You may fetch your belongings Mr
Viccars.

7 EXT RECTORY GARDEN - DAY

7

ANNA hefts the rectory laundry basket full of fresh dry linen past a crimson stand of blossoming crab apple trees.

ELINOR (O.S.)
Ah, Anna.

ANNA turns to see ELINOR MOMPELLION kneeling in a garden bed, vigorously dead-heading the daisies. ANNA stops and curtsies, shocked to see her delicate mistress on the ground with dirt on her hands.

ANNA
Mrs Mompellion.

ELINOR nods for ANNA to set her basket down.

ELINOR
Your babes. James and..?

ANNA
Jamie and Tom.

ELINOR
You will bring them to see me, won't you?

ANNA
(surprised)
If it please you Ma'am.

ELINOR
It would. Indeed it would.

She nips off the head of a daisy and drops it on the heap. Thinking she is dismissed, ANNA goes to pick up her basket.

ELINOR
Do you know that the tea made from this unassuming little daisy cools a fever?

ANNA shakes her head uncertainly.

ELINOR
Of all the flowers in the garden, I think it is my favorite. That such a humble flower can give healing and flourish despite adversity.

ANNA stands uneasily, staring at the ground.

ELINOR
You know Anna, you'd do well to add some herb lore to your store of knowledge, for you can never be sure when your children's well-being might depend upon it.

ANNA
(fearful)
With respect Ma'am, best you keep that herb knowledge to yourself.

ELINOR
Why ever so?

ANNA
 (hesitant)
 Forgive me...but it is one thing for a
 pastor's wife to have such learning
 and another thing again for a widow
 woman of my sort. It is easy for widow
 to be turned witch in the common mind,
 and the first cause is that she
 meddles in medicinals.

ELINOR watches as ANNA picks up her basket and hurries
 towards the house.

8 INT/EXT ANNA'S COTTAGE - DAY

8

ANNA returns home to the sound of JAMIE's squeals and
 laughter coming from inside.

She enters the cottage to find GEORGE VICCARS on the floor
 on all fours with JAMIE riding on his back and squealing
 with delight. JANE MARTIN is preparing the soup sullenly.

ANNA
 Jamie! Get off poor Mr Viccars!

VICCARS throws his head back and neighs.

VICCARS
 I'm his horse, Mrs Frith, if you've no
 objection. He's a very fine rider, and
 he rarely uses his whip.

ANNA feels JANE MARTIN's disapproval but can't help
 smiling as VICCARS and JAMIE continue to play.

9 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

9

ANNA stirs a pot on the fire while VICCARS dazzles JAMIE
 with a card trick.

ANNA
 Jamie, bid good night to Mr Viccars.

JAMIE's eyes light up as VICCARS gives him the cards to
 take to bed. He runs off.

VICCARS
 He's a fine boy. His father must have
 been proud of him.

ANNA ladles soup into his bowl.

ANNA
 Sam was always that wore out from
 being down the mines...
 (MORE)

ANNA (cont'd)
 (remembering)
 He'd bury his tired face in the
 babies' hair and breathe their fresh
 scent. It was the closest he got to
 the airy hillsides. Down in the mine
 at daybreak, out again after sundown.

VICCARS
 His passing must have come upon you
 hard.

ANNA
 They were four days digging him out.
 And it took another to make him decent
 to bury. I bathed his body with the
 soap he liked because he'd say it
 smelled of the children. Dear Sam. He
 never saw it was the children who
 smelled of the soap.

VICCARS watches ANNA lost in the memory.

VICCARS
 Allow me to compliment you on your
 broth Mistress. Tasted none finer
 across the country.

ANNA smiles, suddenly self-conscious.

10 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - LATER

10

The fire crackles in the hearth, flames dancing. VICCARS
 sits cross-legged, stitching linen while ANNA pats out
 oatcakes. She sneaks glances at him, unable to curb her
 curiosity.

ANNA
 May I ask...how did you find the life
 in London Mr Viccars?

VICCARS
 In truth Mistress, it's a hard place.
 A life for the very young and the very
 rich. Others cannot long thrive there.
 I could not. I longed for space and
 air.

ANNA
 (wryly)
 To be sure, we have those aplenty
 here.

VICCARS
 (smiling)
 If you had travelled abroad as I have
 you would know you're as well where
 you are.

ANNA

I went down to Stoney Middleton once
to fetch my father from a drinking
house...

VICCARS

Ah. And did he thank you for it?

ANNA

My father loves a pot better than he
loves his children.

(changing the subject)

But pray, tell me of your adventures
Mr Viccars.

VICCARS

Ah, my days in London town after the
king sailed home -

ANNA

(wide-eyed)

You're acquainted with the king?

VICCARS

Earned my bread sewing liveries for
his courtiers' servants. The tales I
could recount...

ANNA

Do tell! I pray you.

VICCARS

Well...one night his majesty travelled
in disguise to a whorehouse and while
he was... occupied...had his pockets
thoroughly picked.

ANNA

(paling)

You tease me sir. The king would not
go abroad so.

VICCARS

Would he not? I am reminded of a poem
penned by his favorite, the Earl of
Rochester...

He puts on a foppish sneer and a lordly bray.

VICCARS

I rise at eleven, I dine at two,
I get drunk before seven, and the next
thing I do
I send for my whore when, for fear of
the clap
I come in her hand and I spew in her
lap...

Shocked, ANNA claps her hands against her ears. VICCARS sees he has gone too far.

VICCARS
 Forgive me mistress, I fear I have
 offended you...

Blushing, ANNA busies herself with her oatcakes.

11 EXT RECTORY GARDEN - DAY

11

ANNA serves a morning draught to ELINOR under an arch of purple wisteria. The gentle humming of bees fills the air.

ELINOR
 Is it not a wondrous day?

ANNA
 Yes, Ma'am, it is that.

ELINOR closes the book of prayer on her lap.

ELINOR
 Anna, do you read?

ANNA
 Read? No Ma'am.

ANNA serves ELINOR her glass and turns to go.

ELINOR
 Would you like to learn?

ANNA
 Beg pardon Mrs Mompellion?

ELINOR
 To read. I should be happy to teach
 you your letters.

ANNA takes this in.

ANNA
 Thank you Ma'am, but what would I be
 doing with reading?

12 INT RECTORY KITCHEN - LATER

12

ANNA washes the MOMPELLION's fine porcelain in a tub of soapy water, tracing the intricate patterns on the delicate china.

13

EXT VILLAGE HIGH STREET/ANNA'S COTTAGE - DAY

13

The village high street is bustling with the activity of market day. Outside ANNA'S cottage, VICCARS and the CARTER pull a hefty crate from a cart. VILLAGERS gather to see. JAMIE bobs at VICCARS'S side.

JAMIE

Is there treasure inside? Did you steal it from pirates?

VICCARS

Better lad. It's all the colours of the rainbow sent from London town.

VICCARS throws back the sacking. A RAT jumps out and scurries away, a town dog giving lively chase. VICCARS pulls out a length of fabric, feeling it for damp.

CUT TO:

ANNA returning from market, approaches her cottage and curiously pushes past the crowd of onlookers to get in. She is startled to find JOSS BONT at her hearth, an imposing middle-aged man wide of girth, feeding wood into the fire. His wife, APHRA, a plain woman years younger than her husband, dandles baby TOM on her knee. Her two year old, FAITH, plays by her feet with a rag poppet.

ANNA

Father. Stepmother.
(lifting TOM from APHRA)
Where is Jane Martin?

APHRA

We told her we'd sit with the bairns.
Your father wanted to set eye on your new fancy man.

APHRA goes to JOSS'S side, letting him pull her into a clumsy embrace.

JOSS

Aye, and a dandy he is. Does he bed you well daughter? Or is his pizzle made of cloth too?

JOSS laughs at his own wit.

ANNA

Mr Viccars lodges in the attic and pays for bed and board.

APHRA

(smiles knowingly)
That's not all he gets, I'll warrant.

ANNA
(reddening)
I do not know your meaning Stepmother.

JOSS's smile vanishes.

JOSS
It's no riddle. Tongues will be saying
my daughter's a poxy slut.

VICCARS (O.S.)
Then they will be wrong sir.

ANNA turns to the door where GEORGE VICCARS now stands,
holding JAMIE by the hand.

VICCARS
And if you object to your daughter
gaining what income she may by
offering board to a respectable
lodger, I suggest you consider
providing for her and her orphaned
children from your own purse.

APHRA gasps. JOSS reddens. ANNA braces herself for JOSS to
explode. But his face crinkles into a broad grin.

JOSS
Is it *respektabul* you are sir?! Then
you'll kindly be keeping your yard in
your trousers, or I'll be asking a
respektabul sum for her hand by God!

He belly laughs as he makes for the door. APHRA scoops
FAITH into her arms and follows her husband out, giving
VICCARS an appraising look-over as she passes.

ANNA meets VICCARS's eyes with a mixture of gratitude and
shame.

14 EXT ANNA'S COTTAGE - DAY

14

Colourful sails blow in the breeze as VICCARS slings his
fabric out to air on lines set up in the yard.

JAMIE and little EDWARD HADFIELD charge up and down between
the flapping fabrics, pretending to be knights at a joust.
They wield long sticks in their hands, and ride another as
their steeds.

JAMIE
Charge!

JAMIE gets caught up in the fabric and falls dramatically
to the ground. ANNA stands in the doorway, TOM in her arms.

ANNA
 Jamie! I'll not have you soiling Mr
 Viccars' fine cloth! Edward Hadfield,
 be off home with you!

EDWARD darts away through a gap in the hedge. JAMIE takes no heed and resumes the game. VICCARS tousles JAMIE's hair and smiles good humouredly at ANNA. Their eyes connect for a moment before he turns back to his work.

15

EXT RECTORY LIBRARY - DAY

15

ANNA pushes open the library door with her work basket, but stops when she sees MICHAEL MOMPELLION at his desk. He looks up from his writing.

ANNA
 Beg pardon, Sir.

She curtsies and turns to leave.

MOMPELLION
 Wait. What is your work?

ANNA
 (keeping her eyes down)
 Mrs Mompellion bade me polish the
 bookcase and rub beeswax into the
 leather volumes.

MOMPELLION
 Then do as she bids. A little beeswax
 will not rob me of my inspiration.

He goes back to his work. ANNA hesitates, then enters quietly and sets her basket down.

She slides a book from the bookcase and nervously starts to rub wax into its binding. The only sounds in the room are ANNA's hushed polishing, and the scratching of MOMPELLION's quill on paper.

MOMPELLION glances across at ANNA and regards her, amused by the pains she is taking not to make a sound.

MOMPELLION
 Tell me, Anna. Do you feel his
 presence?

Startled, ANNA dare not look up.

ANNA
 Sir?

MOMPELLION
 Do you sense God is with you?

ANNA
...yes sir.

MOMPELLION
When? Where is it you find him?

ANNA
(uncertain)
...in church sir?

MOMPELLION
Ah. You've seen him there? In the pews
or floating above the pulpit?

ANNA fears she is being tested.

ANNA
(flustered)
Yes sir...no sir, not seen him -

MOMPELLION sets his quill down.

MOMPELLION
Do you know where I see God?

ANNA shakes her head mutely.

MOMPELLION
I see him in a man helping his
neighbour thatch his roof, in the
ripening of an apple on its branch, or
the birthing of a child...

ANNA's eyes light up.

ANNA
When my baby Tom smiles at me after a
feed, his eyes are brimming with God's
goodness! They're so wide and blue,
you could fair fall into them.

MOMPELLION is struck by this, responding with a hint of
wistfulness.

MOMPELLION
Ah, then you are fortunate Anna. For
you have indeed seen God.

ANNA forgets herself and meets his eyes - for a moment.
MOMPELLION returns to his writing. ANNA gets back to her
polishing, her thoughts tumbling over each other.

ANNA is met at the door by an impatient JANE MARTIN.

ANNA
Forgive me for tarrying Jane.

JANE
I must make haste to me Mam's to help
make ready.

ANNA
Make ready?

JANE
For Sarah's hand-fasting on the
morrow.

ANNA
(remembering)
Soon it will be your turn to wed.

JANE shakes her head as she pulls her cloak on.

JANE
With six sisters and three to go,
there'll be precious little left in
the coffers to fetch me a husband,
good or bad.

17 INT ANNA'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

17

ANNA climbs the stairs and checks on JAMIE and TOM. They are fast asleep, their pale curls spread out on the pillow. She gently kisses their foreheads, then notices something lying on her pallet. Slowly she unfolds a beautiful green wool dress, trimmed with lace.

Overcome, she holds the soft gown against her, trying to catch a glimpse of herself in the window pane.

In the reflection she sees GEORGE VICCARS standing in the doorway. ANNA drops the dress, embarrassed to be caught admiring herself. VICCARS smiles and averts his gaze.

VICCARS
Forgive me, but I thought of you
directly I sighted that cloth, for the
green is exactly the colour of your
eyes.

ANNA
(blushing)
Good sir, you are kind, but I cannot
accept this from you. I fear that we
approach too near to terms of
friendship -

VICCARS
- I would we may.

He sees in her eyes that there is hope for his affections. He takes a step towards her, then puts his hand out to the wall to steady himself, as if tipsy. Disconcerted, ANNA steps back. He rubs his brow.

VICCARS

Have the dress in any wise. For I mean only to thank you for keeping a comfortable house and welcoming a stranger.

ANNA

...I cannot think it right.

She folds the gown and holds it out to him.

VICCARS

Will you not at least try it upon yourself? For if you mayn't accept this gift, at least you will have rewarded my pains by letting me see how I have done.

ANNA hesitates.

18 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - NIGHT 18

Downstairs, VICCARS warms his hands at the hearth.

19 INT ANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT 19

ANNA unties her whisk and shrugs off her rough sombre smock, revealing the dirty garments she wears underneath. She slips them off, aware of her own nakedness. She closes her eyes and runs her fingers down her body - recalling the touch of a man.

20 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - NIGHT 20

VICCARS hears ANNA's tread on the stair and turns to see her wearing the green dress. His face brightens in appreciation. ANNA twirls shyly, making the skirt swirl around her. VICCARS holds his hands wide.

VICCARS

Mistress, I would make you a dozen such gowns to display your beauty.

ANNA blushes. VICCARS's smile turns serious.

VICCARS

I would you might think me worthy to provide for you in all matters.

He steps towards her and places his hands on her waist, drawing her to him.

VICCARS

Anna. Say you will have me.

He kisses her tenderly. ANNA gives into the kiss, then pulls back.

ANNA

Sir you are fevered!

She lays a hand on his forehead. He rubs his temples.

VICCARS

It is true. All this day I have felt a
grudging of ague, and now I feel a
most dreadful ache probing at my
bones.

ANNA

(gently)

Get you to your bed. I will give you a
cooling draught to take up with you.

He nods reluctantly, seeing the sense in her words. He turns in the doorway, meeting her eyes.

VICCARS

We will speak again of these things on
the morrow, when I am restored.

21 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

21

JAMIE and TOM sleep soundly while ANNA lies on her pallet, restless after her encounter with GEORGE VICCARS. She lies there in the moonlight, tracing her fingers over the fine lace trim on the dress he crafted for her.

Hidden in the rafters above her, a family of RATS rustle and squeak in their nest.

22 INT RECTORY KITCHEN - DAY

22

ANNA sands the pewter kitchenware, singing as she works. ELINOR passes the doorway, then stops.

ELINOR

Why, Anna, what a sweet voice you
have.

ANNA

(blushing)

Thank you Mrs Mompellion.

ELINOR
Why did I not remark on it during
Sunday service do you think?

ANNA
I don't know Ma'am...

ELINOR
Is it not the Lord's praises you are
singing this day?

ELINOR smiles. Embarrassed, ANNA busies herself.

23

INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - DAY

23

ANNA arrives home to find JANE distracting a restless TOM
with a finger of arrowroot and water, and a subdued JAMIE
playing alone by the hearth.

TOM cries for her and she sets him to her breast.

ANNA
How did Mr Viccars seem this morning?

JANE
I have not seen him.

ANNA
(concerned)
He has not come down?

JAMIE
He a bed, Mummy. I goed up to find him
but he yelled "Go 'way".

24

INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - DAY

24

ANNA climbs up to the attic with a pitcher of water and
some bread. At the foot of the attic ladder she hears moans
coming from inside. She opens the hatch into the low-
ceilinged space and nearly drops the pitcher in shock.

VICCARS is lying deathly on his pallet, his hair dark with
sweat, his face flushed. ANNA flinches at the smell in the
room.

VICCARS
Please, water.

ANNA drops to his side. He drinks thirstily.

VICCARS
Thank you. And now I pray you be gone
from here lest this foul contagion
touch you.

ANNA

I must see you comfortable.

ANNA reaches for a pillow and blanket.

VICCARS

Mistress, none may do that now except the priest. Pray fetch him, if he will dare to come to me.

ANNA

Say not so! This fever will break, and you will be well.

VICCARS

Nay, I know the signs of this wretched illness. Just get you gone from here, for the love of your babes.

ANNA tries to lift him to place the pillow under his head. VICCARS lets out a piteous cry.

VICCARS

For the love of God. Get thee gone from here!

25 EXT/INT CHURCH - DAY

25

ANNA runs to the church, finding MICHAEL MOMPELLION at the top of a ladder in his shirtsleeves, patching the ceiling while young WILLIAM TYRELL sweeps the stone floor.

ANNA

Sir -

MOMPELLION turns and notices ANNA's state of distress. He starts to climb down.

MOMPELLION

Anna, whatever is amiss?

ANNA

Sir, it is Mr Viccars, my lodger...

MOMPELLION jumps to the ground, and sees her terror.

MOMPELLION

William, my horse.

26 EXT VILLAGE ROAD - DAY

26

ANNA holds on tight behind MOMPELLION as they ride at speed towards her cottage.

27 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

27

MOMPELLION kneels at GEORGE VICCARS's bedside as the delirious man curses and cries out in pain. ANNA watches in terror as she rinses cold compresses. Showing no fear of VICCARS's ghastly condition, MOMPELLION tends him selflessly.

28 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - DAWN

28

VICCARS is resting fitfully, his breath uneven and shallow. ANNA arrives beside MOMPELLION with a fresh compress but he shakes his head.

MOMPELLION

I fear the fight for his body will soon be lost. We must look to his soul now Anna, and pray that God will be merciful.

VICCARS cries out. ANNA dribbles water on his lips. He opens his eyes and looks to her in anguished thanks.

VICCARS

(whispers)

Burn everything. Burn it all. For the love of God. Say you will!

ANNA sees the urgency in his eyes, and nods. Then he dies, clutching the bedsheet. In shock, ANNA untangles his hands and folds them onto his chest. MOMPELLION lays his own hand on top of them and prays.

MOMPELLION

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

ANNA

(whispers)

Amen.

MOMPELLION turns to ANNA, regarding her.

MOMPELLION

You stayed by this man's bed when many wouldn't.

ANNA nods mutely.

MOMPELLION

I believe George Viccars passed his last weeks happily here, Anna. Try to console yourself that he didn't die amongst uncaring strangers, but in the love and warmth of your small family.

ANNA smiles bravely, concealing her loss.

29 INT ANNA'S ATTIC - MORNING 29

ANNA drops to her hands and knees and starts to clean the floor around VICCARS's empty pallet. She starts scrubbing hard, then harder and faster, blinded by her anger. She stops suddenly, breathing hard and biting back her tears.

She hears a rapping on the door below.

30 INT/EXT ANNA'S COTTAGE - DAY 30

ANNA opens the door, surprised to find CARYS GOWDIE, a striking woman with gold hair and amber eyes.

CARYS
Morning Anna.

ANNA
Carys.

CARYS
Would you kindly tell Mr Viccars I
have come to collect my garment?

31 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - DAY 31

CARYS's face clouds over at ANNA's news.

CARYS
Why did you not call on me, instead of
Mompellion? A good infusion would have
served George better than the empty
mutterings of a fancy priest.

ANNA baulks at CARYS's blasphemy. She busies herself by rummaging through MR VICCARS's work basket.

ANNA
I'm afraid I cannot see...

CARYS leans past her and goes through the fabrics.

CARYS
It is done all but the hem. George was
to make the final stitches with me in
it this morning.

ANNA reacts to CARYS's familiar language.

ANNA
I did not know you were acquainted
with Mr Viccars...

CARYS turns with a flourish, holding a dress up in front of her. ANNA stares at it, shocked. It is vivid scarlet and the neckline is cut daringly low.

ANNA

Mr Viccars told me to burn his work
for fear of spreading his contagion...

CARYS

You shall do no such thing! He
would've wanted me to have it.

She gathers up the dress and sweeps out of the cottage, passing two VILLAGE WOMEN on their way in.

They go straight to the work basket and start rifling through it. ANNA is too perturbed by CARYS's visit to protest.

32 EXT ANNA'S COTTAGE - DAY

32

Flames lick at VICCARS's empty work basket. ANNA throws his clothes and soiled bedding onto the fire. She hesitates, then tosses the dress he made for her on the fire.

33 EXT GOWDIE COTTAGE - DAY

33

ANNA approaches a ramshackle, crooked cottage on the edge of the town. She knocks on the door.

She goes to the back of the house where a stone wall protects a maze of edged garden beds full of herbs. CARYS GOWDIE is digging at the roots of a tall plant covered with blue flowers. She sees ANNA and rises, wiping the soil from her hands. ANNA nods at the plant.

ANNA

It is pretty.

CARYS

Eat a small piece of its root and you
will be dead by nightfall.

ANNA

(shrinking back)
Why do you grow it then?

CARYS

Not to serve you for supper! The wort,
ground and mixed with oils makes a rub
for aching joints, and we will have
many of those in this village as the
winter hardens. But I do not think you
came here to admire my flowers.

34

INT GOWDIE COTTAGE - DAY

34

Inside the cottage, the low-beamed ceiling is hung with bunches of drying herbs. CARYS shoos a cat off a rickety chair and hands ANNA a mug of strong-smelling brew. ANNA regards the drink uneasily.

CARYS

Nettle beer. It will strengthen your blood.

ANNA puts the mug to her lips hesitantly.

CARYS

And so I suppose you need to know whether I lay with George Viccars.

ANNA nearly spills her drink.

CARYS

Of course I did. He was too young and handsome to have to slake his fires with his fist.

ANNA is shocked. CARYS laughs.

CARYS

Drink up. It was naught more to either of us than a meal to a hungry traveller.

She leans forward to stir some leaves steeping in a big black kettle near the fire.

CARYS

His intentions to you were otherwise, set your mind easy. He wanted you to wife, and I told him he'd do well with you, if he could talk you round to it. I told him your boys were his best chance to win you.

ANNA takes this in, disconcerted.

ANNA

But why, if you were on such terms, did you not marry him yourself?

CARYS smiles, as if at a child.

CARYS

I'm not made to be any man's chattel. I have my freedom and I will not lightly surrender it. And besides...

She shoots ANNA a sly sideways glance from under her lashes.

CARYS

...sometimes a woman needs a draught of nettle beer to wake her up, and sometimes she needs a dish of valerian tea to calm her down. Why cultivate a garden with only one plant in it?

ANNA reddens, hurt and confusion rising up in her.

ANNA

Have you no shame?

She sets her mug down and hastily pushes her seat away.

CARYS watches ANNA flee.

35 EXT HANCOCK FARM - DAY

35

ANNA hurries away from the Gowdie cottage, passing the Hancock farm where men are scything wheat while their womenfolk follow behind, tying sheaves. The afternoon sun bathes the field in golden yellow light. LIB HANCOCK, straightening up to ease her back, sees ANNA and waves.

36 EXT WHEAT FIELDS - DAY

36

LIB and ANNA walk together along the edge of the fields. LIB takes a swig from a flask and offers it to ANNA.

LIB

A sorry business about your lodger. He seemed a good man.

ANNA

He was uncommonly kind to my boys.

LIB

I believe my mother-in-law had him in mind for Nell.

ANNA

(wryly)

Was any woman in this village not considering the bedding of that man?

LIB

Anna, you didn't?!

ANNA smiles, a little guiltily.

ANNA

I confess George Viccars may have kindled in me the hunger to feel a man upon me again. But, no, it is not I who has his seed on her mattress...

LIB can tell she is holding something back.

LIB

Who?! Tell me! Who was the tailor pricking?!

ANNA hesitates.

LIB

Anna! Say it!

ANNA

...Carys Gowdie.

LIB's eyes widen. ANNA realizes she has said too much.

ANNA

I'd best make haste to Bradford Hall. Master Henry's up from London.

LIB grimaces at his name.

LIB

Careful or you'll be the next one pricked!

ANNA hesitates as they part at the edge of the field.

ANNA

Lib, mind you do not prate this news all around your house this night.

LIB

(laughing)
The only mating fit for remark at the Hancock table is when the tups get put to the ewes!

37 EXT BRADFORD HALL - DUSK

37

Fine horses and carriages sweep into the grand driveway of BRADFORD HALL, an imposing mansion.

38 INT BRADFORD KITCHEN - DUSK

38

ANNA enters the bustling kitchen, reaches for her apron, and greets MAGGIE CANTWELL, the Bradford's rotund and kindly cook.

MAGGIE
Anna, m'love. 'ere.

She pushes a plate and a mug of ale towards her. ANNA ogles the off-cuts of meat and vegetables.

MAGGIE
Go on, you're nursing a bairn. Do the Colonel good to put food in a babe's belly instead of 'is own.

ANNA tucks into the dinner gratefully.

39

INT BRADFORD DINING ROOM - NIGHT

39

The high ceilinged dining room is furnished exquisitely, an elaborate dinner table laid for twelve. The hosts are COLONEL and MRS BRADFORD, their spoiled daughter ELIZABETH and dissolute son HENRY. The guests include MICHAEL and ELINOR MOMPELLION and a party of six from London.

ANNA serves soup, remaining as invisible as she can in these sumptuous surroundings.

LONDON GENTLEMAN #1
May I compliment you on the adornments
at your table Colonel. I had no idea
young Henry was harbouring such
dazzling jewels at Bradford Hall.

The wigged and powdered GENTLEMAN gallantly kisses MRS BRADFORD's hand. She is a vapid beauty, much taken by his flattery.

COLONEL BRADFORD
I can take credit for two of the
beauties sir, but I'm afraid Rector
Mompellion must answer for the third.

ELINOR, looking radiant in a cream silk gown, sits on the left of COLONEL BRADFORD. MRS BRADFORD turns to her neighbor.

MRS BRADFORD
Mrs Mompellion is none other than the
daughter of the Lord Dancy of
Ashbourne.

The GENTLEMAN is impressed. MOMPELLION nods.

MOMPELLION
And my hope is that one day I will be
worthy of her.

ELINOR
 (smiling modestly)
 You know it is I who must deserve you,
 husband. Titles mean little in the
 eyes of God.

COLONEL BRADFORD
 What's this?! Titles meaningless eh?
 First I've heard of it!

ANNA sees MICHAEL and ELINOR meet each other's eyes across
 the table, with the intense complicity of young lovers.

As ANNA ladles HENRY BRADFORD's soup, his hand squeezes her
 through her smock. ANNA tenses, but doesn't spill a drop.

The GENTLEMAN seated next to ELINOR turns to her.

LONDON GENTLEMAN #2
 Tell me Mrs Mompellion, how are you
 finding life in a village parish?

ANNA dips between the two of them to serve ELINOR her soup.
 ELINOR places a hand lightly on the forearm of the
 GENTLEMAN, interrupting their conversation, and turns to
 ANNA with a grave smile.

ELINOR
 I hope you are feeling quite well
 after your dreadful night, Anna.

At the sight of ELINOR addressing a servant, ELIZABETH
 BRADFORD's butter knife drops to her plate. ANNA keeps her
 eyes down.

ANNA
 Quite. Thank you, ma'am.

She moves down the table. MOMPELLION sees MISS BRADFORD's
 outrage at ANNA and is quick to divert her attention.

MOMPELLION
 Miss Bradford, if you intend riding
 tomorrow it would be a privilege to
 accompany you. Has your mare mended
 from her sprain?

ELIZABETH turns to MOMPELLION, quickly replacing her sour
 expression with a smile of honey.

MISS BRADFORD
 Yes...thank you rector. How kind of
 you to enquire...

40

INT BRADFORD DINING ROOM - LATER

40

ANNA enters with dessert. The silver candelabra have been lit and HENRY BRADFORD is holding forth.

HENRY

You have never seen anything like it on the roads. Men on horseback, wagons, and carts bulging with baggage. Everyone capable of leaving the city is doing so.

MOMPELLION

But surely steps are being taken to contain it?

GENTLEMAN #1

Indeed so Rector. You can hear the screams of the dying locked up in the houses marked with the red crosses.

ELINOR

Oh how terrible!

ELIZABETH BRADFORD

I've heard talk that the king plans to remove his court to Oxford?

HENRY

The city is emptying so fast that there is little worthwhile society to be had. One rarely sees a wigg'd gallant or a powdered lady, for wealth and connection are no shield against the Plague.

There are gasps around the table at the word. MRS BRADFORD raises a hand to her brow, feigning faintness. ANNA clutches the platter she has in her hands, trying to hold it steady.

COLONEL BRADFORD

Come now gentlemen! Do not alarm the ladies. The next thing they will be shunning your company for fear of contagion!

HENRY

Do not jest Father, for on the turnpike north of London, we encountered an angry mob, brandishing hoes and pitchforks, denying entry to their village inn to any who were travelling from London. Before long, to be a Londoner will not be a credential worth owning to.

COLONEL BRADFORD
Well, good thing you got out, eh?!

MOMPELLION's voice cuts through the murmurs of agreement.

MOMPELLION
If God saw fit to send this scourge, I believe it would be his will that one face it where one was, with courage, and thus contain its evil.

GENTLEMAN #2
Very bravely stated, rector. But I must tell you that those who know this disease best - and that would be the physicians and the barber surgeons - have been the fleetest of foot in leaving town.

HENRY
And do you know who were the fastest to follow the physicians out of the city, sir? Why, it were the Anglican ministers, just such as yourself. There's many a London pulpit being filled by a nonconformist on account of it.

All eyes await MOMPELLION's reaction. He pauses.

MOMPELLION
If that be the case, then I will say my brothers in faith are the lesser men. And I am sorry for it.

COLONEL BRADFORD tries to lighten the mood.

COLONEL BRADFORD
Come now, we don't need to dwell on such dismal topics this far from town. Clean air up here, no putrid fevers.

ANNA sees the MOMPELLIONS exchange looks.

41 EXT COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT 41

The briars catch at ANNA's skirt as she runs home in the moonlight, desperate to reach her cottage.

42 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - NIGHT 42

ANNA throws off her cloak and runs up the stairs as JANE MARTIN stirs from her fireside slumber.

ANNA reaches her two sleeping infants. JAMIE lies with his arm around his little brother, both breathing evenly. ANNA almost sobs with relief.

43

EXT COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

43

A perfect day. Clear skies and sunshine. ANNA has TOM wrapped in a sling at her breast. She herds a small flock of black-faced sheep into a pasture. JAMIE has a stick too, and he runs around shooing the sheep, scattering them in all directions. The lambs bleat in confusion. ANNA laughs.

ANNA

You're confounding us all, master shepherd!

JAMIE runs to a fallen branch and points to a line of vivid orange fungus growing along it.

JAMIE

Mama, look, what's this?

ANNA leans down and studies it.

ANNA

Ah, that is the stairway to a faery's bower.

JAMIE's eyes widen with delight. ANNA picks up an acorn cap.

ANNA

And look, here is a cup left behind by a party of feasting wood mice.

JAMIE

A cup! Can we keep it Mama?! Would the mice be very cross?

As ANNA smiles and drops the acorn into her pocket she is distracted by the sound of bleating. She finds one of her ewes, lying under a tree, her tongue out and straining.

ANNA unslings TOM and lays him on a patch of clover. JAMIE watches as ANNA slides her hands inside the ewe.

JAMIE

I help Mummy?

ANNA

Come on then, help me pull.

She sits JAMIE in front of her and guides his hands.

ANNA

Can you find his knees?

JAMIE nods. ANNA braces against the ewe and pulls the front hoofs of the lamb. They both pull and strain. Suddenly a bundle of wet wool slides out and ANNA and JAMIE fall backwards on the grass.

The ewe sets straight to work cleaning her lamb's face. The lamb sneezes. ANNA and JAMIE laugh.

44 EXT STREAM - DAY

44

ANNA and JAMIE wash themselves in the clear stream. ANNA strips JAMIE's clothes off, takes off her pinafore and rinses them.

45 EXT STREAM - LATER

45

Their wet clothes hang over a bush to dry in the sunshine. JAMIE wades in the water while ANNA sits on a flat rock with her toes in the water, nursing TOM. She has unpinned her whisk, untied her cap, pulled off her hose and tucked up her skirt.

ANNA gazes at JAMIE as he chases dragonflies. One lights on a branch near ANNA's hand. The glassy panes of its wings catch the light in rainbow colours. ANNA touches the twig and the insect takes off. She leans back against the bank and closes her eyes while TOM feeds.

As she dozes, she is disturbed by the sound of twigs snapping and the tread of heavy boots. She opens her eyes to see MICHAEL MOMPELLION coming through the trees, an open book in his hands. He glances up from his reading and sees ANNA. She jumps up, fumbling at her bodice. TOM starts howling.

MOMPELLION raises his hand and smiles.

MOMPELLION

He is right to protest my intrusion.
I'm sorry to have startled you, but I
was so lost in my reading, and in the
loveliness of this day, that I was not
aware there was anyone else in the
copse.

To ANNA's astonishment, MOMPELLION sits down on a nearby rock and pulls his boots off. He reaches down into the water, cups his hands and splashes water onto his face, then runs his fingers through his thick, black hair. He lifts his face up to the dappled sunlight and closes his eyes.

MOMPELLION

Sometimes I wonder why we shut
ourselves up in churches.
(MORE)

MOMPELLION (cont'd)
 What can man make, after all, that
 evokes the divine as well as a place
 such as this?

TOM starts to cry again, squirming in ANNA's arms.
 MOMPELLION reaches out and takes him from her. He holds TOM
 up against his shoulder, patting him gently with his large
 hands. TOM lets out a wet belch. MOMPELLION grins.

MOMPELLION
 I learned from caring for my sisters
 that one who is neither mother nor wet
 nurse must hold a babe so, upright, so
 that it ceases to search for the teat.

ANNA blushes to hear him speak like this. He smiles.

MOMPELLION
 You must not think that a minister's
 life is lived entirely among lofty
 words spoken from high pulpits. We all
 begin as naked children, playing in
 the mud.

Downstream JAMIE is engrossed in building a stick dam
 across the stream. MOMPELLION hands TOM back to ANNA, their
 hands briefly touching as he does so. Then he stands and
 makes his way towards JAMIE. Halfway there, he slips on a
 mossy stone and has to fan his arms in crazy circles to
 regain his balance. JAMIE jumps up in the water and laughs
 wildly. MOMPELLION splashes towards JAMIE then grabs him
 playfully and tosses him high into the air.

ANNA can't help laughing as she watches MICHAEL MOMPELLION
 at play with her son. Then she catches herself - for she
 has been admiring him, not as a man of God, but as a man.

46 EXT COUNTRY LANE - DAY

46

On their way home, TOM sleeps soundly in his sling and
 JAMIE darts off from the path, picking the late-blooming
 dog roses.

47 EXT ANNA'S COTTAGE - DUSK

47

On arrival at the cottage, JAMIE stops ANNA.

JAMIE
 Wait here Mama. Close your eyes.

He scampers inside. The upstairs casement creaks open.

JAMIE
 Now, Mama. Look up!

ANNA opens her eyes and looks up into a shower of rose petals. Laughing, she pulls off her cap and lets them land in the tangles of her hair. TOM gurgles and smiles, his fists batting at the fluttering pink and yellow petals. JAMIE leans out of the window, shaking the last blooms from his smock.

ANNA smiles up at him, full of joy.

Then, the piercing sound of pigs squealing...

48

EXT HADFIELD FARM - DAY

48

...as a hog has its throat cut. Reveal ALEXANDER HADFIELD and his son JONATHAN slaughtering and butchering their hogs while MARY HADFIELD and ANNA render the fat and wash the guts for sausage casing.

Little EDWARD HADFIELD and JAMIE play chasings around the yard and behind the woodpile.

MARY stokes the fire under a boiling cauldron. She calls to the boys.

MARY

Where's that bavin for the fire?

But the boys have disappeared behind the woodpile. She wipes her hands on her apron.

MARY

What mischief're they devising now?

ANNA looks up to see MARY returning from behind the woodpile, dragging EDWARD by the ear with one hand, and in the other hand dangling a dead RAT by the tail. JAMIE follows behind sheepishly, dangling another lifeless rat.

MARY

Can you believe it? The two of them were playing with these loathsome pests as if they were poppets. The woodpile's full of them. All dead, thanks be for small mercies.

MARY flings the rat onto the fire, and at her prompting, JAMIE reluctantly does the same.

49

EXT/INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - DAY

49

Outside it is grey and misty. Inside, JAMIE and TOM are itching terribly from flea bites. ANNA is at the hearth burning their bedstraw.

ANNA

Try not to scratch so. I will go to
Carys Gowdie for a balm for your
bites.

JAMIE

Why aren't you scratchy Mama?

ANNA

Because fleas find little boys
flavoursome. Mummies aren't to their
liking. We taste like vinegar.

JAMIE laughs before resuming scratching.

50

EXT HIGH STREET - DAY

50

ANNA hurries along the high street but stops when she sees
the cloaked figure coming toward her is CARYS GOWDIE with
her bag of medicines. ANNA greets her uneasily.

ANNA

Carys...

CARYS

You'll be wanting a balm for the
fleabites.

ANNA nods, a little disconcerted. CARYS hands her a jar and
continues on her way.

CARYS

I can't stop. Young Edward Hadfield is
burning up with fever.

ANNA

(concerned)
Edward? Is it grave?

ANNA hurries after CARYS, lengthening her stride to keep
up.

51

EXT HADFIELD FARM - DAY

51

ANNA and CARYS arrive at the HADFIELDS where a fine horse
is tethered to the post. MARY HADFIELD meets them at the
door, flustered and embarrassed.

MARY

Thank you indeed for coming, Carys,
but Mr Hadfield sent to Bakewell for
the barber-surgeon, and he is with
Edward now. Mr Hadfield said we must
not stint on our Edward's wellbeing.

CARYS steps back without a word. ANNA turns to her friend MARY who ushers her inside.

52 INT HADFIELD FARMHOUSE - DAY

52

ANNA enters the darkened room and flinches at what she sees. Young EDWARD, in feverish delirium, is lying naked on a bench, covered in squirming leeches.

The SURGEON speaks with ALEXANDER HADFIELD who is holding EDWARD's shoulders.

SURGEON

He is a small child, so we need not
draw overmuch to restore the balance
of his humours. Vinegar!

MARY rushes forward with a flask. The SURGEON pours vinegar onto the leeches and pulls them off the boy, a spurt of bright blood following each one. Then he applies linen scraps to each wound and drops the leeches into a cup of water.

SURGEON

If the child is not improved by
nightfall, you must purge and fast
him. I will give you a receipt for a
tincture that will open his bowels.

53 EXT HADFIELD FARM - DAY

53

The BARBER SURGEON is strapping his bag onto his horse when ANNA approaches him.

ANNA

If you please sir...his fever... could
it be Plague?

The SURGEON waves a glove dismissively.

SURGEON

The Plague, by God's grace, has not
been in our shire these score years.
And the child has no Plague tokens on
his body. It is a putrid fever merely,
and if the parents follow my
instructions, he will live.

He mounts his horse.

ANNA

But sir, if there has been no Plague here these twenty years, then perhaps you have seen no cases against which to rightly judge the child's condition?

The SURGEON wheels his horse so that a clod of mud splatters ANNA's skirt.

SURGEON

Ignorant wench! Are you saying I don't know my profession?

He flicks the reins and urges the horse on, but ANNA grasps the bridle.

ANNA

Are lumps at the neck and rosy rings on the body not Plague tokens?

The SURGEON pulls up sharply and looks at ANNA.

SURGEON

Where have you seen these things?

ANNA

On the body of my lodger, buried at last full-moon.

SURGEON

And you bide near the Hadfields?

ANNA

The next door.

At this, he crosses himself.

SURGEON

Then God save you and this village.
And tell your neighbours to call upon me no more.

He kicks his horse and gallops away down the road.

MOMPELLION (O.S.)

I am the resurrection and the life,
saith the Lord...

Close up on a stone inscription which reads: EDWARD HADFIELD, IN GOD'S ARMS, AGED 5.

MOMPELLION (O.S.)
 ...he that believeth in me, though he
 were dead, yet shall he live...

Reveal another headstone: JONATHAN HADFIELD, BELOVED SON...
 and then to the coffin of ALEXANDER HADFIELD being lowered
 into its grave.

MOMPELLION
 ...and whosoever liveth and believeth
 in me shall never die.

ANNA watches as ELINOR places a comforting arm around a
 sobbing MARY HADFIELD. Out of the corner of her eye, she
 sees a RAT running along a grave and disappearing into the
 hedge.

55 INT RECTORY - DAY

55

ANNA is on the stairwell polishing the bannisters when she
 hears urgent voices coming from the library.

MOMPELLION (O.S.)
 I beg of you, before it is too late.

ELINOR (O.S.)
 Husband, you know I will do your
 bidding in anything...

CUT TO:

ELINOR
 ...anything...but this.

MOMPELLION strides to his desk and reaches for paper.

MOMPELLION
 You must go to your father.

ELINOR intercepts him.

ELINOR
 And risk carrying contagion to his
 house? You said yourself if all who
 have the means run from this disease,
 then its seeds will be sown far and
 wide throughout the land. No. My place
 is here with you. I mean to do my duty
 and nothing will prevent me.

MOMPELLION drops his quill in frustration.

MOMPELLION
 I will not lose you to this.

He turns away. ELINOR reaches out to him.

ELINOR

My love, this is my chance, do you not see? Let God test me. Please my darling, for I fear I weaken...

She leans up to him, touches his cheek then presses her lips against his, pleading and desirous. MOMPELLION relents for a moment, then suddenly his face hardens and he turns away from her, as if he cannot bear her touch.

CUT TO:

ANNA on the stairs. She has witnessed the scene and is left wondering.

56 EXT RECTORY - LATER

56

ANNA exits the kitchen to empty a pail of dirty dishwater. She stops in her tracks when she sees JANE MARTIN arriving through the rectory gates with TOM in her arms.

One glance at her sickly babe and ANNA drops the pail on the ground - her world draining from her.

57 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - DAY

57

ANNA tries to get TOM to feed but he lies limp and whimpering in her arms. She caresses his face.

ANNA

Stay with me my Tom, please...

A tear runs down her cheek.

APHRA (O.S.)

Anna, you are lost.

ANNA looks up to see her young stepmother standing in the doorway.

APHRA

Why do you let yourself feel for an infant so?

ANNA bites her lip.

APHRA

You must know it is folly and ill fortune to love a child until it walks and is well grown...

APHRA reaches a hand out in comfort. ANNA stiffens.

ANNA

Then I am lost. For I loved Tom from
the moment I first reached down and
touched the crown of his head, all wet
and bloody as it was...

Her voice breaks. APHRA takes ANNA's hand and closes her
fingers over a hag-stone.

APHRA

Hang it over him to keep evil spirits
from snatching away his soul.

ANNA opens her fingers and stares dully at the stone.

58

INT CHURCH - DAY

58

MOMPELLION is kneeling alone at the altar, head bowed.

MOMPELLION

Father, bestow on me the courage to
guide my flock through this valley of
shadows.

He raises his eyes to the heavens, searchingly.

MOMPELLION

I do not pretend to know your divine
plan, but if you see fit to send us
this terror, I pray you, how must we
meet it?!

59

INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - EVENING

59

ANNA sits by the light of a candle, TOM in her arms, eyes
closed and panting for breath. The door creaks open.

ELINOR

Anna?

ANNA

(startled)
Mrs Mompellion.

ELINOR puts down her basket and goes to ANNA's side.

ELINOR

Where is Jamie?

ANNA

Jane Martin has him at her mother's
house.

ELINOR
 What can I do for you? Can I take him?
 Is he feeding?

ELINOR holds out her arms. ANNA regards her with dismay.

ANNA
 Why would you come to this sick-house?
 Please M'am, get yourself away from
 this contagion, you are in danger
 here.

ELINOR
 That is in God's hands. When did you
 last sup?

She goes to her basket and pulls out dried meats and fruit.
 ANNA is awed to see MRS MOMPELLION in her humble kitchen.

60 INT ANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT

60

ANNA lays TOM down on her pallet. She curls up next to her
 dying baby and pulls him close to her.

MOMPELLION (O.S.)
 The Lord giveth, and the Lord hath
 taken away; blessed be the name of the
 Lord...

61 EXT CHURCHYARD - DAY

61

A tiny coffin lies next to an open grave. MOMPELLION nods
 for it to be lowered into the ground. Distraught, ANNA
 falls upon it.

ANNA
 No!

MOMPELLION gently lifts her away from the coffin and holds
 her to him like a child.

MOMPELLION
 His father's arms were strong were
 they not? Let Tom go to him, Anna. He
 will rock your babe as he sleeps.

ANNA's eyes meet his reassuring gaze, and she sobs
 helplessly.

62 EXT CHURCHYARD - DAY

62

The church bells toll. ANNA walks away from the churchyard,
 her tread heavy. JAMIE trots beside her.

JAMIE
Is Tom in heaven with the angels now
Mama?

ANNA tries to keep her voice even.

ANNA
Yes, he's in heaven.

JAMIE
With Daddy? And Mr Viccars?

She can only nod.

JAMIE
When can we go too?

ANNA reaches for his hand and keeps walking. Then she slows to a stop, crouches down and feels his forehead with dread.

63 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

63

A fevered JAMIE cries piteously on his pallet.

ANNA wraps a hot roasted onion in cloth and presses it against him. JAMIE wails in agony. Desperate, ANNA holds him to her and rocks him in her arms.

ANNA
Don't be afraid, my darling, don't be
afraid.

But ANNA's own fear is engulfing her.

64 EXT ANNA'S COTTAGE - DAY

64

ANNA opens the door to find CARYS GOWDIE on her doorstep. CARYS sees ANNA's anguish.

CARYS
I've brought a cordial of feverfew and
wormwood.

65 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - DAY

65

ANNA watches CARYS lay her hands gently on JAMIE who is fevered and delirious.

CARYS
May the seven directions guide this
work. May it be pleasing to my
grandmothers, the ancient ones. So
mote it be.

She gives him the draught, then starts to rub a salve on his writhing body.

CARYS

Two angels came from the East. One brought fire, one brought frost. Out, fire! In, frost! By all the Mothers' gentle ghosts.

JAMIE's eyes fix on hers and he quietens.

66

EXT ANNA'S COTTAGE - NIGHT

66

ANNA sees CARYS to the door.

ANNA

Thank you Carys for the relief you have brought...

ANNA's eyes well up. CARYS takes her hand.

CARYS

You're a good mother, Anna Frith. Remember your arms will not be empty forever.

ANNA nods mutely, unable to find solace in CARYS's words.

67

EXT CHURCHYARD - DAY

67

Fresh earth falls with a thud on a half-sized coffin. ELINOR is at ANNA's side as she numbly watches JAMIE being buried next to his brother TOM and father SAM FRITH. MOMPELLION prays over the grave, but ANNA is deaf to his words.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE: As the days pass and the death toll rises, fresh graves multiply and mourners grieve for their dead.

JON MILLSTONE digs the graves, while the mason MARTIN MILNE is hard at work carving headstones, his young son MICHA handing him his tools.

CUT TO:

MOMPELLION in his library at night, entering the names of the dead in the village register.

He takes a folded parchment from the back of the register, spreading it out on his desk. It is a detailed map of the village, marked with crosses to indicate the plague deaths and in which houses they occurred. MOMPELLION adds crosses for the latest deaths.

He stares at the pattern on the map. The crosses spread like a star burst from ANNA FRITH's cottage. He traces the roads leading to the surrounding towns, his thoughts crystallizing.

Intense, he reaches for his quill and starts to mark out a boundary around the village.

MOMPELLION (O.S.)

(in full voice)

"Greater love no man hath than this,
that he lay down his life for a
friend."

68

INT CHURCH - DAY

68

ANNA sits in church, fragile and empty, as if she has perished with her babies. Along the pew sits MARY HADFIELD, also alone. The congregation is peppered with empty places, like missing teeth.

Radiating conviction, MOMPELLION looks down from the pulpit.

MOMPELLION

There are some who would say that God sends us this disease because we have earned it in our sinning. And in the dark of night, when our firstborn is snatched from us -

His gaze moves across the pews until his eyes, bright and glistening, look straight into ANNA's.

MOMPELLION

- at such a time, it is easier to believe in God's vengeance than His mercy. But I think our God does not send this Plague as a punishment for our sins. No!

His voice is rich and resonant, his gaze compelling. ANNA hangs on his words, wanting and needing to understand. In the front pew, ELINOR beams encouragement to her husband.

MOMPELLION

God has singled us out, alone amongst all the villages in the shire, to receive this Plague. It is a trial for us, I am sure of it. Because of His great love for us, He is giving us an opportunity that He offers to very few upon this Earth. Here, we poor souls of this village may emulate Our Blessed Lord Jesus, the son of God.

The congregation shifts under his spell as MOMPELLION steps down from the pulpit, continuing to speak while moving along the aisle and making contact with the people - mesmerizing them as he goes.

MOMPELLION

I hear you in your hearts. You fear this disease and the death it brings. Your urge is to flee. And some of us have the means to flee. Some of us have relatives nearby who would gladly shelter us. Others have connections upon whom we could prevail.

ANNA notices the BRADFORDS in their front pew, restless.

MOMPELLION

But how would we repay the kindness of those who received us, if we carried the seeds of the Plague to them? What burden would we bear if, because of us, thousands die who might have lived?

MOMPELLION returns to the front of the church, but instead of mounting the pulpit, he turns and faces the congregation.

MOMPELLION

Dear friends, we have not known each other long, and I am yet to earn your trust. But I say this. We must stop this evil Plague spreading from our village. Here we are, and here we *must* stay. Stay here as one, and the Lord's love will be here for us. Stay here, and I promise you this: while I am spared no one in this village will face their death alone.

MOMPELLION pauses, quiet and intense.

MOMPELLION

I say let the boundaries of this village become our whole world. Close the roads and let none enter and none leave as long as this Plague shall last.

ANNA absorbs MOMPELLION's message, surrounded by growing unrest along the pews.

BRAD HAMILTON AND OTHERS

(shouting out)

And how are we going to live?! What will we eat?!

MOMPELLION raises his voice to be heard.

MOMPELLION

I have a pledge from the Earl of Chatsworth that we will want for nothing as long as our trial lasts. Provisions from Bakewell and Stoney Middleton will be left outside the village boundary. You can be sure our neighbours will not abandon us - for they know it is for them we make this sacrifice.

MOMPELLION's eyes are shining with conviction. ELINOR nods at her husband with pride. The congregation murmurs amongst themselves.

69

INT CHURCH - LATER

69

The congregation has broken up into restless clusters. MICHAEL and ELINOR MOMPELLION move amongst them, speaking quietly to any who need reassurance. The HAMILTON FAMILY are struggling with their decision.

MOMPELLION

Brad Hamilton, Sarah, you are right to be fearful for the safety of your children. And yet I have learnt that fear travels with us wheresoever we flee.

ELINOR takes SARAH's hand in hers.

ELINOR

You have your home here and good friends to lean upon.

As she speaks she notices the BRADFORD family slipping out of the back of the church.

CUT TO:

JOSS BONT and APHRA standing apart from the others. APHRA holds her little girl FAITH on her hip, her three unkempt boys STEPHEN, GEOFFREY and TITUS cluster around her.

APHRA

Think of our bread, husband! If we take to the road, who will feed us? Like as not, our children will starve there. Here, he says we will surely be fed.

BONT

Aye "he says". Well, I say that you cannot eat "he says". Fine words make piss-poor fodder.

APHRA

And if we sicken in a stranger's house? Will we not be turned out like scurvy dogs?

CUT TO:

The CHURCHYARD. ANNA kneels by JAMIE and TOM's headstones, tracing the carved inscriptions with her fingers.

ELINOR (O.S.)

And you, Anna?

ANNA looks up to see ELINOR approaching her.

ELINOR

Tell me you will stay with us. For without you, Mr Mompellion and I would be ill set.

ANNA doesn't answer. Instead, she turns back to her children's graves.

ANNA

Mrs Mompellion, you once asked...

ELINOR

What is it dear Anna?

ANNA

...will you teach me to read?

70

INT CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

70

MOMPELLION mounts the steps to the pulpit. The congregation quietens to a hush. His voice is rich and strong.

MOMPELLION

Friends, will you join me in giving our solemn oath to stay within the boundaries of this village, and not flee, whatever might befall us, so help us God?

He looks to the congregation for a sign. Heads are bowed. MARY HADFIELD is weeping softly and wringing her hands.

ELINOR raises her hand. ANNA raises her hand. Slowly hands start going up, until the whole church is in agreement. Even JOSS BONT gives a surly nod.

CONGREGATION
So help us God.

MOMPELLION bows his head in thanks. His eyes go to the front row where the BRADFORDS sit. Their pew is empty.

71 EXT BRADFORD HALL - DAY

71

ANNA enters the gates of the BRADFORD estate to find it in an uproar. Horses stamp in the driveway as maids and footmen stagger in and out, bent under the weight of chests and trunks. ELIZABETH BRADFORD admonishes an undermaid.

ELIZABETH BRADFORD
Move faster, you clumsy girl!..

72 INT BRADFORD KITCHEN - DAY

72

ANNA enters the kitchen and reaches for her apron when she discovers the BRADFORD's cook, MAGGIE CANTWELL, sobbing.

ANNA
Maggie! What is it?

MAGGIE
They've turned me off! Eighteen years,
and ordered out on a second's notice!

MAGGIE wipes her tears on the corner of her pinafore.

MAGGIE
They mean to leave this hour, and
after they go the Hall will be locked
and guarded and none of us may enter
in it.

MAGGIE runs her hands over her scored and scorched work table, tears welling in her eyes.

MAGGIE
They put me out without a roof or a
way to earn my bread!

She starts sobbing again. ANNA comforts her. At that moment there is a commotion from the courtyard. ANNA looks out and sees MICHAEL MOMPELLION pulling up ANTEROS with a scatter of stones. He dismounts and is up the steps before the GROOM can gather his reins.

ANNA
Go up and pack your trunk, Maggie.
I'll be there presently.

73

INT BRADFORD HALL - DAY

73

Familiar with BRADFORD HALL, ANNA moves through the corridors. Quietly she opens a large oak door and peers across the entrance hall where MOMPELLION is facing the COLONEL at the door of his library.

MOMPELLION

Colonel, your family is first here.
The villagers look to you. If you
quail, how may I ask them to be brave?

COLONEL BRADFORD

I do not quail, sir. I am merely doing
what any man of means and sense must
do.

ANNA creeps closer. She ducks back as she sees ELIZABETH and MRS BRADFORD spying from the top of the stairs.

MOMPELLION

Think of the good you might do here!
From you and your wife, and from Miss
Bradford, the smallest gesture would
mean so much.

On the landing, ELIZABETH BRADFORD stifles a snort. The COLONEL shares her amusement.

COLONEL BRADFORD

Dear sir, I did not raise my daughter
to have her play wet nurse to a
rabble.

MOMPELLION contains his frustration.

MOMPELLION

Then if you must send your wife and
daughter away, I pray you, stay here
yourself and do your duty.

COLONEL BRADFORD

(angered)

Duty?! Do not presume to tell me my
duty sir! Do you think I care for a
few sweaty miners and their snotty-
nosed brats?

MOMPELLION takes an angry step towards the COLONEL, towering over him. The COLONEL raises his hand in a conciliating gesture.

COLONEL BRADFORD

Look, man, you do no ill in making
your congregation feel righteous in
staying here.

(MORE)

COLONEL BRADFORD (cont'd)
 On the contrary, I think it was very
 well done of you. They may as well
 have some comfort, since they have no
 choice.

His telling words ring in ANNA's ears. The COLONEL turns
 away from MOMPELLION, his eyes travelling the bookshelves.

COLONEL BRADFORD
 But I do have a choice. And if you'll
 excuse me, I have a great many other
 choices to make, such as, for
 instance, whether to pack the Dryden
 or the Milton. Perhaps the Milton?
 Dryden's themes are ambitious, but his
 rhymes grow rather tedious, do you not
 think?

ANNA watches MOMPELLION's face set with controlled fury.

MOMPELLION
 Colonel Bradford. Enjoy your books.
 Enjoy them now. For there are no
 pockets in a shroud. Perhaps you do
 not care for the people of this
 village, but if you do not value them,
 there is one who does. He loves them
 dearly. And be sure, He is the one to
 whom you will have to answer. I do not
 lightly speak of God's judgement, but
 on your family I say the vials of His
 wrath will be opened, and a terrible
 vengeance poured down! Fear it,
 Colonel Bradford! Fear a far worse
 punishment than Plague!

ANNA shrinks back into the shadows as MOMPELLION strides
 past her and out the door.

74 EXT VILLAGE ROAD - DAY

74

ANNA and MAGGIE carry MAGGIE's trunk between them. They are
 forced to the side of the road as the BRADFORD's fancy
 carriages sweep through the village.

CUT TO:

On the road ahead ANNA and MAGGIE come across ANDREW
 MERRICK with his belongings on his cart, leading his
 livestock including a donkey, goats, hens and a fine red
 cockerel. He tips his hat as he passes.

MERRICK
 Morning, mistresses.

ANNA regards his chattels.

ANNA

Andrew Merrick, are you fleeing?

MERRICK

Yea and nay for I do not flaunt the village oath. I'm fleeing my cottage and the proximity of other dwellings. And if I carry Plague seeds with me, I will not contaminate other souls, but will die alone on yonder hill, for that is where I will live a hermit life until this curse is lifted, one way or the other.

As he passes, ANNA eyes his livestock.

ANNA

If you're resting up on the hill Andrew, would you be needing your donkey?

75

EXT BOUNDARY STONE - DAY

75

ANNA and MAGGIE lead ANDREW MERRICK's donkey loaded with MAGGIE's belongings.

They join a group of VILLAGERS gathered at the BOUNDARY STONE at the edge of the stream that marks the village limits. The stone looks down on the valley and a well-worn path leading to the village below, Stoney Middleton. Further down the slope, on the other side of the stream, a CARTER is waiting with a load of provisions.

MOMPELLION drops coins into a cloth pouch with a string and tosses it into the stream.

MAGGIE

What's 'e doing?

JOHN GORDON

Water washes away the Plague seeds that ride on the money.

MOMPELLION signals to the CARTER. The VILLAGERS back off to a safe distance as the CARTER leads his pack mule up the slope to the edge of the stream.

ANNA approaches MOMPELLION.

ANNA

If you please, sir. But Maggie Cantwell was turned out from Bradford Hall. She didn't take the oath and she hails from Bakewell...

MOMPELLION

You want to go home Maggie.

MAGGIE

There's nought for me here sir.

MOMPELLION considers her plight. He hesitates.

MOMPELLION

It is true you did not take the village oath and I cannot prevent you leaving. But I pray you, leave your chattels behind lest they contain Plague seeds.

MAGGIE baulks at that, but ANNA urges her to comply.

MAGGIE

If you say so, m'lord.

MOMPELLION

Wait til dusk and travel with caution. And be sure you do not let on that you have come from this village.

The CARTER finishes unloading packages of flour and salt. He pulls the money pouch from the stream and waves back at the VILLAGERS.

CARTER

Our prayers and our blessings be upon all of ye! God have mercy on your goodness.

He turns the mule's head down the slope and rides away. MOMPELLION sees the VILLAGERS are downcast. He rallies himself and smiles.

MOMPELLION

You see? The carter gave us his blessing, and you can be sure that like prayers are on the lips of all those in our surrounding towns!

But the VILLAGERS' faces remain pinched and serious as they wade the stream to collect their provisions and return towards the village.

76

EXT BOUNDARY STONE - DUSK

76

ANNA helps MAGGIE mount the donkey.

ANNA

God be with you Maggie.

MAGGIE urges the donkey across the stream and down the path towards Stoney Middleton. She turns and waves farewell.

77 EXT ANNA'S COTTAGE - MORNING

77

ANNA leaves her cottage and walks towards the rectory. The main street is strangely deserted, doors and shutters closed. Muffled moans and fevered cries punctuate the quiet. Bonfires burn and smoulder. Across the road the sexton's horse and cart waits outside a house. A man weeps as the corpses of his wife and child are loaded onto the cart. ANNA crosses herself and hurries on.

ANNA (O.S.)

A..B..C..D..

78 INT RECTORY - MORNING

78

Close-up on a children's alphabet card showing a figure posing in the form of an E. ANNA hesitates.

ANNA

..E?

ELINOR nods and flips to the next card. ANNA frowns at it. ELINOR reads the rhyme that goes with it.

ELINOR

"From the head to the Feet, he's an...

ANNA

F quite complete."

ELINOR

Anna, I do declare you have natural ability!

ANNA

(smiling shyly)
My mother knew her letters.

ELINOR

And she did not teach you?

ANNA

My father would not allow it.

ELINOR takes this in, then flips to the next card, urging ANNA on.

ELINOR

"Look forward you'll see, he's in the form of a -

ANNA
 (turning to her)
 What will become of this place? Will
 every soul amongst us perish?

ELINOR hesitates, wishing she knew the answer.

79

EXT MOORS - DAY

79

The sky is cold, the clouds steel grey. ANNA herds her flock with her stick and a few clicks of her tongue. The sheep trot in front of her. Suddenly she stops, pulling her hand from her pocket. Slowly opening her fingers, she finds JAMIE's acorn cap lying in the palm of her hand. She stares at it, remembering...

JAMIE (O.S.)
*A cup! Can we keep it Mama?! Would the
 mice be very cross?*

The sheep run ahead, but ANNA is oblivious to them. Their bleating diminishes, replaced by the sound of voices on the wind.

CUT TO:

ANNA mounts a crest and sees below a circle of villagers, jostling and staggering from drunkenness.

In the centre, on the ground is CARYS GOWDIE, her arms bound in front of her with a rope. She wears the scarlet dress GEORGE VICCARS sewed for her, now muddied and torn across the shoulder. BRAD HAMILTON kneels across her chest as his daughter HOPE grasps a fistful of CARYS's hair and scratches her cheek with a hawthorn prick.

HOPE
 Witch! Your blood will drive this
 sickness from my mother's body.

She rubs her hand over CARYS's bleeding cheek, then smears the blood on her mother's neck where there's a Plague sore.

ANNA runs towards them, skidding and sliding down the steep slope as MARY HADFIELD throws herself at CARYS.

MARY
 You killed my family! I heard you
 curse us for bringing the surgeon to
 Edward. I heard you as you left my
 door. Your malice brought Plague on my
 man and my boys!

ANNA pushes her way into the circle.

ANNA

Mary! Carys Gowdie did no such thing!
She left your door with her lips
sealed. Say rather that the surgeon
hastened your Edward's death with his
leeches and purges, before you slander
this good soul!

JOHN GORDON

Why do you defend her? Do not your own
babies lie rotting in the ground from
her cursing?

ANNA

If you speak of babes, there is not a
woman here who does not have Carys or
her mother before her to thank for
bringing her bairns safely into this
world.

MARTIN HIGHFIELD

Anna Frith, get gone if you have
nought to do but hinder.

JOHN GORDON

Aye! For was it not from your very
house this pestilence spread...?

JOHN GORDON eyes ANNA menacingly, but the others draw his
attention away.

VARIOUS

Let's swim her! Then we'll see if
she's witch or no!

They drag CARYS towards a flooded mine.

ANNA

Throw her down there, and you'll be
murderers!

She grabs BRAD HAMILTON by the arm, but he turns and shows
a face distorted by drink and grief. He flings ANNA aside.

80

EXT MINE SHAFT - DAY

80

The VILLAGERS surround the mine shaft, peering into the
black where CARYS struggles in the water. ANNA hurriedly
slings a rope over the old turntree and secures it to the
stowes.

MARY

She's sinking! She's sinking! She's no
witch!

The sounds of struggle come to a stop. ANNA grabs the rope and slides down into the slimy dark. MARY HADFIELD falls to her knees and makes the sign of the cross.

MARY
God forgive us, we've killed an
innocent soul.

She backs away, then turns and runs.

81 INT MINE SHAFT - DAY 81

ANNA lowers herself down on the rope, straining to see in the mine's slimy blackness. Her boots slip on the rotting wood of the stemples and she cuts herself on the rock as she descends. She enters the water's fetid depths, feeling around for CARYS.

ANNA
Carys?! Carys, say you are here.

82 EXT MINE SHAFT - DAY 82

The VILLAGERS peer down into the mine, wondering at ANNA's fate.

83 INT MINE SHAFT - DAY 83

With CARYS's body tied to her, ANNA slowly hauls herself up towards the surface, clawing at the rock as she goes.

84 EXT MINE SHAFT - DAY 84

The VILLAGERS watch as ANNA heaves the lifeless CARYS onto the ground. ANNA turns her over and presses frantically on her chest. Dark water spews from CARYS's mouth. She takes a gasp of air, splutters and opens her eyes. ANNA sinks back in relief.

LIB HANCOCK
She lives! She lives! She has risen! A
witch! Seize her!

ANNA grasps LIB by both arms.

ANNA
Lib, don't be a fool!

LIB HANCOCK throws off ANNA's hands.

LIB

Shut your mouth Anna Frith! For it was you who told me that this witch consorted with the Devil's spawn who brought the Plague here! Know you not George Viccars was a manwitch? And she was his vessel!

ANNA seizes her by the shoulders and shakes her.

ANNA

Lib! Don't speak so of the blameless dead!

LIB stares at ANNA, her eyes glazed.

VARIOUS

Whore! Jade! Fornicator!

The mob surges towards CARYS, pulling her to her feet and tying the rope around her neck. The other end of the rope is slung around the stowes as a scaffold. CARYS stops struggling and draws herself up to her full, impressive height. The tendrils of her wet hair fall about her like golden snakes. A trickle of blood runs from her mouth.

CARYS

Yes, I am the Devil's creature, and, mark me, he will be revenged for my life.

The men who hold her step back, making the sign of the cross.

ANNA

Carys! Don't say these things! You know they are not so!

CARYS looks at ANNA and gives her a ghostly smile. Then she looks round at her persecutors.

CARYS

Yes! I have lain with the Devil, and he is mighty and cold as ice to the touch. His seed, too, is cold and abundant as a river running between our thighs. For I have not lain with him alone! No! I tell you now, I have seen your wives lie with him! Yours, Brad Hamilton, and yours, John Gordon, and yours too, Martin Highfield!

The women scream their outrage, but the men are transfixed by CARYS's words.

CARYS

We rejoice to do it, all of us together and without shame, many times, one after another, and sometimes two or more at once, sucking him and taking him howsoever he desires to go into us. No man's yard is as great as his. He is as a stallion amongst geldings compared to you.

She laughs, as if she cannot control herself. The men bellow with rage and tug as one on the rope. It snaps tight and silences her laughter. But her eyes burn brightly.

CARYS

...every wife has said that her pleasure is extreme, far greater than with any of you!

The men shove her off the edge of the mine shaft, breaking her neck. Her long legs kick in the air.

JOHN GORDON lets go of the rope and looks around wildly for his wife. URITH GORDON sees his crazed eyes and begins to run. He reaches her and brings her down with a blow.

JOHN GORDON

Is it true? Did you lay with Satan?

Before she can answer, he smashes his fist into her face. Blood streams from her nose. He raises his arm to strike her again. A voice thunders from behind on the hill.

MOMPELLION

What in the name of God have you done here?

GORDON turns to see MOMPELLION, astride ANTEROS on the slope above. MARY HADFIELD slides down from the saddle behind him and he plunges ANTEROS down the steep slope, sending stones flying.

MOMPELLION bears down upon BRAD HAMILTON who is closest to the stowes. HAMILTON raises both arms to defend himself, but ANTEROS rears up, driving him back. MOMPELLION turns the horse and jumps from the saddle. He pulls a knife from his belt, reaches up, cradles CARYS in one arm and slashes the rope with the other.

MARTIN HIGHFIELD

She admitted it. She confessed she lay with the Devil...

MOMPELLION

Oh the Devil has been here this day
Martin Highfield! But not in Carys
Gowdie.

ANNA runs to help him with CARYS's body. He looks to the
VILLAGERS with dismay.

MOMPELLION

Do we not have suffering enough in
this village? Is there not death
enough here for you all that you bring
the crime of murder amongst us as
well? Go to your homes and pray that
God look upon you with mercy.

BRAD HAMILTON spits on the ground in front of him.

BRAD HAMILTON

Return to our homes and die, you mean?
Where is this mercy you speak of? My
wife sickens, the Plague is at my
door. Why stay in this forsaken place?
You don't speak for God. There is no
God.

MOMPELLION looks at BRAD with compassion rather than anger,
then beseeches the VILLAGERS.

MOMPELLION

Believe me, God is here, near to us,
nearer perhaps than He has ever come,
or will ever come, in all our lives. I
know the way looks bleak to you now,
but have courage. You must trust that
we are doing right in this village.

BRAD HAMILTON scowls and turns to the others.

BRAD HAMILTON

His oath is a trap I say! This place
will become our tomb. Stay in this
village and you will die here!

As the VILLAGERS start murmuring their agreement, URITH
GORDON points down to the valley.

URITH

Look. Yonder!

ANNA's stomach lurches as she recognises ANDREW MERRICK's
donkey approaching with a load slung across its back.

CUT TO:

JOHN GORDON takes the donkey's bridle and leads it towards
the others, who shrink back. ANNA forces herself to look.

ANNA
Maggie...

MAGGIE CANTWELL's clothes are ripped and her lifeless body badly beaten. A note is pinned to her torn blouse. JOHN unpins it, and hands it to MARTIN HIGHFIELD to read aloud.

MARTIN HIGHFIELD
"Beware those who carry Plague seeds."

At this, the VILLAGERS start moaning, crying out to the Lord, weeping and beating their breasts. ANNA drags her eyes from MAGGIE's corpse to MOMPPELLION, himself shattered to be so vindicated.

85 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - MORNING

85

ANNA is bent over a writing slate in the early light. The cottage is cold and silent, the only sound is the chalk on the slate as she painstakingly scribes her name.

She stops and stares out at the empty yard, her eyes going to the woodpile where JAMIE used to play.

JAMIE (O.S.)
*Mama! Look! I'm building a castle for
you and me and Tom to live in!..*

ANNA's painful reverie is broken by a rapping at the door.

86 INT/EXT ANNA'S COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

86

ANNA opens the door to ELINOR who hurries inside, carrying a basket.

ANNA
Mrs Mompellion...

ELINOR
Anna, we must make haste...

To ANNA's dismay ELINOR picks up her shawl and wraps it round ANNA's shoulders.

ELINOR
Randoll Daniel came to see me. His wife is in labour and, with Carys Gowdie gone, poor soul, he knew not where to look for help. I told him we would be there directly.

ELINOR takes her arm and steers her out the door.

ANNA
But I know nothing of midwifery -

ELINOR

However little you know, it's more than I do, who has never laboured myself nor even birthed any livestock. But you have, Anna. You will know what to do and I will assist you as best I can.

ELINOR leads her away from her cottage. ANNA resists.

ANNA

Mrs Mompellion! Birthing a lamb is one thing! Midwifing is altogether another gate's business. You do not know what you are asking me. Lottie Daniel deserves better than us!

ELINOR

That is no doubt true, Anna, but we are all she has.

She pulls a phial from her basket.

ELINOR

I have here some poppy if her pain is great.

ANNA

(regards the phial)
I do not think you should give her poppy, for labour is not called labour by chance. A woman must do real work to get her baby born. We would be sore pressed if she fell into a poppy stupor.

ELINOR

See, Anna! You have already helped me and Mrs Daniel. You know a great deal more than you think.

87

INT DANIELS' COTTAGE - DAY

87

RANDOLL DANIEL ushers ANNA and ELINOR into a dimly lit room.

LOTTIE DANIEL sits on a pallet with her back braced against the wall and her knees drawn up to her chest as she endures a contraction.

ELINOR sets down her basket and tries to assess the situation. She blanches as LOTTIE screams in agony.

ELINOR

Mr Daniel, might you set some water on the fire?

Seeing that ELINOR is at a loss, ANNA whispers to her.

ANNA
Fresh churned butter will serve
better.

ELINOR nods gratefully.

ELINOR
Yes. Of course. Butter.

ANNA goes to LOTTIE and, hands trembling, lifts the sheet from her knees.

RANDOLL hands her the butter and leaves. ELINOR hastens to her side with a candle for light. ANNA greases her hand, trying to recall CARYS GOWDIE's words.

ANNA
(hesitant)
...May the seven directions guide this
work. May it be pleasing to my
grandmothers, the ancient ones. So
mote it be.

She reaches inside LOTTIE and closes her eyes, feeling for the baby. Her brow furrows. ELINOR sees her concern.

ELINOR
Anna, what is it?

ANNA moves away so that LOTTIE cannot hear her.

ANNA
It is no good. The baby lies
crosswise. It is how my mother died.
She laboured four days until my father
fetched a barber-surgeon who came and
used a thatcher's hook -

ANNA can't go on. ELINOR takes her by the shoulders.

ELINOR
That man was a barber; he pulled teeth
and amputated limbs. He knew nothing
of women's bodies. But you do. You can
do this Anna.

ANNA meets ELINOR's eyes and knows she must try. She goes back to LOTTIE and slides her hands inside her. She shakes her head, frustrated.

ELINOR
What is it?

ANNA

I need to find the foot. I can feel something that might be a foot, but it might also be a hand, and if I pull a hand by mistake, the shoulder will be shattered.

ELINOR

What you have under your hand - feel for the fifth digit.

ANNA tries to do so.

ELINOR

Now, try to flex it. Does it oppose, like a thumb, or no?

ANNA concentrates.

ANNA

No. It's a toe!

ANNA locks eyes with ELINOR for resolve, then braces herself and pulls with the next contraction. LOTTIE screams.

ANNA

Push Lottie, I pray you, help me!

LOTTIE pushes and ANNA pulls, and suddenly, in a slick of blood, a baby boy is born. ANNA and ELINOR look to each other, elated.

CUT TO:

ANNA tenderly wraps the baby in swaddling, his tiny face a searing reminder of her own lost children.

She hands the baby to RANDOLL DANIEL. He carries his newborn son to LOTTIE's bedside, where ELINOR is busy making her comfortable.

ANNA backs away, the joyful scene in front of her suddenly too painful to bear. She eyes ELINOR's basket.

ELINOR turns to ANNA, in time to see her slip out the door.

88

INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - DUSK

88

ANNA closes her door behind her and is met by the deafening silence of her empty cottage. Her eyes go to the slate and chalk lying as she had left them that morning with her name half written.

Kneeling on the cold flagstones at her hearth, she tries to strike the flint.

A spark leaps at the tinder but dies with a sizzle. She tries again, but to no avail, for the flames are being extinguished by her tears.

Sinking onto the floor, she reaches into her bodice and pulls out the phial of poppy resin that ELINOR had showed her earlier. She opens the phial, pinches off half the resin and puts it in her mouth. Grimacing at the bitterness, she closes her eyes and leans her head against the cold wall.

JAMIE (O.S.)
Mama? Are you awake?

ANNA opens her eyes. JAMIE is standing in front of her. Overjoyed, she pulls him to her fiercely.

JAMIE
(whispers)
Don't be afraid Mama. Don't be afraid.

He takes her hand and leads her out of the cottage. ANNA squints in the bright sunshine. They are in a rambling apple orchard teeming with children running and laughing, skipping rope and climbing trees. Young EDWARD HADFIELD tips his hat at her.

JAMIE pulls ANNA through the apple trees, past thickets of wild roses and honeysuckle to a clearing by a stream. There, lying on the clover, is a naked, gurgling baby.

ANNA scoops TOM up in her arms and presses him to her breast. Tiny petals start falling from above like snow. She looks up to see JAMIE astride the bough of a tree, shaking it so the blossoms rain down on her. ANNA laughs with joy.

The petals start falling thicker and thicker until JAMIE's smiling face is blotted out in a curtain of white.

89 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - MORNING

89

A pale finger of light streams through the window and onto ANNA's sleeping face which lies pressed against the stone floor. In the distance, the church bell tolls.

As she wakes, reality seeps back and the smile on her face fades. She eases herself off the floor, her bones aching from the cold. The empty phial lies on the floor in front of her.

ANNA searches on her hands and knees for the remaining piece of poppy resin, desperately groping between the gritstones. When her hand closes around it, she sinks onto the floor with relief.

90 EXT CHURCHYARD - BURIAL MONTAGE

90

Families carry their loved ones to the churchyard, some in coffins, others by dragging them with a blanket slung beneath the armpits of the corpse.

From morning to dusk, MICHAEL MOMPELLION digs graves; his coat off, his sleeves rolled up and his hair damp with sweat.

As the corpses are buried, he prays over each one and then wearily spades the soil back into the grave, before moving onto the next.

MOMPELLION
In the midst of life, we are in
death...

ELINOR is giving comfort at a grave-side when she sees ANNA arrive.

CUT TO:

ELINOR goes to ANNA and clasps her hands in hers.

ELINOR
My dear, when you did not arrive this
day, I feared...are you quite well?

ANNA nods quickly, avoiding ELINOR's gaze. She sees MOMPELLION struggling with the spade.

ANNA
Why is Jon Millstone not here to wield
the spade?

ELINOR
He was found this morning sprawled in
the grave he was digging. There are
six more graves needed before
nightfall and doubtless it will be
Michael who digs them.

MOMPELLION wipes his soiled brow with exhaustion as he shovels dirt into a grave. ANNA sees ELINOR's concern for him.

91 INT/EXT BONT CROFT - DAY

91

ANNA pushes open the door to her father's house. Little FAITH and her three brothers sit at the bench, skinny and poorly dressed, busily pulling apart a stale stub of bread.

ANNA reaches out to STEPHEN, the oldest boy, who has an angry red welt across his cheek.

All eyes go to the other end of the room, where a swinging curtain barely conceals the heated activity going on behind it.

ANNA reaches into her basket and pulls out a batch of freshly baked oatcakes. The children fall upon them hungrily.

APHRA emerges from behind the curtain, face flushed and adjusting her dress.

ANNA
Forgive me, I intrude.

Buttoning her bodice, APHRA sees the oatcakes and is shamed.

APHRA
Anna, you are good, I have not done
the baking today...

She glances behind her and ANNA nods in understanding as JOSS BONT throws aside the curtain, pulling up his breeches.

JOSS
And have you brought me naught,
daughter?

ANNA turns to JOSS with trepidation.

ANNA
With respect father, I have brought
you a proposition.

JOSS pushes past her to the doorway and urinates out the door.

ANNA
The sexton is dead sir, and the rector
cannot keep up with the call for
graves. I was thinking, with your
great strength and fortitude, that
perhaps you might see your way to help
with the digging...

JOSS snorts, then clears his throat and spits.

JOSS
I'd say it would do your prating
priest a power of good to get his lily
white hands dirty.

ANNA
You would have your choice of my lambs
for Sunday's dinner...

The children nearly faint with yearning.

ANNA
And another at the new moon.

APHRA looks at JOSS beseechingly.

92 EXT VILLAGE - DAY 92

On her way to the rectory, ANNA is stopped by the sight of five year old SALLY MASTON standing on the road. The child is wearing a flimsy nightdress, wild-eyed and silent.

ANNA gathers her up into her arms.

ANNA
There, there. Where is your mummy?

93 INT MASTON COTTAGE - DAY 93

ANNA follows SALLY through the doorway and into the dim cottage. She recoils at the sight of SALLY's mother ELLEN lying on a pallet, dead. SAMUEL MASTON lies sprawled on the floor beside his wife, one hand twined in hers. He is fevered, his mouth covered in sores.

94 INT MASTON COTTAGE - DAY 94

JOSS BONT, a rag tied over his nose and mouth, pulls ELLEN MASTON's body onto the sexton's cart where it joins a pile of other corpses. He turns to ANNA.

JOSS BONT
And what of him?

ANNA
He is not long for this world. But he does still breathe.

JOSS curses, sweeping his soiled cap from his head and wiping his brow. ANNA sees his tiredness and softens.

ANNA
Sit down father, and I'll warm you a mug of broth. Perhaps by the time you have swallowed it, there'll be two corpses for the cart after all.

95 EXT MASTON COTTAGE - LATER 95

JOSS BONT heaves SAMUEL MASTON's corpse onto the cart next to his wife's. Then he picks up a sack and throws it onto the cart, making a clanking noise. ANNA pulls open the sack and uncovers pewter bowls and cups from the Maston table.

ANNA
What's this?

JOSS
Nothing these folk will be needing
I'll warrant.

ANNA
Father, how can you chouse the
suffering so?!

JOSS
Tis fair pay for dirty work. Don't
hear them complaining, do you?

He whips the mule on, and the cart rumbles away. ANNA empties the last drops from his mug onto the ground.

96 INT MASTON COTTAGE - NIGHT 96

Snow is falling. Inside, ANNA lays out the body of SALLY MASTON, gently wrapping her in clean linen.

She stops at the door.

ANNA
Lie in peace, little one.

Then pulls her shawl around her and slips out into the night.

97 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - NIGHT 97

ANNA drops the other half of the poppy resin into a mug, pours hot water over it and stirs in half a cup of honey. Exhausted, she carries the mug up the stairs to her bed.

98 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - MORNING 98

ANNA sleeps with a blissful smile. She opens her eyes to the sounds of the morning bird-song, still pleasantly sleepy.

ANNA
Jamie? Are you awake?

The answering silence drags her back to cold reality.

99 EXT GOWDIE COTTAGE - DAY 99

A breathtaking winter landscape. ANNA wades knee-deep through the drifts of snow leading up to the Gowdie cottage.

She pauses on the doorstep, then tries to open the swollen door with her frozen hands. Determined, she drags it open a crack and is startled when CARYS GOWDIE's cat darts out between her legs, hissing.

100

INT GOWDIE COTTAGE - DAY

100

ANNA squeezes through the door into the sombre cottage. Something brushes her face and she gasps before realizing it is a frond of meadowsweet hanging by the door.

The wind whips around the house eerily. ANNA trembles as she feels around the hearth for the flint and tinder. Her hands are shaking and she cannot strike a spark.

A sudden light blazes behind her.

O.S.

Stand back from the hearth Anna.

ANNA drops the flint, trips on a loose hearthstone and slips face down onto the earthen floor. Terrified, she slowly raises her head to the light. White gowned and glowing, ELINOR MomPELLION climbs down the loft ladder with a candle held in front of her.

ELINOR

Oh my dear, have you injured yourself?

ANNA

I thought you were her ghost.

ELINOR

Ghost?

ANNA

The ghost of Carys Gowdie.

ELINOR raises a corner of her white pinafore and wipes ANNA's forehead where she struck it.

ELINOR

I have seen no ghost, but I wish she were here to guide us. For it seems we have come to this place for the same purpose, you and I.

ANNA looks at her, confused. ELINOR goes to the hearth and with her candle starts to kindle a fire.

ELINOR

I believe the key to defeating this Plague must lie here, in Carys's herbs and remedies.

ANNA stays mute.

ELINOR

With the help of the books I have found we can make the tonics, and you and I can distribute remedies through the village. There are riches here indeed Anna but there is much work to be done -

ANNA

Mrs Mompellion, I -

ELINOR

Elinor. You and I cannot work together and continue with the old forms. You must call me Elinor.

ANNA

I cannot work with you.

ELINOR looks at her in surprise. ANNA turns away, ashamed.

ANNA

I did not come here seeking to help others. I am a sinner. I stole from you at the Daniel house, and today I come here to thief again.

ELINOR

Ah. Then you came for these.

From the ceiling rafter she reaches up and unstrings a bunch of seedpods.

ELINOR

The Greeks called them the Poppies of Lethe. The river of forgetfulness. Once the souls of the dead tasted its waters they forgot their past lives.

ANNA eyes the seedpods with yearning.

ELINOR

It is natural to want to forget when every day is a brimful of sadness.

ANNA eyes fill with tears. ELINOR embraces her, holding her.

ELINOR

Hush. I know your pain...

ANNA pulls away bitterly.

ANNA!

How could you know any of it? I've seen buried everyone I have ever loved so that now I think my loving itself is poison. You don't want me to work with you. You, who are pure and good. You'd do well to stay as far away from me as you can!

ELINOR absorbs ANNA's outburst. She hesitates.

ELINOR

Do you remember on the way to the Daniels, that I said I had never birthed a child?... I did not say I had never been *with* child.

ELINOR reaches for her lace handkin.

ELINOR

The child I carried was not Mr Mompellion's.

She wipes ANNA's tears away.

ELINOR

I was just fourteen when I met him. Charles. He was a young man, handsome and the heir to a dukedom. He flattered me in every way and very soon I believed I loved him. Of course my father would not hear of it.

ELINOR interlaces her own smooth fingers with ANNA's rough and calloused ones.

ELINOR

We stole away at dead of night on horseback. We planned to make for the Fleet, where marriages could be bought at any hour without licence.

She turns to the fire crackling in the hearth.

ELINOR

But our desire was strong and our union was consummated before it was consecrated. And then it became clear that Charles did not intend to have it consecrated at all.

ANNA's eyes widen, transfixed by ELINOR's tale.

ELINOR

We lived as man and woman for more than a fortnight until, one evening, Charles didn't return to the inn. He had abandoned me.

ELINOR pauses, staring at the flames dancing in the fire.

ELINOR

My father carried me home, where the shameful matter was to have been kept quiet...but I was with child.

The tears pool in ELINOR's eyes. She squeezes ANNA's hand.

ELINOR

I was desperate, and ashamed. Anna, I violated my own body with a fire iron. I...murdered my unborn child.

ANNA draws breath.

ELINOR

My father engaged the best physician, and so my life was saved. But not my womb, which they tell me is nothing now but a mass of scars. They gave me poppy at first for the pain, and then I think to keep me quiet. And I might very well still be wandering, lost in those empty dreams, if it were not for Michael.

ANNA watches ELINOR's face, lighting with the memory.

ELINOR

Michael brought me out of the darkness and taught me how to live again. He said atonement might be made for the gravest of sins...even mine. Gentle, kind Michael offered me his friendship. And later his love.

She turns to ANNA, her eyes glistening.

ELINOR

To the world at large, it seemed that I stooped to marry my beloved Michael. But the sacrifice in the match was all on his side...more sacrifice than anyone could imagine.

She stares into the fire. A log suddenly shifts and sends a scatter of sparks onto the floor. ELINOR stands abruptly and smooths her long, white pinafore.

ELINOR

And so, my dear Anna, now that you
know how pure I truly am, do you think
we might work together?

ANNA clasps ELINOR's delicate hands and presses them to her
lips.

101 INT GOWDIE'S COTTAGE - LATER

101

Bunches of herbs, dried leaves and roots are strewn across
the table. ELINOR identifies them and sorts them as ANNA
struggles to read from a volume on plants and herbs,
sounding out the harder words as she goes.

ANNA

Nettle for the blood. Star..wort and v-
i-o-

She breaks off in frustration.

ELINOR

(encouraging her)
Violet. Go on...

ANNA takes a breath and continues.

ANNA

Violet leaves for the lungs.
Sil..ver..weed to cool a fever. Cress
for the stomach, and for the throat,
ver-v...

ELINOR scans the herbs.

ELINOR

Vervain.

102 EXT GOWDIE'S COTTAGE - DAY

102

The garden has been blasted by the snow. ANNA goes to pull
up a plant, but ELINOR stops her. She bows her head in
prayer.

ELINOR

Hallowed be thou vervain, as thou
growest on thy mound.
For in the Mount of Calvary there thou
was first found.
Thou healedest our saviour and
staunched his bleeding wound.
In name of Father, Son, and Holy
Ghost,
I take thee from the ground.

She nods to ANNA, who yanks up the roots.

103 INT GOWDIE'S COTTAGE - DAY 103

ELINOR gathers all the bunches into a burlap bag. ANNA goes to put out the fire.

ELINOR
Wait. What shall we do with these?

She holds out the poppies. ANNA regards them with yearning.

ANNA
...do we not need them for the succour
of the afflicted?

ELINOR
There is only enough here to relieve a
handful of grave cases. How do we
choose who should be soothed and who
should suffer?

ANNA stares at the bunch. Then she grasps them and flings them on the fire, along with the hope of holding her boys again in her dreams. The sap hisses, then the pods burst, their showers of tiny seeds falling among the ashes.

104 INT/EXT RECTORY KITCHEN/VARIOUS - MONTAGE 104

The rectory kitchen has been transformed into a laboratory. ANNA and ELINOR work side by side, chopping and pounding, boiling and distilling, their hands stained with the juices of the plants.

ELINOR measures two tumblers of tonic and, clinking glasses, they down the bitter draught.

CUT TO:

ANNA and ELINOR distribute their remedies throughout the village. Tireless and selfless, they show the VILLAGERS how to apply poultices, mix tonics, burn rosemary...

As they leave a cottage on the outskirts of the village, an old man bids them farewell.

VILLAGER
God bless you. God bless the both of
you.

105 INT/EXT JOSS BONT'S CROFT - DAY 105

ANNA opens the door to her father's croft, stepping through a curtain of charms and spells hanging above the door.

APHRA
Stop where you are!

Startled, ANNA eyes the charms. APHRA brings a candle to ANNA and swings a crystal over her. ANNA glances across at APHRA's children who sit at the table feeding on sausages and soup.

ANNA
Where is my father?

APHRA
(proudly)
Wielding his spade in town. There's a
goodly profit in the hole-digging
trade these days.

ANNA notices a pile of booty stacked against the wall. Candlesticks, mugs, bowls, trinkets, skins and furs...

ANNA
Stepmother, you must urge him to take
more care with his comportment. He
shames our family with his greedy
ways.

APHRA
No shame in putting food in our
bellies and clothes on our backs. I'm
his princess now he says. How do you
fancy this?

APHRA proudly shows off her blue velvet dress, which barely
does up around her. ANNA pales.

ANNA
I liked it better on Lib Hancock.

A flash of doubt crosses APHRA's face.

APHRA
Say what you will. My husband is
working hard and providing well for
us.

ANNA
Then pray he is not taking his wages
in Plague seeds. And feed this tonic
to your children.

ANNA offers her a flask of herbal tonic. APHRA regards it
with disdain, stroking the crystal in her hand.

APHRA
Oh, no need to fear for us.

106 EXT CUCKLETT DELF - DAY

106

The dwindling congregation gathers in picturesque Cucklett Delf, a sloping basin with leafy rowan trees arching over it.

MOMPELLION

Beloved friends, though it grieves me to close the doors of our church, yet God has led us to this Holy place...

MOMPELLION's pulpit is a massive outcrop of limestone, weathered in the shape of an arch. His voice fills the Delf.

MOMPELLION

Here we may stand a safe distance from one another. Here the birds shall be our choir, the stones our altar, the trees our spire.

(he pauses)

As well as the church, I fear we must also close the churchyard...

There are moans in the congregation. MOMPELLION continues, the strain showing on his face.

MOMPELLION

With the coming of the warmer weather, it will be impossible to bury our dead in a timely way. We must shoulder the grim task of burying our own dead as soon as we may, in whatever ground we can...

There are howls and terrified shouts of "No!" MOMPELLION dashes a tear from his cheek and raises his hands.

MOMPELLION

You fear that God will not find those who are laid down to rest outside hallowed ground. But this day, I say, we have hallowed all the ground of this village! We have hallowed it by our sacrifice in this place! God will find us! He will gather us to him! He is the Good Shepherd, and He will not abandon even the least of His flock!

107 INT RECTORY KITCHEN - DAY

107

ANNA is busy measuring and bottling tonics, the remedy book open in front of her. She is startled when MOMPELLION enters the kitchen.

MOMPELLION

Where may Mrs Mompellion be found?

ANNA

At the Talbot farm, sir, tending the orphaned children there. Shall I fetch her to you?

MOMPELLION

(hesitating)

No, though I wish she wouldn't go so freely into sick-houses. Make up a parcel of vittles, and bring what remedies you would. I am called to the Unwin house this day.

108

EXT HIGH STREET - DAY

108

Rats scurry through the shadowy corners of the deserted high street. A handful of stray livestock wander through the village, their masters long dead. Further away, a lone boy throws clothes and bedding onto a bonfire.

ANNA walks alongside MOMPELLION as they cross the overgrown village green.

MOMPELLION

Tell me Anna, do you start to see any benefits from your salves and tonics?

ANNA

...in truth sir, it is hard to say. We try to fortify the healthy and soothe the ill. Yet the onset of the disease still spells the end for most.

MOMPELLION

Indeed. I had begun to pray that Christopher Unwin might be lucky and live through it.

MOMPELLION pauses, turning to her.

MOMPELLION

How strange it is. Yesterday, I have filed in my mind as a good day, though it was filled with illness and grief. Yet it was a good day, for the simple fact that no one died upon it. We are brought to a sorry state, that we measure what is good by such a shortened yardstick.

ANNA is surprised that MOMPELLION confides in her. She lifts her eyes to his.

ANNA
Yes sir...we are.

Their eyes hold on each other for a moment, then MOMPELLION pushes the Unwin gate open and goes through it. ANNA follows behind him.

109 INT UNWIN BEDCHAMBER - DAY

109

ANNA enters the bedchamber with a tray of cordial, surprised to see CHRISTOPHER UNWIN sitting up in bed - weak, but not dying. MOMPELLION stands at the window, his brow knotted.

MOMPELLION
How long has he been at this?

CHRISTOPHER
Since shortly after sunup. I awoke to the sound of his spud.

ANNA goes to the window and is mortified to see her father standing waist-deep in a freshly dug grave.

ANNA
I shall send him away.

MOMPELLION
No. Stay here.

110 EXT/INT UNWIN HOUSE - DAY

110

MOMPELLION strides towards JOSS BONT who climbs out of the pit to meet him. ANNA watches from the window.

MOMPELLION
Be on your way sir! There is no need here for your services, on this or any other approaching day.

JOSS
To hell with you priest! I have laboured long and hard and I intend to be paid whether the crack of Unwin's arse feels the dirt this day or no.

MOMPELLION
Joss Bont. You must see that you offend God in your greediness.

JOSS

Hah! You might have honey-tongued me
daughter into emptying your pisspots,
but I won't be foxed by the likes of
you! It's not a poxy priest that's
going to stop me collecting my dues.

ANNA watches as JOSS heads for the house, but MOMPELLION
seizes him, gripping him tight so they stand face to face.

MOMPELLION

And it's not a poxy blaggard that's
going to get by me.

JOSS tries to throw off his grip and is surprised when he
cannot. He raises his fist but MOMPELLION doesn't flinch.
He waits for JOSS's whole force to be committed to the
punch, and at the last instant steps aside, causing JOSS to
stumble. MOMPELLION lands a swift blow to the back of his
neck and shoves him hard. JOSS teeters at the edge of the
grave, his arms flailing and his face astonished. Then he
falls into the muddy pit.

ANNA is in awe to see her father so resoundingly beaten.
MOMPELLION returns towards the house, ignoring the torrent
of curse words spewing from the grave behind him.

111 EXT VILLAGE ROAD - NIGHT

111

MOMPELLION and ANNA walk back to the rectory, MOMPELLION
lighting the way with a lantern. Neither speak. ANNA misses
her step in the dark and stumbles. MOMPELLION reaches out
to steady her.

MOMPELLION

Forgive me. Take the lamp.

ANNA hesitates, then reaches for the lamp, her hand
lighting on his. The attraction between them is palpable.
He draws her close, slowly. Electric, dangerous, neither of
them breathe as their lips draw near -

A muted cry up ahead startles them. ANNA jumps back,
fearful. MOMPELLION raises the lamp and goes in the
direction of the sound. ANNA follows. As they get closer it
becomes clear that what they have heard is a couple mating
in the bushes. The GIRL sees them and screams. The MAN on
top of her jumps up, clutching at his breeches.

The GIRL lies sprawled drunkenly on the ground, her dress
pushed up past her waist. Shocked, ANNA recognizes JOHN
GORDON and JANE MARTIN.

ANNA goes to JANE, pulling down her skirt and reaching for
her undergarments. MOMPELLION regards JOHN GORDON, his
voice trembling.

MOMPELLION

John Gordon, you have done wrong here this night. Get to your home and do not dishonour yourself further.

JOHN GORDON backs away drunkenly, then lurches off into the darkness.

MOMPELLION strides towards JANE as ANNA tries to help her push her feet back into her boots.

MOMPELLION

Jane Martin! Get on your knees!

His voice is a terrible roar. Terrified, JANE tries to raise herself but she is too drunk.

MOMPELLION

On your knees, sinner!

Shocked by the force of MOMPELLION's ire, ANNA scrambles to her feet.

ANNA

Rector! Surely you see that she cannot comprehend you at this time?

MOMPELLION trembles with fury, as if he has lost control.

MOMPELLION

This girl knows well what she does here this night! She has taken the pure vessel of her body and filled it with *corruption*. She shall be *punished!*

ANNA

But she has been punished! You know that she has seen every one of her family into their graves.

ANNA meets MOMPELLION's gaze with fearful defiance. The silence is broken by the sound of JANE retching. At that, MOMPELLION seems to regain his senses. He turns away.

MOMPELLION

Clean her, then send her on her way.

ANNA pulls a cloth from her basket and wipes JANE's mouth.

CUT TO:

ANNA and MOMPELLION walk on without speaking. In the distance drifts the strains of music and drunken debauchery coming from the ale-house. MOMPELLION exhales deeply.

MOMPELLION

None of us is master of himself as we should be in these times. I would ask that you forget... the events of this night.

ANNA nods her assent. They continue in silence.

112 INT ANNA'S COTTAGE - NIGHT 112

A stub of candle gutters by ANNA's bed as she undresses. Her fingers go to her lips, where earlier MOMPELLION's lips had come so close. Then, as if trying to extinguish her feelings, she snuffs out the candle and is plunged into darkness.

113 EXT UNWIN HOUSE - MORNING 113

ANNA arrives at the UNWIN house with a basket of food. She pushes the front door open and calls out.

ANNA

Mr Unwin! It is Anna Frith.

114 INT UNWIN HOUSE - MORNING 114

ANNA enters CHRISTOPHER UNWIN's bed chamber. His bed is empty and unmade. ANNA frowns, then goes to the window. She is shocked and saddened to see a freshly filled grave in the garden. ANNA crosses herself.

115 EXT UNWIN GARDEN - MORNING 115

ANNA picks a rose from the garden and lays it on the grave.

ANNA

Our father who art in heaven...

As ANNA prays, the rose starts to tremble. Imperceptible at first, as if there is a light breeze. ANNA looks to the trees in the garden, but the leaves are still. Then, in front of her eyes the flower's trembling grows to a tremor. A petal falls from the flower. ANNA's eyes widen as the earth on the grave starts to shift.

ANNA starts back, petrified. But when she catches glimpses of CHRISTOPHER UNWIN's live face under the dirt, her fear turns to horror and she leaps forward and with both hands scrabbles in the earth to free him.

CHRISTOPHER sucks in huge gulps of air as ANNA clears his mouth and nose from the dirt. His eyes bulge wildly, the clay sticking to his face and hair.

ANNA stares at the bloody wound on his head and knows at once whose work this is.

O.S.
Josiah Bont!

116 EXT TAVERN COURTYARD - DAY

116

JOSS BONT is held by two miners at the end of a long tavern table, half drunk and with his hands bound in front of him. At the other end is CHRISTOPHER UNWIN, his head bandaged. ALUN HOUGHTON presides at the head of the table.

HOUGHTON
Josiah Bont!

When JOSS makes no response, one of the miners holding him brings his hand down hard on the back of JOSS's neck.

MINER
Ye'll answer "Present" to t'Barmester!

JOSS
Present.

ANNA pushes her way through the crowd to the front. She sees that HOUGHTON has a parchment in front of him.

HOUGHTON
Josiah Bont, it is set down that on the third day of April in the Year of Our Lord 1666, thou art accused of entering the house of Christopher Unwin, where thou didst take a silver salt dish, two brazen candlesticks and one nightshirt of cambric. What says thee?

JOSS remains silent. The MINER pulls his head up roughly.

MINER
Pronounce aye or nay before I thump 'e!

JOSS
Aye.

As he looks up JOSS sees ANNA amongst the crowd.

HOUGHTON
Ye second item, we set down, that on the same day and in the same house thou didst lift your spade to Christopher Unwin and strike a bloody blow to his head. What says thee?

JOSS

...Aye.

HOUGHTON

Ye third item, we set down, that on
the same day thou didst lay
Christopher Unwin in his grave though
he still breathed. What says thee?

The crowd gasps and mutters. JOSS meets eyes with ANNA,
then drops his head.

JOSS

Aye.

HOUGHTON

Josiah Bont, since you own these
crimes, we find thee guilty. Does
anyone wish to speak for this man
before I proclaim his penalty?

All eyes go to ANNA. JOSS raises his eyes to her. ANNA
meets his gaze, but remains silent.

The crowd erupts, calling for the gallows. ANNA raises her
voice above the noise.

ANNA

Who amongst us is innocent?!

The courtyard quietens.

ANNA

Who has not wished that their
neighbour's house be visited by death
in place of their own? Who has not
closed their ears to the screams of
the dying in fear for their own skin?
My father is not a blameless man, but
I pray you, judge him not by what
these dark times have driven him to!

A moment of quiet, then the crowd starts calling for JOSS
BONT's blood. HOUGHTON strikes the table for silence.

ANNA meets her father's eyes and there is a moment between
them before he is dragged away.

117 INT/EXT JOSS BONT'S CROFT - DUSK

117

ANNA bangs at the door of JOSS BONT's croft. She opens the
door, pushing through the charms hanging from the rafters.

ANNA

Stepmother, go to him -

APHRA turns to ANNA, her cheeks sunken and her eyes dull. ANNA looks to the pallets on the floor where young STEPHEN lies dead, and the other boys' plague ravished bodies lie gravely ill. The little girl FAITH clings to her mother's skirts while APHRA stands at the stove stirring a steaming pot.

ANNA puts her hand to her face against the terrible stench. She goes to the boys and drops to her knees beside them.

ANNA
They're burning up - they need water.

APHRA keeps stirring her pot with fierce intensity.

ANNA
Stepmother, what is it you brew?

APHRA
Goat hair and piss to ward off the
demons, dried toad to protect their
innards and outers.

ANNA goes to her and grips her hand to cease the stirring. Like a child, APHRA lifts her terrified eyes to ANNA.

118 EXT VILLAGE GREEN DAWN

118

ANNA drives APHRA and FAITH in the sexton's cart to the village green. At the sight of JOSS's corpse swinging from the gibbet, ANNA stops and shields the little girl's eyes in her skirts.

A straggling group of children jeer and throw stones at the body. APHRA runs after the children, picking up their stones and hurling them back at them.

APHRA
The devil take you! The devil take all
of you!

The children scamper away. APHRA sinks down on the ground under the gallows. She wails for her husband, his body slowly twisting in the air above her.

ANNA (O.S.)
Stephen Bont, aged 10, Plague...

120 INT RECTORY LIBRARY - MORNING

120

Close-up on the village register of deaths.

ANNA
...Geoffrey Bont, aged 8, Plague.
Titus Bont, aged 6, Plague.

MOMPELLION writes the entries. ANNA pauses.

ANNA
Josiah Bont, aged two score and three.

ANNA watches as MOMPELLION fills in JOSS's cause of death. He closes the register, staring at the leather binding.

MOMPELLION
I am sorry for your loss.

MOMPELLION raises his eyes to her. A brief moment. Then ELINOR enters the room.

MOMPELLION turns back to his work. ELINOR goes to ANNA, her face full of compassion.

ELINOR
My dear...

She embraces ANNA, long and hard.

121 INT RECTORY KITCHEN - MORNING 121

ANNA stokes the oven, heats water, slices a loaf, and arranges the porcelain cups and saucers on a silver tray...

122 INT LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER 122

ANNA carries the tray of refreshments as she gently opens the library door. She stops at the sight of MOMPELLION and ELINOR at the window, their backs to her. MOMPELLION is standing close behind his wife. ELINOR's head is tilted back, her eyes closed as his lips graze the nape of her neck. Her hand grips the window frame, her body taut. The scene is charged with erotic tension.

ANNA silently witnesses this, then backs away.

123 INT RECTORY KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER 123

ANNA returns to the kitchen and sets the tray down. She picks up the porcelain cups and saucers, his first, then hers, and smashes them against the stone floor, the noise echoing through the house.

Her anger vented, ANNA stares at what she has done. As she bends to pick up the pieces, she looks up and sees ELINOR in the doorway. ELINOR bends down and picks up a piece of porcelain by her feet. ANNA is filled with remorse.

ANNA
Forgive me, I -

ELINOR holds her hand out to her.

ELINOR
Come, we've work to do.

124

EXT BONT CROFT - DAY

124

ANNA and ELINOR knock on APHRA's door. There is no answer.

ANNA
Stepmother?

ANNA pushes the door open. There, in the dimly lit croft, APHRA sits on a wooden chair, fidgeting with the crystal in her hand and mumbling to herself. On the floor, FAITH plays with a ragged poppet. The child looks ill-fed and unwashed.

ANNA
We bring bread and tonics to restore you.

ELINOR goes to FAITH and offers her an oatcake. FAITH grabs it and devours it like a starved animal. ANNA and ELINOR exchange glances.

ANNA
I pray you, come stay with me in my cottage. We are family.

APHRA doesn't respond.

ELINOR
Then let us care for the child until you are recovered...from your bereavement.

APHRA grabs FAITH away from ELINOR.

APHRA
You think I can't see through you?! You're not my stepdaughter now. Oh, no. You're *her* creature.

She points a finger at ELINOR.

APHRA
That dry-snatched, barren scarecrow would steal my last babe, would she?

ELINOR turns pale.

APHRA
That's what you're after, I know it. I'll not have you blacken me to my own daughter. I'll not have your lies poured into her ears.

ELINOR
Come, Anna, we do no good here.

ELINOR turns for the door. ANNA sets the basket of food on the table.

APHRA
Pox take you and your helping ways!

CUT TO:

FAITH watches at the window, her dark eyes wide and grave as ANNA and ELINOR walk away.

125 EXT COUNTRY LANE - DAY

125

ANNA and ELINOR are both affected by their visit to APHRA.

ANNA
Pray forgive her. She is not herself.

ELINOR
I would surely be the same if I had
suffered her losses.

ANNA stops, affected by ELINOR's generosity. She plucks a wild honeysuckle bloom from the hedgerow, and offers it to her. ELINOR takes the flower, breathes in the heady perfume and smiles. ANNA picks another and teaches ELINOR how to sip its nectar. ELINOR copies her, their eyes locked together in a moment of shared intimacy.

ANNA smiles and runs ahead, plucking honeysuckle from the hedgerow and filling her apron. She hears a cough behind her, but doesn't stop. ELINOR coughs again. Then she has a spasm that wracks her, pressing her lace handkerchief to her mouth.

ANNA lets the flowers fall to the ground and rushes to ELINOR, putting her arm around her to support her. ELINOR tries to smile through the coughing.

ELINOR
Now, Anna, don't bury me on the basis
of a cough merely!

ANNA feels ELINOR's brow, and pulls her to a large stone under a tree.

ANNA
Sit here, and I'll fetch Mr
Mompellion.

ELINOR
Anna! Stop this at once! You shall do
no such thing!
(MORE)

ELINOR (cont'd)
 I am perhaps coming down with a slight
 cold, and I will not have you fuss and
 panic me so!

She squeezes ANNA's hand.

ELINOR
 If I am truly ill, you will be the
 first person I shall confide in. Until
 then, do not trouble Mr Mompellion
 with this.

She walks on briskly. ANNA catches up with her and takes
 her arm. They walk together in uneasy silence.

ELINOR sees ANNA's cheeks are wet with tears. She stops and
 raises her lace handkin, about to wipe ANNA's face. Then
 she stops in mid-gesture, crumples the handkin up and
 plunges it deep into her whisket.

126 INT ELINOR'S BEDCHAMBER - EVENING 126

ELINOR lies in bed, fevered and sleeping fitfully. ANNA
 bathes her face tenderly. MOMPELLION enters the room.

MOMPELLION
 (flatly)
 Thank you Anna. I will sit with her
 now.

ANNA is reluctant to leave ELINOR's side. She rinses a
 cloth and hands it to MOMPELLION. He takes it numbly,
 staring at his fading wife like a haunted man.

127 INT RECTORY KITCHEN - NIGHT 127

ANNA kneels on the stone floor and closes her eyes in
 prayer.

ANNA
 I pray you! Don't punish us this way!

128 INT ELINOR'S BEDCHAMBER - DAY 128

ANNA tries to feed ELINOR a cooling draught. ELINOR opens
 her eyes, smiles faintly and rests her hand on ANNA's.

ELINOR
 I am fortunate to have been given a
 husband such as Michael and a friend
 as dear as you, Anna.

ELINOR closes her eyes. ANNA blinks away tears of remorse.
 ELINOR speaks again, her eyes still closed.

ELINOR
 I hope you will find it in your heart
 to be a friend to Mr Mompellion,
 Anna...for my Michael will have need
 of a friend...

129 EXT RECTORY - NIGHT 129

ELINOR's cries echo in the night.

130 INT ELINOR'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT 130

ANNA rushes into the room where ELINOR is tossing and turning, delirious. She tries to cool her forehead. ELINOR starts giggling girlishly, her breathing rapid.

ELINOR
 Charles! Wait!

Then her tone darkens.

ELINOR
 Charles? Where are you? Charles?!

She cries out and starts moaning in distress. ANNA takes her hand and tries to soothe her. ELINOR quietens. Then she starts whispering urgently, pleadingly.

ELINOR
 Michael...Michael, please, my love,
 how much longer? How much longer?

ANNA leans close, trying to decipher ELINOR's words. MOMPELLION's shadow falls across the doorway.

MOMPELLION
 (cold)
 That will do, Anna. Leave us. I will
 call you if she needs anything.

ANNA
 I think she is worsened -

MOMPELLION
 Leave us!

131 INT RECTORY KITCHEN - DAWN 131

Sunshine streams into the kitchen through the high casement windows. ANNA wakes, easing herself stiffly from the wooden bench. She listens to the deathly quiet of the house with foreboding.

132 INT ELINOR'S BEDCHAMBER - DAWN

132

ANNA eases the door of the bedchamber open. ELINOR lies sunken into her pillows, the vivid flush gone from her face. She is as pale and still as stone. MOMPPELLION is sprawled across the foot of her bed, his hands outstretched towards where she lies, as if reaching to catch her fleeting soul.

ANNA lets out a cry of grief. ELINOR opens her eyes and smiles weakly.

ELINOR
(whispers)
The fever is broken, and I have been
lying here awake, parched for a
posset. I could not call for you
because I did not want to wake my
poor, tired Michael.

ANNA drops to her knees and clasps ELINOR's hand.

133 EXT RECTORY - MORNING

133

The sun rises over the village, throwing soft shafts of light across the garden. As ANNA collects eggs from the rectory chicken coup, she finds a strange rooster amongst the hens.

ANNA
Well, odd's fish! You're Andrew
Merrick's cockerel, if I'm not
mistaken!

The rooster flutters up onto the well windlass and lets forth a mighty peal.

ANNA
And what might you be doing back here,
when your master sits and bides on
yonder lonely peak?

The bird flies off, leaving ANNA wondering.

134 EXT VILLAGE ROAD - DAY

134

ANNA and ELINOR are out walking, ELINOR leaning on ANNA's arm for support. They meet ANDREW MERRICK, his beard grown long and bushy, driving his cart back into the village.

MERRICK
(tipping his hat)
Ladies.

ANNA
Is that you Andrew Merrick?

MERRICK
None other, Mistress Frith.

ELINOR
And do you rejoin us?

MERRICK
My bird reckons it's safe to return to
his old roost. And I trust in his
judgement. Good day to you!

ANNA and ELINOR watch after him, unused to the words.

TOGETHER
Good day.

135 EXT CUCKLETT DELF - DAY

135

ANNA gathers with the VILLAGERS in Cucklett Delf. Among the survivors are MARY HADFIELD, JOHN GORDON, CHRISTOPHER UNWIN, MARTIN HIGHFIELD, ANDREW MERRICK, JANE MARTIN, and RANDOLL and LOTTIE DANIEL with their baby son. They approach each other tentatively, shaking hands and embracing for the first time since the arrival of the Plague.

MOMPELLION and ELINOR are the last to arrive. MOMPELLION is striking in his fine white surplice. But ANNA's breath is taken away when she sees ELINOR, as unearthly as an angel in a delicate white gown, her arms laden with flowers.

MOMPELLION steps up to the pulpit. ELINOR takes her place, where ANNA is waiting. She turns to ANNA, smiling, then turns her face back to her husband, beaming up at him, her face glowing in the dappled sunshine.

MOMPELLION
My friends, our trial is over. Life
endures. Our souls are not
extinguished by death, nor our spirits
by suffering.

MOMPELLION gives his congregation a long impassioned look.

MOMPELLION
Our sacrifice has not been in vain.
For I can tell you that there has been
no case of Plague in all of Derbyshire
traced to our village. Beloved
friends, let us bow our heads and give
thanks...

A piercing shriek cuts through his words.

APHRA
For whaaaat?!

MOMPELLION looks towards the crazed woman pushing her way towards him. She is waving a knife in one hand, and in the other she clutches her daughter FAITH's maggoty corpse. Everyone recoils in horror, letting her pass unimpeded.

Aghast, ANNA steps forward to stop her.

ANNA
Stepmother, please -

But ELINOR holds ANNA back. MOMPELLION calmly walks across the grass towards APHRA. He opens his arms, the lace of his surplice billowing in the breeze. APHRA runs at him, the knife raised above her head.

He steps right into her path, his arms locking round her, gathering her to him like a child. His large hand grips her wrist, rendering the knife useless.

ANNA watches ELINOR run to them, dropping her flowers on the ground.

MOMPELLION
Hush my child...release your
torment...for though you suffer, yet
God loves you...

ANNA watches as the tension leaves APHRA's body and she lets go of the knife and starts to sob. ELINOR strokes APHRA's face with one hand, while gently unclasping her arm from around FAITH's corpse.

Through her tears, APHRA sees ELINOR touching her dead child, and her madness re-ignites. She seizes the knife, lashes out and slices ELINOR's throat. In vivid detail, ANNA sees the blood spurt from the wound, streaking ELINOR's white gown crimson. ELINOR crumples to the ground, where her scattered flowers receive her as a bier.

MOMPELLION cries out and falls onto his beloved wife, desperately trying to stem the flow of blood with his hands. But his hands drip crimson with ELINOR's blood as the light in her eyes fades and goes out.

Before the VILLAGERS can restrain her, APHRA turns the knife on herself and plunges it into her chest, slumping over FAITH's body.

Through the tree tops of cucklett delf, we look down upon this bloody tableau.

136 EXT CHURCHYARD - DAY

136

In the deserted churchyard, ANNA lays daisies on ELINOR's freshly filled grave.

To the side of the grave, MICHA MILNE, the twelve year old son of the mason, clumsily carves the inscription on the headstone.

ANNA

You have mistaken a letter in her name.

MICHA

Forgive me missus. No offence to the good lady. My pa hadn't learned me my alphabet when he -

ANNA

Your father would be proud of you. And you can be sure, she who rests here would forgive you...as I pray she forgives all of us.

137 EXT RECTORY GARDEN - DUSK

137

ANNA finds MOMPELLION standing motionless beside ELINOR's late summer roses.

ANNA

(whispers)

She loved those. Sometimes I used to think it was because they were in her image, all pale and creamy, with just a hint of blush...

He turns to her sharply and raises his hand, his voice a rasp.

MOMPELLION

Do not speak, I beg you.

He turns and walks unsteadily towards the house, leaving ANNA alone on the pathway. She picks up a fallen bloom, closes her eyes and inhales the faded scent, as if trying to breathe in the essence of ELINOR herself. But the petals come away in her hand and fall to the ground.

138 EXT RECTORY - MORNING

138

ANNA arrives for work, passing the stable where WILLIAM the stable boy struggles to lead ANTEROS into the next stall. The horse stamps and snorts and rears against the boy.

WILLIAM

He's not been ridden Mistress, and I
canna get close enough to muck'im out.

ANNA

Do what you can for him William. I
fear it may be a time before the
master calls for his horse.

139 INT MOMPPELLION'S BEDCHAMBER - MORNING 139

She knocks on the door with a tray of breakfast.

ANNA

Mr Mompellion?

She opens the door. The bed has not been slept on.

140 INT RECTORY LIBRARY - DAY 140

ANNA looks in the library. An open flask of brandy and
empty glass are all that adorn MOMPPELLION's writing table.

141 INT ELINOR'S BEDCHAMBER - MORNING 141

ANNA finds MOMPPELLION standing by the head of ELINOR's bed,
unshaven and in yesterday's clothes.

ANNA takes his elbow and steers him to a chair.

CUT TO:

ANNA lays out MOMPPELLION's shaving things on the table by
the window. She picks up the soap. MOMPPELLION's face
remains immobile, his eyes shut as she tentatively lathers
his face. She takes the blade and starts to shave him, her
face close to his. As she works, the light through the
shutters catches his drawn, haggard features... how changed
from the first time ANNA spied the handsome rector from the
hallway all those months ago.

142 EXT GOWDIE GARDEN - DAY 142

ANNA tends CARYS GOWDIE's garden, cutting the herbs and
hanging them to dry.

143 INT HADFIELD HOUSE - DAY 143

ANNA reaches into her basket of remedies.

ANNA

Make an infusion with this leaf, steep it well and drink it before you retire. Tis little wonder that sleep defies us and nightmares lie in wait.

MARY stares at the jar of valerian leaf.

MARY

I often times think if I hadn't turned Carys Gowdie away from my Edward's sickbed...

ANNA clasps MARY's hands in hers.

ANNA

Think not like that, Mary. It will be the undoing of us all.

144

EXT VILLAGE - DAY

144

ANNA carries her basket through the village markets and passes a young woman, dressed modestly and shouldering a bundle. She looks again.

ANNA

Jane Martin!

JANE

Mistress Frith! How glad am I to see you.

ANNA

Are you leaving us?

JANE smiles at ANNA shyly.

JANE

I am to be hand-fastened.

ANNA grasps JANE's hands in hers.

JANE

The farrier in Stoney Middleton. He seems kind and good and not too old...

ANNA

Oh Jane, I wish you well.

They embrace. At that moment a fine horse and carriage approaches, followed by a second carriage loaded down with luggage. As the first carriage sweeps past, ANNA catches a glimpse of the passengers inside. The BRADFORDS.

145 EXT RECTORY - DAY 145

The autumn wind blows the last of the petals from ELINOR's garden, the leaves from the trees swirl on the ground.

146 EXT RECTORY - DAY 146

A cartload of apples draws up to the rectory. ANNA comes out to meet it and scrutinizes the spotted apples.

ANNA

Could you not've brought better for the Rector?

CARTER

E's lucky to get as good as these.
Nary a one left to do the harvest.
Rotting under foot they are.

147 INT RECTORY LIBRARY - DAY 147

ANNA carries a sliced apple on a plate into the dimly lit library where MOMPELLION sits still and silent, an unopened Bible on his desk in front of him. She serves him the apple, but he stares only at the glass of liquor in his hand.

ANNA

...Tis said Christopher Unwin has found a wife in Bakewell and will be returning before the end of leaf fall. Robert Snee has bought Mary Hadfield's pigs and young Jacob Merrill's son has taken up the thatcher's trade...

ANNA goes to the window and opens the curtains.

ANNA

They're calling for servants up at Bradford Hall. Tis said Colonel Bradford won't take anyone whose family was touched by the...

She senses MOMPELLION flinch and quickly changes the subject.

ANNA

- Anteros is fretting in his stall for want of exercise. I do believe there are many in town who would welcome a word of prayer. If you would I'll ask William to saddle -

MOMPELLION

(bitterly)

There is no-one in this village who would welcome me at their hearth. They do not love me for what I have done here. Why should they? Because of me, many are dead who might have saved themselves. I am the bitter emblem of their darkest days.

He reaches for the brandy flask, drunkenly sweeping the Bible off the desk as he goes to refill his glass. The book hits the floor with a crash, breaking its spine.

148 INT/EXT STABLES - DAY

148

ANNA passes WILLIAM asleep in the hay and slips into ANTEROS's stall. The horse rears, then regards her, blowing and snorting.

ANNA

Well, Anteros, I come to tell you that it is no good waiting for him anymore.

She pulls an apple from her pocket and slides the bridle over his head. He tosses his head and flares his nostrils.

ANNA

Here we are, alive, and you and I will have to make of it what we can.

She leads the restless horse into the courtyard and mounts him bareback. He dances a little, impatient. ANNA clicks her tongue and ANTEROS leaps the wall.

149 EXT MOORS - DAY

149

ANNA gallops across the moors, the cold air stinging her face. The wind lifts her cap off, her hair blowing wildly behind her. ANTEROS's hooves beat on the ground like a drum.

ANNA pulls ANTEROS up at the boundary stone, her face flushed and her breathing fast. She gazes across the valley to Stoney Middleton and beyond, and feels the pull of distant places.

The horse drinks thirstily from the stream. ANNA drags her eyes off the horizon, pulls ANTEROS's head up and turns him back towards the village.

150 EXT RECTORY - DAY

150

ANNA rides a sweaty but sedate ANTEROS into the rectory grounds. MOMPELLION strides out the door to meet them, angry and incredulous. He grabs the bridle and stares at ANNA who is riding astride with her skirt pulled up, her hair loose and her cheeks flushed and misted with sweat.

MOMPELLION

Have you taken entire leave of your senses?

ANNA looks down at him, not flinching from his stare.

ANNA

Have you?

MOMPELLION abruptly lets go of the horse. He presses the heels of his palms into his eyes.

MOMPELLION

Yes, truly, I think my senses have left me indeed.

He drops to his knees on the ground. Moved, ANNA slides off the horse and takes him in her arms. He buries his face in her hair.

WILLIAM appears from the stables. ANNA jumps up, trying to regain some composure.

ANNA

There you are, Master William. Kindly see to Anteros. He will want water, and he is calm enough I think, to tolerate a brushing after all this time. See that you do it thoroughly.

Trembling, she hands WILLIAM the reins and walks towards the kitchen.

151 INT RECTORY KITCHEN - DAY

151

ANNA calms herself. She gathers up her unruly hair and fixes it as best she can. She is checking herself in a hanging pan when she sees MOMPELLION's reflection behind her.

She turns, slowly.

He stares at her, then slowly pulls her to him, kissing her roughly. They fall together onto the stone floor, wild and hungry for each other.

152 INT MOMPELLION'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

152

Rain raps lightly at the windowpane. ANNA and MOMPELLION lie together in the candle-light, their naked bodies entwined. She stares at her rough hand in his.

ANNA

When you lie with me, are you lying
with her in your memory?

MOMPELLION tenses.

MOMPELLION

No.

He brushes a strand of hair from her cheek and kisses her, gently at first, then with intensity. ANNA lets herself be drawn into the lovemaking. Then her eyes light on ELINOR's ivory comb lying on the night-stand. She pulls away.

MOMPELLION rises and pours himself a drink.

MOMPELLION

I have no memories of Elinor in my
bed.

ANNA doesn't understand.

MOMPELLION

I never lay with her.

Bewildered, ANNA tries to comprehend.

MOMPELLION

My wife, as a girl, committed a great
sin, of which you could not know...

ANNA

But I do know. She told me of it.

He looks at her, surprised.

MOMPELLION

Then you know that her sins weighed
heavily upon her. Elinor was in great
need of atonement, and that is what I
pledged to her. For her sake, and my
own. I had to be assured she was
cleansed in God's eyes, or else risk
the loss of her for all eternity.

ANNA tries to grasp his meaning.

ANNA

You never lay together as man and
wife?

MOMPELLION

(pauses)

I denied her our bodily union until
there would come a sign from God.

MOMPELLION turns away, bitter.

MOMPELLION

Now I know there was no God, and I was
wrong. I thought I spoke for God.
Fool. My whole life, all I have done,
all I have said, all I have believed,
has been based upon a *lie!*

He smashes his glass against the hearth. Seeing his
torment, ANNA reaches out and takes him by the hand.
Gently, she leads him to the bed. Stroking the lines on his
face, she starts kissing him until he returns to her, and
together they make slow and passionate love.

153 INT MOMPELLION'S BEDCHAMBER - DAWN

153

The cool dawn light filters onto MOMPELLION as he sleeps.

ANNA slips out of bed. As she dresses quietly, she catches
her reflection in the looking-glass. She stops and regards
herself, then slowly picks up ELINOR's ivory comb and turns
it in her hands.

CUT TO:

ANNA bends to collect the chamber pot from under the bed.
As she goes to leave the room, MOMPELLION wakes.

MOMPELLION

...wait.

ANNA turns. He sleepily reaches out to her.

MOMPELLION

Stay.

ANNA

(gently)

You must eat.

MOMPELLION

Anna -

She turns in the doorway.

MOMPELLION

Set the tray for two.

ANNA automatically curtsies.

ANNA
Sir.

154 INT RECTORY KITCHEN - DAWN 154

ANNA cleans the grate in the stove, lights the fire, and puts water onto heat.

155 INT RECTORY LIBRARY - DAWN 155

ANNA pushes the library door open and quietly goes to MOMPELLION's desk.

She slides out a leaf of paper, and his quill and ink. Taking a seat, she tentatively takes pen to paper. Her first attempts are marred by ink blots. She takes a fresh leaf of paper.

ANNA (V.O.)
Sir, forgive my clumsy hand...

CUT TO:

ANNA carries a silver tray set with a fine breakfast to MOMPELLION's bedchamber.

ANNA (V.O.)
...but I must tell you what is in my heart, for I once made a promise to be a friend to you...

At the door, she sets the tray down without a sound. On the tray lies a spray of freshly picked violets, and underneath them, a folded letter.

156 EXT RECTORY - MORNING 156

ANNA reaches the rectory gate. She pushes the iron gate open and passes through. Looking back for a moment, she refastens the latch and walks away.

157 EXT CHURCHYARD - MORNING 157

ANNA goes to her husband's plot, and her children's graves. *James Frith...His Soul To Keep...Thomas Frith...Beloved Son Of Samuel and Anna...*

ANNA
(reads in a whisper)
At peace with the Lord.

158 EXT CARYS GOWDIE'S GARDEN - DAY

158

Close on a plant with woolly leaves and yellow flowers.
ANNA picks a piece, showing it to MARY HADFIELD.

ANNA
Mix it with rue, sweet cicely and
mustard oil for a syrup that quietens
a cough.

MARY takes the flower and puts it to her nose.

ANNA
Strip willow bark in the spring when
the sap begins to flow and boil it to
ease aches and fevers...

ANNA stops at a tall plant covered with blue flowers.

MARY
What is it?

ANNA remembers CARYS's distant words.

ANNA
...eat a small piece of its root and
you will be dead by nightfall. But
grind the wort and mix it with oils
and you have a rub for aching joints.

She continues down the planted rows.

ANNA
Nettle for the blood, cress for the
stomach, bat weed for the glands -

MARY
(overwhelmed)
Stop -

ANNA turns and smiles.

ANNA
Remember what you can Mary. And tend
the garden well. Do it for Carys and
all those who came before her and all
who are yet to come.

MARY nods, understanding.

159 EXT ANNA'S COTTAGE - DAY

159

ANNA emerges from her cottage and closes the door behind
her.

She walks down the high street, her meagre belongings in a bundle on her back.

160

EXT BOUNDARY STONE - DAY

160

ANNA reaches the boundary stone and looks out across the land, taking in its vastness.

At the thudding of hooves she turns to see MICHAEL MOMPELLION riding towards her. He pulls up ANTEROS in front of her.

He slides off his horse and steps towards her.

ANNA

I pray you sir, do not try to stop me.

MOMPELLION

If I do, it would be for my own sake. For I have been lost, wandering in the darkness of my grief. But you, Anna, you grieve and yet you live, and bring life to others.

ANNA

And so must you!

He smiles wryly.

MOMPELLION

No. My faith is lost.

He hands her ANTEROS's reins.

MOMPELLION

Take him...

(with a hint of humour)

...for we both know you can handle him.

CUT TO:

ANTEROS snorts and stamps his hooves. MOMPELLION secures ANNA's belongings behind the saddle.

MOMPELLION

Once on the road to London, take the fork to Bakewell. I am acquainted with an estate there and have taken the liberty of writing a letter of introduction.

He offers her a letter.

MOMPELLION

It would be a good choice for you
Anna, for it is a large household and
they treat their servants fairly.

ANNA hesitates before taking the letter. MOMPELLION holds
out his hand to help her into the saddle, but she mounts
unassisted. Taking up the reins, she turns to go, then
pauses, holding back an impatient ANTEROS.

ANNA

You once said you saw God in a man
helping his neighbour thatch his
roof...

Remembering, he nods.

ANNA

Then you must find a roof to thatch.

Their eyes connect one last time, then ANNA squeezes
ANTEROS with her heels and rides away.

161 EXT COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

161

ANNA arrives at a signpost where the road turns off to
Bakewell.

She takes out MOMPELLION's letter of introduction. Then she
tears it up and lets the wind carry the pieces away.

ANNA sets her eyes on the horizon, clicks her tongue and
continues on the road towards London.

VOICE OVER

Anna's hope was to put the Plague year
behind her. She could not know, as she
rode towards her new life, that a
lasting reminder of that time had
already started to take root inside
her...

162 EXT BUSTLING TOWN - DAY

162

SUPER TITLE: *London Town, 1671*

163 INT SCHOOL HOUSE - DAY

163

Standing up the front of a school room, ANNA teaches a
class of workers' children their letters. She leads with
enthusiasm as the children recite the alphabet.

ANNA

Good. Now, write your name. Call me if
you need help.

ANNA walks between the children, checking the work on their
slates.

VOICE OVER

This is my mother's story. She would
tell it to me, and I in turn shall
tell it to my children. She said it
would be a sin to forget. For that
year was not only one of terrible
grief and sorrow, it was also...a year
of wonders.

ANNA arrives at a LITTLE GIRL, dark and pretty, and younger
than the other students. ANNA checks the LITTLE GIRL's
work. Reveal the name written across her slate...Elinor.

ANNA strokes little ELINOR's hair with a loving smile, then
turns back to the rest of the children and resumes the
class.
