

# An Angel in Islington

*Notes made by Ben Jaffa on the Other Matter that became The Matter in Hand (and another matter).*

After our bloody and effective suppression of the Sodality of St Benedict and the slaying of Carluccio, we were able to give our full attention to the matter of Black Tom and the Skull.



## Recap

Our working hypothesis was that the malign Spirit we saw conjured in the Crypt of the Church of St Leonard's now inhabited the body of a petty docklands gangster called Black Tom, thus transformed him into a sort of cockney Tamurlaine the Great. In barely a fortnight he had already built a small empire along the docks and wharves of the Thames in a campaign of blood and ruthlessness. Our principal, Mr Blythe, had leant us a couple of bravos, Bodie and Doyle, and had, with the greatest of reluctance, agreed to our cunning plan. His reluctance owed to its palpably occult nature:- to wit that Mr Plumswode would utilise the Skull and the Book taken from the Sodality and summon the Spirit out of Black Tom and put it back in the Skull. Unfortunately, having revealed himself to Blythe as a dabbler in the Dark Arts, when he came to do his sums, Plymswood came up some grains short of a full charge in the matter of his summoning. So it was back to the drawing board for Plymswode. Bodie and Doyle remained on standby.

## Sir Henry Percy

Plumyswood resolved to ask a friend. The friend in question was Sir Henry Percy, his patron. To say that Sir Henry is a gentleman is to say that a lion is a type of cat. After all even that cowardly poltroon Drake gets to stick a Sir in front of his name these days. However, Sir Henry is the real deal. He received us at a grand house that he freely admitted was not his own but borrowed from a friend while he was in London (oh, that I should have such friends). He was courteous and gracious to us all in his greeting. After the pleasantries, Plumyswoode gets down to business and consults him regarding his proposed conjuring. I won't pretend to have understood the tenth part of their discussion, but one warning Sir Henry offered has stayed with me. He adjured Plemyswode against making assumptions. A wise man as well as a noble one, it seems.

## The Conjuring

Back at his own house in some small village to the North of London – Islington, I think it's called. Plemmyswode sets out his stall in the basement for the great conjuration. Bell went out in the garden to play with Bodie and Doyle. Ned lurked at the top of the stairs, I at the bottom – curiosity overcoming plain sense - and Blytheman appointed himself magician's assistant. A pentagram was carefully drawn, the skull came out of the box and Plumyswode begins to chant in a language of which I could make nothing.

Long story short, Plumiswood's conjuration yeilds not one spirit, but two – one from the Skull and another from Elsewhere. The shade from Elsewhere is the larger of the two and had very much the seeming of the ghaist that consumed Trenningham. It proceeds to eat the Skull spirit. We reasoned afterwards that the spell must summon any demon in the vicinity. We may have been lucky there were only two.

Repast over, the demon rails against the bars of Plemiswood's pentagram, but his figures were good. The sorceror extracted its name from it and it settled down a bit. It basically said that it had escaped from its duty (presumably due to Trenningham's conjuration). It

was now having a great time possessing Black Tom, and building an empire amongst the humans. It's real job was to guard a magical well where it had been set by an angel called Hesad for all eternity. A boring job it seems. Anyway, I think Plumyswood tried to banish it and in desperation it called out for its boss, the Angel.

I lack clear memories of exactly what happened – but I have seen an Angel. Something to tell my grandchildren I suppose. What I mostly remember is a bright light and loud words in this unknown language. Then it was gone, taking with it the demon. Presumably, the demon is back guarding the well.

We found Plymiswode to be wandering in his wits after the encounter (it took us a little while to ascertain this) and bereft of memory, not just of the events in the basement, but of everything, including his name. However, some calm and an apple pie made by a kind neighbour seemed to calm him. By the following day he was beginning to piece the broken shards of his mind together once more. Meanwhile we laid plans to pay Cutt's Tavern on Brown's Wharf a visit to deal with Black Tom's gang.

### **Brown's Wharf**

Bell and I decided to go in full armour but mis-liked the idea of proceeding through London thus attired. Bodie and Doyle procured us a wagon with a cover. As we rolled up to Cutts Tavern we were accosted by a bunch of gangsters. They regretted it immediately as we jumped out and set about them. Bell chased a couple down the alley. I ran up the steps and kicked down the front door. I was closely followed by Bodie and Doyle.

In all we made short work of Black Tom's gang. The living we handed over to local law enforcement; the dead went into the Thames. The only blemish on the operation was that the fellow that Ned and I designated as Posh Doublet managed to escape.

We found Black Tom in the basement, hung up by his thumbs. It seems that when his demonic muse left him his mates turned on him. There really is no honour amongst thieves. He was rueful but philosophical. He had no real understanding of the nature of his possession but seemed aware of it and rather regretted its passing. Most of his ill-gotten gains seemed to have been spent on an excellent sword and brace of fancy pistols. I sold them back to the merchants who had supplied them in the first place and shared out the cash – not forgetting Bodie and Doyle – which was considerable.

Blythe seemed content and indeed saw fit to furnish us with a modest purse from the Treasury, so we were truly in funds. We were also invited to an event at the Palace in a few weeks time. However, he was very swift to press us onto our new engagement for what is plainly now our boss, Sir Francis Walsingham.

### **Another Matter**

We were reminded of Peskov, the Russian Alchemist who Sandy, Ned and I had encountered as we pursued the rescue of the Turkish Emissary. Apparently he had disappeared and Sir Francis deemed it imperative that he should be found.

We found his shop to have been burnt down. He was said to be dead, but there were enough clues to make us doubt that this was definitely the case. It seemed more likely that he had disappeared by his own volition, or had perhaps been kidnapped. More research on this matter is required.

