

ACT 2: OF BEASTS AND MEN

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY:

- Richard Blake, Captain of the Kestrel, out of Bristol.
- Auralia Perez deLyon, Mistress of Bernard Gui, notable Jesuit within the Inquisition.
- Viscomte Jules du Plessis, a friend and acquaintance of Captain Richard Blake.
- Kerr Avon, noted man of both Physic and Study, also a friend and acquaintance of Captain Richard Blake.
- John Williams, Walsingham's man
- Reverend Hutton - A priest of the Chapel of St. Cuthbert of Letters.
- Monsignor Hütter - the same: not only, but also.
- Assorted Bristol Roughts and their Hounds.
- Townsmen of Bristol, and Yokels of the Somerset Levels, various.
- Urchins.

April 1582 (Cont.)

To the Kestrels's voyage home. Mistress deLyon pleads for her life, family, riches, ransom, jewellery, for all the tale she jumped overboard to Walsingham, for she fears torture or worse.

Her rescue plans failed, her fate inevitable, Mistress deLyon confesses all to the charms of Captain Blake; the instructions for contacts in Bristol, London, of sympathisers who might assist in escape.

Some fortune then that Kerr Avon, Blakes closest friend of Physic and other Arts is about. Drawn is Avon to both the deLyon necklace and jewellery. In study he ascertains inscriptions of primitive eastern language related to those Persian of antiquity. Through Intellectual Powers and Insight (most certainly never the Magick 'Arts') he divines it may translate approximately 'Comes to the world 1599'.

And then the night comes. Exhausted, Kerr Avon dreams of a teeming market under a blazing sky not of any English town, full of insubstantial figures, yet a solid, dark-eyed Moorish boy watches him from an alley, to duck away as he turns to approach. And there in the market somehow looming close yet insubstantial was deLyon herself staring at him, asking 'What time does it have?' Over and over. With a wrenching start he is awakened

by the watch cry of 'Land Ho!'. He is disconcerted, and ill-at-ease for much of the day thereafter for no reasons he can entertain.

Thence the contact with Walsingham's man 'Williams' as they are docked in Bristol. He assures Blake that the coach will present at St Bart's Square, to take deLyon and himself to London that afternoon, at Walsingham's request most urgent.

Handover made, Captain Blake, his redoubtable crew, and friends Kerr Avon and Jules du Plessis retire to the Silver Eel to celebrate a successful voyage, albeit a poor one, for no fortune has been liberated for the Queen. They are comforted that Walsingham pays most reasonably, yet Blake recounts how much more difficult upkeep of the Kestrel might be without his redoubtable Patron, Sir Alistair Uttinfer.

An hour gone, a hearty land meal and much ale for the crew, and other patrons at Blake's word, and the best Spanish wine from his private supply at the Silver Eel for Blake and his friends. Abruptly their splendid evening ashore is interrupted by shouts and cries outside. Men burst in through the door, shouting about an altercation in the Square, the coach, disagreement, swordplay.

There is talk of men with Huge Hounds, swords, a death and one abducted.

In consternation Blake sends out his crewmen from those at the Silver Eel. Bare minutes pass and they report - a body in the square, the coach in disarray. They exit to investigate fearing for Walsingham's Man and the Mistress deLyon.

A body. Walsingham's man indeed, bloodied and still beside the coach,. The horses gone, cut free and scattered. Talk of dogs and men. A canny eye, du Plessis sees an alley and an urchin. A coin, and a description of events unfolds piecemeal: confrontation, sword play, a hound grown huge with balefire eyes, a woman taken. The search erupts: du Plessis's urchins spurred by shiny coin, and the rabble roused by Blake to find the dogs, men and captive woman, while Avon seeks quiet converse with an old acquaintance Reverend Jim, a man of the cloth wedded to his beloved Bristol flock, and a knowledge thereof without compare. For Yes, St. Cuthbert of the Letters is just off Agatha Street and Bitter Alley, old Friar Fortescue by name but lately a new man, Lutheran by accounts: perhaps name of Hatten, Hatter or Hütter, and perhaps familiar amongst those of Bath & Wells....

Hints and more lead in but one area, Agatha Street housing the quiet Chapel of St Cuthbert of Letters. The crowds dispersed, the urchins paid, Rev. Jim away about his business, a plan is hatched.

Later that same evening: the chapel is approached brazenly from the fore, silently from the rear.

Noisy in, Blake and Avon stumble through the Chapel doors, into prayer and need of refuge, dissembling hints of Popery about their manner and words. Practised as presenting fugitives fleeing from Protestant Justice they quickly huddle with the Pastor Hatton to a back room, he intent upon their emotional appeals for help and refuge, such sympathy damning him as a Papist with every word.

Meanwhile, about the Chapel back a laced and perfumed shadow drifts silently from gates left disconcertingly unlocked, thought the smell of horse and muddy hoof prints. du Plessis (for it is he) barely leaves a print of his finest calf skin boot, down at heel and holey soled though it may be. Beside the back door, du Plessis pauses, his nosegay to refresh to the scent of horse shit from outside and wet dog from within.

Within scant moments passed, the dissembling Pastor is revealed armed, and disarmed at pistol point by an observant Captain Blake. At rear a hint of light and smell of dog from an open shutter leads du Plessis in. A dog distracted by thrown horse dung leaps out, so du Plessis leaps in. Thence within the darkness two men come to ends upon the du Plessis blade, such a Master needing nothing so gauche as sight of an opponent to defeat them. His protectors gone the Pastor admits to the woman taken, Muchelney Abbey ruins their destination.

Horses found, Blake, Avon, and du Plessis pursue through the night to reach the Abbey, not far behind those they seek.

The last mile there and floods about the levels. The Abbey ruin sighted in the morning light across a stretch of water, depth unknown. Lucky local then, to rent a second row boat that same morning, the first but a scant hour or two before.

The Abbey upon its dry rise. The central Abbot's Hall stands, still, while all about is ruin for a generation. All quiet, but an abandoned boat and foot prints in the mud show the way.

All surprise on entrance made through the Abbot's Hall doors, inside two roughs are spied, as they spy our Good Men. There is disagreement, yet the roughs have little chance and are beaten down in moments.

Kerr Avon then, a dabbling in Arts, hears distant chants of a most disturbing tone and timbre. Here, he points to doors, and there down, along some way, draw closer.

Steps down then, stoney corridor of old rock to older doors ajar, from whence the chant echoes. Steps away, and peeping through the gap, a ritual!

Monks hooded, line on line, facing Master ordering the ritual, and his touched Men and Hounds, lined before, each with eyes burning bright in the flickering light of sconce and brazier. And there beneath the Master a sarcophagus of ancient stone from which muffled womanly cries escape!

Our Good Men burst amongst them, cutting down monk and man with pistol shot, cutlas and sword to disrupt and destroy the ritual. As Avon rushes to recall another piece of his arcane Arts with desperation feeding his frenzy to self-mutilation and a bloody climax, Blake lays about him with pistol and cutlass frenzy, cutting down all who stand between him and the Master. But du Plessis is most sorely pressed, for the Greatest Hound before the Master leaps forward to challenge him, both size and ferocity enhanced as it jumps across Blake's skewered Monks. du Plessis, himself shielded by an unwilling Monk defends from teeth and claws of the giant Hound-Wolf with blade in one hand and charred monk in the alternate against its balefire breath as best he can, but is grimly burned and bloodied by the end.

Blake then, steps forward to engage the Master as he incants words Blake can never hear. A moment then as Avon screams his unspeakable words spattering his own life blood across hastily chalked symbols and accoutrements in the entrance to the room, and a change it flows about those assembled. Balefire dies as the Wolf-Dog shrinks again to its mortal form, the blazing eyes of those touched Men and Beasts dies with his voice, fighting Monks called up from their slumber collapse into puddles of smoking, fetid liquid at the culmination of those unspeakable incantations and pleas.

De Lyon is rescued then from her stoney internment, images and items retrieved needing future study, but of some Arabian nature, perhaps then some ancient Persian. A carven tablet of some strange runes and scripts, and a dog head statue, of that Persian origin. Both with words needing further study. Fortune then smiles, as Kerr Avon quotes he 'Knows somebody who knows you know...'

Two monks final standing in appearance identical, agree better death than the life they have been drawn back to, so their wish for a return to peace is granted with a bloody thrust.

Of the Master it is stranger still, for it is Pastor Hutton, Hatter, to perhaps Hütter, the man released at the Bristol Chapel, that made better time to this Abbey than seems entirely possible.

Anon, the lady is transported to London and Walsingham without further incident