

# Of the Plantagenet Chronicals

## Part 2

### THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY:

- **Ben Jaffa** - Of Theatre smokes and curtains
- **Valentine Plymmyswoode** - Scholar and man of Arcane learning.
- **Ned Culpable** - Apothecary's Apprentice.
- **Adam Carlisle** - (aka Monsignor **Adama Carluccio**) - Leader of the Sodality of St Benedict in England
- **Nathaniel Horton** - Playwright of some moderate success.
- **Rogues** - Various

### An Exposition: The Sea of Fate

**A**dama Carluccio cursed the English and all their ways as the '*Queen's Liberty*' soared and plunged in the rolling seas coiling it in a swirling figure 8 as it tacked across the Channel. He longed already for the quiet shade of the trees about the Holy City, and a sip of wine and bowl olives in the dappled sunlight.

The wave caught him side on, and he clung to the rope at the bow with a grim determination. Another hour the cursed Captain had said an hour ago, but now darker smudge below the grey clouds suggested landfall, allegedly within the great estuary that was the Thames and eventually London.

He spat, saltily.

### Act 1, Scene 1 - Unquiet

**T**here was concern in the City. About the streets good traders and subjects of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth went nervously about their businesses, for here was a new presence on the street.

Rumours of threats and thuggery reached Ned Culpable and Old Man Mustard. A new gang had been about, and their reach had stretched to Phylpot Lane where Mustard (& Ned) had their Apothecary shop. Unpleasantness about the traders, demands for money, threats. This was not the regular pay off, but new. Demands were bigger, and more aggressive. In the Phylpot Lane community, there was concern.

It took little time to ask around the other traders and street folk of Phylpot Lane - there was mention of violence, and some loose description of the perpetrators seen hanging around on alley corners the last few days, near the more lucrative shops and businesses, watching. Some described a man with big hands, another unreasonably tall, a third scarred, and another accompanying some

of them as just 'ordinary'. They appeared in Paris. Their threats all eventually focused on 'Black Tom'.

### Act 1 Scene 2 - A Visit By Night

Valentine Plymmyswoode studied the book recovered from the catacombs beneath The Theatre most assiduously, identifying the front page '*The Incantation of the Skull*, and '*The Arms of Sweet Repose*' as the spells, and the book authored by a *Heinrich Kramer*. With utmost caution for such books were rumoured to be repeat with spells and traps, Plymmyswoode read the book backwards, and it was soon clear that there were 2 spells herein, each described in exquisite detail.

After yet further study he also identified commonalities between the etching and scribing upon the skull and the symbols and phraseology within the incantation of the skull. Clearly linked, he mused, perhaps as a control. Or to manage the spirit back into the skull.

His musings were disturbed by a pounding upon his door and a man in black with 2 companions upon horses. The man demanded '*my property*' back, and a brief search ensued while Plymmyswoode held under beady eye and sword/pistol point. It is unfortunate that one of the henchmen dropped his name during the search - 'Carlisle.' They identified both the book and the skull in a box, and took them both, riding off into the night.

The new day brought no enlightenment as to whom the visitors might have been, and none of Plymmyswoode's new acquaintances could cast any light upon the name Carlisle either. After much discussion they decided to visit Blythe, the official they had previously encountered after saving the Emissary.

After some waiting they were ushered into a simple room by a clerk, where Blythe sat. Explanation of events and careful consideration by Blythe led to him tentatively identifying 'Carlisle' as Adamo Carluccio, leader of The Sodality, and an Italian Monsignor. Blythe admitted he was unaware of Carluccio's return to England. He was last reported in Italy, likely at the Holy City.

Blythe suggested seeking him at the ruined church of St Leonards, for while work had begun to block up the entrance way to the catacombs it was in no way complete so he might try to revisit and gather the remains of his contacts, or use it as a place to organise.

### Act 1 Scene 3 - Other Matters.

While other events unfold, the locale of Phylpot Lane is up in arms. Threats made and protection demanded from Mustard and others in the area, shops and business wrecked and owners beaten (not least Old man Mustard himself), the watch paid off or keeping their heads down. The common name arising in the threats from the perpetrators was 'Black Tom'.

Enquiries suggested Black Tom was a small time gang leader of purse cutters and pocket pickers from further down around the docks and wharfs of the north bank, perhaps half a dozen to a man, and certainly not so far up in the wider London in such force.

Enquiries made and interviews gained with the old school of 'protection' that had been long enough run locally to be a part of the community, and was often resident in a local tavern. Appeals for help elicited a party to go to the wharfs and contain the impinging gang of Black Tom's. It was

there after of greater concern when they did not return, and their presence in rooms at the Tavern and helpers on the streets slipped away, perhaps fled, perhaps dead.

With trepidation Ned and Ben scouted the wharfs on the Thames in the area Black Tom had been rumoured to operate. To their surprise word from the taverns (and most especially the wenches and keepers) was he'd acquired a new gang a couple of weeks back, of much more difficult men, while his old crowd vanished. Then there was mention of oddly forceful stare, one that no-one met for more than a moment, and if they did, they agreed to all he said and did as he ordered without question thereafter.

In setting out their methods the gang had burned the Belching Pig, and locals and working girls had disappeared, although it was unclear if they had fled or ... worse. They wrecked another Tavern and warehouses and Black Tom had taken up residence in Cutts Tavern on Browns Wharf, where now no ships docked (for long) for fear as word got around. Shockingly when comparing notes they realised this had all been within barely 2 weeks!

Was it coincidence perhaps that that time frame had when the spirit had been driven off in the catacombs and fled to the open world, freed of its command and control of Treningham, then thought to be the lead of the Sodality but now revealed only a second in command. As it was discussed elsewhere, all agreed it an unlikely coincidence, and perhaps the skull and spell books, if retrieved, could be used to summon and imprison the spirit from Black Tom back to the skull, from whence it clearly came.

## **Act 2 Scene 1 - Return to St Leonards Church**

**W**ith others out of town or indisposed it remained with Messrs Plymmswoode, Jaffa and Culpable to root out the Sodality from the ruins of St Leonards. They prepared again with all the armour, arms and swords they could muster. Once again their approach was slow and hidden, taking much the same routes they had some weeks before, for none had remained to note the 'blind spot' in cover of their approach.

As they slipped carefully through the undergrowth well to the side of the road they spied a lookout on the secondary dome's roof, and then another at the nearer parapet. Ben's experience suggested where there were 2 there might well be 4 or more, and all caution was taken as they crept forward bush to bush, before the final rush.

Their assault was planned sudden but Ben substituted his 'bang-pot' of clay with his own home-brew version of the Spanish Grenadoes he'd seen in his travels. He lobbed it blind to the area above the main steps, and then charged up as it exploded sending shards-it and splinters of metals all about, closely followed by Culpable, with Plymmswoode a more distant rear.

Things did not go to plan, for it turned that Carluccio was a more than competent swordsman, trained and experienced. To make Ben's position poorer still he noted that despite the Italian's apparent lack of heavy armour, Ben's successful sword cuts bounced from Carluccio's baggy shirt with impunity, while Ben's own shirt was quickly bloodied around his armour.

It was quickly apparent to both Ben and Adama Carluccio that the latter was the better man. But Carluccio's arrogance left an opening as he tumbled and toyed with Ben, for Ben's experience in the sword came from the brutal schooling of the battlefields on land and sea that he'd survived in his youth, not effete Italian dancing schools.

Opportunity presented as the Italian danced and played, and Ben delivered a grand attack and grappled Carluccio, heaved him away with a wrenching throw as he caught the Italian unexpectedly by the arm. A Grab, turn, twist and throw, left Carluccio teetering and then plunging over the ruined edge of the church to rubble below. Here was Ned, already climbing back after his own mishap and miscalculation left him below, who leapt upon Carluccio to ensure his further fall was all the more exacerbated by grappling and ending atop him on more rocks below. It was a moment to ensure that Carluccio was dead, taken by surprise by brute experience of the field, and a Plummeting Apothecary!

Upon the body of Carluccio, they found two of the golden crosses that other members of the Sodality had possessed. But these two were again twisted and damaged, all their benefits apparently exhausted. The implication of the ones they held seemed obvious to Ben, Ned and Valentine.

With Carluccio dead the other members of the gang succumbed quickly, with but one left begging for mercy as his attempt to flee was caught. It is Nathaniel Horton, play-write.

Horton took very little to be intimidated by Ben, for he was already a broken man under the sway of another. He confessed to being a Papist and a member of the Sodality under Carluccio's influence. The Sodality's duty was to find and use to find more items and articles of Satanic Magickal nature, to ensure the Papist Church was ascendant, or at least, the Sodality of St Benedict was. He babbled, pouring out his twisted and distorted view of all that the Sodality stood for, all that the corrupted Catholic Church and evils of Protestantism succumbed to, and all that they aimed to achieve. The Sodality's strange understanding of the nature of good and evil in both the world and theologically left all those listening confused, and deeply concerned.

Ben, Ned and Valentine were concerned that Horton's knowledge of names and places, of families and children, Catholics all, was likely to find little mercy with the Queen's authorities once Horton confessed all to the torturers. None of them held any illusions about what would happen when Horton was handed over to Blythe, and hence by proxy, Walsingham. Not just Horton, but all those he would implicate, just for being Catholic.

Ben Jaffa asked the inevitable question - Perhaps it would be better if Horton had died in the combat?

To this there was some disagreement. Valentine Plymmyswoode was concerned that Horton knew of Magick, and of Valentine's own nature and studies in this that would lead to him informing, making his position most dire, and safety most dubious. Ned Culpable alone was against an 'accident' finishing Horton in cold blood, and protested that this was not what they were, this was murder. Out voted by the others, in anger he departed the scene rather than watch a man butchered.

The deed done, Valentine and Ben quickly clambered through the part closure of the entrance to the catacombs, and returned once again to the place of the ritual some two week earlier that they had stormed, now searching for the correspondences that were identified in the tome of two spells returned to their hands with the skull and box from Carluccio's belongings in the church above.

## Act 2 Scene 2 - Blythe's Quandary

**B**en and Valentine returned to Blythe's offices with the body of Adama Carluccio across the back of a horse. Blythe inspected it carefully before asking a capable man hovering nearby to take it away.

In discussion of the events and implications for Black Tom, Blythe finally agreed that Tom was a threat and he now understood the abrupt change and growth of Black Tom's gang. Ben and Valentine outlined their theory of the magical and spiritual aspects of Black Tom's rise to power, and the released Spirit some two week before that they had deliberately not emphasised in their previous report.

It was uncomfortably clear that Valentine Plymmsywoode was more master of arcane knowledge than Blythe had understood. Indeed, there was tacit admission of practice of Magick's that would in other circumstances lead to a bonfire. Blythe struggled, but noted even the Queen resorted to Dee's horoscopes. And Blythe was not fool enough to believe that was all Dee was capable of, and indeed, had done. And he had some concerns about the Earl of Northumberland, too.

Eventually, reluctantly, Blythe came around. He approved Ben and Valentine's plan to move in on Black Tom's gang, and in light of their concerns about numbers, agreed that they should be supported by two of his associates, by name Doyle and Bodie. Reliable men, he said, handy with both sword and fist when needed.

Valentine Plymmsywoode returned to his own house to undertake the Magicks to summon the spirit back to the skull prior to Jaffa and Culpable, Bodie and Doyle mopping up Black Tom's thugs. But alas, the next day Valentine had been thwarted in undertaking the Magicks required, for despite his careful preparation he realised he had not the skill or knowledge, quite, to perform it unaided.

And so Black Tom would need to be dealt with the old fashioned way...