

# CORNCRAKE

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NESTING IN THE OAK OF  
ENGLISH LITERATURE

# Ballad of the Sun and Moon

Oz the Pilgrim

The Sun sets on a traveler  
The heat of day fades with light  
The mortal man has gone so far  
And walks seaward with all his might.

Resting by the waves in motion  
In water mind and feet are soothed  
And as he begins reflection  
In the ocean rises the moon.

Diana rides across the sea,  
Kindly she offers silver light,  
Diana whispers so sweetly,  
And she offers wisdom this night.

“Mortal man in meditation  
Far from the day's light you have run  
Now you see the pale reflection  
Of that golden font of creation.

You grant Apollo your laurels  
Call him Bringer of life and light  
You flee the moon, cause of sorrows  
Bringer of sleep, death, dark and night.

And all of mortal man do seek  
The radix of light, warmth and life.  
They find one that sorts strong from weak  
That sets the fires of vital strife.

I turn the tides of change,  
Waters of the primordial birth  
Quenches thirst, and fates arrange,  
But I cannot warm the earth.

But we share a dance in the sky  
My light is his, he shares it so  
Together Sun and Moon do fly  
As brother and sister we go

Only solar is said to be good  
Yet my silvery face reflects  
That the Sun and Moon need not feud  
The celestials should not be vexed

For as I go, from dusk to dawn  
A pale reflection of his light  
Though my power is not my own  
My brother's might is not his might

For where does sun and moon proceed  
What lit his fire and set his course  
Where does our heavenly dance lead  
And by what laws, what will, what force?

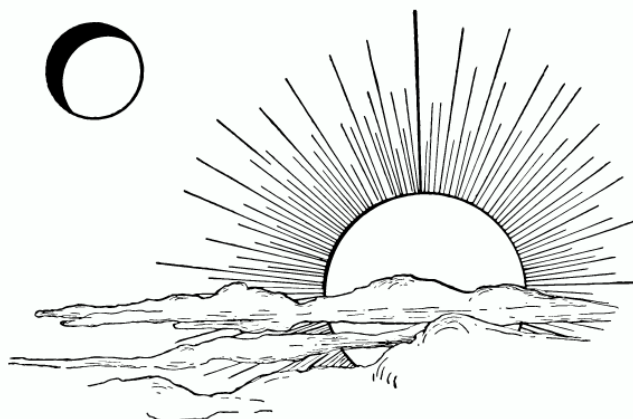
Apollo in his golden crown  
Rightly over Diana rules  
But he has a source of his own  
And so Apollo has his fools

Who worship the Sun as a Lord  
But his light blinds all men to see  
That he is not itself its mold  
And does not make divinity.

For the sun is also a son,  
As I was crafted so is he  
And as the moon reflects the sun  
So the sun a reflection be.”

Now the silver moon fell silent  
And sank beneath the waves of foam.  
Her hours of wisdom had been spent,  
And now greater laws called her home.

Refreshed by his meditation  
Man rose with the sun's golden rays  
And saw the other's creation,  
For which man and sun sang in praise.





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## Boom

by William Riverdale

A mouse on a drone—  
The pilot shakes it off, flies;  
Far off: a split scream.

# Editor's Note



How the months fly by! Here we are in September already! The summer heat fading and the chill of autumn is fast approaching. In this issue we are honoured to have Philip Wortman join us with *Wololo*. The author of many novels, his contribution features a story that has an unrelenting morality. First time contributor Syd Wincharist with a psychological thriller *World Beyond the Endstop of Death*, and a Substack writer William Riverdale with *The Finding of a Saint*. ND Wallace Swan is back with the first installment of a three parter, this one called *Brandor of Bierde*. In celebration of England, a collection of English harvest customs has been included. Poetry includes *The Brown Jug*, and a contribution called the *Ballad of the Sun and Moon*.

WE celebrate the anniversary of Sir Francis Drake's circumnavigation of the world. A Devon man, born in Tavistock. *Round the World* is the story of this feat. Pictured below is the flag of Devon, used at important events, and features St Petroc's cross. Humility is a virtue strongly associated with Petroc. One of the legends describes his return from a pilgrimage to Rome and Jerusalem. As he set foot in Britain it was heavily raining. He confidently told his companions that it would clear up by morning. Instead, the downpour lasted for many days and Petroc, ashamed of his presumptuousness, is said to have left on another pilgrimage, this one of penance. Legendarily he traveled as far as India where he is said to have tamed a wolf.

## Call of the Shieldmaiden

Editor-in-Chief



# Wololo

Philip Wortmann



**It was the year 1683.** A small city, compassed about by the brute bulwark of a wall that was no longer fashionable, embraced a jagged hill atop which a church presided. A priest had been called to minister to that people in younger years by a prince who was presently away to do battle in the south. There, in the south, a sinister Shadow heaved against the gates of Vienna once more. The months had passed by in the absence of this righteous ruler, and something of a vacuum was left in his wake. The shadows in the corners of the courts and streets deepened and eyes wandered against all fidelity in search of strength and leadership in men. It was natural, then, for those that had devout hearts to flock to their pastor, and for those that sought more superficial satisfaction to bend before the might of thoughtless men. Others sought after the slavery that abides at the bottoms of barrels and beer mugs...

And yet, in the very depths of time, where melds the light of stars with silent screams of yawning voids, where sing — like laws of nature — ageless gods in joy and testament, to withstand the fraying of the tattered ends of the world; and yet, here amid the concentrated nowhere, met a gathering of no ones. I say “*And yet,*” because their nature was contrary to “*and then.*” They were in all things contrariwise. Though, as all that lives hangs on a thread of absolute dependence from the thing that comes before the “*and*”, even these unwanted wights could not escape the “*and*” against which they rebelled. For, when their Lord had commanded that there should be light, they had lied. Instead of making his command their truth, they had withdrawn from the call, and became empty shadow, only a foil for the light; at the touch of which they burned and faded quick as smoke in wind.

And yet the devils met and spoke with cleft tongues and slithering words, their monstrous bodies heaving, writhing with unconscious disgust. They spoke and came to blows, they sought to claim what lived, and make of all that was good and true and beautiful a vacant torment, like that which ruled their own cavitous chests. And all their blackened will derived its essence from the knowledge that they had failed in their quest. They had no power in the world. They were the rebellion of pitiable adolescence; a noise without significance. In such rebellion, all at once, like hungry wolves with no more hesitation to pounce upon their prey, they gathered all their hateful spirit in a heaving battlement: a tidal wave that sought to batter down the heart’s door of a humble priest who ordered well his walk amid the grimy narrows of a city on a hill.

His name was Albert, and his beard was bleached bright by sun. Yet, for all the beard that tumbled marvellously from his marble face, his pate had failed even to keep up a stubble that ought to have been tonsured. And so this priest was bald, entirely — perhaps

as once had been that Hebrew ancient, Elijah. Elijah had been ridiculed by children for his baldness once, and for that the prophet had called bears upon them from the woods for a final kind of discipline, and a clear warning against the desecration of things that have been set apart for higher purposes.

But Albert was not ridiculed. He was revered. His hairless head and bearded chin underlined the manly features of his face. His broad shoulders, often bearing buckets by a man-sized yoke from the stony well near the market, were full of shape and strength. His dark robes, always clean, bellowed about him in the open air, defining his doubtless movements like the iron banding of the oaken city gates — and, made of metal as those bonds, it hung about his bullish neck: a crucifix of silver. He was, as were his fathers in the flesh, a man like northern giants in the Nordic wastes. But here he was: a man of God, a man of cloth, a man who waged his war, not against the meek in monasteries with huntsman’s spear and bitter axes, but against just the source of his so brutal frame. He waged a war against his flesh. He did this, to make of it a fitter frame for greater works than others of his growth had done. He warred with demons, which were less simple for their slippery nature in battle.

Now, however, would come the Tempter to his disciplined door, and would knock.

The day was autumn in its paling light; the ruddy tinge upon the leaves like sunset’s bleeding upon the earth. Albert strode with leathern shoes on cobblestones that shimmered black amid the mud-caked road, and all about him bustled the life of his flock: a busy, worldly people for the most part. The children rushed by, laughing; all of them knowing this great man to be their father by virtue of his office. They ducked beneath the swearing carpenter’s broad bench — upon which the same was working fine designs into the white wood by chisels black and iron.

The wood was that of a lime tree, which had once stood beneath the shadow of the church. The merchants, who stood beneath the tortured limbs of willows in the market, cried out to passing fellows, or spoke with quick-witted words a language which had more than once produced a scowl in the lines of Albert’s brightling beard. More than once, however, had Albert sat with these same praters about a table in the night, to share a beer and learn a thing or many about rhetoric, and such. For of their multitudes of exercise, they had learned something about speech-craft, at the very least. On occasion the local *Haretail* inn was as much his sanctuary as was his church during the hours of prayer. In the inn some of his flock would gather regularly — but also strange folk that were passing through with news that bore out things worth hearing.

But today, as was his habit on such days, the priest had sought some water from the well, in order to wash the

flagstones of his home. He had just hooked the large buckets to either end of the yoke, and was strolling through the marketplace, when all of a sudden a well-known harlot lunged out at him, from where she had been showing off her wares, saying to him without regard: "Come now, father, surely those broad shoulders o' yours could take a well-earned rest, eh!"

Albert stopped, and looked at her with one brow raised. His face was flint and, flickering, his eyes betrayed a tempered patience. He had known this young woman for a long time, though for many years they had not exchanged a word. He remembered the beauty of her innocent childhood. And now the long lost words flew from her like fiery darts that smote his heart, though not as they might have smitten another man. Cooley he then said: "Do not desecrate this womb that God has built between your hips, Lucy. It is a tabernacle for life, not a den of thieves." He pointed shameless at her belly, which was exposed as though to invite the demonstration.

Lucy tried to hold the careless smile on her face, though it became a faltering thing. It flickered like a candle in the draft. She had never been so bold, and never so ineffective. Something had egged her on to pounce upon a stone, mistaking it as merely one of the pillows she was used to. Then, quickly, she sought out that old friend, bitterness, to aid her in her battle! With the bitterness of countless disappointments by those that should have taken better care of her, she would steel herself to strike again at this clothern man! He could not resist such blunt and cruel attacks! His codified life would not allow...

And yet, as her eyes alit once more upon the mien of aged Albert, in which she saw neither doubt, nor malice, she faltered once again, and bitterness also fled before his sight. She was reduced to childhood.

It was then this wretched Lucy saw, as Albert had seen the affects wax and vanish from her face, how *his* face wandered through the mysteries of change. Where once there had been upright anger, now the eyes held soft sorrow. It was not the sorrow of pretence. It was not that sorrow that should in fact be called pride (for such "sorrow" is empty, and knows nothing of the suffering of women). For, indeed! how much death and self-destruction had this bearded man accompanied? Among what tombstones had his weathered shoes trodden? Among which buried dead had he made his own dwelling? What orphans had he catechised and sent unwilling into the arms of criminals and murderers, and untimely into the casks of final sleep? How many of the children by the womb of his own classroom having brought forth had he sacrificed on the altar of this sateless world?

It is a seldom thing for harlots to feel shame; but when they do, they *can* become truer than many of the

paragons of men; lambs set apart for slaughter, to burn like beacons in the dark of underworlds. For nothing is impossible. There are some patterns in the web of the world that we simply do not know. Lucy tripped, and stumbled back into the silenced crowd, now not only ugly and unwanted, but useless to her masters. She fell onto the muddy street, stunned. Ashamed. It was as though some dark veil had been withdrawn from her. Though more clothed than often, she was naked in spirit, and powerless; disarmed even of a witch's tongue.

But the eyes of all onlookers, their numbers having increased, bent away from Lucy (what was she, after all?) to look for that familiar father from the church. Though commonplace this scandalous encounter had made of him something novel. He, however, was already on his hasty way back to his house. The buckets splashed a bit of water, which was not their custom when they rode on Albert's bulky form. Something in the depths of his closely kept heart had been stirred; the man known for his calm routine was awakened in an unfamiliar and uncanny way.

"I wonder wha' 'e'll make o' tha'," the baker muttered to the apothecary nervously. The other looked with timid knowing back at his fellow. Then they looked again at Albert, two sinners standing in the street.

Albert, for his part, wound himself with his liquid burden about the narrow streets and looming houses. He entered presently his own abode, and sighed a world out of his lungs. The buckets he let down by means of his yoke. There they stood, at once forgotten on the flagstones. The bearded priest all garbed in black still heard the rumour of the journey without his modest walls, for in his study, which awaited him to his left, the narrow window behind his desk had been left open.

He went to close it absently, not even noticing that he had forgotten to do so upon last leaving the little room. The fallen leaf of an oak had settled on the sill. Then he fell upon his knees before the desk, upon which was laid open a book, the print of which was black. And, pressed upon the page like wine from grapes, were written in the blood of Christ the words that burned themselves into his vision: *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

"I am come, Lord, but where art thou?" sighed Albert, rubbing the folds about his eyes with his large fingers. "The noise of the day presseth against my soul as might the deep!"

And the words that moved by the leaves of the codex on his desk spoke out again, as though the man that was nailed to the cross above his table had descended from that tree of life through death, glimmering with the barely veiled light of heaven. The words pronounced the power of the blood of the Lamb from which the world

was wrought in the age before ages, and said: *Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.*

“Yes, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life,” And it was as though a multitude stood unseen at his back, speaking just the same words as he, thronged about these sacred scriptures that stood opened like a wound upon the workbench of a holy man.

Albert made the sign of the cross then, and drew up his chair to sit upon. He would continue his conversation with the immortal prince; he that offered his own flesh upon the desk by means of words that eyes and ears like twice double mouths devoured. The priest’s jaw was clenched, however. Some animal tremor had entered into his soul, and cast about the furniture therein. He thought of Henry Baker and all the others which fell Lucy had ensnared with open flesh.

“Oh Father, how could I be angry with such fools, if I myself — were I even a whole man at all — would fall into her hellish bonds as quick and easily as they. But the thorn which thou hast stuck into mine side sits far too well in me. It maketh me to drive thy purpose. And yet the loneliness that was abolished by Wittenberg those years hence is not so easily undone for me. You know this, Father. There is no woman of which I could make a mother, even hadst thou given unto me this good desire, after I was maimed by childhood’s misfortune. Yet here I sit, alone.

“Daily I go into thy flock, my Shepherd, to see that all is well. When it is not, I speak thy Truth, and things are set aright, as if by a bright blade in battle, or by the *medicus*, who sets the bone and administers the potion. Sometimes there is much loss and pain, and bitterness; yet thy Light shines all the brighter in the dusk of this fallen world, as though the suffering of men is but the joint that your Word welds and strengthens by bright smithcraft, to build into an armour worthy to be worn by the Body of Christ herself. Oh, and how thy children, which thou has called unto thyself with words that bend the knees of gods, *do* suffer!

“How can this be, my God? My King, why dost thou permit it to be so? Answer me! I demand...” but the words broke off in a sob. It was not the sobbing of self-pity. This was that raw and resignatory stuff that babes partake of, when they realise that there is no way to return into the womb. One *must* carry out this life, and only when the gestation is done does the womb of this world peel away, and reveal a new and joyous victory over all that must decay! But for now the deposit imparted by water and Word was the food a Christian had for this life’s journey: an umbilical cord that ran golden into Heaven. This deposit, an immortal Spirit, dwelt now within the soul of Albert, which rearranged the furniture that poltergeists were throwing hellishly about, bringing order into the calamity once more. Peace into the chaos.

And, when the tears had stopped, the pages of the sacred codex turned again, like doors into forgotten realms. To Job they opened, and a gloomy storm curled cloudy from the page, and whirled with violent darkness. Like thunder came the pealing words of Heaven: *Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the cornerstone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb?*

With both of his callous hands, the vast man covered his now wan face. He thought even now to hear the dreadful singing of those angelic forces in the adamantine heavens, those witnesses of what befell the world before the Earthling, Adam, was made; those sons of God, who went to war, and cast the dragons from their midst, to writhe upon the face of the earth and make of it a pit of vipers for the victims of the Allfather’s, Adam’s, original sin.

“I know that thou canst do every thing,” stuttered the priest, “and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I know not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” And it was as though another stood at his side, sighing without words, laying a battered hand upon his shoulder, knowing the truth of every word. “But, Father, then I pray: repent this Lucy, that she might, as is her name, become a light in the nighttime of the world! Turn her from the demons she is played by, and let her example burn the gold from the ore of this crude place like purifying fire!”

A silence fell over the little room. The priest had bent his knees once more in supplication to the Almighty Father, from whom his dim reflection of paternal character was drawn. A raven croaked somewhere above the gables of the shale roofs, and was barely heard within the quiet study of the parson. The day wound on with the passing clockwork of the lamps of heaven — a music made of diamond, that once sung was hard as glass.

Somewhere past seven, when the sun was long beneath the earth’s broad disc, those that had gathered for the vespers trickled from the stony vaults of the church into the gloomy streets. Some of the deacons aided in the cleaning up of that hallowed hall, whilst Pastor Albert went among the sheep that dwindled in the aisle. Of all his flock, one seemed to linger there on purpose. It was the night’s watch, Edward. The grim man, tall and lean, yet pallid, gaunt and sunken-eyed, was sitting on a wooden stool not far from the back corner of the sanctuary. Albert had seen him enter with



the stool in hand, had watched him place it and sit there through the prayer, never joining his own voice to their petition. Now he wondered what had driven the man back here after a long absence.

“Good Edward, what brings you back to the trough to feed?” asked Albert in a manner that meant nothing more than what it said. He was not here to judge the young man. He was here to hear what ailed him, for thoughts were knit quite tortuously across the other’s brow.

“None is good but God,” said Edward quietly. All the while his gaze had not drifted from the crucifix above the altar at the other end of the stony hall. There the deacons strove to put out many dripping candles, whitely clad like Heaven’s angels. “Not even you, father.”

“No, not even I,” the priest agreed, and turned with folded arms to follow Edward’s gaze. “Have you come to speak with me about your sister?”

This broke the stare that Edward had perfected, causing him to blink, and vaguely wander with his eyes toward the priest’s searching features.

“How d’you know about Lucy?” asked the watchman with a frown.

“I was approached by her in the market today, and gave her some advice,” said Albert.

“Then you maybe do have some of God’s good in you, father,” said Edward. There was something in his face that likened wrath, only Albert saw, then, that it was in fact confusion.

“What has happened, Edward?” asked the priest.

“She’s come home, father,” said the watchman simply, and looked with leaking eyes at the man that had once taught his sister and himself the doctrine of immortality.

Now the writhing demons roared and licked their flaming chops. The pieces had fallen perfectly into place, and had caused stable things to tremble. Now was their chance to pounce once more, and again, and again, until pride led to the fall. The bearded Albert, who had donned the cloth of God, would soon be swept off of his feet, to grovel at their unholy altars, begging them for but a little more of this or that transient power, in order to attempt the impossible escape from Eternity. For that inescapable immediacy, Eternity, broke upon the world with nearing tread, like footsteps in the even breezes of the garden that once had hoveled amid the mountains of the world.

And as these footsteps of the Ancient of Days neared, the sins of men became the best devices to trip them up, and turn them one against the other in hatred and bitter vengeance. Today was all that mattered, as long as tomorrow was not yet it! This was how the devils desired them to think, and this was how the animal in man was prone to play upon life’s stage. This theatre, the fallen third of heaven now devoured with their eyes, and

waited hungrily for every scrap and morsel of the priestly failure to unfold.

That same night, the shepherd clomb down from the hill, atop which the spiring church perched like a gothic griffin, overseeing all the city’s shale roofs. From narrow chimneys in those roofs a dance of tendril smokes was curling into heaven. In their shadow he roamed toward the city wall, for a time accompanied by Edward. They exchanged not many words about the way the day had passed, one filling out the picture which the other had not gotten. Then Edward left the bearded hulk in furling robes, his own watchman’s cloak a banner on the nightly breeze. He held a lantern in his left, and bore the glinting point of a spear in his right hand, the shaft of which he presently tapped with rhythmic strides against the cobbled stones as though it were a walking staff.

For a time, Albert watched the watcher wander in amid the narrow, winding street. The light that fell from lantern glass spilled like a passing memory of daytime over the plastered half-timber of the houses. Above the wisp-like watchman, atop the steepled roofs that leered jaggedly over the street, a murder of crows was perched in silent moonlight, observing what would happen next.

Then even the priest must venture on toward his goal. He had not seen Edwin and Lucy for a long while. They had fallen into the clutches of a power from which the priest had kept himself as distant as he could; lest foolishness might trip him up. For foolishness could make of him as easily a victim as of all others that fell prey to the heartless “Orphan King”. So was the bandit called that dwelt beyond the city’s limits, within the forest to the east.

The Orphan King had agents here within the walls. At his behest they sought to make the city a den for their master in the wilderness. To this end they had done quick work to hollow out their cavities among the ranks of guardsmen, to break down trust between neighbours — so that, in the absence of their prince, the people of the city had taken on a wilder character; one which made cooperation taxing at the least. Even the places that had been a remedy to Albert’s loneliness had been estranged by subtle corruptions in these recent times. More often than in prior years, the inn was frequented by brawlers and unsavoury types. And more than before its rooms were used for young women, the like of which broke Alberts heart.

In much the same way, Lucy had been tempted into serving the Orphan King. She had been a lonely girl, and had been easily seduced. Then, made the plaything of a cruel band, and beautiful — as she had been in that time before the wicked wiles had found purchase on her face — Lucy became the undoing of many within the city walls. Her name, which meant “light”, had become a Luciferian disharmony in the ears of the priest, for his

flock had dwindled whilst *hers* had waxed wanton. And quite simply waxed.

And yet she was only the instrument of an evil will, which stretched like a black hand out of the eaves in the east. Certainly, she had enjoyed her tryst, but now the tragedy of it had gained the upper hand. She was not cared for well by the cruel talons of her masters. Even less so by her so-called patrons, who themselves at times had wives and children — wives and children, Albert supposed, who were ignorant of the evil adventures of their so-called men.

But Albert was the ear of the city, who heard all that moved beneath the surface — the hidden heartbeat, and its disease, which streamed from broken heart into the very extremities of the fold. Not only in the confessional were sins brought to be placed upon the shoulders of the cross-bearing Lamb. Albert, who walked among the people, heard much more than many another goodly priest. He knew the evil of the human heart, and suffered no illusion about his own desperate state, coming as often as he did before the righteous and sapphire Throne of Heaven. There, just as all the other sons of God, he must lay his burdens on the sinless Son of Man, and be forgiven — and be strengthened to soak up sins again, as might a sponge. Such was the vocation of that demigod called Christian. He was to bleed like a sponge when pressed; to bleed with purification.

And like a sponge, Albert swept across the filthy streets toward the dingy housing near the city gate. It was dark between the houses, yet the moon shone full and well, and traced many silver linings over all that stood about him. And then the red of torches flared up at the end of the road. There stood the city gate, well lit; though in its shadows, darkness gathered like the mustering of an enigmatic army, silently.

Albert entered, then, the little house that he remembered once had held Lucinda's dying parents. He had expected to find her here alone. He had not known what state she would be in, and did not feign such knowledge. He had come, and that was how it would begin. And yet the situation in these narrow, cobwebbed quarters was so strange to Albert's eyes that he stood a while frowning at the shapes and figures that he saw cast in candlelight.

Lucy lay bound on the dusty floor. In silence, tears streamed from her hopeless eyes. There was no light in all her being, as though death had made a promise to her, and left it like the branding, covenantal kiss of pallor on her skin, so that none could mistake what fate she was bound to suffer.

At the table, in the middle of the room, sat three broad men, not all too tall to Albert's eyes — but then he was a giant among men. They were well-armed, though one saw this only by the glinting betrayal of weaponry that peaked out beyond burlap robes. The faces of these men

were scowls, sown by many scars into their heads. Their shaggy manes were dressed with leaves and dirt, as though they had a journey freshly at their heels. From leather bottles they were sipping something heavy, the stench of which had settled like a heady poison on the stale air.

The man that was clearly their leader looked up at the priest, unmoved by what he saw, and grumbled through the yellow of his jagged teeth: "Bloody hell, you're a bear, aren't you."

"And you are the Orphan King," concluded Albert.

"I am. Glad am I as well that my name is known to you. I've come," said the other, the men at either of his sides seeming to be no more than decorations for his pride, "to tell you to put her to work again." He pointed at the bound up woman on the floor.

"You knew, then, that I was coming?" asked the priest.

"'T was I what sent for you," said the vagabond, grinning grizzly through his beard.

Albert looked back, through the open door, where he sought the direction in which he had watched Edward wander. He should have known as much. And yet ...

"No, not you," said the priest, and closed the weathered door behind him as he strode into the room, and pulled up a chair for himself. It scraped unpleasantly against the floor, until it stopped, and the priest sat down at table with the foes that cared no more for his life than for an obstacle.

"What d'you mean, *not me*?" scowled the Orphan King.

His men looked questions one at the other.

"It was not *you* that sent for me."

The Orphan King laughed raucously, his fellows joining in with amused chuckles, and then said: "If you mean Edward, 't was *I* what sent him to trick you into coming here. I've turned the sheep into the shepherd, whose led his prior teacher into death, and of *you* I'll make a lovely roast, if you don't get Lucy back to work... It wouldn't be the first time that I've eaten priest for dinner." Again those awful teeth were bared. "Desperation can make many things of a man."

"It can also reduce him to nothing," said the priest after a moment's pause, to ensure that all the attention of his enemies was on him.

"What'd you say to me? You call me and my empire *nothing*?" the Orphan King raised his voice, as though a nerve had been touched. "I have built a city of blood, and it will establish me a fine king of this little corner of the world."

To this the priest said earnestly: "It is better for a man that he be reduced to nothing by despair, than that he should embark on fantasies of self-importance to escape it, Orphan King. It was not *you* that sent for me."

"Then who?" came the reply.

"The saviour of this wretch," said Albert, and pointed at his ward, the harlot laying on the floor. And as the eyes

there present turned and bent to see, if it was truly her to which the holy man was pointing, they beheld something unlikely simmer in the eyes of Lucy: hope. It was in this light that some of her former beauty was restored, though half her face was gagged. Her shepherd continued: "You have no right to bind her like this. She was bought by another. Bought by blood."

"What blood?" the bandit demanded. "What blood could free her from the debt she owes me? Whom have you had killed? Was it Little Robert? He was a rightful pain to me. But even that would not do to settle *her* account, old preacher. So tell me, bear-boy, what blood has bought her?"

"The blood of God," said Albert, and continued to look into the faces of his adversaries, waiting for their answer.

They stared. The men on either side of the Orphan King exchanged a glance again. But then a chuckle rumbled from the belly of the beast, and their leader burst into laughter again. "You mean to say that God himself would shed a drop of — not only sweat — but even blood, for this?" He gestured vaguely with his hand to tied up Lucy. "Have you ever even had a cut, priest? I wouldn't even bleed for her. Well, it depends what she'd give me for a bit of blood, I suppose, but then, I'm a hardy fellow, you see." He pointed to his scars, grimacing with ugly relish.

"You are not a fool in worldly matters, Orphan King," said Albert. "You have followed some of Solomon's tenets, and he was the greatest among such rulers. But there are aspects of his teaching that you do not know. Tell me, are you baptised?"

The other stared again, something like disbelief was growing in his eyes. He growled, then, past pointed teeth. "Get out!" he shouted at his guards.

They hesitated.

"Get out!" he roared.

They fled before his wrath.

"What does this have to do with *me*?" the bandit asked, but ire was coloured by a kind of desperation. "Why do you ask about *my* baptism, priest. I am too far from Heaven for such talk!"

"Far from Heaven or no, are you baptised, Orphan King?" the priest repeated.

"I... no. My mum raised me in the woods, and learned me hate with all my bones the church. I've cursed you and your work, bear-boy. And my curse has been effective. Look at how I've rotted away your holy people!" He pointed again at Lucy and grimaced.

Albert did look. He looked upon her with sadness, the kind that sees something unwanted in the reflection of a looking-glass, then said to the bandit from the bush: "Repent, my friend, and be baptised."

A silence benighted the harlot's hovel then. The two rugged men stared at one another. There was a battle raging between their eyes, whence sparks would have

flown, were one to have seen it. But as it was they sat there silently. And then, in the most savage motion he had yet seen, Albert beheld the table cast aside, a dagger brandished, flashing steel, the Orphan King leapt at him then!

"Christ save you!" roared the priest, arising from his chair, and holding out the crucifix that hung about his necklace chain. No fear was in him at this time, only the long-trained longing for a godly death.

And then, beyond the veil of the worlds, which keeps the heavens hidden from the eyes of men, the many-headed hydra of the legion, that had construed this meeting with the priest, was driven back like smoke in wind, and in the little whore's small bower, the Lord himself strode forth with might. The stubborn heart of Alfred (for so the Orphan King was called) melted then. The steel clattered to the floor, and he, though having seen nothing of the movements in the deep, was moved himself to gush with tears of remorse. He had not known it possible: redemption! How often had he heard the Word of the Cross in his life? How often had he cast it aside, and killed the prophets that had borne it to him, and then hid hence to heavenly hereafter? But no more.

The priest, called Albert, looked with heaving chest upon the brigand at his feet. He breathed a while, his eyes a moment lingering upon the silver cross in hand. He laid a hand upon the head of the vanquished man, and said: "Thy sins are forgiven thee, Orphan King." And so the King of all reclaimed with regal brightness this dark corner of the world, replacing wonderfully the raving lust of hidden devils with pure desire to be whole again.

"My name is Alfred," sobbed the criminal, and crawled to where dear Lucy still lay bound. He loosed her bonds and kissed her hands, which she did draw back fearfully. Then she scrambled back into the furthest corner she could find, alarm her eyes had filled, and wonderful fear! *How could this be?* her eyes seemed to say.

"Then, Alfred," Albert said, "come to the Mass this Sunday morn, and I will teach you of our faith. It has set you free already; but there are still some steps to take, lest devils come and claim you from your Lord, who bought you long ago, before your mother even knew your name, with a heavy weregild."

Thus Alfred did, and lived forever after, but not before he faced the gallows like a man, and drove the fear of God into the sleeping sinners that had feigned at wakeful state. But the priest was not remembered, nor the whore, when the spectacle of execution came. Only the controversial hero, who had turned himself in, and fought with tooth and nail against his own evil works, before cleansing the guilt of his name with the blood of a name far greater; a name that is above all names, not built with bricks of bone and blood, save those that,

willing, sacrificed themselves a gift to give, which could not be returned.





# World Beyond the Endstop of Death

Syd Wincharist

(Found among the papers of the recently deceased Dr. West)

Newburyport, Department of Police and Public Safety  
Special Inspector, D. Auguste Dupin  
Newburyport, MA  
December 3, 1957

Dr. Hannah West  
Orange State University, Florenton, CA  
Department of Psychobiology & Behavior

Dear Dr. West:

I am the coordinating special agent (appointed by the Boston field office of the F.B.I.) directing an investigation of several connected disappearances in Essex County, Massachusetts and surrounding jurisdictions. I write seeking your expert opinion on matters concerning this case.

I was referred to you by Dr. James D. McGaugh, Chief of Psychiatry at Arkham Sanitarium, and consulting expert on this investigation team. It is not my preferred manner to bring in unvetted outside consultants, especially those with no prior experience in law enforcement procedure, but he has assured me that you are not only the foremost authority in your newly emerging field but also a woman of good sense and discretion.

This case is shrouded in bizarre circumstances the likes of which I have never before encountered. All missing persons are currently presumed dead. Circumstantial evidence suggests murder, the means of which we have made no progress in unraveling since the early days of the investigation. We had a single suspect, whom I believe to be solely responsible for all these crimes; she is now also deceased, her sudden death robbing us of our only known avenue by which to learn what really occurred.

I know this will sound nonsensical, but sight and sound can force a syncopation of reality and belief. Since the suspect's death, we believe she has been responsible for two more deaths. I am of the opinion that the circumstances surrounding the additional deaths can point to no other culprit, her means of murder somehow persisting from beyond the grave. We do not understand her methods and therefore cannot prove her responsibility, nor prevent any further potential harm.

Standard procedure and modes of thinking have proven fruitless, and, if I speak honestly, I am unsure of where else to turn. I must confront what is presented to me as reality, even if it is at odds with any prior reality I have known. I hope that an understanding of the suspect's method of murder may lie in your research, and furthermore, I hope that you will be able to disinter that understanding, preventing any further

disappearances. Please forgive my bluntness, but you may be my last hope.

I do feel I have a moral obligation to be forthright with you: if you cooperate in this investigation, I cannot guarantee your safety. I must stress, if you have any hesitation, any concern, any other overriding self-interest, I urge you—please read no further, and burn the enclosed transcription.

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In a career of law enforcement I have found that the key to breaking a case is often in the tiniest detail. It is therefore my wish to recount the suspect's background and certain details of the case so that you may orient yourself in our investigation.

The person we believe responsible for all these crimes is Peggy Doucet (also referred to as "Pudding" by close associates). She was born 1935 in Cambridge, MA, an only child. In 1952, following in her father's footsteps, she studied psychology at Brown University. It was while at Brown that she first met Dr. Henry Eustau, eventually becoming his research assistant, and then lover. Peggy became increasingly devoted to Dr. Eustau, and in time discontinued efforts to pursue her own doctorate in favor of supporting his work. At this time Dr. Eustau's research primarily focused on brain chemistry, especially in regards to psychological states. Through 1954, Dr. Eustau's reputation grew in academic circles and he became something of a celebrity. Soon after questions concerning his increasingly unconventional methodology and disregard for subject safety caused university funding for his research to dry up, although he continued to be well esteemed throughout much of the scientific community.

In 1956, Doucet and Eustau moved to Newburyport to continue their work in a private facility, the true nature of this research we have had trouble verifying. All records and documentation appear to have been destroyed, likely by Peggy Doucet. The only remaining window we have into this period are Henry Eustau's correspondence and the Doucet letters. It occurs to me now, though, that you must be familiar with Dr. Eustau's work? At least until he stopped publishing, as it is in a field predicated by your own?

In our reconstructed timeline of events, Dr. Eustau was the first person to have died. His remains were found August 12, 1957 locked in the basement of his Newburyport facility, along with the corpse of a starved dog. What makes this more inexplicable is that the door was only locked from inside, via a cord strung through the door handles, and then fastened with a combination lock taken from Eustau's own locker. At first this appeared to be some sort of deranged suicide. We speculate however that he had been drugged and compelled to lock himself and the dog inside under

coercion. And then, unable to marshal his faculties, due to the drug, or perhaps some newly sustained injury—perhaps from the dog—was too incapacitated to release himself. Injuries found on the dog's corpse suggest repeated incursions between the two for days before the dog likely killed him. There was little left of Dr. Eustau's corpse when it was discovered. Most of it had been eaten by the dog before it had become too spoiled for even the dog to consume. And while it was able to sustain itself with water from leaky pipes, we estimate the dog starved to death about a month after Henry Eustau died. It appears the poor thing even tried to eat the combination lock, it being covered in teeth marks.

In statements given after Peggy Doucet's capture, she claimed that she last saw Henry Eustau on June 27th of this year. According to her, they had a massive argument and she left him. As best we can determine, this was the last time anybody saw Henry Eustau alive.

Through July and August more people went missing. After delving into their backgrounds we found that all missing persons were linked to Dr. Eustau, many of them colleagues or students, almost all of them women. Eventually we learned that in all cases these missing persons had engaged in romantic affairs with Henry Eustau sometime in the preceding five years.

Whereas the body of Henry Eustau was found soon after he was reported missing, in the case of all other missing persons no remains whatsoever have been recovered. In many cases it is as if they had simply vanished, proceeding into their homes and then never leaving. The husband of one missing person reported that he saw his wife enter their study and not five minutes later entered the same study to find it empty, having seen no one leave it or enter, as he had a view of the door the entire time. And more bizarre still, on her desk he found a letter, appearing to have been freshly read, signed by Peggy "Pudding" Doucet. After extensive searches, similar letters were found in the homes or offices of all missing persons. Thus far these letters remain the only physical evidence to have emerged in regards to any of these missing persons.

Based on the list of missing persons we developed a revenge theory of motive. This was corroborated by information obtained from interviews with people who knew Henry Eustau and Peggy Doucet as a couple. Persons with whom we spoke reported that Peggy had become obsessed with Eustau as a student at Brown and was thrilled when he took a special interest in her. Over the course of their laboratory work they became more seriously involved, continuing through to the time they moved to Newburyport. Throughout their relationship Henry Eustau was engaged in numerous outside relationships and encounters that friends said Peggy seemed "willfully blind to." In their accounting of it, the couple appeared happy despite Eustau's serial

infidelities and Peggy was reported to have spoken of marriage even as late as May 1957.

Based on Henry Eustau's correspondence from this time, this was either one sided or delusional. In letters he comes across as personally uninvested in the relationship, retaining her companionship only for the "latitude her penchant for denial allowed [his] behavior" and her "professional contributions." In truth he appears to have grown indifferent towards her shortly after they had first become involved in 1953. This seems to have been his habit in all romantic entanglements, with the possible exception of his first wife, who had divorced him shortly after his affair with Doucet had begun, among others, and whom he seems to have idolized until the end.

In the period leading up to the disappearance of Henry Eustau, he depicts Peggy Doucet as becoming increasingly more erratic and disconnected from reality. This man to whom she had devoted her life, structured her world around. In late June of this year, Henry Eustau's correspondence ends abruptly.

On September 28, 1957, after her letters were found among the possessions of all missing persons, Peggy Doucet was taken into custody on suspicion of multiple counts of homicide. She put up no resistance and came silently. In her statements to examining officials she was distant and is recorded as saying that her only crime was "loving too gravely." She admitted to writing all the letters found in the possession of the missing persons, but claimed of their contents that they were only the products of delusion, on account of the extreme stress she had suffered in the aftermath of Henry Eustau's "suicide." She accepted no responsibility in the disappearances of the missing persons, nor volunteered any knowledge pertaining to the death of Henry Eustau. To this day we do not know how she acquired the means of correspondence for all these people, the effort of which would have strained the fact finding resources of the Pinkertons, never mind a woman with no experience in such matters. Ms. Doucet declined to comment on how she managed this.

After questioning by law enforcement she was examined by state psychologists, the basis for which were her "delusions." She seemed distressed by this. In truth we knew that based on physical evidence we had no grounds on which to hold her. It is not a crime to send a letter, and although I am certain she is responsible for these disappearances, we can not prove it. If she was crazy, however, as she claimed, she needed care. And if she was lying, she needed to be off the streets. In either case I believed securing her admittance to a mental institution would be for the best, reducing the chance of potential danger for all parties. I still believe we made the right decision.

Based on her official statements and the letters, it was not difficult to have her declared insane. She was committed to the care of Arkham Sanitarium and put under observation.

While at Arkham she is reported to have oscillated between distant apathy and violent bouts of tears. She usually kept to herself, hardly interacting with other patients or staff, and when speaking to doctors, was practically mute, only saying that something was “a mistake”; that they, meaning the medical staff or the investigation team, had made a mistake, or that she, Peggy Doucet, had made a mistake, was unclear. In her short stay at Arkham she seems only to have engaged a cat, kept by the staff as a pet in the common rooms, and one other patient that was herself an actual mute.

Despite her silence during waking hours, it was entirely another matter at night. Staff and doctors reported that while she was unconscious at sleep she spoke more or less continuously, from the instant she lost consciousness to the moment she awoke in the morning, entirely unaware, apparently, that she had said a word. We have reviewed recordings and found that her somniloquy seems to have been incoherent word salads, entirely nonsensical. Such behavior is not uncommon in schizophrenics, though not continuously while in their sleep. In our accounting, from October 1st to October 7th, the words most often spoken by Peggy Doucet while unconscious were: “bridge”, “brain”, “word”, “Henry”, “light”, “X”, “love”, “wife”, and “travel”. It was also observed that her speech seemed to be call and response, as if she was conversing with herself.

On October 8th, after a week at the Sanitarium, Peggy Doucet committed suicide. She had stolen a pencil from the nursing staff, hiding it in her clothes, and later, during a staff rotation, used it to stab herself in the neck while sitting in the common room. Medical staff were unable to resuscitate her. She left a note, which reads as follows--

*In the end, I find all over that love is the only thing worth living for. And how I wish beyond all you might know that it might have gone another way, perfectly perpendicular to the way it has gone. If only he loved me like he did her; but he loved no one.*

*And so I find that I have made a ruin of them all, and in that have found my true love.*

*If Death is a river, I have made of them bridges, not finding much of a ferryman in myself. And now I must shed my natural vessel, and resign myself to architecture, and in the arches and cathedrals of the beyond, we will meet and know each other, not only to share our love, but also cherish justice.*

*And so, with this pencil, let me make my last point: I ask no forgiveness. In death, so as it was in life, I will have the last word.*

#### *Pudding Eustau*

Arkham staff were deeply shaken by the incident, but perhaps none more than the staff cat, which is said to have held somber vigil until the morning's early hours.

What follows is a transcription of the letter found in the study of Prof. Harriet Jackson. All letters found in the possession of the missing persons were essentially identical in content, except for the change of addressee. The original copy of this letter has been examined by our lab and found to have been free of poisons or other contaminants. We have speculated that she might have perhaps deployed hypnosis, somehow conveyed via the letters, but we are bemused as to the scientific possibility of such a thing. It is my hope that you might examine this transcription and speak to the feasibility of such a theory. And if not that, I suppose all that's left is the explanation put forward in the letters themselves. And would we dare dream such a thing?

I await your conclusion. May your findings finally put this entire matter to rest.

*Dr. Jackson---*

*I don't know where to begin.*

*I know we have not always gotten along but please read everything I have to say, any future happiness of mine might depend on it.*

*Henry is dead. And I am afraid for who may be next.*

*You are somewhat familiar with the research of Henry and I, I know, but we have always hidden large swaths of it, for fear of not only being ridiculed but also avarice.*

*I fear there is no other way to write it so just let me be out with it. In the course of our studies we have made contact with a foreign intelligence, a mind not of our own celestial body.*

*It was in our experiments that it first spoke to me. We were testing a new procedure of Henry's, designed to uninhibit the nervous system, to unleash its unrealized potential. I ingested a concoction of steroids and stimulants Henry had prepared. In those days I would have done anything for him. Then I would lie on his couch and bite into a metal bar, not unlike the bite of riding horses. I remember being instantaneously sick from the cocktail. And then the electrical current was applied.*



*Afterwards, I was told I suffered massive seizures and bled uncontrollably. I was long unconscious and likely would have died if not for Henry.*

*But as for my own sense of experience, it was as if my soul left my body. And I found myself in an endless chamber of lightless background, with layers of space on layers of space, like suspended panes of glass, each hung barely apart from one another for as far as I could see. And each pane had in them dimly glowing clouds of all colors, so that when I moved it was as if I walked through a twitching rainbow.*

*When it spoke its voice came from all directions, and it was not so much that I heard it but had felt it, more akin to an earthquake than a sound, and as it moved my body, I somehow understood its meaning.*

*It told me that it had seen me thinking, like a tiny flash in the darkness, and so it summoned me to speak. After some discussion it explained that Henry's procedure had amplified the electrical impulses firing along the axons of my brain and my thoughts had become brightened. And so we spoke a long time about many things.*

*It claimed to be one of many, and that its kind had helped to build the universe, weaving the fabric of space and time itself. And that in the architecture of that creation they had made all sorts of passageways, hidden doors, not only for matter but all manner of thing. And anyone could access them, if only they knew how.*

*When I returned to myself and told Henry my story he did not believe me. But he had gathered data of interest to him, concerning changes in my physio-psychological states, and so was eager to continue with further experimentation. I was also eager to continue, but did not know if my body would be able to tolerate additional trips. Fortunately, the intelligence provided an alternative method, superior to the one that Henry had stumbled across, eager to see me again as well, I think. We had become curious of one another.*

*Preparations were difficult, so we only made contact when we could. I would lie on Henry's couch and then my mind would be distantly transported so we could speak.*

*It had lived so long and knew so much and I wanted to learn. It took me a good time but the intelligence was always patient with me.*

*The passages are always listening, and with the proper inputs they can be put to amazing uses. I do not have to explain to you the electric impulses generated within our brains with every thought. The passages can read these pulses, not unlike morse code, really everything is a combination of dots and dashes, and*

*once you understand the language, it just becomes a matter of sending the right words.*

*The difficulty for me was focusing my thoughts so as to light up the correct patterns and sequences. But the intelligence was generous with its help. I learned that the easiest way was words. Every time you think of dog for instance, your brain lights up a certain way, the same sequence of nerves firing, every time you think "dog". And as soon as you see the word "dog" you cannot help but to think dog.*

*With practice, use of the passages allowed amazing things. I could not only solicit information from other minds but also send instructions, manipulate behavior. It took great effort but a new world of unimagined possibilities had opened up to me, and with the intelligence, we had never been happier.*

*Henry conducted his experiments, recording my reactions, but never truly believing me or understanding. Until one day I showed him. I moved the mind of a moth into a mouse and when Henry saw that mouse flap its tiny arms in panic, he knew the truth. Henry was frightened, but I was far beyond the point of his ever being able to disappoint me again. The intelligence is wise and hated Henry from the start. It urged me to use my new learning to know all there was to know of Henry. And so I did. And left him right after. It took me far too long to realize it, but in the end I could not change him into anything that he was not already.*

*Henry killed himself soon after.*

*I am writing to invite you to the funeral. I know you'll make it.*

*Love,*

*Pudding*

*P.S.*

*I'm afraid I've left out an important part of the story. I'm getting married! He's quite the specimen. Brilliant. Dependable. Funny. Even something of a wordsmith. And quite the eater. He might have even eaten me if we had not first fallen in love! I can't wait for you to meet him. He sometimes has trouble seeing the best in others, but remember, a nice word will go a long way to brighten a day. He'll notice the effort.*

# Old English Harvest Customs



William Maw Egley - Hullo, Larges, A Harvest Scene in Norfolk

Hoaky is brought  
Home with hallowin'  
Boys with plumb cake,  
The cart followin'.  
—From Poore Robin, 1676.

IN one of the fine old Homes of England, the tapestry lining the Withdrawing Room represents a scene which must have been very familiar to the ladies whose diligent fingers accomplished this large piece of handiwork. It is a "Harvest Home" of more than a hundred years ago; and as the light from the huge logs burning on the hearth flickers on the figures it almost seems as if the gayly decorated horses are drawing on the cart laden with sheaves, as if the girl enthroned on the top of the corn is waving the small sheaf she holds overhead, and as if the harvesters are really dancing around; that in another moment the lad riding the leader must sound his pipe, and the old man following the dancers make a merry tune come out of his fiddle-strings. The Harvest is over, and the "last neck" is being carried home in triumph, held on high by the Queen of the Harvest, until it can be deposited in the centre of the supper-table in the big farmhouse kitchen.

This tapestry hangs in a house in Cornwall, a county in which, from its remote southerly position, many traditions have lingered. Among such traditions those connected with the harvest are probably some of the most ancient; handed down from generation to generation from the days when the Romans first brought civilization to England and left their stamp on the harvest as well as on the language, laws, numerals and the roads of this county.

Until the beginning of this century, Ceres was the name given as a matter of course to the queen of the harvest; and in Bedfordshire two figures made of straw were formerly carried in the harvest procession, which the laborers called Jack and Jill, but which were supposed to represent Apollo, the Sun God, and the beneficent Ceres, to whom the Romans made their offerings before reaping began.

The merry queen of the harvest, worked in the tapestry, had no doubt been chosen after the usual Cornish fashion. The women reaped in Cornwall, while the men bound, and whoever reaped the last lock of corn was proclaimed queen. As all were ambitious of this honor, the women used to hide away an unreaped lock under a sheaf, and when all the field seemed cut they would run off to their hidden treasures, in hopes of being the lucky last. When a girl's sweetheart came into the field at the end of the day, he would try to take her sickle away to finish her work. If this was allowed, it was a sign that she also consented to the wedding taking place before the next harvest.

The last lock of corn being cut, it was bound with straw at the neck, just under the ears, and carried to the

highest part of the field, where one of the men swung it round over his head, crying in a stentorian voice, "I have it, I have it, I have it!" And the next man answered, "What hav-ee, what hav-ee, what hav-ee?" Then the first man shouted again, "A neck, a neck, a neck, hurrah!" This was the signal for the queen to mount the "hoaky cart," as it was called, and the procession started for the farmhouse.

Over the borders in Devonshire, the custom of "crying the neck" varied a little. The men did the reaping and the women the binding. As the evening closed in, the oldest man present collected a bunch of the finest ears of corn and, plaiting them together, placed himself in the middle of a circle of reapers and binders. Then he stooped and held it near the ground, while all the men took off their hats and held them also near the ground, and as they rose slowly they sung in a prolonged harmonious tone, "A neck, a neck, a neck!" until their hats were high over their heads. This was repeated three times; after which the words changed to "We have-'en, we have-'en, we have-'en!" sung to the same monotonous cadence. The crying of the neck, as it echoed from field to field, and from hill to hill, on a fine evening, produced a beautiful effect, and might be heard at a great distance.

A musical cry of this sort was also common in Norfolk, Suffolk and Gloucestershire; but the words sung were "Hallo, largess!" One of the men was chosen lord of the evening and appointed to approach any lookers-on with respect, and ask a largess, or money, which was afterwards spent in drink. Meanwhile the other men stood round with their hooks pointed to the sky, singing:

Hallo! Largess!

In Gloucestershire, Ceres rode the leader of the Hoaky Cart, dressed in white, with a yellow ribbon round her waist.

The last in-gathering of the crop,  
Is loaded and they climb the top;  
And then huzza with all their force,  
While Ceres mounts the foremost horse.  
"Gee-up," the rustic goddess cries,  
And shouts more long and loud arise,  
The swagging cart, with motion slow,  
Reels careless on, and off they go.

Stevenson in his *Twelve Moneths*, date 1661, goes on to describe the arrival of the procession at the farmhouse:

The frumenty pot welcomes home the harvest cart, and the garland of flowers crowns the Captain of the reapers. The battle of the field is now stoutly fought. The pipe and tabor are now briskly set to work, and the lad and lass will

have no lead on their heels. O! 'tis the merry time when honest neighbours make good cheer, and God is glorified in His blessings on the earth.

In Herefordshire "crying the neck" is called "crying the maze;" the maze being a knot of ears of corn tied together, and the reapers stood at some distance, and threw their sickles at it. The man who succeeded in cutting the knot won a prize and was made Harvest King for that year. In the same county there was a rough custom of the last load being driven home by the farmer himself at a furious rate, while the laborers chased the wagon with bowls of water which they tried to throw over it. In the more stately processions the horses that drew the Hoaky cart were draped with white, which Herrick, the Devonshire parson-poet, describes in his poem of *Hesperides*, 1646:

Come, sons of summer, by whose toil  
We are the lords of wine and oil;  
By whose tough labours and rough hands  
We rip up first, then reap our lands.  
Crowned with the ears of corn now come  
And to the pipe ring Harvest Home.  
Come forth, my lord, and see the cart  
Dressed up with all the country art.  
See here a maukin, there a sheet  
As spotless pure as it is sweet;  
The horses, mares, and frisking fillies  
(Clad all in linen, white as lilies:)  
The harvest swains and wenches bound  
For joy to see the hock-cart crown'd.  
About the cart hear how the rout  
Of rural younglings raise the shout;  
Pressing before, some coming after—  
Those with a shout, and these with laughter.  
Well, on, brave boys, to your lord's hearth  
Glittering with fire, where for your mirth  
You shall see, first, the large and chief  
Foundation of your feast, fat beef;  
With upper stories, mutton, veal,  
And bacon (which makes full the meal;)  
With sev'ral dishes standing by,  
And here a custard, there a pie,  
And here all tempting frumenty.

The harvest supper in Northumberland was called the "Kern Supper," from a large figure dressed and crowned with flowers, holding a sickle and sheaf, which was named the "Kern Baby," and, being carried by the harvesters on a high pole with singing and shouting, was placed in the centre of the supper table, like the Devonshire and Cornish Neck. Rich cream was served on bread

at the Kern Supper, instead of meal; a custom which was reversed in a sister northern county, where the new meal was thought more of than cream, and the feast was called the "Neck Supper," in its honor.

There was one more quaint ceremony for the laborers to accomplish, after the feasting was over, connected with the completion of the rick or stack. This was formed in the shape of a house with a sloping roof, and as the man placed the last sheaf in the point of the gable he shouted, "He's in, he's in, he's in!" The laborers below in the stackyard, then sang out, "What's in?" and the rickmaker answered with a long harmonious sound, "The cro' sheaf," meaning the cross sheaf.

It has been thought that there used to be one universal harvest song used throughout England, but the words and music are not preserved as such. Some curious songs are performed by the laborers, where harvest suppers are kept up. A very popular one has a chorus ending with:

And neither Kings, Lords, nor Dukes  
Can do without the husbandman.

The majority are drinking songs, and there is reason to fear that the ale and cider that flowed at harvest-time, conduced in no small degree towards the unbounded revelry of these old celebrations.

At the same time the country people of England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were for the most part very simple and ignorant, and their childish exuberance of spirits may have been but the natural expression of life in a perfectly unartificial state. They were men and women who could live for the hour while the sun shone, who could laugh and dance like children who have no fear, and, as George Eliot says, who "cared not for inquiring into the senses of things, being satisfied with the things themselves."

But the change was coming. The old women of Cornwall lamented loudly when their sickles were taken away, and the corn was "round-hewed" by the men with a kind of rounded saw.

"There was nothing about it in the Bible," they said; "it was all *reaping* there."

The round-hewing was but a step, to be speedily followed by the scythe, and then by the steam reaper. And it often happens that the steam engines do not leave the field until the corn is carried to a temporary rick in the corner and threshed on the spot.

Farewell to the Hoaky Cart, the crowns of flowers, the Kern Baby, and the Cro' Sheaf!

With the puffing snort, the whirr and smoke of the engine, came the downfall of the ancient ceremonies. If the corn is threshed in the field and carried away in sacks, there is no time for the triumph of Ceres, or the decking of "Necks."

The laborers are no longer "satisfied with the things themselves." They are keen for the shilling they will earn for overhour work, and in some counties prefer it to the gathering of master and men round the harvest board; and the drink makes them envious instead of merry.

Times are hard. The great iron rakes clear the fields and there are some farmers who no longer say with Boaz:

Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not, and let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.

It seems as though the old happy gleaning days were also numbered. Those days to which the villagers look forward from one year's end to another! The hour at which gleaning may begin is made known in some parishes by the church bell tolling at eight o'clock, after which the children troop off with their mothers to the wide fields. The sun may shine with fierce August fervor, the children's arms and the mothers' backs be weary to breaking, and the corn gathered be only enough for two half-peck loaves—yet there are charms in the long days in the fields, in the strawberries picked in the hedge, and the potato pasties eaten under the rick, and when the church bell tolls again at nine o'clock there are still many lingerers in the fields.

The world is growing grave and old, and it is sad to think that many of the simple old-fashioned enjoyments of past years are fading away. Still there is another side to the inevitable law of change; for out of the relics of the worship of Ceres, out of the ashes of the ancient customs of revelry, a phoenix has arisen, grand and hope-inspiring, and that carries back our memories to days before the Romans were conquerors of the world, and when the most ancient of all nations, the Jews, used to celebrate their yearly feast of Ingathering.

When first Harvest Festivals in Churches were proposed they were looked on with suspicion, for somewhat similar services had been swept away by the iron hand of the Reformation. But thankful hearts and good common-sense have worn out the suspicion, and the day comes now in each year, when every Church in England is decked with sheaves of corn, grapes, torch lilies, dahlias, sunflowers, and all the splendors of autumn, and when glorious Te Deums, and hearty Harvest Hymns rise in thanksgiving for the blessings on the fields.

Once more the ancient cry of "Largess" is, as it were, revived. But now it is largess for the poor, beloved by God, it is largess for the suffering ones, who watch in pain, it is largess for home and foreign missions, that all may be safely gathered in to the great final Harvest.

It is also customary for a Festival to be held in the Cathedrals of the principal county towns. And there are few

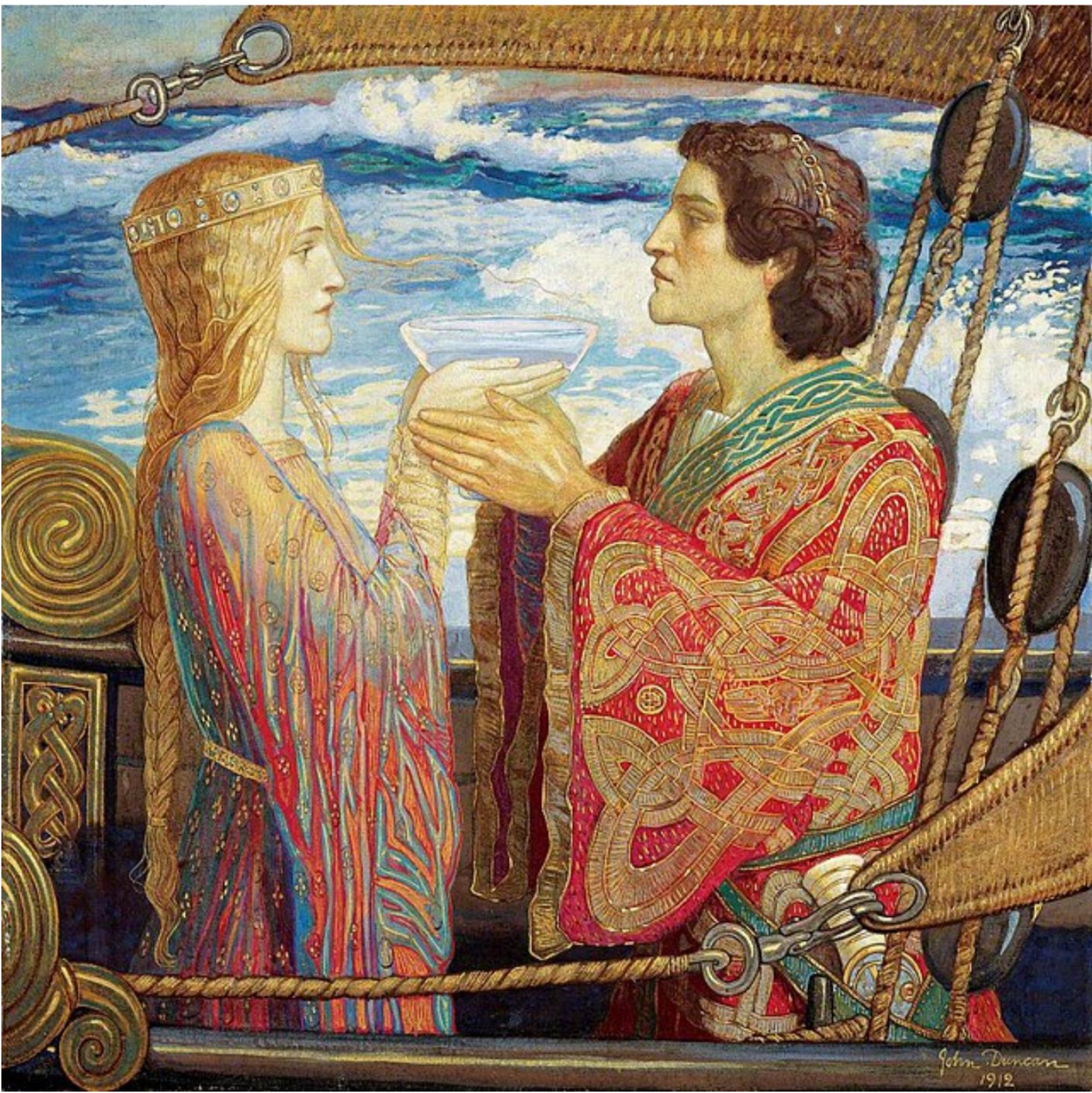
nobler sights than to see the Nave of one of these magnificent old buildings, on a market day, so full of men and women of every position in life, that they are sitting on the bases of the pillars, and standing in the aisles; and there are few nobler sounds than to hear that mighty congregation burst into singing:

Come, ye thankful people, come!  
Raise the song of Harvest Home!



# Tristan and Isolde

John Duncan Tristan & Isolde





Rogelio de Egusquiza - Tristán e Iseo (La vida)

This is part of Algernon Charles Swinburne's prelude to the poem (Tristram of Lyonesse - 1881) which describes the beauty of the tale and his poetic desire to breathe new life into it

Yet of these lives inlaid with hopes and fears,  
Spun fine as fire and jewelled thick with tears,  
These lives made out of loves that long since were,  
Lives wrought as ours of earth and burning air,  
Fugitive flame, and water of secret springs,  
And clothed with joys and sorrows as with wings,  
Some yet are good, if aught be good, to save  
Some while from washing wreck and wrecking wave.  
Was such not theirs, the twain I take, and give  
Out of my life to make their dead life live  
Some days of mine, and blow my living breath  
Between dead lips forgotten even of death?







Edmund Leighton The End of The Song

So that day  
They communed, even till even was worn away,  
Nor aught they said seemed strange or sad to say,  
    But sweet as night's dim dawn to weariness.  
Nor loved they life or love for death's sake less,  
Nor feared they death for love's or life's sake more  
    And on the sounding soft funereal shore  
They, watching till the day should wholly die,  
    Saw the far sea sweep to the far grey sky,  
    Saw the long sands sweep to the long grey sea.  
And night made one sweet mist of moor and lea,  
    And only far off shore the foam gave light.  
    And life in them sank silent as the night.

This section is about drinking from the cup

And with light lips yet full of their swift smile,  
And hands that wist not though they dug a grave,  
Undid the hasps of gold, and drank, and gave,  
And he drank after, a deep glad kingly draught:  
And all their life changed in them, for they quaffed  
Death; if it be death so to drink, and fare  
As men who change and are what these twain were.  
And shuddering with eyes full of fear and fire  
And heart-stung with a serpentine desire  
He turned and saw the terror in her eyes  
That yearned upon him shining in such wise  
As a star midway in the midnight fixed.  
Their Galahault was the cup, and she that mixed;  
Nor other hand there needed, nor sweet speech  
To lure their lips together; each on each  
Hung with strange eyes and hovered as a bird  
Wounded, and each mouth trembled for a word;  
Their heads neared, and their hands were drawn in one,  
And they saw dark, though still the unshun sun  
Far through fine rain shot fire into the south;  
And their four lips became one burning mouth.

Rogelio de Egusquiza - Tristan and Isolt (Death)



# Brandor of Bierde

Part 1

ND Wallace Swan



**High Chieftain Brandor** slammed his fist on the table, commanding more wine from his concubine. As she poured the glistening red nectar into his hard, polished, silver-rimmed drinking horn, some spilt while he drunkenly held it out in front of his glowing red face. Alea was with child, so he treated her kindly compared to the other concubines, but he was still a pure brute — 'a barbarian through and through,' according to the Romans. He took a swig from the decorative horn.

*There could be Romans here, he thought. There could be Romans anywhere.* The wine and mead from earlier flowed through his powerful veins, plied and relaxed from copious portions of alcohol.

"With cavalry, you can go anywhere you want," he said to himself (out loud).

Alea was patient with him. She enjoyed feeling protected by his massive strength, thick skin, and the tribal respect it brought him. This meant status for Alea. Man is a political animal, and politics comes in many forms. The ways of men are often loose and airy, with a hint of sophistication and acting to sweeten the sombre milieu of animalistic survival of the strong. Like a gift, she came wrapped in a bow for her Chieftain, by her father Adenar, and soon he was likewise wrapped around her finger. Soon he was like a spear to be thrust at enemies at her pleasure.

Certainly, he was the head, a hard, pulsing knob of sorts, but she was the long, slender, silken neck that could turn it here and there, his eyes obligated to look. He wasn't the most intellectually stimulating, but neither was she. He stimulated everyone else with brute strength. She could bear his children, who would have every available advantage in this harsh world.

Alea's father Adenar was very quick in both mind and foot and as a friend and ally to the Chief, naturally offered up Alea for concubinage. At the time this was considered the best insurance policy, something nearly everyone lacked: certainty.

Brandor was a powerful man and lived hard. He was a hand taller than most men, with arms like burly oaks and legs like firs. He drank rich mead, and daily drained the udders of many cows for his milk to maintain his vril, as was the custom of Gardar. His mother set this in him early, a near-religious addiction to the drink. Milk in massive quantities was thought to bring men the strength of the bull, a powerful and respected animal in Gardarfolk. Another concubine, young, and frail Yara, brought him a pail of milk. She was very small and had been unable to become pregnant. She had a nose that was almost too large for her face, and her eyebrows lacked prominence. Brandor liked her despite her known infertility and never set her aside as was often the

case. She and Alea were friends anyway, and got along well, having spent a lot of time together.

He drank the milk back quickly, always worried about his vril, got up from his throne, and laid on his large wooden bed, lined with furs and woollen blankets. His concubines, Alea, Yara, and Gewisse, silent and nervous, crouched low, bustled around him carefully, removed his newer calfskin boots, and tunic, and covered his half-naked body with blankets. Gewisse was a wider-set woman with dark hair; she appeared almost foreign in comparison to the others. Brandor passed wind. The women cleared the hold, Gewisse being last as she was plump and slow, having been on a diet of milk and honey in order to increase her fertility.

They quickly scurried to their rooms and washed themselves in their basins, then dumped them in the ditch outside. They wanted to be fresh and ready for the morning, and it was already late. Returning to their rooms, they prepared their simple and modest beds, not of hay like most commoners, but wool, furs, and linen, ready to sleep—or not. They had to be prepared for Brandor.

In the morning, Alea awoke and went to check on Brandor. He was in the same position as they had left him. She stroked his forehead and brought water up to his lips. He sat up and drank the small cup in one go, desperately thirsty. Abruptly, he jumped up, his linens fell to the floor. He called the concubines, and they scrubbed him like washer-women washed a dirty stone floor. The overworked cooks brought in his breakfast of some two dozen boiled eggs, Brandor's cup which was the size of a bucket, of milk, a pot of porridge, and some salted pork. Brandor hastily ate all of the food, like a starving bear feasting on a carcass.

"More milk," he grugged. More was brought, and with it, he washed it all down. He announced to the concubines, "I have to deal with these uppity Frisians. Fetch the guard from the door."

Alea went to get the guard, Gregor, just outside the chamber.

"Gregor, send for Hermann and my horse!"

Soon Horse Captain Herman arrived leading Brandor's black steed, the largest horse in the kingdom: Winemaker (for he crushed men's heads like grapes). Herman was the head of horse and cavalry in Bierde, and a close confidant to Brandor. He had not told the women that he would soon be gone to Frisia, but Herman knew the cavalry would be heading out.

The fortress at Bierde was situated on a hill, near a bend in the Bierderbach River. Surrounding the hill was a wooden palisade, with an inner and outer ditch and ramparts. A road ran up towards the fortress from the village of Bierde, which was protected by a palisade of its

own, though it was less imposing. The stables were at the bottom of the hill, surrounded by a lesser rampart that kept eh *honest people* out.

Brandor got dressed for a possible battle. He put on his armour, mostly leather except for his special helmet, a modified imperial Centurion made of iron, painted green and a blue stripe down the centre. Yara yanked on the back straps as Brandor laughed. "Haha! Yes! HAAAAHA YES! You are growing stronger, Yara!" and he gave her a light pat on the behind and a peck on the forehead. Soon he finished dressing for battle, joined the line of horsemen and headed out. Herman was the kind of captain to go down with his ship, in this case, the hulking Nydam boat *Brandor the Bull*. He took the lead point, ready to die if necessary, followed by 500 cavalry. They headed for the Drenthe, where they would make camp.

Alea watched from the top of the palisade of Bierde as the column disappeared from view. Brandor didn't look back, even for a moment's glance. He was a man who was always looking forward, never backwards, leaving behind his women, including pregnant Alea, his wealth, and all his past glory. Glory was something that must be continuously forged. This has been the case with his ancestors, from the fields of Gardar and beyond, to those of Saxony and Anglia. Only the sea remained.

They had been gone for several months. Alea growing more and more in the belly, while her father, the Castellán, and palace staff tended to the affairs of the fortress and village at Bierde, collected taxes and organized training and the defence of the realm. This was largely done by men like Alea's father, who would send small groups of soldiers out to police the outlands, dealing with criminals and bandits who preyed on the people. The ladies of the household mostly kept to their tasks, such as mending damaged and sewing new garments, while also helping Alea in her final months of pregnancy. When Alea asked her father for news from Brandor, he would shake his head, her countenance growing more grave over time.

Alea went into labour six months after Brandor left and gave birth to a boy, named Frithogar, a name bestowed by his father in the case he was a boy. The name meant Free-Striver, and he was destined for greatness, having been conceived during a full moon under the sign of the Bull. Alea kept him healthy and happy, feeding him plenty of milk and testing his strength where he was soon, even as an infant, could hold her finger while she pulled him up when he gripped on. She mothered him well, with no shortage of resources.

Word soon came that Brandor the Bull had been slain in battle, his corpse taken by the Frisians, beheaded, and thrown to a pit of wolves. Herman was said to have been killed trying to recover Brandor's body from the field,

taking a spear to the chest in a Frisian ambush. The broken column of horses returned home, and soon it became clear how many families had lost men. It was a disaster for the village families.

"King Brandor is dead. Long live The King," the head of the column proclaimed as they entered the gates. They were unaware of the baby's sex, but if it had been a girl, then the Chieftain would likely have been Brandor's brother-in-law Sela of the Angles, or Alea's father Adenar, should he be able to navigate the delicate political situation. Now, however, he could rule through the blood-legitimacy of his infant grandson.

Alea felt betrayed by fate, but rallied her spirit, strength, and resolve, and took a page from Brandor and kept looking forward, to keep things stable and straight. Much needed to be done. The realm could fall into disarray. Her father Adenar, tall, blonde, and strong, with massive hands with great hairy knuckles, quickly took up the regency for his grandson, who was only weeks old. He set to work along with scribes, writing messages ordering lower chieftains to pledge their loyalty to 'High Chieftain Frithogar, son of Brandor.' They were to bring along a hostage as well.

An infant could not wield power, so true authority would come from his mother's father, a capable administrator. The first to respond to the call was Chieftain Juta, a wiry but cunning man from Cuxhaven. They were fishermen and seafarers, and he brought his only daughter Kalva, skilled in knots, as hostage. Hostages were treated well and ensured lesser allies would remain loyal to the High Chief. He brought gifts of dried and fresh fish, as well as salt, painstakingly scraped from artificial pans along the shore. Kalva would be taught by the ladies of the house and was to help them care for Frithogar as he grew. Though not yet, she would probably be expected to marry an army captain as she came of age, where she would likely return to her father's holding. She would be taught useful skills like mending, herbology, and healing.

The Chief of Bergholz arrived soon after, a greying elderly man but still possessing great strength, bringing woven linens that could be made into clothing as well as some quantity of mead. Chief Ylvar Blacktooth, a middle-aged man with a dark complexion and deeply battle-scarred, brought as hostage his spare heir, his toddler-aged nephew Berghi. Sometimes hostages would be replaced with alternatives as a child grew old enough, as they may be needed back at the hold to learn stewardship or martial skills specific to their armed forces. The hostage children lived as siblings in the hillfort, though not as one typically might imagine. Oftentimes, they would be betrothed from a young age to strengthen familial ties, for alliances, or to take advantage of commercial arrangements. There is no stronger knot than shared descendants. Many children

would not make it to age five. Sanitation was poor, and so many fell to illness. In these times theories abound, but it was often assumed to be the work of magic or poor diets. That was less the case with the affluent nobility.

More children were brought in. Gifts of all sorts: enough lumber to build a longhouse, which took hours to unload into the storage yard; ore which again caused much delay as it needed to be brought to the smith's yard for processing; stone, weight of which needed not be said, had to be unloaded through the night by a team of 4 men, and some livestock which were led to their pens, some of which had to be distributed to the army captains as the Chief's barn was bloated. More arrived over the next few months. Nearly every tribe replied, but there was one that did not: the Gilsa and their chieftain, Polz, whose mother was a Slav. Adenar didn't understand why he hadn't responded before the harvest, and was even more confused when he didn't respond afterwards. He dispatched a scouting party that included his own son, Gunnaz, Alea's half-brother; a young man just come of age.

When Gunnaz arrived at Gilsa's hold, he and his party found it abandoned and destroyed. At the entrance to the village, there were skulls on spears, jaws agape as if screaming. Broken pots and ripped cloth smeared in dried blood lay strewn about, with burned corpses, some of which looked burned alive. Gunnaz shuddered. *Who would do this? A beast?* he thought to himself. There was a hog skin with runes scribed on it. Gunnaz picked it up, and they headed back to the hill fort at Bierde. On their way back, they took a slightly different route in case someone was tracking them. They could see a small person, thick with clothes stuck with mud and twigs. They called to them, and a girl turned to face them.

"I am not afraid!" the girl, who couldn't have been more than eight or nine, yelled. She stood there, not moving, so the party walked towards her through the muddy path.

"You have nothing to fear, girl," replied a kind Gunnaz, "We are here to help you, we come from Bierde, and we will take you with us to safety. We are your friends."

The little girl broke down crying, reaching out for a hug from the men at the party. They offered her some water, bread and salted fish. This meant they were also obliged to protect her. She didn't have much to say, except that her parents had hidden her in a ditch burrow just outside the village before the attack.

"They killed mommy and daddy and all the people." She said. They headed straight back to Bierde, and upon entering, he went straight to the regent.

"Father, Gilsa is deserted and destroyed. We found skulls on spears at the entrance, except for this young girl who had hidden during the attack. We also found this

skin with runes stuck to the entrance of the village. Can you discern them?"

"I will need help from the seer; send for him," said Adenar, "But it looks Frisian. I will read this message before we send for the Council."

The seer arrived and got to work scribing the message onto a separate vellum, and then began to translate it.

Meanwhile, Gunnaz watched as Adenar questioned the little girl.

"Girl, I am Adenar, what is your name?"

"My name is Flikka. I am ten summers old," she said.

"My dear, first I want you to know that we look after our own, and you will be safe here. We will find a family for you in the village and will protect you. Now, with the best you can muster, what happened when Gilsa was attacked? Who attacked, do you know?"

"Mommy wrapped me in wool blankets when she saw a flickering light in the distance, in the hill to the west, where an uncle had fields. She rolled me in the mud while saying 'Little Piggy Little Piggy Roll in the mud' and then she said 'Little Piggy Little Piggy roll in the bush'. So I did and it was fun. But then she became serious and told me to run into the thick brush and count to twenty, find a ditch or a log and lay down and not to get up until I could hear nothing. So I did."

"And then what happened?" asked Adenar.

"I heard screaming. I thought monsters were around me, giant beasts with fangs and claws and big eagle beaks! I kept my eyes closed like mommy said, like this"

Flikka demonstrated for Adenar by tightly closing her eyes,

"I kept them closed until I heard nothing. I was cold when I could hear nothing, so I got up and walked back to Gilsa, and it was all broken and everyone was gone. I saw dead bodies. I screamed for my mommy and daddy, Uncle too. No one was there. Are they the dead ones?" she asked.

"I am not sure, but I will find out..." said Adenar, who gave Flikka a hug. He turned his head to Gunnaz and gave it a knowing shake. They were certainly dead. The scribe knocked on the door of the Regent's chamber.

"One moment. Gunnaz, please take Flikka to Yara to take care of until I can arrange for a home for her."

Gunnaz nodded and took Flikka's hand, leading her away from the chamber. The Scribe entered and spoke to the Regent.

"You are right, my Lord; this is Frisian. It says, 'Beware; such is the fate of Friends of Brandor.'"

Adenar nodded and replied to the scribe,

"Send messengers to the council that we will be holding an assembly here at Bierde in one fortnight; I will discuss this with them then."

Riders with messages were sent to the allied chieftains.

Before the assembly, a Cuxhaven scout named Flotta arrived with word that the Frisians had been spotted

scouting around their “moated” palisade. Their chief soon followed the scout, and he was informed of the situation. Ylvar Blacktooth of Bergholz, who had a deep scar across his face from duelling, arrived soon after and was informed of Gilsa. One could see his disgust despite the scar tissue. Other chieftains arrived as well, and they gathered to discuss what could be done. The Frisians were planning something, and a parlay with the Frisians seemed unlikely, given they massacred a village of Saxon farmers, women, and children. Perhaps they sensed weakness given the lack of response after their slaying of the High Chieftain. They were right. It was determined that the Chiefs would increase scouting, and the inlanders would send men and supplies to bolster the lowlanders like the Cuxhaven and others. Meanwhile, a request for assistance was sent to Brandor’s sister Frea, who was married to King Sela of the Angles, in the north. Frea’s message read,

*Dear Nephew Frithogar and His Regent Adenar,*

*I hear of your plight and have convinced my husband to send 500 Angle axemen to your aid. You will need to feed and lodge them and supply them with tents if on campaign. We will visit you soon. I am sending Gearta to be the personal bodyguard of Frithogar; he will serve you well.*

*Hails be to Odin,*

*Freia Baeldegdottir.*

Handsome Gearta, a man about thirty with a mind for tactics and strategy, and the fearsome 500 Angle axemen arrived after a fortnight of travel from the North. They had an air of barbarism, but were quite organized and ruthless. In the Angle society, each warrior was an independent landsman, and so each had an interest in the defence of the realm. The Angles had great respect for Brandor, who had helped them defeat the Skinwalkers in Svealand when he was a young warrior of sixteen summers, after his Gardarfolk came west from Gardarik. Lodging was procured, and soon they were planning a campaign against the Frisian menace. It was decided they would assemble a 2000-strong force in addition to the 500 axemen. They would approach Grunoberg from the south, forcing any resistance to the coast, and hopefully, the Frisians would retreat to their islands.

When they arrived outside Grunoberg, they found no military resistance, only shepherds and farmers who cared not who lorded over them so long as they were not assailed or abused. The Anglo-Saxon force moved into the settlement and began erecting a palisade with local timber. The axemen, like imperial legionaries of ages past, made quick work of it, and soon the entire area was

fortified. The scout Flotta arrived from Cuxhaven and claimed Cuxhaven was besieged by a Frisian force of 1200 men-at-arms. Some Cux had escaped via the sea to their northwest, but the settlement was surrounded and was at risk of being starved out. The commanders left Gunnaz and a force of 150 men at Grunoberg, while the rest of the force, led by Adenar, Juta, and Ylvar, headed to relieve the Cux. This would be Gunnaz’s first time in command of a settlement and fortress, his first real hand in stewardship.

“Any advice, father?” Gunnaz asked Adenar.

“Do not lose it. Around Frisians, never relax. You saw Gilsa, that is their standard should they come. Defend the people, no matter what. You have to want it more than the Frisians do.”

Gunnaz nodded, even though *that advice wasn’t very helpful*, he thought. Soon the main army left, leaving Gunnaz and his group of warriors behind.

Flotta the Cux scout led the army towards Cuxhaven, taking them via a rarely used path. The land was bogged and so it was easy to become stuck in the mire if you didn’t have a good knowledge of the area. Especially when thousands of men were marching around.

The Frisians were unprepared for the attack. They had set up a siege of Cuxhaven and were dug in somewhat around the fortress. With the arrival of the Anglo-Saxon forces, the 1200-strong Frisians were sandwiched between Cuxhaven’s natural moat and the Adenar’s army, nearly twice its size. The camp soon fell into disarray, as the panicked Frisians realized that the hunter was about to become the slaughtered. They began a desperate, scurried attempt to line up against the force. Their lines were mangled and crooked, some were not properly dressed as they rushed to immediate arms, arriving at the line with tilted helmets, boots on the wrong foot, and bellies full of breakfast. Their few, panicked bowmen began to launch volleys at the Anglo-Saxons, but most fired too early and the arrows never reached their target as they were too far away. The weather was not warm, yet their faces shone with sweat in the morning’s sun.

Meanwhile, the battle-hardened Adenar took the centre and observed the order of deployment, where the speedy and screaming Juta, possibly on hallucinogenic mushrooms (Adenar suspected), took the left flank along with the readied Angles. Ylvar and the light cavalry held back slightly on the right flank, prepared to sweep across as the engagement began. The experienced Frisian leader, Meine, whose fearsome gaze froze regular men, had no cavalry, few ranged units, only basic infantry with an assortment of weapons; it was the entire Frisian force in the North, as most were in the south having to deal with the Belgæ and Romans. He put on a brave face but turned to his Gods for a miracle.

The battle began with Chief Juta, anxious to relieve his people from the siege, his forces pushed forward from the left with the Angles, where the Frisians turned to face them. The pressure caused the Frisian centre to wheel to their right, wherein Adenar's force fell upon the conglomerating Frisians who were being hit sideways across their unfortunate column, and began tripping over their camp and each other just to face the assault. Those who fought died as brave warriors, slain by overwhelming numbers, and those who fled were chased down by Ylvar's cavalry.

The relieved Cux, largely fishermen armed with real and makeshift spears, sallied forth from their palisades and cut down the Frisians, who took to the mudflats to escape. They captured some of them and bound their hands, and then tied them to a rope in a sort of "daisy-chain" manner and brought them to their leader Juta.

In the aftermath, only two dozen Anglo-Saxons perished in the melee, while about half of the Frisians

lay dead, another third wounded, 150 surrendered without issue, and fewer than a hundred were able to flee. Meine, wounded in his right hand, was taken prisoner. Juta was left to decide on the fate of the wounded, while the surrendered were brought back to Bierde for negotiations. Three of the surrendered were sent along with an envoy to discuss terms.

The Frisians were subjugated, forced to supply hostages to the Saxons, and were not to harm any allied chieftains. In addition, the remains of Brandor had to be returned.

Gunnaz was made to marry Fenna, the daughter of the powerful North Frisian Chieftain Hidde. Meine was thereafter returned to the service of Hidde. It is in this "*Pax Anglo-Saxus Frisii*", in which High Chieftain Frithogar grew up. But not all was peaceful, for many other enemies clamoured at the gates. The world was changing, even Roma. What plundering might await enterprising men?





# The Finding of a Saint

William Riverdale



**Sister Agatha was somebody** whom I deeply respected, and why wouldn't I?, for I knew, without a doubt, that she was a living saint. I was a witness to it. It was the Feast of the Assumption of Mary in the Year of our Lord 2006, and when we were proclaiming the Mass, I saw her deep in prayer and swaying. But her swaying looked peculiar to me. My eyes went to her shoes, and I saw, to my great astonishment, that they were not touching the church floor. She was floating.

But I decided to practice prudence unless I threw unnecessary commotion her way and broke her meditation. But the sight of it burned a new and overpowering zeal in me for the Lord. My heart earned to imitate her, and I prayed the Lord may grant me but a scrap from the table of the feast to which He had called the pious sister. After the Mass had ended, sister Agatha bid me a warm goodbye and left to do her daily chores, but I stayed behind and adored the Eucharist until the priest of our assembly had cleaned the vessels, cleared the table, closed the book, and replaced the cloth. As he descended the steps, I went to him and confessed to him what I had seen.

The priest made the Sign of the Cross, and I did the same. "Truly, we are blessed by her presence," he said. "And you being granted such a vision, for none but you were able to see it. But keep it a secret from her, lest we distract her mind and soul from the Lord and place it upon herself. We must not be the cause of her temptation."

"It is good, father, that I stayed behind to ask you of this. Thank you." I asked leave and went to do my duties with a light and joyous heart.

I never told sister Agatha of her mystical levitation, but the knowledge of it helped me with my own devotion to Christ. In the following years, sister Agatha kept having these experiences, and neither she or anybody else had wisened to it except me.

But one day the father became gravely ill, and try as the doctors might, he were unable to help him, and his illness was hard upon him. He had always been a man of a frail constitution; fever, colds, and headaches regularly assaulted the poor father and left him sick for days on end. However, this time the situation seemed dire. Two weeks were past, and yet his maladies showed no sign of decrease, and his face looked paler than ever. I feared for the worst, and without another moment of delay, I fetched sister Agatha (for I knew that God had bestowed her with special grace and as scripture told us that 'the prayer of a just man availeth much'), and she was more than willing, and together we knelt before the Tabernacle the entire night and prayed fervently for the kind father's life.

The next day when we went to visit the priest to labor for him, to our great but welcome surprise, we

found him sitting on his bed, his spectacles propped upon his nose, reading the scriptures. His fever had broke, and his face was flush with rosy color. He smiled at us, and the sight of him healthy, not coughing or breathing hoarsely but reclining there with his eyes no longer bloodshot and his temples no longer covered with nervous sweating moved me so much that I choked back tears.

And in that state of joy and relief, I forgot my vow of secrecy I had taken with him and blurted out: "Father, sister Agatha's prayers worked. Truly she is a living saint!"

Sister Agatha looked at me looking utterly lost. The father gave a sheepish look and sighed. I stood there with my mouth open, horrified. Sister Agatha turned to me and asked what I had meant, on why I deemed her prayers efficacious and not mine also, and why I called her a living saint. Seeing I could not deflect her curiosity and not wanting to lie to her, I meekly disclosed what I had seen happening to her for the past few years.

"This is why I sought you out when I heard about the father's condition. Oh, forgive me, sister Agatha!" She looked at the priest, her eyes wide as saucers.

"Is this true, father?" she asked.

"Yes," he confessed with a defeated smile. "I advised her to keep it a secret, as I did you."

"What do you mean, father?" I asked, but sister Agatha questioned me instead.

"You saw me floating on the feast of the Assumption on that year, correct?" she asked.

"Yes, the very year," I said. "Since that day, I was inspired by you to labor more in my faith for the Lord, and that one day the Lord might grant me a holiness akin to yours."

She stared at me for a moment, and then clasping her hands over her mouth, broke out into merry laughter. "What does my Christ mean by playing such mirth with me?"

Now I was confused. "What do you mean, sister Agatha?"

"My sister," she said, holding my hands in hers. "On that day, when I had come back from my chores to ask the priest about the later vigil, I found you in adoration, and I saw an angel placing a wreath of lilies upon your head. I held myself back and watched in awe. After you had talked with the priest and went away, I too went and spoke with him and told him about what I had seen, and he told me to keep quiet lest I distract you from the Lord and unto yourself. And from that day on, I saw many wonders happening with you, and I prayed to the Lord that He would give *me* a faith as deep as yours."

# Round the World

Chapter VII & VIII

The Story of Sir Francis Drake

Mrs Letitia MacColl Elton



**CHAPTER VII** SO we see that both of Drake's ships, the *Pascha* and the *Swan*, were left behind in the West Indies, and he made a quick voyage home in the well-built Spanish frigate. We hear nothing of Drake for two years after his return to Plymouth. There is a legend that he kept on the seas near Ireland. Elizabeth was still unable and unwilling to go to war with the King of Spain, but she was willing to encourage the sort of warfare that Drake and the other rovers had so successfully carried on against him.

Such companies of adventurers as these that sailed under Drake and Hawkins did a large part of the work of the navy in the time of Elizabeth. The country was saved the expense which private persons were willing to pay to furnish the ships. The Queen herself is known to have shared in the expenses and plunder of some such expeditions, and so she thriftily laid up treasure in England's empty money-chests. But some of her older councillors disliked exceedingly this way of getting rich, and would rather it had been done openly in war, or not at all.

To Drake it seems to have been a very simple affair. He wished, in the first place, as the old book says, "to lick himself whole of the damage he had received from the Spaniards." So he acted in pirate-fashion to the Spaniards, but not to the French or to the natives of the West Indies. And Drake considered his own cause so just that he never made a secret of his doings. He went at his own risk, for should he be taken by the enemy his country had no power to protect him, as she was not openly at war with Spain. But, on the other hand, he was secretly encouraged, and his gains were immense.

In the second place, Drake wished to attack and injure the Roman Catholic faith whenever and wherever he could. Churchmen had told him that this was a lawful aim. How earnestly he believed it we can see from the story, where he tried to persuade the Maroons to "leave their crosses," which to him were the sign of the hated religion. The terrible tale of the massacre of the Protestants on St. Bartholomew's Day told him by the French captain (who himself fell into the hands of the Spaniards, as we have seen), must have inflamed this feeling in his soul and in those of his men. It made them more eager than ever to fight the enemies of their own faith.

Then, too, the Spaniards founded their rights to own the New World upon a grant from one of the Popes; and the English, now no longer Catholics, denied his power to give it, and claimed the right for themselves to explore and conquer and keep what share they could get.

The King of Spain looked upon Drake as a pirate, but he could not find out how far he had been secretly encouraged by Elizabeth, and Drake was not punished, in spite of Philip's urgent complaints. But he was prevented from sailing away again on a voyage of discovery, though his friends and brothers went, and among them

John Oxenham, who was hanged as a pirate by the Spaniards because he had no commission or formal leave from the Queen or the Government to trade in the West Indies.

During this interval Drake took service in Ireland, under the Earl of Essex, furnishing his own ships, "and doing excellent service both by sea and land at the winning of divers strong forts." The work he took a part in was as harsh and cruel as any that was ever done by fire and sword to make Ireland more desolate. Here he met Thomas Doughty, one of the household of the Earl of Essex, a scholar and a soldier, who became his friend, and sailed with him on his next voyage.

The story of this voyage is told under the name of "The World Encompassed," and in it Drake is said "to have turned up a furrow about the whole world." In 1520 Magellan had discovered the passage south of America from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, since called by his name. Many adventurers had tried to follow him, but all their efforts had ended in disaster, and the Straits had an uncanny name among sailors, and "were counted so terrible in those days that the very thoughts of attempting them were dreadful."

Drake's fleet was made up of five ships—the *Pelican*, which was his flagship, the *Elizabeth*, the *Marigold*, the *Swan*, and the *Christopher*. They took a hundred and sixty men and plentiful provisions and stores for the long and dangerous voyage. They also took pinnaces which could be set up when wanted. Nor did Drake forget to "make provision for ornament and delight, carrying to this purpose with him expert musicians, rich furniture (all the vessels for his table, yea, many belonging to the cook-room, being of pure silver)."

They started on November 15, 1577, but were forced by a gale to put back into Plymouth for repairs, and started out again on December 13. The sailors were not told the real aim of the voyage, which was to "sail upon those seas greatly longed for." They were too full of fears and fancies. The unknown was haunted in their minds with devils and hurtful spirits, and in those days people still believed in magic.

They picked up several prizes on their way out, notably a large Portuguese ship, whose cargo of wine and food was valuable to the English ships. Drake sent the passengers and crew on shore, but kept the pilot, Numa da Silva, who gives one account of the voyage, and was most useful, as he knew the coasts so well. One of Drake's main cares on this voyage, we are told, was to keep the fleet together as much as possible, to get fresh water, and to refresh the men, "wearied with long toils at sea," as often as possible. He decided to lessen the number of the ships, for "fewer ships keep better company," and he looked for a harbour to anchor in.

"Our General," says the book, "especially in matters of moment, was never one to rely only on other men's

care, how trusty or skilful soever they might seem to be. But always scorning danger, and refusing no toil, he was wont himself to be one, whosoever was a second, at every turn, where courage, skill, or industry was to be employed. Neither would he at any time entrust the discovery of these dangers to another's pains, but rather to his own experience in searching out and sounding of them."

So in this case Drake himself went out in the boat and rowed into the bay. The *Swan*, the *Christopher*, and the prize were sacrificed, their stores being used for the other ships.

On the 20th of June they anchored in a very good harbour, called by Magellan Port St. Julian. Here a gibbet stood upon the land, and in this place Magellan is supposed to have executed some disobedient and rebellious men of his company. In this port Drake began to "inquire diligently into the actions of Master Thomas Doughty, and found them not to be such as he looked for."

(Doughty is said to have plotted to kill Drake or desert him, and take his place as commander, or at any rate to force him to go back, to the ruin of the voyage.)

"Whereupon the company was called together, and the particulars of the cause made known to them, which were found partly by Master Doughty's own confession, and partly by the evidence of the fact, to be true. Which when our General saw, although his private affection to Master Doughty (as he then in the presence of us all sacredly protested) was great; yet the care he had of the state of the voyage, of the expectation of her Majesty, and of the honour of his country, did more touch him (as indeed it ought) than the private respect of one man. So that the cause being thoroughly heard, and all things done in good order, as near as might be to the course of our laws in England, it was concluded that Master Doughty should receive punishment according to the quality of the offence. And he, seeing no remedy but patience for himself, desired before his death to receive the Communion, which he did, at the hands of our minister, and our General himself accompanied him in that holy action...."

"And after this holy repast, they dined also at the same table together, as cheerfully, in sobriety, as ever in their lives they had done aforetime, each cheering up the other, and taking their leave, by drinking each to other, as if some journey only had been in hand.

"And the place of execution being ready, he having embraced our General, and taken his leave of all the company, with prayer for the Queen's Majesty and our realm, in quiet sort laid his head to the block, where he ended his life. This being done, our General made various speeches to the whole company, persuading us to unity, obedience, love and regard of our voyage. And to

help us to this, he willed every man the next Sunday following to prepare himself to receive the Communion, as Christian brethren and friends ought to do, which was done in very reverent sort, and so with good contentment every man went about his business."

On the 11th of August, as quarrelling still continued, Drake ordered the whole ships' companies ashore. They all went into a large tent, and the minister offered to make a sermon. "Nay, soft, Master Fletcher," said Drake, "I must preach this day myself, although I have small skill in preaching.... I am a very bad speaker, for my bringing up hath not been in learning."

He then told them that for what he was going to say he would answer in England and before her Majesty. He and his men were far away from their country and friends, and discords and mutiny had grown up among them. "By the life of God," said Drake, "it doth take my wits from me to think on it. Here is such quarrels between the sailors and the gentlemen as it doth make me mad to hear it. But, my masters, I must have it left [off], for I must have the gentleman to haul and draw with the mariner, and the mariner with the gentleman. What, let us show ourselves all to be of a company, and let us not give occasion to the enemy to rejoice at our decay and overthrow. I would know him that would refuse to set his hand to a rope, but I know there is not any such here...."

He then offered to send any home that liked in the *Marigold*, a well-furnished ship; "but let them take heed that they go homeward, for if I find them in my way I will surely sink them, therefore you shall have time to consider here until to-morrow; for by my troth I must needs be plain with you now."

"Yet the voice was that none would return, they would all take such part as he did." And so, after more of such "preaching," they were told to forget the past, and "wishing all men to be friends, he willed them to depart about their business.

**CHAPTER VIII** ON the 20th of August the three ships entered the Straits of Magellan. Before the "high and steep grey cliffs, full of black stars," of Cape Virgins, at the entrance against which the beating seas looked like whales spouting, the fleet did homage to the Queen. The name of the *Pelican* also was changed to the *Golden Hind* in remembrance of Drake's "friend and favourer," Sir Christopher Hatton, whose crest was a golden hind. In sixteen days they reached the "South Sea," Drake himself having rowed on ahead of the fleet with some of his gentlemen to find out the passage. He had meant to land, and leave "a monument of her Majesty graven in metal," which he had brought with him for that purpose, but there was no anchoring, as the wind did not let them stay; for a fearful storm arose and separated the ships, and threatened to send them all to the bottom of the sea. The *Marigold*, indeed, went down with all hands, and

the *Elizabeth*, “partly by the negligence of those that had charge of her, partly through a kind of desire that some in her had to be out of all those troubles and to be at home again, returned back the same way by which they came forward, and so coasting Brazil, they arrived in England on June 2nd the year following.” So that now, as the story quaintly says, the other ship, if she had been still called the *Pelican*, would indeed have been a pelican alone in the wilderness. Never did they think there had been such a storm “since Noah’s Flood,” for it lasted fifty-two days. The ship was driven south of the continent of America. At this time it was generally believed that another great continent stretched to the south of the Straits, which was called the unknown land, “wherein many strange monsters lived.” And now, when Drake had discovered this idea to be false, their troubles ended for the time, the storm ceased, but they were in great grief for the loss of their friends, and still hoped to meet the missing ships again.

They sailed northwards along the coast of America till they landed on an island to get water. Here they were treacherously attacked by Indians, who took them to be the hated Spaniards. The nine persons who were in the boat were all wounded, and Drake’s faithful servant, Diego the negro, died of his wounds, and one other. Drake himself was shot in the face under the right eye, and badly wounded in the head. They were in the worst case, because the chief doctor was dead, and the other in the *Elizabeth*. There was none left them but a boy, “whose goodwill was more than any skill he had.” But, owing to Drake’s advice, and “the putting to of every man’s help,” all were cured in the end.

They sailed on, and having picked up a friendly Indian who served as a pilot, they reached the harbour of Valparaiso. A ship which was lying in the harbour was seized, and then the town and the Spaniards discovered that Drake had reached the shores of the Pacific. On the coast the ship was trimmed and the pinnace put together, in which Drake himself set out to search the creeks and inlets where the ship could not sail. Grief for the absence of their friends still remained with them. Still searching for the lost ships, they sailed northwards on to Lima, where they got the news that a great Spanish ship had sailed from there a fortnight before, laden with treasure. Drake at once gave chase, hoping to take her before she reached Panama. The first man who sighted her was promised a chain of gold. The ship was overtaken and captured off Cape San Francisco. She was “the great glory of the South Sea,” and laden with gold, silver, plate, and jewels, all of which the English took. After six days the Spanish ship was dismissed, “somewhat lighter than before,” to Panama. To the master of the ship, Saint Juan de Anton, he gave a letter to protect him if he fell in with the missing English ships.

“Master Winter,” it says, “if it pleaseth God that you should chance to meet with this ship of Saint Juan de Anton, I pray you use him well, according to my word and promise given unto them. And if you want anything that is in this ship of Saint Juan de Anton, I pray you pay them double the value for it, which I will satisfy again, and command your men not to do any hurt; desiring you, for the Passion of Christ, if you [Pg 64]fall into any danger, that you will not despair of God’s mercy, for He will defend you and preserve you from all danger, and bring us to our desired haven, to whom be all honour, glory, and praise for ever and ever. Amen.—Your sorrowful Captain, whose heart is heavy for you,—FRANCIS DRAKE.”

The next prizes captured yielded treasure of a different kind, though equally precious. These were some charts with sailing directions, taken from two China pilots. The owner of the next large Spanish ship captured by Drake has left an interesting account of him.

He says that “the English General is the same who took Nombre de Dios five years ago. He is a cousin of John Hawkins, and his name is Francis Drake. He is about thirty-five years of age, of small size, with a reddish beard, and is one of the greatest sailors that exist, both from his skill and his power of commanding. His ship is of near four hundred tons, sails well, and has a hundred men all in the prime of life, and as well trained for war as if they had been old soldiers of Italy. Each one is specially careful to keep his arms clean. He treats them with affection and they him with respect. He has with him nine or ten gentlemen, younger sons of the leading men in England, who form his council. He calls them together on every occasion and hears what they have to say, but he is not bound by their advice, though he may be guided by it. He has no privacy; those of whom I speak all dine at his table, as well as a Portuguese pilot whom he has brought from England, but who never spoke a word while I was on board. The service is of silver, richly gilt, and engraved with his arms. He has, too, all possible luxuries, even to perfumes, many of which he told me were given him by the Queen. None of these gentlemen sits down or puts on his hat in his presence without repeated permission. He dines and sups to the music of violins. His ship carries thirty large guns and a great quantity of ammunition, as well as craftsmen who can do necessary repairs. He has two artists who portray the coast in its own colours, a thing which troubled me much to see, because everything is put so naturally that any one following him will have no difficulty.”

Drake wished to find his way home by the north of America into the Atlantic. But in this he was not successful, for the weather was very severe, and tried the men too much; meanwhile, they found a convenient haven in a little bay above the harbour of San Francisco, and now

known as “Drake’s Bay.” Here they stayed a month, repairing a leak in the ship and refreshing the men. They then set sail, and saw nothing but air and sea for sixty-eight days, till they reached some islands. These they named the “Islands of Thieves,” on account of the behaviour of the natives. In November they came to the islands of the Moluccas, where Drake had a splendid reception.

They then sailed on till they arrived at a little island, which they called the “Island of Crabs.” Here they pitched their tents, and set up forges to repair the iron-work of the ship and the iron-hooped casks. Those that were sickly soon grew well and strong in this happy island.

On the 9th of January the ship ran aground on a dangerous shoal, and struck twice on it; “knocking twice at the door of death, which no doubt had opened the third time.”

Nothing but instant death was expected, and the whole ship’s company fell to praying. As soon as the prayers were said, Drake spoke to the men, telling them how they must think of their souls, and speaking of the joys of heaven “with comfortable speeches.” But he also encouraged them to bestir themselves, and he himself

set the example, and got the pumps to work, and freed the ship of water. The ship was fast upon “hard and pinching rocks, and did tell us plain she expected continually her speedy despatch as soon as the sea and winds should come ... so that if we stay with her we must perish with her.” The other plan, of leaving her for the pinnace, seemed to them “worse than a thousand deaths.”

After taking the Communion and listening to a sermon, they eased the ship by casting goods into the sea—“three ton of cloves, eight big guns, and certain meal and beans”; making, as an old writer says, a kind of gruel of the sea round about. After they had been in this state from eight o’clock at night till four o’clock next afternoon, all in a moment the wind changed, and “the happy gale drove them off the rocks again, and made of them glad men.”

The rest of the homeward voyage was less adventurous, and on the 18th of June they passed the Cape of Good Hope, “a most stately thing, and the fairest cape we saw in the whole circumference of the earth.”

On the 26th of September they “safely, and with joyful minds and thankful hearts, arrived at Plymouth, having been away three years.”



# Druid

# Without a Home

Chapter 7

Terra Novis

Call of the Shieldmaiden





**The Lady Flounder** heaved and settled upon the waves. The sea had grown calmer as daylight appeared, but the ship was badly damaged.

"We will have to wait for the stars to come out in order to navigate more precisely, but I can tell we are far off track." Grudaire's brown eyes were as calm as the day Degore first met him, all the way back at the abbey, now so far away.

Clancy was pulling at the sail that lay forlornly at the bottom of the boat. The mast had snapped, and it had been all they could do to stop the sea from dragging the sail away too.

"We need to get to land and find ourselves a tree," Degore suggested. He peered into the distance. "There might be something out there." He pointed at what could have been a tinge of darkness on the horizon.

"The wind is pushing us in that direction," Grudaire commented on the obvious. "Let's see what there is to see when we get a bit closer." He looked a bit concerned.

"What is wrong?" Degore inquired as he bit into a chunk of bannock bread.

"Just concerned where we might be going," Grudaire said. "I hope we do not end up in Terra Novis, but then again that could be exciting."

"What is of interest in Terra Novis, then?" Degore wondered.

"Many years ago, a young boy ended up in the port of Llyme claiming to be the son of distant royalty. King McKracken tried to contact the boy's family but they did not want him back, as his father had too many sons. So he has been raised by the king ever since. If you ever see a non-ginger in the royal family you will know it's him. Beric they call him. Anyway, soon afterwards there was a plague or something and Beric's whole kingdom was wiped out apparently." Grudaire paused and peered at the darkness on the horizon, which was now more definite. "I do hope there are no savage survivors roaming around."

"Why would they be savages?" Clancy wondered.

"A lack of civilization will do that to a man," Grudaire chuckled.

"Lucky the young Beric made it out." Degore scratched at a mosquito bite. "Will we become savages too?"

"I know your coming of age trip has not started as smoothly as I had hoped, but we will get things back on track." Grudaire smiled at the boys. "I am very glad you boys chose me to go with you on this journey."

"We remembered all your stories, and we wanted to see a yarri." Clancy too peered into the distance. "So it works out perfectly if we go to Terra Novis now; that is where the yarris are."

Grudaire chuckled, "I do not want to see one. The speck indeed turned out to be land, and after half a day's

sailing the boat limped into a natural harbour. The forest was thick and hummed with the sounds of insects and birds. The beach was pristine. A gentle stream trickled into the cove, providing a good source of fresh water.

"Let's drag her up onto the beach boys, we are at high tide." Grudaire, despite being advanced in years, was as strong as an ox and did the same amount of work as both boys put together. The tide soon receded leaving the boat high and dry. After spending some time checking the boat over and going through their provisions and spreading things out on the beach to dry, Grudaire stretched and looked around. "We are safe here during the day, boys, but we need to turn our attention to the nighttime."

"Why? What will get us?" asked Clancy, who sat in the shade of a palm tree mending the split in his trouser leg.

"I do not know the full extent of the animals that live here—" Grudaire surveyed the forest that grew thickly right up to the beach—"but of the ones I know, many are very dangerous, like the yarri."

"What about lions," Degore suggested, "or wolves?"

"No wolves, but some do consider the yarri to be like a lion. And then there is the devil, of course," Grudaire grinned.

"The devil is a spirit though, surely?" asked Clancy as he proudly inspected his sewing.

"These ones have jaws that open 80 degrees and can bite through metal. Last time I was here, one of the old sea dogs got drunk and fell asleep. The rest of us hiked up a small mountain nearby, and got lost. We found our way the next day and all that remained of him was blood stains in the sand and his clothes." Grudaire sighed. "I should have prepared for this. What weapons do you boys have again?"

A sword each, Clancy's longbow and plenty of arrows, and a spear.

"It will do. We need to sort out a place to sleep, and we will need to take turns at keeping watch." Grudaire pointed up to a high rock that formed part of the entrance to the cove. "We will build a fire and that way nothing can get at us."

They began to haul driftwood over for the fire and Clancy scrambled up the rock, bearing the wood and their humble possessions to the top. It did not take long, and the boys then proceeded to fish, as they were a bit tired of the salt beef they had been having since leaving the port in Llyme. The ball of moss with the coal in it had been drenched in the storm so Degore had to work his flint to light up the fire.

Grudaire was chopping down a tall slender tree on the edge of the beach.

"He really does not want to go into the forest, does he?" Clancy said, as he tried to hide the fish he had just caught, mostly because it was smaller than the one Degore had reeled in.

"Well, I am not too keen on meeting the devil myself!" Degore tossed his line back into the water.

"I will vanquish it," Clancy announced.

"I hope you have a larger sized store of courage than the fish you catch," Degore snickered at him.

"Just you wait, the next one is going to be massive!" Clancy baited his hook. "I must say, though, the fish around here bite well."

"I wonder if they have fresh water fish as well," Degore mused. "We would need to go into that forest to look for them."

The chopping sound stopped and the boys watched as the tree crashed down across the beach. Grudaire then walked slowly along the beach towards them in the setting sun.

The boys had caught three fish each by then, but none of them were particularly large. They were small cod, but taken together they would do for one meal. Clancy gutted the fish as Degore moved coals aside and Grudaire clambered up the rocks with an enormous leaf.

"This is a banana leaf, if you wrap up the fish in this it will cook it nicely." He scrounged around in his pockets, and produced some diminutive wrinkled black potato like things. "These are yams, they are a bit like potatoes."

Clancy carefully wrapped the fish and placed them amidst the coals. The yams went in as well and now all they could do was wait.

"Can we go exploring tomorrow?" Degore asked hopefully.

"We need to get our ship in order," Grudaire evaded the question.

"So it's a yes," Clancy said, but a horrible raspy scream came from nearby and his 'yes' came out more like a yell: "What was that!?"

"It's the devil." Grudaire was unbothered. "It's the least of our worries," he pointed over at the forest edge, "see, it's coming out now."

A cute little animal walked onto the beach. It was black with a white stripe that went across his chest and across the top of each front leg. There was also a patch of white on its back above its tail. It was as tiny as the little 18lb Pawdraig, God rest his soul, and it walked with an adorable trot a short way across the sand. The boys stared in bewilderment. The little animal stopped and gave another horrid scream.

"That is the devil!?" Clancy asked incredulously. "How is it so small and cute and horrible?"

Degore thought he saw sharp, needle-like teeth in the quickly fading light. "I kinda want it as a pet."

"You see why I said it's the least of our worries." Grudaire poked at the coals as the scent of fish began to raise their appetites.

"I will still have a hard time sleeping listening to that noise," Degore said, "even though I do not fear the animal."

"Kind of you to offer to keep the first watch," Grudaire said.

"I walked into that, didn't I?" Degore laughed.

Clancy was pulling the fish out of the coals. "Let's see how the foreign leaves compare to our own."

The fish was delicious and the yams went down well. The fresh local food seemed to make Grudaire more friendly towards the forest and he promised the boys an excursion the next day.

Degore sat by the fire as his companions slept. There was a dull coughing sound every now and again, but the sound of the devils was not too disturbing now that he knew how small they were. A full moon was out and the fire had died down to a gentle red glow. The air was warm, and a slight breeze stirred his hair. The air smelt fresh and salty and alive, the perfect night for going on a midnight excursion. A lot of animals seemed to think so too and he saw the shapes of many large beasties come down to the beach from time to time to investigate the boat. Some were quite large and their movements sent chills up his spine. It was a good thing he was so high up on a rock, he reckoned.

Grudaire awoke and stirred the fire. "You are still awake, good job!"

"Why would I not be?" he asked.

"You young chaps who are not used to this kind of thing often fall asleep anyway," Grudaire chuckled. "But now it's time for you to sleep, tomorrow will be a long day."

Degore wrapped himself up in his blanket and made himself comfortable on the hard rock. It would not normally have been comfortable but it was a bed of feathers compared to being down there on the sand with those creatures. He imagined awakening to find the devil screaming in his ear and biting his head. No, it was much better to be up on the rock.

He awoke the next day when the smoke from the fire got in his face. Grudaire was skinning a large fish. "It's a salmon, I caught it during the night, it will give us a good feed."

"What is Clancy doing?" Degore looked out at his friend who was moving across the sand, staring at the ground.

"Animal tracks. There was a giant wombat that came down to the boat last night. Go and check it out, and have a wash too: we may be in the wild, but we must not become savages."

Degore rushed off across the beach. The morning air was fresh and he felt happy to be alive. The sun was not yet savage, and the cool breeze floating in off the ocean was refreshing. He rushed up behind Clancy and pounced on him. Despite being quite lithe, compared to Degore's more solid build, Clancy was no weakling. Years of splitting wood and healthy meals of meat and cheese had made him quite equal to the occasion. He

pulled Degore to the ground and laid a knee across his chest. "I wonder what kind of animal you are. I must say, though, some of the animals around here are quite ugly."

Degore guffawed, "At least I smell fresh compared to you."

Clancy drew back and looked over his dishevelled shirt front. "Alas, 'tis true, I meant to wash but the tracks are so interesting." He pointed them out to Degore. "The giant wombat is a bit smaller than that hippo we saw on that ship when we left Llyme, and it eats vegetation so it's not too dangerous."

"I wonder what it tastes like." Degore inspected the footprint.

Clancy was busy stripping off his clothes. "Are you going to join me?" he asked as he entered the surf. "The water is warm."

"I do not need to wash," Degore said piously. "As long as your heart is clean, that is all that matters."

"Get your corpse into the water, Degore," Clancy ordered.

Degore went down to the water and dipped a foot in, it was warm.

Clancy snorted and plunged into the waves. Degore joined him. The water was warm and delightful. The sea back home was cold all year round, and so this was a welcome change, but their hunger soon drove them out of the water and they found the clothes they had spread out the day before dry and ready to be worn. They hurried back along the beach to where the scent of cooking fish beckoned to them.

The breakfast was salmon with rice. Grudaire had seen some ripened heads on his morning walk. Degore was perplexed, he inquired how Grudaire kept finding food growing everywhere.

"You've got to know what you are looking for and think ahead to what you need." Grudaire placed a healthy portion of fish onto the boys' plates. "Eat up, we have a lot of work to do."

"Are we going to fix the mast?" asked Clancy.

"Yes; as you noticed, the boat needs several repairs, so we shall start on that this morning." Grudaire looked away across the ocean. "We are in a pretty good place here, and should be able to leave without a hitch."

After they ate, Grudaire set the boys to work. He informed them they might be there a few days, and so set Clancy to work gathering more firewood. "We will be fine there as long as the weather does not change." Degore set to work stripping what little bark was on the tree. "It's only partially seasoned, but it will have to do."

"How did such a young, straight tree as this die?" asked Grudaire. He was doing that thing where he asked questions he knew the answers to.

"How should I know when I did not see where it came from?" Degore said as he looked at the short straggled branches.

Grudaire laughed and set to work, cutting the slender trunk to the right length. "This is a lucky find. Just the right length and half-seasoned already."

They worked for a while, until Degore's hands grew sore from using his axe to smooth down the tree. Clancy took over and Degore set to work washing his clothes.

As he swished the linen through the clean water he remembered Uhtred's instructions on washing clothes and how a member of their order was required to be clean and tidy at all times. Even though it is often women who do all the laundry, one cannot depend on them, and one will end up in situations where one has to be responsible for oneself. Freyja had been ill and Uhtred had chosen that cold winter morning to instruct half the boys at the abbey on how to do their own washing. The water was cold and they would have preferred to get toasty by the fire, carving buttons.

Now, with years of experience under his belt and the pleasant weather, washing clothes was a breeze and the task was soon completed. He hung his clothes up on the string Clancy had put up to dry his own.

The sun was beginning to burn down upon them, and they regrouped under a large mango tree. The fruits were almost gone, but Clancy scampered up to pluck a rosy-cheeked mango from amongst the thick green leaves.

"That's enough work in the sun for today. We will finish smoothing the mast down in the late afternoon, but for now let us go on an adventure." Grudaire ordered some fruit gathered from a banana tree and, with some jerky procured from their provisions, the party set off.

The trees were thickly bunched together and very tall. The beach was out of sight once they had gone only a short way into the forest. They followed the stream so as not to lose their way. There were all kinds of things to catch their attention: bright squawking birds, and shy hopping creatures.

They went on for some time until a medium sized hill rose up above them. It was bare of trees and just covered in scrub. The scent of the ocean was long gone and the gentle, humid rotting of the forest was fading as the dry air pressed down on them. It felt oppressive, like being in the clay ovens used at the abbey to bake clay tiles.

Grudaire suggested they stop and have a spot of lunch. The lunch went down well after the morning's hard work and the trek through the forest. They then climbed the hill. The sweat was pouring down their backs and the sun beating down on their heads when they reached the top.

The plain that revealed itself on the other side of the hill stretched as far as the eye could see. In the distance the shimmering mirage made the shapes of men and beasts. The red ground was covered in scrub and the odd tree stuck out here and there. The majestic

baobabs were in full bloom and their white flowers were covering the trees, their waxy petals bent back, touching the stems, and the stamens standing tall and numerous in the centre. The strange, bottle-shaped trunks stuck up above all the other vegetation.

"I heard a story about how the boab tree spirits were proud and arrogant and so they were pulled out of the ground and replanted upside down," Grudaire said. "It's said they store water in their trunks. Though I have not tested that myself."

A large group of animals could be seen moving across the plain in front of them. They looked like the wallabies back in the forest. They were taller than a man and walked calmly side by side. Their faces were short and they had forward-facing eyes.

Clancy looked puzzled. "I thought they would hop, they look like the little ones back there in the forest."

"They would feed the whole abbey for a day," Degore said. "Too bad we can't hunt one."

"No, we need a smaller animal to prepare for our journey, but let's go over to the closest boab and get some nuts. They make good flour," Grudaire said.

The three trudged through the heat. It was getting unbearable. Degore was grateful for his hat. They rested beneath the boab for a while and then filled a bag with nuts.

"Clancy, I want you to bag us a wallaby on the way back if you can," Grudaire said. "Perhaps you can get one while it's resting in the shade."

Clancy took his bow and shifted the quiver to a more comfortable position. The three scanned the area as they walked back the way they had come. They had gone some way without seeing any sign of life when Degore spotted a lone wallaby hopping towards them. It was approaching behind a bush and had not seen them. They stopped and Clancy took out an arrow. "I wish my bow was smaller," he muttered. He was tall enough to use the 6 foot bow, and strong enough, but wished his prey was larger.

The wallaby came hopping innocently around the bush, it did not notice them for quite some time and came towards them in a straight line. Clancy shot and the arrow hit the wallaby in the chest. The animal fell down kicking.

"Good shot!" Degore and Grudaire were impressed.

"All those years of practice," Clancy said as he pretended he hit this well all the time. In truth it surprised him a little also.

Degore slung the wallaby over his shoulder and they progressed forwards again. They struggled up the hill in the heat and down the other side, and then collapsed in the shade of the forest. The waterskins had run empty a long time ago, and they drank deep of the clear water in the stream flowing through the forest.

"This would be a nice place if it weren't so hot," Grudaire said. "I have been to this region a few times, it never gets cooler."

"Are there people here?" asked Clancy.

Grudaire shook his head. "No-one in this area, but it's good hunting and makes for a good excursion."

They rested for some time, and then traipsed back through the forest towards the ocean. It was mid-afternoon when they reached the beach. To their great surprise, a large set of fresh pawprints now led along the strand and headed towards the rocks they had slept on. They followed the prints over there.

A few scratch marks marred the rock face, almost reaching to the top. The large creature, whatever it was, must have tried hard to get up.

Clancy followed the tracks to the forest edge. "It went this way!"

"Come back from the forest!" Grudaire was more agitated than the boys had ever seen him before. Clancy hurried back, calling "What is wrong?"

Grudaire chuckled; his usual calm demeanour was back, but as he spoke there was still a note of urgency to his voice. "We do not know if it has gone away for good, we need to be careful."

Clancy shifted his quiver back to a usable position.

Grudaire suddenly became animated and began to give orders. "Degore, if you could cut up that wallaby and Clancy, you and I will finish up that mast—I know it's hot, but drink lots of water and dunk yourself into the stream if you need to."

They all set to work. Degore wanted to ask more about the dangerous creature but Grudaire had hustled them off so quickly he had not the chance.

He quickly gutted the wallaby and washed the knife in the stream. All the while the chopping sounds rang through the air. He bundled the meat back into the hide and carried it over to the mast.

"It's looking good," he said, "shall I build a fire so we can smoke this?"

Grudaire shook his head. "We can do that later, we want to get this onto the boat before sundown."

It took all three of them to drag the mast over to the boat. Clancy set up a pulley system which attached to a nearby palm tree and then hauled one end onto the boat and set it in place. Degore held the other end to stop it moving and Clancy repositioned his ropes. They winched the mast up and into position. Grudaire dashed about lending a hand here and there, but the boys noticed his furtive glances at the forest. They then set to work on the standing rigging. The ropes had not been damaged too much by the fall of the old mast, and as the sun began to hide behind the distant ocean the mast was held fast.

Clancy dismantled his pulley system and admired the mast as he wound up the ropes. "Looks good, I think a career as a shipbuilder would be fine."

"You would not want to do this every day," Degore said, "you would not have time for your longbow practice."

A faint cough came from the forest and Grudaire took on another burst of energy. "We need to float her out on the tide tonight."

"Can't we do that tomorrow?" asked Degore.

"I fear a coming storm, do you feel a rise in the humidity?"

Degore nodded. "I was wondering why the setting sun did not bring cool air."

"Tropical storms are sudden, and the reason the mast snapped in the first place." Grudaire took his dried clothes down off the chain that held the anchor. "Let us load our stuff into the boat."

"That is going too far!" Clancy protested. "You are up to something!"

Grudaire sighed. "I did not want to panic you, but I think we should spend the night in the boat, just in case that animal should come back."

"What is ..." Degore started to ask when a deep snoring sound, like Grudaire during one of his after-dinner naps, followed by a scream came from the forest behind them.

"And there it is. I can hear it is still some way off, but we must move fast." Grudaire began piling things into the boat. "Fetch our things from the rock, and fast," he told the boys

They rushed down the beach at full speed. The deep snoring scream sound came again. It was significantly closer. Clancy scrambled up the rock and handed the things down to Degore, and, with their arms full of cooking utensils and blankets, they rushed back across the beach

The water was knee high around the boat when they reached it. Grudaire reached down to take the things from the boys and then they clambered up the ropes and into the boat.

Grudaire stashed their things away while Clancy and Degore hauled up the anchor. The tide was coming in fast and the boat was beginning to shift, yet it would be some time before she could float. The sun had gone down completely and dark clouds were hiding the moon

"I wish we had a fire," Clancy moaned, as he wrapped himself in his woollen robe.

"Better to wear warm things and eat a cold dinner than to become dinner yourself," Grudaire snapped. The sun had gone down completely and it was utterly dark. He fumbled for a while longer and then light suddenly appeared. The lantern was alight.

Degore took a pole and gently guided the now floating boat away from the shore. Clancy joined him on the

other side of the boat and soon they were in the middle of the cove.

"This is good," Grudaire said as he dropped the anchor over the side, "we can relax now." Even as he spoke they heard the coughing sound again. It sounded as though it was in the boat with them. The sails that had been sitting in a pile near the mast moved gently. At that moment the snoring scream came once more from the beach. Degore grabbed his sword and poked at the sails. "This is just one of those small devils, right?"

Clancy held the lantern out over the side of the boat "I see something moving around over there..."

Grudaire took a spear and called Clancy over. "Hold the light up," he ordered, "I know what creature this is. It's bigger than a devil, but they do not tend to attack humans—though it will put up a fight. We want to back it off the boat and into the water.

The sail was moved aside and a medium-sized dog-shaped animal got unsteadily to its feet. It snarled at them with enormous jaws set in a wolfish head. Its coat was a brown, sandy colour and there were lots of dark stripes going across its back. Its tail was stiff and baredly moved as the creature backed away from them. It snarled again, and then turned and leapt over the gunwales and into the water. They heard splashing sounds as it swam away.

"Why didn't it attack us?" Clancy asked, lowering the lantern.

"They are ambush hunters," Grudaire said, "luckily for us, or we could be fighting for our lives right now."

Clancy turned back to observe the creature on the beach, but, other than the faint sounds of the striped dog getting out of the water, nothing could be heard. The strange shape on the beach was gone.

"Let's have some food," Grudaire suggested. The clouds parted and the moon shone down upon them and reflected across the water. Now that the excitement was over they felt the cold, as well as the first few drops of rain.

A scream and splash came from the shore. Barks, howls and coughs intermingled with splashing and thuds. Then as quickly as it started it was over.

The meal was a simple one: some cold fish and bannock bread. The boys declined the last yam and encouraged Grudaire to have it. They seemed to be his favourite food.

Then they stretched up a piece of canvas and hunkered down to await the rain. It came suddenly and hard. The boat moved around too much to sleep in comfortably, and to save fuel they had put out the lantern. The rain pelted down for a few hours, but then eased up.

Now that they could hear each other speak, Degore ventured to ask, "Why was that striped dog on our boat?"

"The snoring scream you heard, and the scratches on the rock—maybe it was hiding from that animal," Grudaire suggested.

Clancy curled up to nap, now that the rain had abated and the soft rocking of the boat calmed his soul. Degore felt a little ill so did not inquire further about the many strange animals that seemed out to get them.

He fell asleep and did not wake till the sun was above the horizon. Clancy was busy combing his hair, and Grudaire studying some papers. "I have determined that we shall go to the south," he was saying.

Degore yawned and stretched to the full extent of his flexibility.

"I see you have decided to join us in the land of the living," Clancy said, doing up the ties on his shirt as he spoke. Despite being far away from civilization and a laundry, Clancy was a picture of decency—except his feet. No shoes were needed in that heat and with all the sand.

The boat had been moved while he slept and was near the other side of the cove. This side had more rocks than sand, but there were piles of driftwood.

"We will smoke the meat today and sail away tomorrow," Grudaire said. "We need to get the sail up and running." He motioned to the meat, still wrapped in its skin.

Degore chomped down some bannock bread and Clancy opened a coconut. It was good that they had lived close to a trading port growing up. They had come into contact with many foreign foods before. The coconut was one of Clancy's favourites. "I bet if I had enough of this water I could brew something," he said.

Most of the day was spent getting the sail up again. Every now and again Degore would swim across to the shore to check on the smoking arrangement. On one trip he found a few coconuts floating in the sea and collected them.

The sail was up as the sun was setting. Grudaire announced the job was complete as Degore closed upon the boat balancing a basket of smoked meat on his head. Clancy leaned out over the side and took it from him, and helped him aboard.

"We will get water tomorrow and set off then," Grudaire said.

The three ate another cold dinner and slept fitfully. The horrid coughs and screams were still disturbing, but they were safe out on the water.

The next day dawned bright and clear, Clancy was up with the birds, and Degore sat up as the sun warmed his face. Grudaire and Clancy were pushing the boat across the cove towards the stream.

"We need to be careful," Grudaire told the boys when the boat stopped. "That animal could be lurking around waiting for us to come into its range. I saw one kill a man. Dropped straight out of the tree and onto his head. It held him with its teeth and ripped out his guts with its claws." He shuddered. "We must take care."

Degore shuddered too. They worked quickly to fill their water containers and Clancy found some mistletoe that was close enough to the ground for him to reach the berries. Then it was all hands on deck to push the boat out of the cove and they hit the open water. The sail was up and they sailed across the water towards the south. They kept close to the land. The forest continued till late in the afternoon, and then they came up to the mouth of a river.

Crocodiles leapt up from the sea, snapping and biting at the boat, as if they had eaten all the crocodile version of catnip. Grudaire guided the ship away from the river.

"Not today, Satan." Degore held out his pendant towards them as they faded from view.



# The Brown Jug

-Francis Fawkes

DEAR TOM , this brown jug, that now foams with mild ale,  
(In which I will drink to sweet Nan of the Vale)  
Was once Toby Fillpot, a thirsty old soul  
As e'er drank a bottle or fathomed a bowl;  
In boosing about 't was his praise to excel,  
And among jolly toppers he bore off the bell.

It chanced, as in dog-days he sat at his ease,  
In his flower-woven arbour, as gay as you please,  
With a friend and a pipe, puffing sorrows away,  
And with honest old Stingo was soaking his clay,  
His breath-doors of life on a sudden were shut,  
And he died full as big as a Dorchester butt.

His body when long in the ground it had lain,  
And time into clay had resolved it again,  
A potter found out in its covert so snug,  
And with part of fat Toby he formed this brown jug;  
Now sacred to friendship, to mirth, and mild ale,  
So here 's to my lovely sweet Nan of the Vale.





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