**Death in Pendle**

”It's dark and dreich out here,” Jamie McCrimmon remarked as a tree dropped a shower of cold water on his head. The TARDIS was parked under a thick stand of broadleaf trees beside a deep pitted cart track.

“It is a little before dawn... In January,” The Doctor explained. “It will be light in an hour give or take.”

“It'll still be dreich,” Jamie complained. “And why must I wear these Sassenach clothes?”

“Because we’re in Lancashire in 1570. The main plot to kill Queen Elizabeth and put Mary Stuart on the English throne hasn’t happened yet, but the Pope has excommunicated Elizabeth and Scots are associated with Papism and not so popular just now.”

“So why hang about here getting all drookit, then? Let's leave this dark, wet place full of heretics alone.”

“I’m paying a visit to an old friend,” The Doctor answered. “We’re a mile or so off target, but there’ll be warm fires and hot, spiced wine when we get there.”

Jamie was partially mollified, though falling over a body that he had mistaken for a fallen log set his mood back again.

Two bodies, in fact.

“This one’s just a lad, not much older than me,” Jamie said.

“And this one is a man,” The Doctor said of the other corpse. “They’ve been dead for a few hours… perhaps since it was dark last night. Throats slit.”

“Robbed?” Jamie asked.

“I don’t think so,” The Doctor answered. “This man has a money bag full of silver.”

There were official papers in a leather satchel, too. The Doctor slung it over his shoulder and then brought the dead man back to the TARDIS. Jamie carried the murdered lad.

“We’ll leave them in the cloister room for now. When we’ve found out who wanted them dead we can make proper arrangements.”

“You think somebody wanted them dead?”

“It wasn’t a robbery. It was an ambush. These two were travelling somewhere, and they were prevented from getting there. I’m interested to know who and why.”

“I’m still hoping for hot spiced wine,” Jamie said.

“Both will be found at Whalley Manor,” The Doctor assured him.

They left the two dead bodies decently covered in sheets in the cool, quiet cloister room and stepped back out into the ‘dreich’ morning. There was one more fright for Jamie when he swore he had seen the black beast of doom, but it turned out to be a horse.

“A horse belonging to a dead man, I suspect,” The Doctor said as he noted that the horse was saddled and bridled. “Suffering from a night in the rain, poor thing. We’ll bring him with us. There are stables and oats for him where we’re going, too.”

They walked the horse along the cart track. After a while a grey dawn light made it easier to see, but the rain continued, evincing three more colourful Scots expressions from Jamie before they came to a boundary marker announcing that they had arrived in Whalley.

The Manor was a new Tudor house in the grounds of the ruined and thoroughly disestablished Abbey. The Doctor led the horse around to the stable yard at the back, where several men were preparing to ride out into the ‘drookit’ morning. When they saw the new arrivals, they dismounted. As a groom came to take the horse from The Doctor a young man in a black doublet approached.

“Sir William Peyton, I presume?” he said. “We were just setting out to look for you. Come within, my Lord. Sir Richard will be relieved to see you.”

The young man, who introduced himself as Roger Fitzpatrick, Sir Richard Assheton’s secretary, ushered The Doctor and Jamie into a warm room where a man in a deep russet doublet with silver threads run through the fabric was watching a pan of ale on the fireplace. He looked around as Roger Fitzpatrick announced that Sir William was here.

Sir Richard looked at The Doctor then quietly but urgently told ‘Fitz’ as he called him to close the parlour door.

“This is not Sir William Peyton,” he said to his secretary. “This is my old friend The Doctor. In the dim light they might well be mistaken, and after all we were expecting Sir William since last night, so the error is understandable, but….”

“I fear your Sir William is dead,” The Doctor said quickly and explained about the two bodies on the forest track, and his belief that robbery was not the motive, backed up by the silver and the documents he set down on the sideboard.

Sir Richard Assheton and his secretary looked at each other, and at The Doctor and Jamie. Both were pale faced with concern.

But they were also both practical and pragmatic. The situation called for cool thinking.

“My Lord….” Fitz said after a long moment. “If somebody thought Sir William dead in the forest…. Won’t the arrival of these two be an unpleasant surprise to that man?”

“Yes, it will,” Sir Richard answered, and his eyes flashed with a sombre humour as he turned to The Doctor. “My friend, Doctor, we knew each other in London ten years ago. Neither you nor Sir William, who comes here from the Earl of Derby’s household are known to any within the county of Lancashire. If you would consent to taking the name of Sir William Peyton for a time, we might find out a few matters. It could be dangerous, of course. Whoever struck in the dark might well try again….”

“The Doctor isnae afraid of danger, and no more am I,” Jamie said fiercely. “Besides, whoever was against your Sir William coming here, the lad who was his servant was murdered, too.”

“Indeed, he was,” Sir Richard noted. “We have two souls to be avenged as well as the prime cause that brought Sir William here in the first place.”

“And that was….?” The Doctor asked. But Sir Richard held up a hand for peace as a servant entered bearing cheesecakes and a platter of cold bacon already sliced to make a breakfast. The lord of the manor would not go on until the servant had departed and his guests and secretary were eating and drinking their fill.

“We keep the deception between the four of us,” he said. “Fitz has been with me for twenty-five years. He and I travelled to the Low Countries together when Bloody Mary made it dangerous to follow the Protestant faith. I’ll vouch for him as a loyal servant and a true Englishman. And you, Doctor, I trusted with my life the last time we were together and a gentleman from these north parts was disrespected by the London mob. So, I’ll trust Jamie, too, on your recommendation. But this matter of a dead man in the woods is secret even from my own servants. Kitchens are known places of gossip.”

“Agreed,” The Doctor said, looking up from where he had been perusing the papers within the dead man's satchel. “I see that William Peyton was coming here to assist you in questioning a fellow who may have been plotting insurrection in Lancashire.”

“I’m a Queen’s Justice,” Sir Richard confirmed. “And I’ve got the traitor locked up firmly in the old abbey dormitory. But the Earl felt two of us should question him about his doings before sending him to Lancaster. There may be names he will give up that come under my jurisdiction.”

“Insurrection?” Jamie repeated with a note of confusion that could be mistaken for doubt.

“It’s a sin against God and man,” Sir Richard answered. “Ken ye not your bible teachings?”

Jamie was slightly surprised that the word ‘ken’ was used in Lancashire in the same sense it was in his Highlands, but he knew what the man was asking well enough.

“For rebellion is as the sin of divination,” he answered quickly.

The Doctor smiled. Jamie had played his small part in a battle between Scots soldiers and the English at Culloden, which the English had called insurrection, but to the young piobaire and his comrades was justified war for national pride.

“First Book of Samuel,” Sir Richard added. “Chapter fifteen, verse thirteen.”

“Aye, I’d say so,” Jamie answered, trying to sound certain. In truth he couldn’t quote chapter and verse. Most of his religious knowledge came from listening to others sermonising. In common with most of his rural family and friends he had never even opened a Bible for himself.

Sir Richard looked ready to test Jamie’s loyalty or his faith, or both, a good while longer, but The Doctor interrupted him with an impatient air.

“Shall we have the man before us to speak for himself, then?”

“Jamie and I will fetch him,” Fitz said. “To your study?”

“Indeed,” Sir Richard agreed. Jamie followed the young secretary as The Doctor went with the master of the house to a room less comfortable than the parlour for giving a less fulsome welcome to the alleged traitor.

The prisoner was not within the Manor, but in a building that remained from the old disestablished abbey. What it had been in those days, Jamie wasn’t quite sure, but what it served as now was a sturdy, thick walled prison with heavy oak doors and strong iron locks.

The keys to those locks were wielded by a man called John Webb who looked darkly at Jamie and asked Fitz who he was.

“This is Sir William Peyton’s squire,” Fitz answered. “Come with him from Ormskirk at the Earl’s command.”

Was it his imagination or did that news disturb Webb? Jamie had decided that the keeper of keys was a sullen man who wouldn’t be very convivial company in the alehouse, but was he also a traitor and possibly a murderer? He would need more than a surly glance and just a flicker of the eyes as evidence of wrongdoing. All the same, he was the favourite suspect for the time being.

“Never mind that,” Fitz added. “Open the door and let’s have the churl for questioning.”

Webb did as he was told. Inside a dark, windowless but clean cell the prisoner sat at a plain table where he had been provided with a tin plate and cup for bread and water.

The man was about forty years of age, his face swarthy, a short black beard looking a little unkempt because he had not been allowed a blade to shave for at least a day. His eyes were clear grey and moved quickly between the three men at the cell door, summing them up with an intelligence that might be expected of one in the thick of a conspiracy.

“On your feet!” Webb demanded. The man stood slowly, defiantly.

“Now!” Fitz added with a tone of authority that belied his status in the household. “Sir Richard and his guest want to hear what you have to say”

“Which is more than most men would want,” Webb added. “I’d not listen to a word from the likes of you.”

The prisoner made no comment. He allowed himself to be led out of the cell. In the corridor Fitz walked ahead, Jamie beside him and Webb in the rear. Jamie had a strong feeling that he would prefer not to have Webb behind his back, but there was nothing else for it.

The prisoner said nothing as he was led across the rainswept abbey courtyard and into the much more cheerfully lit manor house. Not that there was any cheer for the prisoner. He was led straight to Sir Richard’s study, a wood panelled room with shelves containing account books and perhaps some general reading. Heavy sideboards lined the walls with candlesticks set ready for evening. A fire was lit in the hearth making the room much warmer than the cell had been. There was a guard outside the door and Jamie noticed a man outside the casement window of the ground floor room in case of any attempt at flight.

A long table had been set out for the examination. Sir Richard and The Doctor were sitting at one end. Fitz took another seat beside them where the quills, ink and paper for the recording of procedures were laid out. Clearly Fitz was used to being Sir Richard’s clerk.

Jamie wasn’t sure of his own role so he sat further down the table where he could keep one eye on the prisoner and the other on Webb, who leaned against the fireplace nonchalantly.

The prisoner stood. Sir Richard looked at him gravely.

“Your name?” he demanded.

“Andrew Paslew,” the prisoner answered.

“Are you indeed?” Sir Richard was surprised by the name. The Doctor seemed to recognise something about it, too. Jamie made up his mind to ask him about that, later.

“I have some doubts about that,” The Doctor said. “But set it down on the paper until any true name is discovered.

This instruction was to Fitz who did as he was told.

“And your business in the county of Lancashire?” Sir Richard demanded.

“No business of yours, nor any other man,” Paslew replied. “My detention here is an insult and an imposition. A stranger cannot pass through these parts without being manhandled and imprisoned?”

“A stranger calling himself Paslew…. Claiming kinship with the last and disgraced Abbot of Whalley?”

“I claim nothing. It is my name. It is you who claim that I have done something treasonable.”

Paslew’s eyes glanced around the room. The Doctor and Sir Richard met his gaze impassively. They had both faced worse than him. Fitz had turned to select a fresh quill and missed the moment. Webb scowled back at him contemptuously.

He looked at Jamie and raised an eyebrow as if he was puzzled by the young Scotsman.

“Nach eil thu nad Ghàidheal dìleas?” Paslew asked of Jamie in Scots Gaelic, to everyone’s surprise.

“Tha mise.” Jamie responded, then with a harder tone he expanded his response. “Ach chan eil thu de mo chinneadh no gin taobh a-staigh m ’eòlais agus chan innis thu dhomh càite am bu chòir mo dhìlseachd a bhith.

“What was that all about?” Sir Richard asked suspiciously, as well he might be.

“He asked was I not a loyal Highlander?” Jamie answered. “I answered that I am, but that he was not of my clan nor any within my ken and he’ll not be telling me where my loyalty should lie.”

Sir Richard looked at The Doctor who nodded emphatically.

“That’s the gist of it. But I think we’ll conduct ourselves in English from here on then there is no ambiguity.” He turned to the prisoner. “Jamie is my man first and foremost. He’ll not take your side whatever you try.”

“Jamie is not under examination here,” Sir Richard added. “You are, having been taken by the Constable of the Watch carrying documents intended to invoke insurrection in the County of Lancashire.”

A leather satchel was thrown down on the table. The Doctor glanced at just a few of the papers within. They were promissory notes giving large rewards to any man who would aid the alleged insurrection. No names were included, but the space was left for them to be added.

“I have never seen that before,” Paslew said coolly.

“You were carrying it when you were taken.”

“Prove it. I say I have never seen those papers and I am a bone fide traveller set upon by ruffians, dragged against my will to your doubtful accommodation and accused of a concocted and unlikely tale.”

It was a clever ploy. All he had to do was keep his cool and keep denying that the documents were anything to do with him. Neither Sir Richard nor The Doctor could make him admit something that would earn him a nasty public execution.

“I’ll make him talk!” Webb said, moving towards the prisoner in a thoroughly unambiguous way.

“No!” The Doctor warned him away. “I’ll not allow a confession extracted under torture. This is to be done right, or not at all.”

Sir Richard wasn’t so certain about that. In a time when reputed witches were ‘swum’ and worse to obtain confession and when he could remember agents of Queen Mary using all kinds of cruel devices on Protestant heretics and agents of Elizabeth using the same on unrepentant Papists, he might have allowed Webb to beat the prisoner.

But the Doctor was firm on that point, and Paslew allowed himself a sly smile knowing that his accusers were so powerless.

The questioning went on in the same way, hoping to grind down the prisoner who was standing without even water at his hand while a servant brought wine and sweet cakes for Sir Richard and The Doctor.

Jamie grew bored with the interrogation by attrition. He was curious to know why the prisoner was so fluent in Scots Gaelic and why he thought he could use it to turn Jamie’s loyalty, but not so curious that he wanted to listen to those smooth denials all day.

Besides, he had noticed that Webb was no longer in the room. He wasn’t sure when he had left – some time after the offer to soften the prisoner up had been rejected, anyway.

Jamie as quietly left his own place and slipped away through the door. He headed towards the kitchen where servants were likely to find themselves on a day when nobody would be outdoors through choice.

Before he reached that almost certainly large and busy room, however, he heard Webb’s voice from a small pantry where he was discussing the safety of dark roads through Pendle countryside at night. Jamie didn’t recognise the voice of the man who answered him, but he heard Webb call him by name.

Jamie listened a little longer then decided he had heard enough. He made his way back to the parlour where the remains of the cheesecakes and the bacon and an ale flagon comforted him while he thought long and deep about certain matters.

It was an hour or more later when The Doctor sought him out.

“Did your man Paslew talk?” he asked.

“Not to Sir Richard’s satisfaction,” The Doctor answered. “He sent him back to his cell to ponder his fate for a while longer. It’s possible bread and water and the cold of the day might change his mind, but I doubt it. I doubt letting Webb loose on him would do it, either, though.”

“Aye… I doubt that, too,” Jamie said so sharply that The Doctor looked at him closely. But he didn’t explain himself right away.

“Doctor…. What would come of this country if this insurrection happened?”

“If it was successful… if it spread from Lancashire to Yorkshire, veritably cutting off London from the North… if the Scots army then met with the rebels… they might succeed in usurping Elizabeth and putting Mary Stuart on the English throne. That would inevitably mean that Catholicism would be restored as the dominant religion. That would mean different European allegiances for England. There would be no war with Spain, but perhaps one with the Protestant low countries instead. More than likely Mary’s heir, James, would be raised as a Catholic, so when he becomes king the status quo would be maintained.”

“Scotland and England would be at peace? There would be no Culloden?”

“That’s still nearly two centuries in the future,” The Doctor said. “But I should think the Stuarts would still be ruling both countries. I imagine the union between Scotland and England would be peacefully achieved by then. There would be no Jacobite uprising.”

“Aye….” It was doubtful whether Jamie followed all the historical consequences completely, but he understood enough to make certain conclusions.

“Then my loyalty ought to be with Paslew and his plotters?”

“Yes,” The Doctor told him because it was all too true.

Jamie nodded and looked silently into the fire for a long time. The Doctor said nothing more. He let his young friend consider his position.

“No,” he said at last. “I told your Sir Richard… I told Paslew. I’m YOUR man first and last. Do you think this insurrection is right?”

“Right and wrong don’t come into it. Changing history in such a big scale is dangerous in ways I can’t begin to explain to you because I don’t know what alternative reality might be created. I know that such an alteration to causality would be frowned upon by my own people. Indeed, it is one of their cast iron laws set in stone to make a really bad simile. Such things are not to be allowed. If I can do anything to prevent these events, I must.”

“Aye…” Jamie sighed deeply. “I thought as much.”

The Doctor waited again for Jamie to complete his decision making.

“Get Sir Richard and Fitz to sit down in the big room again. There’s a thing the Justice needs to hear from me under an oath to God and his secretary write down on the proper papers.”

The ‘court’ was duly assembled, and Fitz stood to take Jamie’s oath before sitting to write down the testimony he was ready to give about what Webb and a man called Pryce had said to each other in the pantry.

“Pryce?” Sir Richard exclaimed. “He’s my head groom. He was also Constable of the Watch before the Lammastide elections. I thought he was loyal even though some of his family are known papists.”

“Pryce and a mob killed Sir William and his lad,” Jamie said. “Webb questioned him about it. He swore the deed was done last night. Webb asked him who we were, then, and Pryce swore he didn’t know and asked if he’d checked to see if our necks were slit. Webb….” Jamie shuddered. “Webb then said that they would be as soon as it was dark tonight…. And the two of you, Sir… You and Fitz. We’re all to be killed and Paslew rescued from your prison.”

“The Devil!” Sir Richard swore. “Fitz… you and Jamie and any two or three men you’re sure you can trust… go and fetch Webb and Pryce if he is still within the household. If not, summon the Watch and have them ride after him.”

Pryce was still in the kitchen, distracting the maids with lewd suggestions. Webb was in the jail, ostensibly overseeing the guards, but with what was now known, probably plotting to bribe or overpower them and release the prisoner.

Both were brought to the table with a guard of trustworthy men of the household watching the door. Fitz went to his place and duly read out Jamie’s testimony of what he had heard them both say.

It was Jamie’s word against the two of them. If they’d kept their heads and denied the conversation they might have brazened it out. But Pryce swore loudly and turned to hit Webb, calling him a loose tongued fool. The guards separated the two before Sir Richard stood.

“You’ve condemned yourselves by your own words,” he said. “Will you now make your depositions explaining Paslew’s role in the matter? Your executions will be quick and easy if you do. He is the one who will be sentenced as a traitor.”

The two men both paled. The penalty for treason was to be hung, drawn and quartered. The term needed no explanation to anyone.

Webb was the first to speak. He placed the blame for the death of Sir William Peyton and his squire firmly on the head of Pryce and three others he could name. Pryce admitted as much and added two more names but accused Webb of supplying the details of Sir William’s journey from Ormskirk, allowing the ambush to be mounted. That made him equally guilty of the deaths and certain of a hanging.

But with nothing to lose both men talked freely of their dealings with Paslew. They named three gentlemen of substance who Paslew had visited before the Watch took him at Barley on the outskirts of Whalley. Those names were duly noted and Fitz was told to summon the Constable once they were done. Arrests would follow.

Meanwhile Jamie was happy to be among the escort when Pryce and Webb were taken to the jail. He smiled in satisfaction when the door to Paslew’s cell was opened. The man clearly thought he was being rescued. Instead his conspirators were locked up together while he was taken to the study. Fitz read the depositions from Webb and Pryce. Paslew swore imprecations upon their heads, but it was no use. Two had sworn against him. He could no longer deny his part.

Fitz was kept busy writing down what Paslew said. Jamie helped by cutting new quills for him as each one wore down.

Finally, there was matter enough to send a dozen men to trial at Lancaster. A Watch of true men was assembled to arrest them and Sir Richard’s wine cellar cleared to hold those for whom the abbey cells wouldn’t have space.

While all of that was going on, The Doctor went alone to speak to Paslew.

“That probably isn’t your real name,” he said. “You got it from the history of the old Abbey. It doesn’t matter. I know what you really are if not who.”

“I don’t know what you mean,” Paslew bluffed, but it was no use. “You’re not from around here, either, are you? Time Agent?”

“Something like that,” The Doctor answered. “I’ve dealt with meddlers trying to change history and affect the future before. I know there are a handful of rogues from the fifty-first century still evading capture. You’re not one of them. You’ve BEEN captured.”

“Are you going to call the Agency?”

“No. The death penalty they impose is a quick, painless atomisation. What waits for you in Lancaster is far nastier and I’m going to let you suffer it. And the reason is the murder of Sir William Peyton’s lad. Even if you felt the Earl’s Justice should die, the boy didn’t deserve it. My lad, Jamie, said so from the start. I’m going to let him have the satisfaction of knowing you’re getting your just desserts.”

With that, he turned away. The cell door closed on Paslew, no longer The Doctor’s concern. Sir Richard had already sent a messenger to the Earl and one to Lancaster. An armed escort would be collecting all of the prisoners within a few days. There would also be men with carts to collect the bodies of Sir William Peyton and his squire. They would be buried with dignity and honour at the Earl of Derby’s expense.

Meanwhile history, for good or ill, would take its course. The Doctor’s duty to his own people, to Earth, and to himself, was done.

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Court of Augmentations