

TABOO

EPISODE ONE

'Shovels and keys'

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First Draft  
July 31st 2013

EXT. RAIN-SWEPT MUDDY ROAD - STORMY NIGHT

Rain pours in giant drapes against moonlight over rolling hills. In the near distance a single carriage lamp burns and we hear a man cursing and horses whinnying...

*Caption: 'Dover to London Road, England, March 1813'.*

We move close to the single light and find a '*Lightning*' four horse carriage, hopelessly stuck in the mud. The carriage driver wears a beaver hat with a curly brim which sheds water in waterfalls. He wears a slick cape. His porter wears the same uniform and is lashing the lead mare in her traces with a whip and cursing her to 'step on'.

The passengers are just shadows huddling inside the carriage, wrapped in blankets. Then one of the passengers steps out into the deluge under a coat and calls out...

PASSENGER

Driver! We are a sitting duck here for Slender Billy.

DRIVER

So why don't you push?

PASSENGER

I didn't pay to bloody push.

The driver laughs into the rain...

DRIVER

Then Slender Billy will make you pay at the end of his pistols.

The driver tries a vicious flick of the reins once more but the carriage will not budge. The porter violently beats the lead mare some more too. The horse shies. It seems hopeless. As the passenger goes to clamber back into the carriage he sees a lone horseman walking up toward the carriage from behind. The horseman is a shadow, a tall man in a broad brimmed hat and leather cape, riding on a grey mare.

The passenger freezes in fear. He turns to the driver.

PASSENGER

Look...

The driver turns and freezes too. The horseman seems unhurried by the rain and his bridle brass clinks as his horse walks. No face is yet visible under the broad brimmed hat.

The porter is still lashing the mare with his whip. The lone horseman is close.

The passenger lets his hand slip under his cape. The driver half opens the lid of a small compartment beside his seat and we see the stock of a pistol. Water has dribbled into the box and the driver sees his powder is wet. He curses. The rider is close. The driver pulls his gun anyway...

DRIVER

Who goes there?!

The lone horseman walks his horse on, not replying. He has a leather bag strapped to his saddle. We see the white faces of the scared passengers as the horseman walks by. He does not look at them even once. The driver has his (useless) pistol cocked.

The porter lays his whip across the back of the lead mare one more time before seeing the horseman too. He freezes, holding his whip aloft.

As the horseman walks by, he grabs the whip from the porter's hand and tosses it into the mud.

He then casually leans over in his saddle, grabs the bridle of the lead mare and hisses an instruction into her ear. The horse jerks and pulls and the carriage heaves upward then slumps down, freed of its ridge of mud at last.

As the carriage rocks and settles, the lone horseman gees his horse and canters away into the darkness. The porter, driver and passenger watch him disappear. After a moment, the porter clambers aboard the carriage. The passenger hurries back inside. The driver flicks his reins and the carriage moves forward slowly.

EXT. RAIN SWEEPED ROAD

The horseman is cantering through the rain and now we catch a glimpse of his handsome features beneath the brim of his hat. He makes good time through the mud and we ride with him for a while.

We will learn soon that this man is JAMES KEZIAH DELANEY, our hero.

James slows his horse and stops beside a chalk-white mile marker in the seventeenth century style. It tells that LONDON is ten miles north.

He dismounts and ties his horse loosely to the mile marker. From his saddle he takes the leather bag and a small shovel with a diamond shaped blade. Rain pours off him. He steps off the road and begins to walk at right angles to it.

## EXT. OPEN HEATH/WOODLAND

James walks in a dead straight line. Beyond, we can just make out the orange smudge in the sky which represents the lights of London. As he walks, James counts under his breath...

JAMES

....Two hundred ninety four, two hundred ninety five, two hundred ninety six, two hundred ninety seven, two hundred ninety eight, two hundred ninety nine...

James takes one more stride then stops. He looks around to get his bearings against trees and hilltops. He is close to an old oak tree, battered by the storm.

James takes the shovel and begins to dig.

It is hard, wet work and we come close to him as he gasps and scrapes. The hole he digs is deep and we cut around his labors until, by the time he has finished, there is a streak of dawn in the sky.

In the half light, James takes his leather bag and drops it in the hole. The rain has stopped but water drips off his broad brimmed hat.

He takes a breath and removes his hat. He wipes sweat and rain from his brow. For the first time we see his handsome, care worn features, set against the rising sun over London.

He puts his hat back on and begins to fill the hole back in.

## INT. MORTUARY

A bare room with twenty cold marble slabs. There are high windows and dull sunlight through iron bars. Flies drone.

The slabs are all empty apart from one. A man in his seventies lies naked on the slab. Dead.

The body looks feeble in the cold hard room, the only softness. We come close to the hawk-face of the cadaver, straggled with grey whiskers. There is a blanket across his genitals but the rest of his skinny body is exposed.

There are two King George pennies on his eyelids but flies land around them to try to reach his dried tears. His toes are curled in death.

Then a door opens and James enters. With his cape removed we see he is dressed in practical dark clothes, the clothes of a sea faring man returned home in the year 1813.

He walks with a business like clip which will characterise him. He takes off his hat late for a man coming into a mortuary.

He stands beside the body and stares at the face. He is not unused to death or dead bodies. Indeed, he has no reaction to the fact of death. He removes the pennies. To our surprise he puts them into his pocket. He half smiles as he looks down on the face (as if the man appreciated thrift). He looks for a long time.

Finally...

JAMES  
Forgive me father.

A pause. A firm nod.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
...For I have sinned.

He is about to say more but finds he doesn't have the words. He turns and walks his fast business-like walk away to the door.

EXT. WAPPING WALL LANE, ROTHERHITHE

It is afternoon in the busy dockside street. Porters and warehousemen carry boxes of goods from the dockside where they have been stacked. Small carriages whip by and people walk quickly. There is a sense of commerce and urgent business all around between the black brick buildings.

We are taken along by a STREET BEGGAR in a frock coat and bare feet. Strapped to his head he has a perfect replica of an English naval battleship, made from sticks and paper and leather. It is twice as big as his head and he balances it with care.

He makes the ship sway and bob as if it were on rough seas. He is accompanied by a gang of delighted children who follow him bare foot and hoot and laugh at his words as he chants out a rhyme....

STREET BEGGAR  
I sailed aboard the Vincent. She  
rolled this way and that.

Children laugh...

STREET BEGGAR (CONT'D)

Then we turned her on the French,  
the mouse for Wellington's cat..

He spits..

STREET BEGGAR (CONT'D)

And know ya this. I saw him there,  
standing on the deck. It was the  
cursed Bonaparte, I threw a rope  
around his neck!

The children suddenly turn and part. They have seen  
something coming. The beggar also turns and stops his  
chanting.

A young man in a black top hat, black frock coat, black  
stockings and boots (THE MUTE) is marching through the mud  
with a stick in his hand. He marches like a military band  
leader, staring straight ahead. The sight of him makes  
everyone freeze. The street beggar holds on to his ship with  
both hands so that he can bow elaborately.

Then we see that the Mute is the vanguard of a funeral  
hearse.

Behind him there is a black hearse drawn by six black horses  
with black plumes atop their heads. They snort in the grey  
cold air. There is a slight slope to the road and the  
pulling is heavy in the mud.

The windows of the coffin box are glass and are steamed up.  
An old man sits on top of the cab looking backward. He cups  
his hand to his mouth and calls out...

FUNERAL CALLER

Behold a good man! Behold a man of  
his calling! Behold the...

He coughs on the damp air...

FUNERAL CALLER (CONT'D)

...Behold the witness to Gods deep  
love for us all.

Behind the hearse walk a dozen men, stepping uneasily through  
the mud, their boots already no more than clumps of earth.

Among them we see three businessmen in frock coats walking in  
a line. The oldest and fattest of them is ROBERT DENT, a  
shipping trader, who we will meet later.

There are two other men, father and son and, between them,  
James, stepping more easily through the mud than the others.

He is dressed in black and his neck tie seems too tight for his muscular neck. We come close to some of the sturdy businessmen dressed in black.

Then, at the back of the funeral cortege, side saddle on a white horse, we see a young woman, beautiful, early thirties, her beauty half hidden behind a black veil. This is ZILPHA GEARY.

Her horse is led by a handsome man in his early thirties (THORNE GEARY), who is Zilpha's husband.

We follow the cortege for a while and study the faces. All eyes are on James and words are spoken softly among the men about him.

INT. ST MARY'S CHURCH, ROTHERHITHE

The congregation are now all spread out among the pews. There are small cliques who sit together. James sits alone at the front pew. Zilpha sits at the back with her husband and she steals glances at James as her husband whispers to her.

James's father's coffin sits on a stone plinth next to the altar. Candles burn in profusion all around.

The three businessmen are conferring as we join the scene and elect Robert Dent to carry out an onerous task. He crouches as he comes forward to whisper in James's ear.

DENT

I don't wish to be indelicate but did you pay the grave diggers the extra shilling?

James doesn't reply.

DENT (CONT'D)

Ressurrectioners are rife here because the Bartholomew hospital is so close.

James doesn't respond and Dent is a little concerned.

DENT (CONT'D)

Men of substance pay extra to be buried two feet deeper than the rest. That way the grave robbers can't dig down to their meat before the sun comes up.

James still doesn't respond. Dent waits. Finally James speaks...

JAMES

I have no business with the grave diggers. My father will rest at the regular depth.

Dent looks a little horrified. The Priest enters from behind a curtain and steps up to the altar. Dent goes back to his seat with a shrug of disbelief to his associates. We come close to James's impassive face...

PRIEST

Before we begin, let us bow our heads to pray.

Everyone bows their head in unison. Except for James.

EXT. ST. MARY'S CHURCH, GRAVEYARD

We see the coffin being lowered into the ground. James is impassive as the priest reads the final words of the burial incantation.

Then, on a cue from the priest, James scoops up some mud and throws it onto the coffin. Almost as an act of defiance to the eyes trained upon him, he speaks in a foreign language...

JAMES

Tlau. Tula. Ngind, Ula.

The priest hears and glares at him. Some of the other old men glare too. Zilpha and James's eyes meet for the first time.

EXT. ST MARY'S CHURCH, GRAVEYARD - LATER

The congregation begin to wander away from the grave side as two grave diggers begin to fill in the grave. Weak Spring sun shines. James walks alone but is joined by Thorne, who hurries to catch him. Zilpha hangs back a little.

THORNE

Mr Delaney? Sir?

James slows and turns. Zilpha is a yard away. *We should sense immediately that there is a past between James and Zilpha but, for the moment, their reunion must be conducted with their eyes and not their words in Thorne's presence.*

THORNE (CONT'D)

My wife and I wanted to express our condolences.

James nods acceptance, looks away from Zilpha.

THORNE (CONT'D)

Bad luck he died before your ship  
made port.

JAMES

It was luck? I see.

The odd, dismissive comment cools the air. Thorne seems to be a polite man eager to break the ice. He glances at Zilpha...

THORNE

I was saying to my wife, England  
must be cold for you after all  
those years away.

James looks at Zilpha.

JAMES

England is frozen.

A pause. He turns to Thorne...

JAMES (CONT'D)

In my mind I mean. Frozen as a  
memory. It doesn't change.

James turns and walks. Zilpha appears to take secret meaning from James's words but Thorne seems puzzled and a little hapless. He calls out...

THORNE

We shall see you at the drinks  
then.

James keeps walking.

INT. ROSE OF CARLISLE INN

The tavern has a large open space where a wood fire roars. There is a table with a black tablecloth with food and wine. Beer barrels rest on trestles.

The congregation from the funeral have mostly arrived, with some still scraping mud from their boots in the doorway.

The wake is busy, unfussy, good humored. Wine is present in huge quantities and there is a single haunch of beef which will feed everyone.

A liveried servant is taking glasses of warm sherry around the small huddles of guests and we follow him. As guests take their drinks we hear snatches of conversation...

OLD MAN (TAKING SHERRY)  
Were those nigger words he said  
over the grave?

The servant moves on. He arrives at a younger set of men, in their thirties...

YOUNGER MAN (TAKING SHERRY)  
...Tighter than a duck's arse he  
was but you'd think the son would  
be all sunshine. They say he was a  
complete horse with the women.

An old lady (MISS EISEN) sits in a corner but stands to intercept the tray of drinks...

MISS EISEN  
Where are the poor? Did the old  
bugger not leave instruction for  
there to be cakes for them?

There is a fat businessman (MACE) and a consumptive solicitor (DELF).

MACE  
He spoke pagan words over the  
coffin. Did you hear?

DELF  
They eat lions, you know. The men  
of the tribes. To make themselves  
wild....

Mace takes two drinks and we now follow Mace across the room. As he walks, we hear a snippet of conversation...

PASSER BY  
I bet he has the pox. The pox in  
Africa goes to your brain directly  
via a worm. The worm takes over  
your soul.

Laughter. Mace passes. Zilpha and her husband are in conversation with several men but Zilpha is looking around for James. He is nowhere to be seen.

Mace takes the extra glass of sherry to Robert Dent who takes it and sips...

DENT  
Where is he? Did he not come?

MACE  
He went to piss.

Dent looks around...

MACE (CONT'D)

This tavern has no privy. You piss  
in the boiling house next door.

Mace sips his wine, a little disgusted...

MACE (CONT'D)

You'd think with all the money the  
old man had he'd have afforded  
something grander than a tavern  
with no pot to piss in.

Dent walks on. Mace grumbles into his drink...

MACE (CONT'D)

Miserly, mad old bastard.

INT. BOILING HOUSE/LAVATORY

The large, heavy timbered space is filled with bones. The bones are mostly of horses and there is a separate pile for horse skulls. There are also the skulls of other animals.

Fifty yards across the bone strewn floor there are three great fires burning, and on top of the fires there are cauldrons which steam and boil intensely. This is a boiling house, where animal bones are boiled up to make glue.

Men stripped to the waist tend the fires and also drop horse bones into the cauldrons, or spill out the glutinous contents onto flat wooden boards for cooling.

The activity of the boiling house is distant and incidental. Close up we find James in a narrow stable, one of three, throwing up into a bucket.

He retches a few times then straightens. He wipes his eyes and gets his breath. As he wipes his face with a cloth, his hand shakes.

After a moment, Dent enters. He walks to the second narrow stable where there is a bucket for the purpose. He unbuttons his fly and begins to pee, his upper half visible over the low stable divide.

DENT

Unfortunate.

James doesn't respond.

DENT (CONT'D)

Considering the occasion. All these bones as reminders.

Dent finishes his 'peeing' rather too quickly and buttons his fly. He steps out...

DENT (BUTTONING) (CONT'D)

Myself, I think burials should be an excuse for music. And laughing. And girls with nice arses. Defiance, you know? Not bones.

He wipes his hands on his breeches. James has a deadly look.

JAMES

I didn't hear the piss hit the leather. Perhaps you had no need. Perhaps you came here to find me.

Dent takes a moment then comes to face James, appraise him.

DENT

James? It is you? That curious, funny boy.

James stretches his collar and goes to leave. Dent has business and takes his arm.

DENT (CONT'D)

Yes, I have other business than pissing.

James studies Dent. We sense he knows him from long ago.

DENT (CONT'D)

What are your intentions now that your father is dead?

A distant door swings open and two skinny horses are led inside from a sunlit yard, ready for slaughter and boiling up. James glances at them...

JAMES (DISTANT)

My intentions?

A pause. For the first time James half smiles.

JAMES (CONT'D)

The future belongs to God doesn't it?

He looks good when he smiles. Dent looks around to check no one is in earshot..

DENT

Then I will speak plainly. As the only heir to your father's interests, his business will naturally come to you. What do you plan to do with it?

The two tired horses are led past by a young groom and James waits until they have gone by. Dent wants his attention.

DENT (CONT'D)

I will offer you a sum. Here and now this moment. You can take the money and sail away to anywhere in the world.

James watches the horses being led to their doom.

DENT (CONT'D)

I will take the whole of the trading business including the rotten parts. And the parts that will get a man killed.

JAMES (DISTANTLY)

And boil it all up, yes.

Dent sees that James isn't listening. He watches as the horses are led to a dark stable for slaughter.

DENT

James, hear me. You are an adventurer and, before, you were always careless of yourself. I don't know how you are now. But you are not a fool. There are things in your father's legacy that you would shy from...

Finally Dent has James's attention.

JAMES

What things?

DENT

As I said, things as could kill you.

James considers Dent. James is sharp and fast and takes lots of meanings from the offer. For now...

JAMES (SARCASTIC)

And you, a charitable man, will take these unknown dangers off my hands.

They stare at each other.

DENT

I'm curious James. I know what it was that left England, but what is it that came back from Africa?

James turns and heads for the open door. Dent calls out...

DENT (CONT'D)

I will send you a formal proposition in writing.

INT. WAKE - LATER

Three men in absurd, matching red velvet suits are singing a 'Harmonic', a song sung in harmony (similar to barber shop) and sung with passion and closed eyes. The ballad is melancholy.

Thick pipe-smoke swirls and the congregation has been swelled by young girls and women who are laughing and drinking with the well dressed businessmen.

Zilpha is with her husband, who is scooping some wine from a bowl. She stares through the smoke to see James returning from the boiling house. James glances at her then takes the condolences from another guest.

THORNE

Darling, we should go. These girls arriving are all whores.

Zilpha glances at James, talking now to a young girl...

THORNE (CONT'D)

They read in the papers that it is a widower's funeral so they know there will be a lot of old men.

Laughter is breaking out around the room. Zilpha finally turns to Thorne.

ZILPHA

Yes. Let me give my condolences to Mr Delaney.

THORNE

We already gave our condolences.

ZILPHA

You hardly let me speak.

Before Thorne can respond, she makes her way through the odd crowd, now infiltrated by young prostitutes, to the delight of the old businessmen.

Finally she reaches James, who has a young girl hovering by his side.

ZILPHA (CONT'D)  
We are leaving Mr Delaney. Once  
again condolences on...

Without any change of expression James interrupts...

JAMES  
I still love you.

Zilpha is dumbstruck. She stops speaking. She instinctively glances back toward Thorne.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Time and Africa had no effect.

Zilpha turns to walk away.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
If you can't speak, write to me and  
tell me your feelings.

Zilpha has gone into the crowd. The harmonic singers croon on. James watches Zilpha take Thorne's arm and walk out of the door. He looks around the room. Dent has a girl on his lap. He finishes his drink and leaves by a different door.

EXT. THAMES FORESHORE

The sun is setting and we see the silhouette of the newly built East India Import docks above on the Blackwall horizon.

James walks down some stone steps, still slippy with weed from high tide, and arrives on the river beach. He tears the neck tie from around his neck and stuffs it in his pocket. He unfastens his collar button so he can breath.

(Throughout, we should feel that James is restricted by the formal clothes of the times. His shoes pinch, his collar strains, his jackets stretch on his frame).

Down the Thames to the East we see ships moored all across to the South bank. James walks slowly, breathing the rank air but also smelling the sea on the breeze. This is a place he remembers.

A stray dog barks and growls and immediately James grins. He squats and the dog comes to him. He ruffles the dog's hair.

In the company of the dog James seems more at ease than he has been with any human.

Then a voice...

VOICE/IBBOTSON

The dogs here live off the flesh of suicides jumping off Blackfriars bridge.

James stands. The voice is coming from the shadows beside the steps where James just emerged. James has been followed. Out of the shadow steps IBBOTSON. He is a man in his early fifties, grizzled, poor and angry. James recognizes him.

IBBOTSON

Never seen one go tamely to a man's hand. Must be some witchcraft you picked up somewhere.

Ibbotson steps out onto the mud. He gestures back at the steps to the tavern behind...

IBBOTSON (CONT'D)

My invitation to the funeral must have got mislaid. So I waited outside.

JAMES

What do you want?

IBBOTSON (FLATLY)

You think your bastard feeds herself?

James instantly steps forward two paces, grabs him around the throat and pushes him against the dripping wall hard. His eyes flash with madness for a second. Ibbotson shows no fear.

IBBOTSON (CONT'D)

Time's not changed you then.

James sees no fear in Ibbotson's eyes and Ibbotson growls into James's face.

IBBOTSON (CONT'D)

I heard you did a lot of evil over there in the company kingdom. Now it's time to do some fucking good among your own.

James allows Ibbotson free. Ibbotson is driven by fury which makes him fearless...

IBBOTSON (CONT'D)

Me and my wife have cared for that girl for ten years with not a penny from you and nothing but threats from your father. Now you're back I want payment.

James is about to respond but Ibbotson ploughs on, a decade worth of anger spewing out.

IBBOTSON (CONT'D)

Look at ye. Fancy coffins and mutes and black plumes. I watched it go by. You're from nothing more than Irish and smugglers. I doubt you'll stay more than two tides so I want payment quick. If it wasn't for us, your kid would be sucking cocks in St. Giles.

James is about to get angry again but he sees the resolution in Ibbotson. He also knows that Ibbotson is justified. After a moment he speaks softly.

JAMES

I planned to look you up Mr Ibbotson.

IBBOTSON

Like hell. You're a Delaney.

James nods gently. He knows the name deserves the contempt. He speaks softly...

JAMES

Get an address to the house. I will send a bankers draft.

James turns and walks.

IBBOTSON

How much?

James swings round and yells across the mud and shale...

JAMES

Enough.

He walks on. Ibbotson watches him go.

IBBOTSON

You don't even ask how your own daughter fares?

James walks on. The stray dog, yapping, follows at his heels.

EXT. THAMES SHORE/CHAMBER HOUSE - NIGHT

The sun has set. Two gas lamps illuminate a fine seventeenth century merchant's house with a flat front and stucco'd pillars which looks out across the River Thames at Rotherhithe.

There are black drapes of mourning at the windows. There is an iron gate that separates it from the footpath above the foreshore and it creaks when James opens it. Behind him, the river glistens and gentle waves slop out the quays.

James reaches into his vest pocket and takes out a key. The taking of the key from his pocket (after many years) is significant. He approaches the house. He hesitates and looks up at the building, the place filling him with memories. Then he realizes that the stray dog is still at his heels. He turns on the dog...

JAMES

Go. Scat.

He goes to the door and opens it up. He goes inside and the dog is left behind.

INT. CHAMBER HOUSE - NIGHT

A match is struck and a gas light lit. A room emerges from the darkness, glowing orange then blue/yellow in the growing light.

James looks around. He sees the well worn, expensive furniture, the fireplace now cold, a rack of pipes and a bed for a dog near to the fire.

The place looks neglected and cobwebs hang in the corners of the high ceiling. There are mouse holes in the skirting boards and books gathering dust.

There is a large leaded mirror and a portrait of James's father. Beside it a portrait of a fine looking woman with a half smile (James's mother).

James runs his hand through some dust on a shelf then glances at himself in the mirror. He studies his reflection between the images of his mother and father in this familiar environment for a few moments.

He then pulls down the black drapes which have been hung over the windows.

Gaslight and moonlight flood in from the river and we can see trading ships at anchor. Two prostitutes chat under a gas lamp and the stray dog James left behind is barking at them.

Then fast footsteps and a side door flies open.

A late fifties man-servant (BRACE) flies through the door brandishing a night stick. He also has a candle which spills from his hand when James turns...

The two men face each other.

BRACE

By God!

JAMES (CALMLY)

Or maybe by ship and carriage.

Brace is breathing hard. He recognizes James and drops the stick with a clatter in surprise. He rushes to James then stops himself. James opens his hands.

JAMES (CONT'D)

What, Brace? Propriety? Servant and master? How dare you?

He grabs Brace's hand and shakes it. Then the two men naturally hug and slap each other's backs hard. Brace pulls away...

BRACE

Begging pardon Sir, but what the hell are you doing here?

James turns and takes in the room...

JAMES (AMUSED)

No, no pardon for you. You are the captain of the mutineers and you will hang.

James turns.

JAMES (CONT'D)

And a pirate and a red Indian.

Brace chuckles and shakes his head.

BRACE

I broke my left knee swinging from a bloody tree being an ape for you. You needed a brother.

They peer at each other.

JAMES

I still do.

A pause.

JAMES (CONT'D)

But, as before, a broken down old  
Butler will have to be sufficient.

A pause. They take each other in, the passage of time.

BRACE

You look the same.

JAMES (MATTER-OF-FACT)

I'm not.

Brace looks around at the mess of the room and seems embarrassed. He pulls a cover straight over the easy chair and begins to tidy...

BRACE (BUSY)

I didn't think you'd come here. I  
thought this would be the last  
place. I thought you'd get the  
first boat back to Africa.

James examines the clutter on the fireplace.

JAMES

But I didn't.

He turns. They look at each other. The words are filled with explosive meaning.

BRACE

You plan to stay the night?

A pause. James's silence suggests something more permanent. Brace can't quite believe it. Before he can speak...

JAMES

Are there any birds hanging on the  
nails?

INT. CHAMBER HOUSE, KITCHEN

James is devouring a cold roasted bird with his fingers. Brace is making a pot of tea on the wood stove and sawing a stale loaf of bread...

JAMES

So he kept only you?

BRACE

The cooks died or got tired of him not eating anything. Sculleries said there were ghosts. Or that he was a ghost. He looked a fright at the end...

Brace brings a pot of tea from the stove...

JAMES

No tea, brandy. How was his mind?

Brace turns on his heel and grabs a bottle of brandy from a high cupboard. He uncorks it and sets it on the table.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Two glasses...

BRACE

Sir...

JAMES

Two glasses. And they should have invited you to the wake at least.

Brace relents and fetches two glasses and sits. James pours two generous shots.

JAMES (CONT'D)

In this whole dirty fucking city there is no one I can trust. You understand? Apart from you.

James raises a toast and they both drink. Brace coughs a little.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Don't try that maidens splutter on me like you never touch a drop, I know you drink a half bottle of Delaney company brandy every night.

They both laugh. James takes out a pipe and fills then lights it. Brace picks his words with care as he takes another sip...

BRACE

Jimmy, you could have written to your father just once.

James disappears in a cloud of smoke.

BRACE (CONT'D)

In the end he was all alone, you know? In the business. A lot of powerful men...

Brace stops himself...

JAMES

What men?

BRACE

They don't have newspapers in Africa?

JAMES

What men?

BRACE

The usual men. You have something they want, they circle you like wolves.

James's curiosity is apparently aroused...

JAMES

Why? What did he have?

Brace takes a gulp of brandy.

BRACE

How would I know, I'm a bloody butler. All I know is stairs and closed doors. But there was something he was keeping locked up.

James stares at Brace. His stare can be unnerving and Brace squirms a little...

BRACE (CONT'D)

Look, if you have any sense you'll sell up...

JAMES (INTERRUPTING)

What sense did I ever have?

BRACE

...sell up his business and go back to the fucking jungle or wherever you were. Begging your pardon. It'd be safer there. London is falling to revolution anyway...

Brace takes another swig of brandy (he's getting a rush of alcohol to his brain now) then gets to his feet to tidy his empty glass.

BRACE (CONT'D)

Ah to shite with all that.

Brace suddenly waves his arm wildly (he's a little drunk)...

BRACE (CONT'D)

You're here and alive and I'm not  
sure it's not a dream. I'll go and  
make up your old room...

James senses secrets but decides not to push it. He also  
gulps down his brandy in one and grabs the bottle.

JAMES

I want to see the company books.

Brace turns, utterly astonished.

BRACE

You what?

James dumps his dish in the sink and heads for the door...

JAMES

The accounts.

Brace follows.

BRACE

What do you know about accounts?

James gets the door...

JAMES (AMUSED)

Nothing. But knowing nothing never  
stopped me in the past.

INT. CHAMBER HOUSE, ATTIC STUDY

At the very top of the house is a study laid out for  
business.

There is a large round port hole window which looks east down  
the Thames toward Gravesend with a perfect view of ships  
entering and leaving the Thames.

As we arrive, we find a mouse nibbling away at a yellowing  
London Gazette. There are model ships all around and ships  
inside bottles on high shelves. The walls are adorned with  
paintings of native Americans, mostly Pacific coast Indians  
beside totem poles. There are maps of colonial America and  
certificates of trade from Boston.

Everything has a sheen of dust. The clock is stopped. We hear four heavy locks being turned.

Brace leads James inside. James studies the four locks on the door as they enter and Brace notices.

James stays with the locks for a moment. Brace goes to the large oak desk at the window but hesitates before lighting a candle...

BRACE

Sir? Why not do this in the morning and save tallow. You should sleep.

James takes the taper from Brace's hand and lights the candle himself. He puts the bottle of brandy down with purpose.

JAMES

Keys to the drawers.

Brace takes a weary breath then finds a key on a high shelf hidden inside a bottle which also contains a wooden ship. He uses this key to open a secret compartment in an oak dresser. From this he takes another key which he hands to James.

James makes silent note of the elaborate security.

He takes the key and unlocks the main drawer of the desk. He pulls it open and takes out a large ledger. In gold letters on the front we read the words '*Delaney shipping and trading company. By Royal Assent*'.

James puts the ledger on the desk. Brace appears to be filled with trepidation which James sees. James enjoys the moment.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Thank you Brace. Go to bed.

James sits down in his father's chair. Brace hesitates and speaks softly, only half sure...

BRACE

Jimmy Delaney? By God. Have you come home?

James peers at him.

JAMES (FIRMLY)

Good night Brace.

Brace hesitates then leaves. James uncorks the bottle of brandy.

EXT. LEADENHALL STREET - NEXT MORNING

We look across the busy commercial street at the impressive, newly built edifice of stone and marble which is...

*Caption: 'Headquarters, Honorable East India Company'.*

INT. EAST INDIA COMPANY HEAD QUARTERS - DAY

A stockinged, liveried man-servant carries a tray of coffee and cups down a long oak panelled corridor.

The walls are lined with portraits of East India company chairmen through two hundred years. The place has an opulence and formality that comes from enormous power and wealth.

We walk with the servant past hurrying clerks and 'writers'. The place buzzes with activity. The servant then reaches a set of enormous double doors. A footman at the door opens the doors up and sunlight floods out. The servant enters.

INT. EAST INDIA COMPANY, BOARD ROOM

The board room is another step up in opulence and grace. A huge mahogany table with thirty matching chairs dominates the room, which has portraits of Indian Moghuls and paintings of Indian street scenes all around.

Dominating the far wall is a huge carved emblem with the words '*Honorable East India Company*'. Below it there hangs a flag (the flag of the East India Company) which is similar to a US flag but with the Union Jack in the corner rather than stars. (The US flag was based on the East India Company flag).

There are fifteen men gathered around the table, some wearing powdered wigs, others in cloth merchants hats. Sun streams through high windows, making the room look like a Rembrandt.

The coffee is placed and the servant awaits instruction. A man in his sixties (SIR STUART STRANGE) is evidently in charge of the meeting and speaks curtly...

STRANGE

Leave it.

The servant heads for the door and leaves. All the men have paperwork in front of them and there is a CLERK sitting a little way away from the table taking minutes. In spite of being in charge, Strange serves the coffees as he talks.

STRANGE (CONT'D)

So gentlemen, let's begin. The clerk will record everything that is said except when a fellow raises a hand. Words from a raised hand will not reach the record.

Strange glances at the clerk, who nods once. Strange pours coffee, sweeping the pot from cup to cup.

STRANGE (CONT'D)

The issue this morning is old man Delaney, may he rot in hell.

There are murmurs of approval and 'amens' around the table (except from one man, a Priest in a dog collar who we will meet later called APPLEBY). Strange talks while pouring coffee...

STRANGE (CONT'D)

The death of the old bastard three days ago was welcome and timely. But it has left us with a question.

The coffee is poured.

STRANGE (CONT'D)

His heir. This boy, this son, this...

He squints at a piece of paperwork...

STRANGE (CONT'D)

...James Keziah. My spies tell me he attended the funeral. As far as we can work out he will inherit the old devil's business lock stock and barrel so we will have to deal with him. Mr Wilton, I asked you to do some digging.

An eager young executive (WILTON) speaks up, pushing a thick hand-written file across the table.

WILTON

Which I have done, Sir. In temperament he takes after his bog Irish mother, begging Mr O'Neil's pardon...

Gentle laughter as an old committee member (one presumes O'NEIL) shrugs forgiveness. Wilton is effete and foppish and enjoys the theatre of his revelations...

WILTON (CONT'D)

He was educated by his granny to the age of eleven. Then, curious to relate, his father put him in with us.

STRANGE

With us? What do you mean?

WILTON

His father put his son in as a cadet at the East India company military seminary in Addiscombe, year of our lord 1798.

There is disbelief and laughter...

STRANGE (INCREDULOUS)

Delaney's son was a *company* boy?

WILTON

Before his fathers disputes with the company began.

STRANGE

Evidently.

WILTON

There is a copy of his attendance record and his...

Strange is sharp and has identified a liveried document...

STRANGE

Year-end reports. Yes I see. My God. Corporal James Keziah Delaney, 1798 to 1799...

He begins to read from reports...

STRANGE (CONT'D)

Exceptional. Exceptional. Exceptional. Musket. Shipcraft. Leadership. Exceptional.

Wilton sips his coffee and enjoys what comes next...

WILTON

But Sir, then along came the year of our lord 1880. Exceptional in different ways. I would guess that confidence allowed his true bog Irish nature to emerge.

As Strange shuffles the papers, Wilton begins to recite with some amusement...

WILTON (CONT'D)

The necks he broke always belonged to officers. The women he fucked were many and of the lowest kind and always begat babies. One bastard was actually born in the eating hall of the Seminary with the boy himself as mid-wife.

Strange looks up from the paperwork and all eyes are on Wilton. He loves it...

WILTON (CONT'D)

And there is the setting ablaze of a Navy boat in an experiment with oil and mashed potatoes while drunk...

The men begin to chuckle...

WILTON (CONT'D)

Wait, it gets better. And a stabbing. And a rebellion against the cooks for bad custard, started by him. And then the theft of a brig in Deptford sink...

More laughter. Wilton gets to his feet the better to regale the room...

WILTON (CONT'D)

And he raved about fortunes and hidden treasures. He tried to recruit other boys. To go to India, to trade with red Indians, to take gold from the Aztecs. Possessed he was. And a fight with a bear in Chancery Lane. And more necks, more whores and more custard and finally...I am almost exhausted in the telling of it, *finally*, in the year of our lord 1803...

Pause.

WILTON (SOFTLY) (CONT'D)

...He ran away to Africa.

Wilton sits down, mock exhausted. His neighbor slaps his back. The laughter subsides. Strange instinctively turns to a thin, owlsh man at the end of the table who is studying his fingernails.

STRANGE

Pettifer? Did the word 'Africa'  
wake you?

PETTIFER

Wasn't sleeping Sir.

STRANGE

Will the Africa desk be as  
impressive in its thoroughness as  
Mr Wilton from the records office?

A pause. Pettifer also has a written file, thinner than the first. He slides it across the table to Strange.

PETTIFER

According to charter records he  
went to Alexandria aboard a ship  
called Cornwallis. Journeyed down  
the Nile with two men, one of the  
lower orders, one a gentleman.  
They went in search of diamonds.  
Instead, they found hell.

Strange sips his coffee...

STRANGE

What kind of hell?

A long pause. Among some around the table there is suddenly  
an unease. Strange is on it.

STRANGE (CONT'D)

Why do others around this table  
appear to know more than I?

A pause.

PETTIFER

There have been rumors about James  
Keziah Delaney these past two  
years. Those around the table who  
look uneasy are those who drink in  
the taverns by the indentured  
docks.

Some of the men swap looks. Pettifer clears his throat (as  
if attempting to change the subject)...

PETTIFER (CONT'D)

But in the file I have put only the  
facts Sir. Not the rumors.

STRANGE (HALF AMUSED)

But what are the rumors?

Pettifer is hesitating for dramatic effect rather than through reluctance.

PETTIFER

Stories from sailors off Saltpetre  
ships coming back from Port of  
Spain.

Strange likes to get to the point and speaks firmly...

STRANGE

What fucking rumors.

Pettifer enjoys the attention.

PETTIFER

Awful and unnatural and I'm sure  
untrue.

A pause. Strange gives Pettifer a piercing stare...

STRANGE

Relate them.

After a moment, Pettifer raises his hand. The clerk sees and stops scribbling...

INT. CHAMBER HOUSE, ATTIC STUDY

Sunlight now floods into the study through the large round port hole window. The Thames sparkles and ships bob on the incoming tide.

James is still studying the ledgers and accounts. He has paperwork strewn all around. The bottle of brandy is empty and ash from his pipe smoulders. A small fire burns in the grate. As we cut back, there is a knock at the door. James comes back from another world. Brace enters with a pot of coffee. There is also an envelope on the tray addressed to James.

BRACE

You did not sleep at all?

JAMES

I don't sleep well these days.

Brace lays the pot and glances at the empty brandy bottle...

BRACE

Even after so much liquor?

James ignores and pours himself a cup of coffee. Brace offers James the envelope on the tray.

BRACE (CONT'D)  
This was delivered at six am by a  
servant of Mr Robert Dent.

James takes the envelope.

BRACE (CONT'D)  
Begging pardon Sir but...

JAMES  
Will you stop begging my fucking  
pardon...

Brace adjusts...

BRACE  
Mr Dent has been trying to buy the  
company from your father for three  
years.

James is impassive. Brace dares to conclude...

BRACE (CONT'D)  
I would imagine the envelope  
contains a financial offer.

James looks at the envelope.

JAMES  
Yes, I imagine it does.

James picks up the envelope, walks to the fire and drops it  
onto the flames. Brace is startled but before he can  
speak....

JAMES (CONT'D)  
According to the books, we still  
pay rent on the offices at the  
Tobacco wharf.

James grabs his coat from the back of the chair. Brace is  
wrong-footed again...

BRACE  
We do?

James pulls on his jacket...

JAMES  
I want to go there...

BRACE  
The old offices are all closed. He  
never went there...

James heads for the door and Brace follows...

BRACE (CONT'D)  
Not for eight years. They are all  
locked up.

James waits in the doorway.

JAMES  
Then I will need yet more keys.

INT. THORNE AND ZILPHA GEARY'S CHELSEA TOWN HOUSE - DAY

Zilpha Geary is at a large desk, writing a letter quickly. The room is opulent even for the times. She sits in a shaft of sunlight. We don't see the contents of the letter but we see that Zilpha is eager to get it written. We study her face for a while.

Then the door opens without a knock and Thorne enters.

THORNE  
My love, the carriage has been  
brought up.

Zilpha forces a smile...

ZILPHA  
Yes, I'm coming.

Zilpha signs her name. Thorne approaches. Zilpha folds the letter and puts it into an envelope before he can get to the desk. Thorne is oblivious. He takes her in his arms and she places the envelope down.

THORNE  
I'm sorry Darby is a bore but his  
wife adores you. And it's only  
lunch.

Zilpha smiles...

ZILPHA  
She is not so bad as some of them.  
Go on and bring the Four round.  
I'll join you on the steps.

Thorne kisses her forehead and heads for the door.

ZILPHA (CONT'D)  
And send the boy for the post.

Thorne leaves. Zilpha sits quickly and dips her pen in her inkwell. She hesitates and we sense she has made a difficult decision.

At last she writes 'James Delaney...' on the envelope. We come close to her face as she completes the address.

INT./EXT. SHIPYARD

Beside a shallow beach that runs down to the Thames, we see a middle-sized shipyard full of industry. Two ships are being built and the sound of men working and laughing and yelling mixes with the screams of seagulls.

We find James walking through the yard. We guess these are familiar sights and sounds from his youth.

Ahead there is a set of iron stairs leading up to a line of offices above a warehouse. Beside it are wharves where boats are stored, upturned. James reaches the iron stairs and climbs them. From his pocket he takes a set of iron keys.

He walks along the landing above the wharves, remembering a doorway. After a moment, he comes to a door which he recognizes. He prepares to open it up. Then...

FEMALE VOICE/HELGA

Oi!

James looks up. Along the landing, smoking a pipe, is a woman in her late forties, apparently still dressed from last night. She has speckled skin and a light brown wig and her facepaint is applied thickly (this is HELGA). She has a German accent...

HELGA

What you doing with the door? You want a bush, you come through me.

She bustles toward James with her pipe smouldering.

HELGA (CONT'D)

That is private property.

James appears to recognize Helga.

JAMES

Yes, indeed it is.

Helga confronts. She wheezes a little as her chest heaves.

HELGA

'Indeed it is'. What are you?

JAMES

Hello Helga. Good to see you still working.

Helga stares at James, uncertain. James half smiles.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I was a virgin. I lay with you. In the hull of a half built boat down there in the mud. When she sailed they called her the Maidenhead. Or did I dream that? I have had so many fevers since then.

Helga angles her head. James puts the key in the lock and turns it.

HELGA

Where did you get that key?

A pause. James knows the penny will drop.

JAMES

From my father, Mr Delaney.

Helga studies James. Then she half recognizes him and realizes what he represents. She sighs...

HELGA

Ah shhhhit.

James opens the door and offers Helga inside.

INT. DELANEY COMPANY OFFICES

James steps inside and looks around with concealed amusement.

What was once a shipping company office has been transformed into a sumptuous brothel. There is lace and silk and purple lampshades. The blinds are painted pink and there are carved phalluses along the shelves. There are reproduction paintings of naked women around the walls and, through drapes, we glimpse beds.

We see that two women are sleeping in one of the beds.

James turns back to Helga. She is defiant.

HELGA

Your father stopped coming. It was empty. It was wasted. So close to the docks...

She bustles toward a small stove...

HELGA (CONT'D)

You want tea?

JAMES (AMUSED)

No.

She lights the stove and gestures at the sleeping women...

HELGA

You want a fuck?

JAMES

No. I'd like my family's offices  
back.

Helga sighs and curses in German under her breath.

HELGA

(I didn't pray to the Saint  
Catherine. I am a bad girl. Shit  
to fuck).

James begins to look around. Behind a drape he finds a  
painting of a merchant ship which evidently remains from the  
time when this was his father's office.

JAMES

How much do you make here?

Helga re-lights her pipe, boils water.

HELGA

With the workers in the yard and  
the boats that moor at the wharf,  
we make twenty five pounds a day.

James hardly reacts. Helga gives it a try...

HELGA (CONT'D)

I'll give you ten. And whatever you  
like. Boys, girls, suck, fuck...

James turns back to her and is suddenly hardened.

JAMES

You have two hours to get out.

Helga's amusement dies away too. Her pipe smoulders in her  
hand. Helga is a hard woman. She decides to test James.

HELGA

You say I took your cherry. Where  
you been little boy?

James meets her stare.

JAMES

I've been in the world.

Helga stares into his eyes.

HELGA

I have girls. But I also have men.

She steps toward him, her chest wheezing. A face off.

HELGA (CONT'D)

They are not good men, you understand? They have rocks for hearts. And knives. Yeah. And chains and ropes. You see out the window?...

James doesn't look...

HELGA (CONT'D)

Men who cross Helga get chained to big dock slabs and they get left there for the high tide and for the crabs. I offered you ten. If you have any sense...

James suddenly and violently snatches a pink blind down from the window and the nails fly from the plaster walls. Even Helga jumps a little.

JAMES

People who don't know me soon learn that I do not have any sense. Now please do not misunderstand the situation.

His eyes darken and Helga (who knows about these things) sees the capacity for evil deeds...

JAMES (CONT'D)

You send a dozen men for me, I will send you back two dozen testicles in a bag and I will have your whores eat them.

James pulls down another blind with a crash. He pushes over a cabinet and ornaments and glass smash. The two prostitutes asleep in the bed begin to stir.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You have two hours.

She looks at him. Dishes are still rattling. Helga knows violent men. He is an interesting specimen. She draws on her pipe.

HELGA  
Old man Delaney's son.

A pause. She speaks softly in German and English.

HELGA (CONT'D)  
Ya. (*Now I remember.*) I heard stories...

She turns to look at the waking girls then back to him. She chuckles...

HELGA (CONT'D)  
If I give a girl to you, I might not see her again.

Helga expects anger or offence. Instead, James leans forward and speaks clearly.

JAMES (SOFT, MATTER-OF-FACT)  
You heard about me. Good. So you'll be punctual.

He leaves.

INT. CHAMBER HOUSE, HALLWAY

Through a small glass window in the door we see James arriving and unlocking the door outside.

Zilpha's letter is on the floor. James enters and sees it. He picks it up and recognizes the writing. He tears it open...

INT. CHAMBER HOUSE

James is climbing the stairs toward the attic study. He has the letter in his hand which he is reading as he climbs.

We hear Zilpha's voice in voiceover.

ZILPHA (OOV)  
Dear James. I feel I need to explain my domestic circumstances in order that you are not given any false impression.

INT. CHAMBER HOUSE, ATTIC STUDY

James is at his desk, reading the letter. We hear Zilpha in voiceover...

ZILPHA (OOV)

Since you left England, I have married. I am happily married and my husband is a good man whom I love.

We come close to James's face...

ZILPHA (OOV) (CONT'D)

It is more than ten years since you went away unexpectedly and in that time I assumed that you had died or at least would never return. In truth, all my former feelings for you have now disappeared and I do not believe that you and I should ever again meet...

He turns a page...

ZILPHA (CONT'D)

We are in the same city but your business is mostly in the east and my society circle is in the west. I doubt we will meet accidentally. And I am certain that we must never again meet by design. With fond memories, Mrs Zilpha Geary.

James stops reading. He puts the letter down and looks out across the river. We see on his face a look of resolution.

He looks back to the letter. We should sense as he folds it and returns it to the envelope that he is not deterred in the slightest.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

We recognize the freshly laid grave of James's father. Then there is a lamp and uncertain shadows. Through trees we see two men with shovels. They are 'resurrectioners' (grave robbers) and they set about the business of digging the grave up.

INT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT, LATER

In a flickering light we see James's father's coffin being smashed and glimpse his ash white face. The coffin lid is split open.

## EXT. DESERTED STREET - NIGHT

The grave robbers bundle the body, wrapped in a black sheet, onto a small pony and trap. They leap aboard and, with a whip, a pony trots away with the body on board.

## EXT. ST. BARTHOLOMEWS HOSPITAL

The pony and trap races through a brick arch toward a dark, low building signed 'Mortuary'. A single candle burns inside.

## INT. ST. BARTHOLOMEWS HOSPITAL, MORTUARY

A cold slab in moonlight. A door opens and the two grave robbers carry the freshly dug body inside. A middle-aged surgeon (POWELL) accompanies them and they lay the bundle on a slab. In the half light we see Powell slip them some coins before the grave robbers go back outside.

This is evidently a routine trade.

Powell pulls the black sheet away to reveal the body, which has begun to atrophy. Powell has surgical implements on a wheeled trolley and he pulls them close. He also has a decanter of port on the trolley. He begins to undress the body, his face only half visible.

Then, in the shadows, a match is struck. To our surprise, James appears from the darkness. He lights a candle and brings it near.

POWELL

Not too much light. There are watchmen.

James places the candle on the slab near to the body of his father. Powell wipes his brow as he begins to lay his scalpels on a clean cloth beside the body. The body's belly and chest are now revealed. Powell takes a sip of the port and James glares at him. Powell drinks and dismisses...

POWELL (CONT'D)

If you don't approve of me steadying my nerves with Madeira, then perhaps you should consult the directory of the Royal College of Physicians and see how many others of them will agree to carry out this kind of work.

Powell turns and, from a drawer, he takes a bell jar attached to two tubes and a horizontal chamber.

From a second drawer he takes a brass tube, curved to the vertical. He attaches the tube to the horizontal chamber. The odd iron and brass contraption will remain unexplained for a while. It has the engineered intricacy of early nineteenth century technology.

(At this point we should have no idea what James is doing here).

Powell picks up a scalpel and prepares to cut into the body.

POWELL (CONT'D)

If you felt anything for him, you should not stay. It is not pleasant to see a man reduced to his component parts...

Powell looks up at James, who has no expression. Powell becomes uneasy...

POWELL (CONT'D)

I will know in twenty minutes. Come back when the church bell chimes.

James turns and walks his business-like walk to the door...

EXT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL, DARK ARCHWAY

We find James standing in a shadowed archway among the black-brick hospital buildings. He is waiting. He leans back against the wall inside the unlit arch and takes out his pipe. He is about to fill it but we see his hands are shaking and he drops it...

INT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL, MORTUARY - SAME TIME

In a fast image we see Powell running his scalpel down the belly of the dead body.

EXT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL, DARK ARCHWAY

...The pipe breaks in two on the hard cobbles. James's hands shake hard and he curses under his breath. He clenches his fists and we see that some kind of fit or mental episode is about to overcome him. He looks around the hospital courtyard. He then leans his head back on the brick and closes his eyes...

INT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL, MORTUARY - SAME TIME

Powell is hunched over the body cavity and using his scalpel to cut through tissue. The image is over in a second...

EXT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL, DARK ARCHWAY

James opens his eyes, breathing hard. He stares out into the misty darkness of the hospital courtyard. He hears a groan of pain somewhere. A woman is giving birth in one of the half lit rooms across the courtyard. He breaths hard...

INT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL, MORTUARY

Powell is fastening the body cavity open with metal clips. It is a brief, ghastly image...

EXT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL, DARK ARCHWAY

James hears the woman screaming as she gives birth. Then he hears the echoing sound of a new born baby crying. He looks deeply agitated and turns to face the brick wall, panting for breath. He puts his fist against the wet brick for support. The crying of the baby continues...

INT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL, MORTUARY

Powell is mixing chemicals into the bell jar. He swirls them around over the open body cavity...

EXT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL, DARK ARCHWAY

James is still facing the wall, trembling now, fighting for breath. We see him suddenly look out of the sharp corner of his eye. He looks deranged as we see the whites of his eyes flash. He hears a voice....

DARK VOICE (HISSING)

*Tula. Tlua. Tula. Tlua...*

The voice sounds as if it belongs to an African teenage girl. She seems to be imploring. With his back to us James shakes his head firmly. He will not turn around and look. He scrapes his forehead on the brick...

DARK VOICE (CONT'D)

*Tula. Tlua. Tula, turn and look.*

James claws the brickwork with his hand and shakes his head again.

JAMES

No. I will not look again.

DARK VOICE

*Tula, Tlua. Look.*

James takes some big breaths. He grunts as if giving in to some irresistible force. Then he slowly turns around. He is expecting horror. He blinks and stares ahead.

To his mighty relief there is only mist and dark shadows and the black brickwork of the hospital. James takes a huge breath. His hand shakes madly as he wipes his hair from his face.

We should sense that he has had these episodes before and seen horrors but this time he has been spared. He looks down and takes a final big breath to end the moment. He looks up...

Then...

Two hospital porters in crimson robes suddenly emerge from a shadowed archway, laughing loudly and sharing a joke. James jumps but then regains his composure. He falls back against the wall and comes to himself.

He takes a flask of brandy from his pocket with trembling hands and takes a swig. We should sense that James has been plagued by some memory or vision but, as yet, we don't know what it is.

The church clock begins to strike twelve midnight.

EXT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL, MORTUARY DOOR

As the last chime tolls, James arrives at the door. He has put himself back together and perhaps we understand more why he is so stiff and buttoned up most of the time. Powell steps out of the half lit mortuary, drying his hands on a cloth.

POWELL

Come.

INT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL, MORTUARY

The body of James's father has been covered over once more by a sheet. Powell leads James to the slab, where the bell jar contraption is set up. The jar now contains a crimson liquid which is dribbling condensation. Powell speaks softly.

POWELL

I added zinc and sulphuric acid to  
a sample of blood from your  
father's liver.

Powell picks up the candle.

POWELL (CONT'D)

The horizontal chamber contains  
calcium chloride. Which dries the  
gas.

Powell half smiles...

POWELL (CONT'D)

Now the moment of truth.

He puts the candle to the end of the upturned brass tube that  
comes out of the horizontal chamber. A blue flame begins to  
burn. Powell takes off his spectacles and holds one of the  
lenses to the blue flame.

He waits a while, his face and James's face lit by the blue  
flame. The smoke from the flame begins to blacken the lens  
of Powell's spectacles. He holds the lens to the flame for  
five seconds. Then Powell takes it off the heat and examines  
the blackened lens.

He makes his conclusion. James studies him.

POWELL (CONT'D)

As you see, the flame has formed a  
reflective surface on the glass.

He holds up the lens and James sees an uneven image of his  
own face.

POWELL (CONT'D)

It is what is known as an 'arsenic  
mirror'.

James reacts.

POWELL (CONT'D)

Your father was poisoned.

James is impassive. We see he was more than half expecting  
the conclusion. Powell begins to wipe the blackness from the  
lens.

POWELL (CONT'D)

From the density of the mirror, I  
would say heavy doses over a short  
period.

Powell puts his spectacles back on and blinks.

POWELL (CONT'D)  
And, yes, it would have affected  
his mind in the later stages.

James nods once. Without a word he reaches into his pocket  
and hands Powell some coins.

POWELL (CONT'D)  
You want him re-buried.

JAMES  
And sewn back up into one piece.

Powell checks the coins...

POWELL  
I would recommend they dig a bit  
deeper this time.

James drops some more coins into his palm. Powell nods and  
goes to turn back to his work. James suddenly grabs him with  
a fist around his collar and spins him around. James stares  
into Powell's eyes.

JAMES  
If you use this body for any other  
purpose, I will come for you and I  
will kill you. Tell every man of  
your profession.

He stares at the surgeon...

JAMES (CONT'D)  
I have ways of knowing about the  
dead and I will know. And I will  
kill you in a very bad way.

Powell looks chilled. When James is close and serious there  
is something terrifying in his eyes. Powell nods quickly and  
puts the coins into his pocket. James heads for the door  
with his business-like stride. Powell calls out, almost  
facetious...

POWELL  
Do you want any words said over him  
when we put him back?

At the door...

JAMES  
No. No one is listening.

## INT. DOCKYARD TAVERN

The place is sad and woozy and drunk from floor to ceiling. Most people have gone home but the prostitutes and a few sailors are sleeping or sobbing or drinking.

James sits alone at a secluded table with a candle and a bottle of brandy which he devours with a sparkle in his eye.

We hear him hiss to himself...

JAMES

They know not what they do.

He rolls his head on his neck. He drinks then chuckles...

JAMES (CONT'D)

Or what I will have them do. Dance  
to this new tune...

James picks up the bottle and looks as if he is about to hurl it against the wall but instead he puts it down gently. We should sense a gigantic energy, a terrible power that he is just holding in check as he looks around the darkness of the tavern, nodding his head.

He could be dismissed as the insane drunk in the corner but there is a terrible discipline about his movements.

Then, suddenly....

HELGA

The keys to your office Mr Delaney.

He turns to Helga. We realize he was expecting her. He takes the keys and puts them into his pocket...

HELGA (CONT'D)

We left it clean and respectable.

Helga looks much improved in the half light. She has a dry sherry in her hand. James focuses on her then looks away.

HELGA (CONT'D)

Are you drunk?

He stares into the shadows.

JAMES

I am unable to get drunk. Go away.  
I have company.

Helga takes his hand. Her German accent is broader now...

HELGA

I'm not impressed Mr Delaney. Most who come back from Africa have company that lives in their heads. You just need a gentle hand. A gentle word. The devils come out of you drop by drop in the spunk you see.

She speaks softly then gestures to a young girl who steps out of the shadows. She steps forward into the candlelight.

HELGA (CONT'D)

My girls are the receptacles for you to empty your devils into.

James turns and focuses on the girl. Helga waits. James takes another swig of brandy.

JAMES

How much?

EXT. DOCKSIDE ALLEY

Behind the pub we find James screwing the young prostitute from behind. He pumps at her, his teeth clenched, no expression in his eyes. The girls takes the pain as he pins her over a low ledge.

Beyond, we see the River Thames glistening in moonlight, the ships at anchor, the commerce of the world at dock.

James reaches orgasm. He straightens immediately and buttons his breeches. The young girl runs away.

James is left alone. He looks at his fingers and sees there is blood under his fingernails where he has gripped the girl so hard.

He has a moment of regret then turns and walks his clip clop walk into the darkness.

EXT. CHAMBER HOUSE - NIGHT

James walks toward the house in gas light. The streets are deserted apart from men collecting pures (dog shit) and the odd drunk teetering home. James's footsteps echo.

He reaches the gate of his house and looks up from his key. He reacts. On the wall, in red paint that might be blood, someone has painted...

*ISIAH 9:19.*

James stares at the words, the paint still dribbling down the white wall. He then hurries to his door, fumbling with his key.

INT. CHAMBER HOUSE

James enters the main room and yells...

JAMES

Brace!!

He goes to the bookcase and begins to pull books down from the shelf...

JAMES (CONT'D)

Brace!!

Books tumble all around. James is looking for a particular book. After a few moments Brace enters from the hall stairs (from below) wearing night clothes...

BRACE

What the hell?

JAMES

Where is the bible?!

James pulls some more books down from the shelf. He grabs Brace's candle to scan the spines and quickly identifies a King James bible. James snatches it...

JAMES (CONT'D)

Go outside and look at the wall.  
Look at what is written there.

Brace is horrified, confused by James's stare.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Go!!

Brace hesitates then heads for the open door. Mathew grabs the bible and exits...

INT. CHAMBER HOUSE, ATTIC STUDY

The attic study is lit by a candle and by lights from the street and the river. Barges drift by slowly in the half darkness.

On the desk the bible is open. The candle drips on it. We glimpse the verse 'Isiah 9:19'.

James is reading the verse and sits down heavily in his father's chair. As we come close to his face, the candle and the bible, we hear the verse being read by James (as if in his head) in voiceover...

JAMES (OOV)

*'Isiah 9:19. And the people shall be as fuel of the fire. No man shall spare his brother. And he shall snatch on his right hand and be hungry. And he shall eat on the left hand and he shall not be satisfied....'*

James's face fills with horror...

JAMES (CONT'D)

*'And he shall eat the flesh of man.'*

We stay with James for a few moments. The door is knocked. James doesn't answer. Brace finally enters...

BRACE (SOFTLY)

Sir?

James doesn't turn.

BRACE (CONT'D)

Sir. I don't understand. There was nothing written on the wall.

James turns sharply.

EXT. ST. JAMES SQUARE - NEXT MORNING

The busy life of one of London's most opulent areas goes on in the street in front of an impressive gentleman's club.

A carriage pulls up and James gets out, carrying a leather case. He heads up the steps of the club and is greeted by a doorman. We read a brass plaque...*'The Honorable East India Club'*.

INT. EAST INDIA CLUB - DAY

James is led through the oak and leather interior of the club, on which no expense has been spared. Animal heads from every continent adorn the walls, along with portraits of Kings and Queens and company chairmen.

James is led toward a side room, a private dining area. A door is knocked and he is shown inside.

## INT. EAST INDIA CLUB, PRIVATE MEETING ROOM

A large fire burns and daylight comes through half-closed shutters. The private room is large and oak panelled. There are four leather chairs placed around a small coffee table near to the fire.

We find Appleby (the Priest from the meeting) sitting in one of the chairs. Sir Stuart Strange sits in another, Wilton in another.

Pettifer is at the window and turns to greet James as he arrives. There is a clerk seated a little way away from the fire prepared to make notes. James is ushered in by the footman. Pettifer shakes his hand...

PETTIFER

John Pettifer. East India company.  
Africa desk.

JAMES

James Delaney.

All the East India company men are on their feet.

PETTIFER

Dominic Wilton, records, Abraham  
Appleby, our delegate from Christ.  
And this...

A flourish...

PETTIFER (CONT'D)

...is Sir Stuart Strange. Chairman  
of the Honorable East India company  
across the entire surface of the  
earth...

Pettifer expects James to be impressed. But he is impassive and only nods. A very slight chill in the air...

STRANGE

Mr Delaney, we thought we'd hold  
this meeting in our private club  
rather than our offices as it is a  
little more conducive. We  
understand you enjoy the finer  
things in life. Please sit.  
Brandy?

JAMES

No.

James sits and he faces the four men and the clerk across the small coffee table.

Appleby takes out a thick file of papers and places them on the table. When he speaks, the clerk begins to scribble...

APPLEBY

Mr Delaney. First of all  
condolences on...

JAMES (INTERRUPTING)

Please understand, hypocrisy I hate  
most.

Appleby re-boots. He nods gently...

APPLEBY

Indeed. I suppose we must not  
pretend...

JAMES

Do not pretend...

Strange steps in.

STRANGE

I wonder, will Mr Appleby ever be  
allowed to finish a sentence.

A pause. James relents a little...

APPLEBY

Mr Delaney, we are here to arrange  
the purchase of your father's  
trading interests with a view to  
incorporating them into the  
international portfolio of the  
Honorable East India Company.

Mathew stares at Appleby for long enough for him to be  
uncomfortable.

JAMES

My father's business is not for  
sale.

Strange quickly glances at Wilton, who drops a sealed  
envelope onto the desk.

WILTON

We have settled upon a figure which  
we think you will find very  
generous.

James stares at Wilton.

JAMES

It is not for sale.

WILTON

Open the envelope.

JAMES

Are you deaf?

APPLEBY

Mr Delaney...

JAMES (INSTANTLY)

Fuck you.

STRANGE

Mr Delaney, perhaps...

James begins to pump out words...

JAMES

The leviathan of the seas. The terrible shadow. The beast with a million eyes and ears. Conquest, rape, plunder, then give them God. In that order. India, Africa, America. The Honorable East India...

Strange and the others swap looks. Is this man perhaps insane? Strange sighs and looks away as James fires on...

JAMES (CONT'D)

In your seminary I learned all your techniques of dominion. Of suppression. Of suffocation. And in Gods' name you will do anything....

Appleby appears to be trusted by the others to be the diplomat and they silently hand over to him as he interrupts...

APPLEBY (INTERRUPTING)

Mr Delaney, we know you left our seminary at odds with us, but perhaps we can stay with the business at hand.

James waits, impassive.

APPLEBY (CONT'D)

As you may know, your father was in a long term dispute with our company. Specifically, the dispute was regarding the trade in furs in an area of North west America known as Nootka Sound.

Wilton quickly unrolls an 1805 map of the United States and Canada. The others secure its corners with candlesticks and glasses. Appleby uses the arm of his spectacles to point out an area marked with black ink... 'NOOTKA SOUND'. It is near to Vancouver Island, near to the existing border with the US.

James doesn't look at the map.

APPLEBY (CONT'D)

Your father laid claim to a harbor post here in 1789 and took it upon himself to also claim ownership of the fur trade in the province.

James lets Appleby continue, his eyes burning.

APPLEBY (CONT'D)

His claims are, of course, disputed.

Sir Stuart Strange pours himself a glass of sherry...

STRANGE

You see, James, your father failed to understand that subsequent to the Yorke Pratt opinion of 1757...

Wilton offers a legal document for James to view, which he again refuses...

APPLEBY

...All overseas territories claimed by commercial interests are also subject to the Crown in any dispute of a political nature.

James says nothing. Appleby is beginning to think maybe James is bamboozled, or out of his depth. He changes the note of his voice.

APPLEBY (CONT'D)

Mr Delaney, for the past three years, ownership of this entire coastline including Nootka Sound has been disputed between Britain and the new cursed rebel Americans.

James says nothing. Appleby is sure now that James simply doesn't get it. He defers to Strange, who half smiles...

STRANGE

You do know that Great Britain and America are currently at war, don't you Mr Delaney.

James nods gently.

APPLEBY

Then you will understand that your father's continued claim on the Nootka Sound outpost as territory outside the British crown's remit is allowing the Americans to treat it as a free zone.

WILTON

They are using it to land men and munitions.

STRANGE

It is therefore a matter of great urgency that your title to the land be passed over to the East India company so that it can, in turn, be deemed property of the British Crown. This is war Mr Delaney.

James lets the word resonate. Then he picks up his leather case. He unfastens it. He takes out some papers and puts them on the desk beside Appleby's papers, on top of the map. He speaks evenly...

JAMES

The Pratt Yorke opinion of 1757 which you cite, only handed political rights to the crown over territory gained by conquest.

James lays a legal document down on top of the map of America...

JAMES (CONT'D)

It does not give the Crown or the East India Company rights to territory gained by treaty.

Strange, Appleby and the others apparently knows these facts already but are shocked that James knows them. They dread what comes next. As James speaks, Strange realizes he is up against someone who isn't stupid and we see a shift in his attitude. James continues with deadly formality..

JAMES (CONT'D)

In 1788 my father made a treaty with a Nootka Indian chief named Nou-Chah-Nulth...

Appleby turns away and whispers to Wilton. James continues...

JAMES (CONT'D)

It gave the Delaney trading company seven acres of land and the exclusive rights to trade fur for Saltpetre on the coast line from Nootka to King George Sound.

James sweeps Appleby's papers aside and points out a strip of coast line.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Since this right was won by treaty, and not conquest, you know as well as I that neither the Crown nor the East India Company has any business making claim to it. And like my father, I have no intention of selling it to anyone.

Silence, apart from the chime of the old grandfather clock. The East India men are forced to make a radical and fast re-assessment of James. After a moment...

APPLEBY

Are you sure you won't have brandy?

Wilton speaks to the air and others murmur...

WILTON (SOFTLY)

If he just opens the fucking envelope this will be done...

PETTIFER

Perhaps we should adjourn....

WILTON (MORE FIRM)

Look, if he just opened the fucking envelope....

Strange clears his throat to stop the squabbling. He peers at James...

STRANGE

Mr Delaney? Are you a loyal subject of his Majesty and of the lawful crown of England?

James doesn't answer. Strange then looks to the clerk and raises his hand. The clerk leans back and stops writing. Strange now speaks softly, with half a chuckle in his voice...

STRANGE (CONT'D)

Mr Delaney, the East India Company  
and the nation state of Great  
Britain are...

A pause.

STRANGE (CONT'D)

...Like brothers. Twin brothers.  
Today I am speaking to you with the  
voice of the Prince Regent. You  
really do not have a choice.

Strange smiles...

STRANGE (CONT'D)

The balance of your father's mind  
was disturbed. You have no such  
excuse. Now why don't you just open  
the fucking envelope.

James waits a moment, then gets to his feet and heads for the  
door, his footsteps echoing. Appleby is on his feet...

APPLEBY

Mr Delvin, this matter will be  
resolved one way or another.

James slams the door and is gone. The company men swap  
looks. Strange takes a breath. Now that James is gone there  
is a loosening of belts. This is a problem but these men have  
dealt with much worse. For now it is a matter of a small  
inconvenience. Even half amusement.

STRANGE

So the son is as unstable as the  
father.

PETTIFER

Perhaps the rumors about him are  
true.

Strange drains his glass.

STRANGE

I was hoping to resolve things in a  
modern way. It seems that will not  
be possible.

A pause. His turns to Pettifer.

STRANGE (CONT'D)

He's all yours.

EXT. BEAUTIFUL MEADOW - SPRING MORNING

The first flowers of Spring are appearing and daffodils sway in a breeze.

It is not until we see James pacing out his footsteps as he walks, that we realize we are in the same place that James buried his leather case in the opening scenes.

He stops as he counts 'three hundred'.

INT. CHAMBER HOUSE, STEEP WINDING STAIRCASE

Brace and James are hauling a heavy iron safe up the stairs. It is awkward, painful work in the narrow twist of the staircase...

INT. CHAMBER HOUSE, ATTIC STUDY

Brace and James lay the hugely heavy safe onto a desk near to the back of the attic, where the ceiling slopes into shadows. They both gasp with the exertion.

BRACE

It'll bring the whole house down  
around it, damn fucking thing,  
begging pardon.

James checks the intricacies of the door and the locking mechanism. Brace watches him.

BRACE (CONT'D)

So what is it for?

James looks up at Brace.

JAMES

To keep things safe.

BRACE

Well, yes, but what things?

James simply peers at him. Brace gets the message. He shakes his head wearily and walks...

JAMES

Oh, and Brace?

Brace stops. James goes to the desk and uses the key to open the drawer. He pulls out a pistol, a bag of powder and some shot. Brace recoils...

BRACE (INSTANTLY)  
Now go to hell...

JAMES  
I know you marched with Tremain.  
Now you march with me.

Brace defies...

BRACE  
March to where? For what purpose?

A pause.

JAMES  
Right now, for the purpose of  
staying alive.

Brace hesitates.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Mr Brace, if you wish to leave my  
service, that's up to you. The sea  
ahead is looking lumpy. You might  
want a quiet life.

Brace stares into James's eyes.

BRACE  
First him, then you. What is it  
with you Delaneys?

James (amused) speaks for him...

JAMES  
Begging my pardon of course.

Brace looks away. James offers the gun again.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Take this for the discouragement of  
burglars and ambitious beggars.

After a frozen moment Brace snatches the gun, expertly cocks it, checks the straightness of the barrel and sniffs the powder.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Hang it in the meat locker. Keep  
the powder out of the steam.

Brace turns and walks, cursing as he goes...

BRACE  
Fucking mad house. Again.

James waits to hear Brace's footsteps on the stairs. He then grabs the leather bag which he buried from under the desk. He opens it up. Inside is a smaller case with a lock, like a medical bag with a brass clasp. James takes a small key from around his neck and unlocks the bag.

Inside there is a black cotton bag. James spills the contents onto the desk.

*We see twenty four large uncut superb quality diamonds.*

James takes three of the diamonds from the spread and isolates them. He puts the rest back into the black bag and puts the bag into the safe. He locks the safe with three jointed levers.

He goes back to the three diamonds he selected and puts them into his pocket.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD, MUDDY LANE

James gallops on the back of his grey mare through open heath land.

EXT. THORNE AND ZILPHA GEARY'S CHELSEA TOWN HOUSE

A uniformed postman walks up to the front door of the house which faces the river. Here, in the west, the river has little commerce and meanders without labor. From outside we see the size of the house and its opulence.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HEATH, CROSS ROADS

A drover herds sheep down the muddy lane. We see sign posts to Hendon and Hampstead. James consults an address and walks his horse up a shallow incline toward a farmhouse on the horizon.

INT. THORNE AND ZILPHA GEARY'S CHELSEA TOWN HOUSE, CORRIDOR

A servant carries a bundle of letters down the elegant corridor of the house. He reaches a door and knocks. He waits and then enters.

Thorne is at his desk, writing correspondence. The servant lays the bundle of post down on his desk but retains a single envelope. He turns to walk away. Thorne is half amused as he gestures at the letter...

THORNE  
What is that one?

SERVANT

It is for Madam Geary Sir.

THORNE

Oh.

A puzzled amusement.

THORNE (CONT'D)

Very well.

The servant leaves. Thorne registers just a flicker of uncertainty.

INT. THORNE AND ZILPHA GEARY'S CHELSEA TOWN HOUSE,  
CORRIDOR/INT. ZILPHA'S MORNING ROOM

The servant continues down the corridor then enters a second room. The morning room is empty. The servant leaves the envelope on Zilpha's desk.

As he leaves, Zilpha arrives, combing through her hair.

SERVANT

Post for you madam.

Zilpha reacts. The servant leaves. Zilpha goes to the desk and stops when she sees the handwriting on the envelope. She recognizes it. She goes around the desk and tears open the envelope.

Inside there is a small ring box. She opens it and a large uncut diamond falls out. She gasps. She searches for a note but there is none. She reacts with incredulity as she studies the jewel on her blotter. A long pause. Then there is a knock at the door. She looks up sharply.

EXT. HENDON/HAMPSTEAD BORDER, SMALL FARMHOUSE

James tethers his horse and knocks the door. The farmhouse is thatched and whitewashed, (therefore the home of a poor man). James waits. Ibbotson opens the door and reacts.

James is cool and business-like as he hands Ibbotson a leather wallet. Inside are a thick wedge of bank notes.

JAMES

I decided to bring it in person.

Ibbotson hesitates. Then he takes the wallet and glimpses inside. He reacts to the huge amount of money and reels a little.

JAMES (CONT'D)

For the past, the present and the future.

Ibbotson can't help but open up the wallet and see again the amount of money. He looks up at James...

JAMES (CONT'D)

I would like to see her. To be sure you're not lying.

Ibbotson is in shock. His manner has changed utterly...

IBBOTSON

Yes Sir Mr Delaney.

The money has bought his humility. He wipes his hands and offers James inside...

EXT. HENDON/HAMPSTEAD BORDER, SMALL FARMHOUSE, PATHWAY BEHIND THE FARMHOUSE

Ibbotson leads James around the back of the house. The garden is well kept and planted with vegetables and herbs.

Across the herb bushes there is a paddock where pigs roam. A girl of twelve in a brown smock is distributing acorns and chicken carcasses for the pigs to eat. The fat sows trundle along behind her as she walks. She talks to them as if they were children.

The girl is fifty yards away but James can make out her brown hair and fine stature. (Much later we will meet her. Her name is AGNES).

James shades his eyes and peers at her.

IBBOTSON

Do you want to talk with her?

A pause.

JAMES (MATTER-OF-FACT)

No. I am not a fit man to be around children.

He continues to stare.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You are doing a good job Mr Ibbotson. Don't let the money change anything. Keep it aside to counter the rolls of the dice.

A pause.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Fate can be very hard on beauty and  
innocence. You have to be hard  
back.

James looks at his daughter a little longer then turns and  
walks his business-like walk away. Ibbotson watches him go  
then looks back to the money.

IBBOTSON

Will you wish to see her again.

James calls back without turning...

JAMES

No. Not ever.

He disappears. Ibbotson hesitates then runs inside the  
house, yelling...

IBBOTSON

Maria! Maria!

EXT. HAMPSTEAD, COUNTRY LANE

James rides back toward London at a slow pace, the drowsy  
Spring sunshine on his back. We walk with him and perhaps  
wonder how he can be so dispassionate, wonder what mechanisms  
are turning in his mind.

Perhaps he is thinking of...

INT. THORNE AND ZILPHA GEARY'S CHELSEA TOWNHOUSE, ZIPHA'S  
BEDROOM

Zilpha enters quickly and closes the door. The room is a  
lady's room, a sanctum and she hurries to her chest of  
drawers. We should incidentally notice how wealthy Zilpha  
is, and how lavish are her surroundings. She opens the  
bottom drawer where her underwear is folded neatly.

She places the diamond between the folds then closes the  
drawer. She takes a key from on top of the dresser (one she  
has never used before) and she locks the drawer.

We come close to her face now that her secret has been  
concealed.

Suddenly...

INT. GRAYS INN ROAD, TABARD INN, AUCTION ROOM

Heavy drape curtains are thrown open and rainy daylight comes in.

In the large back room of the inn, an auction is about to take place. In front of a leaded window an auction table has been set up and there are fifty hard-backed chairs laid out in rows. Rain dribbles down the leaded window.

Gentlemen of some standing are gathered and are sipping tea or beer. An auctioneer in a frock coat enters, accompanied by a young assistant who carries a wooden box. The assistant begins to remove candles from the box and we see that the first inch of each candle has been dyed red.

The assistant lays out a dozen red tipped candles and puts a candlestick on the auctioneers desk. The AUCTIONEER hits the table with his gavel and calls the meeting to order in a businesslike tone...

AUCTIONEER

Gentlemen. Jardine, Matheson and Company would like to commence this candle auction with a published list of twelve items for sale.

The men begin to take their seats and pick up the booklets which have been left on each seat. The auctioneer picks a red tipped candle and puts it into the candle stick.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)

Each item will be auctioned for the length of time it takes for its allotted candle to burn down one inch. When the inch is burnt, the last bid will win.

The auctioneer picks up a pamphlet and turns the first page....

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)

First item on the list, a merchantman brig commandeered from the Spanish fleet by Captain Reeves, this last twelve months and one. Currently the brig is named the '*Felice Adventurero*'.

The assistant lights the candle with a taper from the fire and the flame flickers...

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)

Who will start the bidding?

## EXT. TABARD INN, BACK COURTYARD

In a sheltered courtyard, James arrives on his grey mare. Rain dribbles from rooftops. A stable boy hurries to take James's horse as he dismounts. James enters the inn through the back door...

## INT. TABARD INN, AUCTION ROOM

The auction is proceeding briskly with offers being taken of thirty pounds, rising to thirty one, thirty two...

The bids are made with gentle nods or raising of the hand. We come close to the candle which has almost burnt down one inch. Then the flame is wafted by a breeze as a side door opens. James enters beyond the flame.

James stands by the door as the bidding continues. A particular gentleman in the second row (HURST) recognizes James and peers at him.

James is close to the front and can see that almost all the red has burnt. There is a flurry of late bids. Then, at the last moment...

JAMES

Thirty seven pounds.

All heads turn. James is impassive. He has raised the bid by two clear pounds. No one cares to follow. They all stare at James as the candle burns down for five more seconds.

Then the auctioneer snuffs out the candle...

AUCTIONEER

The *Felice Adventurero*. Sold for thirty seven pounds to...

The auctioneer peers at James...

JAMES

The Delaney/Nootka Trading Company.

Hurst's eyes burn into James.

## INT. EAST INDIA COMPANY HEADQUARTERS - LATER

In a long white washed corridor Hurst is striding along beside Wilton, his wet silk hat dripping in his hand.

HURST

I spoke to old Grady afterwards and he said Delaney had told him he was going to use the ship to increase the capacity of his trade with the Salish Indian tribe and with the Nootka.

Wilton holds open a door and Hurst passes through.

INT. EAST INDIA COMPANY HEADQUARTERS, SIR STUART STRANGE'S OFFICE

Strange has a huge office overlooking the river. He has a map of the world dominating one wall and the obligatory paintings of seascapes all around. There are two giant globes either side of the office.

A portrait of the Prince Regent hangs over his desk. Wilton and Hurst are sitting near to the fireplace. Sir Stuart is standing up, facing the window.

A clock ticks. The silence otherwise is deafening. Strange taps his hand against his leg in a gesture of fury as he stares out of the window at the manicured company gardens. He still has his back turned. Wilton and Hurst swap anxious looks. Finally...

WILTON

Sir, I already have a strategy in place which...

Strange raises his hand for silence. The clock ticks. Strange stews in his own anger. After a while...

WILTON (CONT'D)

Sir...

Strange instantly spins around and barks...

STRANGE

*Why?*

He strides toward the fire.

STRANGE (CONT'D)

Why would he not even look at our offer?

Strange pokes the fire violently with a poker and sparks fly.

STRANGE (CONT'D)

Why would he defy logic and the King simply to maintain trading rights to some sea-otter pelts?

HURST

Not only maintain but expand...

Wilton gestures at Hurst. It's not wise to speak when Strange is in this mood. Strange turns and hurls the poker across the room and it smashes a hanging plate...

STRANGE

Why?

Strange turns on Wilton for a reply. Wilton shrivels...

WILTON

I believe he is simply trying to raise the price...

STRANGE (CUTTING HIM DEAD)

Why did he know so much about the law? The fine print of the Pratt Yorke opinion of seventeen fifty fucking seven? He was no lawyer when he left England and he didn't gain a degree in fucking Africa. And where did he get the money to buy a ship?

Strange turns on Wilton. It seems Strange has his own answer.

STRANGE (CONT'D)

Jesus. Am I the only one in this company with a brain?

Strange is close to a globe and he spins it violently...

STRANGE (CONT'D)

They got to him. Either in Africa or on the passage back to London. One of their agents approached him and briefed him. They gave him money and secured his services.

Strange's eyes burn as the globe begins to slow down on its axis.

WILTON (SOFTLY)

Who did Sir?

Strange turns to Wilton and barks....

STRANGE  
The fucking Americans!

EXT. ROTHERHITHE, DRY DOCK

The dock is a covered shed with a ramp down to the foreshore. James is accompanied by a clerk and a HARBOR MASTER as he steps aboard a tidy brig with masts stripped bare. This is the *Felice Adventurero*.

James steps on the deck and looks all around his new ship. He appears to be filled with anticipation. The harbor master has papers which he consults...

HARBOR MASTER  
We will need signatures to release her.

James looks up to study her masts...

HARBOR MASTER (CONT'D)  
And perhaps before we let her out of the sink you'll want us to change her name. Something a little more patriotic.

James takes the papers and studies them...

JAMES  
I think it is quite a pretty name, Harbor master...

He hands the papers back...

JAMES (CONT'D)  
And I will keep it. I will sign her off as the *Felice Adventurero*. I believe it means 'happy adventurer'.

The harbor master looks troubled as James departs to explore his new ship.

EXT. THAMES FORESHORE - LATER

James is walking home at the water's edge. He seems invigorated. As he walks, he passes the tavern where his father's wake was held. He strides on. Then he hears a dog yapping and sees the stray he met before.

He greets the dog and strokes it roughly.

JAMES

Very well. Come.

He walks and the dog follows...

JAMES (CONT'D)

I will call you... 'Prince'. After the Prince Regent to whom we are all so loyal.

He throws a rock and the dog chases after it. James calls out...

JAMES (CONT'D)

But I warn you, you are entering a very troubled period in your life.

The dog races on.

EXT. CHAMBER HOUSE, FORESHORE - LATER

James approaches his house from the shore once more. Prince is with him. As James ushers the dog toward the steps he sees a gathering of people at the water's edge a little way downstream. One carries a blanket and we glimpse the dark uniform of a Bow Street officer.

For now James pays no attention.

INT. CHAMBER HOUSE, LIVING ROOM

James enters with Prince and throws his coat over a chair. James shows the dog to the dog basket and he sniffs...

JAMES

Her name was Mathilda. Long since gone I'm afraid.

Prince rejects the basket and goes around the room to explore. Brace enters from downstairs...

BRACE

I brought you breakfast this morning but you weren't there.

James takes papers from his jacket...

JAMES

I was out walking long before dawn. I told you, I don't sleep so well...

In a hidden corner of the room Prince barks at a mouse. Brace jumps out of his skin and grabs a poker...

BRACE

How the hell do they get in here?!

James takes his arm.

JAMES

This one by invitation. Prince.  
Come.

Prince emerges from the corner and pants. Brace sighs...

BRACE

Dear God. Another mouth to feed...

JAMES

He will protect us Brace.

Brace is not impressed as Prince comes to James and James ruffles his fur. Brace goes to the window and peers down stream...

BRACE

Maybe we will need protection.

James is busy inspecting Prince's ears for parasites and hardly hears. Brace turns...

BRACE (CONT'D)

Did you not see the constables on  
the shore?

James is still hardly engaged. Brace puts his face to the window to get a better view down stream...

BRACE (CONT'D)

They found the body of a man washed  
up. Dressed like a gentleman. And  
hear this...

James is still busy with the dog...

BRACE (CONT'D)

He'd had his heart cut clean out of  
his body.

James looks up sharply. Brace is still staring out of the window...

BRACE (CONT'D)

And his lungs too. Not a sign of  
them. Like they'd been stolen from  
him.

James gets to his feet. His face is frozen. Brace turns to him...

BRACE (CONT'D)

Body was still fresh so it was last night they think. Or early this morning.

Brace sees the thunderous look on James's face. He half smiles and talks gently as he walks by...

BRACE (CONT'D)

Don't look so worried Jimmy. We have our dog now to keep us safe.

Brace leaves. We stay on James's face for a long time.

EXT. THAMES, FORESHORE

In the bend in the river where the body was found, we find James staring across the water.

He seems to be deeply troubled, trying to piece something together. Prince sits a little way up the bank, attentive, staring at his new master.

High up in the attic study, Brace is peering out of the port hole window and staring at James.

END OF EPISODE ONE