

Of Witches (Part II)

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

- **'Sandy Bell'** - Horseman.
- **Thomas Blitheman** - Swordsman.
- **Valentine Plymmyswoode** - Scholarman.
- **Ben Jaffa** - Theatreman.
- **Ned Culpable** - Leachman
- **Blythe** - Walsingham's man.
- **Edward Denny** - Abbey Management
- **Augustus Dacre** - A most charming man.
- **Francis Walsingham** - Intelligencer
- **Assorted Reptiles** - Scaled, and most cold blooded.
- **Bernadino Mendoza** - Spanish Ambassador to the Court of Queen Elizabeth

Act 1 Scene 1 - R and R

Battered but unbowed our good men returned from the catacombs and stumbled down from the ruins to the cottages with Dacre, although Thomas Blitheman is carried, barely alive, dripping blood through the hasty bandages swathing the multiple wounds about his person.

But for the steady hand of Ned Culpable it would be a miracle that Thomas lived, and some credit must be assigned to the application of Ben Jaffa's recent and hurried studies in Alchemy that produced small quantities of a powder that when sprinkled upon wounds dried blood, clotted and stopped bleeding most precipitously. Truly, a wonder of the modern Alchemical Arts,

Of the others though not all was well. Sandy Bell still twitched, muttered and gazed at nothing within a thousand yards. Ned also, while able to stitch and bind, fought to keep a steady hand as he tended to wounds, and fare dripped with unaccounted sweat in the mild air.

It was clear that everyone had been sorely tried by the night's work and the unexpected horrors encountered in the catacombs below the Abbey ruins, and that all needed to recover themselves. Hence, Sandy Bell decided a day's fishing alone was best to steady his mind, so set off for the nearby river as the morning mists cleared; Ned collected a variety of weeds and worts about the cottage's gardens and the hedgerows, and took hours to pound the pounds of greenery into buckets of odious green sludge with his travelling pestle and mortar; Ben meanwhile wandered the enclosures to the bottom of a nearby field to undertake some solemn meditation upon his ancestry and place of birth, although no one was ever sure what he did at times like those. Blitheman simply lay upon the mattress and oozed, so it was left to the relatively unscathed Valentine Plymmyswoode to watch over him for the day. Alas, as Ned pounded upon his herbs, he was in happy receipt of Valentine's detailed lecture (with hand gestures) upon the architectural niceties of the small cottage in which they sat and others about the area. It was to Ned's relief that Valentine eventually decided an Ale was needed for his dry throat and departed for the village to more closely examine the architecture there.

It was only later in the day, when all else was done, did anyone think to check on Augustus Dacre. He was gone. Surprised, but not put out, it was decided to search both cottages for anything that might give confirmation or clue as to Denny's whereabouts, for few believed he was genuinely 'in Cambridge'.

Of the smaller cottage there was little to find. It was slightly ramshackle and lacked upkeep, the furniture was sparse and basic, the single room upstairs contained little but a bed and chair, a mattress and blankets that looked old and may not have been slept in recently. The other, larger cottage by contrast was well attended with comfortable furniture, ornaments and keep-sakes, and was clean and well looked after. Upon the writing table was a letter, half finished (or at least unsigned) and addressing Thomas Legge, the Master of Caius College in Cambridge. Further investigation, as men with suspicious minds are wont to undertake, revealed a cache of most loving letters from an Eileen Pennybrygg hidden behind a wall tapestry, and some ready cash in assorted amounts beneath a loose floorboard beneath a floor mat. Both of these were returned to their resting places after examination.

It was Valentine who upon his return clarified Dacre's location as out and about in the village talking with the villagers. A chat here, a word there, a conversation and friendly waves everywhere. However, Augustus Dacre did not return as the evening drew in.

Despite the day's rest and the sought calm and refreshment of mental fortitude by everyone except Valentine and Thomas it was felt a watch through the night would be wise. Ned, who had examined the upper floor with care, spied a couple of high windows, shuttered, at the apex of the roof. They were there perhaps to remove or allow entry to birds should pigeon or dove be kept, or to allow the flow of air in the height of summer, or miasmatic air in other circumstances. Between, and within climbing reach, lay a beam of oak. Hence, someone with care could keep a careful watch through both if adept and prepared to balance or cling.

Act 2 Scene 1 - Abbey Rising!

he use of the high vantage paid off for Ned a little before midnight. He spied an erratic light moving from village to Abbey, Its manner of movement was strange and not that of a man walking, and it was quite dim suggesting a shuttered lantern dimly used. Ned dropped from his perch and awakened Ben as the most capable and the least troubled. They slipped out of the cottage and followed to the Abbey. Luckily the moon was almost full and occasionally concealed by skudding clouds so they had little need of a lantern themselves.

As they followed the lights they realised they had been led to the remains of the church entrance. There, tied casually to bushes were 3 horses, all set for a journey. The light carried within the church and noise of voices faded as those from the horses progressed into the ruins.

Ben and Ned searched the horses, finding two set for and accompanied by women's accoutrements, and the third that for a man. Upon the third a sword was scabbarded. Ben examined it in the moonlight, and guessed from its weight, balance and form that it is the work of a master in Damasci so a valuable weapon indeed for someone. Also, there was a note stuffed in one saddlebag pertaining to an address on Fleet Hill in London. Ben copied it and returned the folded parchment to its place.

To hamper any hurried retreat or escape by the three they had followed, they untied the horses and encouraged them to leave the area, at least a little way. The horses moved off, but were reluctant to go far in the darkness.

Ben and Ned crept around the church and once again into the ruins. The hint of the light when it had disappeared was in the direction of the stairs leading down below where the tower would have been if still standing. A route they were familiar with already. Cautiously they descended the stairs and proceeded into the catacombs and tunnels.

As the last glimmer of light they had been following faded they lit their own lantern and closed shutters so only a sliver of light was visible and then crept forward. To their surprise there was little evidence of the previous day's battles. Bodies had vanished with only blood stains and scuffed dirt to show where they had been littered about the tunnels. Familiar with one route through from the day before they followed the tunnels again to the room with the pool where they previously fought lizards and snake women to rescue Dacre. Here too there was little sign of the previous battle. It was clear that someone has been through the tunnels and cavern and cleaned the evidence most effectively.

Further exploration of the pool cavern that they had not been able to do the day before now revealed exits tunnels at the rear. One, with a foul miasmatic taint to its air, led down. The other was level with fairer airs, and from within a faint glow of light could be perceived after they shuttered their own lantern. Beyond the rough cavern the floors became slabs, and the walls lined with cut stone. From ahead there was again a glow and distant sound. They proceeded cautiously upon the paved floor trying to minimise their sound of foot falls, and after twists and turns and careful scouting of rooms and doors they approached an archway from where issued both light and voices.

Act 2 Scene 2 - Sleeping Circle

Ned and Ben crept forward to peek over a low parapet to realise they were high above the floor of the room below. The low parapet protected stairs that curved down around the circular wall to the floor some 30 feet below. Across from them another stair rose to another arch opposite. Upon the floor of the circular chamber was inlaid a seven pointed star of coloured stone, and upon each point lay an unconscious woman heavy with child, each upon a low pallet and bolster with a scattering of items to care for nearby. At the centre of the star Dacre was in earnest conversation with two snake women.

They ducked back below the parapet and a plan was hatched: Ben would cast one of his Spanish Grenado's down towards Dacre while Ned charged the stairs in a screaming attack. Thence, Ben would follow closely, both with swords drawn to attack despite the odds being against them.

Ben lit the Grenado from the slow match smouldering behind his ear, and tossed; Ned hurled down the steps three at a time. The Grenado boomed as it hit the floor, but to little effect.

Surprised, Dacre looked up to see the duo charging down the steps. He turned to the two snake women and shouted 'Kill them all!' Ned hit bottom of the stairs and charged the first snake woman. As she moved to engage she paused beside one of the women upon a pallet, and casually slit her throat. The woman convulsed for a moment as her neck spouted blood spattering to the floor, and then lay still.

When Ben reached the last few steps he leaped the parapet to cut off the second snake woman and in a wild hope to reach Dacre, but to no avail for she blocked his path to allow Dacre's escape. In a shocking moment Dacre ran at the wall below the second entrance to the room rather than take the stairs. With apparent ease he swarmed up the wall and over the parapet with his hands and feet as

if it was but a gentle slope upon a sunny afternoon. With one last contemptuous glance he disappeared through the arch as Ned and Ben fought the snake women.

Despite their vicious daggers and long knives the snake women were no match for Ben and Ned whose blood was up, and came with loaded pistols held ready until the range was short. Pistol and blade made short work. The Snake women were quickly downed with deadly wounds. Ben and Ned pursued Dacre, sprinted up the stairs as fast as their legs could carry. They burst through the archway to a natural passage, but one within which old stones are set, perhaps parts of construction by some ancient hand.

Act 2 Scene 3 - Stairway to Nowhere

Within the next open cavern they spied Dacre at a couple of chests upon the far side. Ancient broken columns tumbled down and lined the sides of the cavern, perhaps once they supported the roof. At the end, beside Dacre were spiral stairs that rose, perhaps once within a turret, now partly broken down. Atop the stairs first turn stood a tall stone, a monolith, jammed within the arch and steps, engraved with symbols and writings too far to see.

Ben loosed a pistol shot at Dacre as he stood at the chests. It hit, but without apparent effect other than to make him stagger. Dacre spoke words in a sibilant tone and an unknown language and gestured in a precise manner. Two translucent lizard men peeled from the nearest pillars, as if discarded skins were animated. They drifted towards Ned and Ben but barely touched the ground. Ned turned to face the first, but Ben charged past and straight for Dacre.

However Dacre had run for the spiral steps. Ben intercepted him at the bottom step where they exchanged blows but Ben's seemed ineffective despite striking Dacre soundly. In desperation Ben parried and grappled Dacre. Ben's hands found Dacre's throat as they struggled, and he took the moment to headbutt Dacre's face with all the force his helm could muster. Dacre reeled at the blow, but was unbowed. But to Ben's horror the wound upon Dacre's brow from the helmet blow revealed a scaly skin beneath the flesh of man!

With a violent heave Dacre threw off Ben's hands and attacked with his sword still in hand. Taken by surprise Ben leaped back, dragged a dagger from its sheath to parry and evaded as he was taught by an old master, a feint, twist and jump back. Without hesitation Dacre took the opening, dropped his blade and made off up the steps. Too far away and too unbalanced to pursue Ben grabbed his last Spanish Grenado, lit and threw as Dacre took the steps two at a time. The Grenado arced high and through the small gap between arch and monolith moments after Dacre disappeared around the curve of the steps behind the monolith. The Grenado exploded with a dull boom that reverberated through the caverns.

Abruptly the animated, translucent lizards that fought Ned slumped and drifted, their skins crumpling and deflating. Ned looked on in disquiet and poked at them with his sword, holing the nearest to a gut churning miasma as it deflated and settled upon the ground.

Ben had snatched up his dropped blade and sprinted up the spiral stairs to confront the wounded Dacre he assumed, for surely the Grenado has done its grisly work. But Dacre has vanished, and all that remained atop the stairs was the rear of the monolith and shattered fragments of the Grenado.

Perhaps, they speculated, the monolith was more than it seemed. The writings upon it were obscure, and it clearly had some ritual nature, but for what they were puzzled.

Act 2 Scene 4 - A Surprise Inside Every One.

Ben and Ned returned to the circular room and the six slumbering and one dead women therein. Those asleep dozed as if in the afternoon sun with out a care, while where the seventh lay her pallet soaked up much of the blood, but there was no motion in her breast to betray any life left.

Ned was determined to discover what might lie within, and pulled from an inner pocket his roll of sharp knives, pincers and scissors. With sure, deft strokes he opened her belly with his sharpest blade and sliced though the flesh layer by layer, to finally expose the child deep within.

Ben stood to one side and looked on with little stomach for the cold dissection of a woman in the name of anatomical study, and indeed out of sight of what Ned revealed within the belly of the dead woman. He only saw Ned's eyes widen as he pulled apart the layers and folds of flesh and sinew. Before him the curled form of a lizard-like foetus nestled where a human baby might normally be found, one dead slit eye stared lifelessly at him. Ned screamed in horror at the sight. Without thought he grabbed at a knife and stabbed at it, slashed and rent the carcass scores of times in a frenzy. He sobbed and cried out in horror, arms bathed in red congealed blood and yellow oozing ichor both. Eventually he collapsed to the floor weeping, sobbing into his bloody hands that covered his face.

As Ben gave what little comfort he could to the weeping Ned he had few illusions at what must be within the bellies of the six other women, despite not having seen that which Ned saw. Ben Jaffa's past was not that of ordinary men of England. The belief's he held as taught upon his mother's knee were that no Daemon should have succour and be brought through the tribe to the lands of men, through whatever path, whether that be a woman or some other way. Despite the years he had lived amongst the good Queen's people and their Protestant belief, he was clear of mind as to what must be done.

Ben drew his knife and passed from one woman to the next, murmuring quiet words he learned as a child to each as he drew the blade across each throat, deep and long to each side to ensure what had be done was done well and without doubt. Then, blade cleaned upon each as he went, he sheathed it with other words, and returned to help Ned to his feet and up the stairs from the cavern. After they left the drip of slowing blood pooling around each pallet the only sound that remained.

Together they climbed back into the clean fresh night air of the Abbey ruins and returned to the cottages with the three horses, for they had not wandered far. Ned collapsed upon his bed, exhausted and fell quickly to a troubled sleep still in his blood soaked clothes. Ben sat at the window, for the early glow of dawn hinted, and awaited the sun.

Act 2 Scene 5 - Waltham by Day.

The new day dawned, and it was Valentine Plymmyswoode who was sent to the village to find breakfast. He soon returned without breakfast but with tales of riot and chaos, cottages burning, hangings and murders on the street. His guess was that the victims were the wives of many of the most upstanding village folk, at whom accusation of Witchery and Consorting with the Devil had been levelled.

Ben Jaffa and Sandy Bell headed for the village to try and identify cause of the madness. When they arrived it was clear Valentine's description was correct. A woman hung in the square upon a makeshift gibbet, and two more were dead in pools of blood, cut down as they ran and then

hacked at with sharp implements. The shouting and burning continued, and there was little to be done while the madness consumed so many.

Ben and Sandy decided to find a robust breakfast and wait it out. The Fleece tavern door was ground ajar, and as no-one appeared to be tending bar, they entered, to find the tinker Josia Pegge helping himself to the next of what has clearly been several ales already. He explained that men had found their wives to be witches, and that their blood flowed yellow, not red. Ben asked about the hanged woman in the square, and the Josia suggested her name might be Alice Ledherer, and she might have been the local wise woman. He admitted to having been through Waltham on many occasions and recalled her from previous visits over the years, and also recalled her worries about witches.

Josia stated he intended to finish his ale and head for London, for he heard business was good there for passing tradesman such as himself and extra pickings were lightly found, so careless were City folk. With little more to gain Ben and Sandy depart after an ale. As Ben passed the hanging body of Alice, he unsheathed his knife and cut her foot. What was left of her blood uncongealed oozed from the wound, dark red.

Act 2 Scene 6 - Looting Later

It was later that day that with a sudden start of alarm Ben Jaffa realised he and Ned had left the great wooden chests Dacre had been rummaging in within the cavern far below the Abbey. They had not checked them nor thought to pick anything that might prove useful from about the floor, perhaps unsurprisingly given their concern for the seven women, and then Ned's anguish at his findings within the one already dead. With Ned in no state to return below, and Ben in no hurry to take him after his own merciful releasing of the other six unconscious women from life and their daemonic lizardly burdens in the circular room, it was Sandy Bell who perked up and offered to accompany Ben below to rescue potentially profitable loot.

On this journey beneath there was no resistance, and no sign that anyone had been there since Ben and Ned had stumbled out in the predawn, many hours before. Trusting memory and lanterns, Sandy and Ben made their way through the tunnels and to the circular room. There the stink of death was strong in the still air, a miasma of bloating putrefaction already hovering. Holding noses and hurrying they jogged through to the final chamber wherein the columns and circular stairs stood.

There were two chests that Dacre had been examining upon their last entrance. The first has charred and burned paper, and it was clear that Dacre had been setting the fire when they interrupted. The second contained a variety of remainders - some glittered with value, others were perhaps valuable in function or workmanship. Of the former, there was gold in various coinages, silver, similarly, and of more interest, gems. In the latter a couple of large pistols of the Ottoman design of some years ago, with a calibre that was significantly greater than any right thinking Englishman would consider. Also, a mail shirt of excellent manufacture. Finally, a pair of gloves of a most fine material or hide that neither Sandy nor Ben had ever seen before. With some concern Ben tried them for size, and they were reasonable as a fit, albeit not perfect. He examined them closely, no little concerned that they might be made from something disturbing, such as the skin of a child, but while fine, there was nothing that suggested human origin to his touch and eye.

They also retrieved the long knives/short swords of the snake women in passing as their bodies lay, for these too are fine weapons upon examination, exhibiting the tell-tale 'Damasci' patterning of their steel.

With forethought Ben had brought much paper and charcoal to make rubbings of the inscriptions upon the monolith atop the stairs to return such for further study. After some clambering, he made rubbings both of the rear and also the front of the stone, dangling precariously above the near 30-foot drop braced upon loose and slippery stonework of the ancient arch, and rubbed frantically before his twisted stance weakened or he slipped.

With too much to easily carry, Ben and Sandy piled everything into one chest, noted that they were of a heavy, dense hardwood with which neither was familiar, for it was not English oak or other hardwood of the land. For several hours, they dragged, heaved, levered, carried, slung, braced, slid, staggered, and lurched the chest and themselves to the surface, having to rest between intense bursts of effort to move its huge weight. Eventually, exhausted, they heaved it to the surface and slumped over it in the afternoon sunlight, limbs trembling with fatigue and soaked with sweat. Thereafter, with the application of horses, it was but a comparatively minor matter to get it to the cottages.

Act 3 Scene 1 - Cambridge

Everyone discussed recent events long into the night. It was concluded that whatever befell the village had been there for weeks months or longer. There was puzzlement over Dacre's role and status, both in village and amongst the lizard men and snake women, for he appeared as both victim and leader, and perhaps as both snake or lizard, and man. The Ottoman pistols (and steel) suggested some link to the East, but where, when or how was unknown. As the discussions flowed and ebbed it was Ned Culpable who noted that the lizards had been passing amongst men not only unnoticed, but indistinguishable from those familiar with them!

Discussion turned to Denny and his potential to be in Cambridge. It was decided that Sandy Bell would ride in haste to Cambridge while everyone else returned to London on the cart. Sandy would deliver the letters from Blythe to Denny if he found him.

When morning came the cart left southwards and Sandy rode north on dry roads for Cambridge and made good time. With the name of Caius College to guide him when he asked directions within the city it was quick to find the college buildings, and there were many taverns happy to take a traveller with ready coin, for many such passed through the town.

After he had brushed up a little he arrived at the main gate of the College, there to be stopped by an impenetrable barrier of the college Porters. Barely armed men in a stone hut beside the gate, albeit more heavily armed men loitered near with obvious intent.

Sandy explained his task, to locate a student known to the Master of the College, in person and to no other. It was agreed that a messenger would be sent to Master Legge. There was much too-ing and fro-ing as gaps in schedules were discussed, until an appointment was made for the next day, assuming the Master Legge was actually available.

The next day he was given a scant and frosty minute by Thomas Legge to explain. Once Denny's name was mentioned Legge's unwelcoming demeanour thawed somewhat, and Sandy was fairly sure he caught a sigh and rolled eyes from Master Legge. An address was suggested, and the Quill and Ring tavern as an alternative, but Legge could not say whether he expected Denny to be at either. It was clear to Sandy Bell that Edward Denny was not in the best standing at Caius College.

Outside the grounds of Caius Sandy asked about and was quickly pointed towards a street some minutes walk away. There amongst the houses the Quill and Ring was an obvious starting point, and after a single question to one of the wenches quickly identified the correct house. There Sandy found an inebriated Denny and delivered the letter. It turned out to be a second letter in the first, this for an Eileen Pennybrygg, with whom Denny had a historical romance, since dropped, and who was Blythe's cousin. While much imbibed, Denny was most concerned at the talk of Witches, and with Blythe's queries of such. He agreed to accompany Bell back to Waltham to see the described chaos for himself the next day, when he was sober enough to sit on a horse.

The next day they returned to Waltham and the burned cottages. While the bodies in the street were gone, Alice's still hung in the square. Denny was horrified to see this and Sandy Bell's description of what had transpired both in the village and beneath these Abbey ruins. He saw little choice but to accompany Sandy back to London to seek an appointment with Blythe, too. They rode out, hoping to make London by nightfall.

Act 3 Scene 2 - London

It was late, and the last few miles were made at a walk for Sandy, Edward and the horses as the light failed. With relief Sandy spied the lanterns of The Bell and the Theatre. They walked in to find Messrs Culpable, Jaffa and a much recovered Blitheman taking supportive drinks after supper.

As explanation and details of what was found beneath the Abbey was recounted for Denny he purchased more drinks for all. He eventually asked, hesitantly, after Eileen Pennybrygg. Unknowing, Ben asked for a description, which was given and to his horror, albeit rather expected, he realised that such description was similar to one of the women, heavy with 'child', interned in the circular cavern beneath the Abbey. He said nothing.

As discussion faltered and more drinks were bought, it was clear to all that Blythe must be reported to the next day. Denny was clearly upset by the thought of having to face Blythe, but agreed. As the time approached midnight, it was deemed wise to send a note early the next morning requesting appointment.

Act 3 Scene 3 - The Last Straw

The next morning a note was sent to Blythe's offices via one of The Theatre urchins requesting appointment. On return it was suggested at 3pm, or sometime thereafter. Denny, while he accepted he had to face Blythe, was not one to let matters go unprepared for and set about drinking himself into a state to face Blythe as soon as he could. He was considerably the worse by early afternoon when he was poured onto his horse, and way was made. The anonymous door was knocked upon and they were shown to Blythe's work room.

Blythe demanded details, both of circumstances and actions, and what occurred was described with some omissions or glossing over of detail. Blythe was clearly in no mood for a conversation from the start. He demanded answers from all those assembled, and Denny most particularly, for to all it was clear this was also a personal matter.

The grim tale was told by all, and Denny appeared more sorrowful with each detail. It was only upon the demands of Blythe to account for Eileen Pennybrygg that he reacted, looking even more distraught. Finally, it was to Ben Jaffa to tentatively answer that perhaps, for he was not sure, with

all the deaths of women accused as witches in the village, she may have been among them. He was careful at no point to mention the circular cavern of those heavy with lizard.

At this, although it seemed an inevitable conclusion he had denied himself, Blythe cried out in horror, and cursed all those present, swept all papers, ornaments, quills, inks and candles from his desk to the floor with crash, before throwing the papers and items at hand into the shelves about his room. In the face of final realisation he sobbed and screamed at all those assembled to get out. All hastily withdrew, and led by a panicking clerk hurried back along the corridors to the door. Behind them they heard shouts and crashes as furniture within Blythe's office met an end.

Act 4 Scene 1 - Back at The Bell

 here were more surprises in The Bell when they returned: a small group of well dressed gentlemen were being eyed up warily by locals, but clearly recognised them as they walked in, and knew each of our heroes by sight and name. More surprising, they were Spanish.

Introductions were begun, and the lead introduced himself with a stream of Spanish titles and names. It came to Denny to resolve the bafflement, as he leaned into Jaffa's side and whispered that the man was the Spanish Ambassador to Queen Elizabeth's Court, Bernadino Mendoza.

Mendoza explained that he would like to discuss a matter with them, for they had a reputation. It would be inappropriate to discuss anything in the tavern, but would they be available within the next few of days to meet at a place of his choosing. Such matters were delicate, and he had no wish for misunderstanding. After some delicate verbal footwork dodging questions Mendoza and his companions departed but promised to be in touch. Horses were led from the stables, and Sandy Bell opined that they were the finest steeds he has ever laid eyes on, and he'd seen a few in his time. He used the word 'magnificent'.

With suitable paranoia the next morning a visit to Blythe is hastily arranged to tell all. To everyone's surprise they were ushered down much longer corridors and different stairwells to a room that contained a man busy at a desk piled high with papers, books and notes. There were no chairs for anyone to sit. It was clear to those in the know that this was Walsingham. After a few minutes he looked up and acknowledged their presence and explained that Blythe was unavailable for a period.

Walsingham was surprised by the news that Mendoza had been in touch. He informed them that Mendoza was about to be deported, having annoyed the Queen and Lord Burghley. Alas, his star was no longer bright back in Spain, and Walsingham suspected he may be intercepted by the Inquisition, or perhaps just Philip's men, and be executed. Either quickly, or slowly, depending. He speculated that this may be some esoteric ploy by Mendoza to try and save himself, but he could not imagine what it could be. However, with some grudging respect, he admitted Mendoza was something of a worthy adversary.

As the dockets for Mendoza's deportation were to be signed that day Walsingham suggested they met Mendoza as soon as possible to find out what he wanted and to feed such back to himself promptly thereafter.

Act 4 Scene 2 - Spanish Flee.

 day later a man with a message arrived at The Theatre and found Ben Jaffa. He explained that a guide would meet them to direct them to the appropriate place the next morning.

At the appointed hour everyone was assembled and a nondescript man arrived. He was firmly English. He explained he was paid to ensure they were brought to a specific door and not followed, so the route was twisting, unexpected, and full of hurries and waits. After considerably more than an hour they arrived at an anonymous door somewhere near St Paul's Cathedral. Behind the door they were met and escorted by a clearly Spanish servant, deep into a significantly large Town House quite unexpected from the road. Within an inner courtyard alive with men and horses being mounted and readied Mendoza saw them and gestured to horses held by expectant stable boys. They were expected to ride with the Ambassador. Mounted, they departed, surrounded by the Ambassador's entourage.

They rode eastwards through the streets of London, with the Ambassador and surrounded by his men. He explained he was to be deported and must return to Spain. He had clearly already guessed or been informed of his fate there for perceived failure, and for not being in step with the change in Spain that Philip had decreed, nor had he ever won favour with the Inquisition. He spoke of a change he has seen in Phillip, of a growing darkness at the heart of the Spanish Court and his dislike of what had returned from the New World, although he did not go into details.

For reasons he did not share he warned them of a Spanish agent that would be landing in Rainham marshes. A Jesuit Priest named Lucien Raphael, an associate of the notorious Friar Luis de Belaños and 'Le Balafré' ('Scarface' in French, although he did not elaborate on a real name if he knew it) bringing not just money, but also something unpleasant, but he did not what.

Finally, he pulled off a heavy saddlebag from his mount and handed it to Jaffa, bid them farewell, good luck, long life, and galloped away towards the eastern gates of London with his entourage.

Upon examination the saddlebags contained approximately 200 Spanish doubloons in pure gold from the weight. That and the horses upon which they rode - four magnificent beasts, with exquisite tack of finest leather inlaid with silver thread and perfect stitching.

With some difficulty then next day a banking merchant was found who was willing to take the gold coins for the weight price, and a value return rather than the doubloons themselves. It was clear they would be taken out of England or melted down for their weight, but the notes of credit were worth far more to everyone than coins that would arouse suspicion if seen.

Furthermore, after some challenges and accusations by reputable horse traders that several scruffy ne'er-do-wells suddenly had four magnificent horses to sell so must have stolen them, Bell and Blitheman managed to contact an old acquaintance of Blitheman's who 'knows horses' and put them in touch with a trader with an appropriate introduction to sell the horses. This too earned everyone significant moneys and that too was introduced to the banking merchants in 5 accounts.

Act 4 Scene 2 - Walsingham Expects.

 n return to Walsingham for guidance, this time with seating which was clearly a weather vain of approval, he listened to their details of the conversation with Mendoza with interest and although hard to read there were some hints he might have been aware of some aspects, and that his agents had been watching the meeting in some way for he smiled at the

mention of horses, and while clearly was aware of the price they brought, asked no direct question about it nor the bag of doubloons. No-one mentioned them further.

To everyone's surprise Walsingham appeared more interested in the likelihood of a Jesuit priest landing in Rainham Marshes than the address Ben Jaffa had discovered in Dacre's saddle bags that was somewhere in Fleet Hill. There was some concern expressed that the prospect of disguised lizard men might be more important than another Catholic. Indeed such was the consternation about lizard men that Ned insisted upon slitting his own palm and others to show their blood was red, not yellow. A tentative suggestion that Walsingham undertake such a test was met with a wholly expected withering glare and 'Don't be ridiculous'. If looks could have maimed, Ned Culpable would have left in a basket. However, despite requesting everyone to attend Rainham marshes soonest, Walsingham did grant that the address in Fleet Hill would be checked with suitable caution.

Here this production ends.