

Death of Captain Doughty

A one-act play by

John Spurling

“The backward look behind the assurance

Of recorded history, the backward half-look

Over the shoulder, towards the primitive terror.”

T.S.Eliot, The Dry Salvages

First published in Great Britain in 1975 by Marion Boyars

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DEATH OF CAPTAIN DOUGHTY was first performed on 28 March 1973 by Granada Television. The play was directed by Carol Wilks and the cast was as follows:

FRANCIS DRAKE.....Jim Norton
CAPTAIN DOUGHTY.....Terrence Hardiman
BREWER.....Bill Stewart
VICARY.....Malcolm Tierney
CHESTER.....Antony Haygarth
BRIGHT.....Roy Marsden
FLETCHER.....Charles McKeown
FIRST SAILOR.....Peter Gordon
SECOND SAILOR.....Seymour Matthews
THIRD SAILOR.....Paul Alexander

Designed by Colin Pocock and produced by Jonathan Powell

PROLOGUE

At the back of the stage, a large map of the Atlantic Ocean. Enter DRAKE

DRAKE. The wind commands me away. Our ships are under sail. God grant we may so live in His fear as the enemy may have cause to say that God doth fight for Her Majesty as well abroad as at home. Haste!

DRAKE steps aside. NARRATOR enters

NARRATOR. Four hundred years ago Francis Drake sailed round the world. Queen Elizabeth and several members of her court were among those who put money into the expedition. The fleet of five ships, with one hundred and sixty-four men and boys on board, left Plymouth in December 1577. One ship, with some fifty men, returned to Plymouth in September 1580. Those who sailed from Plymouth included a party of gentlemen-adventurers, the chief of whom was a certain Thomas Doughty. Captain Doughty, who had helped get Drake his commission as leader of the expedition, did not return to Plymouth. This is a strange story, half light, half dark. We know what happened, but we don't quite know why it happened. We can see the facts, but we may miss the meaning. So we're going to tell the story as simply as we can, without dressing up, without disguising ourselves as men who have been dead for nearly four centuries. We are actors playing the parts of our ancestors. This is a stage or the deck of a wooden ship.

NARRATOR steps aside

SCENE ONE – PRIZE

The other actors enter. One of them goes to the map and points out the Cape Verde Islands off the coast of North Africa.

NARRATOR. January 1578. Drake captures a Portuguese cargo ship off the Cape Verde Islands.

All the actors walk about the stage with a slightly rolling gait, as if exploring the deck of a ship. After a few moments of this, DRAKE stops and the others stop and look at him.

DRAKE. A good big ship. Don't you like her?

BRIGHT. What's the cargo?

DRAKE falls to his knees and slaps floor with the flat of his palm

DRAKE. She's bung full of plunder. Feel her, feel her!

All go down on knees and put hands on floor.

DOUGHTY. *(pulling splinter out of palm)* Damned foreign hulk! The bitch doesn't like me.

BREWER. What's she carrying?

DRAKE. *(caressing boards)* Silks, satins, fine fabrics, costly stuff for Portuguese ladies in Brazil. Sherry wine and madeira for the Portuguese gentlemen. *(slapping floor again and looking round the others enthusiastically)* We'll take her, shall we?

DOUGHTY. *(jokingly)* You are a real pirate.

DRAKE. *(not taking it as a joke)* A pirate! I have the Queen's Commission.

DOUGHTY. Have you? To fight private battles with friendly states? To board and ransack foreign ships? We're not at war with Portugal any more than we are with Spain.

DRAKE. Not at peace either.

DOUGHTY. Dubious, my dear chap, very dubious.

DRAKE crawls rapidly on all fours towards DOUGHTY and stares closely into his face.

DRAKE. I am not a pirate, Captain Doughty.

DOUGHTY. *(staring back)* Pirate is as pirate does, Drake.

DRAKE. *(slowly and menacingly)* I am not a pirate.

DOUGHTY. *(after pause, lightly)* What's in a word? You are not a pirate. *(smiles)*

DRAKE relaxes immediately, changes to sitting position, puts hands flat on boards either side of his thighs.

DRAKE. I take this ship, her silks, satins, sheries and madeiras, her officers and crew as lawful prize and prisoners of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth.

He looks all round at the others, as if expecting an objection

DOUGHTY. *(lightly)* God bless her!

DRAKE. And I rename this ship.... *(thinks for a moment)*... *Mary*.

He looks challengingly at DOUGHTY

DOUGHTY. *Mary?* Excellent name. A touch Catholic, if one wants to be critical, but then she's a Catholic ship, after all. Or was until Her Protestant Majesty took possession.

DRAKE. The prisoners will be treated with courtesy until we can put them ashore at La Brava. The cargo will be left under seal for the present. My trumpeter Brewer and my brother Thomas will sail in her as officers. As commander of the *Mary* I appoint... *(looks around as if seeking a suitable candidate)* Captain Thomas Doughty.

Suddenly lunging forward, DRAKE punches DOUGHTY in the midriff, sending him sprawling. Pause. Then all the actors get up and go off, except for DRAKE. NARRATOR stops by map and points to Cape Verde Islands, as he/she goes off.

NARRATOR. Change of command at La Brava.

SCENE TWO – VALUABLES

DRAKE goes and looks at the map. BREWER pokes his head round one side of it and speaks in a hoarse whisper:

BREWER. General!

DRAKE. Who's that?

BREWER. *(coming round map)* It's me, General.

DRAKE. Is Captain Doughty read to land the prisoners?

BREWER. The man sent me to tell you so.

DRAKE. Let him go ahead, then!

Pause. BREWER stands looking at his feet.

Let him get on with it, Brewer!

BREWER takes DRAKE by the arm and leads him aside in a conspiratorial manner

BREWER. A word in your ear, General. Doughty's been tampering with the cargo. He's opened the wine. Not only that, he's lifted personal valuables from the Portuguese prisoners.

DRAKE. Did he drink the wine?

BREWER. We all drank it, seeing it was already open. But the crew don't like him. He opened the wine to stop them grousing.

DRAKE. Ask Captain Doughty to row over and see me when he's beached the prisoners!

BREWER. All of us serve you, General.

DRAKE. You serve Captain Doughty under me.

BREWER. Doughty doesn't think he is under you. He's not a sailor, he's not serious.

BREWER goes off behind map. A moment or two later, DOUGHTY comes on stage.

DOUGHTY. Prisoners ashore and ship ship-shape, if that's the correct expression. You asked to see me?

DRAKE holds out his hand. DOUGHTY takes it. DRAKE keeps hold of DOUGHTY's hand and lifts it up.

DRAKE. These rings are pretty.

He drops DOUGHTY's hand and lifts the chain which hangs round DOUGHTY's neck, with a medallion at the end of it.

I never saw you wear this before. Whose ornaments are these?

DOUGHTY. The Portuguese gave them to me. I'm not a pirate, you know.

DRAKE. I gave orders the cargo was to remain sealed.

DOUGHTY. I passed on your orders.

DRAKE. (*shouting*) Then who tampered with it?

DOUGHTY. Don't look at me!

DRAKE. Who then? The prisoners? The sailors? By God, Doughty, when I give orders I mean them. You're in command. Was the wine opened on your orders or against your orders? Lack of discipline either way.

DOUGHTY. Don't let's lose our tempers, Drake! The culprit was your brother Thomas. Putting me in a difficult position. Your sailors are frankly scum. I don't mean that unkindly, but as a simple, factual description. They haven't had our advantages in life.

DRAKE. Why did the Portuguese give you these valuables?

DOUGHTY. The Portuguese officers are gentlemen. I liked them, they liked me.

DRAKE. What did they get in return?

DOUGHTY. Courtesy. Generosity. Mutual esteem. Qualities natural among gentlemen, far removed from any conception of material value, of mere gain or loss.

DRAKE. These rings are of material value. You gained them and the Portuguese lost them.

DOUGHTY. The rings are nothing in themselves. Outward tokens of the spirit in which they were given and received. Let me give one to you!

He takes off a ring and puts it in DRAKE's palm

Let me give you two! And there's a third!

He puts second and third rings in DRAKE's palm

DRAKE. And the dingle-dangle.

DOUGHTY takes off the chain with medallion and lays it on DRAKE's palm with elaborate ceremony

DOUGHTY. By all means. With my profound sentiments, from one gentleman to another. In themselves nothing but shiny metal and coloured stone.

DRAKE. For shiny metal and coloured stone like this scum go sailing and Queens fit out their ships. (*closing hand over rings and chain*) Until further notice my brother Thomas will command the *Mary*. You will transfer to this ship, *Pelican*, and I shall join my brother on the *Mary*.

DOUGHTY. You're giving me command of the *Pelican*? The flagship?

DRAKE. Command of the gentlemen aboard the *Pelican*, not of the ship. Obviously you're good with gentlemen, not so good with scum. These... (*weighing valuables in his*

hand) will go in the common chest, to be shared out at journey's end between Her Majesty and Her Majesty's pirates.

DRAKE goes off. DOUGHTY remains.

SCENE THREE – DOLDRUMS

All the actors, except DRAKE and BREWER, come on stage. NARRATOR goes to map and points at equator half-way between Africa and South America.

NARRATOR. It took Drake's fleet a month to get over to Brazil. Between the trade winds blowing from the north and those blowing from the south there's a windless corridor known as "the Doldrums". Crossing the equator the ships were becalmed.

All the actors lie down on the stage, stretched out like landed fish.

DOUGHTY. Bad food, stale water, heat and boredom.

VICARY. *(propping himself languidly on one elbow and looking off-stage)* Someone's paying us an afternoon call.

DOUGHTY. *(yawning)* Who can it be?

1ST SAILOR. It's a boat from the *Mary*.

2ND SAILOR. It's Brewer, the General's trumpeter.

DOUGHTY. Yap, yap! The General's spaniel. *(sitting up)* We should give him a warm welcome.

VICARY. A kick up the arse.

DOUGHTY. That sort of thing.

1ST SAILOR. A cobbey.

VICARY. A what?

2ND SAILOR. A cobbey's a sort of... when he comes aboard, you get a hold of him and... everyone takes a turn... and...

DOUGHTY. Most intriguing! Why don't you show us the cobbey when our friend comes up the ladder?

The SAILORS stand up, dusting their hands on their trousers

VICARY. Nothing dangerous to life or limb, I hope.

DOUGHTY. *(yawning)* I do hope not.

VICARY. You don't care?

DOUGHTY. One sailor more or less. Even God would hardly miss him.

BREWER appears, framed between the backs of two SAILORS waiting to receive him.

BREWER. Captain Doughty! The General sent me over to see how you're doing.

DOUGHTY. Give the General's man a hearty welcome!

SAILORS seize BREWER by the arms, undo his belt, drop his trousers round his ankles, bend his head between his knees, then take it in turns to beat his buttocks with their hands.

DOUGHTY. We live and learn. *(to VICARY)* Won't you join in?

VICARY. I don't much fancy it.

DOUGHTY. We ought to muck in.

DOUGHTY goes and gives BREWER a token slap. VICARY does the same.

VICARY. How amusing!

DOUGHTY. *(to SAILORS)* That's enough. Let him go!

SAILORS release BREWER, who pulls up his trousers and fastens belt.

DOUGHTY. Take the General our warmest regards, Brewer!

He lies down again

BREWER. *(grimly)* I'll tell him what you think of him, Captain Doughty.

He goes off. The rest lie down again.

VICARY. So that's a cobbey!

DOUGHTY. Did you ever see such a dreary bit of horseplay? But what can you expect? Ship's biscuits, foul water and no wind. The seafaring life. The cobbey's only an outward expression of the bad taste in your mouth.

DRAKE appears at the back of the stage.

DRAKE. Captain Doughty! Put yourself forthwith, bag and baggage, into a small boat and have yourself rowed to the supply ship, *Swan*! Aboard the *Swan* you're to take your meals with Captain Chester and his officers, you'll have liberty to walk about the upper deck, but you'll consider yourself Captain Chester's prisoner. Understood?

DOUGHTY. *(screwing up his face, opening mouth and wiping tongue with hand)* A very bad taste.

All go off.

SCENE FOUR – STORM

Actors bring on a see-saw and set it on stage, if possible against a large white screen, lit so as to throw huge shadows of those on the see-saw on to the screen. NARRATOR comes to map and points to River Plate.

NARRATOR. Storms and darkness off the River Plate.

He goes off. DOUGHTY and CHESTER come and sit on either end of see-saw.

DOUGHTY. Captain Chester, you and I are rational men. We know very well that these huge walls of water, ferocious gusts of wind and worst of all these miserable drifts of black fog have natural causes. But I'll bet three quarters of your crew think they're supernatural.

They sway up and down on the see-saw at long intervals, bending their heads as though against lashing rain, speaking in loud, slow voices as though against the din of a storm.

CHESTER. Very likely.

DOUGHTY. Penalties sent by gods or demons for sailing where we shouldn't sail, for going beyond what's permitted.

CHESTER. We're not the first to come here.

DOUGHTY. Not quite the first.

CHESTER. What? Magellan, do you mean?

DOUGHTY. Are you still there, Captain Chester? I can't see you.

CHESTER. Magellan wasn't lost on this coast.

DOUGHTY. *(as he goes down, he leans over the edge of the see-saw)* Christ, look at that sea! Like a mill-race under the poop. Gone again! Extraordinary!

CHESTER. What?

DOUGHTY. How even the most rational mind can give way to doubt.

CHESTER. What?

DOUGHTY. Terror. What if there was a black rock, sharp, coming at us out of the fog, submerged? Boom! What if the world were not round, after all? Do you believe it? What if the world's actually a gigantic dinner-plate over which the ocean pours day and night? Like a mill-race into the black abyss.

CHESTER. The world is round. Don't worry!

DOUGHTY. We're told it is. What's the evidence?

CHESTER. Magellan went round it. Sailing westwards he came back where he started. Any rate, the ship did, if not the man himself.

DOUGHTY. Do you believe in demons?

CHESTER. I've not met any.

DOUGHTY. Do you think it's just chance that everything's wrong with this voyage? First the calm, then the hurricane, then the fog, then the hurricane again.

CHESTER. Natural hazards.

DOUGHTY. Wouldn't you say Drake was losing his grip?

CHESTER. In what way?

DOUGHTY. His ships are scattered. Where's he making for? What's he after in these terrible seas, off these desolate coasts?

CHESTER. You mustn't lose heart, Captain Doughty.

DOUGHTY. Don't misunderstand me! I've seen books which tell you how to raise devils, how to make storms, fogs, calms, shipwrecks. It can be done. Men can command such things if they know how. Why is Drake's voyage going wrong? Don't you think it might be because he's annoyed somebody? Don't you think Drake and everyone who follows him might end up at the bottom of the sea if that somebody wanted to punish them?

DOUGHTY's shadow looms over CHESTER's, arms outstretched. After a pause they go off. Actors remove see-saw and set up mast at one side of stage.

SCENE FIVE – GIBBET

Actors come in and cluster round foot of mast. NARRATOR stands by map and points at it

NARRATOR. On June 18th, 1578, Drake's fleet – reunited – dropped anchor at Port St Julian, far down the coast of South America towards the Strait of Magellan.

DRAKE and DOUGHTY stand together some way back from the other actors.

1ST SAILOR. What is it?

2ND SAILOR. Old mast. Spruce. Seen some weather.

3RD SAILOR. This mast must have been Magellan's.

2ND SAILOR. Magellan's? Why would he stick his mast in the sand?

1ST SAILOR. Did Magellan land on this beach?

3RD SAILOR. Fifty-eight years ago. He stopped to water and refit his ships.

1ST SAILOR. Flagpole, was it? Did he put up his flag and it's blown to tatters over the years?

They look up as if at the flag flapping

3RD SAILOR. I doubt this was his flagpole.

2ND SAILOR. Maybe the ship's still under the mast and the sand covered it. If we dig down we'll come to the timbers.

DRAKE. You'll come to the bones if you dig down.

3RD SAILOR. Bones?

DRAKE. Human bones.

1ST SAILOR. Was this the cross to mark a grave?

DRAKE. It marks a grave.

2ND SAILOR. Whose grave?

DRAKE. The bones of Magellan's officers are buried here.

3RD SAILOR. How did they die?

1ST SAILOR. Murdered by natives?

2ND SAILOR. Fever?

3RD SAILOR. Drowned?

DRAKE. Hanged. This spruce mast was Magellan's gibbet. From this gibbet he hanged his officers. Dig down and you'll find their bones.

DOUGHTY. Why?

DRAKE. They had no faith, Captain Doughty. They were afraid. Rather than follow their leader into the unknown they stirred up trouble among his crew. Therefore he hanged them for mutiny.

He turns away from DOUGHTY

Captain Chester, take charge! Fetch mattocks. Dig down! Let's view these bones. I want every man in the fleet to see a sand-strewn mutineer with his own eyes.

DRAKE walks away from mast. DOUGHTY follows him.

DOUGHTY. You've made your meaning clear. Do we need this macabre exhibition? Even supposing they find a skeleton, it's more likely to frighten the stuffing out of your poor sods than stiffen their moral fibre.

DRAKE. This is where the real voyage begins. Poor sods are no use to me. I'm not asking more of Magellan's officers than they can still perform. We shall need blood as well as bones before we leave Port St Julian.

DRAKE turns round, DOUGHTY with him. The other actors are standing in a group. Each holds a piece of bone so as to make a more or less complete skeleton.

DRAKE. Behold the bones! And now you, Doughty, like these skeleton officers, must do some service to my expedition. You must stand your trial.

SCENE SIX – TRIAL

Someone brings a stool for DRAKE. He sits down with his back to the map. DOUGHTY stands at the foot of the mast. The other actors sit on the ground, the other side of the stage.

DRAKE. This is the charge against you, Thomas Doughty: that you've done your utmost to discredit me personally and to sabotage this voyage.

DOUGHTY. This is a rigged jury and you are judge in your own cause. If I'm to be tried at all, it ought to be in England according to English law.

DRAKE. The Queen's Commission gives me power of life and death.

DOUGHTY. Let's see it!

He holds out his hand and advances towards DRAKE, waving his open palm under DRAKE's nose.

Some commission that can make you one minute a pirate and the next a judge, just as the whim takes you. Let's see the amazing document!

DRAKE. Tie the prisoner's arms!

Two of the SAILORS pull DOUGHTY back to his original position and tie his arms behind him.

We'll hear evidence. Brewer!

BREWER. *(standing up)* The accused person, Thomas Doughty, when commanding the captured Portuguese vessel *Mary*, caused the cargo to be opened, distributed the contents among the crew and took valuables from the Portuguese prisoners, all against the express orders of the General.

DOUGHTY. Lies! You and the General's brother were the guilty men in opening the cargo. As for the valuables, they were given to me quite freely.

DRAKE. Go on, Brewer!

BREWER. When the fleet was becalmed, I visited the *Pelican* on the General's orders. The accused person, then in a position of responsibility on board the *Pelican*, had me beaten by all hands.

DRAKE. Why?

BREWER. Out of spite and revenge because it was I who reported his misconduct on board the *Mary*.

DOUGHTY. More lies. It wasn't my idea to give Brewer a cobbey. I never heard of a cobbey till that day. The sailors beat him and I took part only because I wished to show solidarity with my shipmates. The whole business disgusted me. But all this is too trivial to talk about.

DRAKE. Sit down, Brewer! Captain Chester.

BREWER sits. CHESTER stands up.

CHESTER. While he was a prisoner under my charge on board the *Swan*, at a time when the fleet was scattered and subject to many dangers from wind and sea, as well as fog,

Doughty went secretly among my crew trying to weaken their allegiance to the General and to sow doubt in their minds about the voyage. He even tried his tricks with me.

DRAKE. What tricks?

CHESTER. He suggested that he himself might cause the expedition to come to grief.

DRAKE. In what way?

CHESTER. I hardly know. I didn't take him seriously. He seemed to be claiming to have supernatural power over wind and tide.

DOUGHTY. Ludicrous! I merely told him I'd read books which professed to teach one how to raise winds and waves. I admit it was foolish of me to discuss such matters with an ignorant idiot.

DRAKE. Edward Bright.

CHESTER sits. BRIGHT stands up.

BRIGHT. I was walking quietly in the garden...

DRAKE. What garden?

BRIGHT. Your own garden, General.

DRAKE. At Plymouth?

BRIGHT. At Plymouth. And I overheard the accused person, Captain Doughty, talking treason. He said that Her Majesty the Queen and Her Majesty's Council didn't object to piracy, so long as they got a good percentage of it for themselves.

DRAKE. In other words, he was saying they were corrupt and could be bribed?

BRIGHT. Right. He said they'd do anything for money. He also said that this whole voyage was a sham and a deception.

DRAKE. Did he say what he meant by that?

BRIGHT. The ostensible purpose of the voyage, he said, was for us to go round the bottom of South America and discover a new country there called Terra Australis.

DRAKE. True enough.

BRIGHT. But Doughty said that was all a load of nonsense. The real purpose was to sail up the other side of South America and singe the King of Spain's beard, burn his ports, burgle his treasuries and ransack his ships. But that was a deadly secret between the Queen and Francis Drake, because if the Lord Treasurer, Lord Burghley, got to hear about it, he'd stop the voyage altogether.

DRAKE. Why?

BRIGHT. I don't know.

DOUGHTY. Because, as you very well know, Drake, Lord Burghley is anxious to avoid a war with Spain. That's why he doesn't want you boarding Spanish ships and burning Spanish towns.

DRAKE. Did Doughty say anything else in the garden at Plymouth?

BRIGHT. He said that in spite of everything, Lord Burghley knew perfectly well what was the secret purpose of the voyage.

DRAKE. That's a lie.

BRIGHT. I'm only reporting what I heard him say.

DRAKE. Lord Burghley did not know.

DOUGHTY. I'm afraid he did.

DRAKE. He did not and he could not. The Queen herself, at our private interview, told me that Burghley of all people must not be told the secret purpose of the voyage, and this you very well understood, Doughty.

DOUGHTY. All the same, he knew.

DRAKE. How could he know?

DOUGHTY. I told him.

DRAKE stands up in sudden fury and shouts:

DRAKE. Out of his own mouth! Now you have it! Bring in your verdict! Is he a traitor or isn't he?

VICARY stands up.

VICARY. With all respect, General, as a trained lawyer I must protest.

DRAKE. You are Doughty's friend.

VICARY. I don't deny it. I should think you might allow him one friend among so many enemies. These proceedings are illegal.

DRAKE. Who cares about the law? I know what I'm going to do.

VICARY. That may be. But we can't be responsible for taking this man's life.

DRAKE. You're not responsible for his life. Leave that to me! All you have to do is say if he's guilty. Now say it!

VICARY sits. Jurors whisper among themselves. DRAKE and DOUGHTY stare at one another. The whispering stops and the jurors sit rigid.

DRAKE. Guilty or not guilty?

VICARY. The verdict is guilty. However we think the witness Bright is untrustworthy since it's well known that Doughty has frequently said that Mrs Bright was a whore.

DRAKE. Everything Bright said was perfectly true. I care nothing for Mrs Bright. I want my question answered unequivocally. Is this man a traitor?

JURORS. *(severally)* Yes.

DRAKE. And deserves to die? *(Pause)* Raise your arms those of you who think he deserves to die!

One by one they raise their arms.

Then I pronounce you, Thomas Doughty, the child of death.

All go out except DRAKE and DOUGHTY.

SCENE SEVEN – COMMUNION

DRAKE and DOUGHTY kneel side by side facing audience. FLETCHER enters with Communion chalice. He goes and stands by DRAKE.

FLETCHER. The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. *(gives chalice to DRAKE)* Drink this in remembrance that Christ's Blood was shed for thee, and be thankful!

He takes back chalice from DRAKE and moves across to stand beside DOUGHTY

The Blood of...

DOUGHTY holds up hand to stop FLETCHER, then beckons him closer. FLETCHER stoops and puts his ear near DOUGHTY's lips.

DOUGHTY. *(in quiet, level tone)* I was not a traitor. The trivial things I said and did may have been troublesome, but were not treacherous. I told Burghley the secret of the voyage because I like passing on secrets, can't help it. Not intending to prevent the voyage. Besides, it didn't prevent the voyage, did it? I stirred up sailors because I like dominating people, particularly stupid people. I can't help showing off. Vanity, not treachery. I made difficulties for Drake because he's so serious-minded. People with a mission in life irritate me. I like to upset their plans if I can. Of course, I should never have come, but I wanted to, I thought it would be amusing. It hasn't been very amusing. I was not a traitor.

FLETCHER takes a step back and holds out chalice

FLETCHER. The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. *(gives chalice to DOUGHTY)* Drink this in remembrance that Christ's Blood was shed for thee, and be thankful!

FLETCHER takes back chalice, as DOUGHTY wipes lips with back of hand. FLETCHER goes out.

SCENE EIGHT – DINNER

Actors bring in table with two goblets and a bottle of wine and two seats. DRAKE and DOUGHTY sit down on opposite sides of table.

NARRATOR. Drake entertains Doughty to dinner.

NARRATOR and all except DRAKE and DOUGHTY go out. DRAKE pours wine into both goblets. DOUGHTY stands up with goblet in hand.

DOUGHTY. I propose a toast. You have a long and dangerous journey in front of you. Who knows what countries you'll come to, men walking on their heads, giants, pygmies, monstrous new animals; or what Spanish galleons you'll board at dead of night, what gold and silver you'll stow under hatches? How many of you will ever see Plymouth again? I drink to your journey, your discoveries, your treasure and your safe return. *(he drinks and sits down)*

DRAKE: Thank you. *(standing up with goblet in hand)* You also have a journey to go. Long and dangerous or short and easy? People, ghosts, monster, treasures, torments? Only Magellan has been my way before, but it doesn't seem impossible. Every living man has been or must go your way, but it seems too dark and unreal even to think about. All the same I believe in God. I believe God will light your way. I drink to your journey and your safe arrival. *(drinks and sits down)*

DOUGHTY. Thank you.

DRAKE. *(putting arms on table and leaning towards DRAKE)* I owe this voyage to you. You were the first to mention my name in high places. You used your influence to get this idea accepted.

DOUGHTY. *(leaning across in turn)* I certainly owe the voyage I'm going on to you. I'm sure you too, since you believe in God, will recommend me in that high place.

DRAKE. I will, Doughty. Very persistently and regularly. I shall not forget you.

DOUGHTY. You'll be sorry to lose me.

DRAKE. I will.

DOUGHTY. Why are you doing this to me?

DRAKE. *(sitting back in chair)* It's necessary.

DOUGHTY. Why is it necessary?

DRAKE makes no answer. Long pause, then DOUGHTY speaks again, looking down into his goblet

A very long time ago there was a war between Greeks and Trojans. Remember? How it nearly didn't happen at all, because the Greek fleet was held up by contrary winds. So many quarrels broke out among the Greek leaders during this dreary period of waiting that the whole expedition threatened to collapse and all the Greeks were on the point of going home to their farms. Remember?

DRAKE. I didn't have your education.

DOUGHTY. The Greek General was Agamemnon. Obeying the will of the gods, he sent for his own daughter Iphigeneia and slit her throat in front of the assembled troops. Immediately the wind changed, the fleet sailed and Troy was sacked.

DRAKE. What about it?

DOUGHTY. You find human sacrifice everywhere, in all periods of history, among all peoples. Abraham and Isaac, the Crucifixion, and Cortes found it among the Aztecs. Humans seem to feel an irresistible need for it.

DRAKE. It was just the danger of mutiny. Discipline at sea is a very delicate thing, more delicate than you understood, Doughty.

DOUGHTY. And yet, until we reached Port St Julian, you hadn't decided what to do with me, if anything. Then you saw Magellan's gibbet. You talked about showing the sailors some blood, to impress them. But it isn't to impress the sailors. It's to satisfy gods that drink human blood.

DRAKE. There are no such gods.

DOUGHTY. No. And the world is round. Those are facts. But that's what it is to be human, after all, to know facts and live by fictions. To do frightful, unnecessary things and invent reasons afterwards to prove them necessary. The world is round, no question, but not when you're sailing round it. There are no gods that drink human blood, except when you think the gods may have turned against you. And then it's naval discipline. *(raises goblet)* Good luck! I'm sure you'll make it home now, with my help.

DRAKE. *(raising goblet)* You too, with mine.

DRAKE and DOUGHTY go out. The actors remove the table and chairs.

SCENE NINE – EXECUTION

The actors come on with a block, which they place beside the mast. Then they stand aside in a small group and wait a few moments. FLETCHER comes on, holding a Bible. He is followed by DOUGHTY and behind DOUGHTY by DRAKE. They pass in front of the map at the back of the stage. DOUGHTY suddenly stops and turns to DRAKE.

DOUGHTY. May I speak to you privately? A moment.

DRAKE nods and DOUGHTY whispers in his ear, inaudibly.

1ST SAILOR. What's he saying?

2ND SAILOR. I can't hear.

DOUGHTY stops speaking to DRAKE, then comes and shakes each SAILOR by the hand. He pats FLETCHER's Bible and shakes FLETCHER's hand. Finally he shakes hands with DRAKE, then goes and kneels down at the block with his head upstage. DRAKE takes a long sword from one of the SAILORS and goes and stands behind DOUGHTY.

DOUGHTY. A word of warning. I have a remarkably short neck.

DRAKE raises the sword and brings it down. DOUGHTY drops his head upstage of the block. DRAKE turns to SAILORS

DRAKE. Look! This is the end of traitors.

The actors carry out DOUGHTY, while DRAKE follows.

SCENE TEN – SERMON

FLETCHER turns to audience.

FLETCHER. On August 11th, 1578, on Drake's orders, every man in the fleet made his confession and received the Sacrament. I then mounted the poop preparatory to preaching my sermon.

Actors enter and stand in a group facing FLETCHER

My text taken from St Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, Chapter Twelve, Verse One: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us..."

DRAKE enters swiftly and pushes FLETCHER aside

DRAKE. Thank you, Mr Fletcher. Today I must preach myself. My text is this: if you think you've had a hard time up to now, you'd be better off dead like Captain Doughty. There are some people who are born, live and die as if the world were a garden and they had nothing to do there but flower, fruit and wither with their roots in fixed places and a gardener to tend them. There are others for whom the world is a formless chaos which, like God on the first day of Creation, they must wrestle with and make shape out of, in order that they may justify themselves in the sight of God and, when their own shipwreck comes, leave behind some small pennant over the waters of oblivion. I have set my hand to this voyage and my legs turn to jelly when I think of what I have taken on. I cannot conceive how we shall do it. I tell you this frankly, I cannot imagine how any of us will ever come out of it alive.

Pause

So if anyone wants to go home now, he's free to do so. I'll put a ship at his disposal. There's my offer. But let him find a good wind, because if that ship comes in my way, I shall sink her. Who wants to go?

He hardly leaves a pause and there are no takers

My second text is this: it makes me bloody mad to see the stupid way you've been quarrelling among yourselves. From now on, every bloody gentleman is going to be a bloody sailor and handle ropes and every bloody sailor is going to handle ropes next to every bloody gentleman. And in fact I hereby abolish the notion of gentlemen, except as regards myself. I am the only gentleman here, because I hold the Queen's Commission. (*holding up document*) There it is! In virtue of this document I now dismiss the following from their commands: Captains Thomas Drake, Winter, Chester and Moone.

CHESTER. Why?

DRAKE. Why what, Chester?

CHESTER. Why should we lose our commands?

DRAKE. Why not? My third and last text is this: Captain Doughty was not the only one who deserved death. But he will be the only one that suffers it. From this moment we start this voyage afresh. In token of which I now re-name my flagship. We shall call her *Golden Hind*. And my new commanders will be the following: Captains Winter, Thomas Drake, Moone and Chester.

He turns to go, then thinks better of it

I will confirm to you the real purpose of this voyage. We shall enter Spanish ports and burn them. We shall board and capture Spanish ships. We shall carry their treasure home to Plymouth. Not for the money, no. Though God knows, we are poor enough to need it, and so is the Queen of England. Why, then? Because it is the will of God that the old give way to the new, that the rich be dispossessed by the poor and that what the Bishop of Rome gives, an Englishman shall take away. Because on this reeling globe God ordains constant change. What you want, you get. And if, like Captain Doughty, you want nothing in particular beyond a little amusement, you will lose even that you already have.

He goes out and the other actors follow him.

The End