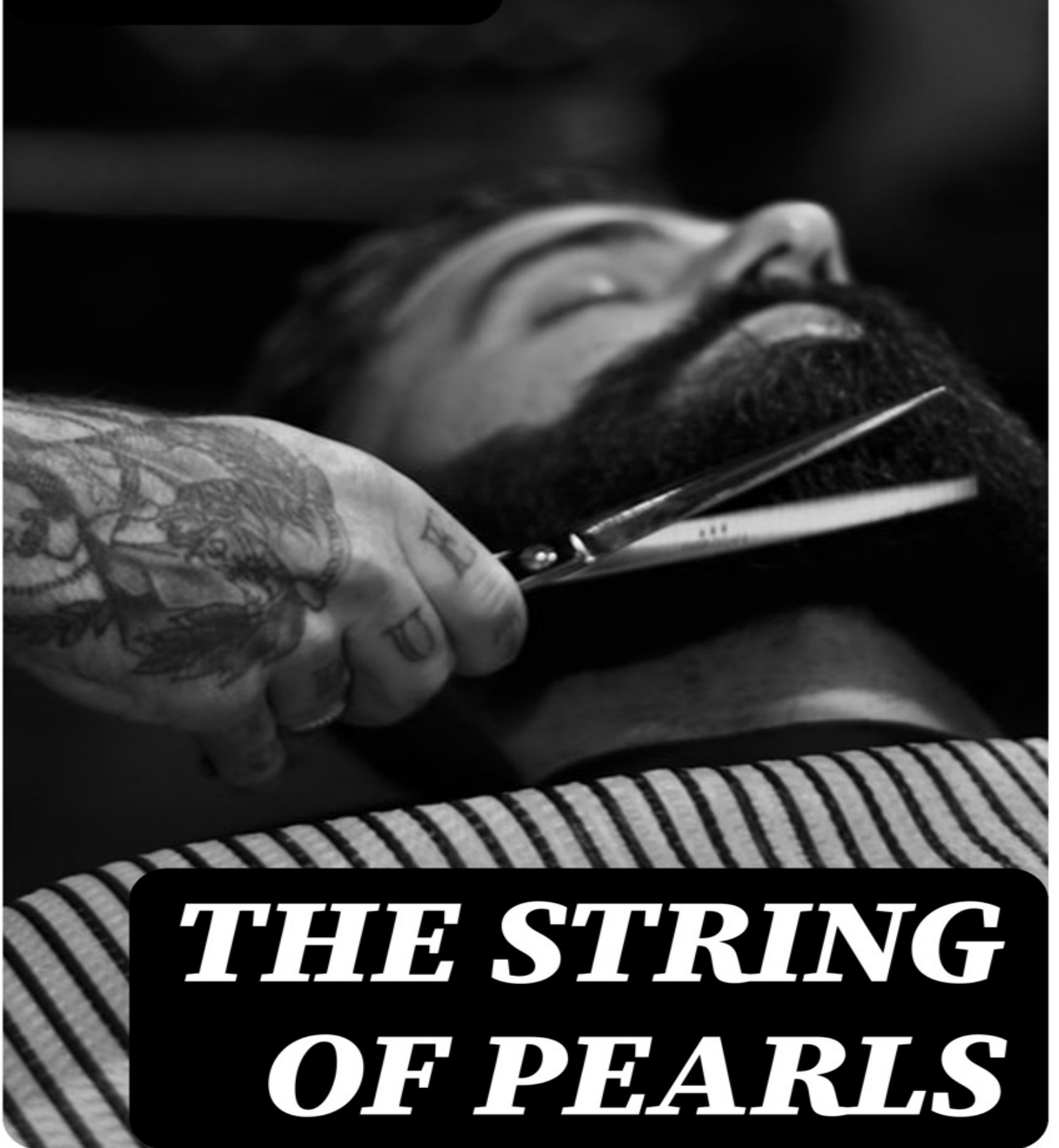


***JAMES
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RYMER***



***THE STRING
OF PEARLS***

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James Malcolm Rymer

The String of Pearls

Tale of Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street (Horror Classic)

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I. The Strange Customer at Sweeney Todd's

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Before Fleet-street had reached its present importance, and when George the Third was young, and the two figures who used to strike the chimes at old St Dunstan's church were in all their glory - being a great impediment to errand-boys on their progress, and a matter of gaping curiosity to country people - there stood close to the sacred edifice a small barber's shop, which was kept by a man of the name of Sweeney Todd.

How it was that he came by the name of Sweeney, as a Christian appellation, we are at a loss to conceive, but such was his name, as might be seen in extremely corpulent yellow letters over his shop window, by anyone who chose there to look for it.

Barbers by that time in Fleet-street had not become fashionable, and no more dreamt of calling themselves artists than of taking the Tower by storm; moreover they were not, as they are now, constantly slaughtering fine fat bears, and yet somehow people had hair on their heads just the same as they have at present, without the aid of that unctuous auxiliary. Moreover Sweeney Todd, in common with his brethren in those really primitive sorts of times, did not think it at all necessary to have any waxen effigies of humanity in his window. There was no languishing young lady looking over the left shoulder in order that a profusion of auburn tresses might repose upon her lily neck, and great conquerors and great statesmen were not then, as they are now, held up to public ridicule with dabs of rouge upon their cheeks, a quantity of gunpowder scattered in for a beard, and some bristles sticking on end for eyebrows.

No. Sweeney Todd was a barber of the old school, and he never thought of glorifying himself on account of any extraneous circumstance. If he had lived in Henry the Eighth's palace, it would have been all the same to him as Henry the Eighth's dog-kennel, and he would scarcely have believed human nature to be so green as to pay an extra sixpence to be shaven and shorn in any particular locality.

A long pole painted white, with a red stripe curling spirally round it, projected into the street from his doorway, and on one of the panes of glass in his window was presented the following couplet:

Easy shaving for a penny,
As good as you will find any.

We do not put these lines forth as a specimen of the poetry of the age; they may have been the production of some young Templer; but if they were a little wanting in poetic fire, that was amply made up by the clear and precise manner in which they set forth what they intended.

The barber himself was a long, low-jointed, ill-put-together sort of fellow, with an immense mouth, and such huge hands and feet, that he was, in his way, quite a natural curiosity; and, what was more wonderful, considering his trade, there never was seen such a head of hair as Sweeney Todd's. We know not what to compare it to: probably it came nearest to what one might suppose to be the appearance of a thickset hedge, in which a quantity of small wire had got entangled. In truth, it was a most terrific head of hair; and as Sweeney Todd kept all his combs in it - some said his scissors likewise - when he put his head out of the shop-door to see what sort of weather it was, he might have been mistaken for some Indian warrior with a very remarkable head-dress.

He had a short disagreeable kind of unmirthful laugh, which came in at all sorts of odd times when nobody else saw anything to laugh at at all, and which sometimes made people start again, especially when they were being shaved, and Sweeney Todd would stop short in that operation to indulge in one those cacchinatory effusions. It was evident that the remembrance of some very strange and out-of-the-way joke must occasionally flit across him, and then he gave his hyena-like laugh, but it was so short, so sudden, striking upon the ear for a moment, and then gone, that people have been known to look up to the ceiling, and on the floor, and all round them, to know from whence it had come, scarcely supposing it possible that it proceeded from mortal lips.

Mr Todd squinted a little to add to his charms; and so we think that by this time the reader may in his mind's eye see the individual whom we wish to present to him. Some thought him a careless enough harmless fellow, with not much sense in him, and at times they almost considered he was a little cracked; but there were others, again, who shook their heads when they spoke of him; and while they could say nothing to his prejudice, except that they certainly considered he was odd, yet, when they came to consider what a great crime and misdemeanour it really is in this world to be odd, we shall not be surprised at the ill-odour in which Sweeney Todd was held.

But for all that he did a most thriving business, and was considered by his neighbours to be a very well-to-do sort of man, and decidedly, in city phraseology, warm.

It was so handy for the young students in the Temple to pop over to Sweeney Todd's to get their chins new rasped: so that from morning to night he drove a good business, and was evidently a thriving man.

There was only one thing that seemed in any way to detract from the great prudence of Sweeney Todd's character, and that was that he rented a large house, of

which he occupied nothing but the shop and parlour, leaving the upper part entirely useless, and obstinately refusing to let it on any terms whatever.

Such was the state of things, AD 1785, as regarded Sweeney Todd.

The day is drawing to a close, and a small drizzling kind of rain is falling, so that there are not many passengers in the streets, and Sweeney Todd is sitting in his shop looking keenly in the face of a boy, who stands in an attitude of trembling subjection before him.

'You will remember,' said Sweeney Todd, and he gave his countenance a most horrible twist as he spoke, 'you will remember, Tobias Ragg, that you are now my apprentice, that you have of me had board, washing, and lodging, with the exception that you don't sleep here, that you take your meals at home, and that your mother, Mrs Ragg, does your washing, which she may very well do, being a laundress in the Temple, and making no end of money: as for lodging, you lodge here, you know, very comfortably in the shop all day. Now, are you not a happy dog?'

'Yes, sir,' said the boy timidly.

'You will acquire a first-rate profession, and quite as good as the law, which your mother tells me she would have put you to, only that a little weakness of the headpiece unqualified you. And now, Tobias, listen to me, and treasure up every word I say.'

'Yes, sir.'

'I'll cut your throat from ear to ear, if you repeat one word of what passes in this shop, or dare to make any supposition, or draw any conclusion from anything you may see, or hear, or fancy you see or hear. Now you understand me - I'll cut your throat from ear to ear -do you understand me?'

'Yes, sir, I won't say nothing. I wish, sir, as I maybe made into veal pies at Lovett's in Bell Yard if I as much as says a word.'

Sweeney Todd rose from his seat; and opening his huge mouth, he looked at the boy for a minute or two in silence, as if he fully intended swallowing him, but had not quite made up his mind where to begin.

'Very good,' he said at length, 'I am satisfied, I am quite satisfied; and mark me - the shop, and the shop only, is your place.'

'Yes, sir.'

'And if any customer gives you a penny, you can keep it, so that if you get enough of them you will become a rich man; only I will take care of them for you, and when I think you want them I will let you have them. Run out and see what's o'clock by St Dunstan's.'

There was a small crowd collected opposite the church, for the figures were about to strike three-quarters past six; and among that crowd was one man who gazed with as much curiosity as anybody at the exhibition.

'Now for it!' he said, 'they are going to begin; well, that is ingenious. Look at the fellow lifting up his club, and down it comes bang upon the old bell.'

The three-quarters were struck by the figures; and then the people who had loitered to see it done, many of whom had day by day looked at the same exhibition for years past, walked away, with the exception of the man who seemed so deeply interested.

He remained, and crouching at his feet was a noble-looking dog, who looked likewise up at the figures; and who, observing his master's attention to be closely fixed upon them, endeavoured to show as great an appearance of interest as he possibly could.

'What do you think of that, Hector?' said the man.

The dog gave a short low whine, and then his master proceeded, 'There is a barber's shop opposite, so before I go any farther, as I have got to see the ladies, although it's on a very melancholy errand, for I have got to tell them that poor Mark Ingestrie is no more, and Heaven knows what

poor Johanna will say - I think I should know her by his description of her, poor fellow. It grieves me to think now how he used to talk about her in the long night-watches, when all was still, and not a breath of air touched a curl upon his cheek. I could almost think I saw her sometimes, as he used to tell me of her soft beaming eyes, her little gentle pouting lips, and the dimples that played about her mouth. Well, well, it's of no use grieving; he is dead and gone, poor fellow, and the salt water washes over as brave a heart as ever beat. His sweetheart, Johanna, though, shall have the string of pearls for all that; and if she cannot be Mark Ingestrie's wife in this world, she shall be rich and happy, poor young thing, while she stays in it, that is to say as happy as she can be; and she must just look forward to meeting him aloft, where there are no squalls or tempests. And so I'll go and get shaved at once.'

He crossed the road towards Sweeney Todd's shop, and, stepping down the low doorway, he stood face to face with the odd-looking barber.

The dog gave a low growl and sniffed the air.

'Why, Hector,' said his master, 'what's the matter? Down, sir, down!'

'I have a mortal fear of dogs,' said Sweeney Todd. 'Would you mind him, sir, sitting outside the door and waiting for you, if it's all the same? Only look at him, he is going to fly at me!'

'Then you are the first person he ever touched without provocation,' said the man; 'but I suppose he don't like your looks, and I must confess I ain't much surprised at that. I have seen a few rum-looking guys in my time, but hang me if ever I saw such a figure-head as yours. What the devil noise was that?'

'It was only me,' said Sweeney Todd; 'I laughed.'

'Laughed! do you call that a laugh? I suppose you caught it of somebody who died of it. If that's your way of laughing, I beg you won't do it any more.'

'Stop the dog! stop the dog! I can't have dogs running into my back parlour.'

'Here, Hector, here!' cried his master; 'get out!'

Most unwillingly the dog left the shop, and crouched down close to the outer door, which the barber took care to close, muttering something about a draught of air coming in, and then, turning to the apprentice boy, who was screwed up in a corner, he said, 'Tobias, my lad, go to Leadenhall-street, and bring a small bag of the thick biscuits from Mr Peterson's; say they are for me. Now, sir, I suppose you want to be shaved, and it is well you have come here, for there ain't a shaving-shop, although I say it, in the city of London that ever thinks of polishing anybody off as I do.'

'I tell you what it is, master barber: if you come that laugh again, I will get up and go. I don't like it, and there is an end of it.'

'Very good,' said Sweeney Todd, as he mixed up a lather. 'Who are you? where did you come from? and where are you going?'

'That's cool, at all events. Damn it! what do you mean by putting the brush in my mouth? Now, don't laugh; and since you are so fond of asking questions, just answer me one.'

'Oh, yes, of course: what is it, sir?'

'Do you know a Mr Oakley, who lives somewhere in London, and is a spectacle-maker?'

'Yes, to be sure I do - John Oakley, the spectacle-maker, in Fore-street, and he has got a daughter named Johanna, that the young bloods call the Flower of Fore-street.'

'Ah, poor thing! do they? Now, confound you! what are you laughing at now? What do you mean by it?'

'Didn't you say, "Ah, poor thing?" Just turn your head a little on one side; that will do. You have been to sea, sir?'

'Yes, I have, and have only now lately come up the river from an Indian voyage.'

'Indeed! where can my strop be? I had it this minute; I must have laid it down somewhere. What an odd thing that I

can't see it! It's very extraordinary; what can have become of it? Oh, I recollect, I took it into the parlour. Sit still, sir. I shall not be gone a moment; sit still, sir, if you please. By the by, you can amuse yourself with the Courier, sir, for a moment.'

Sweeney Todd walked into the back parlour and closed the door. There was a strange sound suddenly compounded of a rushing noise and then a heavy blow, immediately after which Sweeney Todd emerged from his parlour, and, folding his arms, he looked upon the vacant chair where his customer had been seated, but the customer was gone, leaving not the slightest trace of his presence behind except his hat, and that Sweeney Todd immediately seized and thrust into a cupboard that was at one corner of the shop.

'What's that?' he said, 'what's that? I thought I heard a noise.'

The door was slowly opened, and Tobias made his appearance, saying, 'If you please, sir, I have forgot the money, and have run all the way back from St Paul's churchyard.'

In two strides Todd reached him, and clutching him by the arm he dragged him into the farthest corner of the shop, and then he stood opposite to him glaring in his face with such a demoniac expression that the boy was frightfully terrified.

'Speak!' cried Todd, 'speak! and speak the truth, or your last hour is come! How long were you peeping through the door before you came in?'

'Peeping, sir?'

'Yes, peeping; don't repeat my words, but answer me at once, you will find it better for you in the end.'

'I wasn't peeping, sir, at all.'

Sweeney Todd drew a long breath as he then said, in a strange, shrieking sort of manner, which he intended, no doubt, should be jocose, 'Well, well, very well; if you did peep, what then? it's no matter; I only wanted to know,

that's all; it was quite a joke, wasn't it - quite funny, though rather odd, eh? Why don't you laugh, you dog? Come, now, there is no harm done. Tell me what you thought about it at once, and we will be merry over it - very merry.

'I don't know what you mean, sir,' said the boy, who was quite as much alarmed at Mr Todd's mirth as he was at his anger. 'I don't know what you mean, sir; I only just come back because I hadn't any money to pay for the biscuits at Peterson's.'

'I mean nothing at all,' said Todd, suddenly turning upon his heel; 'what's that scratching at the door?'

Tobias opened the shop-door, and there stood the dog, who looked wistfully round the place, and then gave a howl that seriously alarmed the barber.

'It's the gentleman's dog, sir,' said Tobias, 'it's the gentleman's dog, sir, that was looking at old St Dunstan's clock, and came in here to be shaved. It's funny, ain't it, sir, that the dog didn't go away with his master?'

'Why don't you laugh if it's funny? Turn out the dog, Tobias; we'll have no dogs here; I hate the sight of them; turn him out - turn him out.'

'I would, sir, in a minute; but I'm afraid he wouldn't let me, somehow. Only look, sir - look; see what he is at now! did you ever see such a violent fellow, sir? why he will have down the cupboard door.'

'Stop him - stop him! the devil is in the animal! stop him I say!'

The dog was certainly getting the door open, when Sweeney Todd rushed forward to stop him; but that he was soon admonished of the danger of doing, for the dog gave him a grip of the leg, which made him give such a howl, that he precipitately retreated, and left the animal to do its pleasure. This consisted in forcing open the cupboard door, and seizing upon the hat which Sweeney Todd had thrust therein, and dashing out of the shop with it in triumph.

'The devil's in the beast,' muttered Todd, 'he's off. Tobias, you said you saw the man who owned that fiend of a cur looking at St Dunstan's church.'

'Yes, sir, I did see him there. If you recollect, you sent me to see the time, and the figures were just going to strike three-quarters past six; and before I came away, I heard him say that Mark Ingestrie was dead, and Johanna should have the string of pearls. Then I came in, and then, if you recollect, sir, he came in, and the odd thing, you know, to me, sir, is that he didn't take his dog with him, because, you know, sir?'

'Because what?' shouted Todd.

'Because people generally do take their dogs with them, you know, sir; and may I be made into one of Lovett's pies, if I don't?'

'Hush! someone comes; it's old Mr Grant, from the Temple. How do you do, Mr Grant? glad to see you looking so well, sir. It does one's heart good to see a gentleman of your years looking so fresh and hearty. Sit down, sir; a little this way, if you please. Shaved, I suppose?'

'Yes, Todd, yes. Any news?'

'No, sir, nothing stirring. Everything very quiet, sir, except the high wind. They say it blew the king's hat off yesterday, sir, and he borrowed Lord North's. Trade is dull, too, sir. I suppose people won't come out to be cleaned and dressed in a misling rain. We haven't had anybody in the shop for an hour and a half.'

'Lor! sir,' said Tobias, 'you forgot the seafaring gentleman with the dog, you know, sir.'

'Ah! so I do,' said Todd. 'He went away, and I saw him get into some disturbance, I think, just at the corner of the market.'

'I wonder I didn't meet him, sir,' said Tobias, 'for I came that way; and then it's so very odd leaving his dog behind him.'

'Yes very,' said Todd. 'Will you excuse me a moment, Mr Grant? Tobias, my lad, I just want you to lend me a hand in the parlour.'

Tobias followed Todd very unsuspectingly into the parlour; but when they got there and the door was closed, the barber sprang upon him like an enraged tiger, and, grappling him by the throat, he gave his head such a succession of knocks against the wainscot, that Mr Grant must have thought that some carpenter was at work. Then he tore a handful of his hair out, after which he twisted him round, and dealt him such a kick, that he was flung sprawling into a corner of the room, and then, without a word, the barber walked out again to his customer, and he bolted his parlour door on the outside, leaving Tobias to digest the usage he had received at his leisure, and in the best way he could.

When he came back to Mr Grant, he apologised for keeping him waiting by saying -

'It became necessary, sir, to teach my new apprentice a little bit of his business. I have left him studying it now. There is nothing like teaching young folks at once.'

'Ah!' said Mr Grant, with a sigh, 'I know what it is to let young folks grow wild; for although I have neither chick nor child of my own, I had a sister's son to look to - a handsome, wild, harum-scarum sort of fellow, as like me as one pea is like another. I tried to make a lawyer of him, but it wouldn't do, and it's now more than two years ago he left me altogether; and yet there were some good traits about Mark.'

'Mark, sir! did you say Mark?'

'Yes, that was his name, Mark Ingestrie. God knows what's become of him.'

'Oh!' said Sweeney Todd; and he went on lathering the chin of Mr Grant.

II. The Spectacle Maker's Daughter

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'Johanna, Johanna, my dear, do you know what time it is? Johanna, I say, my dear, are you going to get up? Here's your mother has trotted out to parson Lupin's and you know I have to go to Alderman Judd's house in Cripplegate the first thing, and I haven't had a morsel of breakfast yet. Johanna, my dear, do you hear me?'

These observations were made by Mr Oakley, the spectacle-maker, at the door of his daughter Johanna's chamber, on the morning after the events we have just recorded at Sweeney Todd's; and presently a soft sweet voice answered him, saying,-

'I am coming, father, I am coming: in a moment, father, I shall be down.'

'Don't hurry yourself, my darling, I can wait.'

The little old spectacle-maker descended the staircase again and sat down in the parlour at the back of the shop where, in a few moments, he was joined by Johanna, his only and his much-loved child.

She was indeed a creature of the rarest grace and beauty. Her age was eighteen, but she looked rather younger, and upon her face she had that sweetness and intelligence of expression which almost bids defiance to the march of time. Her hair was of a glossy blackness, and what was rare in conjunction with such a feature, her eyes were of a deep and heavenly blue. There was nothing of the commanding or of the severe style of beauty about her, but the expression of her face was all grace and sweetness. It was one of those countenances which one could look at for a long summer's day, as upon the pages of some deeply interesting volume, which furnished the most abundant food for pleasant and delightful reflection.

There was a touch of sadness about her voice, which, perhaps, only tended to make it the more musical, although mournfully so, and which seemed to indicate that at the bottom of her heart there lay some grief which had not yet been spoken - some cherished aspiration of her pure soul, which looked hopeless as regards completion - some remembrance of a former joy, which had been turned to bitterness and grief: it was the cloud in the sunny sky - the shadow through which there still gleamed bright and beautiful sunshine, but which still proclaimed its presence.

'I have kept you waiting, father,' she said, as she flung her arms about the old man's neck. 'I have kept you waiting.'

'Never mind, my dear, never mind. Your mother is so taken up with Mr Lupin, that you know, this being Wednesday morning, she is off to his prayer meeting, and so I have had no breakfast; and really I think I must discharge Sam.'

'Indeed, father! what has he done?'

'Nothing at all, and that's the very reason. I had to take down the shutters myself this morning, and what do you think for? He had the coolness to tell me that he couldn't take down the shutter this morning, or sweep out the shop, because his aunt had the toothache.'

'A poor excuse, father,' said Johanna, as she bustled about and got the breakfast ready; 'a very poor excuse!'

'Poor indeed! but his month is up today, and I must get rid of him. But I suppose I shall have no end of bother with your mother, because his aunt belongs to Mr Lupin's congregation; but as sure as this is the 20th day of August -'

'It is the 20th day of August,' said Johanna, as she sank into a chair and burst into tears. 'It is, it is! I thought I could have controlled this, but I cannot, father, I cannot. It was that which made me late. I knew mother was out; I knew that I ought to be down and attending upon you, and I was

praying to Heaven for strength to do so because this was the 20th of August.'

Johanna spoke these words incoherently and amidst sobs, and when she had finished them she leant her sweet face upon her small hands and wept like a child.

The astonishment, not unmingled with positive dismay, of the old spectacle-maker, was vividly depicted on his countenance, and for some minutes he sat perfectly aghast, with his hands resting on his knees, and looking in the face of his beautiful child - that is to say, as much as he could see of it between those little taper fingers that were spread upon it - as if he were newly awakened from some dream.

'Good God, Johanna!' he said at length, 'what is this? my dear child, what has happened? Tell me, my dear, unless you wish to kill me with grief.'

'You shall know, father,' she said. 'I did not think to say a word about it, but considered I had strength enough of mind to keep my sorrows in my own breast, but the effort has been too much for me, and I have been compelled to yield. If you had not looked so kindly on me - if I did not know that you loved me as you do, I should easily have kept my secret, but knowing that much, I cannot.'

'My darling,' said the old man, 'you are right, there; I do love you. What would the world be to me now without you? There was a time, twenty years ago, when your mother made up much of my happiness, but of late, what with Mr Lupin, and psalm-singing, and tea-drinking, I see very little of her, and what little I do see is not very satisfactory. Tell me, my darling, what it is that vexes you, and I'll soon put it to rights. I don't belong to the City train-bands for nothing.'

'Father, I know that your affection would do all for me that it is possible to do, but you cannot recall the dead to life; and if this day passes over and I see him not, or hear not from him, I know that, instead of finding a home for me whom he loved, he has in the effort to do so found a grave for himself. He said he would, he said he would.'

Here she wrung her hands, and wept again, and with such a bitterness of anguish that the old spectacle-maker was at his wit's end, and knew not what on earth to do or say.

'My dear, my dear!' he cried, 'who is he? I hope you don't mean -

'Hush, father, hush! I know the name that is hovering on your lips, but something seems even now to whisper to me he is no more, and, being so, speak nothing of him, father, but that which is good.'

'You mean Mark Ingestrie.'

'I do, and if he had a thousand faults, he at least loved me. He loved me truly and most sincerely.'

'My dear,' said the old spectacle-maker, 'you know that I wouldn't for all the world say anything to vex you, nor will I; but tell me what it is that makes this day more than any other so gloomy to you.'

'I will, father; you shall hear. It was on this day two years ago that we last met; it was in the Temple-gardens, and he had just had a stormy interview with his uncle, Mr Grant, and you will understand, father, that Mark Ingestrie was not to blame, because -'

'Well, well, my dear, you needn't say anything more upon that point. Girls very seldom admit their lovers are to blame, but there are two ways, you know, Johanna, of telling a story.'

'Yes; but, father, why should Mr Grant seek to force him to the study of a profession he disliked?'

'My dear, one would have thought that if Mark Ingestrie really loved you, and found that he might make you his wife, and acquire an honourable subsistence both for you and himself - it seems a very wonderful thing to me that he did not do so. You see, my dear, he should have liked you well enough to do something else that he did not like.'

'Yes, but, father, you know it is hard, when disagreements once arise, for a young ardent spirit to give

in entirely; and so from one word, poor Mark, in his disputes with his uncle, got to another, when perhaps one touch of kindness or conciliation from Mr Grant would have made him quite pliant in his hands.'

'Yes, that's the way,' said Mr Oakley; 'there is no end of excuses: but go on, my dear, go on, and tell me exactly how this affair now stands.'

'I will, father. It was this day two years ago then that we met, and he told me that he and his uncle had at last quarrelled irreconcilably, and that nothing could possibly now patch up the difference between them. We had a long talk.'

'Ah! no doubt of that.'

'And at length he told me that he must go and seek his fortune - that fortune which he hoped to share with me. He said that he had an opportunity of undertaking a voyage to India, and that if he were successful he should have sufficient to return with and commence some pursuit in London, more congenial to his thoughts and habits than the law.'

'Ah, well! what next?'

'He told me that he loved me.'

'And you believed him?'

'Father, you would have believed him had you heard him speak. His tones were those of such deep sincerity that no actor who ever charmed an audience with an unreal existence could have reached them. There are times and seasons when we know that we are listening to the majestic voice of truth, and there are tones which sink at once into the heart, carrying with them a conviction of their sincerity which neither time nor circumstance can alter; and such were the tones in which Mark Ingestrie spoke to me.'

'And so you suppose, Johanna, that it is easy for a young man who has not patience or energy enough to be respectable at home, to go abroad and make his fortune. Is

idleness so much in request in other countries, that it receives such a rich reward, my dear?'

'You judge him harshly, father; you do not know him.'

'Heaven forbid that I should judge anyone harshly! and I will freely admit that you may know more of his real character than I can, who of course have only seen its surface; but go on, my dear, and tell me all.'

'We made an agreement, father, that on that day two years he was to come to me or send me some news of his whereabouts; if I heard nothing of him I was to conclude he was no more, and I cannot help so concluding now.'

'But the day has not yet passed.'

'I know it has not, and yet I rest upon but a slender hope, father. Do you believe that dreams ever really shadow forthcoming events?'

'I cannot say, my child; I am not disposed to yield credence to any supposed fact because I have dreamt it, but I confess to having heard some strange instances where these visions of the night have come strictly true.'

'Heaven knows but this may be one of them! I had a dream last night. I thought that I was sitting upon the sea-shore, and that all before me was nothing but a fathomless waste of waters. I heard the roar and the dash of the waves distinctly, and each moment the wind grew more furious and fierce, and I saw in the distance a ship - it was battling with the waves, which at one moment lifted it mountains high, and at another plunged it far down into such an abyss, that not a vestige of it could be seen but the topmost spars of the tall masts. And still the storm increased each moment in its fury, and ever and anon there came a strange sullen sound across the waters, and I saw a flash of fire, and knew that those in the ill-fated vessel were thus endeavouring to attract attention and some friendly aid. Father, from the first to the last I knew that Mark Ingestrie was there - my heart told me so: I was certain he was there, and I was helpless - utterly helpless, utterly and entirely unable to lend the

slightest aid. I could only gaze upon what was going forward as a silent and terrified spectator of the scene. And at last I heard a cry come over the deep - a strange, loud, wailing cry - which proclaimed to me the fate of the vessel. I saw its masts shiver for a moment in the blackened air, and then all was still for a few seconds, until there arose a strange, wild shriek, that I knew was the despairing cry of those who sank, never to rise again, in that vessel. Oh! that was a frightful sound - it was a sound to linger on the ears, and haunt the memory of sleep - it was a sound never to be forgotten when once heard, but such as might again and again be remembered with horror and affright.'

'And all this was in your dream?'

'It was, father, it was.'

'And you were helpless?'

'I was - utterly and entirely helpless.'

'It was very sad.'

'It was, as you shall hear. The ship went down, and that cry that I had heard was the last despairing one given by those who clung to the wreck with scarce a hope, and yet because it was their only refuge, for where else had they to look for the smallest ray of consolation? where else, save in the surging waters, were they to hunt for safety? Nowhere! all was lost! all was despair! I tried to scream - I tried to cry aloud to Heaven to have mercy upon those brave and gallant souls who had trusted their dearest possession - life itself - to the mercy of the deep; and while I so tried to render so inefficient succour, I saw a small speck in the sea, and my straining eyes perceived that it was a man floating and clinging to a piece of the wreck, and I knew it was Mark Ingestrie.'

'But, my dear, surely you are not annoyed at a dream?'

'It saddened me; I stretched out my arms to save him - I heard him pronounce my name, and call upon me for help.

'Twas all in vain; he baffled with the waves as long as

human nature could baffle with them. He could do no more, and I saw him disappear before my anxious eyes.'

'Don't say you saw him, my dear, say you fancy you saw him.'

'It was such a fancy as I shall not lose the remembrance of for many a day.'

'Well, well, after all, my dear, it's only a dream; and it seems to me, without at all adverting to anything that should give you pain as regards Mark Ingestrie, that you made a very foolish bargain; for only consider how many difficulties might arise in the way of his keeping faith with you. You know I have your happiness so much at heart that, if Mark had been a worthy man and an industrious one, I should not have opposed myself to your union; but, believe me, my dear Johanna, that a young man with great facilities for spending money, and none whatever for earning any, is just about the worst husband you could choose, and such a man was Mark Ingestrie. But come, we will say nothing of this to your mother; let the secret, if we may call it such, rest with me; and if you can inform me in what capacity and in what vessel he left England, I will not carry my prejudice so far against him as to hesitate about making what enquiry I can concerning his fate.'

'I know nothing more, father; we parted, and never met again.'

'Well, well! dry your eyes, Johanna, and, as I go to Alderman Judd's, I'll think over the matter, which, after all, may not be so bad as you think. The lad is a good-enough-looking lad, and has, I believe, a good ability, if he would put it to some useful purpose; but if he goes scampering about the world in an unsettled manner, you are well rid of him, and as for his being dead, you must not conclude that by any means, for somehow or another, like a bad penny, these fellows always come back.'

There was more consolation in the kindly tone of the spectacle-maker than in the words he used; but, upon the

whole, Johanna was well enough pleased that she had communicated the secret to her father, for now, at all events, she had someone to whom she could mention the name of Mark Ingestrie, without the necessity of concealing the sentiment with which she did so; and when her father had gone, she felt that, by the mere relation of it to him, some of the terrors of her dream had vanished.

She sat for some time in a pleasing reverie, till she was interrupted by Sam, the shop-boy, who came into the parlour and said, 'Please, Miss Johanna, suppose I was to go down to the docks and try and find out for you Mr Mark Ingestrie. I say, suppose I was to do that. I heard it all, and if I do find him I'll soon settle him.'

'What do you mean?'

'I means that I won't stand it; didn't I tell you, more than three weeks ago, as you was the object of my infections? Didn't I tell you that when aunt died I should come in for the soap and candle business, and make you my missus?'

The only reply which Johanna gave to this was to rise and leave the room, for her heart was too full of grief and sad speculation to enable her to do now as she had often been in the habit of doing -viz., laugh at Sam's protestations of affection, so he was left to chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancy by himself.

'A thousand damns!' said he, when he entered the shop: 'I always suspected there was some other fellow, and now I know it I am ready to gnaw my head off that ever I consented to come here. Confound him! I hope he is at the bottom of the sea, and eat up by this time. Oh! I should like to smash everybody. If I had my way now I'd just walk into society at large, as they calls it, and let it know what one, two, three, slap in the eye, is - and down it would go.'

Mr Sam, in his rage, did upset a case of spectacles, which went down with a tremendous crash, and which, however good an imitation of the manner in which society at large

was to be knocked down, was not likely to be at all pleasing to Mr Oakley.

'I have done it now,' he said; 'but never mind; I'll try the old dodge whenever I break anything; that is, I'll place it in old Oakley's way, and swear he did it. I never knew such an old goose; you may persuade him into anything; the idea, now, of his pulling down all the shutters this morning because I told him my aunt had the toothache; that was a go, to be sure. But I'll be revenged of that fellow who has took away, I consider, Johanna from me; I'll let him know what a blighted heart is capable of. He won't live long enough to want a pair of spectacles, I'll be bound, or else my name ain't Sam Bolt.'

III. The Dog and the Heat

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The earliest dawn of morning was glistening upon the masts, the cordage, and the sails of a fleet of vessels lying below Sheerness.

The crews were rousing themselves from their night's repose, and to make their appearance on the decks of the vessels, from which the night-watch had just been relieved.

A man-of-war, which had been the convoy of the fleet of merchant-men through the channel, fired a gun as the first glimpse of the morning sun fell upon her tapering masts. Then from a battery in the neighbourhood came another booming report, and that was answered by another farther off, and then another, until the whole chain of batteries that girded the coast, for it was a time of war, had proclaimed the dawn of another day.

The effect was very fine, in the stillness of the early morn, of these successions of reports; and as they died away in the distance like mimic thunder, some order was given on board the man-of-war, and, in a moment, the masts and cordage seemed perfectly alive with human beings clinging to them in various directions. Then, as if by magic, or as if the ship had been a living thing itself, and had possessed wings, which, at the mere instigation of a wish, could be spread far and wide, there fluttered out such sheets of canvas as was wonderful to see; and, as they caught the morning light, and the ship moved from the slight breeze that sprang up from the shore, she looked, indeed, as if she walk'd the waters like a thing of life. The various crews of the merchantmen stood upon the decks of their respective vessels, gazing after the ship-of-war, as she proceeded upon another mission similar to the one she had just performed in protecting the commerce of the country.

As she passed one vessel, which had been, in point of fact, actually rescued from the enemy, the crew, who had been saved from a foreign prison, cheered lustily.

There wanted but such an impulse as this, and then every merchant-vessel that the man-of-war passed took up the gladsome shout, and the crew of the huge vessel were not slow in their answer, for three deafening cheers - such as had frequently struck terror into the hearts of England's enemies - awakened many an echo from the shore.

It was a proud and a delightful sight - such a sight as none but an Englishman can thoroughly enjoy - to see that vessel so proudly stemming the waste of waters. We say none but an Englishman can enjoy it, because no other nation has ever attempted to achieve a great maritime existence without being most signally defeated, and leaving us still, as we shall ever be, masters of the seas.

These proceedings were amply sufficient to arouse the crews of all the vessels, and over the taffrail of one in particular, a large-sized merchantman, which had been trading in the Indian seas, two men were leaning. One of them was the captain of the vessel, and the other a passenger, who intended leaving that morning. They were engaged in earnest conversation, and the captain, as he shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked along the surface of the river, said, in reply to some observation from his companion, 'I'll order my boat the moment Lieutenant Thornhill comes on board; I call him Lieutenant, although I have no right to do so, because he has held that rank in the king's service, but when quite a young man was cashiered for fighting a duel with his superior officer.'

'The service has lost a good officer,' said the other.

'It has indeed; a braver man never stepped, nor a better officer; but you see they have certain rules in the service and everything is sacrificed to maintain them. I can't think what keeps him; he went last night and said he would pull up to the Temple stairs, because he wanted to call upon

somebody by the waterside, and after that he was going to the city to transact some business of his own, and that would have brought him nearer there, you see; and there are plenty of things coming down the river.'

'He's coming,' cried the other; 'don't be impatient; you will see him in a few minutes.'

'What makes you think that?'

'Because I see his dog - there, don't you see, swimming in the water, and coming direct towards the ship?'

'I cannot imagine - I can see the dog, certainly; but I can't see Thornhill, nor is there any boat at hand. I know not what to make of it. Do you know my mind misgives me that something has happened amiss? The dog seems exhausted. Lend a hand there to Mr. Thornhill's dog, some of you. Why, it's a hat he has in his mouth.'

The dog made towards the vessel; but without the assistance of the seamen - with the whole of whom he was an immense favourite - he certainly could not have boarded the vessel; and when he reached the deck, he sank down upon it in a state of complete exhaustion, with the hat still in his grasp.

As the animal lay, panting, upon the deck, the sailors looked at each other in amazement, and there was but one opinion among them all now, and that was that something very serious had unquestionably happened to Mr Thornhill.

'I dread,' said the captain, 'an explanation of this occurrence.'

'What on earth can it mean? That's Thornhill's hat, and here is Hector. Give the dog some drink and meat directly - he seems thoroughly exhausted.'

The dog ate sparingly of some food that was put before him; and then, seizing the hat again in his mouth, he stood by the side of the ship and howled piteously; then he put down the hat for a moment, and, walking up to the captain, he pulled him by the skirt of the coat.

'You understand him,' said the captain to the passenger; 'something has happened to Thornhill, I'll be bound; and you see the object of the dog is to get me to follow him to see what it's about.'

'Think you so? It is a warning, if it be such at all, that I should not be inclined to neglect; and if you will follow the dog, I will accompany you; there may be more in it than we think of, and we ought not to allow Mr Thornhill to be in want of any assistance that we can render him, when we consider what great assistance he has been to us. Look how anxious the poor beast is.'

The captain ordered a boat to be launched at once, and manned by four stout rowers. He then sprang into it, followed by the passenger, who was a Colonel Jeffery, of the Indian army, and the dog immediately followed them, testifying by his manner great pleasure at the expedition they were undertaking, and carrying the hat with him, which he evidently showed an immense disinclination to part with.

The captain ordered the boat to proceed up the river towards the Temple stairs, where Hector's master had expressed his intention of proceeding, and, when the faithful animal saw the direction in which they were going, he lay down in the bottom of the boat perfectly satisfied, and gave himself up to that repose, of which he was evidently so much in need.

It cannot be said that Colonel Jeffery suspected that anything of a very serious nature had happened; indeed, their principal anticipation, when they came to talk it over, consisted in the probability that Thornhill had, with an impetuosity of character they knew very well he possessed, interfered to redress what he considered some street grievance, and had got himself into the custody of the civil power in consequence.

'Of course,' said the captain, 'Master Hector would view that as a very serious affair, and finding himself denied access to his master, see he has come off to us, which was