

Episode 4

Broken Time

[As before, singing formatted to the left, dialogue to the centre]

VO

Long Cat Media presents *The Ballad of Anne & Mary*. Episode 4: Broken Time.

SCENE 1. INT. MIST'S KITCHEN - DAY

A jolly scene: Nathaniel Mist is teaching Bob how to make a pumpkin pie. (That's not a misspelling.)

He HUMS as he works.

The pumpkin SQUELCHES in a very visceral way.

NATHANIEL

Now pay attention, young man. This is known as 'pumpkin pie,' all the way from the Americas. Take this pumpkin, like so. Thrust the knife into the centre. Now pare it, cut it into thin strips, and lay it into the pie. Your turn.

BOB

Thrust, pare - oh! I dropped me knife.

NATHANIEL

Pick it up then.

BOB

Yes sir.

Nathaniel GROANS.

A rush of SOUND, internal in feel, like blood flow through veins.

BOB (cont'd)

You alright sir?

A BIRD SINGS.

NATHANIEL
 (woozy) Just a headache. Did I drink
 too much last night?

BOB
 Sir, look!

The BIRD SINGS.

BOB (cont'd)
 Shall I sing along?

NATHANIEL
 (in pain) No. Please don't, my head
 is killing me...

Bob starts to SING along to the bird's tune. MUSIC starts
 halfway through.

BOB
 This little birdy just told of a man
 Who's said something he's gonna regret.
 This naughty man has insulted the king
 And now all the king's men are upset
 Cos this man's got a mouth that's as big as a whale
 And he's on some crusade that is destined to fail
 And he'll swallow us all as we flounder and flail...

NATHANIEL (cont'd)
 Not sure I like this song, Bob.

BOB
 I can do the burp song?

NATHANIEL
 (groans) No thank you.
 Where's this bloody music coming
 from?

WAVES can be heard. DRINKING sounds. Suddenly, we're on The
 Revenge.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)
 What is this? Where am I?

BOB
 The Revenge, sir.

DOBBIN
 (distant) they're coming out of the
 mist!

BOB
Mist is dangerous for sailors. Stops
you from seeing what's there.

SUNG -

BOB

(sung) Captain Barnet is stood on his government ship And
his sailors are leading the charge...

BARNET
(distant) Anne and Mary...

NATHANIEL
Oh no.

BOB

(sung) And just out of range of our pistols he stays
As his men swing from their ship to ours.
We've been caught unawares in the warm evening sun.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)
Please Bob, no more.

BOB

(sung) We're in no state to fight, being sodden with rum
We live in the moment, we drink like there ain't no
tomorrow, cos maybe there ain't...
... And Barnet... took our 'morrow's... away.

[CANNON BLAST]

DOBBIN
(shouts) They're on us Jack!
(urgent whisper) Bob, go and hide.

BOB
No!

DOBBIN
Bob, listen to me: come out when the
fighting's done. Tell them you're our
prisoner.

BOB
No!

DOBBIN
They won't hang you if you're not one
of us.

BOB
(upset) I AM one of you! I'll prove
it!

Bob gives a BATTLE CRY and runs off, towards the fighting.

DOBBIN

Bob! No! Come back! Bob!

CRACK OF PISTOL SHOT. The FLESHY SOUND of a knee being blown apart. Bob CRIES out, hits the deck.

NATHANIEL

No! Bob!

Nathaniel RUNS to Bob.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

Your leg's hanging off.
Help him, somebody!

Bob keeps singing, his BREATH RAGGED now.

BOB

When Calico's captured, the others surrender. That is, all but Bonny and Read.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

Hush, boy, save your strength.

BOB

They scream at the pirates who've laid down their swords 'Only cowards and traitors concede'

ANNE

Fight like men or you'll hang like dogs!

BOB

Barnet's men stand in horror just watching them fight "It's unnatural... they're demons" they quiver in fright

NATHANIEL

I can't stop the bleeding...

BOB

Back-to-back they keep fighting, though all hope is gone Outnumbered by fifteen to one Nonetheless... Read and Bonny... fight on.

BARNET

Stop hesitating, get them!

[Mary ROARS and GRUNTS as she fights. The less-experienced Anne's battle cries have a more DESPERATE edge.

Bob's voice becomes weaker.]

BOB

Then... finally... they're bested... restrained...
They cling to each other... with what's left of their
strength...

READ

Anne!

ANNE

Read!

BOB

But the last thing they do... as they're wrenched from each
other
And thrown on the bloody deck is...
Lock lips in one final kiss.

(Bob dies.)

SCENE 2. INT. BARNET'S GAFF

Mist GASPS as he awakes on the floor. The last of the dream
FADES.

MIST GROANS.

NATHANIEL

(sotto) Ugh, my head.

Voices from the NEXT ROOM...

SCRATBY

You two are writing a book about 'em,
ent ya? Well. They finished telling
their stories ages ago.

NATHANIEL

Scratby?

SCRATBY

There's nothing left to get out of
them.

BARNET
You're wrong there.

NATHANIEL
(sotto) Barnet??

He GETS UP, GOES TO THE DOOR.

BARNET
But do carry on.

NATHANIEL
What the devil?

SCRATBY
Your man Mist plays cards with 'em
now. Or reads 'em his newspaper.
Having a lovely time, they are.

Head THUMPING, Mist staggers towards the door.

The voices of Barnet and the Turn-key get louder the closer he gets.

The CREAK of the door as he nudges it open a crack. Barnet and Scratby's voices become clearer, louder.

BARNET
(cold) And why are you telling me
this?

SCRATBY
(confused) I thought you should know
he ain't doing any writing, seeing as
you're the one paying the entrance
fee.

BARNET
So good of you to care about my
finances, Mr..?

SCRATBY
Scratby.

BARNET
But I'm very happy the three of them
are such good friends. Friends tell
each other secrets, you know.
(gritted teeth) At some point.

SCRATBY
(confused) Errr. Right. Well, I think
I deserve a reward for--

BARNET
 (dismissive) Thank you for coming, Mr
 Scrote-by. You can go now.

SCRATBY
 It's Scratby. I think a reward
 would...

BARNET
 ...not be appropriate, given you
 clubbed my employee over the head.

Barnet OPENS the front door for him. CREAK. Muted SOUNDS of
 the street.

BARNET (cont'd)
 Off you go.

SCRATBY
 But... I can tell you other--

BARNET
 (interrupts) Go away now.

SCRATBY
 (improvising) But... you should hear
 what they say to each other!

BARNET
 I already know. Mist tells me. Out!

SCRATBY
 (sly) Sure about that? Sure you can
 trust him?

Beat. Barnet CLOSES the door.

BARNET
 If you have something to say, say it.

SCRATBY
 Erm. (coughs) Eh? Ahem.

BARNET
 (gritted teeth) You will get a reward
 if it's worth it.

SCRATBY
 Oh it is. (sotto) Did you know...
 that Mist delivers letters between
 'em. *Love letters.*

BARNET

Yes, I know that.

SCRATBY

Oh. Erm. What about this then: Anne told Mist that she hates her father so much, she won't ask his help to get out of New--

BARNET

I don't care.

SCRATBY

How about this then...

BARNET

(sighs) Go on.

SCRATBY

Read... has beaten Mist at gin rummy every single time they've played--

BARNET

Get out.

SCRATBY

(fast) Wait! You obviously don't trust him! Just tell me what you want to know!

BARNET

And you'll make something up? I warn you, Scratby, I can tell if a man is lying to me.

SCRATBY

Try me.

BARNET

Alright. Alright. Tell me everything they've said about... treasure.

SCRATBY / NATHANIEL

Treasure?

SCRATBY

Erm. Lemme think. (beat) They ain't said nothing about treasure.

BARNET

Of course they have.

SCRATBY

Ohhhh yeah; that first week, Mist asked Anne where they hid the loot.

BARNET

And?

SCRATBY

She changed the subject. *And then...*

BARNET

Yes?

SCRATBY

...he never mentioned it again.

Beat, during which Barnet breathes heavily, struggling to control the rage.

BARNET

What about Mary?

SCRATBY

Read's never said nuthin' about treasure. Even when she was delirious. And Mist never asked.

BARNET

What do you mean, Mist never asked??
He never ASKED? It's been WEEKS.
(rage) GOD'S TEETH! WHAT'S HE PLAYING AT.

NATHANIEL

(sotto) Oh dear...

SCRATBY

Is that... valuable information?

BARNET

(rage) Go get Mist.

SCRATBY

(reluctant) Erm...

BARNET

NOW.

SCRATBY

Yessir!

On the other side of the door...

NATHANIEL
(sotto) Shit.

The DOOR is thrown open.

SCRATBY
'ere! He's awake!

NATHANIEL
Barnet! What's going on? This fiend
assaulted me!

Barnet STRIDES in.

BARNET
Scratby - seize him.

SCRATBY
On me own?

NATHANIEL
Don't come any closer!

BARNET
Yes, on your own. He's injured. Look,
he's swaying. Just tackle him!

NATHANIEL
Don't you dare--

The turn-key TACKLES Nathaniel, and they CRASH to the floor.
They land with an 'OOF.'

NATHANIEL (cont'd)
Get off!

Sounds of STRUGGLE.

BARNET
Here. My belt. Tie his hands to the
table.

NATHANIEL
Stop!

BARNET
While you're getting comfortable,
Mist, little question for you -
(shouts) WHY HAVEN'T YOU ASKED THEM
WHERE THE BLOODY TREASURE IS?

NATHANIEL

I did! Once! But I'm writing a book,
not treasure-hunti-- oof!

Barnet KICKS Nathaniel in the side. Nathaniel gives a SHARP
MOAN.

BARNET

(shouts) If you hadn't worked it out
by now, I don't give two shits about
the book!

Another KICK.

SCRATBY

I can do the kicking, sir. I've had
more practice.

BARNET

I doubt that. But go on.

The turn key KICKS Nathaniel. He GASPS.

BARNET (cont'd)

How long were you going to drag this
on for? Another couple of weeks? A
month of mooning over your pirate
wenches? Then what? Tell me you'd
tried your best, but they just
wouldn't spill the beans? Stop
kicking him now, Scratby.

NATHANIEL

(wheezes) For God's sake, Barnet. We
don't even know for sure if there IS
treasure.

BARNET

Of course there is! Read, Bonny,
Rackham; they hid their share in the
same location, so that if one of them
should fall, the others would get it.
Three lots of treasure, in one place.

NATHANIEL

And you'd know about that because you
sailed on The Revenge! Yes, they told
me. You're a pirate.

BARNET

I'm no pirate. I was never one of
them.

(MORE)

BARNET (cont'd)

And what does it matter, anyway? What matters is you've been wasting my time!

NATHANIEL

This isn't just about treasure, is it? You hate them so much, you want to take everything from them. You spiteful man...

BARNET

Don't talk to me about spite! I tried to save them, once. They said 'no'. Out of spite.

NATHANIEL

'Save' them?

BARNET

From the noose! In Jamaica. I made a very generous offer...

MEMORY / FLASHBACK

SCENE 3. INT. GAOL, JAMAICA

Sounds of gaol we're familiar with. MOANS, clanking CHAINS. The SEA is audible in the background, and a SEAGULL.

BARNET

Tell me where the treasure is, and I'll fill your bellies with my seed.

ANNE

I'd rather tup a rusty sword, you cowardly piece of shite--

BARNET

(loud, interrupts) Do you want to swing or not? Because I'm your only chance, ladies.

READ

Anne. You should think about it.

ANNE

Have you lost your mind??

BARNET

Mary, my love! Didn't think you'd be the one to see sense! I can do you first, if you like--

READ

Not me.

ANNE

Just me, then?? Absolutely not.

READ

You deserve to live--

ANNE

I'd rather die!

BARNET

That is literally the choice, yes.

ANNE

(pleading) Read, there's gotta be another way. We'll figure something out. I promise.

SCENE 4. INT. BARNET'S GAFF

BARNET

(sighs) They got someone else to do it. Some pirate groupie, I expect. There were enough of them. Shame. I quite fancied a go. (cheerful) But there's still time!

NATHANIEL

You're disgusting.

BARNET

You're incompetent. I'm starting to think this imbecile might be more use.

SCRATBY

Who, me?

BARNET

I want you to know, Mist; this is your doing. You've forced my hand.

NATHANIEL

What are you planning?

BARNET

A good old-fashioned Q & A with A & M.

NATHANIEL

You'll beat it out of them.

SCRATBY

What? No no no! No spoiling the goods. They've gotta be presentable for visitors.

(mutters) And it's not very Christian, is it.

BARNET

(sighs) What if I promised you 5% of the treasure?

SCRATBY

5%?

BARNET

5%.

SCRATBY

Yeah, alright. Their value's been depreciating, so...

NATHANIEL

No! You can't! They won't tell you anything, anyway!

BARNET

They might not, no. But at least I'll have fun.

NATHANIEL

I underestimated you, Barnet.

BARNET

Yep! (to Scratby) Scratby, cancel the ladies' forthcoming visits. I shall be the last guest they see.

SCRATBY

Erm. There is a visit in the diary, sir.

BARNET

(gritted) Well. Cancel it.

SCRATBY

(sotto) Ummm. It's a Baroness and her entourage. They're coming tomorrow at four. They've already paid. I could cancel it, but... would you be issuing the refund?

BARNET

(snaps) No, I will not. Fine. Do not cancel them. But do not take any further bookings, alright? They're mine... as of shortly after four tomorrow.

SCRATBY

Yes of course sir. A brilliant idea sir. Yes. Well done.

BARNET

In the meantime, we shall hasten to the authorities and tell them that you, Scratby, are witness to treasonous blitherings within the prison walls by one Nathaniel Mist.

NATHANIEL

Why would they believe *him*?

BARNET

Well, first, you have prior. And second, I shall tell them to search your property for seditious documents. I don't even need to plant the evidence, do I? (chuckles) Thought not.

NATHANIEL

You're a piece of work.

BARNET

I'm simply speeding up your self-destruction, my dear boy. Much like I did with your pirate hags.

STEPS. Door OPENS.

BARNET (cont'd)

Goodbye, Mist. Maybe they'll give you the cell between Anne and Mary! If you hurry, you can even hear what I do to them.

Door SHUTS.

SCENE 5. EXT. LONDON STREET

Busy street. FEET on COBBLESTONES. Wren the urchin is scooting ahead of Bess, speaking over her shoulder.

WREN

I knew I recognised 'im. That bloke who's always hanging round ya when you sing. You shoulda seen him, Bess! Bleeding from his head, and they chucked in a wagon. I fort he was dead. This way.

Bess is OUT OF BREATH from the pace.

BESS

Slow down, Wren.

WREN

I fort he was dead, but then they dragged 'im out and he went (EXTRAVAGANT MOAN). So I knew he was alive. And then, they carried him in that house over there.

They STOP.

WREN (cont'd)

And then I came and got you!

BESS

Let's see who we're dealing with. Stay here, Wren.

Bess crosses to the house.

BESS (cont'd)

(MUTTERS) Nathaniel, what've you done now?

She KNOCKS on the door.

It OPENS. Bess turns on the showbiz charm.

HOUSEKEEPER

Yes?

BESS

Good morning, madam! Lovely day. May I interest you in the latest popular ballad?

HOUSEKEEPER

Don't normally go house-to-house, do ya?

Bess improvises wildly.

BESS
 Special visit! I hear the gentleman
 who resides here is a keen collector
 of ballads.

HOUSEKEEPER
 (surprised) Captain Barnet?

BESS
 Captain Barnet? Yes! (unsure) Can
 you... take me to him?

HOUSEKEEPER
 He's not in.

BESS
 Right. Anyone else I can sing for?
 Any guests of the Captain, or--

HOUSEKEEPER
 (defensive) --There's no-one else
 here. And if there was, I keep me
 nose out of Captain Barnet's
 business. Now clear off!

SLAM of the door. Wren runs up.

WREN
 Was he there?

BESS
 I dunno. I'll keep a watch on the
 house, see who comes and goes. Here.
 Thanks for your help.

She flips a COIN at Wren, who catches it.

WREN
 Thanks Bess! See you later!

Wren runs off.

Bess tunes her FIDDLE.

BESS
 (sniffs) Might as well shift some
 ballads while I'm waiting.

Bess plays her FIDDLE.

(SINGS)
 Man that is born of a woman hath only
 The shortest--

(SINGS) (cont'd)

HOUSEKEEPER
(shouts) Clear orf!

The SLOSH of a piss bucket being emptied into the street.

BESS
Oi! Watch it!
No respect for the arts.

FOOTSTOPS as she walks a little way from the house, and then stops. Defiant, and LOUDER than before, Bess starts SINGING again.

BESS
Come travellers and friends gather round...

SCENE 6. INT. BARNET'S GAFF - CONT.

We shift inside the house. Bess's SINGING on the street outside is muffled but audible.

NATHANIEL
Is that..? Oh my God, it's Bess!
Wait! Wait!

Nathan is tied to the table. With great effort, he starts to pull it over to the window.

The heavy table SCRAPES and THUMPS along the floor.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)
(heaves) Come on, you stupid table!
I'm coming, Bess. Stay right there.
(pulls) Heave! (rests) Bess, stay
there!

SCENE 7. EXT. LONDON STREET - CONT.

The SCRAPE/THUMP of the table and Nathaniel's SHOUTING can't be heard through the window pane, although occasionally we hear a faint cry of 'Bess!'

Bess is still singing, but a DRUNK WOMAN has joined in and is getting the words wrong.

BESS
Nowhere are men more aware of that fate
Than the terrible ravenous sea.

Where the waves they do tower
The winds they do blow

[the drunk woman joins in more energetically]

BESS
And krakens and monsters
Drag... men down... below.

DRUNK WOMAN
Krakens! Having a kraken time!

BESS
Do you mind? I'm trying to make a
living here.

DRUNK WOMAN
Aren't we all? (sing-speaks) Who's
got a pair of bloomers the size of a
whale? I have!

DISAPPROVING MAN
What a racket.

BESS
You're scaring the customers away!

DRUNK WOMAN
(sing-speaks) Gimme a penny if you
like my song!

A man puts a COIN in Bess's tin.

MAN
There you go.

DRUNK WOMAN
Just a penny? Tight git.

Nathaniel KICKS with one foot at the window. It THUDS but
doesn't break.

BESS
Give that back! That coin's for me!

NATHANIEL
(muffled shouts) Bess!

DRUNK WOMAN
I'll fight you for it.

INT. BARNET'S GAFF

CRASH of GLASS BREAKING! Mist puts his foot through a window pane.

NATHANIEL
(stage whisper) Bess! Over here!

BESS
(gasps) Nathaniel??

Bess runs to the window. The following is fast, urgent.

BESS (cont'd)
Nathaniel! Are you alright, what have they done--

NATHANIEL
(interrupts, urgent) I've got to get out of here!

BESS
Open the window! Climb out!

NATHANIEL
I can't, my wrists are tied to a table leg.

BESS
Shall I find a constable?

NATHANIEL
No no no! Don't do that.
I know; let me kick a bigger hole in the pane.

He starts to kick some of the LOOSE GLASS out.

Nathaniel's voice reflects the physical effort-

NATHANIEL (cont'd)
Then you can reach in and lift the sash, and undo my bonds--

DISAPPROVING MAN
What's going on over there?

DRUNK WOMAN
Neighbourhood's going down the drain.

BESS
(sotto) Nathan! People are watching.

PASSERBY
Is it vandals?

BESS
(sotto, urgent) Stop it! We'll get arrested!

Nathan stops kicking. Bess reassures the passerby.

BESS (cont'd)
(calls) Just... fixing a broken pane!
Nothing to see here.

DISAPPROVING MAN
HMMMM. Harrumph. Broken pane?

NATHANIEL
They're still watching.

Light-bulb moment. Bess has an idea.

BESS
I've got an idea. Just... stay there.
I'll be right back.

Bess WALKS over to the drunk woman. Taps on her shoulder.

BESS (cont'd)
(sotto) Oi.

DRUNK WOMAN
Hello again. Ready for fisticuffs,
are we?

BESS
I'll give you a shilling if you cause
a fuss. Over there, by the lamp-post.

DRUNK WOMAN
A shillin? Go on, then.

BESS
All eyes on you. Got it?

DRUNK WOMAN
I shall try my very best, darling.

Bess WALKS back to Nathaniel. Behind her, the drunk woman has started SINGING again.

DRUNK WOMAN (cont'd)
 (sing-speaks) Look at me! Look at me!
 I've got a couple of big talents, and
 I'm showing them to you.

YOUNG MAN
 'ere, she's popped a boob out!

DRUNK WOMAN
 Oh he likes it, look at 'im.

CHEERS. LAUGHS. A crowd starts to form.

PASSERBY
 (distant) Bravo, madam!

DISAPPROVING MAN
 Bloody hell! Look at the state of
 her!

BESS
 (hushed) It's working. They're
 distracted.

NATHANIEL
 Hurry. Lift the sash.

BESS
 (grunts) It's stuck.

DRUNK WOMAN
 Weyyy!

CHEERS. A few COINS are thrown at the drunk woman's feet.

BESS
 (mutters) They're throwing money at
 her! Unbelievable.

NATHANIEL
 Focus, Bess.

Bess's voice STRAINS as she heaves on the window-

BESS
 You spend all yer life carefully
 crafting ballads, slowly building a
 following, and then someone gets a
 bap out and...hnnngh... THERE!

On 'and', the SASH window flies up.

NATHANIEL
You did it! Quick, climb in.

BESS
(climbs, grumbles) If I get caught
and sent to Australia...

Bess THUMPS down into the room.

BESS (cont'd)
Let's get you untied.

NATHANIEL
They used a belt...

BESS
I've got me knife. Keep still.

The housekeeper RATTLES the internal door to the room in
which Nathaniel is being kept.

HOUSEKEEPER
(muffled) Who's in there? Open this
door! No shouting! I run a
respectable establishment.
Respectable, you hear?

NATHANIEL
Maybe she can help us.

BESS
Who, her? Not likely.

The leather SNAPS apart.

BESS (cont'd)
There! You're free.

HOUSEKEEPER
Open this door!

NATHANIEL
You've saved my life.

BESS
Not yet I haven't. Go on. Get out the
window quick... before gin-soaked
Jenny runs out of tits to bare.

SCENE 8. INT. A CORRIDOR OF NEWGATE

Anne and Read are SINGING / SHOUTING the shanty. A few other PRISONERS have joined in. It's a song of defiance.

Turn keys 2 (Peters) and 3 (Greg) walk the halls.

PETERS

Gregory! What the bloody hell's going on? Why are they all singing?

GREG

Bonny started it after she stabbed that lad who tried to... y'know. Then they all joined in.

PETERS

Scratby won't like it if he comes back and there's a bloody concert in progress. (shouts) ALRIGHT. SHUT UP! OI! SHUT IT!

He BANGS on the doors with his STICK.

Turn key 2 STOMPS away, towards their cell. We stay with Turn Key 3, so that Turn Key 2's voice gets fainter the further he goes.

PETERS (cont'd)

Oi! Stop that! Stop singing or I'll thump ya!

Turn Key 3 is outside Anne's cell. Her SINGING STOPS.

ANNE

(whisper) Pssst. Gregory. Oi. Over here.

GREG

Eh? (nervous) Oh!

ANNE

How's the new baby doing?

GREG

Oh, very well, thanks!

ANNE

Ah, that's grand, that is. Listen, Greg, could I ask a favour?

GREG

Oh, no, I don't think that's appropriate--

ANNE

Please, Greg. You've been so kind to me. I have a note. It's for me ma. She's dying, y'see. I need to get it to her before she (sobs). Or before I... (sobs).

GREG

Oh. Oh dear. Please don't cry.

ANNE

I'm sorry. You know that journalist fella? Mist? If you could take it to him, he'll make sure me ma gets it.

GREG

Errrrr. Errrrrr. I dunno. Mist is banned, isn't he? Scratby won't let him back.

ANNE

I know. That's why I need you, Greg. Please don't let it end this way. For either of us. Please.

SCENE 9. INT. BESS'S GAFF - LATER

Time jump to that evening. A FIRE CRACKLES in a hearth. Outside, RAIN, THUNDER.

Nathaniel PACES.

NATHANIEL

(mutters) Where is she. Come on, Bess.

Door OPENS. Bess enters.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

(urgent) You're back! You're back. Tell me.

BESS

Lemme take me boots off first.

Bess SITS with a WEARY SIGH. Boots come off.

NATHANIEL

Oh no. You look grim. Barnet sent constables to my rooms?

BESS

Yep. Turned 'em upside down. I'm sorry, mate.

NATHANIEL

Did they take my manuscript?

BESS

Have a look.

Bess dumps LOOSE PAPER on the table.

BESS (cont'd)

This is all they left.

NATHANIEL

(faint) Just this?

Nathaniel sorts through it.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

Scraps. A letter. Bills! That's it? My manuscript. They took it.

Nathaniel THUMPS the table.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

Why, for God's sake! It's a silly book about pirates, it's hardly treason!

BESS

Some might say it's a book about dangerous criminals and how fun and brilliant they are.

NATHANIEL

(splutters) No it isn't!

BESS

I read your last draft, remember.

The sound of WATER BOILING.

BESS (cont'd)

Water's boiled. Make a brew, would you. Tea caddy's in the drawer.

Nathaniel SCRAPES his chair back, gets to his feet.

NATHANIEL
 If you're implying I, I somehow
glorified or mythologised, or, or--

Nathaniel becomes distracted by the tea. He POURS WATER into cups. He INHALES.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)
 How do you afford tea?

BESS
 There's a new dealer in town. Nice
 and cheap.

NATHANIEL
 (arch) Tea's only cheap if it's
 smuggled. By *dangerous criminals*.

BESS
 (laughs) Oh, shut up and drink.
 (beat)
 So how long you gonna be here?

NATHANIEL
 Not long. End of the week? Thank you
 for hiding me.

BESS
 You can stay longer if you like.

NATHANIEL
 I can't. They'll be looking for me.
 I was thinking... France?
 An exile in France. Maybe it's a good
 thing. Maybe I'll find freedom on the
 fringes of society.

BESS
 Like a pirate.

NATHANIEL
 No. A pirate lives in the moment;
 that's all they have. But I shall
 continue to write, continue to hold
 our worthless government to account.

BESS
 ...at a safe distance, with a glass
 of French wine in your hand.

NATHANIEL
 Doesn't sound awful when you put it
 like that.

BESS
I'll toast to that.

NATHANIEL
Aye. To things 'not being awful'.
Cheers.

CHINK of teacups.

BESS
Nathaniel, I have to ask; what you
gonna do about money?

NATHANIEL
(groans) I have a little...
Oh God.

BESS
Don't suppose Bonny and Read ever
told you where the treasure is?

NATHANIEL
If they had, we wouldn't be in this
mess. Why does everything always come
down to treasure! (loud) Dammit!

Nathaniel THUMPS the table. It disturbs the PILE of PAPER.

BESS
'ere, watch it! You've knocked your
papers off the table.

NATHANIEL
(despair) I should've sent that
bastard Barnet off on a wild goose
chase.

BESS
You've knocked your papers off the
table.

NATHANIEL
Why didn't I make something up? I
could've scrawled a map on a napkin
and said 'off you go! Happy hunting!'
But now, now he's going to hurt them
and there's not a damn thing I can do
about it!

BESS
(disgust) Erggg!

NATHANIEL

What is it?

BESS

(disgust) It's the letter I took from your house! Look what it's sealed with. That ain't wax!

NATHANIEL

It's lumpy. And... brown. It smells like...

Nathaniel SNIFFS. SNIFFS again.

BESS

Erghhh! Don't sniff it!

NATHANIEL

...(sniff) ale and gingerbread!

BESS

Oh.

NATHANIEL

Good God. This must be from Anne! She sent a letter to my house? How... never mind.

Nathaniel RIPS it OPEN. He reads.

BESS

What does it say?

NATHANIEL

Nothing that makes sense. Numbers... strings of numbers. With an occasional word amongst them - Pencils. Cell. It's nonsense.

BESS

Let me see.

Bess grabs the letter.

NATHANIEL

It must be coded, in case it fell into the wrong hands. Maybe it's some sort of nautical... co-ordinate thing...

BESS

Look - 6th March. That's two weeks ago. She writ the date wrong.

NATHANIEL

Two weeks. Two weeks! Mist's Weekly came out on the 6th! I gave it to Anne to read the very next day.

BESS

Wait... I have a copy...

Bess RUNS to fetch it.

NATHANIEL

You do?

BESS

Course I do. Good paper, this. Makes good bum fodder.

NATHANIEL

You're not wrong there.

Bess spreads the PAPER on the table.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

Some of the numbers are underlined. Page numbers?

BESS

No. There's not enough pages in the journal. Line numbers, maybe! First number, 6.

NATHANIEL

(sotto, counting) Line 6.
1,2,3,4,5,6. Now what?

BESS

The numbers after... perhaps they indicate a word on that line. Four.

NATHANIEL

The fourth word on the 6th line; 'Dear'! Quick, the next.

The next is mixed...

BESS

5. Then underlined 7, line 7, followed by 2 and 8. Then underlined 2, followed by 1.

(MORE)

BESS (cont'd)

Then line 9, word 3. Line 11, word 2.
Line 19, word 10, then the word
'knife'.

NATHANIEL

Dear. Friend. The. Time. Has. Come.
For. Read. And. I.

ANNE'S VOICE takes over from Mist.

Sound design throughout, reflecting the action.

ANNE

...to get the hell out of here. I think I can trust you now. I have little choice. I have taken the small knife you use to sharpen your pencils, and I have learned how to pick the padlock securing my chain to the floor. On the 22nd, at the clock strike of seven, the turn-key will go to his supper. There is a gap the length of five and a half rounds of Such Sweet Revenge until the next turn-key arrives. During that time, I shall pick the lock to my cell, release Read from hers, and together we shall return to my cell, where there is a large chimney hearth. We shall climb up the chimney to the flat roof above. This is where we need your help. Go to the East side with a ladder, a change of clothes enough for the two of us, and a horse.

I trust you will do this for us because of our mutual deep regard. We are, the three of us, too alike to cast the other adrift.

Also, the treasure does exist, it's bigger than you'd expect, and if we reach it alive, you can have half of it.

Yours, Anne Bonny.

Bess LAUGHS, amazed.

BESS

The brass neck of that one! (laughs)
I can see why you like her!

NATHANIEL

No no no!

BESS
What's wrong, Nathaniel?

Mist MOANS.

NATHANIEL
The 22nd is tomorrow!

BESS
It's alright. You don't have to do
what she says. You'd be mad to!

NATHANIEL
You don't understand. Seven is too
late!

BESS
Too late for what?

NATHANIEL
Too late to escape! Barnet. He'll be
there around four.

BESS
You're not making any sense.

NATHANIEL
(grim) He's going to hurt them, Bess.
And I rather suspect they won't be in
any shape to scramble up chimneys
afterwards.