

Tudors

A POOR MAN'S MEDICINE BY NIGEL BRYANT

- MUSIC / FX* *1530s. Dense woodland. Two people creeping very slowly. We hear the hushed voices of John, a young man with a Berkshire/Oxfordshire burr, and father.*
- FATHER Ssshhh! Not a sound, John!
- JOHN Doin' me best!
- JOHN [V/O]** **You hear those voices? That's me - John Little - and me father. We're in the forest...hunting...well, poaching actually...**
- FATHER Look at her - she's a beauty.
- JOHN [V/O]** **You should 'ave seen her. A beautiful doe deer - an' enough meat to feed us for a month. If you're poor in this England of ours and don't want to starve under his majesty King Henry you might 'ave to do like us and break the law...**
- FATHER Right. Just one chance, I reckon.
- JOHN [V/O]** **Me dad takes the arrow. Fixes it to the bowstring. And pulls back his arm... But he can't let go.**
- JOHN What's up?
- FATHER We will be! We'll be up! Strung up high if we're caught with this deer!
- JOHN Dad, we've got to!
- FATHER It's the king's deer, you know it is. And the punishment for anyone poachin' 'em...
- JOHN Is hangin', I know. But we gotta take the risk. Here...I'll do it...
- FATHER John...
- JOHN No choice, 'ave we?





- JOHN [V/O]** **An' me father doesn't stop me as I get ready to shoot. But the thing is - this meat's isn't even goin' to be for us. No, we'll be going back to the same food as yesterday, an' the day before, an' the day before that. In fact, the same food as every day. A mess of beans called pottage. Though me poor, sick mum tells me to be grateful!**
- FX* *Cross-fade to inside John's home. Scraping of pottage from pot to bowl.*
- MOTHER** There we are, John...
- JOHN [V/O]** **Aye, me poor, sick mum. And that sickness...it's the cause of all our trouble...**
- MOTHER** Eat it and be glad of it. *[She coughs]* There's others with less.
- FATHER** Aye - beggars everywhere.
- MOTHER** May good God keep us from ever needin' to beg.
- FATHER** We may be reduced to it yet.
- MOTHER** William! Don't say such a thing!
- FATHER** I've given every penny to that doctor. And are you any better?
- MOTHER** He's a good man.
- FATHER** He's a fool.
- MOTHER** William!
- FATHER** Well what's he done for you?
- MOTHER** He's tried everything!
- JOHN [V/O]** **He had, to be fair. First time the doctor came he checked me mother's pee.**
- FX* *Crossfade to scene with doctor.*
- MOTHER** There you are, doctor. Is it enough?
- DOCTOR** Ample, Mistress Little.
- JOHN [V/O]** **First 'e just stands there, starin' in the bowl.**



MOTHER What're you gonna do with it?

DOCTOR I'm checking it for foam or cloudiness.

JOHN [V/O] Then he puts his nose to it...

DOCTOR Mmm. It has a bitter smell.

JOHN [V/O] And then...he tastes it...!

DOCTOR Ah-ha. Before anything more, you must be purged.

MOTHER Purged?

JOHN [V/O] He gave her what 'e called an "emetic" - I think that was the word. It smelled real strong of some kind o' fungus. All I know is she was terrible sick. In fact, she kept bein' sick, so 'e comes back next day an' gives her...

DOCTOR This powder. This powder will cure all.

MOTHER God bless you.

JOHN What is it, doctor?

DOCTOR The dried windpipe of a cockerel.

JOHN Oh. Right.

JOHN [V/O] A week later, when she was still no better, he came back and "bled" her. He reaches in 'is pocket and fetches out a little glass jar.

FX A cork pops

DOCTOR Here we are!

JOHN [V/O] He pulls out the stopper and one by one he takes out these blood-suck-in' leeches, black and wriggly and thin - not that they were thin for long. He plops 'em on 'er arm and they sit there suckin' for ages till they're fat an' gorged with me mother's blood. And still, two weeks on, she's no better.



- BARTLETT There's an ill wish upon your wife! She has had hurt done to her! In the bubbles! A face! It's sure the face of the one who witched your wife!
- FATHER I...I can't say.
- BARTLETT You! Do you see the face?
- JOHN [V/O]** **I looked. I looked hard. Bubbling so fast, it was, all I could see was steam.**
- BARTLETT Well...if you can't see the face in the liquid, you'll see it in open air.
- FATHER What d'you mean?
- BARTLETT The next person you meet, in the street or as a visitor to your house, will be the witch.
- FATHER What do we do then? How does that make my wife better?
- BARTLETT She must take fast hold o' the witch, scratch 'er till she draw blood from 'er, and then she shall presently recover.
- FATHER Thank you kindly. I've spent much money on a doctor who's done her no good. Oh...speakin' o' money, how can I...
- BARTLETT Pay me? In good meat.
- FATHER Meat? We've had no meat since Christmas!
- BARTLETT You have no beast to slaughter?
- FATHER None! We're lucky to fill a dish with beans an' peas!
- BARTLETT But you have a bow, do you not?
- FATHER A bow? O' course.
- BARTLETT Well then.
- FATHER What? You don't mean me to..?
- JOHN [V/O]** **But he did. Old Bartlett meant us to pay 'im with meat from poaching. An' that's how we come to be here, riskin' bein' hanged - me with arrow on string...about to shoot.**



- FX* *We've crossfaded back to the forest, John about to shoot the deer.*
- FATHER She's looking right at us...
- JOHN Well...'ere goes...
- FX* *Loud twang of bowstring. A little way off, a cry from the deer.*
- Got 'er! I got 'er!
- FATHER John! Keep it down! What we gotta do now...is get away with it! Let's go an' butcher her. But keep a good watch!
- JOHN [V/O]** **So we creep up to her - slow and quiet as we can - and get out our knives...and that's when I hear it...**
- JOHN Listen!
- FX* *Distant shouts and hunting horns. Dogs*
- FATHER What is it?
- JOHN It's a hunt!
- HUNTSMAN Poahcers! Stop them!
- FATHER They've seen us!
- JOHN What do we do, Dad?
- FATHER Run, John! Run!
- FX* *Running and panting through the undergrowth shouts from behind. 'Stop them!' etc. Fades.*