

While The Gentlemen Go By

written by

Matthew Taylor

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Taylor.MJ88@gmail.com

FADE IN:

EXT. DEVON COASTLINE - NIGHT

High cliffs wind down the coast, creating peaks and alcoves. A well trodden path winds atop the cliffs.

Next to the path, a dead man wrapped in chains hangs from a gibbet, his body sways in the wind.

SUPER: Devon, 1747

Anchored out to sea, a large wooden ship. It's tall masts poke into a light mist. Smaller fishing boats approach the coast from the ships direction.

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A basic double bed dominates the small space. A single bed lies in a corner, somebody under the sheets.

Many hooves trot on the stone road outside.

URSULA (10) skinny, rag pyjamas, wakes up from the bed. She tentatively approaches the window.

She reaches out her hand, grabs the blinds.

A hand snatches Ursula by the shoulder. IRIS (30's) peasant clothes hang off her skinny frame. She pushes Ursula to face the wall.

IRIS
Watch the wall, my darling, while
the gentlemen go by.

Iris exits through the door, leaves it open.

On the other side, two dogs lie next to the front door, they raise their heads to the sound of the hooves, lower them again, unphased.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Small, poor. 25 EXMOOR PONIES trot down a stone central road, tiny houses one either side.

JOHN (40's) gruff, wearing a dirty dark coat, rides the lead pony.

The other ponies, lead by both men and women, are laden with barrels strapped to their backs.

EXT. CHURCHYARD - NIGHT

Set back from the road. The ponies make their way through the yard towards a small church at its centre.

A PARSON exits the church through it's large wooden door.

John jumps down from the his pony, greets the PARSON.

PARSON
Next to the woodpile, a space has
been cleared.

John nods to the others leading the ponies. They take them around the back of the church.

PARSON (CONT'D)
How long?

JOHN
Morrow night, Parson. No longer.

Galloping hooves in the distance, the sound draws closer. Parson and John wheel around.

Parson grabs John, drags him into the church.

A horse gallops down the road. Stops at the bottom of the churchyard. MR PIXLEY (40's) sits atop. Smart blue coat with matching hat, red waistcoat underneath and sword by his side. An imposing figure on an imposing horse.

The ponies hidden around the back of the church are just out of his sight.

INT. CHURCH

John and the Parson stand with their ears to the door.

EXT. CHURCH

Mr Pixley grabs hold of his horses reigns. Gallops away down the road.

EXT. VILLAGE - MORNING

Ursula skips through the street, smiles at the residents she passes. She skips past the

BARN

Ursula stops outside it's open doors. Inside, tired ponies lie asleep.

Ursula eyes them with curiosity. Continues on her way until she gets to

CHURCHYARD

Ursula skips up the path, around the church, past the woodpile.

Ursula comes to a stop, stares at a large pile of brushwood. She removes a bunch of it, plays with it in her hands. She removes another, cradles it as if it were a doll.

Puzzled, Ursula spots something under the brushwood. She looks around, curiosity getting the better of her, she removes more of the brushwood.

Underneath, brandy barrels wrapped in tarred rope. A lot of them.

EXT. VILLAGE - MORNING

Ursula runs down the street towards her house. Two dogs outside of her house bark frantically.

URSULA

Mama! Come and see! Come and see!

Mr Pixley steps in her path. She bounces off of him, temporarily stunned.

MR PIXLEY

Come and see, what? Pretty maid.

Ursula, fear in her eyes, stares at Mr Pixley. He gets down to her eye level.

Mr Pixley lightly taps his finger under Ursula's chin.

MR PIXLEY (CONT'D)

know who I am?

Ursula frantically shakes her head.

MR PIXLEY (CONT'D)
I'm to keep watch and ward up and
down this coast. Would Miss know
what I am to be looking for?

Ursula stares at him blankly.

MR PIXLEY (CONT'D)
Smugglers. Have you seen them?
Pretty lace or curious barrels
where they ought not to be?

Ursula looks past Mr Pixley in the direction of the church.
She frantically shakes her head.

Mr Pixley stands up tall, imposing. He follows her gaze up
the street.

MR PIXLEY (CONT'D)
Don't want to swing now, do you?
Pretty maid.

John power walks towards them.

JOHN
Ursula, run home now.

John squares off with Mr Pixley. Mr Pixley's demeanour
softens, intimidated.

MR PIXLEY
Just patrolling my stretch of coast
is all.

JOHN
Then go, patrol. Sir.

Mr Pixley looks around, villagers stop and stare at him.
Hostile.

Mr Pixley hastens to his horse, mounts, and gallops away.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ursula lies in bed, faces the wall. Footsteps come from the
other side of the door. The front door opens, closes.

Sound of Ponies hooves hitting the stone path outside.

Ursula looks up from her bed, Iris stands in the doorway.

URSULA
Watch the wall, I know.

Ursula lies back down, watches the wall.

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Iris sits at a table, mends a whole in the lining of a coat.

Ursula bounds out of the bedroom, stands next to Iris.

URSULA
Why is father's coat torn?

IRIS
Them that ask no questions, isn't
told a lie.

Ursula, annoyed at the shun, feels the lining.

URSULA
Why is it wet?

Iris puts the coat down firmly, glares at Ursula.

IRIS
Don't you ask no more.

Ursula storms out of the front door.

EXT. VILLAGE - MORNING

Ursula runs through the street, past the

BARN

Ursula peaks in as she passes. Empty, the ponies have gone.

Two dogs bark in the distance.

Ursula continues her run into

CHURCHYARD

Ursula runs up to and around the church.

Mr Pixley steps into the churchyard, watches Ursula.

Ursula gets to the woodpile. A hand grabs her shoulder,
forcefully turns her around.

Mr Pixley glares at her.

MR PIXLEY
What have you found?

Mr Pixley walks around the woodpile. Spots the large pile of brushwood.

He picks one up, throws it away. Picks up another, then another. Frustrated he scrambles through the pile, nothing underneath.

Mr Pixley looks to Ursula, she smiles sweetly.

He steps towards her, delivers a crunching backhand across her face. She crumples to the floor.

Mr Pixley approaches her, she scrambles backwards, tries to get away.

He grabs her leg, pulls her towards him.

John storms around the church, tackles Mr Pixley to the ground.

The pair struggle, roll around on the floor. Advantage passed from one to the other.

JOHN
Run home, go!

Ursula runs off.

Mr Pixley gets the upper hand, sits on top of John, punches him in the face.

John lands a right hand into Mr Pixley's face, knocks him onto his back.

John stands. Mr Pixley gets onto all fours. John pulls Mr Pixley's sword, plunges it into the back of his neck.

Mr Pixley falls flat, dead.

John pants, gathers himself. Looks up, Parson stands staring at him, horrified.

Parson looks around him, no witnesses, he slumps off back to the church.

John, deflated, he knows that was a mistake.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ursula lies in bed, faces the wall.

The front door opens, closes. Footsteps draw closer to the bedroom door. It creaks open.

John sits on the edge of the bed. Ursula turns to face him, smiles sweetly.

John hands Ursula a dainty DOLL, it wears a cap of Valenciennes lace and a silk hood.

JOHN
For being good.

John and Ursula embrace in a hug.

John leaves the room, shutting the door behind him. Ursula lies down, cuddles her doll.

She falls asleep to the sound of 25 ponies hooves outside.

FADE OUT.