

1698:

**The adapted biography of
William Stout**

By May Sumbwanyambe

(Draft 3)

Part 1: January 1698 – March 1698

Part 2 : March 1698 – September 1698

Original 1698 Text

In the first month this year the fire happened which burned down in Lancaster above 20 dwelling houses. It began about nine in the morning, the second day of the week, in the north west corner of the house belonging to John Johnson's children, where their mother then dwelt, by her daughter Ann Tinkler, aged about 15, carrying out ashes to that corner not well quenched. That thatch not being two yards above it, a spark got to it, and was not discovered till it got to the roof; and there was a strong east wind and a dry season. It spread in an instant, and in half an hour to the furthest, where it was stopped by stone and slated buildings. It was so quick and violent that people had not time to get out their most necessary and valuable goods. All that was burned was on the north side of the street, except one house, and the main industry was to keep it on that side. There were two stone and slated houses, which were burned round, yet escaped. As soon as I had noticed, I went to the house that it began in, which was under my trust, and got the fire out of it. The whole loss was computed at about £2000 and a brief was got and some collectors appointed over the nation; but the charge of collecting was so great, that not one fourth of the value lost did come to the sufferers.

The 10th day of the second month this year my master, Henry Coward, died, being about 50 years of age. He had been an active and affable man, and very much respected by people of all ranks and professions, and particularly by his friends called Quakers, to whom he was assistant in their sufferings and other ways. But at the same time he affected popularity and to be drawn into some gentlemen's company, and to pretend to skill in horses; which drew him from necessary business, which, whilst I was with him, was very good, and his credit so good that if any had money to dispose of, if they got it into his disposal, they concluded it was safe. But this large credit, and his freedom in conversation in company, and in some houses of no good character, hurt his esteem of his friends. He also dealt in merchandise with loose partners, and become concerned much with persons of declining circumstances, where neither profit nor credit could be got; and he gave uneasiness to his wife by his frequenting some houses of no good character. And she was a very indolent woman, and drew money privately from him, and his circumstances became so burdensome to him, that he daily expected to be made a prisoner; which, with the shame of forfeiting his former reputation, it drew him into despair, and broke his heart, so that he kept to his house for some time, and died of grief or shame. He made a will, and made his wife executor, to pay his debts as far as his personal estate extended, and invested his real estate in Robert Lawson and me, to sell towards the payment of the rest of his debts, which proved more than all would disburse. The widow, although she had a brother and other rich relations in the town, yet none of them would be bound with her in the bishops court for the due of performance of her husbands will here; so she got a poor man well dressed, and went to Kerby Loynsdal, and got legal administration; and the poor man was accepted as her bondsman. She made a sale of the shop goods, mostly to Elijah Salthouse; I then having no intention to the retail trade. She paid part of his debts, to whom and where she pleased, but not regularly being not subject to take good advice, in order to discharge her trust in a reputable manner

The first day of the third month this year, I gave over housekeeping, and turned up the house to the landlord; being I saw I could not be any further serviceable to John Troughton, and grieved at his slighting my favour and service, and to see his loose and disorderly conversation. And as my good neighbour William ROBERT, the collector, always said that when I left the house, he would also leave that part he dwelt in, and not to have any other so near to him; and accordingly he left that house after we had lived in good neighbourhood about four years. My sister went this year to dwell with her brother Josias and Leonard, where she was a good service and company to his young wife in her housekeeping.

I being at this time much out of business, I was persuaded by some neighbours to stand a sixth part share in a new ship of about 80 tons, now building near Warton, which I accepted of, and was active in preparing materials and other serviced for the speedy finishing her.

I having an intention to go to the yearly meeting at London this year, had a horse offered by my brother Leonard, and well kept in my stable. He was well in the evening, and found dead in the morning, a few days before my intended journey. But about the same time, a man came down from London, in order to be a preacher to a Presbyterian or independent congregation here, who had a horse lent there, and to return him again; and, hearing of my going, offered me the horse to ride upon, trusting to my care of him, and to deliver him in London as directed, which I accepted; which I thought would save the charge of keeping a horse in London, and I then thought of hiring one down. The horse carried me well, and was well received at London. I went from here the beginning of the third month, and accidentally met with James Penny (and his sister) of Penny Bridge, going to London in order to collect the effects of their brother, lately dead there, who were good agreeable company; and at Warrington we met with several friends, men and women, who were going to that meeting, and all so agreeable company that I never went to London at so little charge as at this time., or so good entertainment. James Penny, his sister, and I, took up our lodgings at the Swan with Two necks in Lad lane, whilst they stayed in London. I duly attended the general yearly meeting, which was large, unanimous, peaceable, and edifying; and afterwards, at the desire of the owners of the ship building at Warton, I bought for her masts, sails, rigging, anchors, and cables, etc. and got them put on board at the Edwards and Jane (Ketch), Thomas Thorp, master (but when I was first at London James Myers was master of her). She was now full, and ready to sail for Liverpool, and I resolved to come in her by sea to Liverpool; and we had a very ready passage to Gravesend, where we stopped a tide to clear out, and then had a fair wind to the Downs, but did not come it there; and the wind being south-west, we proceeded with a great many ships, who made but little progress; but ours being a good sailor, we got ahead of them, except a Dutch Dogger, who kept the sea along the coast of Kent and Sussex; but were obliged to go within the Isle of Wight, near Portsmouth, and through the kinds fleet at Spithead, and came to anchor at Jack in the Basket, near Limington, whither we went in our boat to buy some provisions. We were at anchor there some days, the wind being westward. We came out at the Needles, but the wind not favourable, and turning to the west till we came near Plymouth, most of the ships in company put in there, but ours stood to the southward, and tacked into Mounts bay, and afterwards to the south, the wind being west,

til at the next tack we weathered the land's end, and came betwixt and the isles of Scilly; and now the westerly wind favoured us, so that we got from the Land's End to Holyhead in two days, and went within the Skerries; and next night, in the night, to Liverpool town side, all well, and in good health. In this voyage I had a very good view of the River Thames, and all the seaports on the south and west of England, except Plymouth. I intended to have come by sea from Liverpool to Lancaster; but my brothers, hearing of my arrival at Liverpool, sent me a horse by some neighbours, shopkeepers, who were then coming to Liverpool; which, after I had re-shipped the goods, I came home by land. At my coming home, I went to board and lodge with ROBERT Lawson, where I remained til the third month next, in which time I was employed in about the building of the ship, and fitting her out for a voyage for Virginia, and providing a cargo; all which was completed about the eight month. She was named the Employment, and James Myers, master. Her cargo, which was in goods, cost £360, which we thought sufficient to purchase her loading of tobacco, about 150 hog heads, and was consigned to the management of the same James Myers, who said in the ninth month, and called at Dublin to take in provisions.

In this year Robert Haydock, of Liverpool, freighted a ship for Philadelphia, to take in such passengers as were disposed to go to settle in Pennsylvania; upon which there were more than 20 persons, old and young, of our merchants of Lancaster, took this opportunity, sold their estates, and took their families. Amongst them was ELIJAH Godalve, a young man who was brought up in a grocer and drapers shop, and was disposed to go there with his substance as a merchant; and for his encouragement I adventured with him a parcel of woollen, linen and other goods, suitable for that country to the value of £110, and consigned them wholly to his care and management for me.

Main character list (5):

William Stout

Ann Tinkler

Robert Lawson

Elijah Salthouse

Presbyterian preacher

Part 1: January 1698 – March 1698

Market street – Inside a small cottage – somewhere in the distance, the muffled sound of Church bells ringing singling It is 10pm (adjust as necessary) outside the sound of a strong gale of wind rattling against the windows and doors, we are in a bedroom, and a man is sleeping – snoring away. The sound of bed springs coiling and releasing their tension to the natural rhythm of THE MAN’S inhale and exhale of breath... we stay in this peaceful sound for a long beat, until it is disturbed. With Three urgent knocks coming from a close by door. THE MAN doesn’t wake up after the first three, knocks.

ANN TINKLER

Mr Stout? Wake up Mister Stout! Mr. Stout?

THE YOUNG WOMAN at door waits for a response and then KNOCKS even more urgently, continuously. Inside WILLIAM wakes...

WILLIAM gets out of bed and heads to the door.

ANN TINKLER

Mr. Stout Wake up!

WILLIAM

Annie. Little Annie is that you?

ANN

Wake up, Mr Stout!

WILLIAM

I’m coming. I’m coming. Just one second Ann.

WILLIAM finds his keys, as he is unlocking the door, the knocking continues.

WILLIAM

Annie, I'm opening the door as fast as I can, Please *stop* the knocking!

The knocking stops. WILLIAM opens the door.

WILLIAM

What is the meaning of this young girl? Is there something wrong with your mother?

ANN

(said at pace)

I think it must have started last night, When I was carrying them out for my mother. I reckon it must have gotten into the thatch and

WILLIAM

Slow down. Slow down. You're not making any sense Annie. Come inside and catch your breath.

ANN

But Mr Stout.

WILLIAM

Slow down. Slow.....That's better....Now – What's that smell?!

ANN

That smell is the reason, why I woke you ...The house, the roof...it's

WILLIAM

Burning! Good god...

ANN

I couldn't get mother to wake up. She's been drinking and...

WILLIAM exits out the house running up the stone path.

ANN follows him. As they run...

WILLIAM

(breathlessly)

Your mother and sister, where are....

ANN

(breathlessly)

I came here to get you.

WILLIAM

(breathlessly)

You left them in the house?!

ANN

(breathlessly)

You said if something went wrong. The first thing -

WILLIAM

(breathlessly)

I know what I said!

As we get closer to the house, we can hear the sound of the flames. Peoples coughing as they are coming out of their houses down the street.

ANN

You said I should always come and get you....

WILLIAM

Never mind! What room is your mother in?

ANN

The back room

WILLIAM

And the child?

ANN

They're in the bed with her, Mister Stout...I don't know what to do? Where should I go?

WILLIAM

Run to the church girl. Run right up by the castle and court. Tell them to ring the bells. Tell them to keep on ringing the bells.

ANN runs off in a different direction. WILLIAM runs towards the fire. As he gets closer and closer the air gets thicker and more difficult to breath, we can hear the crackle of the fire get louder and louder. WILLIAM wades into the house, into a room.

WILLIAM

Wake up. Wake up!

We hear the sound of a WOMAN and CHILD waking up.

WILLIAM

That's it. Follow me!

WILLIAM leads them out, ALL coughing and spluttering.

The sound of a community emptying out onto the street. Somewhere in the distance, the sounds of bells ringing continuously.

FAST CUT to silence, it is later on in the night, WILLIAM is on his own, coughing a little from the fumes, he enters his cottage, takes out a book and starts to write in it.

(Continuous) The sound of pen scribbling on paper. WILLIAM writing in his diary.

WILLIAM (V.O)

In the *first* month this year the fire happened, which burned down in Lancaster about 20 dwelling houses. It began about nine in the morning, the second day of the week, in the north west corner of the house belonging to John Johnson's children, where their mother then dwelt. By her daughter Ann Tinkler, carrying out ashes to that corner, not well quenched (**foolish girl**). That thatch not being two yards above it, a spark got to it, and was not discovered till it got to the roof;—It spread in an instant, and in half an hour to the furthest, where it was stopped by stone and slated buildings...

As the sound of the WILLIAMS pen fades away, We are now in Lancaster Court, the gallery is busy with people. It is packed to the brim WILLIAM is forcing his way through the crowd. As he passes people...

WILLIAM

Excuse me

Oh, I'm terribly sorry.

Excuse me.

Thanks...

WILLIAM eventually makes his way through the crowd and outside of the court – onto the balcony of the castle – so that the hustle of people in the court is now quieter and he is clearly outside. We hear the ringing of the Church bells. Signalling it is 12pm mid-day. We are very close to them. As the ringing of the bells recedes - ROBERT LAWSON and ELIJAH SALTHOUSE are further up the balcony we hear their conversation.

ELIJAH

Devastating

ROBERT

I heard It was so quick and violent that people had not time to get out their most necessary and valuable goods.

ELIJAH

Not those on the north side of the street Sir, they didn't stand a chance.

ROBERT

Have you seen the damage with your own eyes?

ELIJAH

I have, everything burned up, except one house....

Some people are saying that Mister Stout...

ROBERT

Yes?

ELIJAH

Might have been a little more careful.

ROBERT

People are blaming William?

WILLIAM

Well, that's the problem with small towns isn't it?

ROBERT and ELIJAH are startled.

WILLIAM

Elijah, there were two stone and slated houses, which were burned ed round, yet escaped too I think you'll find. No one was hurt, Miraculously.

ELIJAH

Oh. Mr Stout I didn't mean to suggest that you were responsible. That's not what I think...it's just people...

WILLIAM

Talk? Yes they do Elijah. You'd do well not to behave like the average member of a crowd. Im sure if your father was still with us he would agree.

ELIJAH

Yes sir. I'm sorry sir.

WILLIAM

No harm done. It's to be expected I guess. The fire started in a house which was under my trust. People will gossip and rumour.

ROBERT

The boy has said he is sorry William

WILLIAM

Of course you know why they are blaming me, don't you?

ELIJAH

No sir. I don't.

WILLIAM

The whole loss was computed at about £2000. They soon found out that the charge of collecting is so great, that not one fourth of the value lost would come to the sufferers.

ELIJAH

They want someone to blame, to get compensation then?

WILLIAM

Not those that matter. Not those that who know the truth of it. That no one is to blame. A young girl made a mistake that any young girl could have made. The briefs and collectors will realise this soon enough and be gone as quick as they came. Would you mind leaving me and Mr Lawson to speak in private for a second, Elijah?

ELIJAH

No sir. Of course.

ELIJAH moves to exit. Before he does...

ELIJAH

Sir, I Just wanted to say -

WILLIAM

I know Elijah. You do not have to say it.

Exit Elijah.

ROBERT

What on earth has gotten into you?

WILLIAM

Henry Coward has gotten into me, Robert. Henry Coward. All those people in that court room Baying over a dead man's artefacts, have gotten under my skin.

ROBERT

Nothing makes a man more sought after than the opportunity to settle long unpaid debts, ay?

WILLIAM

That's true enough Robert. You know, when last we spoke, Henry and I. He was complaining to me. That his wife was a very, indolent, woman....

ROBERT

That's very politely put.

WILLIAM

Ahe drew money privately from him, and his circumstances became so burdensome, that he daily expected to be made a prisoner... The shame of forfeiting his former reputation, it drew him into despair, and broke his heart, so that he kept to his house for some time. If a man as fine as Henry can drop into such despair. What hope then for the rest of us?

ROBERT

My friend a man can not die of shame. Maybe grief but, for sure shame never killed a man. Greif, a burdensome woman and shame combined might though.

WILLIAM

Don't talk about Henry like that. We owe that man too much to talk him down.

ROBERT

I'm not talking about Henry. I'm talking about his wife....We have no quarrel on this matter William. He was responsible for my education too and like you was the catalyst that converted me to a Quaker. I would think all about his wife a far fetched story myself had I not seen with my own eyes this day, the widows own brother and rich relations in town, none of them willing to be bound with her in this bishops court for the due of performance of her husbands will here...that speaks volumes of the woman does it not?

ROBERT

What is really bothering you William?

WILLIAM

Nothing.

ROBERT

You didn't need to take it out on the boy then.

WILLIAM

I wasn't that hard on him Robert. And if I was I will make amends.

ROBERT

You sound like you have something in mind?

WILLIAM

I'm going to encourage him to approach Henry's Widow to sell him the left over shop goods. Should no one else challenge for them of course.

ROBERT

You'll have no challenge from me. I have no intention to the retail trade.

WILLIAM

Nor me... at present

(Continuous) The sound of pen scribbling on paper. WILLIAM writing in his diary.

WILLIAM (V.O)

The 10th day of the *second* month this year my master, Henry Coward (PAUSE – how to describe it?) Died prematurely.

He had been an active and affable man, and very much respected by people of all ranks and professions, and particularly by his friends called Quakers, to whom he was assistant in their sufferings, and other ways.

But, at the same time he affected popularity, and pretended to skill in horses; which drew him from necessary business, and into some "gentlemens" company.

His freedom in conversation in company, and in some houses of no good character, hurt his esteem of his friends.

As the sound of the WILLIAMS pen fades away, We are now at the Lancaster Quay, overlooking a shipyard, near the docks. WILLIAM is standing over watching the building of a ship, he is standing with ROBERT LAWSON.

WILLIAM

John Troughton!

ROBERT

Oh god, what has he done now?

WILLIAM

he has gone too far.

ROBERT

And how has he been loose and disorderly in his conversations this time?

WILLIAM

this will be the last time he speaks to me in such a manner.

ROBERT

You are tired my friend. It has been a long week. Rest and forget about John Troughton. All will be well

WILLIAM

Rest? It is too late for that.

ROBERT

Too late? How?

WILLIAM

I have already informed him of my intention to give over the housekeeping.

ROBERT

You've tuned up the house to the landlord?

WILLIAM

I have.

ROBERT

Why? What could he have said that could force such a rash move?

WILLIAM

He slighted my favour and service. Let us just leave it at that. If I'm to have any self respect in this world. I will not allow men like that to talk to me as if I am less than dirt.

(Pause.)

ROBERT

So, that is that then?

WILLIAM

Correct. That is that.

ROBERT

You are far too rash sometimes William Stout. Far too rash.... All that being said. Perhaps your rashness is my fortune today. I have a proposition for you? A rash proposition.

WILLIAM

Go on.

ROBERT

William, have you ever heard of The Edward and Jane Ketch?

WILLIAM

The Edward and Jane what?

ROBERT

Ketch. That down there. The ship they are working on.... When it is finished it will be 80 tons

WILLIAM

What do I know about building ships?

ROBERT

Nothing that you can not learn I expect. I and some friends, would like you to stand a sixth part share. What do you say? You can even busy yourself in preparing materials and other services for the speedy finishing of her. Now you have unencumbered yourself from John Trouton

WILLIAM

Building a ship? That sounds like a big venture Robert. A risky venture...

In the distance we hear the sound of the church Bells rigging. Announcing that it is "Dusk" or 6pm

WILLIAM

The sun will be set soon....We should head back to the stables on Market Street

ROBERT

You didn't answer my question.

WILLIAM

Robert, my friend. Let us talk more. I'd like to know what my part would be in seeing the debts paid first?

ROBERT

Is that a yes?

WILLIAM

I don't want to end my life like Henry....If I do not risk something. I will condemn myself to abject nothing.

ROBERT

So it is a yes then.

WILLIAM

It's not a no.

(Continuous) The sound of pen scribbling on paper. WILLIAM writing in his diary.

WILLIAM (V.O)

The first day of the *third* month this year, I gave over housekeeping, and turned up the house to the landlord; being I saw I could not be any further serviceable to John Troughton,. I being at this time much out of business, I was persuaded to stand a sixth part share in a new ship of about 80 tons, now building near Warton, which I accepted of, and was active in preparing materials and other serviced for the speedy finishing of her. I can't remember the last time I felt so alive and excited about what the future might bring.

END OF PART ONE

Part 2 : March 1698 – September 1698

We are in a stables, and we can hear the laboured breathing of a dying horse that is clearly in some discomfort. WILLIAM STOUT is seeing to the horse. The horse becomes more and more frantic we hear the sound of church bells in the distance announcing that it is 8am in the morning. All the combined noise rises to a crescendo where WILLIAM stout pulls out a knife from a sheaf. He cuts deep and true – the horse dies. WILLIAM stays in silence for a long moment, to the extent that all we can hear is his quiet crying

A MAN enters the stables.

MAN

Such a waste.

WILLIAM

I'm sad - I wanted to be alone!

MAN

Sorry - I didn't mean to intrude.

Of course. I will leave you be. It's just...never mind. My apologies.

MAN moves to leave

WILLIAM

Wait... it's me that should apologise. I'm sorry I snapped at you. It's just I left very clear instructions. They should not have let you in the stable.

MAN

Serious business the passing of a beloved creature....They're like members of the family are they not? You strike me as a man bearing a fine and gentle heart then sir.

WILLIAM

A fine and gentle heart? The way I just shouted at you. No, this morning my heart feels very cold.

MAN

That sounds grim.

WILLIAM

I never married and all around me are dying or slighting his favour, This horse is all that I had left. Now he's gone. What can a man do, faced with such bad omens?

MAN

Ah. A superstitious man, is it?...I don't mean to pass judgement.

WILLIAM

Superstitious, perhaps. Leveraged, certainly....I have a meeting in London. This horse, my brother's horse has been well kept in this stable and he was well up until the evening last. Yet this morning I found him dying. all this only a few days before my intended journey. Superstition or not. A bad omen, if ever I saw one. Wouldn't you say?

MAN

I have never been one for that kind of superstition.

WILLIAM

There was time when perhaps I might have shared your sentiment. This damn ship I am involved in...

MAN

You're William Stout. The Quaker and Justice of the Peace?

WILLIAM

That is I.

MAN

I've heard of your name? and your good reputation amongst my congregation. Perhaps our meeting on this unfortunate moment, was more than good fortune

WILLIAM

Oh

MAN

I have just come from London, where I had a horse lent there, which I need to return him again. It is a fine horse. Just in the next stable. On knowing your fine reputation, and seeing your kind gentle spirit. I'm certain that it would not be a mistake for me to offer you the horse to ride upon, trusting to your care of him, and to deliver him in London as directed. Do you accept?

WILLIAM

I don't know what to say.

MAN

Do you not plan still to travel to London?

WILLIAM

Why would you help me in this way?

MAN

If that is the extent of your objections, I take it then that you accept?

Let this be a reminder to you young man. Where there are bad omens in this world, there are also good. Stay strong and true on your path and god will reward thee.

WILLIAM

I'm in your debt sir

MAN

Are you? Perhaps you could do something for me? Directions to the quay.

As WILLIAM and the Man exit. They get quieter as if walking away from us....

WILLIAM

From here on Market Street?

MAN

Yes please

WILLIAM

Well first you want to cut down New Street.. Past bowling Green, Cut down new road to Fleet Square. Turn left on to Damside. Onto Bridge Lane...and then carry on until you get to the magnificent Quay of St ELIJAH....On the River Loin as we like to call it

As the conversation quietens into the distance. (Continuous) The sound of pen scribbling on paper. WILLIAM is writing in his diary.

WILLIAM (V.O)

The horse carried me well, and was well received at London. At Warrington we met with several friends, men and women, who were going to that meeting, and all so agreeable company that I never went to London at so little charge as at this time, or so good entertainment. I, took up our lodgings at the Swan with Two necks in Lad lane and duly attended the general yearly meeting, which was large, unanimous, peaceable, and edifying

A ship on the Sea. WILLIAM's cabin. Sounds of a rough sea outside the ship

WILLIAM is being sick.

WILLIAM

Oh god. No more. Please no more...

Knocking on WILLIAM'S cabin door.

WILLIAM

Hello?

The knocking continues.

WILLIAM

Yes, who is it?

The knocking stops all of a sudden.

WILLIAM

Thank god for that.

We hear the sound of a man with a small hand bell ringing it aloud as he walks up and down the ship, past WILLIAM'S door. Upstairs and across the flooring above our head. For a beat nothing and then the knocking continues again.

ROBERT

William. It's me. Can I come inside?

WILLIAM

Robert, better not. what is it?

ROBERT comes inside the cabin.

(Pause.)

ROBERT

Are you alright?

WILLIAM

I'm afraid I haven't got my sea legs quite yet.

How on earth did you get on this ship? You set off back to Lancaster by horse

ROBERT

William my dear man. Have you finally gone mad?

ROBERT laughs. So does WILLIAM feverishly, until he is suddenly sick again.

WILLIAM

It is madness though, isn't it?

ROBERT

What is?

WILLIAM

This path that God has placed me upon.

ROBERT

The path that lead you onto this ship and into this investment?

WILLIAM

I was just thinking about how crazy this year has been. I will not soon forget 1698. That devastating fire....

ROBERT

I hope you're still not determined to blame yourself for that. there really was nothing you could have done.

WILLIAM

And then the death of my good friend and master

ROBERT

Death? You still cant say it can you? He didn't die William.

WILLIAM

Fine. He committed suicide.

ROBERT

Well at least you certainly can't blame yourself for that can you?

WILLIAM

The last time he tried to speak to me before he died....I told him that I didn't have the time. You should have seen the look on his face. The disappointment in my eyes. At what he had become. It haunts me. I swear he seemed to shrink into less of a man on the spot....And I would call myself a friend. And then being made jointly responsible with *that woman* for settling his estate.

ROBERT

And now look at you, sailing on a ship you own a 6th of back to the grand port of Lancaster

WILLIAM

I am being serious Robert. Dark thoughts have entered my mind Robert. Dark thoughts like those that plagued our good friend Andrew

ROBERT

Oh William. You're much stronger than all that.

WILLIAM

Am I?

ROBERT

You're stronger than him.

ROBERT uncorks a bottle

ROBERT

Here have a drink. This will cheer you up im sure.

WILLIAM is sick.

WILLIAM

Take that foul smelling drink away from me.

ROBERT laughs.

ROBERT

You know, when you tot it all up like that William. It really does sound like madness. You're right friend. Glorious madness

WILLIAM

This isn't funny Robert. I think I'm having a breakdown. I'm feverish, seeing things for Christ sake. Things that are not truly there.

ROBERT

You're fine William. You always will be fine. The fever will pass. Truth be told. This investment we have made. I have also been nervous.

WILLIAM

You have?

ROBERT

I may not show it. Or choose to wallow in self pity

WILLIAM

I am not wallowing

ROBERT

But yes I have my doubts and nerves about this new world that is opening up in front of our eyes...We are all finding our sea legs a new William.

WILLIAM

I guess we are my friend. I guess we are.

The man with the bell makes another pass of the ship. This time going the opposite direction.

WILLIAM

Listen.....

As the sound of the man fades.

WILLIAM

Robert? Where have you gone? Robert?

My god.....Oh my dear friend. I long for your company and the safe solid ground of the Quaker Meeting House

(Continuous) The sound of pen scribbling on paper. WILLIAM writing in his diary. Also the continued sound of the sea.

WILLIAM (V.O)

I bought for her masts, sails, rigging, anchors, and cables and got them put on board at the Edwards and Jane (Ketch), She was now full, and ready to sail and I resolved to come in her by sea to Liverpool; In this voyage I had a very good view of the River Thames, and all the seaports on the south and west of England, except Plymouth. I intended to have come by sea from Liverpool to Lancaster; but my brothers, hearing of my arrival at Liverpool, sent me a horse by some neighbours, shopkeepers, who were then coming to Liverpool; which, after I had re-shipped the goods, I came home by land.

The QUAKER MEETING HOUSE. WILLIAM STOUT is preying.

WILLIAM

Lord, teach me to offer you a heart of thanksgiving and praise in all my daily experiences of life. Teach me to be joyful always, to pray continually and to give thanks in all my circumstances. Change my outlook and attitude into one of joyful contentment I thank You for... All the good luck we have encountered in our trades and for the gift of the Edward and Jane Ketch. I pray for good fortune in my new building of the ship called Employment, who shall voyage out soon for Virginia...

Somewhere outside this building, in the far distance, the sound of church bells ringing for 3pm. From a distance we hear footsteps coming closer, along wooden floors, until they stops outside of the door. We here a knock...

WILLIAM

Hello Robert, do come in.

ROBERT enters the room.

ROBERT

I hope I'm not disturbing you. Elijah Salthouse is asking for you. leaving to Philadelphia apparently?

WILLIAM

Pennsylvania. On the ship freighted by Robert Haydock

ROBERT

I take it this was by your encouragement? It is a big decision.

WILLIAM

It is a good move Robert. Has god not shown us this in our investments.

ROBERT

the young boy is barely a man William. He was brought up in a grocer and drapers shop....

WILLIAM

...and was disposed to go there with his substance as a merchant. My encouragement or not.

ROBERT

Fine. I'll tell him you are coming.

WILLIAM

Thank you Robert.

ROBERT exits, we hear the door close and the steps recede away.

WILLIAM collects some possessions together and exits out the same way as ROBERT, he walks through the house until, entering a room.

WILLIAM

Ah Elijah. There you are, sorry to keep you waiting

ELIJAH

Good morning Mister Stout. And that is ok. I'm happy to wait.

WILLIAM

How is the preparation for Pennsylvania?

ELIJAH

We are all ready for the voyage, this Friday. A few things left to arrange but they are minor. Everything is packed and ready

WILLIAM

Well I do hope you won't mind me encumbering you with a few more items.

ELIJAH

Of course sir. What did you have in mind?

WILLIAM

This parcel of woollen, linen and a few other goods suitable for that country to the value of £110. I would like to consigned them wholly to your care and management for me.

ELIJAH

Thank you sir. That is very kind of you. You've always been very kind to me. Especially since my father passed. I don't know how I could ever thank you.... I will make arrangement to collect at your convenience.

WILLIAM

You know when I was your age. My mentor, the late Henry Coward, he said to me before I went off on a journey to some place or other, that "Whenever I was about to do something foolish or dangerous—or something, I suppose, that simply displeased my father—he would say, 'Don't let a little fear and common sense stop you'".

WILLIAM laughs at his remembrance. ELIJAH laughs politely too

ELIJAH

I'll remember that sir.

(PAUSE)

ELIJAH

Well if that is everything, sir. I will be off.

WILLIAM

Yes I expect you have lots to be getting on with.

ELIJAH

Yes sir.

ELIJAH turns to leave.

WILLIAM

Elijah?

ELIJAH

Yes Mr stout?

WILLIAM

Are you afraid about your journey?

ELIJAH

No sir. I'm excited.

WILLIAM

Excited?

ELIJAH

Last I counted sir. there were more than 20 of our merchants of Lancaster, took this opportunity, sold their estates, and took their families to settle in Pennsylvania.

WILLIAM

Yes. I guess that does make it easier. Safety in numbers.

ELIJAH

Yes sir.

WILLIAM

Elijah?

Where there are bad omens in this world. There are also good. Stay strong and true on your path and god will reward thee.

ELIJAH

Mr Stout...

EXIT ELIJAH. We hear the outside door open and close. After a moment, ROBERT enters.

ROBERT

£110 worth of goods William? Very kind. Very kind indeed. You're fond of that one.

WILLIAM

Yes I guess I am. Pennsylvania sounds very exciting doesn't it?

ROBERT

"Where there are bad omens". You almost sounded like a minister William. Well you had me convinced anyway. You know, I do not know exactly what happened to you on that trip back from London. But there is something changed in you. I see such a new a refreshed determination in your eye. That would see you conquer the world and everything in it.

WILLIAM

For the first time this year, Robert I feel the future looks bright with possibilities. What ever this change is. As this town Lancaster finds itself. After a time being lost. I feel I have also finally found myself again out there in the ports and ships of this world and the great seas.

Will you prey with me?

ROBERT

I will.

The TWO MEN take a knee.

WILLIAM

Jesus, I want to be like You who obeyed the Father without complaint. You embraced the chains of humanity when You walked this earth. Convict me whenever I complain or compare myself with others. Give me Your attitude of humility and thankful acceptance. I want to be like the Apostle Paul who learned contentment in every circumstance. I choose to continually offer You a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that give praise to Your name. I long to bring a smile to Your face. I know that Your truth dwells in a thankful heart. You have set your glory above the heavens. In Jesus' name, amen.

ROBERT

Amen.

The End