

SCRIPT

A scene from *A Warning to the Curious*

The interior of an old junk shop. It is crammed with curious and forgotten objects including a wide variety of stuffed animal heads mounted on the walls. There is a cabinet containing a skeleton and on another there is a hollowed-out skull. Books, pictures and numerous clocks complete the scene. Everything is dusty and covered in cobwebs.

The door opens. The shop bell rings and a draught of air blows through the shop causing the cobwebs to wave.

Paxton enters and surveys the shop - his eye falling on some of the more bizarre items.

A voice is heard causing Paxton to turn rapidly around.

SHOPKEEPER

I am sorry. I heard the bell. Susan (a doll the man is carrying) fell off the shelf and broke an arm. I've just been affecting a little repair. Was there anything in particular?

PAXTON

I was interested in old maps of the area.

SHOPKEEPER

Maps? Let me see. There's a pile of them - over here. The place is covered in dust.

PAXTON looks doubtful of ever finding anything of interest. Suddenly his face registers alarm.

He has seen the skeleton. It is inside a cabinet lying in a foetal position.

PAXTON

Where was that found?

SHOPKEEPER

In the foundations of the old bridge. They were pulling it down some years ago now. It was a common practice in the Middle Ages.

PAXTON

Human sacrifice?

SHOPKEEPER

Yes. They believed the murdered person becomes an evil spirit and guards the bridge from hostile forces. It was done with temples too but bridges were the most popular...

Hold up doll

*Virgins were meant to be particularly efficacious.
"London Bridge is falling down, falling down, my
fair lady . . ." Nursery rhymes are fascinating.*

Meanwhile he has moved to another part of the shop.

Oh, here are your maps. I'll leave you to them.

PAXTON smiles at the SHOPKEEPER as he exits and then turns his attention to the pile of faded and torn papers before him. In reaching for one he manages to knock a pile of books to the floor. He picks up the largest of them - an old family Bible.

He notices the crest on the cover - it shows the three crowns of East Anglia guarded by a ferocious heraldic monster. Paxton opens the Bible. In the inside cover is a rhyme.

PAXTON
(reading)

*Nathaniel Ager is my name and England is my
nation*

*Seaburgh is my dwelling-place and Christ is
my salvation*

*When I am dead and in my grave, and all my
bones are rotten,*

*I hope the Lord will think on me when I am
quite forgotten.*

He traces the names written on the opposite side from Nathaniel down to William - the last of the Ager's and the only one to have died without an heir. His date of death has not been filled in.

PAXTON
[Astonished]

William Ager . . .

END OF SCENE