

THE KING'S COINER

The true story of Isaac Newton, detective

A radio drama by Philip Palmer

BBC Radio Afternoon Theatre
Producer: Toby Swift

FOR EDUCATION PURPOSES ONLY

SCENE 1

ACOUSTIC: A ROOM IN A BOARDING HOUSE.

CHALONER: You are very beautiful. Let me hold your hand. Oh yes. And let your eyes look into mine. I can see your soul. You are full of love. You will meet a man, and he will love you in return. He will be...dark haired. With a ferocious temper. But kind. He'll hold your hand, as I am holding it now, and he will stroke your arm...

HOLLOWAY: Steady on, man.

CHALONER: Play the part Tom. He will be a tailor by trade. You will have five children. Four girls, and a boy.

HOLLOWAY: Can't I have all boys?

CHALONER: But beware. Beware of water!

HOLLOWAY: This is going to work for us, is it?

CHALONER: Trust me. I'll make us a fortune.

HOLLOWAY: I preferred the thieving.

CHALONER: I'll do the talking. My name is Dr Huygens, I am Dutch. No, my name is Dr Paracelus, I am from Germany. I also dabble in alchemy.

HOLLOWAY: If you touch my arse, doctor, will it turn to gold?

CHALONER: It will feel like gold, but tragically, t'will smell the same.

HOLLOWAY: Ha!

SCENE 2

ACOUSTIC: ROYAL MINT, WALKING PAST THE
PRINTING PRESSES.

NEWTON: The mills start up at four of the morning. And I am always here to watch them. Otherwise, the men will smoke and gossip and waste whole minutes.

HALIFAX: This place stinks like the very devil.

NEWTON: Horse shit and molten gold, a heady brew. We have ten mills, fifty horses. Each of these men has his allotted task, the sizers, the nealers,

HALIFAX: Very well, you shall have your clerk.

SCENE 3

ACOUSTIC: A ROOM IN AN INN.

CHALONER: What took you?

HOLLOWAY: Damn you William, I could have been killed! All because you chose to feel your way to heaven with the baker's wife.

CHALONER: It was worth it.

HOLLOWAY: It was worth it for you!

CHALONER: Ah, sweet Isabelle!

HOLLOWAY: They told me her name was Maria.

CHALONER: Perhaps. In the heat of the moment, names sometimes escape me. You're bleeding, let me...

HOLLOWAY: Leave it! You've done enough harm. Will, I'm sick to the stomach of this quack doctoring.

CHALONER: And so am I! I have another trade I'd like to resume. In Warwickshire, you know, I was a craftsman. Acknowledged master of the Birmingham goat.

HOLLOWAY: (ANXIOUS) Counterfeiting's a hanging offence.

CHALONER: Getting caught is a hanging offence, Tom. Here, here, look at this.

HOLLOWAY LOOKS.

HOLLOWAY: It's a piece of earth.

CHALONER: Break it open.

HE DOES.

HOLLOWAY: A shilling.

CHALONER: Take it out. You see the impression left inside the two pieces of clay? That's the perfect impersonation of your shilling. Here, give me all your money.

HOLLOWAY: We could try using your money.

CHALONER: Don't be timid. Stoke the fire. Put the coins in the ladle. The real Paracelsus claimed he could turn lead into gold. But here we start with silver, melt it, add some base metal.

HOLLOWAY: Is that hot enough?

CHALONER: Pour the coins in.

A CHINK OF COINS.

CHALONER (CONT'D) We take silver coins and turn them into thick, thick broth. Adulterate, dilute, transform. You know I love a bit of magic. That's why I liked the prophet business: you spin a yarn, look a girl in the eye, then magic the skirt over her head. Ah, happy days! No matter, this will be better. Stir, stir. Look at that, oh you beauty.

SCENE 4

ACOUSTIC: NEWTON'S HOUSE, DINING ROOM.

HALIFAX: Calm yourself, Isaac. It's an anonymous broadside, we should ignore it.

NEWTON: It was drafted by Leibnitz himself! Trust me, I know his style. That conniving, sly, beetle-headed lawyer!

CATHERINE: Which discovery is the writer referring to?

NEWTON: Hush Catherine, don't interrupt!

HALIFAX: Fluxions, my dear. What Leibnitz refers to as 'the calculus'. Isaac, my advice to you is to say nothing. Take the moral high ground.

NEWTON: Leibnitz received my private letters on this matter and never acknowledged the fact!

CATHERINE: Lord Halifax, pray forgive me - what exactly are fluxions?

NEWTON: Chatter chatter chatter! For pity's sake a man can't hear himself think!

HALIFAX: That's unkind, Isaac, your niece was merely...

CATHERINE: (OVERLAPPING) I'm sorry, I didn't mean to...

NEWTON: Leibnitz is a charlatan! He knows no mathematics!

HALIFAX: Oh for heaven's sake! Give the man some credit.

NEWTON: He is my enemy and I shall destroy him!

CATHERINE: Perhaps, uncle, we could invite Mr Leibnitz to dine?
Repair the breach somehow?

DEADLY SILENCE.

NEWTON: (SCORNFUL) An excellent notion! We'll lay out our best silverware, and search him as he leaves to see how many knives he's stolen!

CATHERINE: Oh no, searching him would be very crude. I propose we count the knives before he comes, count again when he's gone, then simply subtract. A rather more elegant mathematical method, don't you think?

HALIFAX ROARS WITH LAUGHTER. NEWTON IS ALSO AMUSED.

NEWTON: (KINDLY) Fluxions is a method based on infinitesimal approximations. You find the slope of a curved line by drawing a tangent that's approximately the same.

(CONT'D OVER)

NEWTON (CONT'D): And then a closer tangent. And a closer tangent still. You sneak up on the truth, with ten million tiny footsteps. This is Newton's method, and it allows me to formulate the laws of motion, among many other things. Do you understand any of that child?

CATHERINE: Very little. (BEAT) But tomorrow, I shall try to know a little more. The day after, a little more still.

NEWTON: (AMUSED) Very good. (BRUSQUE) I'll give you some tuition. In the mornings, 11 till 12.

CATHERINE: Uncle, I....

NEWTON: Be sure I never have to wait on you.

SCENE 5

ACOUSTIC: WITHIN THE WALLS OF THE TOWER
OF LONDON.

HOLLOWAY: I don't feel comfortable here. Look at that pike.

CHALONER: Just walk with a swagger, make it look like you own the place.

HOLLOWAY: That's Traitor's Gate, I lost both great grandparents down there. And they've got prison cells in there, in the White Tower.

CHALONER: Not for the likes of you and me, Tom. That's incarceration for the Quality, that is.

HOLLOWAY: But we have a proposal to...

CHALONER: We have here a man who already knows the truth. See, Tom, how he meets my gaze. That's a man who needs no telling. He knows he is surrounded by knaves, and has contrived a strategy for the routing of them. Good day Mr Newton, it's rare to meet an honest man such as yourself.

CHALONER GETS TO HIS FEET.

Tom?

HOLLOWAY: We are going then?

CHALONER: I just said so, didn't I?

NEWTON: Wait.

PAUSE.

CHALONER: We are waiting.

NEWTON: What do you want of me?

CHALONER: I merely wish to be of service.

NEWTON: You want me to pay you for information? That can be arranged.

CHALONER: I've taught the method to my friend Tom Holloway here. Give him a job at the Royal Mint, and he can make you a thousand coins as good. And then you'll find, as if by magic, all the counterfeiters will vanish from the Kingdom!

NEWTON: If I adopted this plan, what would your role be?

CHALONER: Well I'd work side by side with Tom. And I could help you, if you wished, with your Warden's duties. I could be your deputy.

NEWTON: Can you read?

CHALONER: (AFFRONTED) Indeed yes.

NEWTON: Without mumbling aloud?

CHALONER: That's an impossibly high standard to set, sir, for a man of my background.

NEWTON: I stand justly rebuked. What is your background, Mr Chaloner?

CHALONER: I am a humble weaver's son, sir.

NEWTON: You have intriguing qualities.

CHALONER: Thank you sir. You're a rare gentleman sir.

CATHERINE: Uncle, are you leaving already?

NEWTON: (HEADING FOR THE DOOR) Yes, yes, the afternoon shift....

CATHERINE: (FIRM) You have a letter.

NEWTON: From Germany. Yes I saw.

CATHERINE: You should open it.

NEWTON: It would only vex me.

CATHERINE: It might be an apology from Leibnitz.

NEWTON: Pigs might fly.

CATHERINE: Uncle! Open your infernal post.

NEWTON: Pass it here.

HE READS.

As I thought. A trap. I have to leave.

HE MOVES TOWARDS THE DOOR.

CATHERINE: Uncle!

HE EDGES BACK.

NEWTON: (SULKY) Very well.

CATHERINE: Let me read.

SHE READS.

It's a challenge. A mathematical problem that the greatest minds in Europe have been unable to solve.

NEWTON: He wants to show me up.

CATHERINE: 'To determine the curve line connecting two given points, at different distances above the horizon and not in the same vertical line, along which a body passing by its own gravity shall descend to the lowest point in the shortest time possible.' Easy. A parabola.

NEWTON: You're not allowed to guess, Catherine.

CATHERINE: Or another curvy line, they all look much the same to me. But honestly Uncle, how hard can it be to solve this one?

NEWTON: I shan't even make the attempt.

CATHERINE: But you have to.

NEWTON: Can't you see! If I fail, Leibnitz will taunt me. If I succeed, he'll know I used calculus, and I'll once again stand accused of being a common thief.

CATHERINE: But you invented calculus!

NEWTON: Catherine, no!

CATHERINE: (COOL) Then I shall write and inform Mr Leibnitz that you have declined his challenge, on the grounds that you no longer have a head for the mathematics. There's no shame in that, Uncle, is there?

NEWTON SIGHS.

SCENE 8

ACOUSTIC: NEWTON'S STUDY AT HOME.

NIGHT/EARLY HOURS OF MORNING.

CATHERINE: Uncle?

NEWTON: Yes Catherine?

CATHERINE: It's late.

NEWTON: I will not sleep tonight. My head is alive with thoughts. If only we knew today what the Ancients knew. All knowledge was theirs. And for all our industry, and invention, all we can ever hope to do is...catch up.

CATHERINE: Perhaps in some areas, we know more than they.

NEWTON: No. Not so. (PAUSE) My work is not complete. But I don't know how to finish it.

CATHERINE: You have your book on Optics, still unpublished.

NEWTON:

But even so, I'm still no closer to knowing how it all fits together. Through the study of the frame of nature, we can come to a knowledge of the deity. I could know God.

NEWTON AND CATHERINE SHARE A LAUGH.

SCENE 9

ACOUSTIC: A TAVERN.

CHALONER: We could go elsewhere. If you're uncomfortable. The Blue Boar is not your roughest kind of public house, but it does have its detractors.

NEWTON: I am quite content. I spend much of my time these days in taverns and prisons.

NEWTON: I think I shall.

NEWTON IS EVER SO SLIGHTLY PISSED.

CATHERINE: You seem flush.

NEWTON: Pleasantly so. I had a convivial meeting with a man I may hire as my clerk. We played a few hands of cards in a tavern nearby. (BEAT) Ha! I won five guineas off him!

CATHERINE: Indeed.

NEWTON: Yes, indeed. Some things you never forget!

CATHERINE: (KNOWS NOW HE'S BEEN DRINKING) Hmmm. (BEAT) Your hand – is it scorched?

NEWTON: It's nothing. I scalded it during an alchemical experiment. It happened last night, as you slept.

CATHERINE: I didn't notice it this morning.

NEWTON: No matter. (PAUSE) Perhaps you can play the harpsichord for me. After we've dined.

CATHERINE: My playing is still very raw.

NEWTON: Still, it pleases me.

CATHERINE: What's his name? The man you plan to have as your clerk.

NEWTON: And is this William also involved in the counterfeiting business?

CARTER: Oh he's the arch-rogue of them all. The most notorious counterfeiter in London town.

NEWTON: I've not come across his name before. Who are his other associates?

CARTER: He used to be in with Blackford Coppinger, till he was hanged. And he's a pal of Tom Holloway and his brother John.

NEWTON:

CARTER: He's been in Newgate twice, but he always gets off, thanks to his trick of trumping up his services, and stifling the evidence against him.

NEWTON: William Chaloner.

SCENE 13

ACOUSTIC: NEWTON'S HOUSE.

NEWTON: You're late.

CATHERINE: It's barely a minute past eleven, Uncle.

NEWTON: (FURIOUS) Lateness is the token of a slovenly mind.

CATHERINE: Then...I apologise.

NEWTON: I'm wasting my time with you.

CATHERINE: I hope you do not feel that. I've learned so much... I feel I am beginning to...

NEWTON: You are a faithless betraying woman.

CATHERINE: Uncle!

NEWTON: Don't bicker with me! I will not have this bickering!

CATHERINE: Uncle, you're being unfair. I did not...I see, something is disturbing you. Is it the business with Flamsteed?

NEWTON: (SPITEFULLY) The business with Flamsteed is no business of yours.

CATHERINE: (ALMOST IN TEARS) Then...once again, I apologise.

NEWTON EXITS.

SCENE 14

ACOUSTIC: LORD HALIFAX'S HOME

CATHERINE: Please forgive me for calling on you like this, Lord Halifax.

HALIFAX: You are a welcome guest. (PAUSE) What is it? (HE CAN SEE SHE IS UPSET) It's your uncle.

CATHERINE: (TACTFULLY) Something is preying on his mind. It makes him abrupt.

HALIFAX: He's known for his terrible rages. As his friends it is our duty to forgive him.

CATHERINE: What can be distressing him so?

HALIFAX: He once told Locke he wished he were dead. He insulted Pepys. We're all afraid of your uncle you know.

CATHERINE: I have always found him...kind.

HALIFAX: But scary.

CATHERINE: Oh yes.

THEY LAUGH. PAUSE.

CATHERINE: I should go.

HALIFAX: I'll see you to the door.

CATHERINE: Or I could stay a while. If that would be proper.

HALIFAX: It would be...quite proper.

CATHERINE: We could converse on political topics.

HALIFAX: Or poetry. We could discuss our favourite writers. Do you read poetry?

CATHERINE: Widely. Voraciously. Do you?

HALIFAX: Damn, no.

CATHERINE: (LAUGHING) We should stay on politics then.

SCENE 15

ACOUSTIC: CROWDED TAVERN.

HOLLOWAY: Mr Newton.

NEWTON: (ICY COOL) Where's Chaloner?

CHALONER BARGES THROUGH THE CROWDED
BAR TO REACH HIM.

CHALONER: What brings you here, my friend?

NEWTON: Mr Chaloner, I've come to inform you that your application to be my clerk will no longer be looked upon favourably.

CHALONER: I'm damned sorry to hear that sir.

NEWTON: And so I'll bid you good day.

HE STARTS TO LEAVE.

CHALONER: Perhaps, Mr Newton, we could...

NEWTON: (FURIOUS) Take your hands off me! I know your game! I'll see you hanged, Chaloner!

CHALONER: (SHAKEN) You'll catch cold with such threats, sir. Take care.

NEWTON: I did not come alone.

CHALONER: A knife in the ribs could, nevertheless, be discreetly managed.

NEWTON: I've said all I have to say. I'll see you hanged!

CHALONER LAUGHS.

CHALONER: You soft headed cully.

NEWTON: Don't mock me. I will not be mocked.

CHALONER: (CALM) You are mocked.

SCENE 16

ACOUSTIC: A ROOM IN PARLIAMENT.

HALIFAX: Yes.

NEWTON: I'm used to that. Death threats, too, have become a matter of course. Whitfield and Frances Ball both say they will shoot me. Well, let them try.

HALIFAX: The House Select Committee into the Royal Mint want you to appear before them. As Chancellor, I serve on the Committee, I have no choice but to be one of your inquisitors.

NEWTON: Inquisitors? Am I being brought to trial, like a common criminal?

HALIFAX: In effect, yes.

HALIFAX: You know him?

NEWTON: I do. He is a...a... (BAFFLED) You're saying, he has supporters in Parliament?

HALIFAX: Chaloner is a remarkable man. (PAUSE) It seems very likely we will vote to appoint him as Supervisor of the Royal Mint.

NEWTON: That would never be acceptable to me.

A LOADED SILENCE.

That's impossible. (PANICKED) This cannot be.

SCENE 17

ACOUSTIC: COMMITTEE ROOM IN PARLIAMENT

CHALONER:

VERNON: (NASTY) Mr Newton, do you know for a fact that Chaloner's methods are not practicable? Or are you merely...speculating?

LONG PAUSE.

NEWTON: I know it for a fact. (PAUSE. THEN A 'CHINK' AS HE DROPS A COIN ON THE TABLE) This is a coin we pressed with Chaloner's method. You see, it's buckled and broke. The blank is too thin to stand having a raised impression. It will not work.

CHALONER: You fool. You simply make the coin thicker!

NEWTON: I've explored that option also.

ANOTHER COIN, ANOTHER 'CHINK'

NEWTON: (CONT) Perhaps you would look at this coin which, as you can see, is thicker, and has the King's Head raised in Chaloner's way without any signs of cracking.

CHALONER: A fine piece of craftsmanship.

VERNON: I agree. Superior to the Mint's previous efforts.

NEWTON: It was not made by the Mint, I cast this myself in my rooms, with a forge and a hammer. Because of the thicker metal, it's relatively easy to hammer out the impression of the King's head. Thus repudiating the idea that Chaloner's coin is harder to counterfeit.

HALIFAX: You counterfeited a coin, Isaac?

NEWTON: (SNAPS) Purely as an experiment. Here. (ANOTHER 'CHINK') This coin, by contrast, was made legitimately by the officials of the Royal Mint, using Chaloner's method. Can you notice anything amiss?

CHALONER: Beware, it's a trick!

VERNON: It seems genuine to me.

NEWTON: And so it is. Except that I have hollowed and scooped out a portion of silver from the centre, and plated it over again with copper. This gives us a new way of debasing coins, you don't just clip from the edges, you can gouge out from the middle.

CHALONER: There may be ways of preventing that. Perhaps with time you and I could find a way to...

NEWTON: No! (PAUSE) I believe I have demonstrated that Chaloner's way does not work. Am I done now?

VERNON: Mr Chaloner has made a

SCENE 18

ACOUSTIC: NEWTON'S HOUSE, DINING TABLE.

NEWTON: ...staring at the sun for half an hour at a time. I even tried putting needles in my eye.

CATHERINE: Uncle!

NEWTON: To see the patterns of light which emerged. Fascinating. But of course, I could easily have blinded myself. I see now, I went too far.

HALIFAX: Age has mellowed you.

NEWTON: Oh certainly.

HALIFAX: I'm surprised to find you so jovial. After that bruising encounter with the Select Committee last week.

NEWTON: I think my views prevailed.

HALIFAX: Indeed, but it must have been galling. To be called to account in such a way, by a man like Chaloner.

NEWTON: No, no. I am a great believer in frank and honest criticism. And I accept there have been abuses by some of my agents, which perhaps I have been slow to deal with. With hindsight, I see Mr Chaloner has done me a great service.

CATHERINE: My Uncle is learning to forgive and forget.

HALIFAX: (DRYLY) I'll warn Leibnitz.

SCENE 19

ACOUSTIC: NEWGATE PRISON

NEWTON: Deposition of Thomas Holloway, 3rd March 1698.

HOLLOWAY: I will not speak.

NEWTON: (TRANSCRIBING) He saith that he hath known William Chaloner, now prisoner in Newgate, for five years or more. They met at Wood Street Counter, where both men were imprisoned for debt.

HOLLOWAY: How did you know that?

NEWTON: You shared a cell with John Newboll. Newboll has become my informant. (TRANSCRIBING) On being discharged from Wood Street both men fell into bad practices, and practised a trade as quack doctors, otherwise known as 'piss pot prophets', assuming the names of Dr Paracelsus and his servant Gustav.

HOLLOWAY: Are you a wizard? How could you know all that?

NEWTON: You bragged one night to Coppinger. Coppinger told the chaplain who shrieved him before he was hanged. The Chaplain told me. We also have a private deposition from the baker's wife. Shortly after this you met Elizabeth, who became your wife Elizabeth Holloway, who will shortly be arrested and tried as a common bawd.

HOLLOWAY: You would not do that.

NEWTON: She'll likely escape with a flogging.

HOLLOWAY: I will not speak against William Chaloner! Nothing will induce me.

NEWTON: Then you will hang with him. We have another witness who can testify you and Chaloner are counterfeiters. John Peers, the clockmaker.

HOLLOWAY: Damn it! I never liked that mean-hearted son of a bitch!

NEWTON: He tells me you made Spanish coins together.

HOLLOWAY: We did, aye.

NEWTON: How many?

HOLLOWAY: Forty. And as many guineas. (PAUSE) And some Treasury Bills. (PAUSE) Am I your Evidence now, Mr Newton?

NEWTON: You are, Tom Holloway. (TRANSCRIBING) 'The informant saith that....'

SCENE 20

ACOUSTIC: NEWGATE, PRISON CELL.

HALIFAX: Isaac, Chaloner has made an allegation.

BEAT.

NEWTON: That is typical of him.

HALIFAX: He admits showing Holloway how to counterfeit coins. But claims he did it as an experiment.

NEWTON: Let the jury decide on that.

HALIFAX: But he says he was never in business with John Peers.

CATHERINE: Lord Halifax has said that he loves me too. (PAUSE)
You...don't approve?

NEWTON: Lord Halifax is my friend. (BEAT) He is also a...man of
the world.

CATHERINE: He drinks. He likes to gamble. He has known many
lovers.

NEWTON: You know of this?

CATHERINE: He tells me everything.

NEWTON: I doubt that.

CATHERINE: He tells me...Enough. Enough to shock a little provincial
girl.

NEWTON: You're hardly that, not any more. This is a delicate
matter, Catherine. Charles is a baron, he comes from a
noble family. Marriage to someone of your background
would be...

CATHERINE: I know all that. We will not marry.

NEWTON: Then...what? (PAUSE) No, don't answer, let me pursue
the argument to its logical conclusion. You will be
his...mistress?

CATHERINE: I believe that is, indeed, the correct term. We will live
together.

NEWTON: Oh damn you!

CATHERINE: I love you Uncle, I would do nothing to hurt you.

PAUSE.

NEWTON: Did Charles tell you about Fatio?

CATHERINE: I have heard of the gentleman, yes. A brilliant young mathematician.

NEWTON: Charles calls him my folly. I adored him...I...He was more to me than...I....stepped to the brink, then stepped back. For I knew there might have been a scandal.

CATHERINE: You are averse to scandal.

NEWTON: I am averse to anything that means people are prying into my business. I am my own man. Closed off. Answerable to no one but my own God.

CATHERINE: Uncle, I could not bear you to disapprove of me.

PAUSE.

NEWTON: (GENTLY) I do not disapprove.

SCENE 23

ACOUSTIC: OLD BAILEY

CLERK OF COURT: And do you find the defendant William Chaloner guilty or not guilty?

CHAIRMAN OF JURY: Not guilty.

HALIFAX: Isaac, stay calm.

NEWTON: I am calm.

HALIFAX: Catherine.

CATHERINE WALKS INTO THE HALL.

HALIFAX (CONT'D): This is the scoundrel I told you about. William Chaloner.

CATHERINE: I thought you were to be hanged.

CHALONER: Not yet. And not ever, if I can help it. If I can persuade that dung-loving Warden of the Mint to cease his harassment of me.

CATHERINE: The Warden, Mr Newton, is my Uncle.

CHALONER: Madam, I am mortified. Shall we adjourn, to the drawing room?

HALIFAX: I think not. Speak your piece man. Do you want charity?

CHALONER: I am drafting a letter to the King.

HALIFAX: What?

CHALONER: Now this misunderstanding is cleared up. I thought a role might be found for me...

HALIFAX: You thought wrong. Flee London, while you still have time.

CHALONER: I'm not without friends.

HALIFAX: Secretary Vernon has disowned you. We have all disowned you.

CHALONER: Ah, but you're in my debt. I have opened your eyes to many matters concerning the counterfeiters' trade.

PAUSE.

HALIFAX: You do, I suppose, have a point.

CHALONER: (EAGERLY) Then you will help me?

HALIFAX: (EXASPERATED) Chaloner, for pity's sake...I cannot....I cannot....

CATHERINE: Mr Chaloner, correct me if I'm wrong. You are a professional thief, are you not?

CHALONER: Madam, I am the leopard who will change his spots.

CATHERINE LAUGHS.

SCENE 25

ACOUSTIC; THE ROYAL MINT

WE HEAR THE PRESSES IN THE BACKGROUND.

NEWTON: I don't understand your role in this affair, Charles.

HALIFAX: I like the man. He charms me.

NEWTON: Good. Is there more to be said? I need to return to work.

HALIFAX: Yes, of course. We're agreed then. About Chaloner?
(PAUSE) Isaac?

NEWTON: Good day, Charles.

SCENE 26

ACOUSTIC: CHALONER'S LODGINGS

CHALONER: Mr Newton! You are most welcome.

NEWTON: Thank you. May I...

CHALONER: Come in, come in.

NEWTON: I cannot stay long. Mr Chaloner, you live a charmed life.

CHALONER: I was fairly acquitted, Mr Newton, you know that.

NEWTON: I know nothing of the sort! You bribed Tom Holloway to flee to Scotland. I have documentary proof of it.

CHALONER: The verdict still stands. (BEAT) Tom's a good lad.

NEWTON: But I concede, in your dealings with John Peers the clockmaker, you proved to be a fly cove. Holloway was implicated, you were not.

CHALONER: I'm a good judge of character. Most of the time.

NEWTON: Still those days are done.

CHALONER: They are. I have turned over a new leaf.

NEWTON: I'm glad to hear it.

CHALONER: I have truly learned the error of my ways.

NEWTON: Good, good. You should not have made an enemy of me, Chaloner.

CHALONER: I realise that now. But you can be sure, Mr Newton, I'll steer clear of your neck of the woods from this day on. I'm not one to make the same mistake twice!
(CONFIDING) To be perfectly frank, I'm thinking of standing for Parliament. You know they passed a Bill based on my recommendations about the Mint? That's a boost to a man's self esteem, if ever there was one.

NEWTON: I admire your ambition.

CHALONER: Lord Halifax has promised to help me.

NEWTON: To stand for Parliament? I doubt that.

CHALONER: Nevertheless, his good word means a lot to me.

NEWTON: Aye, he's a loyal friend. Tell me Chaloner. Are you familiar with a man called Thomas Carter?

CHALONER: I can honestly say I've never heard of him.

NEWTON: (SUDDENLY TENSE) He claims you and he counterfeited Malt Tickets together. Also a hundred Spanish pistoles, and as many guineas. He claims he has had dealings with you these five years hence.

CHALONER: I've never even met him!

NEWTON: He has made a full and frank deposition.

CHALONER: Mr Newton, please! If you're going to produce perjured witnesses, you might at least find a man who knows me!

NEWTON: Carter knows you as well as any man alive. He knows every detail of your life, he knows of the quack doctoring and the Birmingham groats, he knows of your girl in Hatton Garden. I've coached him so well, he half believes himself to be your soundest friend. When they hang you, it will break his heart.

CHALONER: No, no. I don't believe you. You would not...? (CHARGED SILENCE) A week ago I walked out of court a free man. You can't send me back to die on the Evidence of some man who counterfeits himself my friend!

NEWTON: The King's Messenger is waiting outside to make the formal arrest.

CHALONER: You have won, Mr Newton. I have been well and truly beat. Isn't that enough?

NEWTON: I said, I would see you hanged.

CHALONER: In the name of God, have mercy on me sir!

NEWTON: And I shall.

END