

A Miracle in Death

By

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EXT. COTTAGE- DAY

FADE IN.

A silhouetted stone cottage rests on a hill on a dreary, cloudy day. A bird caws as a single-horse wagon pulls up to the left side of the cottage. On the side is written in white paint "WINSLOW'S EXTRA-ORDINARY CURES".

INT. COTTAGE- DAY

WINSLOW, a plague doctor dressed in black plague doctor garb, tends to a PATIENT suffering from some disgusting ailment.

He pops boils, applies leeches, uses herbs, bloodletting--the works. The patient, delirious, murmurs with faint pain as Winslow plies his trade. The patient's SPOUSE watches in fear.

WINSLOW

Do not fret, madame. He will make a complete recovery.

SPOUSE

Oh--Oh, thank you, doctor, praise the lord--

WINSLOW

Yes, he will live a full life still...

Winslow begins packing up his medical bag.

WINSLOW

...As long as demons do not seduce him.

SPOUSE

What? What demons?

Winslow turns around dramatically and takes her hands in his.

WINSLOW

My dear...It pains me to admit this...But lately, I've been losing some patients to devils who come in the night and take their weakened souls as they rest.

(CONTINUED)

SPOUSE

No! Oh please, tell me, kind doctor, is there anything that can be done?

Winslow lets go of her hands. He meanders over to his bag on the desk by her dying husband as he talks.

WINSLOW

I'm afraid that all you can do is pray for his safety. Only the strongest of prayers may ward off their foul presence. I would recommend you entrust a man of God for that, and not this humble healer of men.

SPOUSE

Oh...Then pray I shall. God bless you, sir.

Winslow finishes packing and picks his bag up, walking back towards the woman.

WINSLOW

Your payment, if you will.

SPOUSE

Yes... Will this be enough?

She reaches into the folds of her dress and procures a cloth sack of coins. Winslow snatches it and ties the strings to his belt.

WINSLOW

Ordinarily, this household's health and happiness would be payment enough, but these are dark times. Good day, madame.

Winslow exits the house with a flourish.

EXT. DIRT ROAD- DAY

Winslow travels on his wagon along a dirt road. His expression is hidden by the beaked, black mask. The wooden wagon creaks gently, the paint chipping off the side. His black horse trots along wearily but steadily.

A GROCER mans a FRUIT CART by the side of the road just ahead. Winslow pulls the reins, slowing down and stopping beside him.

(CONTINUED)

GROCER

Good-morrow sir! Care for a fresh apple? Picked fresh, just this morning.

Winslow opens the sack given to him by the dying man's spouse.

GROCER

You're a doctor, are you, sir? There's no need for payment from a noble man such as yourself.

He holds out an apple for Winslow.

WINSLOW

You are a kind, generous spirit, sir, but I should insist--

GROCER

Oh please, sir, you're doing God's work, you are! It would be a blessing to accept this gift.

Winslow hesitates. He takes the apple from the grocer's outstretched hand.

WINSLOW

Very well.

Winslow picks up the reins and snaps them. The horse and wagon lurches forward.

GROCER

Safe travels, sir!

Winslow silently continues along the path. He lifts up his mask slightly to take a bite of the apple. He chews slowly, deliberately. After taking only one bite, he lowers it to his horse's mouth, who eagerly takes it and eats it.

EXT. HOME- EVENING

The wagon pulls up to another stone cottage, similar to the one prior, from the right. The overcast sky has an amber hue as the sun begins to sink behind the clouds.

INT. HOME- EVENING

Winslow enters his home. He sets down his bag, hangs up his coat, and props his cane by the door. He removes his mask, hanging it up with this coat, revealing a gaunt, unshaven face and dour expression.

WINSLOW  
I'm home, sweet.

Winslow walks towards a BED in the corner of the room. A SICKLY YOUNG GIRL rests on it. This is ELIZABETH. She is unconscious, breathing heavily, her face pallid with a light sheen of sweat and a cloth positioned on her forehead.

WINSLOW  
I believe I'm getting closer to a cure, Elizabeth.

Winslow removes the cloth from her head, moistening it in a wash basin and reapplying it. He strokes her hair.

WINSLOW  
Just a little more time... I only need a little more time.

INT. HOME- NIGHT

Winslow is buried in research- reading books, scribbling notes, examining ingredients, mixtures, mixing supplies. Excitedly, he brings a particular golden-yellow mixture over to Elizabeth.

WINSLOW  
Perhaps this will work...

Winslow drips a drop of it onto a BLACK SPOT on Elizabeth's neck. It oozes on the flesh.

Then, slowly, the spot CLEARS UP, leaving only a faint mark on her skin.

Winslow laughs excitedly.

WINSLOW  
Yes! Yes, Elizabeth, the cure is at hand!

He moistens the cloth again with shaking hands.

(CONTINUED)

WINSLOW

You will be cured, my child, as God  
wills it I will save you!

Winslow goes back to his table, jotting down some notes.

A KNOCK on his door interrupts the mood. Winslow looks to  
the door in confusion, then walks to it.

He opens the door, revealing an IMPOSING MAN in fine attire.  
His carriage can be seen outside, his SERVANT waiting with  
the reins.

WINSLOW

Lord Camberley! A pleasure to bear  
your appearance. How fares your  
nephew, sir?

LORD CAMBERLEY

Master Richard passed several days  
ago. Your treatments were of no  
use.

WINSLOW

Oh, sir, a pity, a grave pity. Yes,  
not all of my patients are able to  
resist the wiles of those...vile  
devils. My deepest sympathies, sir.

Camberley's face twitches in silent anger.

LORD CAMBERLEY

Indeed.

WINSLOW

Did you come bearing payment?  
Dreadful as the passing of young  
Master Richard is, I still  
require...compensation for my  
services.

Camberley reaches into his coat pocket hesitantly, staring  
Winslow down as he does. His hand comes out holding a HEFTY  
SILK BAG, sagging and jingling as it approaches Winslow's  
outstretched hands.

Camberley looks past Winslow at ELIZABETH, deathly ill on  
her bed.

LORD CAMBERLEY

Who is that?

Winslow looks back and panics slightly.

(CONTINUED)

WINSLOW

Ah, no one, sir, merely my  
daughter, my silly child. Tired  
herself out from play--

Camberley brushes past Winslow, making his way to Elizabeth.  
Winslow hurriedly shuts the door and follows him.

WINSLOW

Pay her no mind, sir, she's well  
within my care--

Camberley stands by her bed, seeing the black spots and  
evidence of illness on her face.

LORD CAMBERLEY

She's ridden with the plague. Just  
as Richard was.

WINSLOW

...Yes. I have been tending to her  
needs--

LORD CAMBERLEY

Why, then, is she still bedridden?  
Have you perhaps need for your  
miraculous cure? Are your 'demons'  
keeping her ill?

Winslow fidgets uncomfortably.

WINSLOW

It is a new variant of plague, a  
rare form, it--it--

LORD CAMBERLEY

Spare me your stories, 'doctor'.  
You are bare before me, an errant  
fraud, a thief, a murderer. You are  
responsible for my nephew's death.

Winslow's face falls. He's speechless as Camberley pockets  
his money and turns back towards the door.

LORD CAMBERLEY

Rest easy tonight, sir, for you  
will hang tomorrow.

WINSLOW

WAIT!

Camberley pauses and faces winslow.

(CONTINUED)

LORD CAMBERLEY

Have you some other yarn to spin?

Winslow, regaining confidence, resumes his usual flair.

WINSLOW

Sir! I have told no lies! My dear daughter is affected with a disease not seen before the eyes of man! She is delicate, her condition fragile- the slightest error would cause grivous death. In the hands of a lesser doctor, Elizabeth would be dead already!

Beat. Camberley's brow furrows in doubt.

WINSLOW

Sir, give me but three days' time. I have nearly perfected a potent cure for her- a cure which will surely end this plague, regardless of the silly demons who have taken so many, who took your prized nephew. I promise you sir, he shall be avenged. I am a man of my word.

Beat. Camberley opens the door.

LORD CAMBERLEY

Two days. If you are so close, as you claim, then surely two days is all you require.

WINSLOW

Bless you, sir! Now, your payment--

LORD CAMBERLEY

Do not mistake this as a kindness, doctor. I will return in two days with my gold, and a stipend for your patience. I will bring with me also an audience for you to impress and astound with this 'miracle cure' of yours. I shall even send for a priest to ward off demons.

WINSLOW

Of-Of course, I'll prepare--

LORD CAMBERLEY

And you shall use this cure on your daughter, to prove to me your skill and dedication.

(CONTINUED)

WINSLOW  
Elizabeth?

Camberley steps outside and approaches his carriage. His servant opens the door.

LORD CAMBERLEY  
You have two days to prepare, sir.  
And should you fail, you will be  
seen as the fraud that you are.  
Good night.

Camberley rides off as Winslow's face falls. He shuts the door, barring it, and slowly walks to Elizabeth. He leans down and caresses her face gently with his gloved hands.

WINSLOW  
Two days... Please, hold til then.

INT. HOME- DAY

MONTAGE of Winslow hurriedly scrambling to gather notes, scribble things down, mix materials, test materials on dead specimens, reading, examining medical charts, etc.

Elizabeth is seen, still unconscious, breathing shallow breaths.

EXT. FIELD- EVENING

Winslow gathers supplies- mushrooms, flowers, herbs, rodents, small birds. He scrambles, hurts himself, nearly dies after a bad fall. Picks himself up.

INT. HOME- NIGHT

Winslow tests a mixture on Elizabeth. He rubs a salve on her skin. The black spots begin to disappear- Winslow looks hopeful.

The black spots then return, and sprawl across her skin worse than before.

Winslow panics and gently, hurriedly scrubs her skin with a damp rag.

INT. HOME- MORNING

The montage RESUMES, and Winslow continues to hurry and find the cure. Same imagery as before, but even more rushed.

EXT. FIELD- DAY

More scenes of Winslow collecting supplies.

EXT. FIELD- EVENING

The sun falls into twilight. Winslow swiftly picks berries in a forest, crushing them into pastes and powders on the spot.

INT. ANOTHER COTTAGE- NIGHT

Winslow, decked out in his plague doctor uniform, treats a young female patient. Her father stands by, nervously praying. Winslow tries the salve- no luck

FATHER

How does she fare, sir? Will my daughter survive this pox?

Winslow reaches for his bag, but knocks it to the floor. He squats down to collect its contents, and stops-

His fingers find a GLASS TUBE with a YELLOW LIQUID inside. He rummages around the other spilled ingredients and picks up a SMALL GREEN LEAF. He unstoppers the tube and puts the leaf inside, stoppering it again and shaking it.

Winslow examines the bottle through his mask, and picks up a DROPPER from the spilled bag, collecting the liquid.

WINSLOW

Never fear, my good man. After much...much research, after much trial and error, I believe I have a cure perfected.

Winslow opens the girl's mouth and, with some hesitation, drops some of the liquid inside.

WINSLOW

Yes...Finally, I've done it. My war against this foul illness has come to a close.

(CONTINUED)

FATHER

God be praised! Bless you, doctor!

Winslow turns to the man.

WINSLOW

Ah, do not thank me just yet, as my work has just begun! Tell me, sir, have you a cough? Have you frail skin, fatigue?

FATHER

Why, yes, I-I think I have--

WINSLOW

Then it is with a heavy heart I must inform you that you, sir, have yourself become infectious.

The man looks alarmed.

WINSLOW

But fret not, sir, as you have born witness to my scientific prowess, I will administer to you the same cure--at only one half of the normal price.

The man fumbles through his ragged clothes and hands Winslow a meager-looking burlap satchel.

FATHER

This is all the treasure I hold in this world, doctor, other than my darling daughter.

Winslow stands still, looking at the bag. He looks away.

WINSLOW

Put that away.

FATHER

What?

Beat. Winslow suddenly strikes a flourishing pose and speaks with dramatic timbre.

WINSLOW

O sir! Your plight, your purity o soul has swayed me! What is a penny to the everlasting health of a loving daughter? Please, sir, keep your gold, I shall have none of it!

(CONTINUED)

FATHER

Oh, how can I ever repay--

Winslow cuts him off and holds out the bottle for him.

WINSLOW

Drink this once I leave, every  
drop, and you and your daughter  
shall both be saved.

He takes it.

FATHER

At the very least, sir, please--  
Stay for dinner, help me celebrate  
my girl's--

WINSLOW

I'm afraid I must away, sir, more  
patients await. Good day.

Winslow abruptly leaves the cottage, leaving the father  
looking confused. He cradles his daughter's head in his  
hands lovingly.

EXT. DIRT ROAD- EVENING

Winslow drives along the old dirt road. His visage is  
entirely obscured by his expressionless mask.

INT. HOME- MORNING

An arm feeds through a black cloak.

A hand pours a glass of water from a pitcher.

A hand feels Elizabeth's forehead, her eyes covered with a  
white damp rag.

A hand reaches for an apple. A CRUNCH is heard.

Two hands reach for the PLAGUE MASK hanging on the wall.  
Winslow puts it on, his face unseen. He opens the door to  
his house, revealing a large CROWD headed by LORD CAMBERLEY.

LORD CAMBERLEY

Good-morrow, sir! As promised- an  
entourage of on-lookers to observe  
your genius!

Camberley walks inside, smirking at Winslow.

(CONTINUED)

## LORD CAMBERLEY

Enter, good people! O Winslow, your business shall surely grow after this day. You need only thank me- and my poor, departed Richard.

Winslow stands still as the flood of people flood past him into his house. A FAT PRIEST dressed in white and gold attire carrying a golden scepter bumps into him.

## PRIEST

Pardon, sir.

Winslow hesitates, then closes the door behind him. Everyone watches him expectantly, Camberley with a shit-eating grin. They make a path for him as he slowly walks to Eliabeth's bedside. He pauses by her bed, then flourishes.

## WINSLOW

My fine brethren! To-day, you shall bear witness to a miraculous, wondrous practice- The practice of science! My dear daughter...Elizabeth...For weeks, she has suffered. Suffered from a great and terrible disease, a disease that has taken the lives of far too many in this country. Well, on this day, to this illness, I say- ENOUGH! To the devil who commands it, I say- ENOUGH! To his army of demons, who stop at nothing to do his evil bidding and steal away these souls, I say- ENOUGH! This day will be a resounding victory, for myself as well as thee! O, my brothers, THANK ye for coming to my humble home on this day, for a miracle may only exist before those who believe!

The crowd cheers. Camberley appears annoyed.

## WINSLOW

Let us begin!

Another montage of Winslow treating Elizabeth. Every procedure is used- Leeches, incense, salves, etc.

The show ends with Winslow procuring the stoppered tube, showing it to the crowd like a showman.

WINSLOW

Now this- Everything you've seen til now, friends, has only been the beginning. These are merely techniques I have perfected over the years. But THIS- This is a brand new invention, my sword against disease. Not only will this potion revive my daughter, but it will also revitalize her, and shield her from illness- yes, total immunity from this pox!

Winslow opens Elizabeth's mouth and empties the entire potion into her mouth. He closes it and awaits expectantly.

Beat. Everyone looks on in anticipation, even Camberley. Gradually, ELIZABETH'S complexion returns to a healthful tone. Her breath shudders, then returns to normal.

Winslow looks to the crowd triumphantly. They cheer. Camberley fumes amongst them.

WINSLOW

Ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters! See how simply this disease can be cured! Be not afraid- I am your doctor!

The cheer some more, holding out satchels of gold towards him, asking for the cure. Winslow revels in their praise.

Suddenly, Elizabeth's skin turns black, dry, like charcoal. She vomits blood and falls unconscious. Her breathing speeds up- then stops completely. She is clearly DEAD.

The crowd has fallen silent, shocked. Camberley shoves his way to the front.

LORD CAMBERLEY

Out of my way.

Camberley inspects the body.

LORD CAMBERLEY

She is dead. Your own daughter, dead. Good people, this man is a--

WINSLOW

YOU!

Winslow points at the priest. Everyone's eyes follow his finger.

(CONTINUED)

WINSLOW

You are a demon in disguise! How dare you, you vile monster! Give back my daughter at once!

PRIEST

I--I don't--

WINSLOW

Brothers! He is weak in his human form! KILL HIM!

The priest darts out of the house. The entire crowd chases him passionately. Everyone, that is, but Camberley.

LORD CAMBERLEY

You have a gift at manipulation, sir.

WINSLOW

I will admit to that.

LORD CAMBERLEY

But tomorrow, they shall know the truth, and you will be tried for the murder. As God is my witness, I shall see you hang.

Camberley rifles through his coat and procures a hefty silk satchel. He drops it on the bed beside the corpse.

LORD CAMBERLEY

Your payment, as promised. Spend what you can tonight. It was well-worth it to witness you kill your own daughter.

Camberley walks out of the open door, closing it behind him. The sound of a whip crack and trotting horses is heard.

Winslow stands alone. He throws the empty glass tube against the wall, SHATTERING it. He removes his mask, looking tired.

Winslow removes the rag from the body's eyes, revealing it to be the SICK DAUGHTER from the day before.

WINSLOW

I'm sorry.

After a moment of silence, Winslow squats down to the floor nearby and takes up the wooden planks, revealing a DIRT RECESS, in which he has ensconced the real ELIZABETH.

Winslow picks her up. She doesn't look good, and her breathing is labored. He walks solemnly out the door with her.

EXT. HOME- NIGHT

Winslow loads Elizabeth carefully into the back of the wagon, covering her with a blanket.

ELIZABETH

F-Father--

WINSLOW

Hush, child. Save your energy.

INT. HOME- NIGHT

Winslow looks around his cottage. He somberly collects all of his notes, his materials, clothes, and food. The cottage soon becomes barren. Winslow blows out the candles lighting the home.

EXT. HOME- NIGHT

Everything is loaded in to the wagon around Elizabeth. She sleeps, and Winslow gingerly adjusts her blanket.

Winslow takes a bucket from the back and splashes white paint on the wagon's side to cover his name and business.

He gets in the driver's seat and lights a lamp, placing it onto a hook beside him. He takes the reins and mashes the horse forward.

Winslow looks into the night, tired, gaunt. The plague doctor mask sits beside him. He rides along the dirt path away from the empty house silently.

CUT TO BLACK

END