

FABRIC

Written by

Anthony Cawood

INT. CRAMPED OFFICE - DAY

The office is small, bookshelves full of dusty ledgers and ancient accounting books.

JEREMY SAUNDERS, late 20s, officious and fussy, scans a ledger, scribbles on it and then circles a name in the leftmost column.

INSERT: Circled ledger entry

Pater

BACK TO SCENE

Jeremy takes the unwieldy ledger and goes to the door at the end of the room.

He knocks.

MR GUTHRIE (O.S.)

Come.

INT. LARGER OFFICE - DAY

Jeremy steps in and closes the door quietly.

The room is a shrine to Victoriana, everything is a century older than it ought to be.

MR GUTHRIE, 70s, sits behind a large desk, reading today's paper.

JEREMY

Can I interrupt for a moment.

Mr Guthrie smiles at Jeremy.

MR GUTHRIE

Of course you can Jeremy, what is it?

Jeremy approaches the desk and hands Mr Guthrie the ledger.

MR GUTHRIE

We're not going to have that computer conversation again are we?

Jeremy shakes his head.

Mr Guthrie glances down the columns.

MR GUTHRIE

So?

JEREMY

Who's Pater, and why do we pay him
twenty thousand pounds a year?

Mr Guthrie puts the book down, looks at Jeremy, smile gone.

MR GUTHRIE

He's the village horologist.

Jeremy looks confused for a moment.

JEREMY

Horologist, you mean clock winder?

MR GUTHRIE

Yes.

JEREMY

But we only have the church clock
to wind.

MR GUTHRIE

Yes.

JEREMY

Twenty thousand.

MR GUTHRIE

Yes.

JEREMY

Sorry, am I missing something?

Mr Guthrie hands the ledger back to Jeremy.

MR GUTHRIE

No, he winds the church clock, we
pay him an agreed fee.

JEREMY

But you know what the Borough
council said.

MR GUTHRIE

Cut all non essential services.

JEREMY

So?

MR GUTHRIE

He is an essential service.

JEREMY

The clock winder is an essential service for the village?

Mr Guthrie nods.

MR GUTHRIE

Anything else?

Jeremy opens his mouth to say more.

The look on Mr Guthrie's face suggest that would be a bad idea.

JEREMY

No.

He turns on his heels and leaves the room.

EXT. VILLAGE GREEN - DAY

The sun shines down onto the church, creating an otherworldly halo.

Jeremy raises a hand to his eyes and squints up to the clock.

He looks at the time on his phone.

JEREMY

Not even the right bloody time.

He stalks off across the green, towards the pub.

INT. VILLAGE PUB - DAY

Jeremy enters the small pub.

It's the embodiment of 'Country Pub'. Horseshoes and brasses adorn the walls, an open fire crackles in the hearth and the barman looks like he's just finished ploughing.

Jeremy approaches the bar.

CRANSTON, 40's, looks up, puts down the pint pot he's drying.

JEREMY

Hi.

CRANSTON

Hello there, what can I get you?

JEREMY

Oh... yes, a half of lager please.

Cranston gulps, a look of pain crosses his face.

CRANSTON

Lager, you sure?

JEREMY

Yes, you do have it?

CRANSTON

Yes sir, but thought you were a villager now?

JEREMY

I am, does that bar me from drinking lager?

CRANSTON

No, it's just that... well tourists drink that muck.

JEREMY

Oh, and what do we villagers drink?

CRANSTON

Abbeymead Porter, the Trappists make it.

JEREMY

What's it taste like?

CRANSTON

Like someone's pissed in tar.

JEREMY

Jeez, why drink it then?

CRANSTON

It's from here, from the village, it's ours.

JEREMY

Well, yeah, but --

CRANSTON

Great, won't be a tick.

Cranston wanders to the other end of the short bar and pours something thick and viscous.

JEREMY

Say, you know Pater?

CRANSTON

Course.

JEREMY

Where does he live?

CRANSTON

In the village.

JEREMY

Yeah, but where?

Cranston scratches his chin, brings the pint over.

CRANSTON

Hmm, you know, I'm not sure.

Jeremy takes a swig of the beer.

Grimaces.

Dry heaves.

JEREMY

And servants of God make this?

Cranston laughs.

JEREMY

Know how I find him?

CRANSTON

Yeah, just wait at the church, he winds the clock most days.

Jeremy looks unconvinced.

JEREMY

Time?

CRANSTON

Exactly.

A phone rings behind Cranston. He turns and disappears into the back to answer it.

Jeremy leans over the bar, strains to see Cranston, can't.

Pours the tar goes down the sink.

EXT. VILLAGE GREEN - DAY

Jeremy stands over from the church, watching the door to the chapel. The vicar exits and walks towards the vicarage, he waves at Jeremy as he goes past.

Jeremy waves back.

MONTAGE:

-- Jeremy jogs outside the church at dusk.

-- Jeremy outside the church in the rain, at lunchtime, eating a sandwich.

-- Jeremy outside the church, standing in the dew of dawn.

INT. VILLAGE STORE - DAY

Jeremy walks into the shop.

The shelves are full of random goods, no discernible order, some of the stock from another century.

Jeremy approaches the counter where a frizz of grey hair awaits.

JEREMY

Hi, Mrs Ambers.

MRS AMBERS, 80s, leathery skin, bright and lively eyes, looks up from her knitting. Her hair bobs slightly as her gaze meets Jeremy's.

MRS AMBERS

Young Jeremy, afternoon.

Jeremy stops at the counter, gulps.

JEREMY

Afternoon.

MRS AMBERS

Usual?

JEREMY

I don't have a usual.

Mrs Ambers checks her watch.

MRS AMBERS

True, not yet.

JEREMY

What?

Mrs Ambers just smiles.

Jeremy scratches his head.

JEREMY

Anyway... I was wondering...

MRS AMBERS

No.

JEREMY

No, what?

MRS AMBERS

We don't do deliveries or any other new fangled thing.

JEREMY

Oh, no, that's not it.

MRS AMBERS

Well, spit it out then.

JEREMY

I'm trying.

MRS AMBERS

Sorry, I'll stop prattling, go on.

JEREMY

Do you know where Pater lives?

MRS AMBERS

Who?

JEREMY

Pater, the church clock winder.

MRS AMBERS

Oh, him.

JEREMY

Yes.

MRS AMBERS

In the village.

JEREMY

But where?

MRS AMBERS
Ah, now there you have me.

JEREMY
You don't know either?

MRS AMBERS
No.

JEREMY
Why does no one know where he
lives?

MRS AMBERS
Well he's always around.

JEREMY
But is he, is he?

Mrs Ambers raises an eyebrow.

MRS AMBERS
Not sure what you mean?

JEREMY
Never mind.

Jeremy turns and walks out of the shop.

The door SLAMS shut.

Mrs Ambers tuts and returns to her knitting.

INT. LARGER OFFICE - DAY

Jeremy stands in front of Mr Guthrie.

JEREMY
So you see, I think it's some sort
of scam.

MR GUTHRIE
Jeremy, just because you cannot
find him does not a scam make.

JEREMY
No, true, but...

MR GUTHRIE
But?

JEREMY
No one knows where he lives either.

MR GUTHRIE
I do.

JEREMY
What?

MR GUTHRIE
I have his address.

JEREMY
Oh.

Awkward pause.

JEREMY
Can I have it then?

MR GUTHRIE
Why?

JEREMY
So I can make sure everything is on
the level.

MR GUTHRIE
It is.

JEREMY
Yes, but I'd like to make sure.

MR GUTHRIE
No need.

JEREMY
You did hire me to make sure all
the village finances are in order?

MR GUTHRIE
I did.

JEREMY
So, no harm in checking then.

Mr Guthrie sighs.

MR GUTHRIE
No, guess not.

Mr Guthrie takes a pen and a Post-it, scribbles on it and
hands it to Jeremy.

MR GUTHRIE

Play nice, he's very important for the village. You'll understand that one day.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - DAY

Jeremy stands outside a picture postcard cottage, thatch roof, the whole kit and caboodle.

PATER (O.S.)

Pretty, ain't she?

Jeremy drops the file he's holding in surprise.

Jeremy turns to the voice.

PATER, 90s, maybe much older, but vibrant and glowing with life, stands before him, hands on hips.

PATER

Thatch makes it for me, timeless Englishness.

JEREMY

Are you Pater?

PATER

I am, yes, and who might you be?

JEREMY

I'm Jeremy Saunders, from the village council.

PATER

Well, always nice to meet new people from the village. What can I do for you Jeremy?

Jeremy scratches his chin, suddenly unsure.

JEREMY

Er, well...

PATER

Sorry, my manners... would you rather we talked inside.

Jeremy looks relieved.

JEREMY

Yes, that would be great.

INT. PATER'S COTTAGE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Pater stands by the kettle, old fashioned one on a gas hob, whistle just starting to trill.

JEREMY

Thank you, just a splash of milk.

The kettle whistle escalates as Pater moves to the fridge.

He returns with a large jug of milk and takes the kettle off the heat.

JEREMY

So, Pater... er, sorry I didn't get your last name...

Pater looks at him quizzically.

PATER

Not in your files?

Jeremy shakes his head.

PATER

Kairos.

JEREMY

Sorry, how do you spell that?

PATER

K A I R O S.

Jeremy scribbles in the file.

JEREMY

Thanks.

Pater hands over the tea.

PATER

So, what can I help you with?

JEREMY

Well... and thanks for the tea... about the clock...

PATER

The village clock?

JEREMY

Yes.

PATER
Ayuh, what about it?

Jeremy looks nervous, teacup trembles slightly.

JEREMY
Well, no easy way to say this... I think we should let you go and get a volunteer to wind it.

PATER
Oh.

JEREMY
You see, that would save the village twenty thousand pounds a year.

PATER
Would it?

JEREMY
Yes, we could use that for something for the community.

PATER
Really, what?

JEREMY
Er, I've not looked at those options as yet.

PATER
Seems a pretty perfect village to me, what'd you want to mess about with it for?

There's no malice in the voice, but Jeremy reacts as if stung.

JEREMY
I am employed to make sure the village accounts are well managed and we get value for money from every penny we spend.

PATER
(gently)
I'm not sure you'd know how to calculate my value Jeremy.

JEREMY

I'll have you know I am a fully
trained accountant with experience
in a wide variety of roles.

Pater laughs.

Jeremy looks offended.

PATER

Sorry, I wasn't laughing at your
credentials.

JEREMY

No?

PATER

Look, has anyone explained what I
do for the village?

JEREMY

Yes, I am very aware of your
contribution and I'm empowered to
make these decisions.

PATER

Well, if that's the way it is...
guess you can't stop progress
forever.

JEREMY

No.

PATER

And the cottage?

JEREMY

What about it?

Pater's face saddens a little.

PATER

The village supply it... rent free.

JEREMY

(on a roll now)

Well, yes, of course, we'd want
that back too.

Pater sighs.

JEREMY

Look, I'm really sorry but I can't allow sentiment to cloud the village finances.

PATER

Okay, I will be gone this evening.

Jeremy blanches.

JEREMY

No, really, no need for that, we'll sort out a severance package and a couple of months for you to locate a new home.

Pater, stares.

PATER

No, you don't understand... once the clock... well once I stop winding it, I can't be here.

Jeremy looks flustered and bewildered.

JEREMY

Well, okay, but I think you are over reacting... you can stay and sort things out, really.

Pater shakes his head.

PATER

Time's up for me, but I hope the future's okay for you and the village.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - CONTINUOUS

Jeremy trudges down the lane, Pater's cottage disappearing in the distance.

He looks confused.

He stops, checks himself, pats down his pockets, something amiss.

JEREMY

File...

He turns to walk back to the cottage.

It isn't there.

In it's place just overgrown thorns, weeds and poison ivy.

JEREMY

What the...

He runs to the spot.

Nothing, no sign of the cottage at all.

He spies something in the brambles, reaches in.

His file.

EXT. VILLAGE GREEN - DAY

The village green is now an unkempt mess, weeds poke through in numerous spots, the grass hasn't been cut in an age.

To one side a burnt out car is sinking into the earth, rust forming as Jeremy watches.

Jeremy spins.

Everywhere he looks there are signs of disrepair and degradation.

Graffiti on a wall.

Beer cans by a bench.

A glue bag under a tree, next to a syringe.

JEREMY

No.

INT. LARGER OFFICE - DAY

KNOCK, KNOCK.

Jeremy enters.

Mr Guthrie sits at his desk, tears flowing down his face.

JEREMY

What's going on?

Mr Guthrie fixes him with a baleful gaze.

MR GUTHRIE

Time caught up with the village.

JEREMY
I don't understand.

MR GUTHRIE
Clearly.

JEREMY
Why has everything changed?

MR GUTHRIE
Pater isn't here to maintain the
clock.

JEREMY
So, I'll go wind it, but what's
that got to do with anything.

MR GUTHRIE
It's too late, he's gone.

JEREMY
Who? Pater?

MR GUTHRIE
Yes... don't you get it?

Jeremy turns and runs from the office, door slamming behind.

EXT. VILLAGE GREEN - DAY

Jeremy sprints across the green.

He stops, panting, beside the church and looks up.

The hands on the clock are moving far too quickly, hours
cycling round in minutes.

PATER (O.S.)
She's catching up.

Jeremy doesn't turn.

JEREMY
Pater... is Father, right?

PATER (O.S.)
Yes, easier and less likely people
think I'm a priest.

Pater laughs.

JEREMY
But how?

No answer.

The hands on the clock slow to normal speed.

JEREMY

So now what?

No answer.

Jeremy turns, Father Time has vanished.

A police car speeds round the corner, lights flashing, it carries on through the once perfect village.

FADE OUT.