

THE DROWNING CATHEDRAL

Written by

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A film script

WORK IN PROGRESS

Some author notes (these would not be part of the final script)

GENRE:

Historical thriller/romance.

AUDIENCE: 16+

LOGLINE:

A failed student love affair leaves Peter adrift and aimless. 10 years later, with the unexpected help of Father Hugh, a 12th Century Benedictine monk, he finds a sense of purpose and identity in reconciliation with Charlotte.

Notes:

I have been thinking about writing a story about time travel for some time. I did not want to break the rules of Physics though (well not very much) so actual physical time travel was out (eg in the style of Dr Who). So I'm using the device of a supernatural well, which exchanges the consciousness of people who dive into the well, thus allowing them to time travel. Only their consciousness moves in time, not their bodies, or any physical objects. So you can't take objects like clothes or crowns back and forth in time, nor human bodies. Thus Peter ends up in Father Hugh's body back in 1097 while Hugh is in Peter's body in 2015. Because their consciousness's are in a different body, Peter and Hugh have access to some of the memories and knowledge of their host body. This is necessary, so that, back in the 11th Century, Peter is able to speak Anglo Saxon (and latin and Norman French) using Father's Hugh knowledge. He would also know about how the monastery in the 11th century is run, from Hugh's experiences. This enables him to blend into the normal, daily life of the monastery. Father Hugh, in the 21st century similarly has access to Peter's modern English and some knowledge of how the modern world works. I'm still wondering whether Hugh will be amazed when he goes to McDonalds though. That might be too comical though, this is largely a serious film.

Synopsis

The Drowned Cathedral.

In 2002, Peter Green and Charlotte Townsend are students at Winchester University. Peter is an orphan and brought up by an austere and religious aunt,

who made Peter take a regular participation in the Anglican Church, even though Peter had little faith. Peter and John, a friend from school, both go to the newly formed Winchester University. Seeking something new to do, Peter meets Charlotte at the Horse Riding Society stall at the Fresher Fayre. He is surprised to find he is a natural horseman. On the Society's annual trip to Exmoor in the Easter holidays, Peter and Charlotte agree to share in the same student house the following year. And they become lovers. Peter is still unable to step outside his austere upbringing and eventually, Charlotte finds that she wants a more edgy, 'dangerous' partner than the reliable and sensible Peter, so she allows herself to be seduced by John, (Peter's best friend from school), a rather wild and unreliable, hippy with an interest in green activism and civil disobedience.

Hurt by her rejection, Peter drops out and falls into becoming a gardener. His Aunt dies in 2006 and with the inheritance, he buys a run-down house in Parchment Street to do up slowly and starts a small nursery/garden centre in Otterbourne, just outside Winchester. Meanwhile, he becomes involved in the religious life of the cathedral and takes on the role of a lay Canon.

In 1093, Father Hugh dives into the well in the crypt of the newly built Winchester Cathedral, in order to hide the original Anglo-Saxon crown of King Arthur from the Normans. Father Hugh hopes to preserve the crown for a future Anglo-Saxon who will expel the Normans and restore the Anglo-Saxon kingdom. While he successfully buries the crown in the depths of the well, the well is also a portal in time. It will exchange the consciousness of those who dive into it in different time periods.

In January 2010 Charlotte is the manager of the Winchester Oxfam shop and receives a package of old books from the bishop's assistant and finds a manuscript hidden in the cover binding of one of these books, which is amazingly addressed to Peter and herself. When Charlotte and Peter read the manuscript, they find this is an instruction that Peter must dive in the well in the Cathedral crypt, and he will find an important artefact. (Note: this is the letter that Peter will write when he carries out and travels back to 1093). After some debate, Peter decides to follow the instructions.

As a consequence of reading the letter in 2010, Peter Green, now a Canon in Winchester Cathedral, dives in the well in the Cathedral crypt and is transferred into Father Hugh's body in 1093 (who was also then diving in the well). Similarly, Father Hugh's consciousness travels forward to 2010 to reside in Peter's body.

Peter, now in Father Hugh's body in 1093, writes instructions to his future self, telling Peter in 2010 that he must dive into the well, explaining this will not only lead him to re-establish his relationship with Charlotte but also help recover the Crown of King Arthur in 2010, thus proving that King Arthur really existed and

giving a sense of identity to the country.

Meanwhile, in 2010, Charlotte tries to prevent Father Hugh (in Peter's body) from seeing too much of the 21st-century world, in case the seductive attractions of the modern world make Father Hugh unwilling to dive again in the well and return to 1093. In the end, though, Father Hugh is so appalled by the levels of what he perceives as corruption and deceit he is happy to go back. He decides that the magical goodness embodied in the Crown of King Arthur would help mend the ills he sees in the 21st century - and so tells Charlotte that the Crown is buried now at the bottom of the well (or at least it was when Father Hugh left it there in the 12th century). Father Hugh and Charlotte agree that Charlotte will tell Peter about the Crown and that Peter can then retrieve it and in some way make good moral use of it. But, they are concerned that if Peter does dive into the well to recover the Crown, then the time travel portal might open again, and who knows whose body he might end up in. So Father Hugh agrees that once he is back in the 12C he will dive again into well once more, so that when Peter dives (now knowing that he must recover the Crown) that Peter will find himself briefly in the 12C (and Father Hugh in the 21C). The two can then immediately dive back in yet again, and Peter can retrieve the Crown (which hopefully has been there for the last 900 years).

So Peter (in 1093) and Father Hugh (in 2010) dive in the well again, and exchange bodies.

But, when Father Hugh arrives in the 12C, he is arrested and taken away by the Normans, who have heard about his possession and hiding of the Crown.

In the 21C, Charlotte now tells Peter about this new plan. They realise they are still attracted to one another, and trust that they will not be apart from then on. But Peter still has to get the Crown, so he dives once more.

The film ends with Charlotte waiting for Peter's body to resurface from the pool, as per the plan. It never does.

Cast list

CHARLOTTE tall, slim, attractive, forthright, 20 (2003)
FATHER HUGH Anglo Saxon Benedictine monk, late 40s
FIRST YEAR First year Uni student - 18
JOHN tall, attractive, long hippy hair, 18 (2003)
ORC costumed second year student, 21
PETER average height, undistinguished, 18 (2003)
SQUIRES Cambridge Don, late 50s
WHEATLEY Cambridge Don, late 50s
WILL WYKEHAM Hugh's acolyte, 14.
RIDING CLUB MEMBERS A group of 8 or so university students
18-25 (including Peter and Charlotte)

TITLE: THE DROWNING CATHEDRAL

1 EXT. WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL - NIGHT - MAY 2015

Winchester cathedral. A blustery night, rain, and water pours from the mouths of gargoyles onto the flagstones below. CANON PETER, mid 30s, in cassock is getting more and more soaked next to a door in the South Transept wall. He adjusts his soggy Canterbury cap and watches as CHARLOTTE, mid 30s a tall, lithe woman, materialises from the rain.

CHARLOTTE

Sorry, you must be soaked.

PETER

It doesn't matter. I'll be swimming soon enough.

CHARLOTTE

I can't believe you're doing this.

PETER

Neither can I, but I don't think we have any choice. I don't know what will happen. But I think if we choose to believe it work, then it will. The manuscript told us what we must do, and in faith, that it is what I'm going to do.

She gives him an awkward hug. Peter hands her a bag containing towels and a set of mans clothes and then unlocks the chancel door.

2 INT. WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL - NIGHT - MAY 2025

They pass the retrochoir, the Lady Chapel, and finally reach a studded oak door. Peter unlocks it, revealing a set of stone flagstones descending into the crypt.

PETER

There's a torch in the bag. I don't want to use the lights. Even at this time of night, there could be someone outside.

CHARLOTTE

Okay.

She hands him the torch.

3

INT. WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL - NIGHT - MAY 2025

They descend a dozen steps and the staircase opens out onto a small dais.

PETER

This is as far as you go.

He slowly sweeps the torch beam over the water, probing the distance.

CHARLOTTE

It's beautiful.

In front of them is a clear, pool of still water. Thick stone arches rose out of the water, vaulting across the ceiling. The torchlight flicks over the surface of the pool.

PETER

I've never seen it this deep before. In the summer it dries out and you can walk on the crypt floor, but now there must be three or four feet of water -

CHARLOTTE

(Interrupting)

Stop, shine the torch back over there - I think I saw something!

He sweeps the torch beam toward the back of the crypt. A tall figure appears out of the blackness; a figure made of lead, soldered at its joints, smooth and broken, matte in finish yet gently glowing in the dull light. By some hidden mechanism, the water in the pool was being drawn up and overflowing from its cupped hands, flickering and sparkling in the torchlight.]

They stand, absorbed by their thoughts for a moment.

Peter hands Charlotte the torch, and he discards his robes, sits on the edge of the dais and swings his legs into the water, sending ripples into the darkness. He pushes off and drifts towards the far end of the crypt. He vanishes into the darkness.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

(Offscreen (V/O)

Peter, are you alright?

Pause

(Offscreen (V/O)

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Peter... PETER!

SMASH TO BLACK.

4 INT. WINCHESTER, BENEDICTINE PRIORY - NIGHT - FEB 15 1093

The Priory next to the newly completed Norman Cathedral. The previous, now partly dismantled, Anglo-Saxon New Minster is in the background. It is a clear night, with a scattering of snow in the air.

FATHER HUGH LONGFELLOW, 55, bearded and weary, Benedictine cassock and tonsure, black woollen cloth scapula and substantial cowl, guides NOVICE WILL WICKHAM 14, clean-shaven in the Norman fashion, simple grey woollen cassock through the cloisters.

They walked in single file, Father Hugh leading, past the refectory, through the cloisters and then to the priory dormitory. Here, Father Hugh lets Will through a side door and into the Father's cell,

INT. FATHER HUGH'S CELL

The room contains an oak chest and a rough table with two stools. Close to the window, there is a simple writing lectern, placed where the light would fall. A dozen quilled feathers are tied together in a bundle on the shelf under the lectern's inclined top. To the right of the writing top, two ink horns were fastened to the side of the lectern. A couple of bolsters, leaking straw, form a crude bed in a corner. A small yew cross stands in a small alcove.

FATHER HUGH
Sit.

Will dutifully sits on one of the stools. Father Hugh places the bundle of cloth he had been carrying on the table.

FATHER HUGH (CONT'D)
You may unwrap it.

Will starts to do so.

FATHER HUGH (CONT'D)
Carefully!

WILL
(on seeing the contents)
In the name of the blessed Mary!

The contents of the bundle are a fine gold cross, a gold crown adorned with rubies, emeralds, sapphires, enamel and pearls. There is also a simple silver chalice.

WILL (CONT'D)

May I touch them?

FATHER HUGH

By all means. You will be among kings and princes.

Will slowly raises the chalice in front of him. The silver is worn with use, but the decoration around the rim is still visible. The motifs are the five senses, each depicted several times over, with kings, princes, abbots, saints, warriors, monks and plain men in various poses. In the centre of the bowl of the chalice, an engraved figure kneels with clasped hands, in silent, penitent supplication.

FATHER HUGH (CONT'D)

Many of the kings of Wessex and of England wore this crown at their coronation and drank from that chalice. More than rest now in the Minster. These are the lifeblood of the English, this is our past, our heritage. It is in our promise to those who have gone before to hold and cherish these things, in readiness for a new time. They were hidden in the grave of Saint Æthelwold after Harold's fall at Hastings. But the Minster will soon be no more. It is our responsibility now to keep them safe.

WILL

(still transfixed by the chalice)

Tell me what I must do, master.

5

EXT. THE NORMAN CATHEDRAL - FEB 15 1093 - 1 AM

The February full moon shines down on the two churches as two figures flit from shadow to shadow. FATHER HUGH and WILL enter the cathedral by the same side door PETER and CHARLOTTE used. WILL is carrying the cloth bundle, now waterproofed with candle wax and tallow and sealed in a leather firkin.

6 INT. THE NORMAN CATHEDRAL - FEB 1093 FEB - 1 AM

The interior of the cathedral is much simpler in 1093 than it is in 2015. The moonlight, falling through the south windows, illuminates Father Hugh leading Will across an open space to the stone steps leading to the crypt.

7 INT. THE NORMAN CATHEDRAL: THE TOP OF STEPS TO THE CRYPT - FEB 15 1093 - 1 AM

Father Hugh reaches into his cassock and draws out a short, stump candle and a simple wooden candleholder.

FATHER HUGH
Here, light this at the altar.

WILL
Shall I say a prayer, master?

FATHER HUGH
Better two. One for me, and one for you.

While Will is doing this, Father Hugh draws a piece of lead, apparently from the cathedral roof, and a stout flax cord, and attaches the lead as a weight to the firkin. He kneels and says a prayer over the package.

8 INT. THE NORMAN CATHEDRAL: THE STEPS TO THE CRYPT - FEB 15 1093 - 1 AM

Father Hugh leads Will down the steps. They reach the dais at the bottom of the barely flooded crypt. The water is just 6 inches deep.

9 INT. THE NORMAN CATHEDRAL: THE CRYPT - FEB 15 1093 - 1 AM

Father Hugh slips off his cassock, and strides out into the water. At the distant end of the crypt, there is a simple low circular stone wall marking the well's position.

FATHER HUGH
(Praying)
Send thy light, O Lord, into the dark places of our hearts. In thy love, discover to us the snares set by our enemy in the hours of night, that, saved by thy protection in soul and body, we may deserve again to see the morning light. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

After one brief look back at Will he steps over the iron ring and sinks into the depths.

10 INT. AN INDETERMINATE PLACE AND TIME

Wet. Cold. A dim light. Peter is floating again, now relaxed both in mind and body in a dark grey fog.

11 INT. WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL CRYPT - NIGHT - MAY 2015

CHARLOTTE
(Sighing, looking into the
darkness)
Peter...

12 INT. THE NORMAN CATHEDRAL: THE CRYPT - FEB 15 1093 - 1 AM

Peter (in Father Hugh's body) bobs to the surface of the well, spluttering and gasping for breath. Gradually he manages to pull himself over the low wall and rolls onto his side. He sees a distant figure holding a single candle. He gets up and walks towards the figure. He is still naked.

13 INT. WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL CRYPT - NIGHT - MAY 2015

A wet, naked figure is just perceptible in the dark shadows at the far end of the crypt.

CHARLOTTE
(clearly anxious, confused)
Peter - PETER - is that you? Are
you alright?

The dark figure approaches Charlotte, but on seeing the leaden statue, falls back into the water in surprise. Charlotte points the torch to help illuminate the way

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
(Beckoning)
This way - over here!

The dark figure is FATHER HUGH. He rises once more onto his feet and gradually approaches Charlotte. He is dazed - the crypt seems familiar but different too.

FATHER HUGH
(intoning)
In martyrio martyrum,
In uirtute iustorum
In formis spiritalibus,
(MORE)

FATHER HUGH (CONT'D)

In diuinis sermonibus,
In benedictionibus,
Deus tuarum protege me.

CHARLOTTE

(Pulling herself together
as she realises the plan
is actually working, and
averting her eyes from
his nakedness)

Benedicite! You are welcome here.

Stepping to one side, she points at the bag of towels, fresh clothes, which contains a black cassock, underclothing and sandals.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Dry and clothe yourself, Father
Hugh, and then I will explain.

Father Hugh steps onto the dais, clearly astonished and fearful, but he does as she says.

14

INT. THE NORMAN CATHEDRAL: THE CRYPT - FEB 15 1093 - 1 AM

Peter is now a few feet in front of the figure by the candle.

PETER

(in Anglo Saxon)
Ʒæs sy þam Halgan þonc

Having spoken, Peter looks surprised that he said that. He repeats the words, but mid-sentence they they transmute into modern English.

PETER (CONT'D)

Ʒæs sy þam .. thanks to God.

WILL

Amen, master.

PETER

This is a good step, Will. The
crown is now safe from our Norman
friends, Will. But it must not
languish there forever.

Peter reaches for the cassock, and even though wet starts dressing.

PETER (CONT'D)

Come, Will, let us return to the
Priory.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

We will go to the calfectory. Let us warm our bones before Nocturns. And then we have further work to do.

15 EXT. WINNALL HOUSING ESTATE, WINCHESTER, OCT 2003, LATE AFTERNOON

A dull Monday afternoon. Rain sheets down from grey skies with unwavering determination onto the equally grey Warren Drive. At number 23 PETER, 18, thin, tall, with slight acne looks out of his bedsit window, surveying the seen. He turns away and vanishes from view.

INT. PETER'S BEDSIT, 23 WARREN DRIVE, WINNALL ESTATE

A faded pine single bed is pushed up against one wall occupying a good portion of the room. A matching wardrobe needs a little help to remain upright and leans against the opposite wall, tilted back by a wedge under its front feet. A 1960s gas fire hisses quietly next to a meter which also supplies a single gas ring. Next to the meter, there is a small sink. A tiny cupboard above contained exactly one plate, one cereal bowl and a single saucepan. A knife, fork and spoon sit in the saucepan. A utility table and chair complete the room. Tidy, but cheap. Peter is sitting in the chair, not looking at anything in particular.

The murmur of the landlady's TV in the sitting room below can be heard through the thin carpet on the floor.

Peter gets up and again looks out of the window. We see he is looking at a bicycle, chained to the railings that separate the well-tended garden from the road.

The rain continues to beat on the window. The saddle of the bike is sodden.

Peter sighs, sits at the desk, opens a textbook titled 'Introduction to European Geography' and starts to read.

16 INT: HEADMASTER STUDY, IPSWICH GRAMMAR - FLASHBACK - SPRING 1982

SQUIRES, 65 is an 'old school' headmaster, still believing in the values of tradition, Empire, and duty to God, Queen and Country. He is discussing career choices with Peter.

SQUIRES

You need to go to University, my lad. Broaden your horizons, no end. Now, should it be science or arts do you think?

PETER
I'm not quite...

SQUIRES
You should try for Queens - best college in Cambridge, by far.

PETER
Maybe physics perhaps, I'm quite good at physics.

SQUIRES
I had a tremendous time thereafter I was demobbed! Hardly went to a lecture, spent most of my time on the river - when I wasn't in an eight, I'd be punting up to Grantchester. Of course, that's the advantage of a Classics degree -

PETER
Or maybe Engineering - I rather liked Mr Smith's computing class this year.

SQUIRES
Physics? Nonsense boy, far too many lectures to go to. And all those practicals. But if your heart is set on it....

17 INT: DON'S SET, QUEENS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, - FLASHBACK -
AUTUMN 1982

Peter is being interviewed by WHEATLEY and MAXWELL, two 40-50 year Fellows.

WHEATLEY
Well then, if the second law of thermodynamics says that you can't unscramble scrambled eggs, what would you have for breakfast if you wanted to increase your entropy?

We see that Peter is floored by this question and struggling to answer.

INT. PETER'S BEDSIT (CONT'D)

Peter is still reading the geography textbook. He is still on chapter 1. He looks up and stares out of the window for a long period.

PETER

Bugger!

Peter gets up and puts another 50p in the gas meter and starts to make some toast in front of the gas fire.

18

EXT. THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - OUTSIDE THE ADMIN BLOCK. NOON.

A group of first-year students are walking across the Campus from the Romsey Road. They are in high spirits. JOHN, 18, tall, attractive, long hippy hair, recognises Peter coming out of the admin block and calls out:

JOHN

Hey, Peter, long time no see!

Peter half waves a greeting. John detaches himself from the group.

JOHN (CONT'D)

How's it going, man? You made it then?

PETER

Yeah. I've just registered.

JOHN

You want to come to the pub for lunch?

PETER

Well, I was thinking of just getting a sandwich.

JOHN

Come on, man. You're a student now. Time to start living it up. You know, spending that grant. Meeting some chicks. Plenty of time to study later. Come and join us.'

PETER

Yeah, okay, why not?

We see them rejoin the group and head towards the campus exit onto Romsey Road.

19

EXT. THE ST JAMES TAVERN CARPARK, ROMSEY ROAD. LUNCHTIME.

The pub is heaving with students. There is only room for Peter and John's group in the car park.

Peter is trying to balance an orange juice in one hand and sandwich in the other. The rest of the group have pints, some with food and some without.

FIRST-YEAR STUDENT:

There are forty-five pubs in Winchester. I reckon I can do them all this year. That'd be an achievement.

JOHN

Yeah, But that's only one a week. That doesn't sound that hard. If we put our minds to it, we could do them all before Xmas. Four a week. Piss-easy. That'd be a proper job.

PETER

That'd be four and a half, really.

JOHN

Ever the mathematician, eh, Peter?

<< more discussion needed here !! Need to establish a bit more backstory. >>

PETER

I'm going back now - I'm going to have a look around the campus before the introductory session.

JOHN

Okay. You always were a bit of a swot. You coming to the Fresher's Fayre tomorrow?'

PETER

Yeah ... Yeah, I'll see you tomorrow.

20

INT. FRESHER'S FAYRE, UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER CAMPUS

The Fayre was being held in the Sports Hall. It turned out to be two long rows of tables, with posters blue-tacked onto the walls behind them, with one or two representatives of each society or club, lolling on benches behind the tables. Peter walks down the first row.

Rugby, football, lacrosse, cricket, netball, swimming, table tennis, basketball, softball - the list of team sports seemed endless. None of them entice Peter.

The second row focuses on the more esoteric societies. Next to one table, an impressively convincing Orc swings a thoroughly dangerous spiked ball attached to a leatherbound shaft around his head and declaims at Peter:

ORC
 Shall ye enjoin the Tower of Cirith
 Ungol? Stand fast, human, and
 measure your mettle against the
 army of Sauron!

Behind the Orc to see this is the Dungeons and Dragons War Gamers Society. \$\$\$

Peter (with a polite smile) raises his right hand, points his first and second fingers at the Orc, and brings his thumb down smartly on top of them. The Orc looks annoyed but then laughs::

ORC (CONT'D)
 You got me. But no modern
 technology allowed here. Probably
 best to join the Cinema Society if
 Clint Eastwood's your thing. Let me
 give a leaflet anyway, just in case
 you want to come back and take on a
 proper fight.'

Peter silently takes the leaflet and moves down the row.

The next few tables are less engaging but even more eccentric. Tiddlywinks, Hopscotch, Tea Drinking and Punning.

Finally, there are only two tables left. Ball Room Dancing Society. Peter pauses in front of it, reading the blurb. There is no one at the table, but there is a signup list with half a dozen entries, but no pen. He fumbles in his jacket and realises he does not have one either.

He looks across at the last table. It is the Horse Riding Society. Sitting behind the table there is CHARLOTTE, 19, a tall, lissom girl, in jeans and an oversized jumper. She is engrossed in reading a magazine. After a moment of standing in front of her stand, Peter says:

PETER
 Er, hello. I wonder if I could
 borrow a biro?

Charlotte looks up. Peter appears to be slightly dazzled by her cornflower blue eyes.

CHARLOTTE

(waving the pencil she has been offering for the last few seconds)
There you go.

PETER

(not quite taking the pencil)
Thanks

CHARLOTTE

Do you have much riding experience?

PETER

'Um, not really.'

PETER (CONT'D)

(He realises he has not actually taken the pencil from her, and does so.)
'No, it's not something I'd ever considered doing. Isn't it rather expensive - all that posh riding stuff and things?'

CHARLOTTE

Do I look posh?

PETER

Um, well...

CHARLOTTE

(gesturing at what she is wearing)
'No, not at all. This would do fine. Having a waterproof, though, would be a good thing if it's raining. Of course, you're sitting on a warm horse so that helps dry you out anyway. And the Riding School will lend you a hard hat. All you need are some tough shoes, with a decent heel.

PETER (CONT'D)

(Pointing at the adjacent table)
Um...I was going to sign up over there

CHARLOTTE

(smiling)
 You need a proper heel, to stop
 your feet slipping through the
 stirrup if you fall off.
 Otherwise, you can get dragged
 behind the horse.

PETER

Um...

CHARLOTTE

There are lessons for all
 standards. And they're subsidised -
 it's just two pounds for an hour's
 session. The riding school is out
 at Sparsholt. And it's not just
 riding. We have lots of socials
 such as bowling, and social nights.
 There's a trip to Exmoor too
 apparently - riding across the
 moors. I'm not sure I only just
 joined myself though I had a pony
 when I went to senior school. I
 think it's going to be a great
 antidote to being stuck in a
 lecture theatre or the library
 during term time. Judy, the girl
 who was looking after the stand
 wanted to go and sign up for the
 Drama club, so I said I'd stand in.
 She'll probably be back in a
 minute. Here, write your name on
 the list...

PETER

(writing his name on the list)
 Okay, I think I will. When does it
 start?

CHARLOTTE

The first session is next Wednesday
 - it's the same for all the sports -
 the Uni doesn't schedule any
 lectures on Wednesday afternoons so
 we can all go and do healthy stuff.

PETER

Oh, I see. And how does everyone
 get to the stables?

CHARLOTTE

Here's the leaflet with the club
 details.

(MORE)

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

I gather there's a minibus we use. But look, there's a Horsey Happy Hour in the Union tonight, for new and old club members. Yeah, I know, it's a terrible name. But come along and Judy will be there I think to explain it all. You can pay your subscription at the first meeting.

PETER

Okay, yes, I guess I'll do that then. Thanks. I'll perhaps see you there.

20A EXT. EXMOOR, EASTER, COUNTRY PUB 2004 - EVENING

The annual University Riding Club trip to Exmoor. A mixed group of students, most of which are at the bar.

PETER

What would you like then - a dry cider?

CHARLOTTE

Yes, please.

While he buys the drinks, Charlotte takes her windproof off and sits on a bench next to the fire. The rest of the group are still milling around the bar, chatting and ordering.

There is no table for Peter to put the drinks on, so he hands them to Charlotte, while he takes his gilet off. As he sits down next to her, and she still has her hands full of glasses, he leans across and kisses her briefly on the lips. She does not pull away, but she does not respond either. Her cheeks flush (or is it the fire?)

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

What was that for?

PETER

Was that a bad thing to do?

CHARLOTTE

Just unexpected. Maybe even surprising.

PETER

Maybe I should surprise you more.

CHARLOTTE

Maybe you should.

PETER

(Realising she is still
looking at him, waiting.)
It was your swimming costume - it
was so blue.

CHARLOTTE

What?

PETER

I don't know - when we were
swimming in the river - it seemed
such an achingly, wonderful blue.
(Beat)
Blue...

20B EXT. EXMOOR, RIDING STABLES, FIELD, EASTER, 2004 - MORNING -
FLASHBACK

A group of a dozen largely insolvent students, loftily calling themselves the University Riding Club's Official Easter tour, underwriting the cost from the University's Social Club's coffers with some traditionally dubious student accounting. Threadbare tents.

Peter is creeping up on the girls' tent. The girls are inside. Peter is carrying a goose, wrapped in a blanket to pacify it.

Peter releases the goose into the open flap of the girls' tent.

There is a gratifying burst of frantic honking, hissing and barking from the goose.

An equally loud squeal comes from the tent. Peter starts to retreat.

CHARLOTTE

(inside the tent)
Where did that bloody goose come
from? That bastard has shat all
over my sleeping bag!

By the time Charlotte appears at the flap of the tent, Peter is nowhere to be seen.

20C EXT. EXMOOR, EASTER, COUNTRY PUB 2004 - EVENING (CONT'D)

PETER

I'm sorry, I wasn't thinking.

CHARLOTTE

Look, Peter, you just can't go around doing things that like. Most people won't understand. You'll get into trouble - they won't be as tolerant as me.

20D EXT. EXMOOR, EASTER, COUNTRY PUB 2004 - EVENING (2 HOURS LATER)

The group are walking down a country lane, on the way back to the tents, in the farmer's field/Riding Stables.

Peter sees Charlotte ten yards ahead. He quickens his stride to catch her.

PETER

Look, I'm really sorry about earlier on. I didn't mean to upset you.

CHARLOTTE

No, I know you didn't.

PETER

It's just I didn't know what to do. So it just sort of happened.

They walked in silence for a moment

PETER (CONT'D)

I just thought you were so lovely. I just didn't know what to do.

(Beat)

I'm sorry, - so what should I have done, then?

CHARLOTTE

Good grief. For one thing, you can stop apologising all the time!

PETER

(surprising himself)

Is that how you are going to teach your students?

They stop, facing one another. Then she laughs.

CHARLOTTE

Okay, fair enough, you got me.

They start walking again. After a little time the conversation continues.

PETER

Come on then, teacher.

CHARLOTTE

Kissing's not exactly a standard curriculum item. Maybe I can give you an example.

(Beat)

You know that book we were talking about at lunchtime - Far From the Madding Crowd?

PETER

Yeah, I remember it from 'O' level.

CHARLOTTE

Well, you know how Bathsheba can't make her mind up. She's got three suitors, and she makes a mess with all three. There's Gabriel Oak - he's the skilful, hardworking one she should have. But they are both too proud. She doesn't get it on with him till the end of the book -

PETER

Yes, and there's the other guy - I forget his name, the one with the big house and all the land - he's been married before, he's never going to get anywhere with her, he's just all wealth and material stuff. She knows in her heart she should not go for him but she tries to anyway. I'm not sure how this is helping really.

Charlotte ignores his interruption.

CHARLOTTE

And there's Sergeant Troy, flashing his sword around, dazzling her, bemusing her, ready to seduce her. And he might too, until she realises what he is - that he thinks that 'If you treat them right, you are lost'. And then he loses all his charms.

Peter is still not getting it.

PETER

But it's Gabriel that gets her in the end. Sorry, are you saying that I should be a shepherd then?

CHARLOTTE

No, don't be silly - of course not. I'm saying you should decide who you are going to be, for good or bad - and then be that person. And stop saying, sorry. Don't be anyone else. Be Peter.

PETER

Oh.

They walked on in silence, as Peter tried to digest this.

PETER (CONT'D)

Can I kiss you again?'

CHARLOTTE

Maybe. But one kiss a night is enough.

She holds out her hand, they walk on, hand in hand.

PETER

I wasn't going to tell you, but that was me with the goose in the tent.

CHARLOTTE

I know. I hope you're going to say you're sorry.

PETER

But a moment ago, you just told me not to!

She laughs and turns and kisses him.

PETER (CONT'D)

How, do you fancy getting together with a couple of the others in the summer term and looking for a house to share for next year? I'm fed up with being stuck out in my digs in the wilderness of Winnall.

21 INT. THE UNIVERSITY COFFEE SHOP. JAN 2005. NOON

Peter is sitting alone, a black coffee on the table in front of him. He looks up and sees Charlotte walking across the courtyard outside. She enters, buys a lemon and ginger tea, and sits next to him.

CHARLOTTE

Hi. How was the lecture on the population and politics of the Baltics?'

PETER

It was an absolute thriller - I spent most of the time reading the paper in the back row. Callingham had done Estonia, and Latvia and was halfway across the Polish border before she spotted it and made me put it away.

Charlotte smiles and sips her tea. She gets a notebook and textbook out of her bag, ready to start studying.

PETER (CONT'D)

There's something I've been thinking I would like to say.

CHARLOTTE

Well so long as it's not a litany of Balkan population stats, then I'm all ears. Or was it something from today's paper?

PETER

No, nothing like that. A bit more serious, I think. I'm not sure you'll like it though.

CHARLOTTE

Go on, then.

Peter takes a crumpled piece of paper out of his jacket pocket and reads

PETER

How should I espresso my love for you?
Should I melt your frosty look in my cappuccino
or cup the warmth of your steamy Arabica
and then bury my nose in your heady aroma?

Let me drink the creamy froth of your latte.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

Enraptured, my tongue savours the way
your liquid smacks my lips
and I taste the sweetness of your hips.

Your caffeine fizzes and jolts in my veins
as a tsunami of heat carouses in my brain.
A thirst, now quenched, will soon restart
and desire will regrow while we are apart.

CHARLOTTE

(both exasperated and slightly
touched)
Peter...
Peter, that is so ridiculously
needy - give yourself some self-
respect.

(Beat)

You're like a spaniel, sitting
there with big round eyes, tongue
out, desperate for a kind word or a
biscuit.

PETER

If you feel like that, maybe I
should go...

He does not move, though.

(Beat)

CHARLOTTE

Wow, that came out of the blue. I
don't know. I thought we were just
friends now.

PETER

Yes, but why can't we go back?

CHARLOTTE

Back to what?

PETER

Back to how we were before.

She moves her hand away from his.

CHARLOTTE

I think it just gradually faded
away. And then when we were
sharing the same flat and you're
not having any sex. And then you're
no different from any other couple
of people that are friends.

(MORE)

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Once you stop having sex with someone, they stop being the one special person in your life, they become just like the hundreds of other people in your life.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

You know it wasn't really just me that stopped it. Not really.

PETER

I think I got a little lost.

(Beat)

You know we never held hands in the street. I never really knew why.

Beat.

PETER (CONT'D)

I saw a pair of kingfishers today, down by the City Mill,' he said, eventually. 'They were nesting upstream, in the riverbank just underneath the big oak. They caught my eye and made me think. Two little birds - one moment they were perched on a branch, then they were rushing here and there, hurtling along the stream as if their life depended on it. I wondered what they were thinking - why did they choose that moment to fly off downstream? Why not wait a little longer and go upstream? How could they possibly know what would be best?

CHARLOTTE

I don't think they do know. They just look for fish. And if they can't see any, then they fly to another perch and look again. It's not rocket science.

PETER

I wish we were kingfishers. Wouldn't you like to be a kingfisher?

CHARLOTTE

(Finally, mildly
exasperated)

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

No, not really. I've got a lecture now...we can talk later.

Peter watches her walk away.

22

INT. WINCHESTER, BENEDICTINE PRIORY - NIGHT - FEB 15 1093 - 2 AM

Peter (in Father Hugh's body) and Will are in the calfectory. Rough benches and tables form two lines. A small pulpit in one corner of the room for leading pre-meal prayers. Peter is drying himself out in front of the fireplace, which contains the remains of last night's fire.

WILL

Father, you said our task is not yet done. But surely the crown is now safe in the well?

PETER

Yes, Will, it is safe. No Norman hand draws water from that well, nor will they. The spring that feeds the well has done so from before the Angles, before even the Romans. That well was the baptism water of many past English worriers, maybe even Arthur Pendragon himself. Such a spring will not suit the Normans in their high Catholic ways. Only when the true English rise again will people seek its waters again. Until then, we must keep the secret safe. We must find a way to pass our secret on until a new generation can rise again, to take back what we have lost and to cherish our nation once more.

WILL

How will we do that, Master?

PETER

For the moment, you must go back to the dormitory - it must be close to the time for Nocturne, and if you are missed by the other initiates, then you will have some explaining to do.

WILL

I can always say I had been in the reredorter. Last night Brother Edmund's cabbage stew might put anyone there.

PETER'S INTERNAL VOICE

(v/o)
Reredorter?

HUGH'S INTERNAL VOICE

(v/o)
Necessaries...

PETER'S INTERNAL VOICE

(v/o)
Ah - some sort of privy...

PETER

Well, in either case, we must not be missed. Go now, and we will proceed further with your morning instruction.

Will departs and Peter continues to warm himself in front of the fire.

23

EXT. WINCHESTER, PRIORY CLOISTERS - DAY - FEB 15 1093 - 2 PM

Will is waiting outside Father Hugh's cell, ready for his afternoon instruction. Peter (in Father Hugh's body) approaches.

PETER

Come, Will - today we have a writing task to complete. But first, I want you to fetch me the book that Father Wilfrith gave you to read for this month's contemplation. Also, bring me an inkhorn from the scriptorium - make sure it contains some good, strong fresh black ink.

While Peter waits for Will to return, he prepares Father Hugh's writing tools. He unties the bundle of quills and selects a couple of promising looking ones. He looks around for a knife. He feels in his cassock pockets. Nothing, only a small collection of keys, fastened securely to the cassock linked with a small chain.

PETER (CONT'D)

(To himself)

Surely, if Father Hugh had a writing lectern in his cell, then he must have the necessary writing tools.

The only place Peter has not looked is in the chest in the corner of the cell. He tries the first key from the chain in his pocket in the chest's lock. It works. There were a surprising number of things inside.

The chest contained several leather-bound manuscripts. There was a second cassock, some undergarments, a pair of socks and a hose, a very worn pair of sandals, a pair of strong leather boots that laced up to the knee, a scapular, possibly for working in the fields, a few small sheets of vellum, some leather fragments, thread and needle, two candles and not only a knife but a sharpening stone too.

FADE - time passes - FADE IN

Will has returned.

By the time Will returns Peter has managed to sharpen three quills. He has put a piece of the vellum on the writing lectern.

Peter dips his quill in the ink and started to write. He finishes the letter and waits for a moment for the ink to dry.

PETER (CONT'D)

Now, Will, we must make sure that this letter is neither read by our enemies nor by our friends. So we must find a very good hiding place for it.

WILL

But surely there can be no point in writing such a strange letter, Master.

PETER

Ah, it will be read. But not for many years. We are sending a message to our descendants. For the present our kingdom is under the heel of the Normans. But we must prepare for a new kingdom.

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

That is why the crown of the English must be preserved until a new English king can arise, greater than Alfred, even greater than Æthelstan. Then the land can be returned to its true owners.

HUGH'S VOICE

(V/o)

You know that not to be true.

Peter felt sick as he said that. He knew he was lying, and he felt that Father Hugh must somehow know too. It was wrong for Peter to lie, and it was wrong for Peter, in Father

Hugh's body, to make Father Hugh lie too. There would be no new Anglo-Saxon kingdom.

True, the Normans would give way to new kings and kingdoms, but there would never be an English kingdom of Mercia again. But he could say nothing else. The letter had to be written and then secreted somewhere where it could be found in the distant future. If the letter was not hidden and then found again, then the Peter in the future would never know to dive in the well. And what then? How would the Peter, here, standing in 1093 in Father Hugh's body, get back to Anya? He sat on the stool by the table, trying to steady his nerves.

PETER

Bring me the book and the knife,
Will.

Will does so.

PETER (CONT'D)

We must find a way of hiding the letter in the leather covers of this book. See here, the binding is weak along this bottom edge. I think if we make a slit here, then the letter can be slid inside, between the cover and its backing. Here, this is a task for younger, more nimble hands than mine.

Peter gives Will the knife and placed the book, pages down on the table. Will carefully incised a small cut, where Peter indicated.

PETER (CONT'D)

A little longer, then let us see if the letter will fit.

Will cuts a little more, then brought the manuscript letter and carefully slid it into the opening. He presses the edge of the letter inside the cover with the point of Father Hugh's knife. The letter is entirely hidden.

PETER (CONT'D)

Only the question of closing the cover now remains. That cannot be done without glue, and for that, they must wait until the copyists have finished in the scriptorium when the copyists have finished their work for the day. Place the book in the chest, with the other things. We must complete the job tonight.

The bell for Nones rings as Will puts the book in the chest and closes the chest lid.

PETER (CONT'D)

Come that is the bell for Nones

They leave the cell.

24 EXT. WINCHESTER, CATHEDRAL SOUTH WALL - NIGHT - FEB 16 1093 -
1 AM

As on the previous night, the February full moon shines down on the Anglo-Saxon and the Norman cathedrals. Two figures flit from shadow to shadow and reach the south door.

25 INT. WINCHESTER, CATHEDRAL SOUTH WALL - NIGHT - FEB 16 1093 -
1 AM

As before, Peter leads the way, as they enter. The moonlight lights the cathedral nave. As they make their way towards the crypt they pass into the dark shadows. They pause, waiting for their eyes to adjust. Will produces the stub of a candle, in a rough wooden holder from the inside of his cassock.

WILL

Shall I say a prayer and light a candle, Master?

PETER

Yes. We will both say a prayer for each other.

They retrace their steps to the door and go the other way to the altar.

Will lights his candle from the one already burning there. They kneel and in silent prayer, seek the support of their God.

26 INT. THE NORMAN CATHEDRAL: THE STEPS TO THE CRYPT - FEB 16
1093 - 1 AM

Peter and Will are entering the crypt. The water is now only a few inches deep on over the floor. Peter slips off his cassock and sandals and strides out into the water. He leaves the dim glow of the candlelight behind, and the darkness gradually envelopes him.

27 INT. THE NORMAN CATHEDRAL: THE WELL AT THE FAR END OF THE
CRYPT - FEB 16 1093 - 1 AM

Peter stands by the low circular stone wall marking the well's position. He says a prayer.

PETER

Send thy light, O Lord, into the
dark places of our hearts. In thy
love, discover to us the snares set
by our enemy in the hours of night,
that, saved by thy protection in
soul and body, we may deserve again
to see the morning light. Through
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

After one brief look back at Will, he steps over the wall and sinks into the depths of the well.

To be continued...